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# Francis Schaeffer's Whole-of-Life Theology and the Making of the L'Abri Mind

Andrew Carter  
Thesis submitted for PhD  
Durham University  
July 2024

# Abstract

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Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) was a significant evangelical pastor and apologist, active in both the United States and Western Europe. During his life he contextualised the gospel for a new generation, produced over twenty-two books, delivered countless lectures covering dozens of subjects, made two documentary film series, and personally influenced thousands of people. In 1955, alongside his wife Edith, Schaeffer founded The L'Abri Fellowship, a Christian community established to demonstrate the reality of God through ordinary life. Today there are ten branches of L'Abri across the world, inviting guests into community to explore life's deepest questions. Part 1 of this study introduces Schaeffer and considers why he matters. Part 2 contains four chapters examining the integrating factor in Schaeffer's theology: the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life and his rejection of a divided-life spirituality. The conclusion of these chapters is that Schaeffer's approach to the Christian faith is sufficiently distinct that it can be called, 'the Schaeffer mind'. Part 3 explores how the Schaeffer mind has been taken up, modified, and developed by a new generation of L'Abri leaders and thinkers. To this end we consider three themes present in Schaeffer but developed by others from within the Fellowship: first, Jerram Barrs and Randal Macaulay's thesis that redemption represents the recovery of true humanity; second, Dick Keyes' cultural apologetic; third, Wade Bradshaw's engagement with a rival story. Finally, consideration will be given to Nancy Pearcey, who although not strictly of L'Abri, nevertheless writes within the tradition and brings Schaeffer's teaching up-to-date and applies it into new areas. The study concludes by arguing that the Schaeffer mind has evolved into something without parallel in the wider evangelical world. I call this the L'Abri Mind. The study concludes with an attempt to summarise its key ingredients, commenting on why it matters.

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I am also very grateful to Dick Keyes, Jerram Barrs, Ranald Macaulay and Wade Bradshaw who all assisted me with my research.

Mention also needs to be made of my late friend and once fellow-elder at Therfield Chapel, Paul Rydon. Paul loved the writing of Francis Schaeffer and would often explain how Schaeffer's thought had saved his Christian faith. His interest in Schaeffer helped to spark my own interest.

Although it is almost four decades since Francis Schaeffer departed this world, I am deeply grateful for the influence he has had upon my life and thousands of other lives. He truly was a remarkable man and a great inspiration to me personally.

Lastly, I am thankful for the support of my supervisor, Professor Robert Song. Robert has been unfailing in his willingness to make time to read my evolving chapters and offer helpful suggestions for improvements. I could not have had a better supervisor.

Rev. Andrew Carter

# Abbreviations Used

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## Works by Francis Augustus Schaeffer

TGWIT	<i>The God Who Is There (Complete Works, vol. 1, pp. 1-202)</i>
EFR	<i>Escape From Reason (Complete Works, vol. 1, pp. 205-270)</i>
HTNS	<i>He Is There and He Is Not Silent (Complete Works, Vol. 1, pp. 273-352)</i>
BTFAD	<i>Back to Freedom and Dignity (Complete Works, Vol. 1, pp. 355-384)</i>
GITAS	<i>Genesis in Space and Time (Complete Works, Vol. 2, pp. 1-114)</i>
NFC	<i>No Final Conflict (Complete Works, Vol. 2, pp. 117-148)</i>
JFBH	<i>Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History (Complete Works, Vol. 2, pp. 151-316)</i>
BBS	<i>Basic Bible Studies (Complete Works, Vol. 2, pp. 319-370)</i>
AB	<i>Art and the Bible (Complete Works, Vol. 2, pp. 373-413)</i>
NLP	<i>No Little People (Complete Works, Vol. 3, pp. 1-191)</i>
TS	<i>True Spirituality (Complete Works, Vol. 3, pp. 193-378)</i>
NSS	<i>The New Super-Spirituality (Complete Works, Vol. 3, pp. 381-401)</i>
TCTR	<i>Two Contents, Two Realities (Complete Works, Vol. 3, pp. 403-422)</i>
CETC	<i>The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century (Complete Works, Vol. 4 pp. 1-110)</i>
CBWW	<i>The Church Before the Watching World (Complete Works, Vol. 4 pp. 113-179)</i>
TMC	<i>The Mark of the Christian (Complete Works, Vol. 4 pp. 181-205)</i>
DIC	<i>Death in the City (Complete Works, Vol. 4 pp. 207-299)</i>
GED	<i>The Great Evangelical Disaster (Complete Works, Vol. 4 pp. 301-411)</i>
PDM	<i>Pollution and the Death of Man (Complete Works, Vol. 5 pp. 1-76)</i>
HSWTL	<i>How Should We Then Live? (Complete Works, Vol. 5 pp. 79-277)</i>
WHHR	<i>Whatever Happened to the Human Race? (Complete Works, Vol. 5 pp. 279-410)</i>
CM	<i>A Christian Manifesto (Complete Works, Vol. 5 pp. 413-501)</i>
FWC	<i>The Finished Work of Christ: The Truth of Romans 1-8</i>
LFS	<i>Letters of Francis Schaeffer.</i>
CW	<i>Complete Works.</i>

## Other abbreviations used throughout

PC	Private communication
EIO	Emphasis in original
EA	Emphasis added

# Introduction

## Rationale for Study

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### **(1) Statement of thesis subject**

Francis Schaeffer's Whole-of-Life Theology and the Making of the L'Abri Mind

### **(2) Context and purpose**

Ranking alongside the likes of John Stott and Billy Graham, Francis Schaeffer was a giant of the twentieth-century evangelical world. Although based in Switzerland for thirty-seven years, his main sphere of influence was among the nations of the Anglosphere. Schaeffer's significance lies not in him being some great intellectual as some have argued, it was rather that both through his striking manner of life and his thought he brought new emphases to the evangelical world. There are various ways that might be advanced to encapsulate Schaeffer, but it is my contention that it is his espousal of a whole-of-life Christianity that captures him best. His rejection of divided-life Christianity was both significantly unique and impactful for his time. In this study I seek to capture the essence of Schaeffer, and I call this 'the Schaeffer mind'.

As the decades passed, Schaeffer's manner of life and thought found tangible expression in and through the communities he initiated, the L'Abri Fellowships. Factoring in the contribution of leaders that followed Schaeffer, a broader ethos has emerged that I argue is sufficiently distinct to warrant my second designation, 'the L'Abri mind'. Although clearly falling within the evangelical tradition, as we assemble the main ingredients of L'Abri collectively, something significant emerges without parallel elsewhere.

### **(3) Methodology**

Part 1 of this thesis sets the stage for the study and contains three chapters in which I explore the life and times of Francis Schaeffer. Chapter 1 sketches biographical details, while chapter 2 considers Schaeffer's life-defining beliefs and practices. Chapter 3 addresses Schaeffer's significance, explaining how he corrected some deficits of his time and why our understanding of twentieth-century evangelicalism will be incomplete unless we appreciate his contribution.

Part 2 asks the question, 'what *is* the Schaeffer mind?' Here in four chapters (4-7) I select what I believe to be the vital aspects of his thought and ethos to demonstrate his whole-of life Christianity. Chapter 4 considers his integrated view of truth, the framework which provides the underpinning for his view that Christianity is the true story of reality and so speaks to the whole of life rather than only to some spiritual part of it. Chapters 5 and 6 explore Schaeffer's sense of human significance and the value of 'ordinary' human life respectively. Taken together these two chapters demonstrate Schaeffer's rejection of the idea that only some parts of life matter to God. Chapter 7 completes my outline of the fundamentals of the Schaeffer mind, documenting Schaeffer's remarkable breadth of thought; for him nothing in life falls outside the sphere of Christian comment and application.

Part 3 comes to the crux of the study, where I assemble key pieces of the L'Abri mind. Each one individually is found outside of the L'Abri context, but my point is that when put together – and their particular emphases are examined – something emerges that is strikingly distinctive. Across three chapters (8-10) I pick up key themes found in the Schaeffer mind: (i) chapter 8, redemption as restoration of true humanity; (ii) chapter 9,



apologetics; (iii) chapter 10, engagement with rival stories. Taking each theme in turn I examine how Schaeffer's thought has been taken up, modified, and developed by four L'Abri leaders who came after him: Jerram Barrs, Ranald Macaulay, Dick Keyes and Wade Bradshaw. Then in chapter 11, I examine the writings of Nancy Pearcey. Pearcey knew Schaeffer personally and through her prolific writings has arguably corrected, updated, and applied Schaeffer's thought for a new generation. The study concludes in chapter 12 with me drawing together the findings of Parts 1 to 3 to formally delineate what I mean by 'the L'Abri mind'.

# Part 1

## Francis Schaeffer Introduced

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# Chapter 1

## Francis Schaeffer Biography

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This is the first of three chapters introducing the life and ministry of Francis Schaeffer. It provides a brief biography of Schaeffer and the L'Abri Fellowships. Particular attention will be paid to key events in the life of Schaeffer as well as to his whole-of-life theology. The second chapter moves beyond dates and events to reflect more deeply upon his life, under the headings of 'tone' and 'practice'. The third considers why Francis Schaeffer matters for the history of evangelicalism.

Detailed biographies of the life of Francis Schaeffer are available, necessitating only the reporting of salient turning points here, with a tilt towards his whole-of-life Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Francis August Schaeffer IV was born to Francis August and Bessie (née Williamson) Schaeffer on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1912 in Germantown, Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> His mother was determined that he would be their only child and he was.<sup>3</sup> Although born into a working-class family, void of books and lacking cultural stimulation, upon entering school it was recorded that he

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<sup>1</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1981); Colin Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life* (Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2008); Mostyn Roberts, *Francis Schaeffer* (Darlington, UK: EP Books, 2012); Rachel Lane, *Taking on the World: Francis and Edith Schaeffer* (Fearn, UK: CF4Kids, 2019); Christopher Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 1994); William J. Edgar, *Schaeffer on the Christian Life: Countercultural Spirituality*, *Theologians on the Christian Life* (Crossway, 2013). A critical appraisal of Francis and Edith is provided by their son: see Frank E. Schaeffer, *Crazy for God: How I Grew up as One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back*, 1st Carroll & Graf ed (Carroll & Graf, 2007). For an assessment of the accuracy of Frank Schaeffer's work, see Os Guinness, 'Fathers & Sons: Francis Schaeffer, Frank Schaeffer, and "Crazy for God"' <<https://banneroftruth.org/uk/resources/book-review-resources/2008/fathers-sons-francis-schaeffer-frank-schaeffer-and-crazy-for-god/>> [accessed 9 September 2020].

<sup>2</sup> Duriez, 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

scored the highest IQ they had seen in twenty years. In the event no one at home told him;<sup>4</sup> it was not considered important information.

Since it was deemed appropriate to go to church in those days, Schaeffer did so but found himself in a church holding to a liberal theology and with a critical stance toward the Bible. He quickly concluded that the church offered no answers to the great questions of life.<sup>5</sup> However, at the age of seventeen, after reading Greek philosophy he decided that he had never given the Bible a fair hearing and so proceeded to read it from cover to cover.

Colin Duriez comments,

In his reading of the Bible he was surprised to find unfolding answers to the deep philosophical questions he had begun to ask. The dawning excitement would never leave him [...] [afterwards] he committed himself to Christ and the Christian faith.<sup>6</sup>

Significantly Schaeffer came to faith not through gospel preaching or the witness of a Christian but through Biblical theology; he became satisfied that in the narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration the true story of the world is told. His lifelong connection between the Bible and reality was established. The year was 1930.

Soon after his conversion, Schaeffer began to sense a call to pastoral ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Against the wishes of his father who wanted his son to work with his hands, Schaeffer began making plans to study at Hampden-Sydney College – a private liberal arts college in Virginia – on their pre-ministerial course.<sup>8</sup> After attending evening classes in German and Latin, Schaeffer obtained a place at Hampden-Sydney, rejected his father's advice, and set off for college. Schaeffer proved to be a hard-working and able student and it was during these

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Duriez, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Duriez, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Duriez, 24-25.

undergraduate years that he met and fell in love with Edith Seville (1914-2013).<sup>9</sup> Born in China to missionary parents, Edith had returned to America when she was five years old.<sup>10</sup> Her father, George, worked at China Inland Mission's US headquarters in Germantown and Edith attended the same high school as Schaeffer had previously.<sup>11</sup> Francis and Edith met at a young people's meeting held at a liberal Presbyterian Church and connected through their shared indignation at the speaker's denials of the deity of Christ and the Bible as the word of God.<sup>12</sup>

Schaeffer graduated from Hampden-Sydney *magna cum laude* in June 1935 and married Edith a month later.<sup>13</sup> Without question, meeting Edith made Schaeffer's future calling possible. Bryan Follis comments, 'Edith was his soul mate, constant companion and fellow soldier in the struggle to advance Christ's kingdom.'<sup>14</sup> In September of 1935, Schaeffer entered Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS) to study for a Master of Divinity degree.<sup>15</sup> At WTS Schaeffer came under the influence of Princeton Theology with its stress on Biblical inerrancy, Reformed Theology, and rational methodology. Required reading doubtless included the luminaries of the Princeton approach: Charles Hodge (1797-1878), Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921) and J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937).<sup>16</sup> Although unclear, it is possible that Schaeffer also read Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), laying a foundation for his whole-of-life theology. Critically it was at WTS that

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<sup>9</sup> Duriez, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Lane, *Taking*, 42-43.

<sup>11</sup> Duriez, 29-30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Bryan A. Follis, *Truth with Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer*, 1st U.S. ed (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2006), 13.

<sup>15</sup> Duriez, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Forrest Baird, 'Schaeffer's Intellectual Roots', in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, ed. Ronald W. Ruesegger (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie, Zondervan, 1986), 45-67 (46-53).

Schaeffer was taught by Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987)<sup>17</sup> who had a decisive influence on Schaeffer's apologetic methodology.

In 1937 there was a division<sup>18</sup> among the faculty at WTS and Schaeffer joined a breakaway faction to form a new institution – Faith Seminary – established at Wilmington, Delaware, with Allan MacRae (1902-1997) as president.<sup>19</sup> It was during these years and through his friendship with Carl McIntyre (1906-2002) that Schaeffer's early 'separatist' thinking was forged, as well as his life-long premillennial theology. Schaeffer graduated from Faith in 1938 and was ordained into the Bible Presbyterian Church.<sup>20</sup>

Schaeffer held three pastorates between 1938 and 1948. The first was in Grove City, Pennsylvania (1938-41), the second in Chester, Pennsylvania (1941-43) and the third in St Louis, Missouri (1943-48).<sup>21</sup> During his years at seminary and church pastorates, three daughters were born to Francis and Edith: Priscilla in June 1937, Susan in May 1941 and Deborah in May 1945.<sup>22</sup> Ten years of pastoring shaped Schaeffer's life-long concern for people and their welfare, a sense that found its deepest expression later in the establishment of the L'Abri Fellowships.

In 1947 Schaeffer was sent by the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions on a three-month fact-finding visit to Europe, a continent recovering from the

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<sup>17</sup> Van Til was a reformed Dutch-American professor who taught theology and apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary for 43 years. He is known for his defence of presuppositional apologetics. See John M. Frame, *Van Til: The Theologian* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Pilgrim Pub. Co., 1976).

<sup>18</sup> The issues were complex but centred around competing views of eschatology and the definition of Christian holiness and liberty. On the second point, some of the discussion centred on whether the believer is permitted to drink alcohol. Barrs argues that the issue also concerned personalities and leadership battles, see Jerram Barrs, *Francis Schaeffer The Early Years: Marriage and Seminary Life* (1989), iii <<https://resources.covenantseminary.edu/programs/life-work-francis-schaeffer>> [accessed 6 March 2023].

<sup>19</sup> Roberts, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Roberts, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts, 11; Catherwood, 123-24.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, 11.

impact of World War II. Schaeffer's visit was motivated by two concerns:<sup>23</sup> the perceived lack of children's work being done in Europe and the encroachment of what he called 'The New Modernism' among the churches.<sup>24</sup> After landing in Paris, his visit took him to 13 countries and 31 cities, keeping 180 appointments.<sup>25</sup> He arrived back in the United States exhausted but deeply moved by the plight of the European church, writing to his Mission Board, 'To meet the basic need of Europe we need two things – missions, and an international council of Bible-believing churches.'<sup>26</sup> After studying Schaeffer's report, the Mission Board decided that Francis and Edith should be sent to Europe to, 'Strengthen the things that remain (Rev. 3:2)'.<sup>27</sup> The task given to Schaeffer comprised two parts. First, he was to help set up an alternative to the liberal-leaning World Council of Churches (to be called The International Council of Churches) and second, he was to represent the Board in whatever way the Lord would lead them in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

The Schaeffer family landed at Rotterdam in July 1948, and after spending three weeks in the Netherlands, travelled on to Lausanne, Switzerland. Critically for Schaeffer's biography, during his time in Amsterdam he met Hans Rookmaaker (1922-1977). It proved a turning point in his life.<sup>29</sup> Rookmaaker was to become his close friend and fellow-enthusiast on matters of whole-of-life Christianity, especially in how he understood art, history and philosophy.<sup>30</sup> Arguably, it was Rookmaaker – steeped in the Dutch Calvinist thinking of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) who contributed the most to

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<sup>23</sup> Roberts, 43.

<sup>24</sup> By this he meant the theology of Karl Barth. For a discussion of a meeting that Schaeffer had with Barth and his rejection of neo-orthodoxy, see Duriez, 95-101.

<sup>25</sup> Roberts, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Duriez, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Roberts, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Duriez, 72-73.

<sup>29</sup> William J. Edgar, 'Two Christian Warriors: Cornelius Van Til and Francis A. Schaeffer Compared', *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995), 57-80 (61).

<sup>30</sup> For the significance of Rookmaaker for Schaeffer's life see Duriez, 76-80.

Schaeffer's commitment to the Lordship of Christ over all of life.<sup>31</sup> Charles Cotherman suggests that that in time Rookmaaker became L'Abri's scholar-at-large and comments that he was the only intellectual permitted into Schaeffer's inner circle.<sup>32</sup> After a short time in Lausanne the Schaeffers moved to Champéry, and with the exception of a furlough during the years 1953-54, remained there until 1955.<sup>33</sup>

The early years in Champéry were characterised by the struggle of settling into a new culture and language, plus the strain of considerable travel across Western Europe to help churches establish children's ministries and encourage them to stand against the influence of neo-orthodoxy and ecumenism.<sup>34</sup> Their son and fourth child, Francis August Schaeffer V, was born in August 1952.

During the early 1950s, Schaeffer descended into a spiritual crisis, an event which proved pivotal in his life.<sup>35</sup> Arguably this crisis – and especially its resolution – provided the catalyst for the birth of L'Abri Fellowship.

Schaeffer's crisis had several dimensions to it. Firstly, Schaeffer began to be concerned about the ugliness he had witnessed between Christians. He comments, 'A problem came to me – the problem of reality [...] it seemed to me that among many who held the orthodox position, one saw little reality in the things that the Bible so clearly says should be the result of Christianity.'<sup>36</sup> Looking back twelve years earlier to the conflict he

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Charles E. Cotherman, *To Think Christianly: A History of L'Abri, Regent College, and the Christian Study Center Movement* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 23. Cotherman remarks that a lack of good advisors explains why some of Schaeffer's material is poorly crafted. For further assessment of the influence of Rookmaaker on Schaeffer's life, see Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 2014), 211.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Duriez, 84.

<sup>35</sup> For an account of this crisis, see Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry*, (Waco: Word Books, 1981), 354-55. Schaeffer writes of his crisis in, 'Why I write My Books', *Eternity Magazine*, March 24, 1973, 64.

<sup>36</sup> *TS*, 195.



had been involved in during his days at WTS, he wondered how the Christian faith could be true if it produced such unkindness among believers.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, life on another continent provided fresh perspective on battles left behind and it is likely he decided many were not worth fighting.

Secondly, the spiritual reality of others was not his only concern; it was also himself. Schaeffer writes, 'It gradually dawned on me that my own reality was less than it had been in the early days after I had become a Christian. I realised in honesty that I had to go back and rethink my whole position.'<sup>38</sup> At stake here was nothing less than whether the Christian faith was true.

Thirdly, it seems likely that his early years in Europe persuaded Schaeffer that the American fundamentalism he preached was not obtaining traction in Europe. To have an impact he needed to contextualise the gospel for another setting and the process of doing so created considerable personal upheaval.<sup>39</sup>

After weeks of walking in the mountains and pacing his hayloft – with Edith praying desperately for him – Schaeffer emerged from his crisis in the Spring of 1951 a different man and in the words of Edith, '[with] fresh preparation for all that was ahead'.<sup>40</sup> Arguably without this crisis – and certainly unless he had emerged with renewed Christian conviction – there would have been no L'Abri Fellowship. Duriez confirms as such, remarking, 'Schaeffer always believed that without this deep struggle [...] the work of L'Abri would

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<sup>37</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Francis Schaeffer The Early Years: Spiritual Crisis*, Francis Schaeffer: The Early Years (1989), xix <<https://resources.covenantseminary.edu/programs/life-work-francis-schaeffer>> [accessed 29 September 2022].

<sup>38</sup> *TS*, 195.

<sup>39</sup> Cotherman, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *The Tapestry*, p. 357.

never have started'. With hindsight we can say that Schaeffer's crisis proved highly significant for what L'Abri became.

Schaeffer emerged convinced that the Christian faith is the true story of the universe, not merely a source of personal stability and experience. This conviction became the foundation stone upon which L'Abri was established. Accordingly, the message he communicated began to become centred upon this truth claim and its apologetic defence.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, if Christianity were true, it had a message for all of life, not just some parts of it.

Although no new beliefs emerged from Schaeffer's crisis, what did emerge was a new ability to trust God and His promises. During his crisis Schaeffer shifted beyond being a doctrinalist or a Presbyterian thought figure, to recognising the need for a profound dependence upon God. This meant turning his back on the coldness of the dry orthodoxy he had witnessed in the North American setting and finding a new liberty of spirit. On the Schaeffer family furlough (1953-54) following his spiritual crisis, Schaeffer preached a series of sermons that formed the basis of what he considered to be his most important book, *True Spirituality*.<sup>42</sup> In it Schaeffer offers an account of the lessons he learned during his crisis and in particular his insistence that Christian ministry, in whatever calling, depends upon a moment-by-moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

Schaeffer's spiritual crisis set in motion events that eventually led to the Schaeffers leaving their Mission Board and setting off on their own without formal financial support.<sup>44</sup> This was the outworking of his newly found dependence upon God coupled with a new

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<sup>41</sup> Duriez, 106.

<sup>42</sup> Duriez, 124-25.

<sup>43</sup> Duriez, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Duriez, p.132. In time the Schaeffers parted company with the MacRae movement and joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church, see Edgar, *Warriors*, 57-80 (60, 10n).

independence from formal structures to strike out in his own doing what he believed God had called him to do.

Following Schaeffer's crisis we find him leaning in an existential and compassionate direction that attunes him to the disappointment and lostness of the generation that shortly are to come up the mountain to L'Abri. From now on Christianity will not only be a source of rational answers, but something that you embody, something that you can live out in relationships and community. Whereas in America Biblical truth had been eclipsed by infighting, L'Abri would be a place where truth finds reality in hospitable community. From now on love would stand alongside truth.

Schaeffer's crisis fostered in him a profound empathy with both believers and unbelievers who struggled or had doubts. Needing to find answers to his deepest questions, he became determined to help others with theirs'. Never would he judge others for their struggles, for [comments Barrs] 'He had been through the valley of despair himself.'<sup>45</sup>

In addition to Schaeffer's spiritual crisis, to understand the birth of L'Abri Fellowship, it is also necessary to factor in a further set of events. At the time when the Schaeffers were pondering the idea of opening their home to be a spiritual shelter, they were living in Champéry within the Roman Catholic Canton of Valais.<sup>46</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> February 1955 they received two written instructions from the Swiss' authorities. The first demanded that they leave the Canton of Valais and the second that they leave Switzerland. The date for both departures was set at 31<sup>st</sup> March, in just six weeks' time.<sup>47</sup> It seems that all the Schaeffers' investment in the country was ending abruptly. Subsequently it transpired that the reason

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<sup>45</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Francis Schaeffer The Early Years: Beginnings of L'Abri 1*, 24 vols (1990) <<https://thirdmill.org/sermons/series.asp/srs/Francis%20A.%20Schaeffer%20Later%20Years>> [accessed 21 September 2019].

<sup>46</sup> Barrs, *Beginnings of L'Abri 1*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

for their expulsion was that the family of a local man converted under the Schaeffers' ministry had become indignant at their presence and joining up with the local Catholic bishop had lobbied the Canton to demand their removal from the country.<sup>48</sup>

During subsequent weeks the shocked Schaeffers gave themselves to prayer and eventually witnessed what they believed was a series of miraculous events that resulted in them being allowed to remain in Switzerland and purchase a large house in Huémoz<sup>49</sup> – Chalet les Mélèzes – situated in an adjacent Protestant Canton, Vaud.<sup>50</sup> For the Schaeffer family the dramatic reversal of the Swiss' authorities decision to expel them from the country provided providential confirmation that they were in the place that God wanted them to be.<sup>51</sup>

The Schaeffer's settled into Chalet les Mélèzes with the intention of demonstrating God's reality in the rhythms of everyday life.<sup>52</sup> Edith comments that they would, 'ask God that our work, and our lives, be a demonstration that He does exist.'<sup>53</sup> Anyone wanting to ask questions about the Christian faith and needing hospitality while they did was welcome.<sup>54</sup> Here Christianity would not be one compartment of life but a way of seeing and living all of it. They gave their house a name, *L'Abri* in French, 'The Shelter' in English.<sup>55</sup>

Further descriptions of *L'Abri* will be found in chapters 6 and 7, but what is noteworthy here is that from 1955 onwards people travelled from near and far to stay with the Schaeffers. Initially it was student friends of their daughter Priscilla who from 1955

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> A full account of how the decision to expel the Schaeffers from Switzerland was reversed and how they obtained the necessary deposit for Chalet les Mélèzes is told by Edith in *The Tapestry* 409-436.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Cotherman, 17.

<sup>53</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer and Deirdre Ducker, *L'Abri* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 124.

<sup>54</sup> James I. Packer, 'No Little Person', in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, by Ronald W. Ruesegger (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 7-17 (10).

<sup>55</sup> Edith Schaeffer and Ducker, 76.

studied at nearby Lausanne University. Eventually people came from overseas, from every profession and from every worldview and religion.<sup>56</sup> As will be explored in chapter 6, during the 1960s large numbers of disaffected young people came to the Schaeffer door; some freshly back from the 'hippie trail' to India or Nepal, others came while on their way.<sup>57</sup> Around the fireside, Schaeffer engaged with their objections and scepticism; invariably they were impressed by his arguments. Here was a Christian who took the great issues of life seriously and did so with an understanding not only of the Bible but also of the ideas of western history and the concerns of a disaffected generation. Cotherman comments, 'At L'Abri the Schaeffers helped students imagine what a gospel that touched and informed all of life looked like'.<sup>58</sup> Not all became Christians, but many did. In time came many young people brought up in Christian homes, but with questions. Mostyn Roberts comments, '[during] the 1950s and 1960s, it was predominantly non-Christians who [arrived] [...] by 1980 one was far more likely to meet confused or disenchanted young Christians.'<sup>59</sup>

As people visited L'Abri and took the word home of this remarkable couple welcoming people into their home in the Swiss Alps, invitations for Schaeffer to speak poured in from all over the world.<sup>60</sup> From the mid-sixties onwards, it was common for him to be lecturing, both at L'Abri and beyond, and workers had to be recruited to assist them. Out of Schaeffer's lectures came tape recordings for hire or purchase, and books. *Escape from Reason* and *The God Who is There* were published in 1968, followed by *He is There and He is Not Silent*. Twenty-two more were to follow as were two video series, *How Should We*

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<sup>56</sup> Roberts, 83-84.

<sup>57</sup> Catherwood, 149.

<sup>58</sup> Cotherman, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Roberts, 84.

<sup>60</sup> Cotherman comments that by this time they were 'evangelical celebrities', 26.

*Then Live?* (1976)<sup>61</sup> and *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979).<sup>62</sup> Duriez's summary of Schaeffer's first film series applies to all Schaeffer's thought: firstly, 'The Lordship of Christ'; secondly, 'The inerrancy of Scripture' and thirdly, 'The necessity for a coherent Christian worldview.'<sup>63</sup>

Swiss L'Abri, as it became known, was the first of several residential centres to open across the world: Rochester, Minnesota; Greatham, England; Eck en Wiel, The Netherlands; Southborough, Massachusetts; British Columbia, Canada; Yang Yang, South Korea. In addition, L'Abri has three resource centres: Elderslie, Australia; Bel Horizonte, Brazil; and Gauteng, South Africa.

Through the 1970s and early 1980s, Schaeffer continued to minister through one-to-one meetings, lectures, preaching, writing and personal correspondence. Following the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, Schaeffer began working with the Moral Majority in America. His main concern was what he saw as the normalising of abortion in America following the 1973 'Roe v Wade' ruling of the US Supreme Court. The decision to work with the Evangelical Right proved to be the most controversial episode of Schaeffer's life and it cost him the support of many concerned evangelicals.<sup>64</sup> Less sympathetic commentators have argued that there were in fact three versions of Schaeffer: the early fundamentalist, the open-minded European and then a return to the American fundamentalist of his later years.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *How Should We Then Live: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, dir. by John Gonsler, 10 vols (Baker & Taylor, 1976).

<sup>62</sup> *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, dir. by Buchfuehrer Jim, 5 vols (Frank Schaeffer V Productions, 1979).

<sup>63</sup> Duriez, 187.

<sup>64</sup> Roberts, 127-28.

<sup>65</sup> Baird, 64. For a rebuttal of Baird's view see Jerram Barrs, *Francis Schaeffer The Later Years: Criticisms* (1990), xxiv <<https://resources.covenantseminary.edu/programs/life-work-francis-schaeffer>> [accessed 4 February 2020].

In 1978, during the final stages of filming 'Whatever Happened to the Human Race?', Schaeffer began to lose weight at an alarming rate. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic discovered that he had a cancerous tumour the size of a football.<sup>66</sup> Treatment began in earnest, and it was not until 15<sup>th</sup> May 1984 that Schaeffer died. The years between diagnosis and death were productive ones. He completed his film series 'Whatever Happened to the Human Race?' and an accompanying book with the same title. By 1981 he also produced *A Christian Manifesto*, calling for action in response to the concerns raised by his films. He also edited all 22 books contained within his *Complete Works*. Finally, with help from his friend and editor, Lane T. Dennis, Schaeffer completed one of his most important and arguably prophetic books, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (1984).

In 1997, Christianity Today summarised Francis A. Schaeffer's legacy in the following way:

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.<sup>67</sup>

We shall now move on to further consider Schaeffer's life under the vital headings of tone and practice.

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<sup>66</sup> Roberts, 128.

<sup>67</sup> Michael S. Hamilton, 'The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer', *Christianity Today*, (1997), 22 <<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1997/march3/7t322a.html>> [accessed 16 January 2021].

## Chapter 2

# Francis Schaeffer: Tone and Practice

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Although Schaeffer – and the L’Abri mind he helped forge – was deeply concerned about right doctrine, his passion was deeper than a call ‘to get your thinking straight’. As we saw in chapter 1, Schaeffer desired that his life and L’Abri Fellowship be a demonstration of the reality of God. Any understanding of Schaeffer will be incomplete without some attention being paid to what this meant. Accordingly, this chapter will focus on matters that lay at the core of Schaeffer’s DNA, his tone, life-defining beliefs, and practices.

### 1. Tone

Although a lion for Biblical truth, Schaeffer’s tone was arguably defined by kindness, compassion, and an irenic spirit. Mark Ryan suggests that the fusion of two virtues – truth and love – reveal the spirit of Schaeffer. He comments,

Schaeffer’s speech and the form of his arguments were driven by love for the non-Christian. Rather than assault people with truth, he took time to listen, to see whether his arguments were relevant to the person [...] all of this goes under the umbrella of what it meant for him to love another human being. Schaeffer was the antithesis of the angry man. He was not a culture warrior and was never found trying to overpower a person with his intellect.<sup>68</sup>

Listening to recordings of Schaeffer answering questions has persuaded me that Schaeffer never felt threatened by opposing points of view; he knew what he believed and explained his position without defensiveness or unkindness. Never does he seek to catch a questioner out or hint that theirs was a foolish question. Each person is treated with the respect and

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<sup>68</sup> PC, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020. Mark Ryan is Director of the Francis Schaeffer Institute, Covenant Seminary.



dignity Schaeffer believed is owed to an image of God. As we shall see later, it was his commitment to what Macaulay and Barrs later called ‘being human’ that shaped his concern for the importance of each person’s unique story. Schaeffer was commonly heard saying, ‘If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first fifty-five minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then in the last five minutes I will share something of the truth.’<sup>69</sup> Louis Parkhurst quotes a medical student present at one of Schaeffer’s discussions who remarked, ‘Dr Schaeffer was the first Christian I could not make angry, who would not lash out or be driven into a corner.’<sup>70</sup>

Schaeffer’s tone is expressed throughout his writings, but it is best felt in his films and personal letters. In each episode of the film series, ‘How Should We Then Live?’, Schaeffer’s compassion for the lostness of the 1960s’ generation is clearly on display. On occasions, his voice cracks and his eyes are filled with tears as he reflects upon a generation raised to believe that they, like their universe, were nothing more than a cosmic accident.<sup>71</sup>

Schaeffer’s published letters provide us with another window into his tone.<sup>72</sup> The letters reveal a willingness to take a keen interest in people who asked him for advice, in spite of a very busy life. Frequently, Schaeffer invites people to L’Abri to spend time with him to work through their struggles and seek God’s will together.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps the best way to highlight Schaeffer’s tone is to call witnesses who knew him personally. Jerram Barrs was a fellow-worker with Schaeffer at Swiss L’Abri (1967-68) and a

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted by Jerram Barrs, ‘Francis Schaeffer: His Apologetics’, in *Francis Schaeffer: A Mind and Heart for God*, ed. Bruce A. Little (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 27-49 (34).

<sup>70</sup> Louis Gifford Parkhurst, ‘The Quiet Assurance of Truth’, in *Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, by Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 141-51 (143-44).

<sup>71</sup> *How Should We Then Live?*, Video Series, Dir. Gonser, Episode 9, The Age of Personal Peace and Affluence.

<sup>72</sup> *LFS*.

<sup>73</sup> *LFS*, see for example, 236-237

founding member and director of English L'Abri (1971-88). In a lecture entitled, 'Idolatry in Contemporary Society', Barrs is asked whether he was ever tempted to make an idol of Schaeffer. This was his answer,

My wife was Francis' secretary, and I was Edith's gardener and we got to know them very well [...] One of the things I've always appreciated about them was their refusal to be put up upon a pedestal and their desire not to be regarded as plastic saints [...] the things that touched me most deeply [about Francis] [...] are those things in which he manifested the grace of God. It wasn't the power of his personality, his great speaking or writing abilities; it was his compassion for people; it was his concern for little people.<sup>74</sup>

A second witness to Schaeffer's tone and kindness is Maria Walford Dellù. In an essay written shortly after his death, she describes how after becoming a Christian her parents forbade her from reading her Bible. After an evening attending one of Schaeffer's studies she explains how he asked her to, 'Tell him frankly about the situation at home.' She continued, 'He listened carefully and then said, 'Maria, if one day you need to leave, you know that you can have a family with us'.<sup>75</sup> She comments, I was very upset by those words. He did not know how much my family loved me and I loved them. That would never happen to me! But it did [...] [in time God] used the Schaeffers to bring stability and love back into my life.<sup>76</sup>

The final comment on Schaeffer's tone comes from the testimony of an African-American photographer, Sylvester Jacobs. Jacobs has written a powerful book about the struggles he experienced growing up with racism, *Born Black*. However, at one point he describes the first time he witnessed Schaeffer giving a lecture in London during the autumn of 1966. After the lecture, Jacobs explains how Schaeffer extricated himself from the crowd

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<sup>74</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Idolatry in Contemporary Society* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 15 June 2020].

<sup>75</sup> Maria Walford-Dallu, 'You Can Have a Family With Us', in *Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, by Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 129-40 (131-32).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

of ‘clever people’ around him and walked over to introduce himself and invite him to L’Abri. Jacobs comments, ‘So this was the great Francis Schaeffer. Philosophic talk and un-American clothes and sad brown eyes. What I remember most was that he’d been kind to me.’<sup>77</sup>

Schaeffer’s gentle, irenic and winsome tone, although never lacking in conviction, frequently stands in contrast with other Christian leaders both in the present and past. Importantly for this study, Schaeffer sought to create an atmosphere within the L’Abri Fellowship of conviction embedded in love. In time, the embrace of this approach became a key ingredient of the L’Abri mind.

## **2. Practice**

Moving on from Schaeffer’s tone, in a bid to understand what made him tick, comment will now be made concerning Schaeffer’s practice. Analysis will be covered under three headings: (a) apologetic; (b) community; (c) place of the scriptures. The point here is not to be exhaustive, merely to highlight key ingredients that make up the core of Schaeffer’s approach to Christianity.

### **a. Schaeffer’s Apologetic**

Since Francis Schaeffer is considered to be one of the most successful Christian apologists of the twentieth century, it is unsurprising that numerous books and papers have

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<sup>77</sup> Sylvester Jacobs and Linette Martin, *Born Black*, Hodder Christian Paperbacks (Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 100.

been produced analysing his method.<sup>78</sup> Debate has been most intense as to what category of apologist Schaeffer fitted into. Most consider him to be a modified presuppositionalist<sup>79</sup> whilst others have labelled him an empiricist<sup>80</sup> or a verificationist.<sup>81</sup> It is not difficult to explain these differences of opinion. Schaeffer's writings on apologetics lack precision and consistency and can leave the best minds wondering how all the pieces fit together. In any case, Schaeffer was determined not to be put into a box and never grew tired of reminding people that he was first and foremost an evangelist.<sup>82</sup> The aim of this summary is not to fully enter into the debate around Schaeffer's apologetic, but simply to highlight the contours of how he went about offering a reasoned defence of the Christian gospel.<sup>83</sup>

Firstly, it is noteworthy that Schaeffer believed in the value of Christians engaging in apologetics. In one sense this is not surprising; he did study under one of the great apologetic thinkers of the modern world, Cornelius Van Til. Nevertheless, Schaeffer served in Europe at a time when – on that continent at least – confidence that the Christian faith could be defended using reasoned argument was almost non-existent.<sup>84</sup> Neo-orthodoxy remained highly influential in Europe and – to Schaeffer's mind – its divorcing of spiritual

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<sup>78</sup> To understand Schaeffer's approach to apologetics, see: Follis, 'Truth with Love'; Burson and Walls; David R. Leigh, *Presupposing: How to Defend the Faith – The Methods of Francis A. Schaeffer & Cornelius Van Til* (Fox River Grove, IL: Leighist & Grateful Pressless Press, 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Jerram Barrs calls Schaeffer a compassionate presuppositionalist (PC, 2 April 2020). Os Guinness suggests that he is a modified presuppositionalist (quoted by Burson and Walls, 'Lessons' 143).

<sup>80</sup> Robert L. Reymond calls Schaeffer an inconsistent empiricist, Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1976), 147.

<sup>81</sup> *Burson and Walls* call Schaeffer a verificationist, 145-150. The terms presuppositionalist, empiricist and verificationist will be explained in Chapter 9.

<sup>82</sup> Jack B. Rogers, 'Francis Schaeffer: The Promise and the Problem (1)', *The Reformed Journal*, 27.5 (1977), 12-15 (12-15). In chapter 9 we will consider whether Schaeffer was disingenuous by suggesting he was 'merely' an evangelist.

<sup>83</sup> Schaeffer's most concise and helpful summary of his apologetic methodology is, Francis A Schaeffer, 'A Review of a Review' (PCA Historical Center, 1948) <<https://www.pcahistory.org/documents/schaefferreview.html>> [accessed 20 March 2020]. For helpful discussion of this document see Jerram Barrs, *Francis Schaeffer The Early Years: A Review of a Review* (1989), xi, xii <<https://resources.covenantseminary.edu/programs/life-work-francis-schaeffer/>> [accessed 3 July 2019].

<sup>84</sup> This theme will be explored in more detail in chapters 3 and 9.

experience from Biblical history and reason, rendered it ineffective for serious apologetic engagement.<sup>85</sup> In the United Kingdom of the 1950s and 1960s, the Keswick Convention's 'higher-life' teaching dominated many evangelical churches, Bible Colleges and mission organisations.<sup>86</sup> Even the influential preacher, Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel in London – although not subscribing to Keswick teaching – held that conversions occurred through pulpit and personal proclamation, not through discussion, debate and persuasion.<sup>87</sup> But Schaeffer was not deterred; his was a Christianity rooted in history and reason, as well as experience and will, and he was firmly committed to the place of apologetic engagement with the non-believer or doubting believer. For him, the essence of Christianity was encountering truth, not getting a spiritual high.

Secondly, it is helpful to consider what Schaeffer means as he reflects upon himself as an apologist. Attached as an appendix to *The God Who is There* is a brief essay, 'The Question of Apologetics',<sup>88</sup> and it is here that Schaeffer addresses that question. He remarks that he is not an apologist, if what we mean by the term is someone who formulates arguments to feel secure in their position from within a 'safe house'.<sup>89</sup> Rather, he is an apologist in the sense of being, 'Out in the midst of the world as both [a] witness

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<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of Francis Schaeffer's engagement with and rejection of neo-orthodoxy see Duriez, 40-41. It is fair to say that Schaeffer's appraisal of Karl Barth rested heavily on the writings of Van Til. Van Til was in turn criticised by fellow evangelicals such as Carl Henry and C.G. Berkouwer for having presented a one-sided and inaccurate appraisal of Barth's theology. See Carl Henry, "'Barth in the Balances" A Review Article of Christianity and Barthianism, by Cornelius Van Til', *Christianity Today*, 9.Dec. 21 (1962), p. 450ff.; G.C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in Karl Barth*, Second Edition (Eerdmans, 1956). While current scholarship generally eschews the kind of sweeping criticism that Schaeffer, following Van Til, levelled at Barth, it is by no means the case that Schaeffer's viewpoint has been disproven or overturned. Indeed, even cooler, more recent examinations of Barth continue to reveal the mixed nature of his contribution to evangelical theological thought. See for example, *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. by Sung Wook Chung (Paternoster Press ; Baker Academic, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> David D. Bundy, *Keswick: A Bibliographic Introduction to the Higher Life Movement* (First Fruits Press, 1975).

<sup>87</sup> Ranald Macaulay remarked to me that Lloyd-Jones made a comment to this effect during a sermon at Westminster Chapel while Schaeffer was present.

<sup>88</sup> *TGWIT*, 175ff.

<sup>89</sup> *TGWIT*, 175.

and salt, not sitting in a fortress surrounded by a moat.<sup>90</sup> This notion of being with people, commending and defending the Christian faith is trademark Schaeffer.

Thirdly, Schaeffer insists on flexibility in apologetic engagement, wanting to avoid any method that follows what he calls ‘mechanical rules’.<sup>91</sup> He writes, ‘There is no set formula that meets everyone’s need [...] short of an act of God’s mercy.’<sup>92</sup> In a connection to Schaeffer’s tone discussed above, he then insists that the primary consideration in apologetics is love:

I think these things turn on love and compassion to people not as objects to evangelise, but as people who deserve all the love and consideration we can give them, because they are our kind and made in the image of God<sup>93</sup> [...] We tend to give a person a prepackaged answer instead of having the compassion of Christ, which is to take the person where they are and actually step into their world in order to talk in a meaningful way to them.<sup>94</sup>

Burson and Walls sum up Schaeffer’s approach in this regard,

[For him] Non-believers are not projects, science experiments or scalps to be won. We should not rain down indiscriminate apologetic aerial assaults from the heavens but rather step out of our comfort zones and into the daily rough-and-tumble lives of people around us. In short apologetics must be relational [...] [Schaeffer] worked diligently to help people see the truth and beauty of the Christian vision in a way that was both credible and captivating to the contemporary mind.<sup>95</sup>

Fourthly, Schaeffer believed that apologetics should proceed on the basis of examining and challenging presuppositions. His classic work *The God Who is There* begins with a commendation of presuppositional apologetics.<sup>96</sup> Schaeffer is convinced that the old classical approach of offering evidence and rational arguments in support of the Christian worldview is no longer viable since believers and non-believers have ceased to share the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>92</sup> *TGWIT*, 176.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> *TGWIT*, 177.

<sup>95</sup> *TGWIT*, 150-151;153.

<sup>96</sup> *TGWIT*, 7-8.

same assumptions.<sup>97</sup> Once, he suggests, it was universally agreed that argument must proceed on the principle of absolutes; if X was right, Y was wrong, the principle of antithesis.<sup>98</sup> But, suggests Schaeffer, sometime around 1890 in Europe and 1935 in the United States<sup>99</sup> things changed and hereafter people began to think that truth was relative and evolving. No longer could it be easily argued that absolute *moral* right and wrong exist.<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, he argues there developed a huge gulf between Christians and non-Christians, and when the believer assumes the principle of absolutes in apologetics, they are unintelligible to non-believers who are relativists. For that reason, Schaeffer contends, Christians need to find new ways of engagement by helping people to examine their presuppositions and think through where they lead.<sup>101</sup>

Accordingly – as we shall in more detail in chapter 9 – Schaeffer’s aim in apologetic engagement is to lovingly help non-Christians see where their presuppositions take them and in turn invite them to ‘taste and see’ what the world looks like from a Christian standpoint. For Schaeffer the worldview of the Bible is something reasonable to believe; it verified itself by its own correlation to reality. The meant in practice that Schaeffer never expected people to believe the Bible to be trustworthy because of its own claim to be true, but to assess its assertions in the light of their own experience of the world. Schaeffer writes,

The biblical system does not have to be accepted blindly, any more than the scientific hypotheses have to be accepted blindly [...] As Christians we consider it to be objectively true because we have found that it does give the answers both in knowledge and in life. For the purposes of discussion, however, we invite non-

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<sup>97</sup> *TGWIT*, 6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Schaeffer called these watershed dates moments when a ‘line of despair’ was established, *TGWIT*, p.6.

<sup>100</sup> *TGWIT*, 7.

<sup>101</sup> *TGWIT*, 7-8.

Christians to consider it as *an alternative – not to be accepted blindly, but for good and sufficient reasons*.<sup>102</sup>

Fifthly, Schaeffer's apologetic cannot be understood without appreciating his commitment to Christianity as the truth about the universe. Schaeffer knew from experience that for many believers, the starting point for the Christian faith is that it provides a private source of spiritual nourishment rather than being the truth about the universe. He writes, 'many Christians do not mean what I mean when I say Christianity is true, or Truth [...] When I say that Christianity is true, I mean it is true to total reality – the total of what is.'<sup>103</sup> To counter subjective and private understandings of Christianity Schaeffer keeps talking about, 'the God who is there' – the God who exists in Himself, rather than existing as the figment of his or anyone else's imagination. Such a commitment underpins his apologetic; he wants people to encounter reality.

With the above five principles forming a context, I will tentatively seek to summarise Schaeffer's apologetic method. A quote from *He is There and He is Not Silent* takes us to the core of his approach:

The fact is that if we are going to live in this world at all, we must live in it acting on a correlation of ourselves and the thing that is there, even if we have a philosophy that says there is no correlation [...] In other words, all men constantly and consistently act as though Christianity is true.<sup>104</sup>

Schaeffer's point is that all people – believers and non-believers alike – inhabit a world which has been created by God and correlates with that reality. It is possible to suppress this reality and believe 'a philosophy that says there is no correlation',<sup>105</sup> but if the

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<sup>102</sup> *WHHR*, pp.359, EA.

<sup>103</sup> *CM*, 424-25.

<sup>104</sup> *TGWIT*, 130.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*.



Bible is true – as Schaeffer is persuaded – the result will be a life lived in tension with the way things really are. In another place Schaeffer puts it like this:

The strength of the Christian system – the acid test of it – is that everything fits under the apex of the existent, infinite-personal God, and it is the only system in the world where this is true. No other system has an apex under which everything fits. That is why I am a Christian and no longer an agnostic. In all the other systems, something 'sticks out,' something cannot be included; and it has to be mutilated or ignored.<sup>106</sup>

Having established that it is only in the worldview integrated by the existence of the Infinite God that all the pieces fit, the apologist's role in dialogue with the non-Christian is to locate a point of tension – a thing that 'sticks out' – and make use of it for gospel advance.

Schaeffer coined a phrase for this: 'Taking the roof off'. He writes:

Every man has built a roof over his head to shield himself at the point of tension [...] The Christian, lovingly, must remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is, to beat upon him. When the roof is off, each man must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is [...] He must come to know that his roof is a false protection from the storm of what is; and then we talk to him of the storm of the judgement of God.<sup>107</sup>

Once the Christian apologist has removed the roof of a person's worldview, allowing the rain of reality in, if accepted, the house stands ready to be rebuilt upon Biblical truth: the reality of God who is really there and who is not silent.<sup>108</sup>

To summarise, Schaeffer is convinced that all non-Christian worldviews – if consistently followed – result in an irrational, amoral and meaningless life. For example, the naturalist maintains that the universe is accidental, unguided, without (final) meaning, and that human beings are nothing more than a complex collection of molecules kicked up out of the slime by chance. Fortunately, few live consistently with this worldview, and as

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<sup>106</sup> *HTNS* 339.

<sup>107</sup> *TGWIT*, 140-141.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

images of God all humans are able to subconsciously ‘borrow’ from the Christian worldview to prevent their life slipping into absurdity. For Schaeffer, the role of the apologist is to gently assist the unbeliever in unmasking their faulty presuppositions and help them see their logical destination. Once the roof has come off, a true Biblical set of presuppositions can be suggested.

Schaeffer provides examples of what it means to take the roof off during apologetic engagement. One will be explained here. In *The God Who is There* he relates an occasion when he was talking to a group of students at the University of Cambridge.<sup>109</sup> Present was a Hindu student who spoke out against the Christian faith. Schaeffer remarks that he seemed unaware of the problems of his own beliefs and asked him: ‘Am I not correct in saying that on the basis of your system, cruelty and non-cruelty are ultimately equal, that there is no intrinsic difference between them?’ Schaeffer explains that the student in whose room they were meeting was in the process of making tea. Listening to the exchange, he took his kettle full of boiling water and held it over the head of the Hindu student. Vexed and annoyed, the Hindu student asked him what he was doing. With a fixed expression, the Christian student replied, ‘There is no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty.’ At this point the Hindu walked out into the night.<sup>110</sup> The point of tension in his worldview had been revealed and where it led, unmasked. This is what Schaeffer meant by taking the roof off.

The point of this summary of Schaeffer’s apologetic is not to examine every detail of his method, nor offer a substantive critique.<sup>111</sup> Its importance here lies in the contribution

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<sup>109</sup> *TGWIT*, 110.

<sup>110</sup> *TGWIT*, 110.

<sup>111</sup> For a critique of Schaeffer’s apologetic, Rogers, ‘Francis Schaeffer: The Promise and the Problem (1)’; Jack B. Rogers, ‘Francis Schaeffer: The Promise and the Problem (2)’, *The Reformed Journal*, 28.1 (1977), pp. 15–19.

Schaeffer made to apologetics and in particular, the role his thought and methodology played in the shaping of the L'Abri mind. This will be further explored in chapter 9.

### **b. Community: By Demonstration God.**

Schaeffer's legacy to the world was his books and recorded lectures, but it was also the establishment of communities seeking to demonstrate the reality of God through everyday living, an 'integration of life, faith and mind'.<sup>112</sup> As was pointed out in the introduction, Schaeffer was interested in correct ideas – and without doubt L'Abri was a place of intellectual vitality – but for him ideas mattered in the context of people. It was at L'Abri that he and Edith sought to live out, and help others live out, a demonstration of the church living before the watching world.<sup>113</sup> Doubtless Schaeffer's emphasis on these things was born of a concern that some young people arriving at L'Abri brought reports of unhealthy church situations. He writes, '[y]oung people were turning away from the churches because they were finding no beauty there [...] the older generation was not living by the orthodoxy it was preaching. There was little love, little concern, and little or no community.'<sup>114</sup>

Schaeffer was never estranged from the church. In addition to an international preaching ministry spanning two decades, he preached regularly in the *Temple Protestant* in Champéry, Switzerland from 1949-75.<sup>115</sup> However, the community to which he devoted most attention and energy, was not a local church but a para-church institution, his own L'Abri Fellowship. Accordingly, it is L'Abri that understandably attracts most of his remarks

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<sup>112</sup> Cotherman, 2.

<sup>113</sup> The title of one of Schaeffer's books. Schaeffer never thought of L'Abri Fellowships as churches, but believed that in their own way, they have the ability to demonstrate the Christian Faith.

<sup>114</sup> *NSS*, p.388.

<sup>115</sup> Duriez, Photo 20.

concerning his commitment to living life in and through community. In some sense then, a tension existed in Schaeffer's life; he extolled the local church but sought to live out the Christian faith in a community which was never quite one.

The first L'Abri Fellowship was founded in 1955 at Huémoz in Switzerland. To say 'founded' can be deceptive; in the early days it was little more than Francis and Edith's home with space to accommodate people who came to stay for hospitality and discussion. But in spite of the intentional informality, early on the Schaeffers did produce a simple document explaining what they were about: '*The Consensus of Faith*'.<sup>116</sup> Just its opening words capture the essence of the Schaeffers' vision: 'L'ABRI is a shelter for anyone with need.'<sup>117</sup>

The '*L'Abri Document*' contains a number of sections but most critically for this study is the following: 'Principle of Operation: L'Abri Fellowship's basic principle of practical operation is that of operating in all matters so as to exhibit: 1. The reality of the existence of God. 2. The character of God – His love and His holiness. 3. The reality of the supernaturally restored relationship among those who, through faith in Christ, are brothers and sisters.'<sup>118</sup> These brief words are those of principle and intent, but the theme continued to be expressed and chronicled for a wider audience in other forms. The most complete accounts

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<sup>116</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer and Edith R.M. Schaeffer, 'The Consensus of Faith' (L'Abri Fellowship, 1955) <<https://swisslabri.org/the-labri-statements/>> [accessed 11 September 2022].

<sup>117</sup> Helpfully, L'Abri, Southborough offers the following description of what the Fellowship is about: 'L'Abri is a "shelter" from the relentless pace and pressures of 21st century life for genuine questions and honest reflection on the truthfulness of Christianity and its bearing on reality. Those of us who work at L'Abri believe the Bible to be true, and believe that becoming (and remaining) a Christian involves identifying, owning and addressing our doubts, questions and disillusionments as we move through life's ups and downs. We believe that questions and doubts about God should be discussed thoughtfully and personally, and that answers—or at least clearer, more well-informed thinking—can be gained. At L'Abri, we do not think doubts and questions are opposed to faith; rather, *addressing* our doubts and questions make for a robust and resilient faith. L'Abri offers time and space to do just this.' <https://southboroughlabri.org/about/what-is-labri/> [accessed 12 March 2022]. The lingering influence of Francis and Edith Schaeffer in this description is unmistakable.

<sup>118</sup> Schaeffer, *The Consensus of Faith*.

of Swiss L'Abri were written by Edith Schaeffer in *L'Abri*<sup>119</sup> and *The Tapestry*.<sup>120</sup> Francis Schaeffer penned the preface to 'L'Abri' in the following way:

[L'Abri Fellowship] has two inter-related aspects. First there is the attempt to give an honest answer to honest questions – intellectually and upon a careful exegetical base. My books, *The God who is There*, *Escape from Reason* and *Death in the City* are directed to this aspect. The second aspect is the demonstration that the Personal-Infinite God is really there in our generation. When 20th century people come to L'Abri they are faced with these two aspects simultaneously, as two sides of a single coin.<sup>121</sup>

The theme of demonstrating the reality of God's existence appears frequently in Schaeffer's writings, especially those focusing upon the church. For example, in *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, he writes, 'How we function must witness to the fact that we know God is there. All too often we say God exists and then go on in just a scholastic orthodoxy.'<sup>122</sup> He then hypothesises what would happen if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from our midst: 'Let me ask you something: what difference would there be from the way we acted yesterday? Do we really believe that God is there? If we do, we live differently.'<sup>123</sup> The necessity of the Holy Spirit's presence among believers was critical for Schaeffer, as was his insistence that there be a corporate expression of Christianity which extended beyond 'merely' correct doctrine. Schaeffer undoubtedly stood for Biblical orthodoxy,<sup>124</sup> but he must be seen as more than a theologian calling people to get their theological doctrines in order. Although convinced that there was such a thing as truth, he insisted that truth must find expression in a people whose collective testimony adorned what it believed cognitively. He writes: 'The church will not stand in our generation, the

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<sup>119</sup> Edith Schaeffer and Ducker, *L'Abri*.

<sup>120</sup> Edith Schaeffer, *Tapestry*.

<sup>121</sup> Schaeffer E., *L'Abri*, Preface.

<sup>122</sup> *NLP*, 40.

<sup>123</sup> *NLP*, 40.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. *NLP*, 37-46.

church will not be a striking force in our generation [...] unless it keeps the strength of Christian dogmas and at the same time produces communities with beauty as well as truth.<sup>125</sup>

Cotherman makes the important observation that L'Abri Fellowship's success flowed from the principle of contextualisation found in other mission settings. Having broken free from the rigidities of American fundamentalism and drawing upon Edith's familiarity with Hudson Taylor's identification with the people to whom he was called in China, the Schaeffers successfully identified with a new generation. Cotherman writes, 'By adapting their lives, schedules and even appearance, the Schaeffers signalled not only that L'Abri was in step with the times but also that it was a place open to individuals who might seem too eccentric for a traditional evangelical church.'<sup>126</sup> Schaeffer knew the music and the films of the times and was at ease explaining their worldview commitments. In a world of dowdy and reactionary Christians, Schaeffer was a cool guy, willing to see the failings of the church and call out the shallowness of the middle-class world from where many of his guests came.<sup>127</sup>

The Schaeffers' commitment to demonstrate the reality of God's existence found practical expression in other ways. Firstly, they determined never to engage in fund-raising, instead praying about their financial needs and trusting that God would provide. Secondly, they never publicised the Fellowship, praying that God would send the 'right' people and later the 'right' helpers and workers. Thirdly, they believed in seeking God's will for the

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<sup>125</sup> *NLP*, 63.

<sup>126</sup> Cotherman, 39.

<sup>127</sup> Cotherman, 40.

future of the Fellowship, believing that He would reveal it rather than on them relying upon the decisions of committees.<sup>128</sup>

Schaeffer's desire to establish community for the benefit of others is indicative of his whole-of-life Christianity, but comment needs to be made about how costly it was. After his daily ministry commitments Schaeffer had little time left for himself or his family. He remarks,

L'Abri is costly. If you think what God has done here is easy, you don't understand. It is a costly business to have a sense of community [...] In about the first three years of L'Abri, almost all of 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 someone smoking in our living room [...] Everyone came to our table. What happened at L'Abri could not have happened in any other way.<sup>129</sup>

Schaeffer's personal struggles came to the attention of others. William Edgar comments first-hand from his days at L'Abri,

Life was not easy. For one thing it was always cold. Fran was unusually frugal. He would guard the fireplace to make sure no one put too much wood on at one time [...] there was constant cleaning to do, dishes to wash, snow to shovel. Edith stayed up late doing chores and writing letters [...] He [Schaeffer] seemed tired much of the time. He often struggled with motivation just to go on day after day.<sup>130</sup>

Francis and Edith's willingness to share their life with others is doubtless one of the reasons why many became Christians at L'Abri. But for the purposes of this study, the Schaeffers' commitment to community is one more example of a living Christianity that went beyond adherence to a set of theological doctrines. The expression, 'You don't really believe anything until you are willing to sacrifice for it' had a real outworking in Francis Schaeffer's

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<sup>128</sup> E. Schaeffer, *L'Abri*, chapter 1.

<sup>129</sup> *NLP*, 93.

<sup>130</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 63.

life. There was nothing divided about his Christianity; it was a whole-of-life affair. He lived in such a way as to humbly demonstrate God's reality, through simply living.<sup>131</sup>

### (c) The Place of Scripture

Schaeffer's doctrine of revelation and Scripture will be developed at considerable length in chapter 4, so only brief comment will be made here. Schaeffer believed in Biblical inerrancy and affirming what he saw as the Bible's claims about itself. He writes:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments describe themselves as revelation, communication in language, from the infinite personal God to us, His creatures. The Bible claims divine inspiration for all that it affirms, and therefore also claims to be infallible or inerrant in its teaching. This is true whether it is addressing matters of faith and practice or matters of history and the created order.<sup>132</sup>

Of importance for this study is not the commitment to Biblical inerrancy in the shaping of the L'Abri mind – that can be taken for granted in his successors – but the nuances of Schaeffer's approach to Scripture. Several points are worthy of comment. Firstly, Schaeffer did not teach or engage in apologetics only by quoting Bible texts.<sup>133</sup> Convinced that he was working with a generation that had rejected the authority of the Bible, he sought to take people to Scripture, not start with Scripture, but rather with inconsistencies in a person's worldview.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, Schaeffer demonstrated considerable flexibility in his approach to handling Biblical truth. His *Basic Bible Studies*<sup>135</sup> demonstrate straight-forward systematic theology. On the other hand, Schaeffer's writings are replete

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<sup>131</sup> In the light of Schaeffer's humility and abiding conviction that 'small is beautiful', Cotherman's remark seems misplaced: 'L'Abri gave the Schaeffers a place to hone their thinking and a platform from which to launch into a global ministry as writers and speakers and eventually filmmakers and political activists', Cotherman, 15.

<sup>132</sup> Schaeffer, *The Consensus of Faith*.

<sup>133</sup> For an example of this approach see Paul Williams and Barry Cooper, *If You Could Ask God One Question*, [Revised edition] (The Good Book Company, 2017).

<sup>134</sup> *TGWIT*, 175-87.

<sup>135</sup> *BBS*, 319-370.



with the themes of Biblical theology: creation, fall, redemption and restoration.<sup>136</sup> Barrs writes,

At the heart of all of Schaeffer's teaching was his basic conviction about the unchanging truth of God's Word. This foundation led him to relate all that he taught to the creation, fall, and redemption framework of biblical teaching. People came to him with their troubles and in their lost wanderings, in their sense of despair and in their alienation. He answered them with the message unfolded in God's revelation.<sup>137</sup>

But beyond systematic and Biblical categories, Schaeffer's sermons demonstrate the use of Old Testament narrative particularly to make theological points. This is seen especially in his collection of sermons, *No Little People*, most of which are applications of Old Testament narrative.

Thirdly, Schaeffer's New Testament understanding leans in a Pauline direction rather than a Jesus direction. This is particularly apparent in *Basic Bible Studies* where his headings read like the index of Paul's theological categories. It is in fact surprising how little Schaeffer engages with Jesus, either in terms of his person or teaching. He does follow the Westminster Shorter Catechism pattern of Jesus as prophet, priest, and king, but beyond that there is little. One would have expected that Schaeffer would have made more use of how Jesus Christ answers the unmistakable questions of life.<sup>138</sup> As we shall see later, others in L'Abri who came after Schaeffer have corrected this imbalance.

This section on tone and practice has sought to move beyond the biographical details as set out in the first chapter by adding a further dimension, a sense of who Schaeffer was, what made him tick and provide an outline of key ingredients to his approach

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<sup>136</sup> See Jerram Barrs, *The Biblical Theology of Francis Schaeffer* (Unpublished, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message*, 2006  
<<https://www.covenantseminary.edu/francis-schaeffer-the-man-and-his-message>.> [accessed 5 December 2020].

<sup>138</sup> A Contemporary example of this would be, Timothy Keller, *Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions*, First Riverhead trade paperback edition (Riverhead Books, 2015).

to Christianity: his apologetic, his focus on community and place of the scripture in his thinking. In the next chapter we move on to a consideration of why Schaeffer matters and is worthy of study.

# Chapter 3

## Why Francis Schaeffer Matters

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Although he possessed a capable and trained mind, arguably Schaeffer's significance lies not in being an outstanding evangelical thinker; he was not a C.S. Lewis or a Carl Henry, nor did he address great theological issues. Cotherman suggests that his approach to scholarship seemed eccentric.<sup>139</sup> Schaeffer's significance arguably was that he put vital things together – things that are often kept apart – to establish a vibrant whole-of-life Christianity and reached an audience not usually reached by evangelicals. This chapter will explore the matter of his scholarship before considering what makes his life and ministry important for any serious understanding of the history of twentieth-century evangelicalism.

### 1. Schaeffer, A Scholar?

Attempts to dismiss Schaeffer's intellectual abilities are to my mind overplayed. Few can read the significant corpus of his books and fail to be impressed at the sheer ambition and scope of his writings. His message changed lives, reorientated people's thinking and brought hope into a world where it is in short supply. He gave answers in a world that had decided there were only questions. It would be a mistake to fail to recognise the profound impact that Schaeffer's thought has had on the evangelical world, both in the United States and Western Europe. He was quite simply a remarkable man, even if he was not a scholar in the normal sense of the word.

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<sup>139</sup> Cotherman, 32.

In spite of these considerations, the most common criticism that came from within the academic community was that Schaeffer masqueraded as an intellectual but failed to be one. The historian Mark Noll expressed exactly this view in a Newsweek Article: ‘The danger is that people will take him [Schaeffer] for a scholar, which he is not.’<sup>140</sup> Jack Rogers, in a somewhat condescending article, heaps scorn on the idea that a man who is an intellectual and scholar would attract such a wide following as Schaeffer did. Instead, he spends time reclassifying him as an evangelist.<sup>141</sup> In an accompanying article Rogers writes, ‘The publisher does neither Schaeffer nor his readers a service by representing *How Should We Then Live?* as a work of scholarship. At its heart it is not. It is preaching.’<sup>142</sup> The historian Ronald Wells adds the word ‘populariser’ to the mix.<sup>143</sup> Dennis has taken the time to gather together words and terms that Wells uses to describe Schaeffer’s book, *How Should We Then Live?*: ‘sophomoric bombast’; ‘simplistic’, ‘shallow’, ‘tendentious’, ‘muddled’, ‘cruelly ironic’, ‘atrophied’, ‘based on half-truths [...] more dangerous than falsehoods’, and ‘bordering on the paranoid’.<sup>144</sup>

To the charge that Schaeffer was not a scholar, it all depends how we define one. As this study demonstrates, he was a highly intelligent man who read widely and wrote prolifically across a range of subjects. Doubtless he wrote from the pulses and failed to follow academic conventions: his writing style is arguably amateurish. Only occasionally did he explain or reference his sources; cursory peer review before going to print would have identified basic mistakes and omissions in his review of the history of western ideas.

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<sup>140</sup> Lane T. Dennis, ‘Schaeffer and His Critics’, in *Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, by Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), pp. 99-126.

<sup>141</sup> Rogers, *Promise 1*, 12-13.

<sup>142</sup> Rogers, *Promise 2*, 18.

<sup>143</sup> Ronald A. Wells, ‘Francis Schaeffer’s Jeremiad’, *Reformed Journal*, 32.5 (1982), 16-20 (p. 16).

<sup>144</sup> Dennis, *Critics*, 102.

Doubtless some of the criticism of Schaeffer on this front stems from disliking his attempt to bridge the gap between academic ideas and the public. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that behind some of the critiques lingers thinly disguised elitism, and even jealousy of his popularity. Dick Keyes, commenting on Jack Rogers' dismissive critique of Schaeffer remarks,

May be Schaeffer was getting what C.S. Lewis also experienced from his academic colleagues in Oxford – the need to condescend to and devalue anyone whose ideas or writing makes a significant connection with the general population. This is the ingrown, elitist, and pathetic notion that intellectuals are not meant to do that, and if they do, they forfeit their status as intellectuals – as Schaeffer obviously had for him [Rogers].<sup>145</sup>

The critique of Schaeffer, that he sought to bridge the gap between academic ideas and the wider population, is always going to apply because that was precisely what Schaeffer was committed to doing. Living through huge cultural changes required people to understand ideas and interpret events, so that a semblance of sense could emerge. Schaeffer sought to fulfil that role in the lives he came into contact with. Keyes comments,

This was where Schaeffer's contribution was strategic in its time. Massive changes in the intellectual world and in culture in general were gripping the west in the sixties and seventies and both Christians and most non-Christians did not have a clue what was going on, especially in the student world. He enabled quite a few of them to get some sort of foothold while also being challenged by the Bible and the message of Christ.<sup>146</sup>

Jack Rogers' negative appraisal of Schaeffer, condescending – as he saw it – to speak to ordinary people, is open to a wider critique. There is a danger of scholarship for scholarships' sake, scholar writing for scholar, coupled with jargon which defines the boundaries of the profession, whilst being incomprehensible to the person in the street.

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<sup>145</sup> PC, 20 April 2020.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Schaeffer's approach of connecting his considerable learning with a wider audience has in many ways been vindicated by the passage of time. Compared with the era in which he was working, bookshops today are awash with works written by some of the finest academics in their field seeking to communicate in language accessible to the general intelligent reader.

At this point it is fitting to note William Edgar's personal reflections on Schaeffer's thought and scholarship. Edgar, Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, is a graduate of Harvard and the *Université de Genève* and is more of a classically trained academic than Schaeffer ever was. Although generally supportive of Schaeffer's thought, he is by no means uncritical.<sup>147</sup> When first approached by Crossway and asked to write a book with the title, *Schaeffer on the Christian Life*, Edgar declined. He offers several reasons for this, but one is that he initially felt Schaeffer failed the greatness test. He writes, 'Is Francis Schaeffer in the same league as Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and other figures in the Christian Life series?' Edgar's reply is interesting,

If you'd asked me twenty years ago, I would have said no. It would be hard to overstate my love for the man. However, I thought he had neither the academic standing nor perhaps the influence wielded by these giants [...] But today I gladly agree that Schaeffer belongs to this hall of fame.<sup>148</sup>

Edgar then offers a helpful insight into why Schaeffer possessed a degree of greatness. It was not his brilliance with ideas but what he did with them – he inspired people. Edgar writes,

Schaeffer's importance is because of the way he could take God, thinkers, and truth and make them so profoundly exciting – to people! [...] What is unquestionable is the way Francis Schaeffer moved from the heart of the Christian faith, or *True*

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<sup>147</sup> Edgar comments, 'A number of Schaeffer's ideas or historical assessments should be called into question' *Schaeffer*, 14.

<sup>148</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 14.

*Spirituality*, into every realm of life, with absolute continuity and astonishing freshness, and communicated all of that to so many people.<sup>149</sup>

Edgar ends by writing, 'I am honoured to be asked to help defend such a legacy.'<sup>150</sup>

## 2. Schaeffer and Whole-of-life Christianity

This study defends the view that Schaeffer's first contribution to evangelicalism centres around his commitment to whole-of-life Christianity and its expression in Christian community. This commitment functions like a wrapper taking in the importance of the mind, engagement with rival stories to Christianity, apologetic persuasion, as well as interest in culture and the arts. Moreover, for Schaeffer, all these dimensions of Christian experience are set in the context of a profound spiritual dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Schaeffer's Christianity was genuinely holistic, bringing together things commonly set against one another: mind and emotion; faith and reason; kingdom and culture; piety and scholarship. This ability to draw many things together reminds us why Schaeffer matters and also why it is reasonable to call the mentality he nurtured 'the Schaeffer mind.'

Schaeffer's contribution to evangelical theology and practice in the decades after the Second World War was especially significant when we consider the context into which he stepped. Although not extinct, Schaeffer's holistic gospel was far from being the norm in both North America and Western Europe. In particular two themes presented serious challenges: (a) anti-intellectualism and (b) what here will be broadly called 'higher-life Christianity'. Schaeffer's theology and methodology addressed both of them.

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<sup>149</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 14.

<sup>150</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 14.

To grasp Schaeffer's significance, it is necessary to outline anti-intellectualism and higher-life theology within an historic evangelical context. Clearly, there is overlap between the two issues, but for the sake of clarity each will be explored in turn.

### **(a) Anti-intellectualism<sup>151</sup>**

The charge of anti-intellectualism within the evangelical community has been made by several authors during the past sixty years. Here we consider three of them.<sup>152</sup> First, in 1963 the British scholar Harry Blamires (1916-2017) published *The Christian Mind*.<sup>153</sup> Blamires spends the first section of his book lamenting the absence of a Christian mind.<sup>154</sup> He opens his charge with the words, 'There is no longer a Christian mind',<sup>155</sup> before proceeding to explain what he means:

It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morale in the twentieth-century church [...] the modern Christian has succumbed to secularisation [...] he accepts religion – its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but [...] rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal, the view which relates all human problems – social, political, cultural – to the doctrinal foundations of the Christian Faith, the view which sees all things here below in terms of God's supremacy and earth's transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Although not explored here, anti-intellectualism can be viewed not as foolishness but rather an understandable suspicion towards the academy and academics in general. After all, from an evangelical perspective, it was from the academy that the most biting critiques of the Bible emerged, as did ideas most hostile to the Christian faith. This reality goes some way to explaining Schaeffer's significance. That he was a highly intelligent man who believed the Bible proved attractive to many.

<sup>152</sup> There is extensive literature on this subject. For a commentary on general anti-intellectualism in America, see Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1963). For a focus on evangelicalism, see *The Two Tasks of the Christian Scholar: Redeeming the Soul, Redeeming the Mind*, ed. by William Lane Craig and Paul M. Gould (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2007); Os Guinness and Paul Cavill, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do about It* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

<sup>153</sup> Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Vine Books, 1997). Blamires.

<sup>154</sup> His context is specifically the evangelical community.

<sup>155</sup> Blamires, 3.

<sup>156</sup> Blamires, 3.



Blamires' contention is that the majority of Christians in his day failed to possess a Biblical worldview lens through which to observe and evaluate all of reality. Rather, they divided the world into two segments: the sacred, where spiritual categories applied, and the secular, where Christian categories were absent. His point is that except on overtly 'religious' subjects, evangelical believers essentially thought like everyone else.<sup>157</sup> This represents what Dick Keyes would later call divided-life Christianity.<sup>158</sup> Blamires' contention is that it is possible, indeed essential, for believers to develop a Christian mind about everything and he proceeds to spend the remainder of the first part of his book offering insights into what differences ought to exist between the secular mind and the Christian mind.

In the second half of his book, Blamires outlines six characteristics necessary for the cultivation of a Christian mind: firstly, 'a supernatural orientation';<sup>159</sup> secondly, 'an awareness of the power and spread of evil';<sup>160</sup> third, 'a conception of truth which is supernaturally grounded, objective and not manufactured from within nature';<sup>161</sup> fourthly, 'an acceptance of divine authority';<sup>162</sup> fifthly, 'a concern for the high value of the person made in the image of God';<sup>163</sup> sixthly, a mind that is sacramentally cast, '[which] shows life's positive richnesses as derivative from the supernatural.'<sup>164</sup> Blamires' book was timely and for those open to heed his words, revolutionary.

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<sup>157</sup> Blamires, 3-4.

<sup>158</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *The Lordship of Christ Over All of Life* (1984) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 10 September 2021].

<sup>159</sup> Blamires, 67.

<sup>160</sup> Blamires, 86.

<sup>161</sup> Blamires, 106.

<sup>162</sup> Blamires, 132.

<sup>163</sup> Blamires, 156.

<sup>164</sup> Blamires, 173.

In 1972, a decade after Blamires' book, John Stott, then Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, published a little work carrying the title, *Your Mind Matters*.<sup>165</sup> The book emerged from a lecture given by Stott on the theme of anti-intellectualism in the Christian world. His concern is with what he calls, 'mindless Christianity' or 'zeal without knowledge'.<sup>166</sup> True Christianity, Stott insists, is based upon a healthy blend of three essential parts: experience, action, plus what he thinks is frequently lacking, rigorous thought.<sup>167</sup> Leaving any of these out results in a damaging imbalance. He comments, 'I am not pleading for a dry, humourless, academic Christianity, but for a warm devotion set on fire by truth.'<sup>168</sup> In this book – and in contrast to Blamires' intuitive methodology – Stott proceeds to defend the importance of the Christian mind both from the overall narrative and the text of Scripture.

In another of his books, Stott offers the following definition of what he believes the Christian mind should look like,

The Christian mind [...] is not a mind which is thinking specifically about Christian or even religious topics, but a mind which is thinking about everything, however apparently 'secular', and doing so 'Christianly' or within a Christian frame of reference [...] a mind which has absorbed biblical truth and Christian presuppositions so thoroughly that it is able to view every issue from a Christian perspective and so reach a Christian judgement about it.<sup>169</sup>

Like Blamires before him, Stott's writings sought to be corrective of an anti-intellectualism he witnessed in his day.

Shifting across the Atlantic to North America, in 1995 Mark Noll published, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.<sup>170</sup> Whereas Blamires wrote as a lecturer in English

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<sup>165</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters*, IVP Classics, 2nd ed (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

<sup>166</sup> Stott, *Mind*, 13.

<sup>167</sup> Stott, *Mind*, 13-18.

<sup>168</sup> Stott, *Mind*, 18.

<sup>169</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 128.

<sup>170</sup> Mark A Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Eerdmans, 1995).

literature,<sup>171</sup> and Stott as an Anglican Churchman, Noll is a historian, and his work is reflective of this. He begins with a strong opening remark reminiscent of that made by Blamires thirty years previously, ‘The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.’<sup>172</sup> After listing a variety of positive virtues he finds among evangelical protestants in North America, he comments,

American evangelicals are not exemplary for their thinking, and they have not been so for several generations [...] despite dynamic success at a popular level, modern American evangelicals have failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life. They have nourished millions of believers in the simple verities of the gospel but have largely abandoned the universities, the arts and other realms of high culture [...] Feeding the hungry, living simply, and banning the bomb are tasks at which different sorts of evangelicals willingly expend great energy, but these tasks do not by themselves assist intellectual vitality.<sup>173</sup>

Noll considers it ironic that it is evangelicals who – while maintaining that the God revealed in Scripture is the ‘sustainer of human institutions [...] [and] the source of harmony, creativity and beauty’ – are nevertheless the ones who have ‘neglected sober analysis of nature, human society and the arts.’<sup>174</sup> The result of this neglect of the intellect, he argues, has been a damaging retreat into an evangelical subculture.<sup>175</sup>

Noll follows his definitions and introductory comments with discussion of why the neglect of the mind matters,<sup>176</sup> coupled with a detailed historic account of how evangelicals in North America arrived at this situation.<sup>177</sup> He then outlines the implications of what he sees as the evangelical disengagement from intellectual pursuits, especially in the realms of

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<sup>171</sup> Blamires, p.iv.

<sup>172</sup> Noll, 3.

<sup>173</sup> Noll, 3.

<sup>174</sup> Noll, 4.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Noll, 29-56.

<sup>177</sup> Noll, 59-145.

politics and science.<sup>178</sup> The book ends with Noll outlining reasons for hope that the situation is improving and offers suggestions for how this ‘scandal’ can be addressed.<sup>179</sup>

### **(b) ‘Higher-Life’ Theology**

We turn now from anti-intellectualism to a frequently related theme that is loosely called higher-life theology, and to the entailments that invariably accompany it. Although less common today than in the past, higher-life Christianity describes a particular approach to the Christian life which made a significant impact on the British and American evangelical world between the years 1875 to 1975. Having various permutations, higher-life or second blessing theology is complex to define and dissemble. At its most simple level higher-life theology represents an attempt to recover vibrant and meaningful faith in the face of legalistic and or defeatist Christianity.

Perhaps the most systematic attempt to define higher-life theology has been made by Andrew Naselli.<sup>180</sup> Using categories from the Keswick Convention,<sup>181</sup> Naselli explains that the core of higher-life theology is that there exist two types of Christians, the carnal and the spiritual. The former are justified but not sanctified; they are freed from sin’s penalty but not its power. Carnal Christians know little communion with Christ, little fruitfulness and little power for service. This type of Christianity is in effect a lower life version of the real thing.<sup>182</sup> In marked contrast, serious followers of Christ progress beyond lower-life categories, undergoing a crisis of sanctification and into a subsequent experience of the

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<sup>178</sup> Noll, 149-210.

<sup>179</sup> Noll, 211-253.

<sup>180</sup> Andrew David Naselli, *No Quick Fix: Where Higher Life Theology Came from, What It Is, and Why It’s Harmful* (Lexham Press, 2017); Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Perfectionism Part 2*, Reprinted, copyright 1932 by Oxford University Press, NY, 9 vols (Baker Books, 2003), VIII.

<sup>181</sup> No date is provided but it is likely he was referring to the Keswick Convention in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth. In more recent years the Convention has dropped its commitment to higher-life theology.

<sup>182</sup> Naselli, 32.

Holy Spirit where they enter into the full blessing of the Christian life.<sup>183</sup> ‘Spiritual’

Christians are victorious believers: they are no longer routinely defeated by sin; they enjoy ‘life in the Spirit’ and find power and fruitfulness in ministry.<sup>184</sup> This is the higher-life and for its adherents it represents the recovery of true New Testament Christianity.

Although the destination of Naselli’s work is to critique higher-life theology as Biblically deficient,<sup>185</sup> he takes time to trace its history, suggesting that it has origins in the perfectionist teaching of John Wesley (1703-1791).<sup>186</sup> From Wesley, he argues that the idea of the separation of justification from sanctification continued on through Methodism and various holiness, revival and Pentecostal movements (on both sides of the Atlantic) and eventually found its defining expression in the Keswick Convention<sup>187</sup> and the movement that went with it.<sup>188</sup>

Naselli includes an extensive list of Christian leaders, missionaries and hymn-writers connected to the Keswick Convention who were highly influential in the wider evangelical movement, in both Great Britain and the United States. They include Evan Hopkins (1837-1918), H. W. Webb-Peploe (1837-1923), H.C.G. Moule (1841-1920), F.B. Meyer (1837-1929), Andrew Murray (1828-1917), J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), Amy Carmichael (1867-1951), Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879), A.T. Pierson (1837-1911) and W.H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1924).<sup>189</sup> Naselli proceeds to list four American ‘institutions or movements’ which

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<sup>183</sup> Naselli, 31-39.

<sup>184</sup> Naselli, 35-36.

<sup>185</sup> Naselli himself was raised with higher-life theology but later came to reject it.

<sup>186</sup> Naselli, 12.

<sup>187</sup> The Keswick Convention began in 1875 and continues to the present day. Until around 1965 its essential theology was that of the higher-life. For a history of Keswick see Charles Price and Ian Randall, *Transforming Keswick: The Keswick Convention Past, Present and Future* (Accrington: OM, 2000).

<sup>188</sup> Naselli, 12-22.

<sup>189</sup> Naselli, 18-22.

were spawned by higher-life theology: The Christian and Missionary Alliance,<sup>190</sup> Moody Bible Institute,<sup>191</sup> Pentecostalism and Dallas Theological Seminary.<sup>192</sup> Although not discussed in Naselli's book, higher-life theology was prominent within the writings of Oswald Chambers,<sup>193</sup> William Booth's Salvation Army<sup>194</sup> and the British House Church Movement, founded in the 1960s.<sup>195</sup>

Even this brief survey of those promoting higher-life theology ought to be sufficient to convince anyone with a cursory knowledge of the evangelical scene during the last 200 years, just how widespread its influence has been. Recognising this reality, J.I. Packer comments that higher-life theology became standard in virtually all of evangelicalism except confessional Reformed and Lutheran circles.<sup>196</sup>

### 3. Commentary: Schaeffer for Such a Time as This<sup>197</sup>

In the Anglosphere during the first half of the twentieth century, anti-intellectualism and higher-life theology together exerted powerful influences which in turn gave definition

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<sup>190</sup> Founded by A.B. Simpson (1844-1912). A.W. Tozer (1897-1963) was a leader in the Christian and Missionary Alliance and a leading proponent of higher-life theology. See Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for God: The Spiritual Journey of A.W. Tozer* (Moody Publishers, 2008).

<sup>191</sup> Opened in 1889 and led by D.L. Moody (1937-1899), R.A. Torrey (1856-1928) and James M. Gray (1851-1935).

<sup>192</sup> Naselli, 22-30.

<sup>193</sup> Oswald Chambers' theology was complex. His interpretation of Scripture was allegorical, but at the same time he insisted that believers develop a Christian mind. His biographer writes, 'A man like Oswald Chambers, who wrote poetry, played classical music, and exalted in the beauty of nature was not likely to restrict his written communicates to spiritual and practical matters only', Dave McCasland, *Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God: The Life Story of the Author of My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1998), 189.

<sup>194</sup> Roger Joseph Green, *The Life & Ministry of William Booth: Founder of the Salvation Army* (Abingdon Press, 2005).

<sup>195</sup> Andrew G. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (Eagle, 1998).

<sup>196</sup> J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*. (Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2005), 151.

<sup>197</sup> Esther 4:14.

to the evangelical landscape. Their twin influence crossed denominational boundaries and shaped university Christian unions, mission organisations and annual conferences.

Doubtless some aspects of anti-intellectualism and higher-life theology exerted a healthy influence on an overly rational and at times lifeless orthodoxy. Nevertheless, during the first half of the twentieth century, Christianity tended to be experiential, devotionally focused, anti-scholarship, private to the person and located in the emotions and will.

Reason and Christianity were frequently thought incompatible. Christ was Lord of the spiritual part of life only. Moreover, early twentieth-century Christianity lacked a focus on the mind, both in terms of theology and apologetics. It frequently failed to confess the gospel as public truth and the story of redemption as rooted in time, space, and history.

The stress was upon attending to one's own soul rather than working towards the redemption of the whole of life. 'Secular' music, art and films were largely off-limits for believers. Widespread dispensational theology created a canon within the canon; New Testament redemptive theology became separated out from the Biblical 'creation to new creation' narrative. A premillennial eschatology questioned the value of working towards the redemption of the cosmos since the world can only get progressively worse and will one day be destroyed. Too often evangelicalism offered a theology of escape but not of cultural transformation.

It would, however, be a mistake to draw the conclusion that all evangelical discourse and practice was shaped by anti-intellectualism and higher-life theology. Examples of exceptions demand mention. In the United States, Princeton Seminary placed great emphasis on the Christian mind, Reformed Theology and apologetics.<sup>198</sup> In the United

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<sup>198</sup> See James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2012).

Kingdom James Orr could be found publishing works on apologetics in 1909.<sup>199</sup> C.S. Lewis gave his 'War Talks' during World War II, commending 'Mere [but intelligent] Christianity' to the British nation.<sup>200</sup> Non-Conformist Martyn Lloyd-Jones was preaching 'logic on fire'<sup>201</sup> from Westminster Chapel from 1940<sup>202</sup> onwards. John Stott<sup>203</sup> and James Packer<sup>204</sup> kept the flame of intelligent Christianity burning within the Anglican evangelical communion in the post war decades. Admittedly outside the Anglosphere, the Netherlands produced several serious 'whole-of-life' theologians: Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977).<sup>205</sup> The point about these people and institutions is that although significant in their own way, until the 1960s it was rare to encounter whole-of-life thought in the evangelical world.

With this background, the significance of Francis Schaeffer's appearance on the evangelical scene becomes apparent. As I argued above, although not a scholar in the commonly held sense, what Schaeffer did was to bring a new mood, a new flavour to evangelicalism, energising Christians to think in new ways and connect things that were often not connected. But Schaeffer's significance goes further than that.

Firstly, as this research explores, Schaeffer promoted whole-of-life Christianity, in contrast to much of the evangelical world about him. He demonstrated that both modern epistemology and Christian pietism could not present a unified picture of the world, and

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<sup>199</sup> See Glen G. Scorgie, 'James Orr, Defender of the Church's Faith', *Crux*, 22.3 (1986), 22-27.

<sup>200</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (William Collins, 2012).

<sup>201</sup> David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), 97.

<sup>202</sup> Iain Hamish Murray, *The Life of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, 1899-1981* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013).

<sup>203</sup> Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*. (Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>204</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *J. I. Packer: His Life and Thought* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2020).

<sup>205</sup> Nathan Clay Brummel, *Dutch Reformed Theologians: Explorations in Prominent Theologians and Their Central Ideas* (CreateSpace, 2018).



presented one that he believed could: whole-of-life Christianity.<sup>206</sup> To paraphrase Pearcey, he announced that redemption is not only about being saved from sin, but it is also about being saved *to* something – to resume the task for which we were originally created.<sup>207</sup> If Jesus Christ really is Lord of the universe, this has implications for more than just our souls, it impacts everything else. Schaeffer writes, ‘The truth of Christianity is that it is true to what is there. You can go to the end of the world and you never need be afraid, like the ancients, that you will fall off the end and dragons will eat you up.’<sup>208</sup> Schaeffer’s Christianity sought to be intellectually credible, addressing the greatest questions of human existence through apologetic engagement. But he was also pastoral: Schaeffer was interested in history and ideas but not for their own sake but in order to help ordinary people find meaning in their lives.<sup>209</sup> Accordingly, before other evangelical scholars attempted to do so,<sup>210</sup> Schaeffer assembled a serious account of the history of ideas and used it to critique the present. The consequence was that – as we shall see in detail in chapters 4-7 – through his life, writings and lectures Schaeffer impacted a generation of believers to *think* for Christ, not only *sing* for him; to see the culture not as something to escape, but something to enjoy where possible and redeem when necessary – through engagement with society, whether as an academic, a police officer, a doctor, or any other

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<sup>206</sup> Edgar, *Warriors*, 61.

<sup>207</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2004), 47.

<sup>208</sup> *HTNS*, p.290.

<sup>209</sup> Stephen J. Wellum, ‘Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984): Lessons from His Thought and Life’, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 6.2, 4-32 (5).

<sup>210</sup> Christian scholars who came after Schaeffer and have written major intellectual histories of Western thought include Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and John Milbank. These thinkers are explored in more detail in chapter 4.

societal role. Reason, faith, and living were not incompatible for Schaeffer; they were reconciled by a true understanding of the Bible.<sup>211</sup>

Secondly, although committed to the Christian mind, Schaeffer was far from the dry Christian rationalist; he had a radical vision of spirituality. His work *True Spirituality* is arguably a classic on the personal life of the Christian. Tellingly, he remarks in the introduction that ideally, he should have written the book first, before other more philosophical works,<sup>212</sup> the implication being that for the Christian the foundation is always their relationship with God. Although Schaeffer's view of spirituality was significantly different from the higher-life view, nevertheless, he did maintain that many believers remain impoverished in their experience of God and need to seek for something deeper and better. For him, the Christian life is not one of perpetual defeat but of triumph found through participating in the death and resurrection of Christ through a moment-by-moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit's power.<sup>213</sup> He writes, '[w]e 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.'<sup>214</sup> Interestingly, at least two prominent characters from the higher-life movement were heroes for Schaeffer: James Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael.<sup>215</sup> There is a sense that Schaeffer straddled two worlds: the world of the mind and the world of personal piety. Perhaps it was this that made him accessible to many and dismissed by few.

Third, while acknowledging Schaeffer's significance for the time in which he rose to prominence (late 1960s onwards), it would be a mistake to think that Schaeffer had some strategic plan to counter divided-life theology and the neglect of the mind by evangelicals.

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<sup>211</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>212</sup> *TS*, 195.

<sup>213</sup> *TS*, 224.

<sup>214</sup> *TS*, 212.

<sup>215</sup> Duriez, 182.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In the early 1950s, Schaeffer found himself living on a mountainside in Switzerland, far removed from the mainstream of evangelicalism. Any notion that he would influence thousands seemed incredible.<sup>216</sup> In fact, Schaeffer's thought developed in response to unfolding events in his life. Three are worthy of comment.

Firstly, arriving in post-war Europe, the fundamentalism of Carl McIntire (1906-2002) and espoused by Schaeffer proved an inadequate paradigm to fuel his new ministry.<sup>217</sup> It was meeting Hans Rookmaaker (1922-1977) and his whole-of-life Dutch Calvinism that provided him with teaching that simultaneously brought the breath of the gospel and countered the anti-intellectualism of his day.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, Rookmaaker doubtless reawakened the teaching of Cornelius Van Til and Abraham Kuyper which he had previously encountered at Westminster before he defected to McIntire's fundamentalism.<sup>219</sup>

Secondly, the student protests of the 1960s and the appearance on his doorstep of countless disillusioned young people at Swiss L'Abri demanded that he came to grips with the philosophies of the western world. Ryan comments that Schaeffer became interested in ideas out of a concern for people.<sup>220</sup> Thirdly – and as discussed above – it was out of Schaeffer's 'spiritual crisis'<sup>221</sup> of the early 1950s that he shaped a theology of spirituality that was rooted in life rather than the shedding of it. In this sense it was arguably more Biblical, richer and more radical<sup>222</sup> than that espoused by the proponents of higher-life Christianity. He called it *true* spirituality.

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<sup>216</sup> See *LFS* for an insight into his influence on lives. See also E. Schaeffer, *Tapestry*, 393-94.

<sup>217</sup> Duriez, 81-125.

<sup>218</sup> Duriez, 76-80.

<sup>219</sup> Duriez, 43.

<sup>220</sup> PC, 17 April 2020.

<sup>221</sup> *TS*, 195.

<sup>222</sup> Schaeffer's true spirituality combined good biblical and systematic theology with intelligent worldview Christianity and deep piety. It is this combination that arguably made it richer and more holistic than higher-life theology.

Schaeffer was truly a person who appeared ‘for such a time as this’<sup>223</sup> and the evangelical world of today would be a poorer place had he not emerged when he did. Consequently, understanding his life and thought is critical to understanding the history of evangelicalism during the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. By the end of his life in 1984, Schaeffer had played a part in changing the lives of thousands of people, written over 20 books, lectured at countless universities around the world, started a new Christian movement, The L’Abri Fellowships, and had been awarded eight honorary doctorates. He led a remarkable life.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In answer to the question as to ‘why Schaeffer matters’, let me try to summarise. His significance lies not in him being a great theologian who addressed great theological questions. Rather, his significance lies in that when few were doing so, Schaeffer presented the Bible’s message in terms of a worldview, rather than the means to some higher spiritual experience or a retreat into a Christian subculture. In maintaining that the Bible was the truth about the real world rather than some ‘religious’ world, he connected its message to the vital issue of human meaning. In doing so he addressed the questions of a lost generation, many of whom were seeking better answers than those on offer at the time. Moreover, he learned the art of communicating in ways his hearers could relate to, bypassing the usual ‘spiritual language’ of many evangelicals. His message was one of hope: material matter is not the final reality; rather He [the personal God] is really there, and He is not silent. In this sense, Schaeffer made a significant contribution to evangelicalism.

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<sup>223</sup> Esther 4:14.

We now come to Part 2, where in four chapters I explore the rudiments of the 'Schaeffer mind', especially as they pertain to his theology of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life: firstly, his integrated view of truth; secondly, his sense of human significance; thirdly, his teaching on the sanctification of the ordinary and fourthly the remarkable breadth of his thought.

# Part 2

## The Schaeffer Mind

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# Chapter 4

## Schaeffer's Integrated View of Truth

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### 1. Introduction

Schaeffer's thought is underpinned by a conviction that the separating out of grace and nature – commonly found in contemporary western societies – into two unrelated realms results in huge problems for human cognition and welfare. This divide, which Schaeffer was persuaded had emerged over many centuries as secular thought gradually took hold of the western mind, is also commonly found among Christians. Where it is found, suggests Schaeffer, it involves the church conceding to a non-Christian worldview which results in the Bible's scope being limited to a narrow 'religious' category rather than to the whole of life. This can be described as a spiritual/secular divide, something Schaeffer spent his life exposing and challenging. It was his belief that the realms of grace and nature, though in some sense distinct, find a unity under God, the Author of all things. This chapter will seek to demonstrate that it is Schaeffer's desire to recover the 'correct' relationship between grace and nature that forms the key ingredient for his whole-of-life Christianity.

Schaeffer's argument was that the separation of nature from grace emerged as a consequence of the decline of a theistic worldview in the west and the corresponding ascension of a non-theistic worldview.<sup>224</sup> Or to put this another way, it was a consequence of what Schaeffer called the 'decreation'<sup>225</sup> of the world which led to reality being increasingly defined according to naturalistic assumptions. In the post-Enlightenment

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<sup>224</sup> This is the thesis of *EFR*, 207-70; it is also defended by Pearcey, *Total Truth*.

<sup>225</sup> *PDM*, 53.

world, the concept of a supernatural God who creates and acts in His world became increasingly dismissed from the eighteenth century onwards. As the change from Christian theism to secular atheism gathered pace, inevitably a reconfiguration of grace and nature occurred.

Schaeffer's rejection of the modern world's configuration of grace and nature, and his championing of a worldview that redefines and integrates grace and nature, must be seen as nothing less than the reinsertion of the God of the Bible into the story of reality, and in particular God's status as Creator. Clearly this has huge relevance for apologetic engagement. But it also highlights the reason why many Christians hold to divided-life thought: they have an insufficient theology of creation.

For Schaeffer, the separation of nature from grace is not some minor aberration but represents a corruption at the very heart of Christian theology. In denying God's authorship of the world, it in turn undermines what it means to be a human being with all the ramifications that go with this. Accordingly, setting grace and nature in their right relationship is not merely a matter of straightening our thinking, it is in fact an essential pathway to the renaissance of Christianity and spiritual renewal.

As we shall see on several occasions in this study, Schaeffer maintains that the integrated Christianity he espouses is not some theoretical ideal only, but something that found real historical – if imperfect – expression during the protestant reformation. It was during this time – Schaeffer maintains – that we have concrete examples of societies that functioned with an integration of grace and nature. This, for instance, afforded great dignity and status to 'ordinary' people doing 'ordinary' things such as farming and raising children.



With grace and nature integrated, no longer could it be considered a more spiritual calling to be a monk or a priest.<sup>226</sup>

The wedge between grace and nature was for Schaeffer not only a disaster for the church and ‘ordinary’ believers, but it was also a disaster for society at large. Although a telling indicator of how western society had departed from a Biblical worldview, it was also the means by which it had shipwrecked itself. Nowhere, Schaeffer suggested, was this more clearly observable than with the 1960s’ baby boomer generation which – he lamented – had inherited poisonous philosophical categories. For Schaeffer the result was the ‘crisis of meaning’ he encountered in many young people who made their way to L’Abri during the 1960s and 70s.<sup>227</sup> This chapter will focus on how Schaeffer charts the historic path of the dividing of grace from nature, resulting in divided-life Christianity, whilst chapters 5 and 6 will focus on what – to his mind – were the implications for human meaning and welfare.

## 2. Ideas make the world

In explaining the separation of grace and nature and with it the corresponding division of values from facts, and faith from reason, Schaeffer took the long view, seeking to establish the cause in an incremental acceptance of, and subservience to, secular thought which had deep roots in previous centuries. This explains the reason why Schaeffer spent so many pages setting out and interpreting the history of western thought. Schaeffer’s most widely known books, *The God Who is There*, *Escape from Reason* and *How Should We Then Live?* are largely historic surveys of key ideas he was persuaded have shaped the western world, and mostly for the worse. Philosopher Ronald Nash explains,

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<sup>226</sup> *HSWTL*, 124.

<sup>227</sup> *CETC*, 5-35.

It was Schaeffer's method then to look at the broad flow of philosophy and culture in the West, and to focus upon key thinkers at critical points where [...] [problems] were most apparent. His approach was to take a panoramic view of intellectual history and culture in order to achieve a broad perspective on the past and to understand how specific critical points shaped the urgent cultural, moral, and philosophical issues of the day.<sup>228</sup>

Before offering a thumbnail sketch of Schaeffer's approach to western philosophical history, a comment needs to be made about his methodology. It would be accurate to say that his analysis is based upon a conviction that, fundamentally, it is ideas that shape people and cultures, rather than other factors such as the emergence of critical leaders, unexpected events, or inventions. For example, in *How Should We Then Live?*, Schaeffer comments,

There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind – *what they are in their thought-world determines how they act*. This is true of their value systems, and it is true of their creativity. It is true of their corporate actions, such as political decisions, and it is true of their personal lives. The results of *their thought-world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world*.<sup>229</sup>

In maintaining that people and their cultures are fundamentally shaped by ideas, Schaeffer has been strongly criticised. His critics suggest that his analysis is reductionist, ignoring the impact of social and economic factors that shape people and the cultures they create. Richard Pierard is typical: labelling Schaeffer's approach to history 'ideational', he writes,

His interpretation centres on the impact that ideas have on life, and such an idealist reductionism essentially excludes as crucial or even significant other forces that impinge upon human behaviour, such as economic or geographical factors, social conditions, natural disasters, and personal charisma [...] The history of ideas is a vital

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<sup>228</sup> Ronald H. Nash, 'The Life of the Mind and the Way of Life', in *Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, by Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 51-70 (53).

<sup>229</sup> *HSWTL*, 83, EA.

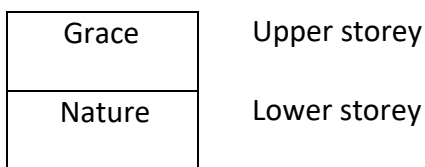
component of the larger discipline of history, but no respectable intellectual historian today believes that ideas operate in a vacuum.<sup>230</sup>

By placing excessive emphasis upon the notion that essentially it is ideas that make history, Schaeffer leaves himself open to criticism, arguably failing to consider the complexity involved in the evolution of a culture. William Edgar, a sympathetic commentator, suggests that, if challenged on the matter, Schaeffer would doubtless have conceded as much.<sup>231</sup> In chapter 9 we will explore how later the L'Abri mind evolved beyond Schaeffer to take greater account of the sociology of knowledge and how factors other than ideas contribute to societal change.

### 3. Schaeffer's Two-Storey Universe<sup>232</sup>

To aid his analysis of grace and nature and how their interaction shapes history, Schaeffer makes use of an illustration, a building with two levels, an upper storey and the lower storey.<sup>233</sup> He sets them out diagrammatically as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Schaeffer's Two-Storey Building



<sup>230</sup> Richard V. Pierard and Ronald W. Ruesegger, 'Schaeffer on History', in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie, Zondervan, 1986), 197-219 (209-10).

<sup>231</sup> William Edgar writes, 'Although he never enters into discussion with contemporary schools – such as Berger's sociology of knowledge, The Frankfurt School, or the Birmingham School in the United Kingdom, all of which have mapped out complex ways in which ideas and culture relate – he would no doubt agree broadly that culture is produced by many factors, not just ideas', Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 170-1.

<sup>232</sup> The question needs to be asked is how original was Schaeffer's two-storey model of nature and grace? When reading Schaeffer's Trilogie, the parallels with Herman Dooyeweerd are striking. So much so that a friend of mine virtually accuses Schaeffer of plagiarism. My own conclusion is that it seems unlikely that Schaeffer read Dooyeweerd's *Roots of Western Culture*, but – almost unwittingly – picked up his ideas via his friend, Hans Rookmaaker who himself was well-versed in Dooyeweerd.

<sup>233</sup> *EFR*, 209.

After establishing this simple framework, Schaeffer expands his definitions of grace and nature in the following way:<sup>234</sup>

**GRACE THE HIGHER:** God the Creator; heaven and heavenly things; the unseen and its influence on the earth; man's soul; unity

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**NATURE THE LOWER:** The created; earth and earthly things; the visible and what nature and man do on earth; man's body; diversity

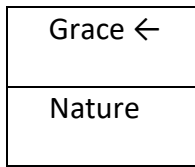
Readers of Schaeffer's march through the centuries quickly realise that for him the key to understanding history is found in grasping the relationship between the two storeys and asking which one is afforded priority. In particular, Schaeffer identifies three broad historical phases in the relationship between grace and nature: (1) grace over nature; (2) nature over grace; and (3) freedom replaces grace. But his analysis is never theoretical only. Forever the pastor and apologist, the point for Schaeffer is not really to understand a particular historical period *per se* but to grasp how the world reached its present point in order that the human predicament can be properly diagnosed and its remedy in the Christian gospel applied. This brings us back to a recurring theme with Schaeffer: he is interested in ideas and their history, but only insofar as they relate to the people he seeks to help in the present.

a. Priority of grace over nature

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

Figure 2 Grace over Nature



← Indicates priority

Although Schaeffer begins his historical survey with the Roman world,<sup>235</sup> the first period he analyses in detail using his two-storey model is the Medieval era.<sup>236</sup> During these centuries he maintains that European society prioritises matters of grace over matters of nature. This is illustrated in Figure 2 with grace above nature. However, the line dividing the upper storey of grace from the lower of nature is a broken one, indicating the interconnectivity of the two storeys, especially the idea that grace can shape nature. Schaeffer argues that the Medieval period in European history was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church whose theology was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, especially that of Plato and Aristotle,<sup>237</sup> which persuaded him undermined a strong creational worldview.<sup>238</sup> Schaeffer labels the thought-pattern of this period 'Byzantine'.<sup>239</sup> Commenting on the influence of Plato, Schaeffer suggests that his form over matter philosophy easily transmuted into grace over nature, with heavenly things (grace) given

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<sup>235</sup> *HSWTL*, 83-90.

<sup>236</sup> 5th-15th century. Roughly from the fall of the Western Roman Empire until the Renaissance.

<sup>237</sup> See Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Muskegon: Gospel Films, 1977, Episode 2, The Middle Ages).

<sup>238</sup> Doubtless the Medieval Church would have maintained that Plato and Aristotle explained how creation works. In what follows it must be born in mind that Schaeffer presents an arguably outdated and crude 'Hellenisation thesis' view of Greek – and especially Platonic – thought that is overly simplistic. Clearly there is more nuance to the way that Christianity has appropriated the Platonic tradition than Schaeffer allows. For a perspective that offers a rich appreciation of Plato and its positive influence on Christianity see Hans Boersma, *Five Things Theologians Wish Biblical Scholars Knew* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2021), especially Chapter 2, 'No Plato, No Scripture'. For a more sceptical view of the relationship between Christianity and Plato see *T&T Clark Handbook of Colin Gunton*, ed. by Andrew Picard, Murray Rae, and Myk Habets, T&T Clark Handbooks (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2023), pp. 293–98.

<sup>239</sup> *EFR*, 210.

priority over earthly things (nature).<sup>240</sup> Moreover, for Schaeffer, the Medieval period was a time when cultural representations of earthly things were purposely modified to give them a heavenly essence: grace impacted nature. There were not two unrelated realms.

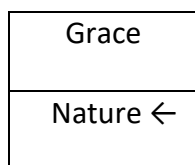
Critically, the priority was grace modifying nature and diminishing it. In *How Should We Then Live?*, Schaeffer provides examples from the world of music and art to illustrate this theme.<sup>241</sup> His repeated point is that during this era the realm of the material was weakened; what mattered was the realm of the spiritual. This was the age of the monastery where prayer, celibacy and contemplation came to be defined as the higher calling, away from the business of ordinary people. The word ‘vocation’ became associated with a calling to the priesthood, a role higher than farming or motherhood. Nancy Pearcey – who largely follows Schaeffer’s thought – comments:

And if the material world is bad, then the goal of the religious life is to avoid, suppress, and ultimately escape from the material aspects of life. Manual labour was regarded as less valuable than prayer and meditation. Marriage and sexuality were rejected in favour of celibacy. Ordinary social life was on a lower plane than life in hermitages and monasteries. The goal of spiritual life was to free the mind from the evil world of the body and the senses, so it could ascend to God.<sup>242</sup>

The result of the priority of grace over nature, suggests Schaeffer, was a shrinking of ordinary human existence, of life lived before God in His good creation.

#### **b. Priority of nature over grace**

Figure 3 Priority of Nature over Grace



<sup>240</sup> *HSWTL*, 92.

<sup>241</sup> *HSWTL* 91-106. For example, in the film that accompanies this chapter, Schaeffer cites the development of the Gregorian Chant and calls it, “Impersonal, mystical and other-worldly”.

<sup>242</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 76.

Schaeffer suggests that it was Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)<sup>243</sup> who substantially modified the Byzantium paradigm, laying the foundations for the European renaissance and eventually paving the way for human thought to be disconnected from God's revelation in Scripture.<sup>244</sup> To Schaeffer's mind, Aquinas' mistake was that he misunderstood the impact and extent of human sinfulness, underplaying or even denying the noetic<sup>245</sup> effects of sin. He writes: 'In Aquinas's view the will of man was fallen, but the intellect was not.'<sup>246</sup> For Schaeffer, this failure to comprehend the extent of the fall had profound ramifications for how people in Europe came to understand the world, and in time it laid the foundations for the secular society. Previously, he suggests, it was accepted that the light of Scripture was needed to inform the human mind so that it could pursue fruitful theological and philosophical enquiry, marred as it was by the effects of sin. In other words, nature needed to be informed by grace. After Aquinas, suggests Schaeffer, it began to be believed that nature could be understood without the need for grace.<sup>247</sup> This paradigm is illustrated in Figure 3, where a solid line is drawn between grace and nature. The mind could come to a knowledge of truth about the world without the aid of Scripture. In a memorable phrase, Schaeffer comments: 'Nature begins to 'eat up' grace', i.e. grace becomes unnecessary for human understanding, and the world eventually loses any sense of transcendence, paving the way for the secular society.<sup>248</sup> In practical terms, Schaeffer believed this to be a grave mistake since the wisdom of Scripture (grace) forms an essential part of the means to

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<sup>243</sup> *EFR*, 209.

<sup>244</sup> *HSWTL*, 103.

<sup>245</sup> Effect on the mind or intellect.

<sup>246</sup> *EFR*, 211.

<sup>247</sup> *EFR*, 210-211.

<sup>248</sup> *EFR*, 212, 220. Ronald Nash suggests that it would have been better if Schaeffer had blamed The Enlightenment for the grace/nature separation rather than focus on Thomas Aquinas' complex theology, Nash, 60.

understand nature, especially in regard to theological and existential categories.<sup>249</sup> To put this another way, according to Schaeffer truth can be discovered in both the domains of grace (Scripture) and nature (creation) and both are necessary to come to the total truth about the world. To exclude one domain or even prioritise one domain, results in a fragmented and incomplete understanding of the world.<sup>250</sup> Specifically, Schaeffer expresses concern for the domains of law, morality and human value, suggesting that when human thought becomes decoupled from the light of God's truth in Scripture, these categories drift into relativism and become subject to fickle human opinion.<sup>251</sup> Duriez suggests that Schaeffer's concern about Aquinas was that he contributed to the placing of the human mind as the final authority on matters of thought, thus displacing the authority of the mind of God mediated through Biblical revelation.<sup>252</sup>

Schaeffer's interpretation of Aquinas is not without its critics. For instance, Norman Geisler suggests that Schaeffer fundamentally misunderstands Aquinas' view of grace and nature, wrongly suggesting that he denies the noetic effects of sin. Aquinas, Geisler argues, speaks frequently of the necessity for God's help in understanding nature, both before and after the fall.<sup>253</sup> He maintains that contrary to what Schaeffer suggests, there is no room in Aquinas' thought for the human mind to operate autonomously of God's revelation.<sup>254</sup> Ronald Nash has some sympathy for the criticisms of Schaeffer put forward by people like Geisler, but comments that a careful reading of Schaeffer suggests a more nuanced view than that with which he has been characterised. Nash writes:

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<sup>249</sup> EFR, 217-224.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Schaeffer outlines this thesis in, *CM*, 423-430.

<sup>252</sup> Duriez, 168.

<sup>253</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 12-16.

<sup>254</sup> Nash, 59-60.



Schaeffer did not himself see Aquinas as a proponent of a radical separation between Nature and Grace. Schaeffer's main point concerning Aquinas is that a principle of separation between Nature and Grace was introduced in Aquinas' theology, and this principle bore bitter fruit in centuries to come.<sup>255</sup>

### c. Freedom replaces grace

Figure 4 Grace replaced by freedom



Schaeffer continues his journey through the stages of the grace/nature relationship found in Western thought by arguing that the trajectory of Thomas Aquinas' paradigm adjustment found its natural expression in the European renaissance (c. 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries) and beyond into The Enlightenment (c. 1715-1789). That which characterises these periods – Schaeffer suggests – is a focus upon nature, and by the end of the period, the exclusion of grace entirely.<sup>256</sup> Grace is, in time, entirely replaced by freedom,<sup>257</sup> as is represented in Figure 4. In other words, eventually humanity establishes itself as free from any divine authority and can now shape nature as it sees fit. Input from divine revelation becomes neither necessary nor desirable; the human mind is only free when allowed the place of final authority.

Schaeffer characterises the period of The Renaissance as one in which particulars were emphasised over universals.<sup>258</sup> As a consequence, meaning increasingly became something to be imputed to individual things by the observer; the notion that universals such as beauty, grace and even God Himself are necessary to make sense of details went

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> *EFR*, 212.

<sup>257</sup> *ERF*, 227.

<sup>258</sup> *EFR*, 215.

into retreat. Doubtless, Christian Mediaeval nominalism emerged as one response to what many saw as a theology previously too wedded to Platonic philosophy and at risk of undermining God's full providence. This explains the nominalists' stress on the free sovereignty of God over His creation, which in time arguably laid a foundation for the reformers with their strong emphasis upon the sovereignty of God over His creation.

Within the freedom/nature paradigm there no longer remains the possibility of any word from God (from the realm of grace) to guide the organisation of the material world (nature). Schaeffer devotes a considerable portion of his writings to demonstrating how European art, literature and music exemplify the transition from grace to freedom from the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>259</sup> Duriez calls the shift from nature/grace to nature/freedom the development of 'modern consciousness'.<sup>260</sup> The human mind is now the final authority on all matters and the trajectory for the postmodern declaration that all values and truth claims are relative. Significantly, Schaeffer makes use of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) dialectic of thesis/antithesis leading to synthesis, as an example of the march to declare truth to be relative. Following Hegel and others, instead of true and false categories, synthesis becomes the way society comes to understand reality, and 'truth' becomes something that evolves, rather than being received from God.<sup>261</sup> Tellingly, the Schaeffer biographer Mostyn Roberts comments,

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<sup>259</sup> *EFR*, 210-216. For the impact of a grace to freedom transition shaping the Enlightenment paradigm, see *HSWTL*, 135-146.

<sup>260</sup> Duriez, 169.

<sup>261</sup> See *EFR*, 232-233. Schaeffer comments on the implications of the shift from antithesis to synthesis: 'We must not forget that Christianity stands or falls on the basis of antithesis. Without it, historical Christianity is meaningless. The basic antithesis is that God objectively exists in contrast (in antithesis) to His not existing. Which of these two are the reality, changes everything in the area of knowledge and morals and in the whole of life', *TGWIT*, 8.

The Story of how western culture became relativistic is the theme of Schaeffer's trilogy. One of the early tapes at L'Abri is entitled "Our real enemy: Relativism". This could almost be an overall title for the trilogy.<sup>262</sup>

Connecting such change to a shift into a broader humanist worldview to come, Schaeffer writes,

Humanism in the larger, more inclusive sense is the system whereby men and women, beginning absolutely by themselves, try rationally to build out from themselves, having only Man as their integration point, to find all knowledge, meaning and value.<sup>263</sup>

As will be considered in more detail in chapters 5 and 6, for Schaeffer the arrival of the freedom/nature era has had catastrophic implications for human existence. For him the only redeeming historical episode was the period between The Renaissance and Enlightenment, the European reformation, a time when Schaeffer maintains that grace and nature stood in correct relation to one another with both being afforded their proper place. This will be considered in more detail later on.

#### **4. Faith separated from reason**

After completing his journey through western thought – with its culmination in the freedom/nature<sup>264</sup> age, Schaeffer takes a sideways move, seeking to flesh out how this paradigm has shaped the thought and behaviour of contemporary secular society. As noted above, one of his abiding concerns is to demonstrate the way in which the modern world's juxtaposition of freedom/nature has impacted the ability of Scripture to speak to people,

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<sup>262</sup> Roberts, 104.

<sup>263</sup> *TGWIT*, 9.

<sup>264</sup> Although not referenced by Schaeffer, likely he borrowed this term from the Dutch thinker Dooyeweerd. See Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (Thorold, ON, Canada: Paideia Press, 2012), 149.

resulting in the purging of religion from the public square, which is little more than another description of divided-life Christianity.

Schaeffer's two-storey model of the world is developed with a degree of flexibility across his writings, especially in its application. An attempt to assemble the various pieces of his freedom/nature application establishes several related structures (Figure 5), even if not always explicitly codified by him:

Figure 5 Grace-Nature Paradigm Applied

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Non-rational Faith	Private Sphere	Values	Feelings
Rational Nature	Public Sphere	Facts	Realm of True/False

In the post-Enlightenment world, deeply sceptical of the very idea of divine revelation, the realm of grace or faith found itself downgraded to the status of the non-rational (Figure 5a).<sup>265</sup> Or, to put this another way, and since we are dealing with the Christian Faith, Biblical knowledge is not considered to be 'real' knowledge in the sense of it being located within the realm of reason.<sup>266</sup> This is seen in Western societies today where it is commonly assumed that 'faith' is nothing more than belief in the face of the evidence, but valuable nonetheless to gain psychological support. Accordingly, 'faith' is relegated to the private realm (Figure 5b): not being objective knowledge, it is only afforded the status of

<sup>265</sup> Schaeffer blames Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) for placing faith in the realm of non-reason, calling him the father of modern thought, *TGWIT*, 14-17. With the possible exception of his views on Thomas Aquinas, it is Schaeffer's assessment of Kierkegaard that has attracted most criticism. Schaeffer blames him for setting faith against reason (his 'leap of faith'). For a discussion of Schaeffer's use of Kierkegaard, see Nash, 61-62.

<sup>266</sup> *TGWIT*, 63ff.

being true for a person's private life, i.e. it is 'true for you', but not for everyone. In other words, objective truth and false categories are not applicable in this realm. This is the realm of preference, personal values and /or feelings (Figures 5c and 5d).<sup>267</sup> Importantly for this study, faith is deemed incompatible with reason.

Moving down to the lower storey, the post-Enlightenment world ascribes certainty only to this realm, i.e., that of nature. Here is the place where rational knowledge is derived through science and human observation, hence the term 'rational nature' (Figure 5a). Unlike upper storey religious knowledge, lower storey knowledge is binding upon everyone: it is the realm of public truth (Figure 5b); facts (Figure 5c); and where categories of 'true' and 'false' apply (Figure 5d).

## 5. Arriving at an Existential Crisis

Schaeffer developed his grace/nature model in an attempt to explain how western societies became secular and in turn rejected the possibility of objective truth about God, human value, morality and meaning. At the very beginning of his Trilogy, he states that '[there has been a] change in the concept of truth.'<sup>268</sup> He continues, '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.'<sup>269</sup> This was the crux of the matter for Schaeffer: truth had been split into two. In his Christian worldview, the Bible was the very word of God, giving meaning and answers to life. But in the post-Enlightenment world, it had been assigned a subjective status, thus draining it of its power to speak and to shape lives. The speaking God – whose word explains reality – had effectively been gagged. On the other

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<sup>267</sup> See Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 20-21.

<sup>268</sup> *TGWIT*, 5.

<sup>269</sup> *TGWIT*, 6.

hand, nature had achieved the status of objective truth, but all it could offer was the conclusion that human beings are no more than highly-evolved pond slime, accidents of nature, specks in an impersonal, closed and meaningless universe. Moreover, God, who had previously been the source of answers to the human predicament, was now consigned to the status of being nothing more than the figment of the human imagination.<sup>270</sup>

For Schaeffer, the separation of grace and nature in the western philosophical tradition was the cause of the despair he encountered in the young people who came to him seeking answers. Prior to The Enlightenment, the marriage of grace and nature had provided people with a sense of unified truth about the world; the invisible explained the visible. This in turn gave humans a sense of purpose, morality and identity. But, he maintained, by his day the philosophers had established a backdrop of meaninglessness; there was no longer any word from God to make sense of life. During the 1960s and 70s and at a time when many Christian ministers defended the status-quo out of instinctive reaction, not only did Schaeffer take the time to understand<sup>271</sup> the mood of the times, he largely agreed with the diagnosis of contemporary society proffered by the ‘rebels’ of the 1960s. Like them, he had concluded that the society created by western thought was sterile, uninviting, and void of answers to the biggest questions of life.<sup>272</sup> Schaeffer suggested that all that young people were being offered were ‘two impoverished values of personal peace and affluence’. Schaeffer defines personal peace and affluence in the following way:

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<sup>270</sup> *TGWIT*, 64.

<sup>271</sup> Schaeffer’s son, Frank Schaeffer, writes that, ‘[his father] got interested in secular culture, not as a means to an end but for its own sake [...] In evangelical circles, if you wanted to know what Bob Dylan’s songs meant, Francis Schaeffer was the man to ask.’ Frank Schaeffer, *Crazy for God*, 118.

<sup>272</sup> *HSWTL*, p.211. William Edgar summarises what Schaeffer calls, ‘personal peace and affluence’ as ‘the bourgeois life’, *Schaeffer*, 180.

Personal peace means just to be let alone. Not to be troubled by the troubles of other people, whether they're across the world, or across the city, or across your street – to live one's life with minimal possibilities of being personally disturbed. Personal peace means wanting to have my personal life pattern undisturbed in my lifetime, regardless of what the result will be in the lifetimes of my children and grandchildren. Affluence means an overwhelming and increasing prosperity – a life made up of things, things, and more things – a success judged by an ever-higher level of material abundance.<sup>273</sup>

Schaeffer then was persuaded that the crisis of the baby-boomer generation was a crisis of meaning. Personal-peace and affluence were what the west had to offer young people and many of them did not find them attractive. Many were in rebellion, looking for answers elsewhere.

## 6. Additional Readings of the Making of the Modern World

As mentioned in the introduction, whatever the limitations of Schaeffer's reading of intellectual history – some of them will be discussed below – he was a pioneer in attempting to explain how the world became naturalistic and relativistic. Others have come after him. Three will be introduced here with particular reference as to how they differ from or complement Schaeffer. Firstly, for consideration will be Radical Orthodoxy, secondly, Charles Taylor's understanding of secularism, and finally the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre particularly as it pertains to morality and virtue.

### a. Radical Orthodoxy

Radical Orthodoxy as a movement began its life with the book, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*<sup>274</sup> by John Milbank, but it derived its name from a published

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<sup>273</sup> HSWTL, 211.

<sup>274</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed (Blackwell Pub, 2006).

collection of essays by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*.<sup>275</sup> All three are Anglicans with strong Anglo-Catholic leanings.<sup>276</sup> Like Schaeffer before them, the Radical Orthodox theologians think big; nothing is outside their sphere of interest and analysis. Their aim is nothing less than to rethink – not only theology – but the whole of life from a Christian perspective.<sup>277</sup> Or to put this another way, for them, the world demands to be interpreted theologically and the myth of secular neutrality deconstructed. For the disciples of Radical Orthodoxy, the target is secularism and what they see as the capitulation of much theological discourse to its categories. They are appalled that theology – once the queen of the sciences – has been relegated to a marginal place in the academy, peripheral to the modern understanding of reality. Radical Orthodoxy represents a charter of resistance; it is a courageous statement that The Enlightenment paradigm needs dismantling and the world reconstructed on a true and better foundation. For Radical Orthodoxy, the march of Enlightenment secularism is nothing short of a tragedy for human life and flourishing.<sup>278</sup> God – the One whose existence and presence gives meaning to reality – has been bracketed out of the mainstream discourse, relegated to the private sphere. But, as Milbank comments, ‘the [recent] deconstruction of modernity and foundationalism represents an opportunity for

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<sup>275</sup> *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham. J Ward (Routledge, 1999).

<sup>276</sup> James K.A. Smith has written an accessible introduction to radical orthodoxy, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2004).

<sup>277</sup> John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2015), 551.

<sup>278</sup> *Paul Kennedy Interviews Catherine Pickstock & John Milbank about RADICAL ORTHODOXY*, dir. by Paul Kennedy, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6QnEMH8K-c>> [accessed 25 November 2021]. For more detailed discussion see Introduction to Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, esp. pp. 2–3.



theology.<sup>279</sup> Radical Orthodoxy is keen to exploit that opportunity. When considered in these broad categories, Radical Orthodoxy shares much in common with Schaeffer's thought. With Schaeffer, it also dares to rethink the modern world, considers that secularism is not a matter for celebration and sees through the myth of secular neutrality. Like Schaeffer, Radical Orthodoxy demands that we place God at the centre of reality in order to make sense of all things.

Delving deeper reveals some important distinctions between Radical Orthodoxy and Schaeffer. Firstly, Milbank and Pickstock's critique of the secular society owes much of its substance to the postmodern attack on modernity and foundationalism.<sup>280</sup> Whereas Radical Orthodoxy fails almost entirely to attend to the Bible, Schaeffer leans heavily upon more overtly Biblical categories when making his critique.<sup>281</sup> Secondly – and significantly for this chapter – Radical Orthodoxy differs in key respects from Schaeffer concerning how the secular world came about. Like Schaeffer before him, the genealogy of the secular project is a vital question for Milbank. He begins his work, *Theology and Social Theory*: 'Once there was no "secular". And the secular was not latent, but waiting to fill more space with the steam of the 'purely human', when the pressure of the sacred was relaxed.'<sup>282</sup> Schaeffer would agree but disagree about the trigger for the secular project. Interestingly, both Schaeffer and Radical Orthodoxy pinpoint Thomas Aquinas' thought as crucial in the debate but in different ways. While Schaeffer identifies Aquinas as setting a course for secularism,

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<sup>279</sup> *Interview with Theologian Dr A.J. Milbank*, dir. by Antony Borisov, 2012 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lnz2v1UvrRU>> [accessed 20 November 2021]. For further discussion see Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, p. 1ff.

<sup>280</sup> John Milbank, 'POSTMODERN CRITICAL AUGUSTINIANISM', *Modern Theology*, 7.3 (1991), 225–37 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.1991.tb00245.x>> [accessed 10 September 2022].

<sup>281</sup> See for example, *DIC*, 207-99.

<sup>282</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 9.

for Radical Orthodoxy it is the rejection of Aquinas that laid the foundation of the secular society.

For Radical Orthodoxy, secularism flows from a rejection of a Christian understanding of reality, one that was lost during the fourteenth century. This understanding of reality found its best expression in Aquinas' *De Principiis Naturae*.<sup>283</sup> Crucially, Aquinas argued for a specific relationship between God and creation, what he called the concept of participation. Rather than creation existing in and of itself, it participates in God and is itself a divine gift, a donation. Aquinas' point is that there are not two separate entities, God and creation. Instead, there is God, and creation shares His being and participates in Him.<sup>284</sup> All other perceptions of reality will be deficient and life-diminishing.

Radical Orthodox theologians suggest that the primary thinker who most influentially attempted to challenge Aquinas' 'creation as participation in the divine', was Duns Scotus (1265-1308), with his concept of univocity of being.<sup>285</sup> Univocity is the notion that the words we use to describe the properties of God are equivalent to their use when applied to creatures. According to Radical Orthodoxy, Scotus' displacement of Aquinas' analogical understanding of creation, not only placed God and the creation into two distinct entities but it made Him distant from His creation, a Being we study, can comprehend.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, assisted by the thought of William of Ockham (c. 1287-1347), a voluntaristic view of God emerged, with notions of power and law shaping the theological and political

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<sup>283</sup> Joseph Bobik and Thomas, *Aquinas on Matter and Form and the Elements: A Translation and Interpretation of the De Principiis Naturae and the De Mixtione Elementorum of St. Thomas Aquinas* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

<sup>284</sup> *Radical Orthodoxy Part II*, dir. by Simon Oliver, St John's Timeline, 2012 <<https://stjohnstimeline.hymnsam.co.uk/radical-orthodoxy-part-2/>> [accessed 5 November 2021]; see also Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, pp. 3–14, 109-117.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

landscape. Eventually – Radical Orthodoxy suggests – creation came to be thought of as operating independently of God, who in time became unnecessary. The trajectory was set to the making of the ‘secular’ society we inhabit today. Oliver comments,

So the secular is the product of theological shifts in the late Middle Ages [and the task of Radical Orthodoxy is] to revise our theology to reintroduce the divine – the re-enchantment of the universe – everything shimmering with the divine [...] [once more uniting] faith and reason, philosophy and theology.<sup>287</sup> The point is that once we reconnect with the Divine, no longer will the world be ours – to dominate, to consume, to understand, to fight over<sup>288</sup> – then, we will rediscover the original peaceableness of all things.<sup>289</sup>

To summarise, Radical Orthodoxy seeks to return theology back to its premodern and presecular roots, as the queen of the sciences with philosophy as her handmaiden. As we have seen, Schaeffer sought to explain the path to the secular in a very different – even contradictory – manner to Radical Orthodoxy. For Schaeffer it is the protestant reformation that offers us a paradigm of societal health; for John Milbank it is the world before 1300. Doubtless, Schaeffer would be concerned about Radical Orthodoxy’s sacramental approach to reality and the danger of confusing the Creator-creation distinction. For Schaeffer the goal of grace is not to infuse nature, but to transform it.<sup>290</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of these differences both have helpful contributions to make; both

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> *Radical Orthodoxy – John Milbank & Catherine Pickstock*, dir. by Objective Bob <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMn6q1z7Oxk&t=430s>> [accessed 29 October 2021].

<sup>289</sup> *Radical Orthodoxy Part I*, dir. by Oliver Simon [accessed 05 November 2021]. For more detailed discussion see Simon Oliver, ‘Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: From Participation to Late Modernity’, in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 3–27.

<sup>290</sup> Radical Orthodoxy’s suggestion that reformed thought has bequeathed to us a God defined largely by power, sovereignty and even coerciveness has been strongly challenged. For example, Todd Billings argues that Calvin’s doctrine of participation in Christ provides a strong affirmation of human significance and that rather than nature being destroyed by Calvin it is fulfilled by grace. Billings suggests that contrary to his critics, Calvin offers a profound vision of sacramental participation. See J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*, Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For an evangelical theologian’s robust defence of a sacramental worldview and the need for its recovery see Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2011).

have a radical critique of the secular, and both offer a vision for life and society transformed.

### **b. Charles Taylor's 'A Secular Age'**

Arguably Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*<sup>291</sup> represents the most comprehensive attempt to explain the secular society. The book opens with a question: 'why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?'<sup>292</sup> Taylor spends the remaining 900 pages of his work seeking to answer this question.

If Schaeffer is first a pastor and evangelist, Taylor is the scholar. As such – and in contrast to Schaeffer's lament – *A Secular Age* should be seen as an attempt at a descriptive and objective account of the origins of the modern world. Furthermore, Taylor is concerned not so much about the evolution of the modern world but with changes to the backdrop of a society that make a worldview plausible or not. James K.A. Smith – in seeking to exegete Taylor – helpfully comments, 'Our goal in trying to understand our "secular age" is not a descriptive *what*, and even less a chronological *when*, but rather an analytic *how* [...] Taylor is concerned with the "conditions of belief" – a shift in the plausibility conditions that make something believable or unbelievable?' So, although they differ concerning the triggers for modern secular thought – and Schaeffer is more interested in the "what" and "how" issues – both Taylor and Schaeffer share a focus on the plausibility of belief.

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<sup>291</sup> Charles M. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>292</sup> Taylor, 25.

Key terms in the language used by Taylor to describe the secular age include ‘the era of exclusive humanism’<sup>293</sup> and life lived entirely in an ‘immanent frame’.<sup>294</sup> The immanent frame is human existence limited to a closed universe governed by natural forces with no appeal to transcendence or eternity. Taylor writes,

I would like to claim that the coming of modern secularity in my sense has been coterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true.<sup>295</sup>

Schaeffer and Milbank would doubtless agree, but what concerns us here is Taylor’s perspective on how we reached the age of exclusive humanism.

Before lasering in on Taylor’s explanation for our secular age, we note that a crucial part of his analysis is what he rejects. For Taylor, the journey to a secular age is not a story of subtraction.<sup>296</sup> That is, it is not that there once existed a world characterised by transcendence, superstition, and myth, whereas from the era of The Enlightenment onwards, societies began to *subtract* these fictions until eventually we arrived at the actual world, the secular world, understood by reason and science alone.<sup>297</sup> For Taylor, subtraction theories are themselves mythological. Instead of subtraction being the key to understanding secularism, Taylor posits the idea of substitution.<sup>298</sup> The secular has been substituted for the religious: considering that every generation has a deep need for significance and meaning, secularism has effectively become to us what religion once

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<sup>293</sup> Taylor, 19.

<sup>294</sup> Taylor, 143.

<sup>295</sup> Taylor, 18.

<sup>296</sup> A typical subtraction account of secularisation is found in, Christopher E. Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

<sup>297</sup> Taylor, 22.

<sup>298</sup> As far as I can ascertain he does not use this term, but it is useful to describe his thought.

was.<sup>299</sup> Moreover, the secular project is not accidental, some natural outcome of a truth-embracing age. Instead, it is the deliberate rejection of one worldview and the purposeful construction of another. Smith comments helpfully, '[For Taylor] The secular is not simply a remainder; it is a sum, created by an addition, a product of intellectual manipulation.'<sup>300</sup> This rejection of subtraction should be seen as complementary to Schaeffer, despite him seeing things slightly differently. Schaeffer's notion that 'nature eats up grace' is a recognition that he too grasps subtraction theory, recognising that the secular project is predicated on reason swallowing up [subtracting] grace.<sup>301</sup> However, Schaeffer is arguably more concerned about the outcome than Taylor who is largely reporting his conclusions. For Schaeffer, subtracting grace from nature has been disastrous for human significance and welfare.<sup>302</sup>

As we saw above, Charles Taylor is primarily interested in what makes the secular narrative believable. Nevertheless, Taylor knows this issue cannot be divorced from changes in intellectual ideas that triggered the secular project. Accordingly, he offers an account of how the secular age commenced, using the term 'Reform'<sup>303</sup> to describe various movements and ideas that tipped western societies on the journey to the secular, to the point where for many belief in a transcendent God became incomprehensible. Although Taylor identifies various strands that 'reformed' or reconfigured the old medieval order, he identifies the protestant reformation<sup>304</sup> as the key trigger in the disenchantment of the

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<sup>299</sup> Taylor, Part IV.

<sup>300</sup> James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 26.

<sup>301</sup> *EFR*, 212.

<sup>302</sup> See chapter 6 of this study.

<sup>303</sup> Taylor, 62; See also Smith, 35.

<sup>304</sup> Taylor acknowledges that movements to Reform were also present in the Roman Catholic Church, 75-79.

world and the opening of a door to secularism.<sup>305</sup> At the risk of simplifying, Taylor's reasoning is as follows: the Medieval world maintained a careful equilibrium between a sacred realm and a creaturely realm. To maintain the equilibrium in the complex balance between the two, some people were called to serve the wider society in the sacred sphere, with a religious vocation – priests, nuns and monks – whilst the remainder of the population functioned in non-sacred roles. The latter, Taylor suggests – were entitled to feel a lesser 'weight of virtue'.<sup>306</sup> This was what Taylor unapologetically calls 'two-tiered religion'. His point is that the medieval system found a reasonable way to cope with the high demands of the Christian faith; competing parts of the human experience, indeed reality itself, were held in a workable tension.<sup>307</sup>

Taylor's primary argument is that the various 'Reform' movements upset the established medieval equilibrium, with the protestant reformation as the number one culprit. The reformation, he suggests – called everyone – not just those serving in the sacred realm to 'higher standards'. In announcing that all of life is to be lived to the glory of God,<sup>308</sup> the reformers announced that there is no Biblical warrant for a two-tier society; for all Christian believers, ordinary life is sacred and there are no spiritual second-class citizens.<sup>309</sup> For Taylor, as Smith comments, (the reformation declared that), 'Domestic life is affirmed as the sphere of grace. It's not just priests and nuns who are "religious"; the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker can also undertake their 'ordinary', 'this-worldly tasks with a sense of devotion and life.'<sup>310</sup> If this would be music to Schaeffer's ears,

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<sup>305</sup> Taylor, 77.

<sup>306</sup> Smith, 35-36.

<sup>307</sup> Taylor, 63.

<sup>308</sup> 1 Cor. 10:31.

<sup>309</sup> Taylor, 79, 81.

<sup>310</sup> Smith, 37.

for Taylor it heralds the start of the long road to exclusive humanism. Taylor's point is that although the aim of the reformation was to raise everyone's game to a new level of dignity, in practice, instead of levelling up, the task proved an impossible one. Calling everyone to a sacred life demanded of people what they could not give. Inevitably – argues Taylor – instead of the universal establishment of the sacred, the opposite occurs. In time, the sacred is dropped by everyone and the secular society emerges.<sup>311</sup>

Taylor offers a second and related reason for the reformation contributing to the making of the secular age. To his mind, the reformer's rejection of grace as something fundamentally mediated through the sacraments<sup>312</sup> and replaced with the notion that grace is essentially mediated through the preached Word of God, sowed the seeds for a broader disenchantment of the world and the steady adoption of a naturalistic worldview. His point is that if you strip the physical world of divine mystery and sacred meaning, before long, order has to be imposed on nature by human action. And that order has proven to be sterile, mechanical, and critically eventually secular.<sup>313</sup>

Taylor's explanation for the secular society is not dissimilar to that of Radical Orthodoxy. Both place emphasis on the rise of voluntarism and nominalism in the late Middle Ages and the consequent decline of a sacramental worldview. It seems to me though that both Milbank and Taylor fail to fully appreciate that the reformers' theology – and found in Schaeffer – seeks to establish a fundamental continuity between nature and grace, creation and redemption – not a division between them. Granted, John Calvin was no sacramentalist, but his Institutes express a high view of creation as God's world,

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<sup>311</sup> Taylor, 75.

<sup>312</sup> There was disagreement between Luther and Zwingli on this issue, with Luther retaining a semi-sacramental view of The Lord's Supper.

<sup>313</sup> Taylor, 80.



declaring His glory and greatness. Rejecting sacramentalism does not necessarily divest the physical world of mystery and meaning, abandoning it to a godless secularism. Moreover, Taylor may 'blame' the decline of a two-tiered society for secularism – but the very notion of a distinction between a sacred-class and a non-sacred class finds scant support in the New Testament.<sup>314</sup>

### c. Alasdair MacIntyre.

Alasdair MacIntyre (b.1929) is a Roman Catholic ethicist who is also interested in the genealogy of the secular society. His interest centres around virtue and morality and is therefore more specific than Schaeffer or Taylor in his analysis. Nevertheless, his thought forms an important contribution to our understanding of the historical development of the secular society.

In spite of considerable differences in biographies and theology, MacIntyre and Schaeffer have some important things in common. MacIntyre shares Schaeffer's concern for engagement with reality and the human predicament rather than philosophical abstractions.<sup>315</sup> As such, he seeks to explore one of the deepest questions of all: how does morality shape what it means to be human, and in turn sustain one's inner sense of meaning? MacIntyre, like Schaeffer, holds that our contemporary situation cannot be understood as unique to our time, but as a consequence of seeds sown centuries ago. Here

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<sup>314</sup> For an evaluation and critique of Taylor's *Secular Age*, see Carl Trueman, 'Taylor's Complex, Incomplete, Historical Narrative.', in *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor*, by Collin Hansen, (The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 13-21.

<sup>315</sup> Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), xviii. In particular, MacIntyre is not interested in mainstream analytical moral philosophy, seeing it as too focussed on technical arguments and abstract distinctions.

we will briefly explore arguably his most important work, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*.

MacIntyre's thesis is that when it comes to morality, the western world has badly lost its way and consequently faces a crisis of virtue. Moral discourse – he argues – is dominated by interminable discussion and conflict, with no agreement on the mechanism for finding resolution.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, the morality espoused and imposed by social institutions is often little more than a naked exercise in the will to power.<sup>317</sup> Critically, the label he attaches to modern discourse on morality is 'emotivism'. He offers the following definition: 'Emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character.'<sup>318</sup> Such an approach to morality and ethics, MacIntyre claims, provides no way for adjudicating between opinions, offers no way to differentiate between rational persuasion and manipulation, nor can it provide a foundation for attaining the moral consensus necessary to unite society.<sup>319</sup>

MacIntyre traces his moral predicament back to the enlightenment project. In particular, he suggests three legacies it has left us with. First, The Enlightenment established the individual as 'sovereign in his moral authority'.<sup>320</sup> Second, it dismantled the Judeo-Christian claim that morality has its origin in the will and purpose of God.<sup>321</sup> Third, it rejected the Aristotelian conception of humanity understood in a teleologically-orientated

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid, 11-12.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, 22ff.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, 62.

framework. Picking up on this third point, in Aristotelian thought, a moral judgement is considered true if it furthers the intended end for human life and false if it does not.<sup>322</sup>

For MacIntyre, The Enlightenment's rejection of the previously held pillars of morality coupled with the failure of its own moral suggestions (Bentham's utilitarian and Kant's notion of pure reason), have – to his mind – paved the way for the emotivism of the modern day with its irreconcilable definitions of justice, happiness and goodness.<sup>323</sup>

Nietzsche – he suggests – saw this more clearly than anyone, recognising that, 'What purported to be appeals to objectivity were in fact expressions of subjective will.'<sup>324</sup> The Enlightenment, he remarks, may have achieved 'freedom' from tradition but it failed to provide any coherent goal for humans to aspire to. MacIntyre's point is that we have to know *what to do with our freedom* and the centuries since The Enlightenment demonstrate that we do not.<sup>325</sup>

Reading MacIntyre, one cannot fail to be struck by his profound philosophical learning, deep historical knowledge, and practical application. If The Enlightenment project created the emotivism of the present day, what does he propose as the remedy? Or, as he presents his alternatives, he asks, 'who will prevail, Aristotle or Nietzsche?' MacIntyre's proposals for a way forward draw upon three sources: firstly, the virtues prized in heroic societies and in literary form of saga and epic;<sup>326</sup> secondly, the teleological virtues advocated by Aristotle, especially the concept of eudaimonia, where humans flourish by attaining their purposed end and in so doing live virtuously;<sup>327</sup> thirdly, the Christian virtues

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, 255.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, 121ff.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid, 146.

of faith, hope, and charity which<sup>328</sup> – he suggests – provide a telos that transcends Aristotle’s polis.<sup>329</sup> After presenting these various suggestions – harvested from the pre-Enlightenment world – he makes a case for the recovery of virtue.<sup>330</sup>

Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* represents a serious attempt to explain the failure of The Enlightenment project and seek older solutions to the human predicament it had helped snuff out. Schaeffer would doubtless agree with much of MacIntyre’s analysis. He spent much of his life counselling people simultaneously disillusioned with a world constructed on enlightenment principles while seeking the freedom from restraint it promised, but not finding it. Like MacIntyre, Schaeffer recognised that to find purpose in life, people need a moral vision, and The Enlightenment has failed to provide one. MacIntyre looked to Aristotle; Schaeffer looked to the Bible.<sup>331</sup> Both would agree that a correct understanding of the human *telos* shapes our morality. Schaeffer would want to add that understanding our origins as people created to be God’s image-bearers also matters, as does the story of redemption.

## 7. Evaluation of Schaeffer’s Two-Storey Paradigm

After our excursion into the thought of others, we return now to Schaeffer. Before shifting gears to consider the natural transition from Schaeffer’s two-storey paradigm to his embrace of a whole-of-life Christianity, some evaluation of his approach will be offered. In essence, what Schaeffer’s two-storey model suggests is that studying the relationship

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid, 256-63.

<sup>331</sup> Later in life MacIntyre has turned from Aristotelian to more Thomist expressions of some of his commitments. Additionally, he has endorsed Catholic moral theology along with writers such as Servais-Théodore Pinckaers who grounds his thought more substantially in Scripture. See Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Selected Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 179–96.

between grace and nature is a fruitful way to evaluate western societies, and in particular assess how their relationship evolved to give us the world we see today. In this broad sense, it seems hard to fault Schaeffer; the grace/nature relationship is undoubtedly a valid lens through which to read history. Clearly, like everyone who seeks to explain history, Schaeffer comes with prior commitments, in this case that the God of the Bible is really there, that He is not silent and that the creation, fall, redemption and restoration paradigm provides the true basis for understanding reality. To Schaeffer's credit he is open and up front about these commitments. Clearly, a philosophical naturalist would not accept his analysis, but that says more about differing prior commitments than the usefulness of Schaeffer's model. Taken on its own terms, and with Schaeffer's commitments in place, there can be little doubt that the various phases of grace/nature he identifies make up an important ingredient in any attempt to understand history. As was mentioned above, his model sheds light on what happens to a society – for better or for worse – when its thought-leaders seek to 'deGod' and in turn decreate the world. Emasculating the realm of grace as a source of divine revelation is essential to make the secular paradigm fit; not to do so would leave us with a form of philosophical schizophrenia.<sup>332</sup> Schaeffer's model explains this clearly. As we saw above, Radical Orthodoxy, Taylor's *Secular Age* and MacIntyre's thinking about morality and virtue all complement Schaeffer in important ways.

Jerram Barrs suggests that the most compelling argument for the essential correctness of Schaeffer's overview is that he successfully charts the march to what today is called 'postmodernism'.<sup>333</sup> One of Schaeffer's key concepts is his 'line of despair', the point in history after which – he contended – the general population ceased to believe in

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<sup>332</sup> Dooyeweerd calls this a 'dialectic tension', see Dooyeweerd, 226.

<sup>333</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Line of Despair Parts 1 and 2*, (2009) Lecture: <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library?page=6&query=jerram+barrs> [accessed 02 Nov 2017].

unchanging truth, instead perceiving truth to be something evolving and relative to the person.<sup>334</sup> Barrs suggests that Schaeffer's articulation of the line of despair represents a prescient recognition of what in time came to be known as postmodernism. Barrs comments that, in his writings, Schaeffer uses his grace/nature model to explain both the path to postmodernism and the characteristics we commonly associate with it: (i) loss of belief in the inevitability of progress; (ii) belief in the innate goodness of humanity; (iii) doubts about the reliability of reason; (iv) the relativising of all truth claims; (v) morality as personal preference; (vi) the absence of any agreed meaning for history; (vii) no agreed purpose for the individual.<sup>335</sup> Taking these factors together, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they all contribute to the ubiquitous cynicism found in today's western society, proof perhaps, that we are this side of Schaeffer's line of despair.

Mostyn Roberts concurs with Barrs, noticing Schaeffer's prophetic sense of first the drift into the irrational, and second the relativization of all truth. Roberts writes,

One thing one cannot help noticing today is the way in which Schaeffer, in his exposure of the triumph of relativism, identifies the essence of postmodernism long before that word came into vogue, or the concept was being discussed. Postmodernism is rationalism taken to its logical and destructive conclusion. Realizing that reason cannot provide what Enlightenment 'modernism' promised, postmodernism took the line of exalting irrationality; so that even madness is seen as the ultimate form of freedom as Michel Foucault [...] argued.<sup>336</sup>

Focusing on Schaeffer's concern about the death of truth, Roberts comments,

Objective truth has altogether been lost, so subjectivity is the only source of truth. Put simply, "what's true for you may not be true for me"; and this is where the vast majority of western people are today in terms of religion, spiritual matters, values and morals. What Schaeffer demonstrated is that when reason is exalted above

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<sup>334</sup> *TGWIT*, 6. Schaeffer suggests that the line of despair was reached in Europe in 1890 and in the United States in 1935. Shortly I will elaborate on this concept and offer some critique.

<sup>335</sup> Barrs, *Line of Despair Parts 1 and 2*, (2009) Lecture, *ibid*.

<sup>336</sup> Roberts, 110.

revelation, we are ultimately headed for despair; there is no hope of finding “total truth”.<sup>337</sup>

We now move on to consider Schaeffer’s bold attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of history. Chapter 7 will consider what his critics have said about his historical understanding and some evaluation will be offered. However, in the context of the present chapter, it is worth noting that some thoughtful commentators have been complementary. For example, Colin Duriez writes, ‘He [Schaeffer] has some detractors, but for me, he has always eluded their nets.’<sup>338</sup> Mostyn Roberts agrees: ‘His work, however, has never been demolished and in the big picture, it remains persuasive.’<sup>339</sup> Philosopher Ronald Nash is also complementary but offers a word of caution. Calling Schaeffer’s overview of Western philosophy, ‘creative and provocative’,<sup>340</sup> Nash questions his habit of locating turning points of history to particular individuals,

Instead of seeing various individuals as a kind of exclusive cause in the development, for example of rationalism or relativism, it would be better to treat them as illustrations or key figures who are representative of more general trends in history. [For example] Hegel should not have been seen as the originator of relativism or as the individual cause of its modern expression.<sup>341</sup>

Whatever its strengths, Schaeffer’s two-storey model is arguably lacking in one key understanding of history and the development of the modern world: it misses a vital aspect of The Enlightenment project. As we saw above, Schaeffer suggests that the result of The Enlightenment is that over time nature eats up grace, leaving a lower storey in which only empirical knowledge exists (Taylor’s subtraction idea). Doubtless many contemporary

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Duriez, 10.

<sup>339</sup> Roberts, 110.

<sup>340</sup> Nash, 60.

<sup>341</sup> Nash, 60-61.

defenders of The Enlightenment would see things this way.<sup>342</sup> In reality, a proper understanding of The Enlightenment is more nuanced than Schaeffer saw it. In place of grace, with its metanarrative of creation to new creation, arguably The Enlightenment did not dispense with the upper storey but simply inserted another metanarrative into the place previously occupied by Biblical revelation: the metanarrative of human progress through reason, technology, and scientific understanding. Moreover, this commitment to human progress was not something that could be proven empirically, it was – and still is, to some extent – an article of faith. Whether Schaeffer realised it or not, this contradiction at the heart of The Enlightenment paradigm fails to receive sufficient attention in his writings. However, he did realise – ironically – that in rejecting revelation, enlightenment thinkers lost the ability to derive meaningful existence from the lower storey. Science and technological progress rest upon the concept of the ordered and comprehensible universe identified by Scriptural revelation. Moreover, human progress is a dubious concept if – as western societies were eventually to conclude – it is true that human beings are merely accidents of mindless evolution and have no *intrinsic* value. For these reasons, Schaeffer grasped that The Enlightenment project was unsustainable. Modernity did not only lose religion, in time it would lose everything, including science, human value and any meaningful concept of progress.

The recognition of the replacement of the upper storey with the metanarrative of human progress and later human freedom, augments Barr's contention that Schaeffer correctly predicted what is often called the collapse of modernity into postmodernity. Although beyond the scope of this study, postmodernism is not value-free either: the

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<sup>342</sup> See for example, Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997).



concepts of justice and equality permeate the writings of the postmodern philosophers but have little meaning in a world reduced to accidental collisions between molecules.

Doubtless in time, void of any grounding for its values, the postmodern project of affirming the equal value of every micronarrative will also fail. All that will remain is power and a fight over who has the most.

Turning now to some critique of Schaeffer's two-storey model and his understanding of the history of ideas.

Richard Pierard<sup>343</sup> takes Schaeffer to task for limitations he displays in his understanding of history. Pierard suggests that Schaeffer simplifies periods of history, labelling them either wholly good or wholly bad; he comments that the real world is always more complex.<sup>344</sup> Like many theologians who trace their roots back to the Reformers, Schaeffer did tend to neglect theological thought prior to the reformation. This is apparent for example in *Pollution and the Death of Man* where medieval thought is considered almost universally platonic and matter-denying, whilst reformational thought is overly idealised. Schaeffer's generous spirit could have avoided this pitfall. Pierard also identifies the difficulty of splitting up periods of history into neat parcels of time<sup>345</sup> – something Schaeffer tended to do – diminishing the impact of one period's thinkers upon the next.

A second criticism is more substantive and concerns the central role that Schaeffer's line of despair plays in his history of ideas. Schaeffer's suggestion is that people living above the line of despair (Europe before 1890 and the US before 1935) believed in and could access objective truth rationally, whereas people living after the line of despair found themselves living in a world of irrationality where the notion that truth could be found in

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<sup>343</sup> Pierard, 'Schaeffer on History', 215-217.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

the realm of reason had been abandoned. As a result, a mood of irrationalism and pessimism set in. Doubtless one of the strengths of Schaeffer's analysis is that he is very good at showing how irrational we have become, giving up on hope of integrating points of conflict and tension. But if living above the line of despair gives us the irrational society, living below gives us the rational society. What Schaeffer fails to consider is that rationalism can be as hostile to the Christian worldview as irrationalism is dismissive of it.<sup>346</sup> Below the line of despair enlightenment rationalism may have believed in absolutes and that truth was discoverable, but they were discovered through human autonomy and the sufficiency of reason without the need for divine revelation. Arguably the rationalist's insistence that truth can be found without God is equally as problematic for the advance of Christianity as is the abandonment of truth. What Schaeffer seems to do is to pay too much attention to the problem of being above the line of despair and insufficient attention to the problem of living below it.<sup>347</sup>

Whatever the failings of Schaeffer's march through history and the conclusions he draws, he cannot be faulted for his ambition, nor for his attempt to help Christians think about matters that historically they have given far too little attention to. In time, others came and arguably tidied up his ideas, and with the benefit of better training and libraries

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<sup>346</sup> The charge is often made that theologians shaped by the 'Old Princeton School' are overly indebted to enlightenment rationalism. See for example, Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology*, Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology (Baker academic, 2007). For a rebuttal of this view see Paul Kjos Helseth, *'Right Reason' and the Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal* (P&R Pub, 2010). Whatever stance one takes on this matter, in recent times serious authors have stressed the more-than-cognitive and whole-of-life aspects of the Christian Faith in Reformed thought. For a good example see, James K. A. Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition* (Brazos, 2010).

<sup>347</sup> For a discussion of Cornelius Van Til addressing the problems of both irrationalism and rationalism for the Christian position see John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub, 1995), 231–38. On pages 237–238 Frame explains Van Til's rejection of both Schaeffer's idea that the Greeks possessed a rational worldview that shaped western culture up until the time of Hegel and his suggestion that Hegel was the one who opened the door to irrationality. For further discussion of Schaeffer's historiography and the problems of his line of despair see William J. Edgar, 'Two Christian Warriors: Cornelius Van Til and Francis A. Schaeffer Compared', especially 69–70.

than Schaeffer was able to access, built upon his achievements. Nancy Pearcey is the finest example of this. Pearcey’s book *Total Truth*<sup>348</sup> harnesses Schaeffer’s basic two-storey model and the fundamentals of his historical analysis and with it provides a fuller and more accurate account of how ideas helped create the society that we inhabit today.

**8. Divided-Life Christianity**

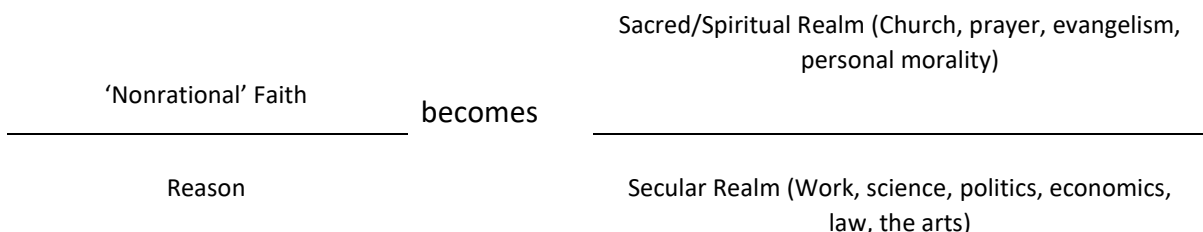
One of the strengths of Schaeffer’s two-storey analysis of western thought is that it provides a useful tool for explaining divided-life Christianity. If we take Figure 5 a-d (above) and develop it logically to a further stage (Figure 6), the sacred or spiritual resides in the upper storey and the secular in the lower (Figure 6e):

*Figure 6 Spheres of Divided-Life*

(a) Non-rational Faith	(b) Private_Sphere	(c) Values	(d) Feelings	(e) Sacred/Spiritual
Rational Nature	Public Sphere	Facts	Realm of True/False	Secular

In the event of the church becoming beholden to modern thought, combining (a) and (e) demonstrates how naturally a divided-life Christianity emerges (Figure 7):

*Figure 7 Divided-life Christianity*



<sup>348</sup> 20-22; 101-109.

Figure 7 explains how, in the modern world, religion or faith (in the upper storey) can very naturally be considered to belong to a sacred or spiritual realm outside of the domain of reason and true/false categories. It is here that we place the church, prayer, evangelism, morality, and mission endeavour. For many Christians, this realm becomes the very definition of Christ's kingdom. Conversely, placed in the lower storey, is the kingdom of the world, the domain of the secular, which is beyond the interests of the church. Into this we place the public world of work, science, politics, economics, law, and the arts. In this paradigm Christ seeks to redeem only the upper storey; the lower is neutral and outside of his concerns.

## **9. Conclusions: Recovering Whole-of-life Christianity**

All that remains to be done in this chapter is to take the two-storey model and harness it to demonstrate Schaeffer's own rejection of divided-life Christianity and his embrace of whole-of-life Christianity.

As noted earlier, Schaeffer's most frequent way of explaining and commending whole-of-life Christianity is to point backwards and specifically to the period of the reformation. It was this era, he maintains, that most successfully recovered a true Christianity, one with a grace/nature configuration which unified the whole of life.<sup>349</sup> Both grace and nature were afforded their proper place: God through His word informed the realm of nature, which was rightly seen as the creation of God, something to be embraced and enjoyed, not escaped from. Schaeffer writes,

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<sup>349</sup> *EFR*, 217-224.

What the Reformation tells us, therefore, is that God has spoken in the Scriptures concerning both the “upstairs” and “downstairs”. He has spoken in a true revelation concerning nature – the cosmos and man. Therefore, the reformers had a real unity of knowledge. They simply did not have the Renaissance problem of nature and grace! They had a real unity, not because they were clever, but because they had a unity on the basis of what God had revealed in both areas. In contrast to humanism there was, for the Reformation, no autonomous portion.<sup>350</sup>

Burson and Walls summarise Schaeffer’s solution to the nature and grace issue as follows:

The Reformers simply had no epistemological challenge, for verbal, propositional revelation solves the universals-particular problem. In Scripture God speaks about himself (grace) and history and the cosmos (nature) providing a unified body of knowledge and meaning. Schaeffer believes ‘the strength of the Christian system – the acid test of it – is that everything fits under the apex of the existing, infinite personal God, and it is the only system in the world where this is true. Everything fits universals and particulars.’<sup>351</sup>

Following his insistence that *grace informs and transforms* nature, Schaeffer taught that God was interested in all of life: from prayer to farming; from church to artistic endeavour. In typical fashion Schaeffer fails to quote the reformers he commends.<sup>352</sup> But there is little doubt that he is correct in reminding us that the reformers discounted the medieval division between ‘spiritual’ callings and ‘non-spiritual’ callings. Moreover, they sought to impute to the word ‘vocation’ a new context; no longer would the word vocation be reserved for the office of the priest but widened to any work that God assigns to a person where he serves Christ and neighbour. Moreover, in the embrace of his or her God-appointed vocation, the person finds purpose. John Calvin writes ‘[Each person] Has their own kind of living assigned to them by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that they may not heedlessly wander about through life [...] [moreover] the Lord’s calling is the beginning and

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<sup>350</sup> EFR, 220.

<sup>351</sup> Burson and Walls, 194-195.

<sup>352</sup> Referencing sources was not Schaeffer’s strong point.

foundation of well-being.<sup>353</sup> Tellingly, Calvin adds, ‘That no task will be so sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God’s sight.’<sup>354</sup> On work, Martin Luther was arguably even more practical than Calvin, writing,

Hence I advise no man, yea, I dissuade every man from entering into the priesthood or any religious order, unless he be so fortified with knowledge as to understand that, however sacred and lofty may be the works of priests or of the religious orders, they differ not at all in the sight of God from the works of a husbandman labouring in his field, or of a woman attending to her household affairs, but that in His eyes all things are measured by faith alone.<sup>355</sup>

It was doubtless this ‘whole of life mattering to God’ approach to Christianity prevalent in the reformers that Schaeffer prized so highly.

Critics of Schaeffer have suggested that he idealised the protestant reformation, seeing it as a golden era that we should seek to emulate in the present.<sup>356</sup> This charge will be explored in more detail in chapter 7, but it needs to be emphasised that Schaeffer’s writings abound with caveats concerning the reformation . The following is typical:

The Reformation was certainly not a golden age. It was far from perfect, and in many ways it did not act consistently with the Bible's teaching [...] For example [...] mistakes were made as Luther’s unbalanced position in regard to the peasant wars, and the Reformers showed little zeal for reaching people in other parts of the world with the Christian message. Yet [...] they did return to the Bible’s instruction and the example of the early church.<sup>357</sup>

Although Schaeffer’s advocacy of a whole-of-life approach to Christianity was significantly rooted in the history of the reformation, he often explained his ideas in more

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<sup>353</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion Vol. 1*, ed. by John Thomas McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 3.10.6.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Regimen Books Christian Classics (Vision Press, 2017), viii, p. 84.

<sup>356</sup> Mark A Noll, ‘When Bad Books Happen to God Causes: A Review Article’, *The Reformed Journal*, May 1984, 27.

<sup>357</sup> HSWTL, 123.

contemporary terms. For example, in 1981, during a lecture given at the University of Notre Dame, Schaeffer remarked:

Christianity is not a series of truths in the plural, but rather truth spelled with a capital "T." *Truth about total reality, not just about religious things.* Biblical Christianity is Truth concerning total reality – and the intellectual holding of that total Truth and then living in the light of that Truth.<sup>358</sup>

We are now in a position to summarise the key ingredients of Schaeffer's own upper and lower storey understanding. For him, nature and grace are not separated from one another but find their integration in the existence of the Infinite-personal God, the term he coined for the God of Scripture.<sup>359</sup> Since God is the Creator of the whole earth, there is no domain that falls outside of divine revelation; the Bible speaks to all of life, not just some spiritual realm. Consequently, nothing is autonomous, neutral, or secular. Schaeffer writes,

With propositional revelation from the personal God before us, not only the things of the cosmos and history match up, but everything on the upper and lower storeys matches too: grace and nature; a moral absolute and morals; the universal reference point and particulars, and the emotional and aesthetic realities of man as well.<sup>360</sup>

Accordingly, for Schaeffer, the Bible speaks to, or at least sets the context for, the study of every subject from art to economics to law. Grace operating through Scriptural revelation enlightens nature, enabling us to make sense of it. In the comment made at the University of Notre Dame, Schaeffer stresses that truth is not divided; all truth is God's truth, in both the upper and lower storeys.<sup>361</sup> The Christian message of redemption is not limited to some

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<sup>358</sup> Quoted by Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 15, EA.

<sup>359</sup> *WHHR*, 286-287.

<sup>360</sup> In *TGWIT*, 120, Schaeffer writes, 'With the propositional communication from the personal God before us, not only the things of the cosmos and history match up, but everything on the upper and lower stories matches too: grace and nature; a moral absolute and morals; the universal point of reference and the particulars, and the emotional and aesthetic realities of man as well'.

<sup>361</sup> Roberts writes, 'In both books [*TGWIT* and *EFR*] Schaeffer also points out the answer [to the division between grace and nature]. The Reformation of the sixteenth century recovered the Bible as truth in all areas of life; and, within the Christian concept of the personal-infinite God who is there and his Word which we can trust, there is real hope of a unified field of knowledge, real hope for unifying the particulars of life, and a real basis for morality. We need to return to Scripture.' 108.

narrow 'spiritual' realm. Instead, Christ is in the business of redeeming every area of life: marriage, family, art, economics, business, philosophy, government, law and so on.

Schaeffer's Christianity is truly a transformational Christianity.

Before completing this analysis, three points will be highlighted that provide critical commentary on how Schaeffer understood reality. Each one follows logically from his integrated view of truth and enunciates how countercultural his message is for the contemporary secular mind.

Firstly, for Schaeffer, the Christian message is a rational one,<sup>362</sup> operating in the realm of reason.<sup>363</sup> For instance, it is reasonable to believe that the universe is not accidental but is instead the result of the action of a wise and all-powerful Creator. It makes sense to believe that as God's image-bearers, human beings carry far greater significance than if they are merely a complex collection of molecules that emerged from slime by chance. The point is that for Schaeffer, Christian theism provides more intellectually convincing answers than the three major alternative worldviews of pantheism, atheism and paganism. This is what Schaeffer meant when he said that Christianity was reasonable to believe. Accordingly, faith in God is not a blind leap into the dark, but rather trust in a God who has demonstrated that it is reasonable to trust Him.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> *TGWIT*, 45.

<sup>363</sup> Schaeffer makes a distinction between rationality and rationalism and offers the following definitions: 'Rationalism [...] man can understand the universe by beginning from himself without any recourse to outside knowledge, specifically outside knowledge or revelation from God [...] rationality means that reason is valid. The first axiom in the classical concept of rational methodology is that A is A and A is not non-A. That is, if a proposition is true, then its opposite is not true [...] one should not confuse the terms rationalism and rationality, *DIC*, 121.

<sup>364</sup> Tellingly, one of the videos made to accompany his book, *A Christian Manifesto* is called, *Christian Apology for a Reasonable Worldview* (1982), <[https://archive.org/details/FrancisASchaefferAChristianManifesto\\_201609](https://archive.org/details/FrancisASchaefferAChristianManifesto_201609)> [accessed 04 November 2017].



Secondly, and related to the first point, Christianity is established by and in real events that occur in what Schaeffer called space-time history.<sup>365</sup> For Schaeffer, these events, whether the creation of the universe, or the bringing into being of the nation of Israel or the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, establish the Christian Faith in the world of history and fact rather than ideas that fail to have any reality beyond the minds of those who believe them. In order to establish this point, Schaeffer makes remarks which highlight the historicity and physicality of the cross:

Christ died in history. This is the point we have been making. He died in space, time, history. If you had been there that day, you could have taken your hand and rubbed it across the rough wood of the cross of Jesus Christ; you could have got a splinter in your hand from the cross.<sup>366</sup>

Schaeffer is seeking to counter the separation of faith and history and in particular the idea made popular by Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) that religion was some kind of imaginary wish-fulfilment.<sup>367</sup>

Thirdly, and related to the first two points, it follows that, for Schaeffer, Christianity makes a truth claim about reality. Essentially for him, Christianity is not a psychological prop to help the weak through life. Or to come at this from another angle, Christianity exists in the category of true and false; it is either true for everyone or false for everyone. As such, the Christian Gospel is public truth, not private truth confined to those who choose to believe it. The claims of Christianity are not preference, nor opinion nor feeling, but claims to objective knowledge that exists independently of the mind of any human being. It was for these reasons that Francis Schaeffer talked to his generation about 'the God who is

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<sup>365</sup> *TGWIT*, 17.

<sup>366</sup> *TS*, 234.

<sup>367</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (London: Kegan Paul, 1890).

[really ]there', rather than someone who simply exists as a figment of his or anyone else's imagination.<sup>368</sup>

Schaeffer's integrated view of grace and nature provides the intellectual foundation for his whole-of-life view of Christianity. All of life is God's domain, since He is the Creator of everything. Although all of life has been affected by the fall, through the work of Christ God seeks – and will accomplish – the redemption of the whole cosmos. This paradigm, this integration of grace and nature, this total truth, this affirmation of the universe as a creation of God, provides the foundation stone of the Schaeffer mind and, critically, for his whole-of-life theology.

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<sup>368</sup> This is the title of the first book in Schaeffer's Trilogy.

# Chapter 5

## Schaeffer's Doctrine of Humanity

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### 1. Introduction

Francis Schaeffer's commitment to whole-of-life Christianity can be demonstrated on several fronts. The previous chapter sought to explain how the two-storey model he developed for understanding reality assumes and demands a whole-of-life theology. This chapter will consider a second front: his theology of humanity, assembling it into a simple Biblical Theology following the biblical theological motifs of creation, fall, redemption and restoration.<sup>369</sup> Schaeffer never wrote anything that amounted to a comprehensive biblical<sup>370</sup> or systematic theology.<sup>371</sup> Accordingly, what he did write on the doctrine of humanity needs to be assembled from across his writings.

Schaeffer's understanding of human beings as created image-bearers of God lays a key foundation for his theology. From it flows his insistence that every person counts, as does their contribution and not just for those with a so-called 'spiritual' calling. However, Schaeffer's anthropology is never confined to creation. Although the creational intention of God is remarkable, to his mind it is deeply marred by a real historic fall. The remedy is redemption accomplished by Christ, whereby human beings are recreated to function with

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<sup>369</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen identify 'six acts' in the 'drama of scripture' spanning the Biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation: (1) the creation of the universe; (2) the fall of humankind; (3) the nation of Israel; (4) the person of Jesus Christ; (5) the mission of the church; and (6) the completion of God's redemptive plan at Christ's return. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2004), 22-23, 231-234. For the purposes of this study Schaeffer's theology fits four acts better: creation, fall, redemption and restoration.

<sup>370</sup> Arguably, Schaeffer produced the beginnings of a Biblical theology with his commentaries on Genesis and Joshua. Jerram Barrs has attempted to assemble Schaeffer's Biblical Theology. See Barrs, *Biblical Theology*.

<sup>371</sup> Schaeffer's *BBS* represents a basic introduction to systematic theology, 319-370.

dignity and purpose in a world created for their benefit and enjoyment. It is these markers that underpin Schaeffer's doctrine of humanity.

Schaeffer's high view of human beings is captured in these words:

'Man<sup>372</sup> is not just a chance configuration of atoms in the slipstream of meaningless chance history. No. Man, made in the image of God, has a purpose – to be in relationship with the God who is there [...] Man forgets his purpose, and thus he forgets who he is and what life means.'<sup>373</sup>

Dennis Hollinger argues that Schaeffer's emphasis on human dignity and significance represents his *Summum Bonum*. He writes:

[t]here is one major value that Schaeffer eulogizes above all others – human dignity. In fact, although there are secondary values and concepts that he readily employs in ethical analysis, human dignity is the moral value and principle which he sets forth systematically [...] The linchpin for Schaeffer is clearly theological anthropology [...] it is this aspect of the Christian framework that most strikingly distinguishes it from Western materialist – humanist schemes or Eastern "impersonal" views of reality.<sup>374</sup>

In what follows I seek to build in stages Schaeffer's doctrine – even celebration – of humanity. Each section provides underpinning for the subsequent one.

## 2. Rejection of a Naturalistic Anthropology

A central tenet of any coherent worldview is a person's perspective on what a human being is essentially. Schaeffer was aware of this: 'Every man lives in tension until he finds a satisfactory answer to the problem of who he is'.<sup>375</sup> And again, 'Any system of

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<sup>372</sup> Schaeffer was writing before the widespread adoption of inclusive language. In using the term 'man', he meant men and women. In the preface to Volume 1 of his *Complete Works*, he apologizes if his use of 'man' causes offense or is mistakenly considered to be to the exclusion of women, CW 1, x.

<sup>373</sup> *DIC*, 214.

<sup>374</sup> Dennis p. Hollinger, 'Schaeffer on Ethics' in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, ed. Ronald W. Ruesegger (Grand Rapids: Academie Books), 248-249.

<sup>375</sup> *TGWIT*, 93.

thought, to be taken seriously, has to at least try to explain the two great phenomena of the universe and man'.<sup>376</sup>

Across Schaeffer's writings, and especially his Trilogy,<sup>377</sup> a deliberate pattern is observable: he first sets out what he rejects before establishing his own position. He writes, 'We may say that there is a time, and ours is such a time, when a negative message is needed before anything positive can begin.'<sup>378</sup> What then is Schaeffer's negative message? Although he engages a little with eastern transcendentalism and expresses his concerns,<sup>379</sup> Schaeffer's main target is philosophical naturalism with all its entailments. Naturalism – with its insistence on reducing the universe and humanity with it to some cosmic accident – is to his mind a disaster for human welfare.

Schaeffer defines a naturalistic anthropology as one where human beings are merely the product of an impersonal universe, 'plus time, plus chance'<sup>380</sup> and insists that this reduces people, 'to a zero'.<sup>381</sup> By this he means that human beings are left without value or dignity. Another way he expresses these ideas is by saying that naturalism reduces human beings to the status of a machine,

In our time, humanism has replaced Christianity as the consensus of the West. This has many results, not the least of which is to change people's view of themselves and their attitudes toward other human beings. Here is how the change came about. Having rejected God, humanistic scientists, philosophers and professors began to teach that only what can be measured mathematically is real and that all of reality is like a machine. Man is more complicated than the machines that people make, but is still a machine, nevertheless.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> *TGWIT*, 179.

<sup>377</sup> The Trilogy consists of three books: *TGWIT*, *EFR*, *HTNS*.

<sup>378</sup> *DIC*, 251.

<sup>379</sup> See for example, *TGWIT*, 110.

<sup>380</sup> *EFR*, 266.

<sup>381</sup> *HTNS*, 313.

<sup>382</sup> *HTNS*, 285.

On this point, Schaeffer cites the co-discoverer of DNA, the late Francis Crick. Crick, writes Schaeffer, '[r]educed man to the chemical and physical properties that go to make up the DNA template [...] an electro-chemical machine.'<sup>383</sup> For Schaeffer, the consequence is a purely deterministic view of human existence: '[In this worldview] man is considered to be programmed.'<sup>384</sup> If humans are just machines, Schaeffer infers, choice and the ability to shape one's environment and history are merely illusionary.

Schaeffer is sceptical of the claim that humans have the capacity to create meaning and purpose in the face of an impersonal universe,<sup>385</sup> insisting that, without theology to make sense of the universe, 'Man is left to 'build out from himself, having only himself as his integration point, to find knowledge, meaning and value.'<sup>386</sup> This line of reasoning leads Schaeffer to argue that the historical departure from a Judeo-Christian understanding of human existence to one shaped by philosophical naturalism has resulted in an existential crisis for the West. He writes: 'If people are not made in the image of God, the pessimistic realistic humanist is right: the human race is an abnormal wart on the face of a silent and meaningless universe.'<sup>387</sup> And again, 'The dilemma of modern man is simple: he does not know why man has any meaning. He is lost. Man remains a zero. This is the damnation of our generation, the heart of modern man's problem.'<sup>388</sup>

### 3. Schaeffer's Doctrine of God

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<sup>383</sup> *BTFAD*, 362.

<sup>384</sup> *TGWIT*, 113.

<sup>385</sup> As for example might be suggested by the existential philosophy popular at the time of his writing.

<sup>386</sup> *TGWIT*, 8.

<sup>387</sup> *GED*, 405.

<sup>388</sup> *HTNS*, 285.

The key to understanding Schaeffer's doctrine of humanity rests upon grasping his doctrine of God and especially God as a Trinity of Persons. Since Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 speak of creation occurring 'In the beginning', Schaeffer coins the term, 'Before the beginning'<sup>389</sup> to describe what existed prior to creation, namely God.<sup>390</sup> For him understanding Who existed before the beginning is the key to understanding who we are. Although he fails to quote him on this point, Schaeffer's understanding of humanity is in keeping with that of John Calvin: 'It is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face.'<sup>391</sup>

Concerned that the term 'God' – used without qualification – is too generic and open to interpretation, throughout his writings and lectures, Schaeffer refers to the God of the Bible as, 'The Infinite-personal God'.<sup>392</sup> In doing so, Schaeffer seeks to add content to who God is as well as suggest that God's infinity and personhood are the most important things about Him. Each will be considered in turn.

Schaeffer's use of the word, 'infinite' as an attribute of God, is somewhat unconventional, even clumsy. The usual use of the term is that God is not subject to the limitations of time and space, as are things within the creation.<sup>393</sup> But Schaeffer does not use it in this way. Rather, what he seems to have in mind by God's infinity is His objective existence, that He exists from and of Himself.<sup>394</sup> Accordingly, Schaeffer defines God's

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<sup>389</sup> As far as I can ascertain, no one else used this phrase before him.

<sup>390</sup> See for example, *GITAS*, 8.

<sup>391</sup> Calvin, *Institutes Vol. 1*, I.1.1.

<sup>392</sup> He uses this designation more than 60 times. Schaeffer, Index to CW, CW5, 552.

<sup>393</sup> For a discussion of God's infinity, see Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All* (Joplin, Mo: College Press Pub, 2002), 73-74.

<sup>394</sup> This is known as God's aseity.

infinity in the following way: 'This means that God exists objectively; He exists whether or not people say He does.'<sup>395</sup> Or again,

On the side of God's infinity, He stands alone. He is the absolute other. He is, in His infinity, contrary to all else. He is differentiated from all else because only He is infinite. He is the Creator; all else was created. He is infinite; all else is finite. All else is brought forth by creation; so all else is dependent and only He is independent.<sup>396</sup>

On the second word, 'personal', Schaeffer is keen to stress that God is a Someone rather than a Something, and as a consequence the world does not have an impersonal origin. He writes, '*God* is not just a theological term; he is not a "philosophical other". He is a personal God.'<sup>397</sup> And from this point, Schaeffer harnesses the doctrine of the Trinity as the key factor in God's personhood.

Let us understand that the beginning of Christianity is not salvation: it is the existence of the Trinity. Before there was anything else, God existed as personal in the high order of the Trinity. So there was communication and love between the persons of the Trinity before all else. This is the beginning.<sup>398</sup>

For Schaeffer, God is a God of Persons in relationship. Commenting on the Nicene Creed he writes: 'Three Persons, One God. Rejoice that they chose the word "person". Whether you realise it or not, they catapulted the Nicene Creed right into our century and its discussions: three Persons in existence, loving each other, and in communication with each other, before all else was'.<sup>399</sup>

In the face of people asking how he can believe in a Triune God, Schaeffer is assertive: 'I would still be an agnostic if there were no Trinity, because there would be no answers. Without the high order of personal unity and diversity as given in the Trinity, *there*

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<sup>395</sup> *GED*, 392.

<sup>396</sup> *HTNS*, 288.

<sup>397</sup> *CETC*, 142, EIO.

<sup>398</sup> *CETC*, 39.

<sup>399</sup> *HTNS*, 289. By 'catapulted the Nicene Creed right into our century', Schaeffer means that the doctrine of the Trinity speaks to the contemporary issue of what a human person is.



*are no answers*'.<sup>400</sup> Schaeffer is doubtless stretching a point; many Israelites of the Old Testament believed in God in the absence of Trinitarian understanding. But his wider point is helpful. In saying that without the Trinity there are no answers is an acknowledgement that philosophical systems have difficulty coping with both unity and diversity, tending to swing one way or the other. Stressing unity risks pantheism with the loss of the individual; stressing diversity and it becomes hard to know how things relate to one another. For Schaeffer this problem of unity *and* diversity is resolved by grasping the nature of God: Three Persons yet so interconnected that there is only one God.<sup>401</sup>

Schaeffer was never a theorist only; he always applied his thinking, and none more so than when discussing the doctrine of God. He writes: 'The infinite-personal God is there, but also He is not silent; that changes the whole world.'<sup>402</sup> But for Schaeffer, not only does the doctrine of God change the world, it also explains the world; for reality to make sense, this world demands the existence of the God of the Bible.

#### 4. Schaeffer's Doctrine of Humanity Created

Moving on from the doctrine of God to his doctrine of humanity, we need to ask what it means for humans to be created. For Schaeffer it is the *imago dei* that controls his thinking and is what differentiates human beings from the rest of creation. The Infinite-personal God must consider humans significant to impute them with the stamp of who He is, and it is from this point that we derive our highest dignity. Schaeffer writes:

We must understand that the question of the dignity of human life is not something on the periphery of the Judean-Christian thinking, but almost the centre of it (though

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<sup>400</sup> *HTNS*, 288, EIO.

<sup>401</sup> Although Schaeffer doesn't reference Cornelius Van Til, his line of reasoning is classic Van Tillian. Cf. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1985), 24.

<sup>402</sup> *HTNS*, 276.

not the centre because the centre is the existence of God Himself). But the dignity of human life is unbreakably linked to the existence of the personal-infinite God. It is because there is a personal-infinite God who has made men and women in His own image that they have a unique dignity of life as human beings.<sup>403</sup>

The dignity Schaeffer finds in humanity and the way it shaped his personal dealing with people is explained well in a personal anecdote,

[On one occasion I was] introduced to a boy who had been on drugs [...] I greeted him. He looked me in the eyes and said, "Sir, that was a beautiful greeting. Why did you greet me like that?" I said, "Because I know who you are – I know you are made in the image of God." We then had a tremendous conversation [...] We cannot deal with people like human beings, we cannot deal with them on the high level of true humanity unless we really know their origin – who they are. God tells man who he is. God tells us that He created man in His image. So man is something wonderful.<sup>404</sup>

The dignity afforded to human beings by being made in God's image is a recurring theme for Schaeffer. He writes, '[every person is] unique and special, worthwhile and irreplaceable.'<sup>405</sup> And again,

[we must show by our actions], that every life is sacred and worthwhile in itself – not only to us as human beings, but also precious to God. Every person is worth fighting for, regardless of whether he is young or old, sick or well, child or adult, born or unborn, or brown, red, yellow, black or white.<sup>406</sup>

On another occasion Schaeffer comments, 'Cultures can be judged in many ways, but eventually every nation in every age must be judged by this test, how did it treat people?'<sup>407</sup>

It follows that if humanity is created in the image of God, some consideration needs to be given to what attributes or qualities it was made to image. Casting back to what existed 'before the beginning', Schaeffer suggests that the two most fundamental intra-Trinitarian characteristics are love and communication. Schaeffer's point is that love and

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<sup>403</sup> *CM*, 455.

<sup>404</sup> *EFR*, 219.

<sup>405</sup> *WHHR*, 281.

<sup>406</sup> *GED*, 322.

<sup>407</sup> *WHHR*, 281.

communication, intrinsic to the being of God, existed even before the world was created. He writes, 'The Persons of the Trinity communicated with each other and loved each other before the creation of the world.'<sup>408</sup> Moreover, God created human beings in such a way that these fundamental attributes of the Godhead are communicable to his creatures. Since God is love, human beings made in His image can love; since there always has been communication within the Godhead, human beings made in His image can communicate. He writes, 'And God has made man in His own image, and part of making man in His own image is that man is a verbaliser.'<sup>409</sup> The point of his line of reasoning is that human beings – by creation – possess remarkable gifts which dignify the race of Adam and Eve. Moreover, since the Infinite-personal God is eternal, love and communication have always been; humanity – although created – possesses attributes that are themselves eternal and not the product of some evolutionary survival process.<sup>410</sup>

Although for Schaeffer, love and communication are central for what it means for us to be human and God's image bearers, he also suggests other attributes that are meaningful for humans to be humans. Creativity and morality are frequently mentioned:

Man was made in God's image. This is man's glory, and it is that which sets him off from other creatures. What does it mean that man is made in God's image? Well, among other things it certainly means this: man is moral. This means that he can make moral choices. Also, man is creative – we find that men everywhere make works of art. It is also the reason why he loves.<sup>411</sup>

In *Death in the City*, Schaeffer says something similar. Asking what makes humans distinct from 'animals and machines', he comments,

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<sup>408</sup> *HTNS*, 289.

<sup>409</sup> *HTNS*, 326.

<sup>410</sup> *HTNS*, 289.

<sup>411</sup> *BBS*, 329.

Man is distinguished [...] on the basis of his creativity, his moral motions, his need for love, his fear of non-being, and his longings for beauty and for meaning. Only the Biblical system has a way of explaining these factors which make man unique.<sup>412</sup>

As this section has demonstrated, Schaeffer's application of the doctrine of God is invariably connected to his doctrine of humanity. Doubtless purists would argue that he is neglectful of a sense of God as 'He is in Himself'. Nevertheless, it is a measure of his pastoral and evangelistic heart that Schaeffer seems unable to think of God without thinking of humans. For Schaeffer, grasping God is the key to grasping humanity. Only in knowing God can we comprehend our identity, realise our predicament, and find restoration. It is the latter two matters that we turn to now.

## 5. An Historic Fall

Whilst Francis Schaeffer harnesses the *imago dei* found in Genesis 1 and 2 to explain the value and dignity of humankind, he seizes the account of the fall found in Genesis 3 to account for its tragedy. For Schaeffer, evil and its consequences are an abnormality in the world; not the way it was created to be.<sup>413</sup> And the origin of that evil is found in the first humans disobeying their Creator in what he calls 'a true, space-time, historical Fall'.<sup>414</sup> What Schaeffer means by a real historic fall is that Genesis 3 describes an historical event rather than something mythological. Adam and Eve were the first real persons; this is what he means by, 'real man in real history'.<sup>415</sup> But we note that while Schaeffer spoke of a 'historic space-time Fall', he did not mean by this that the fall could be given a date.<sup>416</sup> For Schaeffer, Adam and Eve were the product of God's special creation, not theistic

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<sup>412</sup> *DIC*, 268.

<sup>413</sup> *GED*, 384.

<sup>414</sup> *HTNS*, 304.

<sup>415</sup> *GITAS*, 49.

<sup>416</sup> *HSWTL*, 114.

evolution.<sup>417</sup> Schaeffer leaves open the question of the length of the days of creation, commenting, 'If anyone wonders what my own position is, I really am not sure whether the days in Genesis 1 should be taken as twenty four hours or as periods. It seems to me that from a study of the Bible itself, one could hold either position.'<sup>418</sup> He did however reject the notion that the universe began with the 'big bang'.<sup>419</sup> In reality, in his analysis of Genesis 1-3, Schaeffer offers little in the way of discussion of the complexities posed by the fossil record, geological time or genetics. Nor is there discussion about the theological questions as to when death commenced in the creation.

Schaeffer connects the possibility of evil with the *imago dei*; humans possess the dignity of choice, even if the results are catastrophic.<sup>420</sup> Writing in *Genesis in Time and Space*, Schaeffer explains the fall in this way:

By the action of one man in a historic, space-time situation, sin entered into the world of men. But this is not just a theoretical statement that gives us a reasonable and sufficient answer to man's present dilemma, explaining how the world can be so evil and God still be good. It is that in reality, from this time on, man *was* and *is* a sinner. Though some men do not like this teaching, the Bible continues like a sledgehammer, driving home the fact that evil has entered into the world of man, all men are now sinners, all men now sin.<sup>421</sup>

When coming to the question of the existence of evil and suffering, although Schaeffer is associated with the Reformed tradition,<sup>422</sup> he cannot be considered a Calvinist in the strict sense of the term. To his mind, the fall was neither decreed nor inevitable. In *Basic Bible Studies*, Schaeffer stresses the centrality of human agency in Adam and Eve's rebellion:

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<sup>417</sup> For a helpful overview of the complexities surrounding Adam, see *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, ed. by Matthew M. Barrett (Zondervan, 2013).

<sup>418</sup> *GITAS*, 34.

<sup>419</sup> *GITAS*, 17.

<sup>420</sup> *PDM*, 53.

<sup>421</sup> *GITAS*, 61.

<sup>422</sup> Schaeffer was a life-long Presbyterian.

God made man. Man's body and soul were good. Man had a true unprogrammed choice by which he could show his love for God by obedience [...] He was given a simple test so that he could demonstrate his love and obedience. Adam and Eve sinned. Since then all people, you and I, have personally sinned.<sup>423</sup>

Schaeffer would likely not have agreed with Calvin's remark, 'I acknowledge that this is my doctrine – that Adam fell not only by the permission of God but by His secret'<sup>424</sup> In fact, Schaeffer's view that Adam and Eve possessed the power of contrary choice,<sup>425</sup> coupled with his free will defence to explain existence of evil,<sup>426</sup> are more in keeping with Jacob Arminius<sup>427</sup> than Calvin.<sup>428</sup> Schaeffer writes,

Christianity's answer [to the problem of evil] rests in the historic [...] Fall [...] there was an unprogrammed man who made a choice, and actually rebelled against God. Once you remove this you have to face Baudelaire's profound statement, 'If there is a God, He is the Devil.'<sup>429</sup>

As far as Schaeffer is concerned, evil and suffering are the price of giving Adam and Eve free will, that their love for their Creator may be genuine, not mechanical.<sup>430</sup>

In his commentary on Genesis, Schaeffer spells out four consequences resulting from Adam and Eve's disobedience. The first is guilt before God;<sup>431</sup> second, God's judgement upon humankind and nature;<sup>432</sup> third, an abnormal universe;<sup>433</sup> and finally, what he calls separations: between God and humans; humans from themselves, one human being from

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<sup>423</sup> *BBS*, 331.

<sup>424</sup> Jean Calvin, Paul Helm, and Keith Goad, *The Secret Providence of God*, New ed. (Crossway Books, 2010), p. 65.

<sup>425</sup> *BBS*, 331.

<sup>426</sup> *TGWIT*, 117.

<sup>427</sup> Jacob Arminius, *The Works of Jacobus Arminius Volume 1* (Devoted Publishing, 2017), p. 96.

<sup>428</sup> For a discussion of Schaeffer's view of free will, providence and suffering, see Burson and Walls, 219-226.

<sup>429</sup> *EFR*, 262.

<sup>430</sup> This is called the free will defence, see *TGWIT*, 117. For an account of the free will defence, see Jack Cottrell, *God the Ruler* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1984), 397-405.

<sup>431</sup> *GITAS*, 64.

<sup>432</sup> *GITAS*, 65.

<sup>433</sup> *GITAS*, 66.

another and lastly human separation from nature.<sup>434</sup> Schaeffer feels the existential force of sin and human alienation, commenting,

The Bible teaches that though man is helplessly lost, he is not nothing. Man is lost because he is separated from God, his true reference point, by true moral guilt. But he will never be nothing. Therein lies the horror of his lostness. For man to be lost, in all his uniqueness and wonder is tragic.<sup>435</sup>

Even though Schaeffer stresses human lostness and tragedy, he refuses to miss an opportunity to point out a positive implication of the fall. The very fact that the first humans could impact the world so dramatically signifies significance. He comments, 'Man as created in God's image is therefore a significant man in significant history, who can choose to obey the commandment of God and love Him, *or revolt against Him*'.<sup>436</sup> The fall, he insists, testifies that human beings have the power to write history. He comments,

Man is wonderful: he can really influence significant history. Since God has made man in His own image man is not caught in the wheels of determinism. Rather, man is so great that he can influence history for himself and for others, for this life and the life to come.<sup>437</sup>

Moreover, although the image is marred, it is not eradicated:

The fact that man has fallen does not mean that he has ceased to bear God's image. He has not ceased to be man because he is fallen. He can love, though he is fallen. It would be a mistake to say that only a Christian can love [...] So it is a truly wonderful thing that although man is twisted and corrupted and lost as a result of the Fall, yet he is still man. He has become neither a machine nor an animal nor a plant. The marks of 'mannishness'<sup>438</sup> are still upon him – love, rationality, longing for significance, fear of nonbeing, and so on.<sup>439</sup>

## 6. The God who Speaks

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<sup>434</sup> *GITAS*, 69-71.

<sup>435</sup> *EFR*, 267-68.

<sup>436</sup> *TGWIT*, 113, EA.

<sup>437</sup> *DIC*, 258.

<sup>438</sup> The 'mannishness of man' is a term coined and used by Schaeffer to describe the uniqueness of human beings over and against the rest of the creation. Cf. *TGWIT*, 178.

<sup>439</sup> *EFR*, 266-67.

Essential to Schaeffer's theological understanding of human beings is his commitment to divine revelation. Indeed, the entirety of his theological thinking rests upon it, including God's plan of redemption. He writes,

The infinite-personal God, the God who is Trinity, has spoken. He is there and He is not silent. There is no use having a silent God. We would know nothing about Him. He has spoken and told us what He is and that He existed before all else, and so we have the answer to the existence of what is.<sup>440</sup>

For Schaeffer, it is because God is really there, and He is not silent, that beings created in His image can find answers to the great questions of life. In particular, as we saw above, it is because humans are created in the image of God that verbal revelation from God to humanity is possible.

Before coming to verbal revelation, we will consider Schaeffer's comments on general revelation. In Schaeffer's thought, God has revealed His existence in creation, and His moral nature via the human conscience. Commenting on Romans 1: 19-20, Schaeffer writes, 'The point is that "From the creation" [...] the things that God has made are a testimony to His being, to His goodness and to His personality.'<sup>441</sup> Elsewhere he remarks,

God's external creation speaks of Himself. We properly reject pantheism, but the orthodox man is in danger of forgetting that God has created the objective world – all the parts of His external creation – so that it speaks of Himself. The external, objective universe does speak of Him. While God is not the world, the world is created by God and speaks about God.<sup>442</sup>

Schaeffer develops his theology of creation's revelatory significance in this way,

The believer [...] should know there is a God simply by observing the amazing creation around him. He is not living in a dark cave. He can see creation all around him and surely, he must wonder where it all came from [...] The Bible emphasises many times that creation is a testimony to God. Even those who do not have the Bible should be able to conclude from creation that there is a God [...] As Paul shows,

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<sup>440</sup> *HTNS*, 291.

<sup>441</sup> *GITAS*, 42.

<sup>442</sup> *CBWW*, 136.



creation reveals knowledge to the rational person – who can't escape his rationality even though he is a rebel.<sup>443</sup>

Commenting on Acts 14:17, Schaeffer writes,

Here Paul focuses not so much on creation as a past event, but on creation as the present good providence of God. Jesus likewise speaks of the rain falling on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). Paul is challenging nonbelievers, not just on the basis of the creation's witness as a past event, but also on the basis of the witness of a creation that bathes them with sun and bathes their fields with rain and dew. [...] It isn't just that our world had a first cause, but that we are surrounded with the good things of God. He fills our every human need, and this should be ample testimony to His existence.<sup>444</sup>

Staying with general revelation, we move on from creation to the human conscience.

Schaeffer sees the conscience as a means by which human beings have a sense of God's moral reality and of our moral failure before a holy God. He writes,

He [God] says to the Gentile nonbeliever, 'Even though you have never seen a Bible, you have a conscience and you know that you have violated it. You're not a machine. You're not a robot. You're not an animal. You can't excuse yourself by animal psychology. You know you have a conscience and you know that you have violated it'.<sup>445</sup>

We turn now from general to special revelation. As would be expected from an evangelical Christian forged in the Presbyterian mould, Schaeffer reserves his most frequent and detailed discussion of divine revelation for Scriptural revelation. His commitment to the authority of Scripture is unequivocal. Approvingly quoting John Bunyan's character Hopeful in 'Pilgrim's Progress', he writes, 'Concerning that book [the Bible] [...] every jot and tittle thereof stood firmer than heaven and earth.'<sup>446</sup> For Schaeffer, the believer's personal relationship with a personal God is based upon His written, propositional communication to

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<sup>443</sup> *FWC*, 31-32.

<sup>444</sup> *FWC*, 32.

<sup>445</sup> *FWC*, 31.

<sup>446</sup> *TGWIT*, 147.

humankind.<sup>447</sup> He writes, ‘No one stresses more than I that people have no final answers in regard to truth, morals or epistemology without God’s revelation in the Bible.’<sup>448</sup> Aware of the challenge from the liberal and neo-orthodoxy theology of his day, Schaeffer is unapologetic in his defence of verbal propositional revelation. For him God has spoken to humanity in true and false categories that connect up with the very fabric of reality that He has created. Commenting on the giving of the law at Sinai recorded in the Book of Exodus, Schaeffer writes,

Moses says to the people, ‘You saw; you heard.’ What they heard (along with other things) was a verbalised propositional communication from God to man, in a definite, historic space-time situation. It was not some kind of contentless, existential experience, nor an anti-intellectual leap.<sup>449</sup>

Forever contending that Scripture is true to reality and not just a book of ‘religious’ language disconnected from ordinary existence, Schaeffer writes,

I find that many people who are evangelical and orthodox want truth just to be true to the dogmas, or to be true to what the Bible says. Nobody stands more for the full inspiration of Scripture than I, but this is not the end of truth as Christianity is presented, as the Bible presents itself. *The truth of Christianity is that it is true to what is there* [...] when evangelicalism catches that – we may have our revolution. We will begin to have something beautiful and alive, something which will have force in our poor, lost world.<sup>450</sup>

Almost as if he anticipated the coming postmodern scepticism towards universal truth claims, Schaeffer coined the phrase ‘true truth’ to describe truth that is applicable to everyone, everywhere, in every culture.<sup>451</sup> This was his way of saying that there exists truth that is not constructed by a culture but is instead anchored in the being of our Creator. For him, it is this truth that is communicated in verbal form in the Bible.

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<sup>447</sup> *TGWIT*, 17.

<sup>448</sup> *TGWIT*, 184.

<sup>449</sup> *EFR*, 267.

<sup>450</sup> *HTNS*, 290, EIO.

<sup>451</sup> *HTNS*, 312-313.

Although Schaeffer omits a technical discussion on the ability of language to transmit revelation, he draws upon both the Trinity and creation to explain how he thinks language possesses this capacity. Stating that human beings are inherent verbalisers, he comments, 'The Bible says, and the Christian position says, I can tell you why [man is a verbaliser]: God is a personal-infinite God. There has always been communication before the creation of all else, in the Trinity.'<sup>452</sup> From here Schaeffer connects communication within the Godhead to the *imago dei*. He writes,

In historic Christianity a personal God creates man in His own image, and in such a case there is nothing that would make it nonsense to consider that He would not communicate to man in verbalised form. Why should He not communicate in verbalised form when he has made man a verbalising being, in his thoughts as well as in communication with other men?<sup>453</sup>

Of special importance for this study is Schaeffer's stance that it is via Scriptural propositional revelation that God speaks to the whole of life rather than to a narrow 'spiritual' subset of life. He writes, 'God has spoken in a linguistic propositional form, truth concerning Himself and truth concerning man, history and the universe. There is a unity because God has spoken truth into all areas of knowledge.'<sup>454</sup> Moreover, for Schaeffer it is Scripture that 'joins up' the world and gives it an integrated meaning. He writes,

Neither the abnormal external world<sup>455</sup> nor the abnormal 'mannishness' of man can give the answer to the whole meaning of the created order [...] With the propositional communication from the personal God before us, not only the things of the cosmos and history match up, but everything on the upper and lower storeys<sup>456</sup> matches too; a moral absolute and morals; the universal point of

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<sup>452</sup> *HTNS*, 326.

<sup>453</sup> *TGWIT*, 99.

<sup>454</sup> *TGWIT*, 100.

<sup>455</sup> Abnormal due to its fallenness.

<sup>456</sup> Both grace and nature.

reference and the particulars, and the emotional and aesthetic realities of man as well.<sup>457</sup>

On another occasion, Schaeffer writes, 'As Christians we do have the answers to the questions posed by reality. But we have not thought up these answers – we know them from God's revelation.'<sup>458</sup> And again, 'Beginning with the Christian system as God has given it to men in the verbalized propositional revelation of the Bible one can move along and find that every area of life is touched by truth and a song.'<sup>459</sup>

A further way that Schaeffer expresses the world integrated under Scripture is by stating that there is no autonomous sphere to reality. Everything – both grace and nature – falls under the authority of Scripture, resulting in a unity of knowledge.<sup>460</sup> He writes, 'There is nothing autonomous – nothing independent from the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Scriptures. God made the whole man and is interested in the whole man, and the result is a unity.'<sup>461</sup>

Before moving on from the subject of Biblical revelation, a caveat is necessary. Despite Schaeffer's commitment to propositional Scriptural revelation, for him, true and false categories are never an end in themselves. The goal of Scriptural revelation is to come to know the One who is the Author of Scripture. He writes, 'The evangelical Christian needs to be careful because some evangelicals have recently been asserting that what matters is setting out to prove or disprove propositions; what matters is an encounter with Jesus.'<sup>462</sup>

## 7. From Fall to Redemption in Christ

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<sup>457</sup> *TGWIT*, 120.

<sup>458</sup> *TGWIT*, 185.

<sup>459</sup> *HTNS*, 275.

<sup>460</sup> *EFR*, 218, 220.

<sup>461</sup> *EFR*, 224.

<sup>462</sup> *EFR*, 258.

In this chapter so far, we have considered the doctrines of creation and fall in Schaeffer's thought, especially as they pertain to his doctrine of humanity. Comment now needs to be made about the other major component of a Biblical worldview: redemption. For Schaeffer the key to understanding redemption is the Person of Christ in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and session. God the Father graciously sends His Son into the world to redeem a lost race. So, for example, following his expositions of creation and fall – and with The Book of Revelation in view – Schaeffer writes, 'It is the Lamb of God who is able [...] to bring the needed change. The solution [to the fallenness of humanity] was Christ's redemptive work in history, in time and space, as the Lamb of God.'<sup>463</sup> And Christ's redemptive work offers salvation as a free gift of grace. Schaeffer writes,

But with Christianity we do not do anything; God has done it all. He has created us and He has sent us His Son; His Son died and because the Son is infinite, therefore he bears our total guilt. We do not need to bear our guilt, nor do we even have to merit the merit of Christ. He does it all.<sup>464</sup>

For Schaeffer, the Old Testament narrative is one of preparation for Christ's coming while the New Testament heralds and records his arrival and work. In *Basic Bible Studies*, he traces Scriptures from the Old Testament that predict the coming of the Messiah and Mediator who will reverse the effects of the fall and save all who put their trust in him.<sup>465</sup> Following these comments, Schaeffer takes time to spell out the offices of the messiah: prophet, priest and king. In his role as prophet, Jesus Christ, 'Revealed the things of God to man'<sup>466</sup> and in his royal role he is a great king.<sup>467</sup> But it is Schaeffer's comment on Christ's priestly role that is most applicable here:

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<sup>463</sup> *GITAS*, 45.

<sup>464</sup> *JFBH*, 182-3.

<sup>465</sup> *BBS*, 332-336.

<sup>466</sup> *BBS*, 334-337.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

If there is true moral guilt in the presence of a personal God [...] then perhaps there will be a solution from God's side. And God says to man that there is a solution. That solution rests upon God saying that He is holy and He is love, and in His love He has loved the world, and He sent His Son. Now in history, there on Calvary's cross, in space and time, Jesus died [...] This is the eternal Second Person of the Trinity – when He died, with the division that man has caused by his revolt now carried up into the Trinity itself, there in expiation, in propitiation and substitution, the true moral guilt is met by the infinite value of Jesus' death. Thus Jesus says: 'It is finished'.<sup>468</sup>

Schaeffer's doctrine of the atonement is very much focussed on penal satisfaction and substitution.<sup>469</sup> For him Jesus' death is both an expiation and a propitiation.<sup>470</sup>

Considering Schaeffer's approach was frequently pastoral in emphasis, at times one is left asking why he fails to engage with, for example, *Christus Victor* or Irenaeus' Recapitulation theory of the atonement.

As we ponder Schaeffer's doctrine of humanity, we recall that for Schaeffer great dignity is conferred upon human beings from being created in the image of God. Moreover, there is even dignity in the fall; human beings have a significance so great that they can wreck the world by their choices. But for Schaeffer there is greater dignity yet: being the object of God's plan of redemption through Christ. He writes:

He [man] has been separated from God by his true moral guilt, but he is not dead. Man is wonderful, made in the image of the personal God [...] And in the substitutionary death of Christ who died upon the cross in space and time and history, there is a way for our true moral guilt to be removed and for man to return to fellowship with God.<sup>471</sup>

Moving now from Christ's death to his resurrection, Schaeffer is resolutely committed to affirming the bodily resurrection of Christ and its significance. He writes, 'If you find the body of Christ, the discussion is finished; let us eat and drink for tomorrow we

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<sup>468</sup> *TGWIT*, 116.

<sup>469</sup> *BBS*, 340-342.

<sup>470</sup> *BBS*, 340-342.

<sup>471</sup> *CETC*, 50.

die.<sup>472</sup> Or again, ‘Christ’s body was raised from the dead. It could be touched, and he could eat. And this resurrection body is now somewhere [...] we believe in the ascension; the Bible tells us that the physically resurrected body of Christ is somewhere in the unseen world.’<sup>473</sup>

As with Christ’s death, Schaeffer connects his resurrection to his doctrine of humanity. He comments:

We are told in the Word of God, by the Apostle Paul, that in Christ’s resurrection we see the promise, the first fruits, of our own coming physical resurrection. What we see Him to be after his resurrection, Paul insists, *we shall be*. When I consider the resurrection of Jesus Christ [...] I have the promise from the hand of God Himself that I will be so raised from death. This body is so much of myself, in the total personality – the whole man – and it will not be left behind in the salvation that is brought forth through Jesus Christ [...] In one specific day, the Christian’s body will be raised from death, like Christ’s risen body, glorified.<sup>474</sup>

## 8. Restoration and Cosmic Significance

In Schaeffer’s thought it is through the work of Christ that human beings are redeemed, but that is not the end of the story. Redemption involves being reconciled to God, but the goal of redemption is not confined to humanity. Rather, it is the restoration of the whole cosmos. Schaeffer explains, ‘The Bible has no place at all for Platonic distinctions about nature. As Christ’s death redeems men, including their bodies, from all consequences of the Fall, so His death will redeem all nature from the Fall’s evil consequences.’<sup>475</sup>

For Schaeffer, a key goal of salvation is to liberate human beings from self-centred existence to the work of the redemption of the whole cosmos. Accordingly, redeemed human beings

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<sup>472</sup> *TGWIT*, 45.

<sup>473</sup> *PDM*, 33.

<sup>474</sup> *TS*, 234, EIO.

<sup>475</sup> *PDM*, 39.

are called to use their gifts and talents for the benefit of others. For Schaeffer, this impact is never confined to some narrow 'spiritual' segment of life but to the whole of God's creation.

As we saw above, Schaeffer is adamant that God's verbal revelation speaks to both storeys: both grace and nature. God is interested in the whole of life and every aspect of culture.

He writes:

The Bible says God made the whole man, the whole man is to know salvation, and the whole man is to know the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the whole of life [...] Salvation has something to say not only to the individual man, but also to the culture. Christianity is individual in the sense that each man must be converted and born again, one at a time. But it is not individualistic [...] God is interested in the whole man and also in the culture which flows from people's relationship with each other [...] do not think it covers just a small area.<sup>476</sup>

David Illman<sup>477</sup> has a helpful way of thinking about Schaeffer's approach to whole-of-life Christianity. He suggests that many Reformed thinkers consciously or subconsciously hold to a Biblical theology that begins with Genesis 3, the account of sin coming into the world, and ends with the death of Christ on the cross. Illman suggests that Schaeffer, by contrast, begins his theology in Genesis 1 with creation and ends with the new creation of Revelation 21 and 22. Illman is making the point that Schaeffer understood the significance of the physical creation and the soon-to-be physical new creation for human existence. If faulty Reformed thinkers have a doctrine of redemption only, Schaeffer has a theology of creation *and* redemption *and* restoration. Adam and Eve – suggests Illman – were not put into the Garden of Eden merely to pursue 'spiritual' activities; rather before sin came into the world every activity was spiritual: creating art, education, making music, marriage, raising children etc. When sin came it affected every part of the creation and so every part needs redeeming. Christ paid the penalty for human sin and his resurrection body became

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<sup>476</sup> *DIC*, 262.

<sup>477</sup> PC, David Illman, formerly of Christian Heritage, Cambridge, UK, 16 June 2016.



the first fragment of a soon to be resurrected universe and new creation. Accordingly, the present task of followers of Christ is to live purposefully in God's world in the 'ordinariness' of life, knowing that as they fulfil the vocation given to them, they play their part in a grand plan, the redemption of the whole world.

Taking this line of thought from an anthropological perspective, we could say that Schaeffer believes that personal human redemption marks the beginning of a return to true humanness: the image of God in human beings is being restored. Integral to this restoration is living in God's world as His image bearers, daily working out what it means to bring the Lordship of Jesus to all aspects of life. It was the influence of Schaeffer upon Jerram Barrs and Randal Macaulay that led them to co-author *Being Human, The Nature of Spiritual Experience*.<sup>478</sup> This work will be discussed in chapter 8.

Although Schaeffer rarely references him,<sup>479</sup> there can be little doubt of the influence of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920)<sup>480</sup> on Schaeffer's thought. Kuyper famously remarked: 'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign overall, does not cry, Mine!'<sup>481</sup> And if that is correct, every person has a role to play bringing all of life under Christ's Lordship. Schaeffer again:

That man is made in the image of God gives many important answers intellectually, but it also has had vast practical results, both in the Reformation days and in our own age. For example, in the time of the Reformation it meant that all vocations of life came to have dignity. The vocation of the honest merchant or housewife had as much dignity as the king.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Randal C. Macaulay and Jerram Barrs, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* (Solway, 1996).

<sup>479</sup> There are only three references to Kuyper in Schaeffer's writings. Only one has any bearing on whole-of-life Christianity, *PDM*, p.35.

<sup>480</sup> There can be little doubt that as a leading proponent of Dutch Calvinism, Abraham Kuyper would have been required reading at Westminster.

<sup>481</sup> Abraham Kuyper, 'Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader', ed. James D. Bratt, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing), 461.

<sup>482</sup> *HSWTL*, 124.

The aim of this chapter has been to flesh out a vital piece of the Schaeffer mind with its whole-of-life categories: his doctrine of humanity, especially in its significance. As we have seen, Schaeffer never tires of confessing the significance of human life. For Schaeffer, human beings are ransomed, healed, restored and forgiven,<sup>483</sup> but not in order to escape the world. Rather, they are to work for its redemption, in and through all areas of life.

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<sup>483</sup> Taken from *Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*, Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847).

# Chapter 6

## The Sanctification of the Ordinary

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### 1. Introduction

It would be a mistake to consider Francis Schaeffer a conservative trying to maintain the status quo. Referring to his own ministry he comments, ‘One of the greatest injustices we do our young people is to ask them to be conservative. Christianity today is not conservative, but revolutionary.’<sup>484</sup> Although he disagreed with the remedy proposed by the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s – which was frequently a call to destroy society or withdraw from it<sup>485</sup> – he did in some measure endorse its critique, suggesting that the West had become what he called ‘a plastic culture’.<sup>486</sup> Schaeffer comments that plastic is synthetic and possesses neither grain, nor form.<sup>487</sup> His complaint is that western people – obsessed by material possessions and seeking a retreat into a quiet life in suburbia – had created a society that was sterile, shallow and void of meaning. Accordingly, while Schaeffer’s concern for humanity is in the first place a moral one – in that he believes we humans are sinners needing to be reconciled to our Creator<sup>488</sup> – for him a close secondary concern is existential. Recognising that the fall and sin have seriously affected our identity, for him the problem has been compounded by centuries of misguided western thinking

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<sup>484</sup> It would however be correct to call Schaeffer a social conservative in the sense that he believed that western nations possessed a Judeo-Christian heritage that needed conserving. But this commitment to conserving the good did not stop him from seeking to fight that which was wrong such as racism and environmental damage.

<sup>485</sup> *CETC*, 25-26.

<sup>486</sup> *CETC*, 24.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>488</sup> *FWC*, 29ff.

which has left humanity lost and bewildered – and worse – without a map charting a way out of our predicament.<sup>489</sup>

Forever sensitised to the plight of individuals, Schaeffer is a theologian who seeks to translate ideas to a level that ordinary people can comprehend, relentlessly applying his theology to the matter of human purpose. Undergirded by his Christian worldview, he insists that people are never ‘ordinary’, nor do they serve in ‘little places’.<sup>490</sup> This means that he stands resolutely against any ranking of vocations; what matters to Schaeffer’s mind is where God has placed us ‘on the pitch’. Moreover, and in the context of this study, if Christ is Lord over all people and all places and is the final determiner of the contribution of each person’s life, significance cannot be limited to some ‘spiritual’ sphere of existence. This chapter builds upon the last, seeking to demonstrate that to the Schaeffer mind God sanctifies ordinary life. In this we have yet another marker demonstrating Schaeffer’s embrace of whole-of-life Christianity.

## **2. The Student Revolution of the 1960s.**

Francis Schaeffer’s ministry cannot be understood without paying attention to the times in which he lived. Trained in theologically conservative seminaries during the 1930s and undergoing a deep spiritual crisis in 1951,<sup>491</sup> Schaeffer emerged as a pioneer who sought to contextualise evangelical theology for a new time and a new generation. His

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<sup>489</sup> Schaeffer would have argued that our human existential crisis could only be resolved if our moral crisis was first resolved.

<sup>490</sup> Hence the title of his book, *No Little People*. The first Chapter is entitled: ‘No Little People, No Little Places’.

<sup>491</sup> Discussed in chapter 1.

more apologetically oriented books were born out of this endeavour<sup>492</sup> and sought to demonstrate how the Christian faith answers the inescapable questions of life.

Living in Switzerland, the first wave of visitors to come to the door of L'Abri were invariably from the baby-boomer generation, many of whom had been deeply influenced by the 1960s' counter-cultural movement. Hearing their questions, listening to their songs, and watching their films, Schaeffer was determined to understand and help, not condemn and reject. He was certain that Christianity provided answers to their questions. One of his mantras was that Christians should seek to give 'honest answers to honest questions'<sup>493</sup> and Schaeffer devoted much of his time to doing this.<sup>494</sup> Although he lectured on a host of themes, leaving time for questions and discussion became a hallmark of the L'Abri experience. As Schaeffer sought to engage with young people, he was saddened to find that too often they associated church with the settled status quo; where cultural confrontation was needed, it was often lacking. In response, Schaeffer sought to redeem the experience of Christianity for young people, believing that L'Abri could play a part by recovering a gospel message which was simultaneously orthodox and revolutionary.

During Schaeffer's years at L'Abri, many visitors noticed a uniqueness in his ministry among young people. William Edgar – one of the early guests to Swiss L'Abri – explains how he quickly concluded that Schaeffer understood the baby boomer generation to which he [Edgar] belonged. He writes,

As he interacted with the culture of the 1960s, Fran came into his own. He was especially effective in responding to those times. Surely the Schaeffers were called 'for such a time as this' (Esther 4: 14) [...] Often, our parents, coming from the 'greatest generation,' having known the depression and then the war, were unable

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<sup>492</sup> *TGWIT, EFR, HTNS.*

<sup>493</sup> *TCTR*, 413.

<sup>494</sup> William Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 22.

to give any good reasons for hard work or morality. Were it not for the Schaeffers, many of us wonder where we might be today.<sup>495</sup>

Schaeffer's son Frank comments that his father was not '[y]our average Presbyterian missionary minister'.<sup>496</sup> He writes,

Dad [...] got interested in secular culture, not as a means but for its own sake [...] In evangelical circles if you wanted to know what Bob Dylan's songs meant, Francis Schaeffer was the man to ask. In the early '60s, he was probably the only fundamentalist who had ever heard of Bob Dylan.<sup>497</sup>

The Student Revolution – as Schaeffer terms the events of the 1960s<sup>498</sup> – was for him much more than the result of a generational gap, coupled with a protest against the Vietnam War; it represented a deep crisis of meaning in the western world. As we saw in chapter 4, Schaeffer believed that this crisis had been a long time in the making. It was the culmination of centuries of thought originating in the human mind rather than in minds submitted to the Word of God. He writes:

The international student movement was a watershed in our culture and society. It did not spontaneously appear from nowhere. Its true and deepest roots are seen in the stream of intellectual history which flows from the European Renaissance and before. It was a revolution that was not merely cultural or psychological. Its source was not to be found in a simplistic analysis of the generation gap. The roots strike deep into the history of man and his attempt to understand who he is and where he came from.<sup>499</sup>

Clearly Schaeffer's interpretation of the 'student revolution' is predicated on his belief that what is wrong with the world is tied to its rejection of Christianity. It goes without saying that for other commentators, the 1960s revolution represented quite the opposite: the throwing off of the shackles of Christianity with its strict mores concerning

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<sup>495</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 69.

<sup>496</sup> Frank Schaeffer, *Crazy*, 118. Unhelpfully Frank insists upon calling his father a fundamentalist, which he was not.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> *CETC*, 5.

<sup>499</sup> *CETC*, 5.

submission to parental authority, marital union as the only legitimate arena for sexual expression and traditional roles assigned to men and women. Moreover, the willingness of a generation to rebel against authority made possible the protests against racism and the Vietnam War. Schaeffer never really engaged with this interpretation, focusing instead on a generation undergoing a crisis of meaning, not a generation on the cusp of liberation.<sup>500</sup>

In *The God Who is There*, Schaeffer sets out his thesis that a long line of philosophically bankrupt ideas had accumulated and given birth to a generation of disaffected young people.<sup>501</sup> Central to his thesis is what he sees as a change in the concept of truth and the impact upon morals and meaning that came in its wake. In fact, the very opening words of his *Complete Works* express this idea: ‘The present chasm between the generations has been brought about almost entirely by a change in the concept of truth.’<sup>502</sup> Almost everything else Schaeffer wrote about the problems facing humanity represent an extended footnote to this sentence. His point is that America and other western societies have evolved from ones that possessed absolutes in truth and morality to ones in which truth and morality became relative to the culture or the individual.<sup>503</sup> Schaeffer speaks variously of, ‘[a change in] the way we approach truth’<sup>504</sup> and how western society no longer thinks in terms of an antithesis between right and wrong in the realm of morality.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> For a discussion of these issues, see Brown Callum G., ‘What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?’, *Journal of Religious History*, 34.4 (2010), 468-79.

<sup>501</sup> *TGWIT*, 5-128.

<sup>502</sup> *TGWIT*, 5.

<sup>503</sup> Schaeffer died before the term postmodern came into common usage. However, it would be correct to say that he predicted and documented the transition from modernism to postmodernism, or late modernism as he likely would have understood it.

<sup>504</sup> *TGWIT*, 5.

<sup>505</sup> *TGWIT*, 6.

As we saw in chapter 4, Roberts' argument is that the main theme of Schaeffer's Trilogy is how the world became relativistic.<sup>506</sup> Schaeffer's concern was that a redefinition of truth – from one based upon Scripture and rooted in the character of God – had given way to a subjective view of truth. Since to Schaeffer's mind truth and meaning stand or fall together, these changes were not only hugely disorientating but also rendered final human purpose elusive.

Aside from the disorientation caused by damaging philosophical ideas, another major strand in Schaeffer's explanation for the disaffection of many young people was the report offered by much of the scientific community. Although Schaeffer never tires of remarking that modern science sprang forth from a Christian worldview,<sup>507</sup> he argues that for the most part, the more recent secular scientific community had created a world where everything was reduced to predictable and absolute laws. These laws – when interpreted deterministically – have for Schaeffer diminished the status of human beings. He writes,

Scientists in this stream of thought [philosophical naturalism] moved to the idea of a completely closed system.<sup>508</sup> That left no place for God. But equally it left no place for man. Man disappears, to be viewed as some form of determined or behaviouristic machine. Everything is part of the cosmic machine, including people.<sup>509</sup>

Schaeffer's point is that if the universe is merely accidental, governed by inviolable laws, and human beings just a complex arrangement of molecules, it is hard to see how any

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<sup>506</sup> Roberts, 104.

<sup>507</sup> Schaeffer maintained that scientific endeavour was founded upon God-given reason which rendered human beings capable of discovering laws in the universe and unlocking them for human advancement. See *HSWTL*, 155-164.

<sup>508</sup> By this he means the universe is governed by inviolable laws and is not open to reordering from outside by God, nor from within by humankind since men and women's actions are not free but determined by these laws. See *CBWW*, 118-119; *DIC*, 287-299.

<sup>509</sup> *HSWTL*, 167.



human action has any real significance in the long run. Naturalistic science added to the dilemma faced by a generation of young people.

In the context of human meaning, Schaeffer brings the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) into the discussion. He suggests that a proper understanding of the baby boomer generation requires an understanding of Rousseau's thought.<sup>510</sup> Faced with human beings relegated to autonomous machines by scientific naturalism, and modern societies dehumanising them further through the constraints imposed by 'civilisation' and capitalism, Rousseau's solution is for individuals to throw off external restraints and live in a way that is true to themselves and in keeping with a 'natural' way of life. For Schaeffer, young people of his era were embracing Rousseau's critique of the world and seeking a more authentic and simpler existence. This, he maintained, explained the rationale behind the Bohemian lifestyle of the hippies, thousands of whom he came into contact with over the years, and of whom he witnessed many become Christians.<sup>511</sup> Schaeffer called the freedom pursued by the hippie movement, 'autonomous freedom'.<sup>512</sup> His concern was that in abandoning morality and restraint, autonomous freedom provided scant basis for the care of others or for meaning beyond pursuing one's own hedonistic dreams.<sup>513</sup>

In his assessment of the counterculture movement of the 1960s, the title of Schaeffer's small book, *Escape from Reason*, summarises the destination of his thought. The generation he was ministering to had concluded that it was only by escaping from reason that meaning could be found. Schaeffer's journey through western thought persuaded him

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<sup>510</sup> *CETC*, 8.

<sup>511</sup> Schaeffer's involvement with hippies was usually the result of them arriving on his doorstep. However, ever the evangelist, there were occasions when Schaeffer sought hippies out. One such incident recorded by Duriez, occurred after he gave a series of lectures at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. Tiring of an evangelical subculture, and without invitation, Schaeffer climbed the California hills to engage with a community of hippies. Duriez, 162.

<sup>512</sup> *CETC*, 9.

<sup>513</sup> *CETC*, 9.

that by the twentieth century, philosophers had given up hope that questions relating to human existence could be solved in the realm of reason.<sup>514</sup> By this Schaeffer did not mean that reasonable answers cannot be found to the dilemmas of human existence (in Christianity he was convinced that they could), but that mainstream western thought had abandoned the quest to find them.

For Schaeffer, it was the inability to find answers to life's inescapable questions within the realm of reason that had resulted in the plastic society of the 1950s and 60s. Western society had been so stripped of meaning, that all that remained to live for were what he called the twin goals of 'personal peace and affluence'.<sup>515</sup> For Schaeffer it was the sheer shallowness of this world and life view that produced the widespread disaffection of the 1960s generation with their compulsion to escape the constraints of their parents and their bland lives. Moreover, Schaeffer was sympathetic: 'Young people wanted more to life than personal peace and affluence. They were right in their analysis of the problem, but they were mistaken in their solutions.'<sup>516</sup>

As we saw in chapter 4, Schaeffer used his two-storey model of reality to illustrate his point. If, as Schaeffer maintained, western philosophy had concluded that answers to the greatest questions of life were unavailable in the lower storey of reason, the response of young people in the 1960s was to seek them in an upper storey: the realm of non-reason. In his first film series, 'How Should We Then Live?', the seventh episode carries the title, 'The Age of Non-Reason'.<sup>517</sup> Here Schaeffer journeys through several ways in which people he commonly encountered were seeking meaning in the realm of non-reason. Firstly, he

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<sup>514</sup> *HSWTL*, 167.

<sup>515</sup> *HSWTL*, 211. Schaeffer's definitions of personal peace and affluence can be found in chapter 4 of this study.

<sup>516</sup> *HSWTL*, 213.

<sup>517</sup> *How Should We Then Live?*, Video Series, Dir. Gonser.

discusses the attraction of Rousseau's thought: meaning sought by pursuing a bohemian lifestyle, a life free from external restraint and authority. Secondly, he considers the influence of the existentialist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), upon young people. Sartre, he suggests, agrees that life is absurd and meaningless but nevertheless maintains that human beings can legitimise their existence with a leap into personal meaning that they create for themselves. Thirdly, he focuses on Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) with his proposal that meaning be found through drug-induced experiences. Fourthly, Schaeffer considers the attraction of Eastern religion; meaning and inner peace derived through meditation into a pantheistic reality. Fifthly, and finally, he spends time explaining the increasing tendency to seek meaning through the occult. For Schaeffer, these are all upper storey (irrational) solutions to the failure of modern people to find meaning in the realm of reason. Schaeffer sees this 'jump' into upper storey solutions as sad and in the end hopeless. Burson and Walls summarise Schaeffer's conclusions,

Either one can rationally follow the inescapable logic of all-inclusive determinism to a position of 'unyielding despair' [the lower storey], or one can ignore the logical implications of this position and opt for an irrational, optimistic leap into the realm of mystic meaning. The former option preserves intellectual integrity but leads to personal suicide, while the latter preserves physical integrity but leads to intellectual suicide.<sup>518</sup>

For Schaeffer there is an answer to the dilemma of life which preserves both intellectual and physical integrity. True meaning, he maintains, can be found in the rediscovery of the Christian gospel which gives reasonable answers to the great questions of life.<sup>519</sup> Escaping from reason is neither desirable nor necessary; Christianity provides 'a

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<sup>518</sup> Burson and Walls, 190.

<sup>519</sup> Of secondary importance to this discussion, but nevertheless significant, is Schaeffer's consideration (in *HSWTL*) of non-rational searches for meaning in the realm of theology. He considers first liberal theology with its claim that religious symbols and interpretations provide people with meaning and guidance. Second, Schaeffer discusses neo-orthodox theology (Barthianism): spiritual reality mediated through the Bible albeit

rationally discerned, integrated view of reality.’<sup>520</sup> This conclusion underpinned a vast amount of Schaeffer’s apologetic and cultural engagement. His apologetic was to confront men and women with reality and expose the inadequacies of all other worldviews.

To grasp Schaeffer’s impact on the evangelical scene of the 1960s, an historical anecdote is helpful at this point. Schaeffer’s willingness to understand and engage with contemporary culture – rather than dismiss it as inherently ungodly – came to the attention of students at Wheaton College in 1965. Called to speak at the College’s Spiritual Emphasis Week under the title ‘Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth-Century World’,<sup>521</sup> Schaeffer quickly made his mark for being unlike any missionary that had been invited previously. During his lectures, Schaeffer spoke with ease about current philosophical ideas, books and films being discussed in college bars across America and beyond. Greg Jesson comments with humour on the irony felt by students at the time: ‘When Schaeffer lectured at Wheaton College<sup>522</sup> and frequently referred to the existentialist films of Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini, the students were in the midst of fighting with the administrators for the right to show films like ‘Bambi’ and ‘Herbie the Love Bug’ on campus.’<sup>523</sup> Edgar comments on the event,

Neither students nor faculty had ever seen anything remotely like this. Here was the evangelical Francis Schaeffer, dressed in his Swiss britches and speaking with his Germantown drawl, telling them how to read the European avant-garde film culture and other evidences of the twentieth-century ethos.<sup>524</sup>

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denying that Bible is true in the realm of history. Schaeffer is unimpressed with both, especially by their denial of the historicity of Scripture. Roberts comments: ‘The division of truth into religious and spiritual truth on the one hand and historical and scientific truth on the other was intolerable to Schaeffer’, 63.

<sup>520</sup> Burson and Walls, 189.

<sup>521</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 70.

<sup>522</sup> Illinois, United States.

<sup>523</sup> Greg Jesson, ‘Beyond ideological Impasses: Francis Schaeffer on Truth, Community, and the Life of Discussion’, quoted by Duriez, 161.

<sup>524</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 70.

As Schaeffer worked hard to understand a generation of young people, what he discovered shaped him profoundly but also troubled him deeply. He was as far from being a self-righteous bystander and critic as it is possible to get. Arguably, if Schaeffer had a sense of greatness about him, it was here. Without doubt one of his most significant and moving books carries the title, *Death in the City*. The work represents an extended exposition of the Biblical books Jeremiah, Lamentations and Romans, in each case with extensive contemporary application. Here – perhaps more than in any of his other works – Schaeffer bares his heart and, like Jeremiah before him, weeps for a society turning its back on God and the hope and meaning that comes through knowing Him. As he explores Romans chapter 1, he writes:

Let us say emphatically that there is no exhibition of this [rejection of Christianity] anywhere in history so clearly – in such a short time – as in our own generation. We who live in Northern European culture, including America and Canada, have seen this verse (Romans 1: 21, 22) carried out in our generation with desperate force. Men of our time knew the truth and yet turned away [...] Having turned away from the knowledge given by God, man has lost the whole Christian culture [...] Do not take this lightly! It is a horrible thing for a man like myself to look back and see my country and my culture go down the drain in my own lifetime.<sup>525</sup>

John Fischer was a freshman student present when Schaeffer spoke at Wheaton College in 1965. His recollections on the attitude of Schaeffer towards the world into which he sought to minister are poignant. He writes,

He [Schaeffer] was the evangelical conscience at the end of the 20th century, weeping over a world that most of his peers dismissed as not worth saving, except to rescue a few souls in the doomed planet's waning hours [...] Schaeffer, who died in 1984, understood the existential cry of a humanity trapped in a prison of its own making. Schaeffer was the closest thing to a "man of sorrows" I have seen.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> *DIC*, 214.

<sup>526</sup> John W. Fischer, 'Why Francis Schaeffer Still Matters' Blog Post, July 11, 2012; <https://catchjohnfischer.com/2012/07/11/why-francis-schaeffer-still-matters/> [accessed 8 January 2021]

In the same article, Fischer continues with the theme of contrasting Schaeffer with other evangelical Christians,

Too many of us are too busy bashing feminists, secular humanists, gay activists, and political liberals to consider why they believe what they do. It's difficult to sympathize with people you see as threats to your children and your neighbourhood. It's hard to weep over those whom you have declared as your enemies [...] [but] Schaeffer was the first Christian leader who taught me to weep over the world instead of judging it.<sup>527</sup>

Before moving on to set out Schaeffer's response to the crisis of meaning he identified in a generation, it is helpful at this point to mention something that arguably he missed. Although frequently called a prophet by his admirers<sup>528</sup> for his ability to predict the future trajectory of Western culture, Schaeffer failed to appreciate that voices would appear in subsequent generations celebrating the absence of a larger meaning, seeing it not as a tragedy but rather as a gateway to freedom and individuality. If postmodernism is defined as incredulity towards all metanarratives<sup>529</sup> – whether it be Christianity or enlightenment rationalism – for many today the absence of metanarratives is not a cause for despair. Since all metanarratives limit freedom, moving beyond them grants us the freedom to create our own micronarratives and self-defined purpose.<sup>530</sup> Clearly there are huge limitations to the 'write your own meaning' narrative – such ideas can likely gain wide acceptance only in affluent and stable societies – but it is noteworthy that Schaeffer failed to engage with this challenge to his conclusion that the loss of an overall meaning is tragic.

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> For example, JI Packer calls Schaeffer a 'prophet-pastor' in a respectful introduction to *'Reflections on Francis Schaeffer'*, ed. Ronald W. Riegsegger (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), pp.7-17.

<sup>529</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 10, Repr (Manchester Univ. Pr, 2005).

<sup>530</sup> See for example, Stephen Jay Gould, ('What is the meaning of life?'; 'Why are we here?' in 'The Meaning of Life the Big Picture', *Life Magazine* December 1988).

### **3. The Sanctification of the Ordinary**

So far, this chapter has considered Schaeffer's diagnosis of the disaffection felt by some of the post-World War II 'baby boomer' generation and considered his compassion for them. We now turn to Schaeffer's response, a significant piece of it involving the theme of this study, his whole-of-life Christianity.

Chapters 4-6 of this study address key aspects of Schaeffer's response to the meaninglessness he encountered during his ministry. Chapter 4 outlined his integrated view of truth where he insists that Biblical revelation speaks to the whole sphere of human existence, not only some spiritual realm. Chapter 5 concerned Schaeffer's high view of humanity, dignified by being created to be God's image bearers. The remainder of this chapter will outline an additional strand to Schaeffer's thought, one which combines and builds upon what has been set out in the previous two chapters: his insistence upon the sanctification of the ordinary. Although implicit in any analysis of the Schaeffer mind, there is a nuance to this theme that demands further explanation and development.

At this point, it is worth injecting a reminder of what drove Schaeffer in his ministry. Although his thought inevitably dealt with society collectively, as seen for example in his Trilogy, Schaeffer cannot be properly understood except with reference to the concern he held for individuals. Often identified as an evangelist and apologist, Schaeffer never forgot his original calling to be a pastor and physician of souls. However sophisticated his theology, Schaeffer insisted upon applying it into the lives of ordinary, often hurting people. It was a commitment that made him tick.

### **4. A Foundation for Meaning: Schaeffer's Two Chairs**

Before outlining Schaeffer's response to the existential crisis he encountered – especially among young people – it is important to explain the foundation that his response rested upon. Clearly, the primary need he stresses is for each person to be converted, forgiven of their sins, and reconciled to God.<sup>531</sup> For Schaeffer this is the gateway to life and true existence. But then *how* the believer lives and understands his or her life and work is important for Schaeffer. It is this that we explore in this section.

Schaeffer's work *Death in the City* contains his most systematic analysis of – as he saw it – the practical consequences that follow for societies that leave behind their Christian foundations. The last chapter of the book carries the title, 'The Universe in Two Chairs' and is worth exploring.<sup>532</sup>

Schaeffer begins the chapter by quoting Romans 1:17 that, 'The just shall live by faith',<sup>533</sup> and writes, 'That is, that they shall live existentially by reliance on God and faith in Him. We turn now in this final chapter to see what living by faith means in our twentieth-century world.'<sup>534</sup> At no point does Schaeffer define the term 'faith' in the way as is common today – especially by those termed the new atheists – as the antithesis of reason, a blind leap into the dark to believe something for which there is no evidence. Rather, Schaeffer's use of the word is in keeping with its historic etymology, meaning 'trust'. Moreover, rather than suggest that trust in God is blind, Schaeffer would say that we can put our trust in God (have faith in Him) because He has given us sufficient reasons to trust

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<sup>531</sup> *TS*, 199.

<sup>532</sup> *DIC*, 287.

<sup>533</sup> *DIC*, 287.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid*.



Him.<sup>535</sup> As far as Schaeffer is concerned, it is rational to place faith in the God of the Bible.<sup>536</sup>

In 'The Universe and Two Chairs', Schaeffer hypothesises two men sitting in a room with the door locked and the curtains drawn.<sup>537</sup> The room represents the extent of the universe. The first man sits in the chair of the philosophical naturalist. Schaeffer writes, 'As far as he is concerned, the universe is made up of nothing but mass, energy, and motion; that's all there is to it.'<sup>538</sup> The second man sits in the chair of the Christian and, 'Lives in the light of the teaching of the Bible as the propositional revelation of God.'<sup>539</sup>

In Schaeffer's account, the first man – the naturalist – devotes his life to exploring the universe based upon his worldview assumptions. It takes him many years but eventually he writes up and publishes his findings about how the universe works.<sup>540</sup> Eventually, he shows the books he has published to the Christian sitting opposite, who reads them with interest and comments, 'Well, this is a tremendous work. You really have told me a great deal about my universe that I wouldn't otherwise have known. However, my friend, though this is very instructive, it's drastically incomplete.'<sup>541</sup> The first man expresses his surprise and asks what he has missed. In answer the Christian replies,

I have a book here, the Bible, and it tells me things that you do not know. It tells me the origin of the universe. Your scientific investigation by its very nature cannot do that. And your investigation says nothing about where you and I as men came from [...] you have not told me how we came to be here [...] in short you don't know the origin of the universe or of us.<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> See *WHHR*, 359.

<sup>536</sup> *DIC*, 121.

<sup>537</sup> *DIC*, 288.

<sup>538</sup> *DIC*, 288.

<sup>539</sup> *DIC*, 288.

<sup>540</sup> *DIC*, 288.

<sup>541</sup> *DIC*, 288.

<sup>542</sup> *DIC*, 288-9.

The Christian continues, ‘I know from this book [the Bible] that there is more to the universe than you have described. There is an unseen portion as well as a seen portion. And there is a cause-and-effect relationship between them.’<sup>543</sup> The Christian goes on to explain his point with the help of an illustration. He compares the universe to an orange sliced in two, explaining to the materialist that his problem is that he only holds one half of the orange: the material or the seen world. But to obtain a complete understanding of the world, he needs the other half, the unseen world which is accessible to the person with the Bible. He comments, ‘You only know half of your own universe.’<sup>544</sup>

Schaeffer’s main application of his two-chair analysis relates to Christians verbally professing belief in the supernatural realm but actually sitting in the naturalist’s chair, without any expectation that God will work in their lives or in the world on a day-to-day basis.<sup>545</sup> From there Schaeffer embarks on an extensive discourse about the importance of prayer in the believer’s life.<sup>546</sup> More relevant for our discussion is to apply his model to personal meaning. Although Schaeffer fails to state it quite in the terms I will use here, he believed that meaning could not be found while sitting in the naturalist’s chair, or – to shift to his other metaphor – while holding only half the orange. Meaning comes from the unseen realm, from being rightly related to the God who is really there. It comes from realising that God has spoken in verbal revelation in the Bible and through His actions in redemptive history, especially in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The tragedy – to Schaeffer’s mind – is that a generation had grown up that had settled down into the naturalist’s chair and for this reason was in the middle of a crisis of meaning. It needed to

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<sup>543</sup> *DIC*, 290.

<sup>544</sup> *DIC*, 290.

<sup>545</sup> *DIC*, 292-293.

<sup>546</sup> *DIC*, 296-299.

get up and relocate into the Christian's chair, realising the reality and resources of the supernatural. Only then can a sufficient foundation for meaning be found.

### 5. No Little People, No Little Places

Although he does not explicitly set out the problem in the way I shall here, implicit in Schaeffer's thought is the understanding that in any society where personal meaning is derived from the approval of others, there is the likelihood that only the few will find it. Fame can – by definition – only be found by the few.<sup>547</sup> The likelihood is that the rest, the 'little people' functioning in 'little places' and unnoticed by the crowds, will be left with a sense of being life's 'also-rans'. Even for those designated 'big people', operating in 'big places', given the fickleness and madness of crowds, the meaning they derive is likely to be fragile. Schaeffer's thought offers a challenge to this whole paradigm, impacting upon such fundamental questions as what constitutes success in life and is based upon his theistic understanding of reality. Characteristically, Schaeffer – although, again, he never quite put it this way – sees himself not in the business of trying to turn the world upside down but turning it the right way up. The Bible – to his mind – is the place where the world is described as it really is.

The first book in the third volume of Schaeffer's *Complete Works* carries the title, *No Little People*. It contains the edited transcripts of 16 of Schaeffer's sermons, messages that he doubtless preached on numerous occasions. Although these sermons range across a multitude of themes, as the book title suggests the integrating idea that weaves its way through them all is his perspective on personal meaning. Moreover, the second book in the

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<sup>547</sup> This theme and its antidote is explored by Dick Keyes in his work, *True Heroism in a World of Celebrity Counterfeits* (Colorado Springs, Colo: NavPress, 1995).

volume, *True Spirituality*, and the fourth, *Two Contents, Two Realities* also contain additional thinking on the theme of meaning. Here the contribution of each book to this theme will be considered and conclusions presented, the aim being to demonstrate Schaeffer's embrace of whole-of-life Christianity.

In his sermon, 'No Little People, No Little Places' Schaeffer sets the scene with a remark about what it means to be 'the Christian glorified':<sup>548</sup> 'It is wonderful to be a Christian, but I am such a small person, so limited in talents – or energy or psychological strength or knowledge – that what I do is not really important.'<sup>549</sup> It is this person that Schaeffer is seeking to engage, refute their false self-perception, and in doing so encourage. He continues, 'The Bible, however, has quite a different emphasis: with God there are no little people.'<sup>550</sup>

The 'No Little People, No Little Places' sermon is an exposition taken from the Book of Exodus and centres around the theme of Moses' rod. As he introduces his theme, Schaeffer adds a biographical remark, stating that it was a study of Moses' rod, undertaken by him after leaving seminary that gave him the courage to persevere with his calling.<sup>551</sup> Then, beginning with Exodus 3, Schaeffer explains how Moses encounters Yahweh at the burning bush and is commanded by Him to go to Pharaoh and demand that he releases the Hebrew people from Egypt. Moses objects,

'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?'<sup>552</sup> [...] behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my

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<sup>548</sup> By this term Schaeffer is speaking of a Christian who has passed from death to life and is living supernaturally in the power of the Holy Spirit. See *NIP*, 27-51.

<sup>549</sup> *NLP*, 5.

<sup>550</sup> *NLP*, 5.

<sup>551</sup> *NLP*, 5.

<sup>552</sup> Exodus 3:11.

voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.’<sup>553</sup> The response of Yahweh is to say, ‘What is that in thine hand?’ And Moses replies, ‘A rod’.

Schaeffer comments, ‘God directed Moses’ attention to the simplest thing imaginable – the staff in his hand, a shepherd’s rod, a stick of wood somewhere between three and six feet long [...] Exodus 4: 20 tells us the secret of all that followed: the rod of Moses had become the rod of God.’<sup>554</sup>

What follows in Schaeffer’s discussion is a description of the occasions in which Yahweh directs Moses to use his rod in such a way that Yahweh’s power over Pharaoh is displayed and in turn the Egyptian nation is weakened, resulting in the Hebrew people being released from their captivity. By the time of the Exodus, as God directs Moses, his staff had turned into a snake that swallowed up the snakes of the Egyptian magicians; it is the means of the plagues coming and going from Egypt; as Moses’ rod is lifted, the sea opens, enabling the people to escape from the pursuing Egyptian army. Later – during the time when the children of Israel are encamped in Sinai, Moses’ rod is the instrument to bring water from a rock to quench the thirst of the people.<sup>555</sup>

What interests us here is Schaeffer’s application of these texts. He writes:

Consider the mighty ways in which God uses a dead stick of wood [...] [this stick] can be a banner cry for each of us. Though we are limited [...] 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.<sup>556</sup> Then I can become useful in God’s hands. The Scripture emphasises 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 people and unconsecrated people.* The problem for each one of us

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<sup>553</sup> Exodus 4:1.

<sup>554</sup> *NLP*, 6.

<sup>555</sup> *NLP*, 8.

<sup>556</sup> EIO.

is applying this truth to ourselves: is Francis Schaeffer the Francis Schaeffer of God.<sup>557</sup>

Having set out what – to his mind – makes a person’s contribution effective, Schaeffer’s next move is to connect people to places. He asks the question, ‘If the Christian is consecrated, does this mean that he will be in a big place instead of a small place?’<sup>558</sup> But for Schaeffer the question contains a category error, falsely assuming that there exist big and small places. He writes, ‘As there are no little people in God’s sight, so there are no little places. To be wholly committed to God in the place where God wants him – this is the creature glorified.’<sup>559</sup> Again, he remarks, ‘The size of the place is not important, but the consecration of that place.’<sup>560</sup>

Schaeffer states that in his writing and lecturing, the stress has been on the reality of God as the intellectual integration point for all of life. But he cautions against having God *only* as our intellectual integration point: ‘[God] must be the reference point *not only in our thinking but also in our living*. This means being what he wants me to be, *where he wants me to be*’.<sup>561</sup> For Schaeffer, being where God has placed us is the clinching factor that gives our life and work meaning and significance.

As the sermon continues, Schaeffer takes time to identify and at the same time reject two commonly held badges of significance. The first is *size* as the identifier of success. He writes, [it is commonly held that] ‘If I am consecrated, there will necessarily be large quantities of people, dollars, etc. This is not so [...] To think in such terms is simply to

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<sup>557</sup> *NLP*, 8, EA.

<sup>558</sup> *NLP*, 8-9.

<sup>559</sup> *NLP*, 8-9.

<sup>560</sup> *NLP*, 13.

<sup>561</sup> *NLP*, 9, EA.

hearken back to the old, unconverted, egoist, self-centred *Me*'.<sup>562</sup> His second false badge of significance is *power*. He rejects the idea that if he or she has plenty of people to order around, that person must have significance: 'In every one of us there remains a seed of wanting to be in control and have the word of power over our fellows. But the word of God teaches us that we are to have a very different mentality.'<sup>563</sup> Schaeffer then launches into an extensive discussion of Jesus' teaching regarding service and greatness. Harnessing Mark 10: 42-45, he seeks to show that a leader is called to stand in the place where Jesus stood, in the place of humble service for others. Moving on to Matthew 23:8, he states,

The basic relationship between Christians is not that of elder and people, or pastor and people, but that of brothers and sisters in Christ [...] There are different jobs to be done, different offices to be filled, but we as Christians are equal before one Master.<sup>564</sup>

Next Schaeffer takes his listeners and readers to John 13 and cites Jesus' washing of the feet of his disciples as a profound example of servanthood:

Christ washed the disciples' feet and dried them with the towel with which he was girded – that is with his own clothing. He intended this to be a practical example of the mentality and action that should be seen in the midst of the people of God.<sup>565</sup>

Finally, Schaeffer winds up his argument for greatness in acts of service from Luke 14: 7-11, where the subject of Jesus' parable is taking the lowest place and concludes, 'For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'<sup>566</sup>

Schaeffer comments:

All of us [...] are tempted to say, 'I will take the larger place because it will give me more influence for Jesus Christ [...]' But according to the Scripture, this is backwards:

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<sup>562</sup> *NLP*, 9. The prosperity gospel is when size, wealth and popularity become markers of success.

<sup>563</sup> *NLP*, 8-9, EIO.

<sup>564</sup> *NLP*, 10.

<sup>565</sup> *NLP*, 11

<sup>566</sup> *NLP*, 11-12.

we should consciously take the lowest place unless the Lord Himself extrudes us into a greater one.<sup>567</sup>

Although Schaeffer's principles, as outlined in his sermon, are largely applied to service in the church, it would be a mistake to think that his application is confined to that one domain only. For example, speaking of Abraham Kuyper, he writes,

He saw each of us as many men: the man in the state, the man who is the employer, the man who is the father, the elder in the church, the professor in the university – each of these in a different sphere. But even though they are in different spheres at different times, Christians are to act like Christians *in each of the spheres*. The man is *always* there and he is always a Christian under the norms of Scripture, whether in the classroom or at home.<sup>568</sup>

Clearly, Schaeffer's principles of service and humility apply across the spectrum of life. Implicit in Schaeffer's writings is the conviction that meaning comes from being rightly related to the Infinite-personal God who made us, through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>569</sup> But the point being made here is that he also believes that meaning comes from doing the work God gives us to do and looking to God to be our reward. And there is an inclusivity to his thought. No longer is meaning available only to the 'big people' who live in 'big places', revelling in the limelight. Instead, meaning is derived from settling it in our hearts that the Lord is the one who declares what constitutes a successful life. But the inclusivity is not limited to people and places but to the work itself; Schaeffer's theology overrides any distinction between spiritual and secular activities. Although William Tyndale's words fail to appear in Schaeffer's writings, they express his sentiments well: 'Now if thou compare deed to deed, there is difference betwixt washing of dishes, and preaching of the word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all: for neither that

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> *PDM*, 35, EIO.

<sup>569</sup> *HTNS*, 277.



nor this pleaseth, but as far forth as God hath chosen a man, hath put his Spirit in him, and purified his heart by faith and trust in Christ.<sup>570</sup>

## 6. Elijah and Elisha: A Biblical Example

Another of Schaeffer's sermons included in his volume *No Little People*<sup>571</sup> provides an example of how he applied his thought in this area. Schaeffer turns to Old Testament narrative again and the lives of Elijah and Elisha<sup>572</sup> and uses them as a study in contrast: they each had different roles, but one was not of greater significance than the other. Elijah, suggests Schaeffer, was a man, 'Always at the centre of the action'.<sup>573</sup> The particular arena that he was called to was 'confronting the great,' i.e. kings and rulers.<sup>574</sup> As the sermon continues, Schaeffer journeys through the major events in Elijah's life: his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18); his interactions with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel over the stealing of Naboth's vineyard and his subsequent murder (1 Kings 21-22), and finally Elijah's confrontation with Ahaziah and the calling down of fire from heaven to destroy his soldiers (2 Kings 1).<sup>575</sup> Schaeffer comments, 'In each place Elijah stands at a place of importance in the eyes of men'.<sup>576</sup> He writes,

In the New Testament his [Elijah's] name is mentioned more than thirty times, and always in a place of importance. Some of the people who first heard Christ thought that perhaps he was Elijah (Matt. 16:14), which shows that the memory of the prophet was still bright in the minds of the Jews even after 900 years.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> William Tyndale and others, *The Works of William Tyndale*, 1st Banner of Truth ed (Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), vol. 1, p. 102.

<sup>571</sup> *NLP*, 99-106.

<sup>572</sup> 1 and 2 Kings.

<sup>573</sup> *NLP*, 100.

<sup>574</sup> *NLP*, 100.

<sup>575</sup> *NLP*, 102.

<sup>576</sup> *NLP*, 102.

<sup>577</sup> *NLP*, 100.

Schaeffer then turns his attention to Elisha, the man who assumed Elijah's mantle. Elisha – he suggests – was called to fulfil less conspicuous tasks and was forever destined to be thought of as Elijah's servant rather than being a prophet in his own right. During his ministry, Elisha 'healed' the water spring in the city of Jericho (2 Kings 2: 19-22), he saved a widow's children from going into slavery (2 Kings 3), he advised how a Gentile army commander, Naaman, could be healed from leprosy (2 Kings 5) and helped a man recover his axe head (2 Kings 6).<sup>578</sup> Schaeffer suggests these actions are hardly to be compared with the prominent ones of Elijah,

As we compare the ministries of these two men, we must remember that Elisha has a 'double portion', a carbon copy of Elijah's spirit. But he had an entirely different ministry. Elijah was before the great of the earth constantly, Elisha only occasionally [...] [his] was a quieter ministry, involving more care of common people and the common things of life. Was it more or less important than Elijah's? Elisha was in a place more like that of most of us.<sup>579</sup>

In spite of not being involved with people in 'high places', nor a name that lived on to be found in the New Testament, Schaeffer goes on to detail the 'ordinary people' who would have been grateful for Elisha's ministry: the people of Jericho, the widow, the army commander.<sup>580</sup> It is they and many others, he suggests, who would surely have thanked God that there was an Elisha as well as an Elijah.<sup>581</sup> Schaeffer concludes his sermon: 'For each of us Christians, the important thing is that there are some people, whether great or small, who can be thankful that we have lived and that God has worked through us.'<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> *NLP*, 104.

<sup>579</sup> *NLP*, 105.

<sup>580</sup> *NLP*, 106.

<sup>581</sup> *NLP*, 106.

<sup>582</sup> *NLP*, 106.

Rachel Lane provides a moving example from Schaeffer's own life of how – during his early days of ministry – he lived out these principles.<sup>583</sup> While pastoring in Grove City (1938-41), Schaeffer regularly visited a small boy called Ralph with Down's Syndrome. Ralph's parents could not afford the special education that their son required. Observing this situation, their pastor, Francis Schaeffer took upon himself the responsibility of visiting the little boy twice a week to teach him as best he could, using colourful blocks as teaching aids.<sup>584</sup> Schaeffer's desire to help educate a small boy with special needs provides a practical example of how his 'no little people, no little places' convictions found living expression in his own life.

## 7. Death and Resurrection

There is a further twist to Schaeffer's theology of meaning that needs to be explained and its importance stressed in the context of this chapter. It is found in his application of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in and to the believer's life. Schaeffer sets out his theology of Christ's death and resurrection in his book, *True Spirituality*. This book has roots in the spiritual crisis that Schaeffer experienced in the years 1951-52 (discussed in chapter 1).

It took Schaeffer several months to emerge from his crisis, but he did so with renewed assurance of the truth of Christianity. But there is a nuance to new assurance that is relevant to this discussion; it concerns the application of Christ's work. Schaeffer came to think that previously he had largely understood the work of Christ as it pertained to his salvation. But during his crisis he came to a gradual realisation of the significance of Christ's

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<sup>583</sup> Lane, Taking, 78.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

work for his own living in the present. He writes: 'I had heard little about what the Bible said about the meaning of *the finished work of Christ for our present lives*. Gradually the sun came out and the song came [...] This [new understanding] was and is the real basis of L'Abri'.<sup>585</sup>

Two men who knew Schaeffer well suggest that his emphasis upon living in the power of the finished work of Christ was the central ingredient in his understanding of personal Christianity. The first, his son-in-law Randal Macaulay, comments that Schaeffer maintained that the heart of practical Christianity is living in the power of the Holy Spirit who transports the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus into the cut and thrust of the believer's life.<sup>586</sup> He suggests that Schaeffer saw this as 'living in truth, moment by moment [...] this explains his power and influence.'<sup>587</sup> Second, Colin Duriez, arguably Schaeffer's most thorough biographer, says a similar thing, albeit from a slightly different perspective. He writes,

What is the essence of Francis Schaeffer? Is it his system of theology, his books, his political campaigning, the existence of L'Abri? [...] [It is demonstrating] what might be called an existential Christianity – living in the moment; embracing the reality of existence; seeing the underpinning certainty of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and reckoning on the specific intervention of the Holy Spirit in conversion at a point in time in a person's life, after which he or she *passes from death to life*.<sup>588</sup>

Schaeffer's application of this idea of living in the reality of death to life is in the realm of the fight against evil in the world: 'As Christians, we say we live in a supernatural universe and that there is a battle, since the fall of man, and that this battle is both in the seen world and the unseen world [...] If we really believe this, first we must be contented before God and yet fight evil, and second surely it is God's right to put us Christians where he judges best in

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<sup>585</sup> TS, 196, EA.

<sup>586</sup> PC, 5 March 2019.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Duriez, 13, EA.

the battle.<sup>589</sup> Moreover for Schaeffer the battle against evil is bound up with love for others. He writes,

In 1 Corinthians 10: 23, 24 I am told that my longing in love should be to seek the other man's good and not just my own [...] these are the areas of true spirituality. These are areas of true Christian living. They are not basically external; they are internal, they are deep.<sup>590</sup>

## 8. Conclusions

Paraphrasing Schaeffer's language and in the light of everything discussed above, 'how should the Christian live?' Or to use another of his connected phrases, 'What is true spirituality?' To answer these questions, we need to join the pieces of his thinking together as we come to the crux of his holistic understanding of the Christian's life. Clearly, one must begin with conversion and new birth as the entrance point into true reality with the meaning and purpose these confer. But the Christian is also to live in the reality of death and resurrection, moment by moment drawing upon the power of the Holy Spirit. However, this existence must never be confined to some spiritual realm, Schaeffer's creational theology rules this inadmissible. The Christian's beliefs are to find expression in the length and breadth of human experience. Moreover, it is not just the 'super Christians' that are called to this task; there are in fact no little or big people in Christ's kingdom and no little or big places for them to serve. And since the service of King Jesus and his creation holds the key to existence, here true meaning is found. Every task and every day has significance, and that significance will, in eternity, be revealed and rewarded. This is whole-of-life

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<sup>589</sup> *TS*, 208.

<sup>590</sup> *TS*, 209-10

Christianity, this is the Schaeffer mind and his remedy for the existential crisis of the 1960s generation.

# Chapter 7

## The Breadth of Schaeffer's Thought

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### 1. Introduction

Schaeffer's belief that Christianity is an explanation of life rather than merely a collection of salvation doctrines underpins his whole-of-life Christianity. The principal ways his writings demonstrate this have been laid out in chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this study. In this chapter we turn to the fourth demonstration of his whole-of-life Christianity, namely the sheer breadth of his thought. Believing that Christians need to speak into the whole of life, Schaeffer's thinking ranges across a host of subjects, many of them rarely covered by contemporary evangelicals.<sup>591</sup> This legacy has not gone unnoticed by others. For example, Lane T. Dennis<sup>592</sup> remarks in an introduction to a collection of essays on Schaeffer, 'In reading these chapters, we cannot help being struck by the breadth of Dr Schaeffer's<sup>593</sup> interest – from art to law, from literature to politics, from theology to social activism.'<sup>594</sup> This chapter explores five areas where Schaeffer applied his theology of the Lordship of Christ to all of life: (1) his stand against anti-Semitism during World War II; (2) his concern for ecology; (3) his interest in and concern for art; (4) his history of western thought; (5) his approach to and involvement with politics and ethics.<sup>595</sup> What follows is by no means an attempt to exhaust Schaeffer's thinking on these subjects. Rather, it is an attempt to

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<sup>591</sup> *PDM*, 6.

<sup>592</sup> Dennis edited Schaeffer's *Complete Works*.

<sup>593</sup> Schaeffer received numerous honorary degrees.

<sup>594</sup> Lane T. Dennis, 'Introduction', in *Francis A. Schaeffer Portraits of the Man and His Work* (Westchester, IL: Crossway), 8.

<sup>595</sup> Schaeffer's approach to apologetics and his commitment to demonstrating the reality of God through community are discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

highlight themes that were central to Schaeffer's understanding of the world, coupled with some critical evaluation where relevant.

## 2. Schaeffer's Stand Against Anti-Semitism in the American Church

The earliest example that we possess of Schaeffer's whole-of-life theology appears in 1943, during the dark days of World War II. During his third and last pastorate, in St Louis, Missouri, Schaeffer felt compelled to address the question of anti-Semitism in the church in the United States.

Writing in 'The Independent Board Bulletin', Schaeffer's article carried the title, 'The Fundamentalist Christian and Anti-Semitism'.<sup>596</sup> His use of the word 'fundamentalist' needs clarifying and should not be thought of as carrying the negative connotations it often has today. During this era in his life, Schaeffer proudly labelled himself a fundamentalist in the sense that he held to the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, such as the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Christ. Such teachings were at the time contested within the Presbyterian Church in America by Biblical scholars seeking a naturalistic interpretation of Scripture.<sup>597</sup> Accordingly, when writing to denounce anti-Semitism among fundamentalists, he was addressing people from the same spiritual stable as himself. In 1943, he happily stood among fundamentalists and addressed their shortcomings as one of them. Later, in 1955, following his spiritual crisis of 1950/51, which contributed to his decision to resign from the Independent Board for Presbyterian Missions, Schaeffer dispensed with the terms

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<sup>596</sup> Francis A Schaeffer, 'The Fundamentalist Christian and Anti-Semitism' (The Independent Board Bulletin, 1943) <<http://www.pcahistory.org/documents/anti-semitism.html>> [accessed 30 November 2019]. Schaeffer's article was eventually produced as a small pamphlet. Edith notes that it was handed out by the thousand, see *Tapestry*, 239. Later in life Edith went on to write a book carrying the title, *Christianity is Jewish*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1975).

<sup>597</sup> Duriez, 33.



‘fundamentalist’ and ‘separatist’ and from then on identified himself as an evangelical only.<sup>598</sup>

It is easy to forget that in the 1930s and 40s, anti-Semitism was not confined to Hitler’s Germany but extended to many nations including the United States which prided itself on religious freedom and for providing a refuge for persecuted peoples.<sup>599</sup> Soberingly, a revealing editorial comment included at the top of Schaeffer’s article reads: ‘We thoroughly approve of the viewpoint of this paper. If its attitude were the attitude of all Christians, *the fear in which even American Jews live* would vanish and many would return to Christ at once.’<sup>600</sup>

Schaeffer begins his article by setting out the problem:

We live in an age in which anti-Semitism is a powerful force. In many lands it has resulted in the death of countless Jews. Even in our own land it shows itself in various guises from time to time. Even among those who call themselves fundamentalist Christians we find an occasional individual who spends a large portion of his time assailing the Jews.<sup>601</sup>

Schaeffer’s first move in countering the matter of anti-Semitism amongst Christians is by way of reminding his readers of the Jewishness of the Biblical narrative. Unsurprisingly, he focuses on Jesus Christ, who was a Jew raised in the nation of Israel.<sup>602</sup> Taking a Biblical theological approach rather than a systematic one,<sup>603</sup> Schaeffer connects Jesus’ ancestry back to King David and Abraham and reminds his readers how the Jewish nation provided

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<sup>598</sup> Colin Duriez writes, ‘In the North American perception, he was now an evangelical rather than identified with Reformed fundamentalist groups’, *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>599</sup> See Rafael Medoff, *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust* (The Jewish Publication Society, 2019).

<sup>600</sup> Schaeffer, ‘*Anti-Semitism*’, EA.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>603</sup> Schaeffer’s Presbyterian training at Westminster and Faith Seminaries placed considerable emphasis on a Biblical Theology which explores the narrative of Scripture from the standpoint of redemptive history. See John Ji-Won Yeo, *Plundering the Egyptians: The Old Testament and Historical Criticism at Westminster Theological Seminary (1929-1998)* (University Press of America, 2010).

the cradle for his coming to a ministry in which all nations would be blessed, not just the descendants of Abraham. From there he stresses Christ's Jewish upbringing and his fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies commenting, 'He was the Jew of all Jews [...] Jesus was not a Jew by accident, nor as an incidental thing in the plan of God; if Jesus had not been born a Jew, according to both the Old Testament and the New, He could not have been our Saviour.'<sup>604</sup>

Secondly, Schaeffer outlines the attitude that should characterise his fellow Christians towards the Jews of his own day. Harnessing the apostle Paul's discussion from Romans 11 of what should be the Gentile Christians' response to the Jews in his day, Schaeffer quotes the apostle's reminder that Gentiles have no right to boast against Jews, since it is they who are the natural branches of the olive tree, while Gentiles are wild branches grafted in. Moreover, even if now estranged from their Creator, the natural branches can be grafted back in more easily than the wild ones, and one day will be.

Schaeffer comments,

The Word tells us that the day will come when all Israel will be saved, and the Jews will look upon Jesus as their true Messiah, and also the Promised Land will be theirs once more. It is not only for the past, not only for the present, but also for the future, that we who are now Christ's should love the Jew.'<sup>605</sup>

Schaeffer's third main point in the article is that many of the heroes of faith that he longs to in meet heaven are Jews. He gives a long list including Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, from the Old Testament and John, James, Peter and Paul from the New Testament, and concludes, 'These are only some of those I long to meet who bear the name of Jew. How could I hate the Jew?'<sup>606</sup> Quoting once more the Apostle Paul in Romans

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<sup>604</sup> Schaeffer, '*Anti-Semitism*'.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

11, Schaeffer pleads that Christians show mercy toward Jewish people, 'My friends, mercy and anti-Semitism in any form do not live in the same household. We cannot seek to win them individually to the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour if we despise them as a people in our hearts'.<sup>607</sup>

Schaeffer finishes his tract with a poem that he suggests has been widely circulated among Jews living in New York. The poem highlights the irony, indeed the paradox, that exists when Christians' harbour anti-Semitic attitudes:

How odd of God to choose the Jew,  
But not so odd as those who choose  
The Jewish God and hate the Jew.<sup>608</sup>

Colin Duriez, in referring to Schaeffer's stance against anti-Semitism, highlights that his short work is an example of his unexpectedness, his lifelong habit of doing things differently from others. It is also, he comments, a clear example of his compassion.<sup>609</sup> For the purposes of this study and this chapter in particular, what is significant is that at a very early stage in his ministry, Schaeffer was applying his theological mind to the international affairs of the day. For him, Christianity was concerned not only with prayer, evangelism and souls for heaven but also with issues of justice and race. His tract against anti-Semitism provides us with an interesting example of his early commitment to whole-of-life Christianity.

### 3. Schaeffer and Ecology

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> I have quoted this poem the way it is (mistakenly?) published in Schaeffer's article. To ensure that it rhymes, it seems likely that on both occasions the word 'Jew' ought to have been written, 'Jews'.

<sup>609</sup> Duriez, 56.

In several respects, Francis Schaeffer can be thought of as a pioneer in evangelical thought. His attempt to offer an interpretation of the history of ideas from the time of the ancient world is one of the earliest of its kind. His interest in art is particularly significant, writing at a time when many Christians thought art at best a distraction from missionary endeavour and at worst a thoroughly 'worldly' preoccupation. But in some ways Schaeffer is at his most original on the issue of the environment. He published his book, *Pollution and the Death of Man*<sup>610</sup> in 1970, long before the environment became an issue for society at large, let alone for the evangelical community.<sup>611</sup> Edgar calls *Pollution and the Death of Man* his favourite book, 'so prescient, and with such a call to beauty'.<sup>612</sup> Space permits only a summary treatment of Schaeffer's comments and concerns about the environment. For the purposes of this study, what matters is how his writing and lecturing in this area provide yet another example of the breadth of his Christian application.

Schaeffer's book, *Pollution and the Death of Man* commences with him setting out what he sees as the environmental problem confronting humanity. Under a chapter heading, and borrowing from, 'Strange Days' (1967) by The Doors, he asks, 'What Have They Done to Our Fair Sister?':

What have they done to the earth?  
 What have they done to our fair sister?  
 Ravaged and plundered,  
 And ripped her and bit her,  
 Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn,  
 And tied her with fences and dragged her down.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> PDM. See also Schaeffer's lecture *Christian Ecology* which he gave sometime between 1967 and 1970: *Christian Ecology* (L'Abri Fellowship) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 15 November 2022].

<sup>611</sup> See Darren E Sherkat and Christopher G Ellison, 'Structuring the Religion-Environment Connection: Identifying Religious Influences on Environmental Concern and Activism', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46.1 (2007), 71-85.

<sup>612</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 168.

<sup>613</sup> PDM, 5.

Schaeffer goes on to highlight various ecological concerns: the depletion of resources, water pollution, destructive noise levels and air pollution in cities.<sup>614</sup> But his concern extends beyond the damage done to nature, to the lack of interest shown by his fellow evangelicals on this issue. He comments, 'The distressing thing about this is that orthodox Christians often really have had no better sense about these things than unbelievers.'<sup>615</sup> Schaeffer proceeds to quote an article by Lynn White Jr.,<sup>616</sup> who blames the ecological crisis on a mentality that the modern world has inherited from its Christian past. White, Schaeffer explains, argues that Christianity has instilled in humanity a belief in its rightful dominion over nature, legitimising its destructive behaviour.<sup>617</sup> Schaeffer disagrees with White but concedes that part of the problem is that Christians have not formulated a proper theology of the environment.<sup>618</sup>

Schaeffer's focus in his book is the proper relationship between humans and nature. To do this, he spends a considerable amount of time reviewing an article from 'The Saturday Review' published in 1967. In the piece, Richard L. Means argues that pantheism provides us with a solution for the ecological crisis. Schaeffer quotes Means: 'Wouldn't it be a solution if we just said, 'We're all of one essence?''<sup>619</sup> Schaeffer is as ever respectful but takes time to refute the claim that an Eastern understanding of the essential oneness of all things, including humans, provides a solution to the ecological crisis. His main point is that pantheism destroys the uniqueness of humanity, dissolving it into the oneness of all things. Furthermore, in keeping with Schaeffer's presuppositional commitments, he comments that

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<sup>614</sup> *PDM*, 4.

<sup>615</sup> *PDM*, 4.

<sup>616</sup> *PDM*, 5.

<sup>617</sup> *PDM*, 5.

<sup>618</sup> *PDM*, 5-6.

<sup>619</sup> *PDM*, 7.

pantheism provides no basis for acting morally, since all distinctions between right and wrong dissolve in the end.<sup>620</sup>

In Schaeffer's next chapter he turns to the inability of what he calls 'Byzantine Christianity' to provide answers to the ecological problem.<sup>621</sup> He defines Byzantine Christianity as pre-renaissance Christianity where, 'The only truly valuable thing is heavenly.'<sup>622</sup> In this 'poor Christianity', based upon a 'grace/nature split', there are no answers either since nature has no real importance.<sup>623</sup> He writes,

It is well to stress then that Christianity does not automatically have an answer; it has to be the right kind of Christianity. Any Christianity that rests upon a dichotomy – some sort of Platonic concept – does not have an answer to nature; and we must say with sorrow that much orthodoxy, much evangelical Christianity, is rooted in a Platonic concept. In this kind of Christianity there is only interest in the 'upper storey', in the heavenly things – only in 'saving the soul' and getting into heaven.<sup>624</sup>

Schaeffer's solution to the ecological crisis is the recovery of reformation theology<sup>625</sup> with its emphasis on creation or nature as he called it. Nature, he writes, 'is of value because God made it' [...]<sup>626</sup> So the Christian treats 'things' with integrity because we do not believe they are autonomous [to humanity] [...] The value of things is not in themselves autonomous, but that God made them – and thus they deserve to be treated with respect. The tree in the field is to be treated with respect.'<sup>627</sup> Later in the chapter he writes, 'As a Christian I am consciously to deal with every other created thing with integrity [...]' He has

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<sup>620</sup> *PDM*, 9-20.

<sup>621</sup> *PDM*, 21.

<sup>622</sup> *PDM*, 21.

<sup>623</sup> *PDM*, 21.

<sup>624</sup> *PDM*, 23.

<sup>625</sup> *PDM*, 27-36.

<sup>626</sup> *PDM*, 27.

<sup>627</sup> *PDM*, 32.

made the stone, the star, the farthest reaches of the cosmos [...] to think of any of these things as intrinsically low is really an insult to the God who made it.’<sup>628</sup>

Schaeffer builds upon his assertion that material things should be treated with respect by citing the resurrection of Jesus as an affirmation that in God’s world matter counts, not just the spiritual.<sup>629</sup> But ultimately for Schaeffer the creation matters because of the One who made it. He comments: ‘And for the highest reason: because I love God – I love the One who made it! Loving the Lover who has made it, I have respect for the thing He has made.’<sup>630</sup>

In the latter parts of *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Schaeffer explains how the fall has separated humanity from God, men from women and humanity from nature.<sup>631</sup> But a renewed creation is coming when these things will be no more. At this point he quotes the Apostle Paul in Romans 8,<sup>632</sup> concerning the future of the creation: ‘[it] will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.’<sup>633</sup> From Schaeffer’s perspective, the complete restoration of the creation remains for the future, however, today, those who are Christian should work towards substantial healing of the relationship between humanity and nature.<sup>634</sup>

How are we to evaluate *Pollution and the Death of Man*? The book’s strength is revealed by its title: he connects the good original creation with the fall of humanity which then leads to the destruction of the environment. Eventually, he connects his thesis to the redemption of all things through Christ. In other words, as you would expect from

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<sup>628</sup> PDM, 35.

<sup>629</sup> PDM, 32-33.

<sup>630</sup> PDM, 33.

<sup>631</sup> PDM, 38-39.

<sup>632</sup> Romans 8: 19-22.

<sup>633</sup> PDM, 39.

<sup>634</sup> PDM, 39.

Schaeffer, the book is theologically driven; the essential Biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and restoration is apparent throughout. Of equal theological significance – unlike much secular environmental activism where ‘Mother Nature’ takes centre stage – Schaeffer’s concern is for the world as the creation of Father God.

Moving onto the shortcomings of Schaeffer’s concerns for the environment, one wonders why he did not connect his thinking to eschatology. Although he adhered to a premillennial future, he managed to avoid the pitfall of thinking that the earth was destined to become increasingly worse before the return of Christ. Clearly, others of the same eschatological persuasion did not, and it would have been helpful if he had engaged with the potential for contradiction in this area: the perception of the inevitability of a worsening world while taking active care of the planet.

Schaeffer’s work on pollution is by no means a comprehensive treatise on the environment but nevertheless it represents an early attempt to apply Christianity to an area long neglected by the church, and one that over time has been taken up by others. Of relevance here is that Schaeffer’s concern for the environment provides a major example of his creational worldview.

#### **4. Art and the Christian**

Although Schaeffer wrote his book, *Art and the Christian* as a correction to his perception of an unhelpful anti-art attitude in the evangelical community, his first concern for art was his love for it and disbelief when others did not share his love. William Edgar explains how, when visiting Schaeffer at L’Abri in Switzerland, he noticed that in his



favourite annex he had art books open, displaying favourite paintings by Picasso, Cézanne, Vermeer and others. Edgar comments,

His critics thought he was basically showing off. I think otherwise. He was simply more comfortable with such works in the room [...] Although Fran had been much encouraged in his study of the arts by his friend Hans Rookmaaker, in fact [...] he had been fascinated with art and culture from the beginning quite on his own.<sup>635</sup>

Schaeffer provides an interesting anecdote which highlights his exasperation with some fellow-Christians as they toured museums of the city of Florence together. He writes, ‘We had stood in front of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, and I had said, ‘Isn’t it beautiful?’ One of the men looked at me and asked, ‘What’s beautiful about it?’ How could anybody standing in front of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* see nothing beautiful?’ [...] This negative attitude towards art and culture was often a significant factor in evangelicalism and in orthodoxy.’<sup>636</sup>

The first paragraph of Francis Schaeffer’s small book, *Art and the Bible* sets the scene for why he decided his book was necessary:

What is the place of art in the Christian life? Is art – especially in the fine arts of painting and music – simply a way to bring in worldliness through the back door? We know that poetry may be used to praise God in, say, the psalms and may be even in modern hymns. But what about sculpture or drama? Do these have any place in the Christian life? Shouldn't a Christian focus his gaze steadily on “religious things” alone and forget about art and culture?<sup>637</sup>

As is implied by these words, Schaeffer sensed a deep suspicion towards art that existed within the evangelical community of his day. Doubtless one of the main objections to the Christian being involved in art was the distraction argument; it drew believers away from the main business of life, which was to see souls saved for heaven. But as the above quote suggests, the objection was considerably deeper; it involves the charge that the Christian

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<sup>635</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 168.

<sup>636</sup> *NSS*, 388.

<sup>637</sup> *AB*, 375.

artist is guilty of tacit worldliness. In other words, he or she is at best insufficiently spiritual and at worst sinful.

Schaeffer's rebuttal in *Art and the Bible* that art is timewasting, or worse worldly, forms one of his most comprehensive defences of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. Or to express this another way, it is here that he puts in place the missing doctrine of creation as a prequel to the doctrine of redemption, and in doing so, widens the scope of Christianity. Also worthy of comment before the contents are summarised, is the title that Schaeffer gave to his book: *Art and the Bible*. Schaeffer knew his readership sufficiently to know that if he were to persuade evangelical Christians to embrace art, he would have to persuade them from Scripture, not by an appeal to pragmatism or to some aesthetic principle within humanity. To summarise, we can say that in writing his book, Schaeffer wanted Christians to redeem art for Christ; he was also concerned that if they opted out, they leave a void for non-Christian art to fill, with themes conveying philosophical ideas he frequently considered destructive.

Schaeffer's defence of the legitimacy of art begins with a rebuke; that evangelicals have narrowed the scope of Christ's Lordship down to a small area of reality and have, '[m]isunderstood the concept of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of man and the whole of the universe and have not taken the riches that the Bible gives us for ourselves, for our lives, and for our culture.'<sup>638</sup> Schaeffer continues by taking time to lay out a doctrine of creation from the Genesis 1 and 2 accounts, explaining how the first couple were commanded to fill the earth and have dominion over it. At no point in his writings does Schaeffer use the term 'cultural (or creational) mandate' but he believes in what is meant by

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<sup>638</sup> AB, 375.

that term, of full Christian involvement in creating culture. Schaeffer is writing during a time before such terms became popular. Edgar comments that Schaeffer was more familiar with the Kuyperian term, 'sphere sovereignty', which he suggests, lurked in the background during his [Edgar's] time at L'Abri.<sup>639</sup> Even if Schaeffer failed to stress the autonomy of each 'sphere' he certainly believed that each sector of the creation, be it family, business, the arts or civil government was a domain instituted by God, and after the fall spoiled by sin and in need of redemption. In the context of our present discussion, it would include the art studio. Schaeffer writes, 'But there is another side to the Lordship of Christ, and this involves the total culture – including the area of creativity [...] We do not seem to understand that the arts too are supposed to be under the Lordship of Christ.'<sup>640</sup> He quotes the early English scientist, Francis Bacon (1561-1626): 'Man by the Fall fell at the same time from his state of innocence and from his dominion over nature. Both of these losses, however, can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith and the latter by the arts and sciences.'<sup>641</sup> Schaeffer adds, 'A Christian should use these arts to the glory of God [...] as things of beauty to the praise of God. An artwork can be a doxology in itself.'<sup>642</sup>

Schaeffer's next move is to anticipate and answer the objection that the Bible has little to say about art, suggesting that if anyone thinks such a thing, he or she is not reading it carefully enough.<sup>643</sup> To prove his point, Schaeffer takes his reader on a (more or less) chronological journey through Scripture commenting on its perspective on art. His first comment is on Exodus 20:4, the second commandment, where God forbids the making of a

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<sup>639</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 105.

<sup>640</sup> *AB*, 377.

<sup>641</sup> Quoted in *AB*, 377.

<sup>642</sup> *AB*, 377.

<sup>643</sup> *AB*, 378.

graven image.<sup>644</sup> Schaeffer remarks that often these words are used by fellow Christians to state that God forbids the making of art. His response is to take the reader to Leviticus 26 commenting, '[This Chapter] makes it clear that Scripture does not forbid the making of representative art, but rather the worship of it. Only God is to be worshipped [...] To worship art is wrong, but to make art is not.'<sup>645</sup>

Next Schaeffer turns to the use that the Biblical narrative makes of art. He finds art in the design and construction of the tabernacle and later Solomon's Temple.<sup>646</sup> Under a surprising heading, 'Secular Art', he comments on the use of art to augment Solomon's throne: ivory, gold and carved animals. Clearly here Schaeffer seeks to highlight the legitimate use of art which does not specifically involve the worship of God, hence his use of the word, 'secular'.

In the New Testament, Schaeffer notes in John 3 that Jesus harnesses the brass serpent narrative (Num. 21:6) to illustrate his own coming death by crucifixion. He comments: 'What was Jesus using as his illustration? A work of art.'<sup>647</sup> At this point Schaeffer does seem to be clutching at straws and stretching a point; it might have been helpful if Schaeffer had engaged with the reality that there are no specific injunctions in the New Testament encouraging Christians to create art.

Schaeffer moves on from discussing representative art and comments on other art forms in Scripture. Firstly, he mentions poetry: the Psalms and Song of Songs are discussed.<sup>648</sup> Then Schaeffer moves to music, finding numerous instances of the use of

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<sup>644</sup> AB, 378.

<sup>645</sup> AB, 378.

<sup>646</sup> AB, 380-383.

<sup>647</sup> AB, 384.

<sup>648</sup> AB, 384-387.

instruments and song, especially in the praise of *Yahweh*.<sup>649</sup> He finds drama in the Book of Ezekiel (chapter 4) and dance in the Psalms (149, 150) and in the life of David (2 Samuel 6).<sup>650</sup> Finally, he discusses art associated with the second coming of Christ, and in heaven as depicted in the Book of Revelation.<sup>651</sup> Schaeffer concludes his first chapter on art with the words:

Do we understand the freedom we have under the Lordship of Christ and the norms of Scripture? Is the creative part of our life committed to Christ? Christ is the Lord of our whole life, and the Christian should produce only truth – flaming truth – but also beauty.<sup>652</sup>

The book where Schaeffer seeks to connect beautiful art with truth is not in fact in *Art and the Bible* but in his work, *How Should We Then Live?* The first edition published in 1976<sup>653</sup> came replete with photographs of pieces of art he used to illustrate the philosophical ideas of the age he was discussing. Here, and while he was lecturing, Schaeffer used his love of art as a teaching aid.

Following Schaeffer's justification of the legitimacy of art for the Christian, preceded by his journey through the Bible, Schaeffer begins a second and final chapter in *Art and the Bible* with the heading, 'Some Perspectives on Art'.<sup>654</sup> Here Schaeffer sets out his accumulated wisdom in eleven points, all of which are concerned with how Christians should think about art and engage in it. Space does not permit an extensive discussion of

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<sup>649</sup> *AB*, 387.

<sup>650</sup> *AB*, 389.

<sup>651</sup> *AB*, 390-391.

<sup>652</sup> *AB*, 391.

<sup>653</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The rise and decline of Western thought and culture*, (Old Tappan, N.J: F.H. Revell Co, 1976).

<sup>654</sup> *AB*, 393ff.

this chapter, but it is replete with pastoral and practical encouragement for the Christian who senses a calling to be in the arts.

In keeping with Schaeffer's other works, *Art and the Bible* is not a work of deep scholarship, but it does represent a serious attempt to remind Christians of the place of art in their worldview. For Christians rooted primarily in a New Testament context and centred on fulfilling the Great Commission, it is unlikely to obtain much traction. For those rooted in a comprehensive Biblical theology, spanning creation through to the new creation, Schaeffer's book has liberated many to fulfil a calling to serve Christ in the arts. In this sense it is a valuable work and serves the purpose for which it is written. For Schaeffer himself, his book is testimony to him being a truly 'renaissance man', interested in all-of-life and seeking to bring all things under the Lordship of Christ.

## 5. The History of Ideas

Perhaps it is because in his writing Schaeffer tackled this subject first, or may be because few others in the evangelical community were doing it, but Schaeffer is best remembered for his writings on the history of ideas. Schaeffer's most well-known work, his *Trilogy*,<sup>655</sup> is devoted to his interest in ideas and how he perceived their shaping the present era.<sup>656</sup> These early works – all published by 1972 – were augmented by, *How Should We Then Live?* in 1976, where Schaeffer attempts to formally chart the march of thought from the time of the Romans up until his day. The title is taken from Ezekiel 33:10; this book later

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<sup>655</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: The Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Crossway Books, 1990).

<sup>656</sup> First publication dates: *TGWIT* (1968), *EFR* (1968) *HTNS* (1972).

formed the basis for a documentary film series containing ten episodes.<sup>657</sup> In this film series, Schaeffer sought to make his thought accessible to a wider public, particularly people who would not read his books. It was viewed widely in churches across the United States,<sup>658</sup> but less so in Europe. Although the series was an attempt to provide an alternative perspective on history to the BBC's series, 'Civilisation' by Kenneth Clark, it was not shown on public television. Edgar comments that this was perhaps a good thing, writing, 'It is not the best documentary ever produced.'<sup>659</sup> However, more positively, he comments, 'At the same time, nothing quite like it had ever been done by an evangelical Christian.'<sup>660</sup> But the point to be noted here is that Schaeffer was interested in ideas and educating people about them, believing that understanding ideas and their power is the key to diagnosing the world's problems and creating a better world for future generations.<sup>661</sup>

Lane Dennis points out an interesting sequence to Schaeffer's writings.<sup>662</sup> He suggests that the theme of Schaeffer's early books is ideas, ideas that have cumulatively impacted, and in turn shaped and corrupted the West. His later books, Dennis suggests, focus on the consequences of these ideas. He writes:

In his earlier books he demonstrated the philosophic bankruptcy and degeneracy of Western humanistic culture, which has abandoned its Judeo-Christian roots and heritage.<sup>663</sup> In his later books, he looked at the natural consequences of this abandonment – rampant secularism, social disintegration, moral degeneracy, sexual perversion, and the deadly consequences of the antilife movement.<sup>664</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> *How Live Video Series*, Gonser.

<sup>658</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 33.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>661</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 32.

<sup>662</sup> Dennis, *Critics*, 101.

<sup>663</sup> These would be, *TGWIT* (1968), *EFR* (1968), *DIC* (1969) and *HTNS* (1972).

<sup>664</sup> Especially, *WHHR* (1979), *CM*, (1981).

One does not have to agree that Schaeffer was always correct in connecting the ideas he identified with the consequences he observed, nor with his overall narrative of Western history to recognise that Dennis' remarks represent an accurate reflection of how Schaeffer read the world.

Clearly, any interpretation of history will be contested, but some comment needs to be made about Schaeffer's overall approach. Richard Pierard offers a helpful summary:

[h]is understanding of the historical process is readily visible [...] God created history and acts within it; he is not suspended above it. History is going someplace; it is not a series of endless cycles. There is a flow to history. From its absolute starting point at the creation, history flows on to its fulfilment at the establishment of Christ's reign on the earth [...] God works in history "on the basis of his character" and when his people and their culture turn away from him he judges them either by "direct intervention in history" or "by the turning of the wheels of history".<sup>665</sup>

Pierard's attempt to make explicit Schaeffer's presuppositions as he reads history, helps us understand the conclusions Schaeffer draws. Accordingly, for Schaeffer, post-Enlightenment thought and the growing secularism it promotes, can never be a force for good since it diverges from Biblical principles.

Schaeffer's attempt to document the history of ideas has been outlined in chapter 4 with some commentary provided.<sup>666</sup> Nevertheless, further evaluation will be offered. Since this area of Schaeffer's writings is most well-known, unsurprisingly it is here that he has been most criticised.

Before comment is made about the limitations of Schaeffer's foray into historical thought, it is worth thinking about where he is to be complimented. Numerous people who were influenced by Schaeffer remark that however imperfect his writings, he was doing

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<sup>665</sup> Pierard, *'Schaeffer on History'*, 198ff.

<sup>666</sup> The main specific criticisms of Schaeffer's thought concern his interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, Søren Kierkegaard, and the virtual absence of any discussion of Friedrich Nietzsche. See Nash, 51-69.



what few evangelical Christians before him had done before; he was engaging with history, seeing its importance, and teaching about it.<sup>667</sup> Dick Keyes, a history graduate of Harvard who knew Schaeffer well and is the founder of the first American based L'Abri in Southborough, Massachusetts, makes a connected point, reminding us that Schaeffer was not some ivory tower thinker but spent the majority of his life working out how to live in the light of a Christian understanding of history.<sup>668</sup> Edgar, another early visitor to L'Abri comments, 'One the most common testimonies [about the influence of Schaeffer upon them] is from Christians who had never known it was legitimate to think about culture, or even to think at all.'<sup>669</sup>

Sympathetic readers – especially those who essentially share Schaeffer's Biblical worldview – suggest that allowing for a few distortions and omissions, Schaeffer essentially understood the world correctly. One American pastor suggested to me that Schaeffer's sweep through the history of ideas should be likened to a seventeenth century map of the world. He comments, 'You can tell it is the world as we know it today, but some of the contours of the continents are somewhat inaccurate'.<sup>670</sup> Mark Ryan, until recently Director of the Francis Schaeffer Institute,<sup>671</sup> similarly remarks that Schaeffer's analysis is about as good as you would expect from someone writing from his desk in a village in Switzerland without access to a seminary library, faculty conversation and peer review, things that many scholars would simply take for granted.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> See for example, Harold O.J. Brown, 'Standing Against the World', in *Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, by Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 13-26 (15).

<sup>668</sup> PC, 17 April 2020.

<sup>669</sup> Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 97.

<sup>670</sup> PC, Randy Jackson, 15 September 2015.

<sup>671</sup> Based at Covenant Seminary, St Louis, Missouri.

<sup>672</sup> PC, Mark Ryan, 24 April 2020.

Schaeffer's sense of ideas and history have drawn criticisms from various angles. As we explored in chapter 3, much of the criticism centres around whether he was a true scholar and could be relied upon to interpret history accurately. Other criticisms appear at different levels; some represent surface disagreements. Others reflect deeper philosophical differences with Schaeffer. It is the latter on which I will now focus.

Schaeffer not only believed in Biblical inerrancy but saw it as one of his responsibilities in life to defend. His defence of the inerrancy of Scripture occurs repeatedly in his writings but appears in perhaps its most cogent form in, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* and *The Church before the Watching World*. These books contain extensive critiques of both neo-orthodoxy and theological liberalism. An outline of Schaeffer's theology of Scripture was provided in chapter 5 but the point to note here is that in certain quarters of the evangelical world, his commitments were not well received. Schaeffer was writing at a time when to use a term of Thomas C. Oden, there were numerous people around who were 'searching for new translations of the Christian faith.'<sup>673</sup> The consequence was a battle fought between 'traditional' evangelicals who advocated Biblical inerrancy, and 'post-conservative' or 'neoconservative' evangelicals who believed that Christianity was best served by conceding that Scripture contained errors.<sup>674</sup> One institution where this debate was most visible was at Fuller Seminary in California where eventually the faculty came to

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<sup>673</sup> Thomas C Oden, 'On Not Whoring After the Spirit of the Age', in *No God but God: Breaking With the Idols of Our Age*, by Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992), 189-203 (190).

<sup>674</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 6-22.

reject the inerrancy of Scripture<sup>675</sup> and in time embrace a more liberal stance towards political and social issues.<sup>676</sup>

It is therefore unsurprising that one of Schaeffer's most dismissive critics, Jack Rogers, arose from the ranks of Fuller Seminary.<sup>677</sup> As we saw in chapter 3, Rogers takes Schaeffer to task for not being a true intellectual, but he also challenges his view of Scripture, which he paraphrases as one where [the Bible contains], 'Absolutes which correspond to the realities of the universe and mankind, absolutes which in all areas which speak to life and thought.'<sup>678</sup> In another place he comments, 'Schaeffer thinks it essential that we know things as God knows them, not exhaustively but truly.'<sup>679</sup> Rogers' contention is that Schaeffer simply fails to appreciate firstly the vastly different cultural context in which Biblical thought arose compared with today and secondly the complexity of the world's problems in the modern era and the multi-faceted solutions they require.<sup>680</sup>

Reading Rogers, and other critics with a more favourable attitude towards contemporary thought, one senses a dislike of Schaeffer the reactionary, and a dislike of his unwillingness to seek a synthesis between contemporary philosophical thought and Biblical Christianity.<sup>681</sup> Rogers maintains that Schaeffer had been too influenced by Scottish Common-Sense Realism, 'Including the general belief that all persons in all times basically think alike.'<sup>682</sup> This approach to the world, Rogers' contends, is what Schaeffer picked up during his theological training from the old Princeton theology, built on the thought of

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<sup>675</sup> Those who held to an inerrant view of Scripture and left Fuller included Harold Lindell, Wilber Smith and Gleason Archer, *ibid*, 17.

<sup>676</sup> Erickson, 6-22.

<sup>677</sup> See Rogers, *Promise 1* and 2.

<sup>678</sup> Rogers, *'Promise 1'*, 13.

<sup>679</sup> Rogers, *'Promise 2'*, 17.

<sup>680</sup> Rogers, *'Promise 1'*, 13.

<sup>681</sup> Although not explicit, this critique is implicit in both of Rogers' articles.

<sup>682</sup> Rogers, *'Promise 2'*, 15.

Francis Turretin and developed by Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield and Gresham Machen. The result – for Rogers – is a naïve and out-dated epistemology in which Schaeffer seeks answers to contemporary problems, while all the time being enslaved to a world long since disappeared.<sup>683</sup> He writes, *'How Shall We Then Live? offers cheap answers to questions no longer actually being asked by intellectuals.'*<sup>684</sup> This line of reasoning leads Rogers to charge Schaeffer with a simplistic understanding of the world, and worse having an expectation that others will see things the way he does, forgetting the complexities that culture and experience add to the epistemological process. He writes,

Contrary to Schaeffer's assumption [that all people essentially think the same way], anthropologists have documented thousands of distinct world-views. There are over six thousand different language and culture groups, plus numerous subcultures in the world each having its own worldview [...] Cross-cultural communication of the gospel requires scholarly training and sensitivity to cultural differences. Schaeffer's mono-cultural perspective adversely affects his thought [...] *Christians who have studied philosophy seriously find it difficult to deal with Schaeffer's gross generalisations.*<sup>685</sup>

Rogers' critique continues in the same vein questioning Schaeffer's 'characterisations' of leading philosophers; his misunderstanding of scientific endeavour and how findings are interpreted by the human mind.<sup>686</sup>

The point of taking time to summarise Rogers' critique of Schaeffer is that it highlights the way in which some of his most hostile critics opposed him because they held different assumptions about the world. His critics frequently couch their opposition to him through comments that his thinking was too simple and too unsophisticated, that he was trying to understand things too complex for him. But behind this rhetoric lie profound

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<sup>683</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid, 15, EA.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid, 17.

worldview differences concerning the nature of Scripture, epistemology and revelation, a common feature when disagreements arise between competing theological positions. Whatever one thinks about Schaeffer's engagement with ideas and their history, what is without question is that his writings point to a man deeply engaged with what the world is about. Doubtless he could have done it better as others who followed him have,<sup>687</sup> but for engagement with ideas in an age when much theological discourse rarely extended beyond John 3: 16, he must be commended. It is yet one more pointer to the breadth of Schaeffer's thought.

## 6. Schaeffer on Politics and Ethics

With Schaeffer's belief that the Lordship of Christ should extend into the whole of life, it is not surprising that his writings and lectures frequently engage with political ideas and their ethical consequences. Reviewing his works in this area, Schaeffer has a twofold focus: liberty, and the sanctity of life. Although he also focuses on issues to do with good governance and political stability in *How Should We Then Live?* and *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, this section will concentrate on his book, *A Christian Manifesto* and the lectures he gave to introduce his book. It is in this work – perhaps more than anywhere else – that we are taken to the heart of Schaeffer's concerns about the political direction of the west, especially America. Although published in 1982, he wrote the forward to *A Christian Manifesto* in 1981, just three years before his death and at a time when he perceived that Christians in America had a real opportunity to impact the moral climate of their nation.

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<sup>687</sup> For example, Nancy Pearcey.

No one can accuse Schaeffer of lacking ambition for his work, *A Christian Manifesto*.

Inscribed in the first pages of the book appear the words:

The Communist Manifesto 1848

Humanist Manifesto I 1933

Humanist Manifesto II 1973<sup>688</sup>

The inference from the listing of these three works is that Schaeffer hoped to publish something on a par with, and perhaps as influential as them. He also wanted to write a book that would provoke believers to thought and action. In the preface he writes emphatically, 'This book is written not as a theoretical exercise but as a *manifesto*'.<sup>689</sup>

The first chapter carries the title, 'The Abolition of Truth and Morality' and contains a summary of what to his mind is wrong with the United States and other western nations.

His concern again is a worldview one; that there has been a change in the fundamental beliefs of American society, or at least among those with the power to make public policy decisions, and various kinds of harmful consequences have resulted. But the discussion begins with a gentle rebuke to American Christians – suggesting that they have been slow to realise that changes over which they have expressed concern, follow logically from a transformation of the belief system of their nation: 'The basic problem in regard to Christians in this country in the last eighty years or so, in regard to society and in regard to government is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals.'<sup>690</sup> His point is that the issues over which Christians lament have a deeper root cause. He writes,

Permissiveness, pornography, [what is being taught in] the public schools, the breakdown of the family, and finally abortion, [these are but] a symptom of a much larger problem. [There has been] a shift in the world view [...] *away from* a world

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<sup>688</sup> *CM*, 421.

<sup>689</sup> *CM*, 418.

<sup>690</sup> *CM*, 423.

view that was at least vaguely Christian in people's memory [...] *towards* something completely different [...] the idea that the final reality is impersonal matter or energy shaped into its present form by impersonal chance.'<sup>691</sup>

As we saw above, unmasking what Schaeffer sees as this fundamental paradigm shift is the core theme found in his Trilogy. In place of a society whose integrating point is the Infinite-personal creator God with its Judeo-Christian ethic derived from the Bible, America has morphed into a society founded upon the idea that all that exists is matter, time and chance.<sup>692</sup> Schaeffer stresses the fundamental antithetical nature of these worldviews, 'There is no way to mix these two worldviews [...] they are separate entities that cannot be synthesised [...] [and so they result in total differences in regard to society, government and law.'<sup>693</sup> Schaeffer calls the society that has emerged, 'a humanistic one',<sup>694</sup> 'Man beginning with himself, with no knowledge except he himself can discover and no knowledge outside himself. In this view man is the measure of all things as The Enlightenment expressed it.'<sup>695</sup>

What interests us here is Schaeffer's commentary on the impact of this worldview shift on government, law, and ethics.<sup>696</sup> His assertion is that the Judeo-Christian worldview provided a foundation for good government and laws which preserved both liberty and the rights of the individual. To his mind, the protestant northern European nations and their extensions (the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) derived a healthy

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<sup>691</sup> *CM*, 423, EIO.

<sup>692</sup> *A Christian Manifesto*, Lecture by Francis A. Schaeffer (Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, 1982) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F8j4Vg5cyg>> [accessed 16 September 2020].

<sup>693</sup> *CM*, 425.

<sup>694</sup> Schaeffer has been criticised for the use he makes use of the word, 'humanist', ignoring its historical roots. See for example Wells, *Jeremiad*, 16-17. There may be some truth in this, but Schaeffer does explain that he is using the word in the way it is commonly applied in contemporary society.

<sup>695</sup> *CM*, 427.

<sup>696</sup> Mark Ryan comments that Schaeffer's involvement in the shifting worldviews of this day was much more than simply on the level of ideas and politics. Although he officially left the pastorate in 1947-8, his pastoral ministry continued. For the remainder of his life, he counselled people on issues of a personal nature, many of them the direct result of cultural change, especially in the areas of relationship. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in LFS. Ryan comments, 'At the time no one else in the church was dealing with sexuality, relationships and marriage. These were taboo issues for the churches. But not for Schaeffer.' *PC*, 24 April 2020. This provides a further example of Schaeffer's breadth of interest and originality.

balance between form<sup>697</sup> and freedom, one that owed its origin to the Reformation which in turn derived its ideas from Scripture. This commendable form of government, Schaeffer says, must not be thought of, 'As natural in the world [...] [rather] it is unique in the world, past and present'.<sup>698</sup>

Focusing in on America, Schaeffer proceeds to justify his assertion that its constitution was founded upon Biblical principles.<sup>699</sup> His main argument concerns the Presbyterian John Witherspoon (1723-1794). He writes, 'John Witherspoon [...] stood consciously in the stream of Samuel Rutherford, a Scotsman who lived from 1600-1661 and wrote *Lex rex* [...] [meaning] law is king – a phrase that was absolutely earthshaking. Prior to that it had been *rex lex*, the king is law [...] Therefore, the heads of government are under the law, not a law unto themselves.'<sup>700</sup> For Schaeffer, the point is not only that national leaders are to be under law rather than being above it, but that they must make laws in keeping with a higher law, the law of God as found in the Bible. If, continues Schaeffer's line of thought, a Biblical worldview underpins the making of laws, certain things follow, one of them being the value and dignity of human life. Since all people are made in the image of God – he contends – everyone possesses value, '[w]hether a person is young or old, strong or weak, well or not, a sex object or not, a consumer or not'.<sup>701</sup> Here Schaeffer points to the American Declaration of Independence's statement of unalienable rights – to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They are unalienable, he comments, because since they are granted by God, they cannot be taken away.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> By this Schaeffer means the necessary structures to hold a society together, both legally and institutionally.

<sup>698</sup> *CM*, 428.

<sup>699</sup> *CM*, 431-436.

<sup>700</sup> *CM*, 431.

<sup>701</sup> 'A *Christian Manifesto*', Lecture.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid*.



Schaeffer's reasoning in *A Christian Manifesto* is that the gradual replacement of a worldview founded upon the Bible with one based upon philosophical naturalism has resulted in terrible consequences for law-making, especially regarding the sanctity of human life. He remarks that if all that exists is matter, energy and chance, then the universe is silent about human value and rights.<sup>703</sup> If value and rights no longer come from God but are granted by the state, they can be taken away by the state or changed and manipulated according to the preferences of law-makers.<sup>704</sup> He comments, 'This is the opposite of what the founding fathers had in mind'.<sup>705</sup> In this new climate Schaeffer worries about a society where morality shifts according to the whims of popular opinion, the arbitrary power of the judiciary and the persuasive power of cultural elites.<sup>706</sup>

Schaeffer takes up the theme of the unborn and in particular the *Roe v Wade* ruling of the Supreme Court of 1973 which granted women the constitutional right to obtain an abortion.<sup>707</sup> Schaeffer was horrified by abortion, seeing it as the unjustified removal of human value and rights from the unborn.<sup>708</sup> But his point in *A Christian Manifesto* is not limited to abortion. He is concerned that *Roe v Wade* set a dangerous precedent for other ethical issues: 'Abortion opens the door to the taking of any human life'.<sup>709</sup> For Schaeffer, the legalisation of abortion represents a slippery slope which could – if unchecked – lead to infanticide and euthanasia.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> Ibid.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> *CM*, 437-444. See also, *HSWTL*, 211-244.

<sup>707</sup> This ruling was overturned by the US Supreme Court in 2022 and the legality of abortion returned to the decision of each state's legislature.

<sup>708</sup> Schaeffer participated in numerous pro-life rallies in both America and Britain.

<sup>709</sup> '*A Christian Manifesto*', Lecture.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

After setting out what Schaeffer sees as the consequences of the shift from a Judeo-Christian worldview to one rooted in naturalism and relativism, the second half of *A Christian Manifesto* is a call to action by the Christian community. For him the Lordship of Christ must be brought to bear on these issues, and he wonders what Christian leaders and professionals have done to try to prevent the redefinition of humanity and the ethical consequences of so doing. In a rhetorical question he asks, ‘What have Christians done to prevent these things [...] church leaders, lawyers, businessmen, educators, doctors?’<sup>711</sup> He suggests that the blame lies at the feet of those fearful of speaking out and in other cases with those who compartmentalise their Christian life, thinking that the public square is off limits for the believer.<sup>712</sup> True spirituality, he contends, is that Christ is Lord of all life, not just spiritual life.<sup>713</sup>

Finally, Schaeffer sets out priorities for what Christians should be aiming for in the political arena. First, he argues that evangelicals should be working to preserve the freedoms set out in the American constitution, not just for themselves but for all religious beliefs.<sup>714</sup> Secondly, he contends that Christians seek for revival, but remarks that every true revival has three parts to it, the salvation of individuals, the Lordship of Christ in lives and societal change.<sup>715</sup> Thirdly, he asks that Christians fight for a level playing field so that the secular worldview is not privileged over the Christian worldview and justified by a false reading of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.<sup>716</sup> Fourthly, he asks that

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<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid.

<sup>716</sup> Schaeffer contends that secularists have wrongly – and to their advantage – argued that the First Amendment prohibits religion from shaping government policy and laws. To his mind the First Amendment exists for two reasons only: (i) To prohibit a state church for the United States; (ii) To prevent the state from interfering with religion, Ibid.

Christians stand for a high view of life.<sup>717</sup> Fifthly, Schaeffer wants Christians to operate on the basis that no state has absolute power and comments that when, '[t]he Government negates the law of God, it abrogates its own authority'.<sup>718</sup> For Schaeffer, this means that believers need to ask themselves what loyalty to Christ may cost them.<sup>719</sup>

Before coming again to Schaeffer's critics, comment must be made about the involvement he had with the Moral Majority movement, founded in 1979 and led by Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and D. James Kennedy. Following on from his first film series, 'How Should We Then Live?', Schaeffer and his son Frank released another film series under the title, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979). Duriez suggests that this second film, Schaeffer's book, *A Christian Manifesto*, and its accompanying lecture series, aided the creation of the Christian Right in the United States.<sup>720</sup> This is possible, since a significant theme of Schaeffer's film and lectures is abortion, something likely to have galvanised the political right. Duriez notes that the German magazine 'Der Spiegel' described him as the philosopher of the Moral Majority.<sup>721</sup> With the election of pro-life President, Ronald Reagan in 1980, Schaeffer saw an opportunity to work for a political reconsideration of the abortion issue and other life-related matters. He writes,

With this [conservative swing] there is at this moment a unique window open in the United States. It is unique because it is a long, long time since that window has been as open as it is now. And let us hope that the window stays open, and not on just one issue [abortion] [...] Rather we should be struggling and praying that this whole entity – the material-energy, chance worldview – can be rolled back with all its results across all of life.<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Ibid.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid.

<sup>720</sup> Duriez, 191.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid.

<sup>722</sup> *CM*, 457.

As will be considered below, Schaeffer's involvement with the Moral Majority movement became *the* issue that attracted the most sustained criticism he received at any point in his life.<sup>723</sup>

A review of the secondary literature on Schaeffer, bears testimony to how a man viewed as a prophet by some came to be disparaged by others.<sup>724</sup> One who falls into the latter category – and is especially pertinent here – is Ronald A. Wells, a professional historian, with expertise in American, Canadian, and British history, especially touching the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For our purposes, it is Wells' two articles published in 'Reformed Journal', 'Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad'<sup>725</sup> (1982), and 'Whatever Happened to Francis Schaeffer?' (1983) that we will focus upon.<sup>726</sup> In the first article, Wells critically engages with Schaeffer's book, *A Christian Manifesto*; in the second he critiques Schaeffer's involvement with the Moral Majority.

In reviewing *A Christian Manifesto*, Wells begins by agreeing with Schaeffer's thesis, that there is something wrong with modern society, especially America.<sup>727</sup> Then after spending time introducing Schaeffer as a '*cause célèbre*' in evangelical Christianity, Wells introduces himself as one of a breed of 'new evangelicals'.<sup>728</sup> In the same vein as Jack Rogers before him, Wells comments unfavourably on Schaeffer's focus on and understanding of the notion of antithesis: 'He [Schaeffer] invites Christians into a headlong confrontation with the institutions of contemporary society.'<sup>729</sup> He continues, 'We must ask if Schaeffer's characterisations of modern society and his remedies are to be accepted and

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<sup>723</sup> See for example Wells, *Whatever?*

<sup>724</sup> Johan D. Tangelder, 'Reformed Reflections: Francis Schaeffer's Ministry' (Reformed Reflections, 1978) <<https://www.reformedreflections.ca/articles/francis-schaeffers-min.html>> [accessed 20 October 2020].

<sup>725</sup> A Jeremiad is a long mournful complaint or lamentation, a list of woes.

<sup>726</sup> Wells, *Whatever?* 10-13.

<sup>727</sup> Wells, *Jeremiad*, 16.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

followed. My answer to both is a qualified no.<sup>730</sup> Setting out his qualification to make this judgement, Wells writes,

I am an academic intellectual. Schaeffer is a populariser, who by his own testimony, is not a philosopher but an 'evangelist' [...] I take it that Schaeffer in *A Christian Manifesto*, believes himself to be offering a serious critique of modern society, and I intend to take him seriously and critically. If any reader might wonder which 'side' I am on ideologically, I affirm that I am on the Christian side, but a side which does its work with care and honesty.<sup>731</sup>

In 'Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad', Wells makes two main criticisms of *A Christian Manifesto*. First of all, he takes Schaeffer to task for what he calls his, '[a]historical and propositional' definition of humanism and its connection with the protestant reformation.<sup>732</sup> 'When Humanism', writes Wells, 'arose in the context of the Renaissance it offered a methodology by which persons could challenge 'authority' in any realm of life.'<sup>733</sup> This methodology, suggests Wells, eventually morphed into a religious form which became known as the protestant reformation.<sup>734</sup> He then comments that Schaeffer's confusion rests on his inability to see Protestantism as a religious form of Renaissance humanism.<sup>735</sup> Wells continues, 'To be sure, Protestants *said* that their consciences were informed by the Bible, on which authority alone rested ("sola scriptura"). Yet we all know of Protestant inability to agree on what the Bible said, or even on what kind of book it is.'<sup>736</sup> Accordingly, for Wells, Schaeffer's misunderstanding of what the reformation actually was, prevents him from evaluating it properly. Similarly, in the context of Schaeffer's inability to see the Reformation as part of The Renaissance renders his leveraging of the Reformation as a point of antithesis

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<sup>730</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid, 18

compromised (or in Well's own words, 'atrophied').<sup>737</sup> As Wells states it, 'Schaeffer repeatedly invokes the Reformation as the answer to the problem of humanism, when in reality it is part of the problem.'<sup>738</sup> So where, asks Wells, has this attitude of challenging authority and freedom of conscience led us, 'I suppose it has led to the sorry state of things which Schaeffer illustrates' [in *A Christian Manifesto*].<sup>739</sup> This remark is qualified when he writes, 'I do not say that these religious humanists were 'wrong' in invoking the primacy of private conscience, but I accept that when they did so they, among others, loosed a methodology on the world which results in modernity.'<sup>740</sup> Wells' point is that the protestant reformation had little to do with the recovery of a Biblical worldview, as Schaeffer believed. The value in Wells' argument is his highlighting Schaeffer's largely uncritical attitude toward the reformation. Scholars such as Brad Gregory have pointed out that translating the Bible into the vernacular and encouraging wider and personal interpretation of Scripture did produce a crack in the foundation of churchly influence and push society down the path towards individualism with its accompanying a crisis of authority.<sup>741</sup> There is not a straight line from Luther to postmodernism, and although undoubtedly an unintended consequence, Wells is correct in reminding us of something that Schaeffer failed to acknowledge, that the Reformation was a factor that changed the social conditions under which we think about ourselves.

The second argument of Wells is that Schaeffer is propagating a false view of history.

He explains Schaeffer's view as follows:

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<sup>737</sup> Ibid.20.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>741</sup> Brad S. Gregory, *Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Belknap Harvard, 2015).

That right religion and liberty are on the same side against wrong religion and tyranny. The Anglo-Saxon peoples are especially blessed in this regard, and it is the protestant nations of northwest Europe and their overseas extensions which are cited as the righteous nations [...] Schaeffer appears to have swallowed the theory whole.<sup>742</sup>

There are nuances to Wells' arguments: firstly he is concerned with Schaeffer's [implied] agreement with the Puritan John Winthrop's (1587- 1649) that America's destiny was to be a 'city on the hill', a light to the Gentile nations of the world.<sup>743</sup> Secondly, Wells highlights what he sees as Schaeffer's simple view that the American Constitution was a document underpinned by Christian thought, rather than a synthesis between Christian and enlightenment ideas.<sup>744</sup> Third, Wells comes to his major complaint about Schaeffer, that his thought is one jeremiad – a long lament that America has departed from Winthrop's vision. This, suggests Wells, is the motivation behind Schaeffer's *A Christian Manifesto*, the notion of the enemy within, that some have betrayed the faith and departed from the vision of the founding fathers of a righteous nation.<sup>745</sup> In Schaeffer's view, he suggests, the enemies within are the secularists who control the media and education. They are being allowed to direct America away from the original vision of the nation's founders and the reason is the apathy of Schaeffer's fellow Christian brethren who do nothing to stop it.<sup>746</sup> For Wells, and despite Schaeffer's carefulness to safeguard against overstatement,<sup>747</sup> Schaeffer's version of history is based on half-truths and myth, and ignores the issues people with this view of history are prone to miss, 'The arms race, institutional racism, the inequities of industrial

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<sup>742</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>747</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Crossway Books, 1984), pp. 183–84.

capitalism.<sup>748</sup> He continues, 'Schaeffer's outrage, and his willingness to be civilly disobedient, seem to be rather shallow in not taking these important matters into account.'<sup>749</sup>

Wells' second article on Schaeffer, 'Whatever Happened to Francis Schaeffer?' is a play on Schaeffer's book title, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* The article concerns Schaeffer's involvement with the Moral Majority movement in the United States during the early 1980s.<sup>750</sup> Although Wells writes that he stands by his previous article ('Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad'), it is apparent that it attracted criticism from readers who felt he had been unfair to Schaeffer. Accordingly, in the first paragraphs of the article, Wells backtracks a little, taking time to explain the things he feels able to compliment Schaeffer for. This extends to Wells suggesting that a gulf has emerged between the early Schaeffer and the latter: the first, 'A writer of serious and energizing books' to [the second], 'a heavily promoted commercial phenomenon advocating simplistic analyses and single-issue causes.'<sup>751</sup> This latter Schaeffer has resulted in, '[a] special pleading for conservative political and social causes in the United States' and an 'astonishingly innocent acceptance of the synthesis of evangelical Christianity and American 'culture religion'.<sup>752</sup>

Wells takes time to repeat his argument in 'Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad', that Schaeffer's desire to return to the foundational ideas recovered by the reformation is flawed logic.<sup>753</sup> Instead of seeking an orientation point in the historic reformation, Wells suggests that contemporary Christians look for 'a reference point from which to judge

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<sup>748</sup> Ibid, 19, And yet, Schaeffer specifically lists as serious shortcomings, the area of race, the area of the compassionate use of wealth, and the area of manifest destiny, Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>750</sup> Wells, *Whatever?*, 10-13.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid, 12.



modern culture' in 'The social gospel tradition from Rauschenbusch to Niebuhr', or what he calls the careful work of evangelicals Carl F. H. Henry and David O. Moberg.<sup>754</sup> Additionally, Wells suggests, Christians need to learn to live with ambiguity, remembering, the words of Richard Niebuhr that, 'The grossest forms of evil enter into history as schemes of redemption'.<sup>755</sup>

In Wells' analysis, and harkening back to remarks made previously, Schaeffer's great mistake – as one who ironically holds so strongly to the principle of antithesis – is to seek, 'the most profound and dangerous synthesis possible, combining – and therefore confusing – historical/biblical Christianity with the secular hope of the American Dream.'<sup>756</sup> He continues, 'What is destructive of the cause is for Schaefferites to embrace and baptize the Christian right, with its shallow patriotism, its jingoistic militarism, and its sanitized history.'<sup>757</sup>

Wells offers three suggestions for Schaeffer, necessary conditions before he could support Schaeffer in his Christian cultural engagement. First, '*Definitive repentance from Protestant triumphalism*'.<sup>758</sup> The gospel he writes, '[m]ust be seen to be a genuinely ecumenical force, not depending on a sectarian view of history, especially of the Reformation.'<sup>759</sup> Second, '*Definitive repentance from association with American civil religion* [...] [the ethos must be] independent of nationality'.<sup>760</sup> Third, '*Definitive repentance from the "evangelical ethos"* [...] it must *not* be seen as a force which withdraws from mainline

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<sup>754</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>755</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, (1949), p. 214, quoted by Wells, *Whatever?*, 12.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid, 13

<sup>758</sup> Ibid, 13, EIO.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid, 13. EIO.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

institutions and churches to form its own para-church institutions and endlessly fragmenting mini-denominations.<sup>761</sup>

Wells concludes his article by hinting that the Schaeffer of later life had fallen for the attraction of, ‘the siren song of media popularity, and the slick programs of production companies’.<sup>762</sup> And then he offers a word of advice for the church, ‘[if he steps back from this agenda] in dealing with the vastly more important question of what is to happen to the human race, we can have Francis Schaeffer's formidable help, and leave aside the question of whatever happened to Francis Schaeffer’.<sup>763</sup>

Ronald Wells’ criticisms, like Jack Rogers’ before him, may be traced back to both worldview differences as well as the reality that one’s interpretation of Scripture is influenced by factors such as the noetic effects of sin as well as cultural blind spots resulting from finitude and contingency. However, we need also to take seriously the multiple and substantial factors that inform the differences in interpretation between these two men, both of whom see themselves as functioning within a broadly Reformed and evangelical tradition. So as not to venture too far afield, I will draw attention to three key factors.

Firstly, vocational factors loom large. On the one hand, Wells, operating as a trained historian, committed to methodological care and honesty, expresses concern over Schaeffer the “popularizer”.<sup>764</sup> For Wells, who wishes to insist on intellectual honesty, Schaeffer’s use of history in service of his calling as an evangelist is disturbing, and risks confusing the roles of specialist and generalist.<sup>765</sup> For Schaeffer, however, his desire to illustrate larger cultural

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<sup>761</sup> Ibid, 13, EIO.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>763</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>764</sup> Wells, *Jeremiad*, 17, mentions this twice on one page; and again alludes to this at the close of his *Whatever*, 13.

<sup>765</sup> *Whatever*, 13.

concerns by appeal to various turning points in history, was part and parcel of his desire to communicate with relevance and effectiveness to the secular world. Schaeffer owned his lack of expertise, recognised the value of more specialised studies, and yet functioned with more care and nuance than is often granted him by his critics.<sup>766</sup> While it is not necessary to agree with all the details of Schaeffer's work (or all of those of Wells), nonetheless, it seems clear that the communicative strategies adopted by both men are informed by their vocational pursuits and particular callings.

Secondly, and as alluded to already, Schaeffer and Wells assess their Reformed heritage differently. For Schaeffer, the reformation is an example of God acting in history, raising up men and women to challenge the teaching of a corrupt Roman Catholic Church, place the authority of Scripture at the centre of the life of the church and translate the Bible into the language of ordinary people.<sup>767</sup> Schaeffer was firmly persuaded that the reformers did recover a holistic whole-of-life Christianity. Lane Dennis agrees: 'For Schaeffer, the Reformation with all its imperfections, but at the same time with its clear emphasis on the Bible alone, justification by grace through faith, and the priesthood of all believers – was a source of inspiration.'<sup>768</sup> However, Wells – in contrast to Schaeffer – seems dismissive of the reformation, seeing it as little more than a religious version of The Renaissance.<sup>769</sup> And from this posture, Wells' denies the reformation can play the role that Schaeffer intends.<sup>770</sup> Regarding Wells' view, Lane Dennis comments:

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<sup>766</sup> That Schaeffer was not 'fast and loose' with the facts or adoptive of irresponsible positions is the testimony of numerous PhD's, including those who write in Part One of Lane T. Dennis, *Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work* (Crossway, 1986).

<sup>767</sup> *HSWTL*, 119-146.

<sup>768</sup> Dennis, *Critics*, 113.

<sup>769</sup> Wells, *Jeremiad*, 18.

<sup>770</sup> Wells, *Whatever*, 12.

Actually Wells holds a rather novel view of the Reformation – that it was really an epiphenomenon of Renaissance humanism. This view may be gaining strength among secular historians who, of course, would like to find nonreligious, reductionistic explanations for all religious phenomena. But it is hardly the view of the classic historians of the Reformation such as Ronald Bainton and Jaroslav Pelikan. I would think Martin Luther (1483-1546) would also find it surprising to learn that his agony over his personal salvation was really a “religious form of renaissance humanism”.<sup>771</sup>

Comment needs to be made about Wells’ dismissal of Schaeffer’s conviction that America grew out of Christian ideas that had their origins in the protestant nations of Northern Europe. Doubtless making a connection between John Winthrop and Samuel Rutherford is more complex than Schaeffer suggests,<sup>772</sup> and few commentators would want to diminish the impact of enlightenment ideas on America’s Founding Fathers and the Constitution they penned. And yet, to diminish the significance of protestant ideas – as Wells does – in the shaping of what is positive about America, seems to be a mistake. Historian Tom Holland makes the case that such concepts as freedom, kindness, progress, and an intense concern for the powerless are derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ.<sup>773</sup> Moreover, enlightenment naturalism is a highly unlikely source of such values; justice and liberty are unlikely to emerge in a chance universe in which humans are little more than highly evolved pond slime.

Wells’ concern that Schaeffer ignored the sins of America, may have some justification. Although racism was a big concern for Schaeffer, doubtless his social conservatism did guide the choice of issues that concerned him: more emphasis could have been placed on the excessive power of corporations, the exploitation of the poor, the mistreatment of women and sins committed in the name of nationalism. Even considering

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<sup>771</sup> Dennis, *Critics*, 112.

<sup>772</sup> *CM*, 431.

<sup>773</sup> Tom Holland, *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind*, Paperback edition (ABACUS, 2020).

the huge mistakes made by protestant nations,<sup>774</sup> Wells arguably fails to appreciate that Schaeffer's writings are valuable in emphasising America's Christian base and the consequences of departing from it.

Thirdly, comment needs to be made about the issue that provoked Wells' greatest ire: Schaeffer's involvement with the Moral Majority. Here it seems we are dealing with a differing ethos and approach to certain contemporary issues than with an interpretation of particular facts. As noted above, Wells makes a distinction between the early and the later Schaeffer: the thinker and writer to right-wing political activist.<sup>775</sup> Wells is somewhat impressed by the early 'version' of Schaeffer but appalled at the latter. Jerram Barrs makes the case that there never was a former and latter Schaeffer;<sup>776</sup> there was only one man who in later life put his ideas into practice with greater social concern and activism. Since Schaeffer adhered to whole-of-life Christianity, he held that one of the ways to change bad ideas was through politics. This line of reasoning, along with his socially conservative leanings, arguably drove his involvement with the Moral Majority. The danger – and what doubtless angered even some of his friends – was that in aligning himself with the religious right, he became associated with a whole package of policies. Being pro-life is one thing, but it seems unlikely that Schaeffer would have uncritically lined up behind a raft of policies we associate with the American Right: gun rights advocacy, militaristic foreign policy, mistrust of socialised healthcare and hostility to welfare payments and minimum wages.<sup>777</sup>

Dick Keyes of The L'Abri Fellowship knew Schaeffer well in those days and comments helpfully on his links to the Moral Majority: 'I think FAS felt it was a calculated risk which on

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<sup>774</sup> For example, the slave trade, slavery, racism, colonialism, the treatment of indigenous peoples etc.

<sup>775</sup> Wells, *Whatever?*, 11.

<sup>776</sup> See Barrs, *Criticisms of FAS*.

<sup>777</sup> It is telling that while a pastor in America, Schaeffer refused to have the US Flag in the church, PC, Jerram Barrs, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

one side would gain a lot of visibility and broader clout for pro-life issues which he felt evangelicals were hopelessly weak on, and on the other side that he would risk being tarred with the brush of some of the very fundamentalism from which he had fled the US 25 years earlier'.<sup>778</sup> Keyes comments however that Schaeffer was uncomfortable with the experience:

I am sure that, given the way he set up L'Abri, the Christian corporate professionalism of [Jerry] Falwell's operation was rough for him to take. I also think Falwell's general attitude to the culture – of self-righteousness and no real engagement with non-Christian ideas except to condescend to them – would have been hard for him [...] he was a social conservative but he had made L'Abri a place where people from the Left came and stayed, many of them becoming believers. He was passionately committed to connect with them in a way that they understood and felt understood.<sup>779</sup>

Whatever the rights and wrongs of Schaeffer's involvement with the American Right, this discussion of Schaeffer's political thought and activities serves to highlight another aspect of the breadth of the man as he sought to apply the Lordship of Christ to the whole of life. Wells is welcome to disagree with Schaeffer's turn toward politics (as he plainly does) but it is not as though Wells' is without political preference himself, and it is by no means obvious why his ethos (such as repenting from a classical evangelical ethos),<sup>780</sup> or his list of contemporary issues (war and peace, and the structural injustices of industrial capitalism),<sup>781</sup> is to be elevated over that of Schaeffer's. At this point, it seems we are driven back to more fundamental worldview issues, even as we recognise the more mundane factors just noted.

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<sup>778</sup> PC, 6 May 2020.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid.

<sup>780</sup> Wells, Jeremiad, 16.

<sup>781</sup> Wells, Whatever, 11, and Jeremiad, 19.

This chapter – and the three before it – have sought to outline some contours of the Schaeffer mind. Although his writings and lectures are open to critique and improvement, what is indisputable is Schaeffer's willingness to engage with all of life from a Christian worldview perspective. We now move from the Schaeffer mind to the L'Abri mind.

## Part 3

# From the Schaeffer Mind to the L'Abri Mind

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## Introduction to Part 3

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The first half of this study sought to demonstrate the essence of Francis Schaeffer's mind as the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. After introducing Schaeffer as a person and thinker in the first three chapters, chapters 4 to 7 explored four ways that Schaeffer expressed his theology of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life: firstly, his integrated view of truth; secondly his sense of human significance; thirdly his teaching on the sanctification of the ordinary, and fourthly the remarkable breadth of his thought. The second half of this research shifts emphasis from Schaeffer's mind to the L'Abri mind and addresses the question, 'in what ways and to what extent did Schaeffer's Lordship of Christ theology shape a new generation of L'Abri thinkers?'

### 1. The Key Shapers of the L'Abri Mind

Before coming onto four specific case studies which investigate the development of the L'Abri mind in considerable detail, a summary of the wider contributors to that mind will be offered. Both during the life of Francis Schaeffer and afterwards, the L'Abri Fellowship has spawned numerous capable thinkers. The L'Abri Ideas Library lists hundreds of people who have given lectures over the last 50 years. Many are or have been L'Abri workers; others are invited visitors giving one-off lectures for an evening, or speakers at L'Abri conferences. What follows is a brief overview of the key thinkers in the movement.<sup>782</sup> Clearly many will be left out;<sup>783</sup> the decision of who to include in this brief analysis requires

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<sup>782</sup> All of the authors discussed in these pages have lectures that can be accessed at <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>.

<sup>783</sup> I have omitted a new generation of L'Abri workers who currently serve the Fellowship. My emphasis is on significant voices who followed Schaeffer.

some personal judgement, but each one in the following discussion has been chosen on the basis of two criteria: (1) they are or have been a L'Abri worker; (2) in my judgement they have said something of significance.<sup>784</sup>

I begin in the early days of L'Abri with Os Guinness (b. 1941). Although Guinness' time within the Fellowship was brief by the standards of some – he lived and worked at Swiss L'Abri for approximately six years<sup>785</sup> – he has kept in touch with the movement to the degree that insiders consider him one of the family.<sup>786</sup> By any measure Guinness remains one of the finest minds, most prolific authors and best orators to have emerged from L'Abri. His website defines him as a social critic and author, 'A quiet voice on behalf of faith, freedom, truth, reason and civility.'<sup>787</sup> Although trained in theology,<sup>788</sup> Guinness is not a theologian or Biblical exegete, instead, in his numerous books<sup>789</sup> he seeks to make Christian thought and faith plausible in a secular age.<sup>790</sup>

Moving onto other early L'Abri leaders and thinkers, Ranald Macaulay, Jerram Barrs and Dick Keyes all figure exceptionally large in the movement. All are highly capable people and have contributed significantly to the L'Abri mind, but since they will be the focus of the three next chapters, no attention will be paid to them here.

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<sup>784</sup> In 1982 L'Abri produced a collection of essays by its early leaders (Jerram Barrs, Dick Keyes, Ranald Macaulay, Susan Macaulay, Udo Middelman, Wim Rietkerk, Edith Schaeffer, Francis Schaeffer and Barry Seagren). The work represents a helpful statement of the early L'Abri mind. L'Abri Fellowship, *What in the World Is Real?* (Communication Institute, 1982).

<sup>785</sup> Os Guinness, 'Fathers and Sons', *Books and Culture*, 14.2 (2008).

<sup>786</sup> Mark Ryan, PC, 22 May 2020.

<sup>787</sup> <http://www.osguinness.com/about-os-guinness/>

<sup>788</sup> Guinness completed his undergraduate degree in theology at the University of London and his D.Phil in the social sciences at Oriel College, Oxford.

<sup>789</sup> Guinness' website lists over 30 publications.

<sup>790</sup> Of particular interest here is his first book – and the only one written before leaving L'Abri: Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death: The Sixties Counterculture and How It Changed America Forever*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020). The book's subtitle, *The Sixties Counterculture and How It Changed America Forever*, signifies how closely Guinness' early thinking followed Schaeffer's. Later books address questions as diverse as persuasion in apologetics, liberty, doubt, evil and truth. Guinness' content, approach and style bear the hallmarks of a man who sat under Schaeffer during his early days.

In terms of significant women's voices from the early days of the L'Abri movement, Mardi Keyes has lectured and written on the themes of feminism and age segregation.<sup>791</sup> Edith Schaeffer has written extensively on her life with Francis<sup>792</sup> as well as books on suffering,<sup>793</sup> creativity,<sup>794</sup> parenting,<sup>795</sup> homemaking<sup>796</sup> and prayer.<sup>797</sup> Edith and Francis' daughter Susan Macaulay has written books about children's literature and education.<sup>798</sup> I will now move onto other thinkers who contributed to the early L'Abri mind. Hans Rookmaaker has written and taught on the theme of art; Ellis Porter – a former Buddhist who converted to Christianity under the influence of Schaeffer – has contributed to the themes of Zen Buddhism and eastern thought in general.<sup>799</sup> Donald Drew's lecturing is on literature, film and hymnology;<sup>800</sup> he has written a book advising students as they settle into university life.<sup>801</sup> Richard Winter – a medical doctor – has written and lectured on the interface between theology, psychiatry and mental health.<sup>802</sup> Jim Ingram was the Executive Director of Swiss L'Abri for 15 years and in his lectures specialised on issues of epistemology, technology and theonomy.<sup>803</sup> Wim Rietkerk, a Dutchman, holds a PhD in philosophy and

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<sup>791</sup> See for example, Mardi Keyes, *Feminism and the Bible* (IVP, 1995).

<sup>792</sup> E. Schaeffer, *Tapestry*.

<sup>793</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *Affliction* (Baker Book House, 1993).

<sup>794</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *Hidden Art* (Norfolk Press, 1971).

<sup>795</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *10 Things Parents Must Teach Their Children: And Learn for Themselves* (Baker Books, 1994).

<sup>796</sup> Edith Schaeffer, *The Hidden Art of Homemaking* (Tyndale House, 2012).

<sup>797</sup> Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *The Life of Prayer* (Crossway Books, 1992).

<sup>798</sup> Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, *For the Children's Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School* (Crossway Books, 1984).

<sup>799</sup> Search for Ellis Potter, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>

<sup>800</sup> Search for Donald Drew, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>

<sup>801</sup> Donald J. Drew, *Letters to a Student* (Christian Focus, 2003).

<sup>802</sup> Richard Winter, *Perfecting Ourselves to Death* (IVP, 2005); Richard Winter, *When Life Goes Dark* (IVP, 2012); Richard Winter, *Still Bored in a Culture of Entertainment* (InterVarsity Press, 2002).

<sup>803</sup> Search for Jim Ingram, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>

was a good friend of both Francis Schaeffer and Hans Rookmaaker.<sup>804</sup> Rietkerk has engaged extensively with issues connecting the disciplines of theology and philosophy.

The above L'Abri leaders and thinkers may be thought of as the 'old guard' of L'Abri. Most were active within L'Abri from the 1970s and beyond. In more recent years, new voices have emerged. Wade Bradshaw has been chosen as a representative thinker from these more recent times and will be discussed at length in chapter 9. Andrew Fellows was for many years a co-worker to Bradshaw and English L'Abri. Fellows is a profound evangelical thinker and author, who has lectured extensively on issues of apologetics and theology.<sup>805</sup> Jock McGregor has over a period of 30 years worked both at the English and Rochester branches of L'Abri and lectured extensively on the history and influence of ideas.<sup>806</sup> Frank Stootman, along with his wife Heather, oversees the work of Australian L'Abri. Frank is interested in astrophysics, computational simulation, and the relationship Christianity and science in general.<sup>807</sup> Finally, mention needs to be made of Guilherme de Carvalho, who heads up the work of L'Abri in Brazil. Carvalho is a Baptist pastor and also a profound thinker who is taking the ideas of Francis Schaeffer and applying them into a South American context. His themes tally with those of Schaeffer and therefore are theological with an existential flavour.<sup>808</sup>

## 2. Dick Keyes' Five Themes of L'Abri

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<sup>804</sup> Wim Rietkerk, *If Only I Could Believe!* (Carlisle: Solway, 1997); Search for Wim Rietkerk, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>.

<sup>805</sup> Search for Andrew Fellows, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>

<sup>806</sup> Search for Jock McGregor, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>

<sup>807</sup> <https://labri.org/australian-labri/>

<sup>808</sup> Search for Guilherme de Carvalho, <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>. See also <https://www.labri.org.br/catalogo-de-palestras>

Before explaining the choice of L'Abri leaders to investigate the evolution of the L'Abri mind, mention needs to be made of an existing attempt to explore and classify the L'Abri mind by Dick Keyes of the Southborough branch. Keyes' important lecture carries the title, 'Five Themes of L'Abri'<sup>809</sup> and first dates back to the late 1970s but has been given numerous times since and in many branches of the Fellowship. In more recent years Keyes' son Ben has sought to update the original lecture under the title 'Five Themes of L'Abri Revisited'.<sup>810</sup> Keyes' original 'Five Themes of L'Abri' is helpful for many reasons but perhaps most of all because it represents an insider's attempt to codify the essence of what Francis Schaeffer's L'Abri stood for. Outsiders and newly arrived students could listen to the lecture and get a basic but vital guide to what L'Abri was all about. In time Keyes and others would build on his foundation and the L'Abri mind would evolve.

Before outlining his five themes, Keyes comments that whilst there is a positive agenda behind the themes that undergird L'Abri, the Fellowship must partly be seen as a corrective to deficits previously existing in the evangelical world and in response to unhelpful ideas prevalent in attending students. Moreover, and since they are so vital, addressing these themes, he remarks, can help the church revive. Keyes' five themes of L'Abri are: (1) the Christian faith as true;<sup>811</sup> (2) the reality of the supernatural;<sup>812</sup> (3) spirituality as a human reality;<sup>813</sup> (4) living under the shadow of the fall;<sup>814</sup> (5) the Lordship

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<sup>809</sup> Dick Keyes, *Five Themes of L'Abri* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 16 April 2021].

<sup>810</sup> Ben Keyes, *Five Themes of L'Abri Revisited* (L'Abri Fellowship) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 17 April 2021].

<sup>811</sup> Meaning that the Christian faith represents a view of reality. It describes the real world and speaks to the real world not some 'religious' reality.

<sup>812</sup> Meaning that God is really there, has spoken in the Bible and is active in His world.

<sup>813</sup> This theme is explored in depth in chapter 8 and maintains that spirituality and humanness are not to be separated. Instead, to be truly spiritual is to be truly human.

<sup>814</sup> This is a theme barely discussed in this thesis. It is to be found across Schaeffer's works but especially in NSS. Schaeffer was concerned that too many Christians of his era were assuming that upon being converted,

of Christ over the whole of life.<sup>815</sup> Although necessary to aid understanding – Keyes has given them discrete headings – in reality they represent interlocking and mutually reinforcing themes. Keyes' summary is both perceptive and helpful, covering principles that guide the L'Abri Fellowship.

### 3. The Evolving L'Abri Mind

As the above survey of L'Abri's leading thinkers – with their diversity of interests – has revealed, there is no shortage of candidates who could be chosen for a study exploring the evolution of the L'Abri mind. In the event the criteria used for selection was as follows. Firstly, they must have worked for L'Abri for at least a decade.<sup>816</sup> Secondly, they must be published with at least one book as well as having numerous L'Abri lectures to their name. Thirdly, they must demonstrate a tone and attitude that is true to the spirit of the Fellowship.

The following four chapters will proceed as follows. Firstly, I will look at the 'being human' thesis as set out by Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs. Both knew Francis Schaeffer personally and intimately and both spent decades of their lives working at branches of L'Abri. I have chosen to study the 'being human' thesis first not only because it is integral to the mindset of L'Abri but also because it is closely connected to the Lordship of Christ over the whole-of-life thesis. Secondly, I will explore the evolution of L'Abri's apologetic method beyond Schaeffer using the lectures and writings of Dick Keyes. The defence of the Christian faith is integral to L'Abri's existence and demands to be investigated. Keyes is a man of

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they somehow transcended the effects of the fall and could live lives free from sin and suffering. An example of this would be the 'higher life' teaching common in the Keswick movement before around 1965.

<sup>815</sup> Meaning that Christ is Lord of all of life rather than the so-called spiritual aspects to life: prayer, Bible reading, church assembly, evangelism etc.

<sup>816</sup> An exception has been made for Nancy Pearcey, the reasons for which will be explained later.

considerable intellect who has worked in L'Abri Fellowship for more than thirty years.

Thirdly, Wade Bradshaw represents a L'Abri leader who arrived around twenty years after Macaulay, Barrs and Keyes. Bradshaw spent a decade at English L'Abri and like Schaeffer before him has sought to engage with the evolving ideas of a generation, especially when they represent a rival story to Christianity. Finally, consideration will be given to Nancy Pearcey. Although Pearcey was never a L'Abri worker, she studied at L'Abri, was converted to Christianity under the ministry of Francis Schaeffer and is perhaps the most capable contemporary advocate and propagator of his ideas alive today.

What follows is not a comprehensive account of every aspect of what makes up the L'Abri mind. Rather, it represents an exploration of key leaders who came after Schaeffer, in each case focusing upon an idea that is critical to the essence of L'Abri Fellowship.

# Chapter 8

## Being Human

### Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs

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#### 1. Introduction

Charting the development of the Schaeffer mind to the L'Abri mind, we begin with Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs' 'being human' thesis. Their contention is that the essence of true Christian spirituality is found in the recovery of the image of God in humanity. This chapter will seek to demonstrate that this concept has its L'Abri origins in Francis Schaeffer<sup>817</sup> but is developed and applied extensively by Macaulay and Barrs. Moreover the 'being [truly] human' thesis parallels the centrality of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life, a concept that was a key feature of Francis Schaeffer's worldview. Imbued into the L'Abri mind is the conviction that receiving Christ does not translate someone into some higher spiritual existence that transcends the creation but rather represents the recovery of authentic human existence. To be truly spiritual means to be truly human. Christians are redeemed to live in the creation and recover true humanity – as God intended at the beginning – seeking to bring every aspect of life under the Lordship of Christ.

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<sup>817</sup> The following words are frequently attributed to Hans Rookmaaker: 'Jesus didn't come to make us Christian; Jesus came to make us fully human'. See for example, Dick Staub, *About You: Fully Human, Fully Alive*, 1st ed (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 13. Rookmaaker died in 1977, a year before *Being Human* was published by Macaulay and Barrs. Since Rookmaaker was active in L'Abri Fellowship for many years it seems likely that he propagated the 'being human' idea before it was formally developed and codified by Macaulay and Barrs. Whether or not he influenced Schaeffer on the idea, or the other way around, it seems impossible to say.



This chapter will begin by setting out biographies of Macaulay and Barrs – some of the first leaders of L’Abri Fellowship – in recognition that for this thesis their biographies are as important as their theology. Both Macaulay and Barrs knew Schaeffer from their early twenties. Both lived with him at Swiss L’Abri and were deeply influenced by his approach to life, thought and ministry. Discussion will move on to identify areas in which they follow Francis Schaeffer and areas in which they diverge from him. The ‘being human’ model of the Christian life will then be set out and some discussion offered.

This chapter will draw mainly from the book, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* as well as from various lectures on the subject given by Macaulay and by Barrs.

## 2. Biographies

### a. Ranald Macaulay

Of Scottish heritage, Ranald Macaulay was born in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa in 1936. He attended Michaelhouse School in South Africa and in 1956 entered The University of Cambridge to study law. Growing up, Macaulay embraced an agnostic position towards Christianity. However, whilst an undergraduate student at Cambridge, Macaulay became a Christian through the influence of a friend.<sup>818</sup> In what proved to be a life-shaping moment, Macaulay met Francis Schaeffer in June 1958 during Schaeffer’s first visit to Cambridge.<sup>819</sup> Meeting Schaeffer had a significant impact on Macaulay. He writes,

After that day in June 1958 I began to appreciate how intensely real and intellectually solid the Bible actually is: certainly not a ‘sop for the weak-minded’, or a ‘leap in the dark’, or ‘mental suicide’, which my secular friends kept saying it was. Instead, I saw that it makes sense of who we are as human beings – for the simple

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<sup>818</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, ‘The Christian Mind’, in *What in the World Is Real?* (Champaign, IL: Communication Institute, 1982), 110-25 (110).

<sup>819</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, ‘Contending for the Lamb’, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 24.2 (2020), 11–30 (11).

reason that it fits the totality of our experience. I saw, too, that it grounds itself in history, something no other philosophy or religion comes anywhere close.<sup>820</sup>

Macaulay was at the beginning of his Christian journey; this statement reveals the depth of Schaeffer's early impact upon him.

After graduating in 1959, Macaulay remained in Cambridge for three terms, studying theology at Ridley Hall. He then travelled to Swiss L'Abri, staying on his initial visit for one month but returning there in March 1960 as a recognised staff worker. He spent four years at Swiss L'Abri and developed a strong relationship with the Schaeffer family. In 1964 he married Susan, Francis and Edith's second daughter. The same year the newly married couple moved to London, where Macaulay studied for the Bachelor of Divinity degree at King's College. Leaving London in January 1971, the Macaulays moved to Greatham in Hampshire to establish English L'Abri. Apart from a four further years at Swiss L'Abri following Schaeffer's death in 1984 and a year of sabbatical leave, Macaulay remained at English L'Abri until 1996, when he and Susan relocated to Cambridge.

In 2001, Macaulay set up Christian Heritage in the Round Church (c.1130), Cambridge.<sup>821</sup> Although not residential, Christian Heritage was established with similar aims to L'Abri Fellowship, seeking to sustain a Schaefferian ethos within a city of international scholarship. Its website explains, 'We exist to explore the relationship between faith and culture, and how Christianity has shaped Cambridge and Western civilisation.'<sup>822</sup> Christian Heritage carries the motto, 'Recovering the past, challenging the present, shaping the

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<sup>820</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>821</sup> Renamed 'The Foundations Trust' in 2022.

<sup>822</sup> <https://roundchurchcambridge.org/about/christian-heritage/>

future.<sup>823</sup> Macaulay remained in Cambridge until September 2017 when he and Susan retired to Petersfield in Hampshire, close to English L'Abri.

#### **b. Jerram Barrs**

Jerram Barrs<sup>824</sup> was born in 1945 and raised in Hampshire, England into what he describes as a poor home but one that was nevertheless happy and stable. His father was a gardener at an English manor house and sensitised to what he saw as the social injustices of the world, and a committed Marxist. Clearly interested in ideas and their transmission through great writings, Barrs' father introduced him to the finest writings of classical literature. The interest it sparked in Barrs inspired him to read English Language and Literature at Manchester, and he graduated in 1967. It was whilst at Manchester that he underwent a profound crisis of meaning. Looking for answers to the great questions of life, Barrs despaired at the shallowness of his lecturers' ability to help him and was in turn driven to the brink of suicide. At the point of preparing to jump from a cliff, Barrs found himself overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the setting and decided to keep searching for answers.<sup>825</sup> Two weeks later he met a Canadian PhD student, Mike Tymchak. Tymchak had previously studied under Francis Schaeffer at Swiss L'Abri. He now held group studies and discussions in his home, including listening to tapes of Schaeffer teaching. Barrs writes, 'Within a little over a year and a half, Mike led me in a prayer of commitment on a Tuesday

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<sup>823</sup> Ibid.

<sup>824</sup> The majority of what follows is drawn from several interviews held with Jerram Barrs at the Francis Schaeffer Institute, St Louis in April 2019.

<sup>825</sup> Barrs, *Schaeffer, Apologetics*, 41.

evening in November 1966, as we knelt side by side on his kitchen floor. God had brought another reluctant sinner to himself!<sup>826</sup>

After graduating, Barrs travelled to Swiss L'Abri where he became a staff member, working as cook and gardener for Edith Schaeffer. Leaving a year later with his new American wife Vicki (whom he met at L'Abri), Barrs studied for a Master of Divinity (MDiv) in Pastoral Studies at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Graduating in 1971, he returned to England to join Ranald and Susan Macaulay to assist in the setting up of English L'Abri. During his years in Greatham, Barrs helped found the International Presbyterian Church at Liphook. In 1989, Barrs relocated to Covenant Theological Seminary to head up the Francis Schaeffer Institute and hold the position of Professor of Christian Studies and Contemporary Culture. Barrs is the author of over ten books and has lectured around the world.<sup>827</sup> Although he has not published a biography of Schaeffer, Barrs is one of the world's leading authorities on Schaeffer's thought.<sup>828</sup>

### 3. Macaulay and Barrs Compared to Schaeffer

Ranald Macaulay – unlike Schaeffer with his working-class background – began life with considerable privilege. This is evidenced by his attendance at one of South Africa's premier schools before moving to the UK to study at the University of Cambridge. Macaulay's theological training, at King's College, London, contrasts with Schaeffer and other L'Abri leaders – Jerram Barrs, Wade Bradshaw, Dick Keyes and Barry Seagren – who

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<sup>826</sup> Ibid.

<sup>827</sup> <https://www.covenantseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Faculty-CV-Barrs-2020.06-v4.pdf> [accessed 15 February 2018].

<sup>828</sup> Barrs' extensive engagement with Schaeffer's life and thought can be found in lecture form at <https://www.covenantseminary.edu/>.

trained at American seminaries. In terms of tone, Macaulay is arguably similar to his father-in-law Schaeffer in temperament; both are men of passion, drive and conviction but persuaded that the communication of truth must always be in the context of love.

Moving onto practice, Macaulay married into the Schaeffer family within ten years of L'Abri's inception and, like his father-in-law, has been fully committed to the Fellowship and its sister organisation, Christian Heritage. Also, like Schaeffer, Macaulay is a visionary and innovative leader. His drive explains much of the birth of English L'Abri in the same way that Schaeffer's drive explains the birth of Swiss L'Abri. Although Macaulay, like Schaeffer, would not be called an intellectual in the purest sense, nevertheless his writings and lectures reveal him to be a man of considerable intellectual ability, skilled at communicating the gospel in a popular context. Like Schaeffer before him, and with Jerram Barrs at his side, Macaulay recognised how many young people struggling with belief in God in the face of late modernity, need to experience incarnational Christian community as an important manifestation of the Kingdom of God. To this end, Macaulay believes that L'Abri Fellowship has not been ambitious enough and would like to see new Fellowships set up in cities where engagement can occur with university students.<sup>829</sup> Although not published to the extent that Schaeffer was, Macaulay has still produced material of great value. Mark Ryan describes Macaulay's paper, 'The Great Commissions', as one of the best descriptions of whole-of-life Christianity he has ever read.<sup>830</sup> His volume *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* – written in conjunction with Jerram Barrs and the subject of this chapter – is an original work which has proved to be of great profit to many readers. The newspaper and website, 'Evangelicals Now', contains a number of important articles that

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<sup>829</sup> PC, Mark Ryan, 13 November 2020.

<sup>830</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, 'The Great Commissions', *The Cambridge Papers*, 7.2 (1998) <<https://www.jubilee-centre.org/cambridge-papers/the-great-commissions-by-ranald-macaulay>> [accessed 20 December 2020].

Macaulay has contributed over the years.<sup>831</sup> An avid student of history, he has also made an important contribution to the history of Presbyterianism with his publication, *As for the Saints Who Are in the Land: The Roots of the International Presbyterian Church 1954-1990*.<sup>832</sup>

Moving onto Jerram Barrs and firstly to the subject of tone, Mark Ryan – a close friend and colleague of Barrs – describes him as a pastor in the mould of Francis Schaeffer.<sup>833</sup> Ryan comments that Barrs was captured by the heart of Schaeffer and his love for all people, regardless of their background, need or worldview. Accordingly, Barrs should be thought of first and foremost as a man who believes – in the pattern of Schaeffer – that all ministry must flow out of love for God and neighbour. Speaking of his own ministry at Covenant Seminary, Barrs remarks,

My passion is to teach our students and people in our churches to be in the world as Jesus was in the world – that’s what Jesus prayed for on the night before he died – that we should be sent into the world as he was [...] what that means is that he calls us to be friends of the people around us no matter what they worship, no matter what they do, how disobedient they are to God’s commandments [...] Jesus sets us a wonderful example in going to the house of Zacchaeus, a man who was corrupt and greedy.<sup>834</sup>

Although – like Schaeffer – Barrs is a significant thinker and teacher in his own right, it is as a pastor that he most closely follows in his footsteps. Commentators debate what calling forms the essential Schaeffer – prophet, evangelist, or thinker – but pastor to a lost generation would not be far from the mark. If this is correct, Barrs is as close to a modern-day Schaeffer as one might reasonably expect to find. As was discussed in chapter 6, John

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<sup>831</sup> <https://www.e-n.org.uk/search?f=&q=ranald+macaulay> [accessed 12 August 2018]

<sup>832</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, *As for the Saints Who Are in the Land: The Roots of the International Presbyterian Church 1954-1990*, 1st edition (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

<sup>833</sup> PC, Mark Ryan, 13 November 2020.

<sup>834</sup> *Faculty Video of Jerram Barrs*, dir. by Jerram Barrs <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh1ZPeMa6CA>> [accessed 04 July 2020].

Fischer calls Schaeffer a ‘contemporary Jeremiah’ who weeps over the nations.’<sup>835</sup> Barrs is without question of the same ilk; like Schaeffer he concludes that much unbelief towards the Christian faith has its roots in pain rather than in rebellion. A colleague of Barrs at Covenant Seminary, Zach Eswine, writes movingly of his time as a student at Covenant. During a lecture on apologetics, Barrs – speaking on Psalm 10 – spoke of the victims of crime and telling a story out of his own life, he broke down in tears. Eswine comments that he learned two things in that moment,

That challenges, questions, objections to the Christian faith come from scepticism, but the deepest questions of a generation can arise from our sorrows. I learned a second thing that day – an apologist is savvy and able to reason with the questions of a generation and a human being, but an apologist is also able to cry with the pains and sorrows of a generation and a human being.<sup>836</sup>

This story could doubtless have been told of Schaeffer. If compassion is the hallmark of the L’Abri Fellowship tone – as it came down from its first leader – it is found in its purest form in Barrs. It is unsurprising then that Barrs is perhaps the most loyal defender of Schaeffer. His lecture series on Schaeffer includes a detailed rebuttal of his critics.<sup>837</sup> Ryan comments, ‘Jerram owes a debt of love to Schaeffer. Schaeffer was instrumental in his conversion, he introduced him to his wife and led his father to Christ in the final days of his life.’<sup>838</sup>

Moving on to the subject of practice, Barrs and Schaeffer share certain things in common. Neither was from a Christian home; they shared working class roots but each in their own setting engaged seriously with ideas, Barrs through his father and Schaeffer through his own initiative. Both were searchers for reality, neither willing to settle for an inauthentic life, pretending that personal hedonism and material gain could satisfy the

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<sup>835</sup> Fischer, ‘Why Francis Schaeffer Still Matters’.

<sup>836</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_R2LmjLMBn0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_R2LmjLMBn0) [accessed 02 July 2018]

<sup>837</sup> Barrs, Lecture, *Criticisms of FAS*.

<sup>838</sup> PC, 13 November 2020.

human spirit.<sup>839</sup> Both trained in Presbyterian institutions and were ordained into Presbyterian denominations. Both ministered for many years in Christian community, and both travelled the world lecturing. On the other hand, Barrs opted to migrate out from the L'Abri Fellowship and move to Covenant Seminary to establish the Francis Schaeffer Institute to work as a lecturer. However, even here, he took the L'Abri mind with him and sought to engage with students in an environment of discussion and hospitality, rather than a traditional classroom setting. There are other important things that Barrs and Schaeffer hold in common: both are premillennialists in their eschatology, believing that the world is going to get worse, not better before Christ's Second Coming; both claim the Calvinist tradition but leave significant room for human agency, and both place emphasis on creation and the importance of common grace.

#### 4. The Being Human Thesis

##### a. Background

Whilst working together as leaders of English L'Abri, Macaulay and Barrs jointly produced a book in 1978. It first was published with the title *Christianity with a Human Face*.<sup>840</sup> Later Paternoster Press republished it under the title, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience*.<sup>841</sup> The work had its origin in a series of lectures given by Macaulay and Barrs at a L'Abri conference in Calgary, Canada during the mid-1970s.<sup>842</sup> So popular were their lectures that a number of people pressed them to put their ideas into print. Contained

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<sup>839</sup> For an account of Barrs' conversion see Michael Tymchak, 'Unexpected Encounters', in *Firstfruits of a New Creation: Essays in Honor of Jerram Barrs*, ed. by Doug Serven (Oklahoma City, OK: Storied Books, 2019), 37-48.

<sup>840</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay and Jerram Barrs, *Christianity with a Human Face* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1979).

<sup>841</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*.

<sup>842</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, 'Being (Even More) Human', in *Firstfruits of a New Creation: Essays in Honor of Jerram Barrs*, by Doug Serven (Oklahoma City, OK: Storied Books, 2019), 7-26 (13).



in the lectures and subsequent book is one of the core ideas of the L'Abri mind: that the essence of true spirituality is the recovery of true humanity.<sup>843</sup> In this study it will be referred to as the 'being human' thesis. So important is this concept that Macaulay calls it, 'The genius of L'Abri'.<sup>844</sup> This chapter will explore this simple but significant idea as put forward by Macaulay and Barrs.

As was argued in the introduction, this study maintains that the central motif of the L'Abri mind is the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. Interestingly, in a recent account of the 'being human' concept, where Macaulay comments on the writing of his and Barrs' book forty years previously, Macaulay specifically connects 'being human' to the Lordship of Christ as they learned from Francis and Edith Schaeffer. He writes,

What we did not have to learn before embarking on the book was the content of being human [...] because we'd lived and worked with Francis and Edith Schaeffer at L'Abri in Switzerland. One of their common expressions was 'the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life which sums up pretty well what we learned in this area [...] [seeing how they lived] [...] why then would Christianity not be a glorious affirmation of life! The problem we quickly saw, isn't human experience per se but sinful human experience [...] we basked in the freedom this refreshingly different vision of the Christian life afforded.'<sup>845</sup>

Similarly, on another occasion Macaulay comments, 'I realised Christianity doesn't restrict our humanity, it restores it [...] our seven years at the Manor<sup>846</sup> (prior to writing *Being Human*) didn't add much to our intellectual grasp of the content for the book. We'd learned a lot of that from the Schaeffers.'<sup>847</sup>

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<sup>843</sup> The 'being human' thesis has echoes of Irenaeus' remark, 'The glory of God is man fully alive'. For a detailed exploration of Irenaeus in this context, see Michael Reeves, 'The Glory of God : The Christological Anthropology of Irenaeus of Lyons and Karl Barth' (unpublished PhD, King's College, London, 2005) <[https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/the-glory-of-god--the-christological-anthropology-of-irenaeus-of-lyons-and-karl-barth\(58377e4f-51bc-44a5-8beb-3cd4f927adb9\).html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/the-glory-of-god--the-christological-anthropology-of-irenaeus-of-lyons-and-karl-barth(58377e4f-51bc-44a5-8beb-3cd4f927adb9).html)> [accessed 24 October 2022].

<sup>844</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, *Still Being Human* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/>> [accessed 15 December 2020].

<sup>845</sup> Macaulay, *Being (Even More) Human*, 9.

<sup>846</sup> English L'Abri is also known as 'The Manor'.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid.

Before explaining Macaulay and Barrs' 'being human' concept in greater detail, some context needs to be outlined. If the origin of the concept of Christianity as the recovery of true humanity had its genesis in logically applying Schaeffer's Lordship of Christ to all of life, it also arose as a response to several concerns of Macaulay and Barrs. During the early years of English L'Abri they found themselves countering what they saw as sub-Christian concepts that ran contrary to the 'being truly human' motif – especially as they presented themselves in people arriving at L'Abri.

The first of what Macaulay terms 'misguided alternatives', is the idea that 'the point of becoming a Christian is to get out and tell others.'<sup>848</sup> In this view, he comments, 'Social and cultural pursuits are mere distractions [...] All<sup>849</sup> has to be set aside in favour of preaching the Gospel.'<sup>850</sup> Macaulay should not be misunderstood at this point. As an evangelical who affirms the uniqueness of Christ for salvation, he is not against evangelism *per se*. What he is against is making evangelism the controlling factor in the Christian's life.<sup>851</sup> In his analysis, Macaulay connects this 'saved to win others' approach to Christianity with an anti-intellectualism he found in many people who found their way to English L'Abri: 'The Bible [it was often suggested to him] doesn't need human reasoning, it just needs to be proclaimed. Getting to grips with the culture is a waste of time.'<sup>852</sup> Later he remarks, 'The development of a Christian mind was almost taboo even at university. The result was that

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<sup>848</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>849</sup> The things that must be set aside might include, for example, the enjoyment of the arts including literature, or enjoying the creation.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid, 10. This is a classic case of reductionism, reducing the Christian life to one activity, in this case the proclamation of the gospel. Dooyeweerd is very helpful on this point, providing a tool for identifying reductionism and reductionist attitudes, his modal aspect theory. See Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, Collected Works, B (Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia, 2012), xvi, 7-10.

<sup>851</sup> Randal C. Macaulay, *Being Human* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/>> [accessed 15 December 2020].

<sup>852</sup> Macaulay, *Being (Even More) Human*, 9.

few Christians had the faintest idea how to challenge the secularism surrounding them.’<sup>853</sup>

Macaulay’s rejection of a simple ‘saved to evangelise’ mindset coupled with a rejection of an anti-intellectual mentality is without question a major part of the L’Abri mind, with roots going back to Schaeffer.

Macaulay’s second ‘misguided alternative’ to ‘being truly human’ Christianity – and doubtless connected to the ‘saved to win others’ and anti-intellectual creed – is an over emphasis on experience through a second blessing baptism in the Holy Spirit. He comments, ‘[The charismatic movement fed its adherents a] heady cocktail of euphoria and hand-waving. Punters were confident that the charismatic approach to spirituality would turn things upside down. The church would now be able to ‘march across the land’ with a message of power.’<sup>854</sup> Significantly, in a section from Jerram Barrs’ *Festschrift*, Macaulay explains that one of his and Barrs’ motivations for writing *Being Human* was a related concern they shared about Schaeffer’s work *True Spirituality*. Schaeffer, suggests Macaulay, was trying to ‘cover the wider reaches of spirituality [...] he was exploring the journeys of the heart [...] [however] what struck us was its inadequate framework.’<sup>855</sup> He continues, ‘Schaeffer was using terminology related to the Keswick Convention of the late nineteenth century [...] the resemblance was more than superficial.’<sup>856</sup> Macaulay and Barrs were consequently concerned that Schaeffer’s work leant too far in the direction of a devotional spirituality at the expense of a Lordship of Christ over whole-of-life spirituality. Hence, in *Being Human*, Macaulay and Barrs sought not to reject *True Spirituality* but to erect around Schaeffer’s teaching a framework rooted in ordinary life. In doing so, Macaulay later

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<sup>853</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>854</sup> Macaulay, *Being (Even More) Human*, p.10.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid, 16.

concluded that something was lost, remarking that although good in framework, their *Being Human* book was weak on experience.<sup>857</sup>

On the theme of their concern to clarify Schaeffer's position as he presented it in *True Spirituality*, Barrs and Macaulay were concerned about his frequent references to dying to the self.<sup>858</sup> They considered that Schaeffer overly employed the language of Christian mysticism. Macaulay comments that he and Barrs were concerned that readers may mistakenly think that the self is synonymous with one's humanity, which has to be died to.<sup>859</sup> Accordingly, they wanted to clarify that when Schaeffer spoke of dying, he meant dying to sin and selfishness; he did not mean that the image of God is diminished or lost, but rather restored.<sup>860</sup>

Coming now to the third and fourth of Macaulay's 'misguided alternatives' to the 'being human' thesis. The third is what Macaulay calls 'the cause of peace-making'.<sup>861</sup> He comments that '[in those days there existed an] overemphasis on unilateral nuclear disarmament, as if this were the essence of Christianity.'<sup>862</sup> His fourth was the plea for Westerners to adopt a simple lifestyle and give more generously to the economically poor world. Although Macaulay (and Barrs) opposed unilateral nuclear disarmament during the era of the Cold War,<sup>863</sup> they did not seek to diminish the importance of Christian peace-making as such,<sup>864</sup> or the living of a simple lifestyle.<sup>865</sup> Their opposition was, rather, to making these the controlling themes of the Christian faith.

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<sup>857</sup> PC, 23 April 2019. He means the experience of God's presence.

<sup>858</sup> TS, 215ff.

<sup>859</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Still Being Human*.

<sup>860</sup> Ibid.

<sup>861</sup> Ibid.

<sup>862</sup> Ibid.

<sup>863</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Peace and Justice in the Nuclear Age: Christians and Pacifism* (Garamond Press, 1983).

<sup>864</sup> Ibid.

<sup>865</sup> PC, 9 April 2019.

After outlining his four mistaken turns, Macaulay takes time explaining what he sees as one of the root causes of these mistakes – Christian pietism.<sup>866</sup> Macaulay identifies two factors he finds unhelpful in evangelical pietism: first, what he calls a ‘heart over head’ approach, and second, ‘public over private’ Christianity.<sup>867</sup> On the first issue, Macaulay’s arguments centre on what he calls ‘heart-felt religion’, and in particular Philipp Jakob Spener’s attempts to revive the German church during the eighteenth century after its descent into formalism and doctrinal dryness.<sup>868</sup> What came to matter at that time, Macaulay suggests, was warmness of heart towards God rather than a mind trained to think for Him.<sup>869</sup> The result – he remarks – was a retreat from public engagement to private devotion.<sup>870</sup> For Macaulay, two historical events confirm the limitations of heart religion: the European enlightenment and the French revolution. These events, he writes,

[u]nashamedly repudiated biblical revelation and morality [...] yet Evangelical believers were like flotsam and jetsam, hardly knowing what was going on. The truth of the matter was that they had deprived themselves of what was most needed in this unprecedented onslaught [i.e. a Christian mind] [...] [the consequence was that] The reversal of a Christian consensus in Europe was just a matter of time.<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>866</sup> Macaulay, *Still being Human*. For an introduction to pietism and its attempt to inject warmth and devotion into what was perceived as the dry doctrinal stance of the post-reformation church, see Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). Clearly, there have been different streams within pietistic movements, e.g. the 19th century holiness movement, the Keswick Convention, and later the 1960s house churches. Some groups emphasised the Holy Spirit for holy living, others for signs and wonders, other for mission. For a review of the diversity found within pietism see Unknown author, ‘The Roots and Branches of Pietism’, *Christianity Today*, 1986 <<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-10/roots-and-branches-of-pietism.html>> [accessed 12 March 2019].

<sup>867</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Still Being Human*.

<sup>868</sup> For a discussion of Philipp Spener, see Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 39-54. In their book Olson and Collins make a strong defence of pietism and would doubtless argue that much of Macaulay and Barrs’ presentation of it represents an unfair caricature of a movement. See especially pages 160-181.

<sup>869</sup> Macaulay, *Being (Even More) Human*, 13.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid.

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

Probing further back in time before the rise of Christian pietism in the 1600s, Barrs and Macaulay attribute divided-life spirituality – with its accompanying diminishment of ordinary life – to the harmful influence of neo-Platonic philosophy upon Christian theology.<sup>872</sup> Following their perception of Plato’s division of the inferior material from the superior spiritual, Barrs and Macaulay suggest that much Christian thought has wrongly adopted a negative attitude towards the mind, body, sense and reason.<sup>873</sup> In their work, Macaulay and Barrs spend a considerable amount of time explaining Plato’s philosophy and ways in which it influenced early Christian thinkers.<sup>874</sup> Space precludes a detailed discussion of their arguments, but they seek to show that neo-Platonic thought contaminated early Christian theology and has been present ever since. As far as they are concerned, no part of Biblical theology is exempt: creation, sin, redemption and restoration.<sup>875</sup> But the point here is that for Macaulay and Barrs, it is the neglect of a good creation that has weakened the Biblical importance of ordinary human life.<sup>876</sup>

From a consideration of what Macaulay and Barrs reject, we now turn to a description of the positive, whole-of-life spirituality that they seek to embrace and proclaim.

## **b. Being Human**

The crux of Macaulay and Barrs’ argument – and as was noted above, what Macaulay calls ‘the genius of L’Abri’<sup>877</sup> – is that ‘Christianity is concerned not with the

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<sup>872</sup> Like Schaeffer before them Macaulay and Barrs present an oversimplified view of the influence of Plato on Christianity, largely setting them up as antithetical to one another. For a serious attempt to reconfigure Christianity in synthesis with Platonic thought see Paul Tyson, *Returning to Reality: Christian Platonism for Our Times (Kalos)* (Cascade Books, 2014).

<sup>873</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 29-42.

<sup>874</sup> *Ibid*, 32-34.

<sup>875</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>876</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>877</sup> *Macaulay*, Lecture: *Still Being Human*.

abrogation of humanness but rather with its establishment.<sup>878</sup> This relatively simple argument stands in contrast to teaching which makes the focus of the Christian life spiritual experience whilst dismissing the physical as a distraction and to be subject to mortification.

Barrs and Macaulay propose what they call the Bible's own 'organising principle' for understanding the Biblical narrative and in turn the Christian life.<sup>879</sup> They suggest that this organising principle lies at the core of what it means to be human and derives from the words of Genesis 1:26, 'Let us make man in our image.'<sup>880</sup> For Macaulay and Barrs the image of God is the key to the essence of humanity and as such provides the essential hermeneutic for understanding the Bible's story. God created humans to carry his image within the creation. The fall damaged the image but did not destroy it; Christ's redemptive work is to redeem and restore the image so that the original design for human beings is recovered. They write,

We adopt the statement of Genesis 1:26 as the organising principle first because it speaks of our origin, our very constitution as humans. Second, we adopt it because the New Testament teaches explicitly that the purpose of salvation is to restore this image.<sup>881</sup>

In his lecture entitled 'The Humanness of Spiritual Experience', Barrs develops the concept of the image of God as the controlling factor in the 'being human' thesis. He begins with the doctrine of God. God exists, creates and sustains the universe and its laws; He creates humanity in His own image with the capacity to love, communicate, rule and act with significance. Human beings are not passive, but creatures created with agency, able to impact their environment.<sup>882</sup> The image of God is expressed not by a single component of

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<sup>878</sup> Described to me in this way in PC, 13 January 2019.

<sup>879</sup> Macaulay, *The Christian Mind*, 3.

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

<sup>881</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 5.

<sup>882</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Being Human*.

the human person alone – such as the spirit – but with the whole person: body, spirit, mind, will and emotions. To function in all of these capacities is the meaning of true spirituality; loving God with body, mind, will and emotion. This, insists Barrs, is what it means to be human; to be truly human is to be truly spiritual.<sup>883</sup> In a parallel lecture to Barrs, Macaulay remarks, ‘The first perfectly spiritual man had no Bible, no church to attend, no prayer meeting, no evangelism [to do] and God looked and saw that it was very good.’<sup>884</sup>

According to Barrs, if this argument is correct, our humanness is not our problem, only our departure from it. The human problem, comments Barrs, ‘is our moral rebellion against God.’<sup>885</sup> Or again, ‘My difficulties don’t come from being a human but from being sinful and disobedient.’<sup>886</sup> Barrs thus considers that the essence of the fall is the use of our body, mind, will and emotions not to image God but for self-promotion and aggrandisement, representing a distortion of our humanness.<sup>887</sup>

Macaulay and Barrs move on to stress that the Man Jesus Christ is the perfect human<sup>888</sup> – untainted by sin and therefore possesses an intact capacity to image God. As such he imaged God in every dimension of his life, not just in some narrow ‘spiritual’ aspect. Barrs comments, ‘His [Christ’s] spirituality and relationship with God was not expressed in some narrow spiritual part of his life but in everything he was and did – his whole life declared God’s character.’<sup>889</sup> Barrs adds that, in Christ’s death and resurrection, the moral barrier between God and humanity is removed, enabling believers to live in a restored relationship with their heavenly Father in every part of the creation. Conceived of this way,

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<sup>883</sup> Ibid.

<sup>884</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Still Being Human*.

<sup>885</sup> Jerram Barrs, *The Humanness of Christianity* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/>> [accessed 15 June 2020].

<sup>886</sup> Ibid.

<sup>887</sup> Ibid.

<sup>888</sup> Evangelical theology sees the resurrected Christ as a glorified human, fully God but a human nevertheless.

<sup>889</sup> Jerram Barrs, Lecture: *The Humanness of Christianity*. See for example, Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 663-704.



salvation is the redemption of the image of God to restore true humanness. This restoration of the image, argues Barrs, must be the organising principle of our soteriology. The final restoration of the image will occur at the *Parousia*.<sup>890</sup>

To augment his argument affirming the essential wholeness of humanity, Macaulay makes two further important Christological affirmations.<sup>891</sup> The first is a reminder that humanity is now and will be eternally present in the Godhead, in the Person of Christ; he is the heavenly *Man*. His point is that this represents a remarkable affirmation of humanness; humans cannot be inherently defective if this is the case.<sup>892</sup> Second, Macaulay reminds us that Jesus Christ recovered what Adam lost in that he was a human functioning as Adam was supposed to have functioned.<sup>893</sup> If Jesus Christ was fully man, 'being human' *per se* cannot be a problem. To put this point another way, Christ did not transcend humanity but restored it to what it was in the beginning; the problem he came to solve was sin not humanness.<sup>894</sup> In a helpful summary, Macaulay and Barrs write: 'The model of the Christian life is the recovery of ordinary human experience – 'ordinary' not in the sense of sinfulness, but as opposed to suprahuman; 'ordinary' in terms of God's original creation and Jesus' perfect example.'<sup>895</sup>

Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs are quick to point out the importance they attach to the recovery of restored humanity. Calling it the 'corrective principle for the health of the church', Macaulay comments, 'I am more and more persuaded that the church in the

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<sup>890</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Being Human 1: Biblical vs. Platonic Spirituality* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 15 December 2020].

<sup>891</sup> Ranald C. Macaulay, *The Meaning of Denying Oneself* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 15 December 2020].

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>893</sup> This is often known as recapitulation theory of the atonement and was developed most extensively by Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165) and later by Irenaeus (c.130-c.202 AD).

<sup>894</sup> Barrs, Lecture: *Biblical v Platonic*.

<sup>895</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 17.

West will remain powerless unless it grasps the significance of being human.<sup>896</sup> Again, he states, 'Humanness, being made in the image of God, is like a key which unlocks all the doors in the house of the Christian life.'<sup>897</sup> Barrs applies the 'being human' corrective to life in the West as a whole and not just to the church. He suggests that people have tremendous material wealth in the West but are poverty stricken when it comes to the experience of human life.<sup>898</sup> As evidence for this poverty he mentions family breakdown, increasing divorce rates, neglect of the elderly, abortion and the rise of euthanasia, a lack of creativity, passivity, control by advertisers and the overstimulation of emotions to cope with emptiness.<sup>899</sup> Echoing Schaeffer, Barrs comments on what he sees as the slipping of society into a condition of non-reason with the rise of the new age movement, the occult and Eastern religion. Barrs' point is that at the root of the problem is a wrong view of what it means to be human. In contemporary secular societies the most commonly accepted narrative is that human beings are merely highly-evolved animals. This, he suggests, is a root cause of the shallowness of life that is found in the West.<sup>900</sup>

### **c. Application: Life-Affirming Christianity**

The climax of Macaulay and Barrs' argument is that Christianity is life affirming rather than life denying. Their point is that the forgiveness of sins and the infilling of the Holy Spirit are not in and of themselves the goal of Christian experience. They are 'through' experiences into new life where the image of God is being restored, to a life lived in the

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<sup>896</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Still Being Human*.

<sup>897</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 19.

<sup>898</sup> Barrs, Lecture: *The Humanness of Jesus*.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid. Clearly there are other factors contributing to the shallowness of Western societies. For an exploration of the role of technology in this process, see Nicholas G. Carr, *The Shallows: How the Internet Is Changing the Way We Think, Read and Remember* (Atlantic Books, 2010).

presence of God in every sphere of life in the creation. Macaulay and Barrs express this theme through the lens of various aspects of Christian doctrine. For example, they write, 'Sanctification (becoming holy) then is essentially an affirmation of life. The whole purpose of the Christian life is the recovery of the kind of human experience which God intended Adam and Eve to have before the Fall.'<sup>901</sup> On the theme of the place of law in the believer's life they comment:

The admonitions and commands of the Bible are not arbitrary directives [...] I see them as essentially constructive. Why? Because my nature as created by God, is to live in accordance with such directives. Therefore, when I seek to obey God's commandments, I am not working against myself, but for myself. I am acting in accordance with my nature as the image of God. As I do what is right I establish my true identity: I free myself!<sup>902</sup>

In one of his lectures on the theme of humanness, Macaulay insists that his 'affirmation of life' theme is necessary because of two teachings which abound, and which are, he considers, unbiblical negations of life. The first negation he calls, 'the sombre negation' and defines it as, 'the call to get out of the world: touch not, taste not, don't enjoy pleasures.'<sup>903</sup> Macaulay suggests that this denial of the pleasures of God's creation generally goes hand-in-hand with the notion that all activities are subordinate to evangelism, which is the main business of every Christian.<sup>904</sup> The negation is of a holistic human existence where every aspect of life is valuable and to be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Macaulay's second negation of life-affirming Christianity is what he terms, 'the superman model' of the Christian life. In this misunderstanding, 'The self is not the true vehicle of human spirituality but must be superseded by Another [i.e., Christ].'<sup>905</sup> In

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<sup>901</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 6.

<sup>902</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 10.

<sup>903</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Denying*.

<sup>904</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*

other words, the human person becomes merely a vessel through whom Christ lives.

Macaulay's analysis has echoes from Schaeffer's little book, *The New Super-Spirituality*<sup>906</sup> in which Schaeffer seeks to engage with similar concerns as he encountered them in visitors to the L'Abri Fellowship.

In a helpful summary of their position, Macaulay and Barrs comment, 'The Christian life should be viewed as life and liberty, recovery and restoration. Too often it has been viewed as a life of dullness and dryness, of repression and rigidity.'<sup>907</sup>

#### **d. Challenges to the 'being human' thesis**

These will be considered under two headings: dying to self and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

##### **i. Dying to Self**

Macaulay and Barrs are aware that the 'being human' thesis must be able to survive the scrutiny of numerous verses of Scripture that demand that Christians deny themselves, as well as others that command them not to love the world. They recognise that at first glance these verses appear to be negations of 'being human' and of enjoying the creation. Two examples must suffice: John 12: 25, 'Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life'; 1 Jn. 2:15, 'Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them'. In what follows I will engage with these verses plus four related ones: Matt. 5:29; Matt 16:25; Gal. 5:24, 2:20.

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<sup>906</sup> NSS.

<sup>907</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, *Being Human*, 8.

The question is how do Macaulay and Barrs reconcile the ‘being human’ thesis with these verses? Do they not deny humanness and advocate an other-worldliness for the Christian believer? Macaulay and Barrs say ‘no’, not when handled with a correct hermeneutic. Taking John 12:25, Macaulay suggests that Jesus’ words should be seen from the point of view of what he calls ‘the world’ (Cf. Jn 17: 16). Unless one recognises the future triumph of Christ’s kingdom, a superficial reading of this text may give the impression that Jesus is saying that the disciple must despise his or her life. But, if Christ’s kingdom triumphs in the end, making costly choices for that kingdom is really the path to victory and true life. The life we must hate – and die to – is the self-centred life that avoids costly decisions for the kingdom and is therefore destructive to our true identity.<sup>908</sup> Macaulay comments, ‘[Jesus’ words] are not a negation [of life] – [they are] an affirmation of life because my identity is as a child of God and *I am prepared to die to preserve what I truly am*. [dying means] I shall gain my life forever, affirming my true humanity.’<sup>909</sup> He draws similar conclusions on Matt. 16:24-25: the desire to follow Christ requires a purposeful denial of that which is destructive to the true self and as such is an affirmation of true and renewed humanity. He remarks, ‘Even though we seem to lose our lives, actually we gain them, even now.’<sup>910</sup>

Coming to Matt 5:29, Macaulay insists that we simultaneously affirm two things which are not incompatible: first an affirmation of the self and second the sinfulness of the self.<sup>911</sup> The point of Jesus’s words here is that a follower of Christ must deal radically with

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<sup>908</sup> Macaulay, Lecture: *Denying*.

<sup>909</sup> Ibid, EA.

<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid.

sin; they say nothing about the diminishment of the integrity of the human being.<sup>912</sup>

Moreover, since sin is destructive to human welfare and alien to true humanity, dealing radically with it is actually an affirmation of humanness.<sup>913</sup> In a similar vein, Macaulay remarks that ‘the flesh’ of Gal. 5:24 that has to be crucified, is not the body – created by God – but is in fact a common Pauline way of speaking of the sinful nature.<sup>914</sup> The Paul of Galatians 2:20 that has been crucified with Christ is not the humanity of Paul but his previous sinful life; when Christ died, Paul’s old life died with Christ. Barrs comments that the reason Paul refers to the sinful nature as ‘the flesh’ is, ‘[that] Our bodies are the bit of us that are most affected by the Fall, subject to sickness, decay and death.’<sup>915</sup> In a bid to demonstrate that the body is not in itself sinful, Barrs offers three Scriptural evidences. Firstly, he points to the creation of Adam and Eve – including their physicality – which was said by God to be ‘very good’ (Gen 1:31). Secondly, he refers to Romans 12:1, where Paul exhorts Christians to offer *their bodies* to the Lord as a reasonable act of worship. Why would He want our bodies if they were inherently sinful? Thirdly, he insists that, ‘The supreme value of the body is demonstrated in the bodily resurrection of Christ and the future bodily resurrection of believers.’<sup>916</sup> In their book, Macaulay and Barrs comment, ‘It is human life in its fullest sense which is restored by the resurrection of the body.’<sup>917</sup>

Finally coming to 1 Jn. 2:15, Barrs argues that the world that John commands us not to love is not God’s creation but fallen humanity living outside the rule of God. In no sense

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<sup>912</sup> Ibid.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid.

<sup>915</sup> Barrs, Lecture: *Biblical v Platonic*.

<sup>916</sup> Ibid.

<sup>917</sup> Macaulay and Barrs, Lecture: *Being Human*.

then is refusing to love the world a denial of the legitimacy of the Christian enjoying life and God's creation.<sup>918</sup>

## ii. Be Filled with the Spirit

A further potential objection to the 'being human' thesis is addressed by Barrs and concerns the charge that being filled with the Holy Spirit can be thought of as a separate experience from ordinary life.<sup>919</sup> He anticipates detractors suggesting that the infilling of the Holy Spirit results in life above the ordinary, with power to fulfil the will of God. Barrs' response is taken from Ephesians 5:18 where Paul exhorts his readers to be filled with the spirit but almost immediately afterwards begins teaching on both relationships between husbands and wives, and parenting. The implication – Barrs suggests – is that the infilling of the Holy Spirit has a very practical outworking in the ordinary affairs of human life. We need the Holy Spirit to equip us to be fully human, he notes.<sup>920</sup>

## 5. Being human and the making of the L'Abri mind

We now come to the important question for this research: to what extent does the 'being human' thesis – an important ingredient in the L'Abri mind – follow on naturally from the Schaeffer mind? The answer is that although it is present and significant, 'being human' is not Schaeffer's *central* way of describing what is meant by redemption, as it is with Barrs and Macaulay. First, we consider where it is present in the Schaeffer mind.

In *The God Who is There*, Schaeffer writes,

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<sup>918</sup> Barrs, Lecture: *Biblical v Platonic*.

<sup>919</sup> Ibid.

<sup>920</sup> Ibid.

[t]he Christian is called to exhibit the characteristics of true humanity, because being a man is not intrinsically being sinful man, but being that which goes back before the Fall, to man made in the image of God. Therefore, Christians in their relationship should be the most *human* people you will ever see. This speaks for God in an age of inhumanity and impersonality and facelessness.<sup>921</sup>

This remark provides clear evidence that Schaeffer understood a vital aspect of Christian experience to be the recovery of true humanity. Encapsulated in a few words he reveals his sense that sin is extraneous to the human condition, an alien disease that has contaminated life, and that redemption is the process of the restoration of the true image of God in men and women. Moreover, Schaeffer's use of terms such as the 'mannishness of man'<sup>922</sup> and 'Man is a glorious ruin'<sup>923</sup> bear further testimony to his adherence to the importance of 'being human' and human uniqueness. As Dick Keyes comments,

Schaeffer was opposed to any idea that, we [humans] are basically worms, having no value unless we are doing specifically religious activities by the power of the Holy Spirit [...] [if we think this] we miss the very positive view of humanity made explicit by our creation as images of God.<sup>924</sup>

Mark Ryan makes a related comment, this time stressing the significance of the human being:

When Schaeffer talks about the mannishness of man [...] he wants to take man seriously as a creature [...] so you have man in a relational environment – not just a brain on a stick or a doctrinal or philosophical entity – but a real person of relational and historical significance.<sup>925</sup>

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<sup>921</sup> TGWIT, 173, EIO.

<sup>922</sup> For a discussion of what Schaeffer meant by this term, see chapter 5.

<sup>923</sup> In a lecture given at English L'Abri when I was present, Dick Keyes commented that Schaeffer used this term when speaking of human beings.

<sup>924</sup> Dick B. Keyes, 'The Spiritual Integrity of Francis Schaeffer', *Southern Baptist Theological Journal*, 24.2 (2020), 79-97 (86).

<sup>925</sup> PC, 18 December 2020



This sense of treating each person as a whole and valuable human was one of the key ingredients to Francis Schaeffer's approach to people. In his world there were no little people and no unimportant callings; the ordinary was sanctified.<sup>926</sup>

On the same theme, Francis and Edith Schaeffer's establishment of the L'Abri Fellowship with its 'demonstrating God' ethos,<sup>927</sup> needs to be seen as a concrete expression of the 'being human' thesis. L'Abri was an attempt to exhibit authentic human existence to all who entered their home. Guests were expected to study or attend personal tutorials in the morning, but in recognition of the importance of the whole of life, they were required to work in the house or garden each afternoon. Mealtimes were celebrations of food and a vital opportunity for discussion. Walks in Swiss meadows and mountains were a weekly occurrence and designed to celebrate the beauty of God's creation. For similar reasons music and art were major components of daily life. L'Abri Fellowship – both then and now – represents an attempt to live out genuine and joyful human existence in all its facets, everything under the Lordship of Christ. For L'Abri, all of life is renewed; there is no secular/sacred divide. In promoting this aim, Edith Schaeffer demands special mention. Os Guinness, who knew the Schaeffers well, calls her the 'Secret of L'Abri'.<sup>928</sup> It was Edith who took responsibility for making countless meals, placing flowers on the table before serving food, and playing a recording of classical music in the background. Dick Keyes writes, 'I remember that a friend of mine stumbled into the Schaeffers' L'Abri chalet late one night, unannounced and a stranger. Edith Schaeffer was still up, working in the kitchen on meals for the next day and quickly discovered that he had not had a meal in a long time. Within minutes, filled with conversation, she brought him a tray with a hot meal, a tiny flower

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<sup>926</sup> See chapter 6 of this study.

<sup>927</sup> See chapter 2 of this study.

<sup>928</sup> Guinness, 'Fathers and Sons', 32.

arrangement and a lit candle on the tray. He couldn't believe it. But it was a small piece of what eventually enabled him to believe that a loving God is really there.<sup>929</sup> Ryan comments that to think of L'Abri as fundamentally an apologetics ministry is to be mistaken: 'We [the L'Abri workers] are not trying to prove you wrong or simply trading in ideas; instead, we're seeking to demonstrate the reality of a Christian life, life with the Creator, *Coram Deo*.'<sup>930</sup>

In spite of the above strong affirmations in Schaeffer celebrating humanness and its recovery, as we saw above, the 'being human thesis' is not his starting point for defining spirituality. In his now classic work *True Spirituality*, the focus is not the renewal of our humanity, but a believer's identification with the cross of Christ whereby we die to sin and rise with him in resurrection to live moment-by-moment in communion with God,<sup>931</sup> serving in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>932</sup> Moreover, Schaeffer's true spirituality is positively transcendent and godward, not immanent, and manward. There is a strong focus on living in freedom now<sup>933</sup> but the trajectory is forever forward to a glorified humanity and a new creation, not a renewed humanity living in this present creation.<sup>934</sup> We will explore this further in the conclusions to this study, but we note here some divergence between Schaeffer's sense of spirituality and that of Macaulay and Barrs as found in their 'being human' thesis.

## 6. Conclusion

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<sup>929</sup> Keyes, *Integrity*, 87.

<sup>930</sup> PC, 18 December 2020.

<sup>931</sup> *TS*, 233-40.

<sup>932</sup> *TS*, 253.

<sup>933</sup> *TS*, 287-340. In these pages Schaeffer organises his thought under three headings: (1) freedom from conscience; (2) freedom in the thought-life; (3) substantial healing of psychological problems; (4) substantial healing of the total person.

<sup>934</sup> *TS*, 373-378.

The ‘being human’ thesis is in keeping with what L’Abri does well: engaging intelligently with ideas and their outworking in ordinary life. Macaulay and Barrs’ work in this area is not aimed at the world of scholarship as such, but this does not diminish its value for its target audience. Especially when the thesis was developed, there existed a scarcity of works coming under the umbrella of what we might call intelligent Christianity. The ‘being human’ thesis gave university students and other thoughtful engagers with ideas an accessible and interesting entrance to one of the greatest questions of all: what it means to be human.

There can be no doubt the ‘being human’ thesis forms an integral part of the L’Abri mind. It began with Francis and Edith Schaeffer but has been given more substantial Biblical and theological underpinnings by Macaulay and Barrs. That is, Macaulay and Barrs make explicit that which is rarely codified but is always implicit in the Schaeffer mind. Their lectures and writings involve taking Schaeffer’s attention to the image of God to its logical application.

The ‘being human’ thesis is also important for another reason: it provides one of the best examples of Schaeffer’s – and in turn Macaulay and Barrs’ – ability to see crucial issues that others often miss but are important for the renewal of the church and its mission to the world. As we saw earlier in the introduction to Part 3 of this study, Keyes captures this well, suggesting that the ‘humanness of spirituality’ thesis represents one of what he terms the five ‘strategic corrections’ which make up the core legacy of Francis Schaeffer and L’Abri.<sup>935</sup> We also noted earlier that Macaulay calls the ‘being human’ thesis the ‘genius of L’Abri’. Ryan calls it the ‘signature contribution’ of L’Abri’.<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>935</sup> Keyes, *Integrity*, 80.

<sup>936</sup> PC, 18 December 2020.

Over the last century and a half, a post-Christian definition of what it means to be human in western societies has taken shape but little of it has been flattering for our race. Charles Darwin taught a generation that we are merely highly evolved animals. In time, as industrialisation became a dominant feature of society, we became known as complex machines. In today's climate of technology, humans are complex robots, highly developed algorithms, shaped by the information fed into us by our devices. Into this deterministic gloom, the Biblical concept of humans being made in the image of God and living out the restored image seems attractive.<sup>937</sup>

Against these strong affirmations it must be recognised that, overstated, the 'being human' thesis runs the risk of excessively rooting our theological understanding in an immanent context. Care must be taken not to root human identity and purpose too strongly in the creation. Doing so risks diminishing the transcendence of God and the human need to find our first identity in our knowledge of Him.<sup>938</sup> The danger of the 'being human' thesis is that in the final analysis it is excessively anthropocentric and insufficiently theological.

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<sup>937</sup> See Staub's *Fully Alive, Fully Human* for a more recent treatment and non-L'Abri account of the 'being human' thesis.

<sup>938</sup> Bradshaw comments, 'We long for a sense of transcendence today just as we longed for a sense of God's immanence in the 1960s', *Demonstration*, 29.

# Chapter 9

## Cultural Apologetics

### Dick Keyes

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#### 1. Introduction

As we considered in the first three chapters of this study, Francis Schaeffer was a gifted apologist and serious engager with culture. From the earliest days of L'Abri, people came with pressing questions of meaning, purpose, and identity. To the best of his ability, Schaeffer sought to answer their questions from a Biblical worldview, removing barriers to faith in Christ. Accordingly, during his life and continuing on after his death, apologetics formed a major ingredient of the L'Abri mind and of its whole-of-life Christianity. Just a cursory exploration of the material in the L'Abri Ideas Library reveals numerous lectures on apologetics and related themes.<sup>939</sup>

This chapter will focus on the apologetics of Dick Keyes. Of the L'Abri leaders, Keyes is arguably both the Fellowship's most capable apologist<sup>940</sup> and a key contributor to the evolving L'Abri mind in the area of apologetics. The question under consideration in this chapter is the extent to which Dick Keyes' own apologetic approach represents a continuation of Francis Schaeffer's. It will be shown that, although Schaeffer's apologetic remains in the background, in Keyes' approach we find significant development. First, Keyes' apologetic is less methodological than Schaeffer's. Second, in keeping with L'Abri's core principle, Keyes' apologetic is a better-developed whole-of-life apologetic. Third,

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<sup>939</sup> <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>

<sup>940</sup> This statement will be defended below.

Keyes' approach is more scholarly than Schaeffer's. Like Schaeffer, he also appreciates the significance of history and the architecture of ideas for understanding the times and engaging with non-believers. But Keyes' alertness to the social context in which ideas evolve and take root means that Keyes factors in the importance of events, inventions, and institutions in a way that Schaeffer does not. Fourth, although Schaeffer encouraged people to ask honest questions about the Christian faith, Keyes took this further, paying serious attention to the way Jesus used questions in engagement with people and what we can learn from his example.

## **2. Dick Keyes' Biography**

Born 30 years after Schaeffer, in significant ways Dick Keyes' early life story could not be more different to his. Although both were born into non-Christian homes, Schaeffer's family were distinctly working class; his father worked in a steelworks and was determined that his son become a manual worker.<sup>941</sup> Schaeffer's was a home with few, if any books, and lacked conversations of intellectual interest.<sup>942</sup> By contrast, Keyes was born in 1942 into a family in Massachusetts who possessed the means to send their son first to a private school and later to Harvard, where he majored in history (1960-64). After graduation, Keyes left America for France, enrolling at the University of Aix-Marseilles, an action which led to the deferral of his Vietnam War draft for one year. During his time in France, Keyes visited Swiss L'Abri and through the influence of Francis Schaeffer became a Christian in 1965 after reading through the Bible in its entirety. Like Schaeffer before him, he became persuaded that the narrative of the Bible contained the truth about the universe.

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<sup>941</sup> Roberts, 16.

<sup>942</sup> Duriez, 16.

Upon returning to America, Keyes served six months in the National Guard before entering Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia in 1967. During his years at Westminster, Keyes married Mardi Drew and graduated in 1970 with an MDiv. The next nine years of his life were spent in Europe; several months at Swiss L'Abri and the remainder split between London and Greatham, Hampshire as English L'Abri took root. During his time in London, Keyes pastored the fledgling International Presbyterian Church in Ealing. These years were filled with lecturing, counselling, and preaching, as both pastor and L'Abri worker. In 1979, the Keyes' family left England for the United States to begin a new L'Abri work at Southborough, Massachusetts. Until Schaeffer's death in 1984, Keyes had extensive involvement in his life and ministry.

Keyes has served at Southborough L'Abri for the last 44 years, although he and his wife left the L'Abri house in 2010. His books include *Beyond Identity*,<sup>943</sup> *True Heroism in a World of Celebrity Counterfeits*,<sup>944</sup> *Chameleon Christianity*<sup>945</sup> and *Seeing Through Cynicism*.<sup>946</sup> Keyes has also written chapters in anthologies including, *Finding God at Harvard*<sup>947</sup> and *No God but God*.<sup>948</sup> Although an accomplished author, the majority of Keyes' thinking is contained in hundreds of lectures he has given, over five decades, many of which are available online at the L'Abri Ideas library.

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<sup>943</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *Beyond Identity: Finding Your Self in the Image and Character of God* (Paternoster Press, 1998). Keyes comments on his motivation for writing on this theme, 'The prevalence of the identity question compelled me to address it. Going back a little, I can say that in the 1960s the question I heard most were, "Who is God?" and, "Is He there?" In the 1970's it was, "Who am I?" And the asking of that question has not stopped'. Taken from unpublished transcript, Mark Ryan, 'Mark Ryan Interviewing Dick Keyes', 2009.

<sup>944</sup> Keyes, *Heroism*.

<sup>945</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *Chameleon Christianity: Moving beyond Safety and Conformity* (Wipf and Stock, 2003).

<sup>946</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *Seeing Through Cynicism: A Reconsideration of the Power of Suspicion* (IVP, 2006).

<sup>947</sup> Dick B. Keyes, 'A Crisis of Meaning', in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, by Kelly Monroe (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 78-85.

<sup>948</sup> Dick Keyes, 'The Idol Factory', in *No God but God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age*, by Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody), 23-48.

In what sense then can Keyes be called L'Abri's most capable apologist? If we limit the definition of an apologist to someone who defends the Christian faith in public debate, the term will likely not apply to him. In any case, such an approach is not the L'Abri way, nor can apologetics be limited to such a narrow category. On the other hand, if we think of a broader definition of an apologist as someone who defends the Christian faith in the face of opposing ideas, Keyes' certainly fits that category. If public debates are not the arena in which his competency in apologetics can be observed, it is seen in the following ways.

Firstly, in the breadth and range of his work, including time spent on the task. Keyes has engaged deeply with numerous subjects, including human identity, sentimentality, celebrity culture vs true heroism, the plausibility of sin, tolerance, and cynicism. As we shall see later, Keyes' books and recorded lectures engage with literally hundreds of topics where the Christian faith is contested. At the end of many lectures, Keyes can be found fielding questions, some from people with quite different worldview perspectives to his.<sup>949</sup>

Secondly, for no less than 50 years, Keyes' has been meeting with visitors to the L'Abri Fellowship and engaging with their worldview commitments. Even if this task represents only 10 hours per week, the number of accumulated hours over 50 years is immense. No one else in the Fellowship has anything close to the amount of experience he has in this task. Thirdly, arguably Keyes has an originality and perceptivity that sets him apart even from other competent apologists in the movement such as Wade Bradshaw, Jerram Barrs and Andrew Fellows. Edgar comments, 'Keyes' research has fostered greater depth in cultural analysis [than others]. He is one of the most creative thinkers in the Christian orbit.

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<sup>949</sup> See for example, Dick Keyes, *The Strange Search for the Historical Jesus* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 16 August 2022].



A perusal of his work uncovers astonishing quotes from various sources. As Os Guinness once put it, ‘Dick is like a French wine, improving with age.’<sup>950</sup>

### 3. Keyes Compared to Schaeffer

#### a. Tone

As we explained in chapter 2, there is little doubt that a major ingredient in the L’Abri approach is tone, something intentionally forged by Francis Schaeffer himself. Schaeffer’s irenic and winsome manner was likely not a function of his personality, but rooted in his theology, holding as he did that every person made in the image of God possesses value, and so deserves respect and dignity. Consequently, Schaeffer provides a model of the apologist who seeks to win the person rather than the argument.

There can be no question that Dick Keyes follows intentionally in Schaeffer’s footsteps in regard to tone. In an interview with Mark Ryan in 2009, Keyes cites Francis Schaeffer and Cornelius Van Til as being, ‘In a class by themselves’ when it comes to influences that shaped him.<sup>951</sup> Doubtless much of Schaeffer’s influence upon Keyes was in the realm of tonality. Tellingly, commenting upon another influence on his life, Timothy Keller, Keyes identifies the centrality of listening well in his apologetic, commenting, ‘Keller is a good expression of FAS moved up in time. He listens hard. He listens creatively. He listens for the unadmitted faith commitments.’<sup>952</sup> Like Schaeffer before him, Keyes has listened long and hard to the culture and in personal interactions he identifies with students and disputants, never belittling their concerns or mocking their cultural assumptions, but instead seeking to understand their challenges and questions.

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<sup>950</sup> PC, Bill Edgar, 7 May 2022.

<sup>951</sup> Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>952</sup> Ibid.

Doubtless some of Keyes' determination to pursue truth *and* love is simply the result of having Schaeffer as an early mentor. However, other factors are worth considering. In his book, *True Heroism in a World of Celebrity Counterfeits*, while discussing what he calls 'the cardinal Christian virtue of humility before God and other people', Keyes quotes philosopher Joseph Pieper who writes, 'The ground of humility is man's estimation of himself according to truth. And that is almost all there is to it.'<sup>953</sup> Reading through Keyes' books and listening to him lecture, one is conscious that he is a man whose humility is a consequence at least in part of gaining a deeper understanding of himself in relation to God. Consequently, despite being a man of substantial intellectual capacity and a graduate of Harvard, Keyes is a man content to be a servant of others. This is part of the DNA of L'Abri. It is not without significance that upon arriving back in the United States in 1979, after working in Europe for 10 years, Keyes and his wife opted to join an African-American congregation, Greater Framingham Community Church. Ryan explains how, during his early years as a Christian, Keyes became aware that he came from a privileged world which had shielded him from the needs of those less advantaged than himself. This in turn led him to a profound awareness and concern for issues of social injustice.<sup>954</sup> Evidence for this emerges in two lectures. Firstly, in 'In Defence of the Blues', Keyes demonstrates a profound sensitivity towards racial issues.<sup>955</sup> Moreover, committing to an African-American church has been for him one small gesture towards helping heal relationships between black and white people in the United States.<sup>956</sup> Secondly, Keyes' emphasis on justice also appears in

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<sup>953</sup> Keyes, *Heroism*, 155.

<sup>954</sup> PC, 5 March 2020.

<sup>955</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *In Defense of the Blues Parts 1 and 2* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 20 December 2020].

<sup>956</sup> Mark Ryan, PC, 22 May 2020.

his lecture series on the Book of Amos where injustice is a constant theme.<sup>957</sup> In this sense arguably he was ahead of Schaeffer. Although Schaeffer would often comment on the injustice of what he called, ‘the non-compassionate use of accumulated wealth and racial prejudice and slavery based upon skin colour’,<sup>958</sup> issues of social injustice do not figure significantly in his writings.

## **b. Practice**

One of the compliments that can be paid to Francis Schaeffer is that he did not produce clones of himself. As we have seen, Dick Keyes’ life and ministry is characterised by a similar tone to Schaeffer; he also possesses a profound understanding of Schaeffer’s thought. But in spite of these realities, Keyes avoids the adoption of the facile characteristics that some disciples acquire from their masters. Schaeffer had a quirky dress sense and wore a goatee beard; along with other L’Abri leaders, Keyes never followed suit. There is no evidence from Keyes’ lectures that he utilizes similar phrases to Schaeffer, still less his mannerisms. Respect is undoubtedly present, but in no sense does Keyes idealise Schaeffer or place him on a pedestal. Ryan suggests that Keyes was willing to listen to criticisms of Schaeffer and learn from his mistakes, especially in his handling of the history of ideas.<sup>959</sup>

Although Schaeffer’s one-to-one conversational partners were numerous over his lifespan, arguably the scholars who influenced him the most were relatively small in number.<sup>960</sup> Edgar comments that Schaeffer’s method of learning during his L’Abri days, ‘was

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<sup>957</sup> Dick Keyes, *The Book of Amos*, CDs 6 vols, Soundword, unavailable.

<sup>958</sup> *HSWTL*, p.142.

<sup>959</sup> PC, 22 May 2020.

<sup>960</sup> I outline the key influences on Schaeffer in chapter 1, especially those during his seminary years.

less the careful study of textbooks with footnotes and more an informal collecting of insights from Scriptures, people, articles, clippings and his own hunches. He had a 'nose' for generalisations.<sup>961</sup>

Although Dick Keyes' books and lectures are aimed at a popular intelligent audience, his conversational partners are wider and deeper than Schaeffer's. During his time at Westminster, he would likely have studied the same Presbyterian writings that Schaeffer had thirty years previously. But other writers figure heavily in Keyes' thought. When asked about the people who shaped him, Keyes cites C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, David F. Wells, Ernest Becker, Daniel Boorstin, Andrew Balbanco, Anthony Kronman, John Frame, Timothy Keller, Os Guinness, Peter Kreeft and Lesslie Newbigin.<sup>962</sup> Doubtless there are others; this selection is merely representative of influences on Keyes, whose lectures and writings indicate that he reads widely and is a life-long learner.

One area where there is a great degree of commonality between Schaeffer and Keyes is in regard to spirituality. As was discussed in chapter 3, a defining feature of Schaeffer is what Ryan calls his 'pneumatic dependence'.<sup>963</sup> Schaeffer believed in a moment-by-moment supernatural dependence upon the Holy Spirit, coupled with a life devoted to prayer. The result was a man suspicious of programmes, always wanting to know what the Lord was wanting him or L'Abri to do next. It was for this reason that he called his book, *True Spirituality* – where these themes are explored – the foundational work upon which all his other books are dependent.<sup>964</sup> Wade Bradshaw considers this reliance upon the Holy Spirit to be 'the very core' of Schaeffer and cautions against

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<sup>961</sup> Cornelius Van Til and William J. Edgar, *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 2003), 25.

<sup>962</sup> Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>963</sup> PC, 21 August 2020.

<sup>964</sup> TS, 195.

becoming side-tracked into thinking that the essence of Schaeffer was his mind or even his whole-of-life Christianity.<sup>965</sup> There is a degree of truth in Bradshaw's remark, but it would be wrong to pit Schaeffer's spirituality against his whole-of-life thought; for him they complement one another. The believer, recognising that every realm of creation is marred by the fall, seeks the redemption of every realm, but not through their own strength. For Schaeffer, Christian action – in every arena of life – is only possible through a moment-by-moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit's guidance and power.

Dick Keyes follows closely in Schaeffer's footsteps in regard to pneumatic dependence. Ryan remarks that Keyes' lectures and books emerge out of a prayerful concern to tackle issues which the Holy Spirit led him to address.<sup>966</sup> It is noticeable that Keyes' lectures typically begin with prayer for help and guidance from the Holy Spirit. According to Ryan, conversations with Keyes frequently contain prayer; often he will make a comment, pause, and then remark, 'Please can we pray about that?'<sup>967</sup> After prayer, he may then change his mind or take the conversation in a new direction. Ryan's comment is that none of this is mechanical or forced, but genuinely authentic.<sup>968</sup> Keyes is aware that he needs the Holy Spirit's power to understand culture and people, and for anyone to come to faith.<sup>969</sup> Keyes may well have learned this pattern of life from Schaeffer himself.

This study focuses on the thought and practice of Francis Schaeffer and the evolving L'Abri mind. However, at this point mention needs to be made of how his wife Edith's biography shaped the L'Abri Fellowship. During the interwar years, Edith's parents were

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<sup>965</sup> PC, 5 May 2020.

<sup>966</sup> PC, 21 August 2020.

<sup>967</sup> Ibid.

<sup>968</sup> Ibid.

<sup>969</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *What Is Cultural Apologetics?* (2005) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 27 July 2021].

missionaries with the China Inland Mission (CIM).<sup>970</sup> It seems likely – even probable – that she brought some of CIM’s missional ethos to the L’Abri Fellowship. CIM, founded by Hudson Taylor, was strictly a faith mission. As such, the organisation and its missionaries never formally asked for money but were required to trust God for the provision of sufficient finances to continue their work. From its inception in 1955, L’Abri adopted this stance and has since functioned on this basis. Opting to work for L’Abri means embracing this ethos; workers must believe that God will be faithful to provide the necessary resources without ‘support raising’.<sup>971</sup> Dick Keyes, as the leader of Southborough L’Abri has for four decades followed this principle.<sup>972</sup>

Moving onto differences, Schaeffer and Keyes diverge in their respective approaches to ecclesiology. Throughout the course of his life, Schaeffer remained a Presbyterian and a committed churchman. This can be seen in a number of ways. Firstly, Schaeffer was ordained into the Bible Presbyterian Church in 1938 and held firmly to the importance of seminary training and ordination for other L’Abri leaders.<sup>973</sup> Although he decided against publishing a book on infant baptism so as not to alienate people of a baptistic persuasion, Schaeffer held to a Reformed view of the sacraments throughout his life.<sup>974</sup> During his years in Switzerland, Schaeffer regularly preached at the *Temple Protestant in Champéry* (1949-1975)<sup>975</sup> and during the years when English L’Abri was being established, he founded a

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<sup>970</sup> For an account of Edith’s early life and her parent’s work with CIM see Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry*, 64-98.

<sup>971</sup> The L’Abri Statement includes this remark, ‘The Worker for this purpose shall follow the Fellowship practice and therefore shall not solicit funds but look directly to the Lord in prayer and faith’. <https://labri.org/the-labri-statements> [accessed 03 June 2019].

<sup>972</sup> Keyes, Lecture, *Five Themes*.

<sup>973</sup> Jerram Barrs, Udo Middelman and Barry Seagren attended Covenant Seminary in St Louis; Dick Keyes attended Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia; Ranald Macaulay and Os Guinness pursued theological studies with the University of London.

<sup>974</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality Part 15, The Calling of the Church* (1979) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 7 May 2022].

<sup>975</sup> Duriez, plate 20.

distinctly Reformed denomination, the International Presbyterian Church in Ealing, London. Secondly, Schaeffer's churchmanship is seen in the way he remained under the oversight of his American Presbytery throughout his long years in Europe. He would regularly return to the United States to provide them with a report on his activities. Thirdly, Schaeffer took a lifelong interest in and at times contributed to ecclesiastical debates that went on within the Presbyterian church.<sup>976</sup>

Although Keyes has been committed to the evangelical church since his conversion to Christianity in 1965, he cannot be described as a churchman in the way that Schaeffer was, still less a thoroughbred Presbyterian. Although Keyes attended Westminster Theological Seminary and pastored the newly planted International Presbyterian Church in West London founded by Schaeffer, Keyes' ecclesiastical commitments are much more fluid than Schaeffer's ever were. Not only did Keyes and his wife commit themselves to an African-American church that is thoroughly baptistic, but as leader of L'Abri Southborough he made a point of vetting prospective Presbyterian-minded workers to ensure that they were not going to add 'unnecessary' aspects of Reformed Theology and practice to the 'mere Christianity' he is committed to sharing in The Fellowship.<sup>977</sup>

A further difference between Keyes and Schaeffer concerns their approach to work in the L'Abri Fellowship. Both Francis and Edith were 'old-fashioned' 'ministry people', committed to serve Jesus whatever the personal cost. Likely this approach was derived from two sources: Edith's roots in the China Inland Mission (CIM) and their eschatology. CIM typified this 'old missionary approach' of hard work and little rest.<sup>978</sup> Edith likely

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<sup>976</sup> For examples of Schaeffer's familiarity with these debates, see *CBWW*, 151-164.

<sup>977</sup> PC, Mark Ryan, 22 May 2020.

<sup>978</sup> See Howard Taylor and Frederick Howard Taylor, *Biography of James Hudson Taylor*, reprinted (Hodder and Stoughton, 1973).

observed this attitude in her parents (as CIM missionaries), and in turn brought it into L'Abri.<sup>979</sup> Additionally, this relentless commitment to ministry likely emanated from another source, the Schaeffers' premillennial convictions.<sup>980</sup> Although not stated formally, there is an urgency to act in Schaeffer's writings which likely stems from the conviction that the world will only get worse, and that Jesus' Parousia is imminent.<sup>981</sup>

Upon founding the L'Abri Fellowship in Southborough, Dick Keyes – believing that the Schaeffers' work rate at Swiss L'Abri was unsustainable<sup>982</sup> – determined to establish the new branch upon a different rhythm.<sup>983</sup> Unencumbered by a premillennial urgency – Keyes is an amillennialist<sup>984</sup> – and embracing the notion that rest is part of God's plan for our lives,<sup>985</sup> he established regular days off for staff and students, making time for hobbies, reading, seeing friends and engaging in ministry in the local church. In doing so arguably Keyes avoided burnout and made L'Abri Fellowship sustainable for future generations.

### c. Apologetics

The above analysis has focused on a broad comparison between the lives of Francis Schaeffer and Dick Keyes. We now turn to the matter of their respective approaches to apologetics.

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<sup>979</sup> In one letter Edith remarks that any 'private life' is fading out of their daily schedules, Edith R.M. Schaeffer, *Dear Family: The L'Abri Family Letters, 1961-1986*, 1st ed (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989), 110.

<sup>980</sup> Hutchinson quotes Schaeffer as commenting, 'We can say with pride that we are the first Reformed group to say formally by our creed that we believe in the premillennial Second Coming of our Lord', see George P. Hutchinson, *The History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Evangelical Synod, 1974), 254. For a detailed introduction to Schaeffer's eschatology and millennial view, see Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Book of Revelation, Part 19, Chapter 20: 1-15*, 1976, <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/searchtest2>>.

<sup>981</sup> BBS, 367-370 [accessed 15 June 2020].

<sup>982</sup> Edgar – recalling his own days at Swiss L'Abri – remarks that Schaeffer always seemed to be tired. See Edgar, *Schaeffer*, 63.

<sup>983</sup> PC, Mark Ryan 22 May 2020.

<sup>984</sup> PC, Dick Keyes, 20 June 2020.

<sup>985</sup> Ibid.



### i. Apologist or Evangelist?<sup>986</sup>

At the outset, comment needs to be made about a fundamental difference in calling between Schaeffer and Keyes. As implied above, Dick Keyes is a man with an unassuming attitude. If asked about his life's calling, he would likely pass on the question, wanting to avoid some label that may carry an air of pretension about it. Accordingly, it is difficult to pin Keyes down to a self-designated calling. Mark Ryan helps on this point, suggesting that Keyes is fundamentally a Christian apologist before he is anything else. He remarks, 'Keyes – unlike Schaeffer – has never said, "I am just an evangelist".'<sup>987</sup> Whereas Schaeffer was arguably a preacher, pastor, evangelist, apologist – in that order – Keyes might be considered apologist, pastor, evangelist, preacher – in that order.

Further evidence of the contrast between Keyes and Schaeffer is seen in the degree to which they reference arguably the greatest apologists of the twentieth century: C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton. Schaeffer's writings contain very few references generally, but not once is there mention of Lewis or Chesterton. Nor is there much indication in Schaeffer's thought that he was familiar with the thinking of either man. In contrast, Keyes' writings and lectures are replete with references to both.<sup>988</sup> This contrast is doubtless indicative of differences in respective interests and callings in life.

Moving on to apologetic methodology, Jack Rogers recounts a moment in which Schaeffer is questioned at an event at which he was speaking. The question began: 'Since

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<sup>986</sup> It is noteworthy that although in the New Testament Christians are all called to the task of apologetics (1 Peter 3:15), an apologist is not specifically listed as a spiritual gift in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 or Ephesians 4. Andrew Fellows wonders whether the term apologist is that useful, asking if those engaged in the apologetic task would better be described as pastors and theologians, PC, 15 June 2022.

<sup>987</sup> PC, 22 May 2020.

<sup>988</sup> See for example, Keyes' lecture series, Dick B. Keyes, *Why It Is so Hard to Believe in Sin?, Can We Still Believe in Sin?*, 6 vols, 1992 <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 7 August 2022].

you are a presuppositionalist, rather than an evidentialist [...].’ Schaeffer’s reply is telling: ‘I am neither. I’m not an evidentialist or a presuppositionalist. You’re trying to press me into the category of a theological apologist, which I’m really not. I’m not an academic, scholastic apologist. My interest is in evangelism.’<sup>989</sup> Schaeffer’s response reminds us that he saw his approach to apologetics as consciously eclectic and person-focused and that he refused to be tied down to a prescribed methodology. If by an evangelist, he means he is flexible and focused on salvific goals it is hard to disagree with Schaeffer’s self-designation. However, in reality Schaeffer was not only an evangelist and never set out to be; neither was he without a methodology in his apologetic approach. As Edgar rightly comments, ‘Schaeffer was not so innocent of involvement with academics as he claimed. He liked to picture himself as being in touch with the great thinkers and artists of his day. He was not afraid to discuss Aquinas, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, and other philosophers. In fact many who came to L’Abri had the impression that it was a constant philosophy seminar.’<sup>990</sup>

## ii. Apologetic Methodology

Reading through Schaeffer’s *Trilogy*, the reader soon becomes aware that his apologetic arguments have a historical context. Fellows calls this ‘an historical apologetic’, commenting that Schaeffer’s arguments do not hang in mid-air but are rooted in the history of ideas.<sup>991</sup> Keyes is of the same school; he engages with the history of ideas but less consciously. Although Keyes does not attempt some grand narrative of ideas as Schaeffer does, his apologetic works – both writings and lectures – frequently engage with the

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<sup>989</sup> Rogers, *Promise 1*, 12-13.

<sup>990</sup> Edgar, *Warriors*, 58.

<sup>991</sup> PC, 7 June 2022.

historical context. For example, in his lectures on the plausibility of sin Keyes traces how ideas stemming from the enlightenment have rendered sin implausible to moderns.<sup>992</sup>

As we have seen in chapter 3, at times there is a question mark over the accuracy of Schaeffer's scholarship. Schaeffer is prone to simplify complex arguments, especially as he comments on the history of ideas. One 'advantage' of this approach is that Schaeffer does not get bogged down in detail and presents the big picture. Keyes holds a history major from Harvard and, alert to the criticisms of Schaeffer, seems understandably determined not to make the same mistakes. Accordingly, Keyes' lectures – although always insightful and interesting – tend to be long and exhaustive. Arguably at times he does get bogged down in detail, risking obscuring the big picture of what he is trying to say.<sup>993</sup>

Keyes follows Schaeffer both in eschewing labels to describe his apologetic methodology and in flexibility of method. The term he uses for his own approach is simply, 'cultural apologetics'. Before attention is paid to what he means by this, comment needs to be made about Schaeffer and Keyes' relationship to the writings of Cornelius Van Til, arguably the father of presuppositional apologetics. The importance of this excursion lies in the fact that Van Til taught Keyes apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, as had Schaeffer some 30 years previously.

#### **4. Cornelius Van Til, Schaeffer, Keyes and Presuppositional Apologetics**

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<sup>992</sup> Keyes, Lecture Series: *Why It Is So Hard to Believe in Sin?*

<sup>993</sup> See for example, Dick B. Keyes, *Living With The Unpredictable: Fate, Luck & Providence*, Alternatives to Providence, 2 vols (2005), 1 <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 7 August 2022]. Keyes' books – doubtless with good editorial scrutiny – do not display this tendency.

Although likely he did not coin the term, Cornelius Van Til can be considered the architect of presuppositional apologetics.<sup>994</sup> The rudiments of his approach will be explained here. Firstly, Van Til's writings cover the whole range of human thought and activity; he sees apologetic encounters as just one subset of living under the Lordship of Christ, thinking God's thoughts after Him.<sup>995</sup> He is concerned that in apologetic encounters, Christians – recognising that the non-believer does not share their worldview – may be tempted to set aside their own presuppositions and assume what the non-believer assumes about the categories of causality, logic, rationality, sensory experience and facts.<sup>996</sup> Van Til's point is that in doing so the apologist risks wrongly conceding that these categories have validity even if the God of the Bible does not exist. When this happens the apologist – he insists – falsely maintains the mistaken idea that the believer and unbeliever share a common interpretation of the facts under discussion, or a neutral posture from which to argue. But in reality – suggests Van Til – causality, logic, rationality, sensory experience, facts and how we interpret history are never neutral categories in themselves. Instead, how we understand them rests upon prior assumptions about the nature of reality.<sup>997</sup> Consequently, to believe that a common epistemological framework exists between the believer and unbeliever represents a profound misunderstanding and cannot provide a proper basis for apologetic engagement. Van Til writes,

The issue between believers non-believers in Christian theism cannot be settled by a direct appeal to “facts” or “laws” whose nature and significance is already agreed

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<sup>994</sup> Jerram Barrs offers some interesting insights into the origin of the term ‘presuppositional apologetics’, suggesting that very likely it was coined by Schaeffer's friend, Allen A. McRae. See Barrs, *Review of a Review*. For an introduction to Van Till's apologetic, see Cornelius Van Til, ‘My Credo’, in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Theology and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 18-37.

<sup>995</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, pp. 530–31.

<sup>996</sup> Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, p. 531.

<sup>997</sup> Van Til, ‘My Credo’, 26.

upon by both parties to the debate. The question is rather as to what is the final reference-point required to make the “facts” and the “laws” intelligible. The question is as to what the “facts” and “laws” really are. Are they what the non-Christian methodology assumes they are? Are they what the Christian theistic methodology presupposes they are?<sup>998</sup>

For Van Til, suspending the presupposition of God’s existence and the Biblical framework of reality derived from His revelation can only have one consequence: true knowledge of God becomes unattainable on such autonomous grounds. Moreover, debating whether the evidence points to God’s existence, when that evidence is divorced from a God-centred worldview risks conceding away the apologist’s trump card, that it is only when we *presuppose* the existence of the God of Scripture as our non-negotiable starting point, that anything else makes sense.<sup>999</sup> It is therefore imperative that the apologist stands firm and insists upon his or her Biblical presuppositions. Not only is this expedient but it is essential if we are to honour God as we ought through our apologetic endeavours. Van Til is really insisting that unlike classical apologetics which, when pursued apart from biblical-theistic presuppositions, tends toward compromise, the presuppositional apologist insists that we reason from what God has revealed.<sup>1000</sup> Nothing makes sense without Him and His revelation in Scripture; denying Him is foolishness of the highest order.<sup>1001</sup>

Secondly – following on from the first point – for Van Til apologetics is not a game for opposing parties who enjoy debate but is instead a life and death struggle over where authority lies in this universe. Van Til writes,

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<sup>998</sup> Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, p. 100.

<sup>999</sup> Van Til and Edgar, 139.

<sup>1000</sup> Van Til, ‘My Credo’ Points A 1-7.

<sup>1001</sup> Van Til, ‘My Credo’, 36.

Apologetics involves a conflict over ultimate authorities. That is a conflict over our presuppositions or a final standard. The sinner's opposition to the word of truth [...] does not arise from legitimate intellectual issues regarding the truth or the veracity of Scripture. It arises from the rebellion of a sinful soul and because he is natural, even at his best rational level he cannot attain to this spiritual knowledge.<sup>1002</sup>

Thirdly, despite points one and two it would be a mistake to conclude that Van Til maintained that believers and non-believers have nothing in common from which to begin discussion. Despite antithetical worldview differences there still exists significant common ground between them, making meaningful dialogue possible.<sup>1003</sup> Regardless of the espoused worldview the non-believer offers, and on the basis of every human being made in God's image and being in contact with God's general revelation both in nature and the human conscience, so the reality of the true God remains known.<sup>1004</sup> Van Til writes, 'man's very constitution as a rational and moral being is revelational.'<sup>1005</sup>

Fourthly, the presuppositional Christian apologist's task is twofold. First, it is to graciously carry out a deconstruction of the unbeliever's counterfeit and inconsistent worldview,<sup>1006</sup> demonstrating that non-Christian worldviews fail to make sense of reality. For Van Til, without the God revealed in Scripture, reason, causality and the laws of logic have no foundation. Moreover, when we remove God as our first presupposition we humans are left with a valueless existence in a meaningless universe. He comments,

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<sup>1002</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 130.

<sup>1003</sup> For a detailed and technical discussion of the point of contact (Van Til) or communication (Schaeffer) see Edgar, *Warriors*, 64-68. Interestingly, what Francis Schaeffer speaks of as "the mannishness of man" and "the universe and its form" approximates what Van Til grants or gladly recognizes, namely, that we all live in God's world and each retain some sense of responsibility to God. That is, the significant common ground is metaphysical and psychological.

<sup>1004</sup> Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, p. 92.

<sup>1005</sup> Van Til, *Defense*, 91.

<sup>1006</sup> Van Til, 'My Credo', 36.

Now, in fact, I feel that the whole of history and civilisation would be unintelligible to me if it were not for my belief in God. So true is this, that I propose to argue that unless God is back of everything, you cannot find meaning in anything.<sup>1007</sup>

Having pulled the rug from under the non-believer's worldview, the second task is of the apologist is to invite him or her onto the ground of the believer's worldview and explain how life is explained and made meaningful by the Scriptural framework.<sup>1008</sup>

Fifthly and finally, what is the place in Van Til for evidence? Perhaps surprisingly, although rejecting evidentialism, which assumes a neutral evaluation of the evidence, he is not against the use of evidence. His insistence though is that when the apologist cites evidences in support of any argument, his or her 'proofs' must be framed by the God of Scripture as the starting point, instead of being framed by the supposed neutrality of the human mind.<sup>1009</sup> For Van Til, 'facts' and 'evidence' cannot be thought of in isolation from the God who gives them context and meaning.<sup>1010</sup>

Returning now to Dick Keyes, like Schaeffer before him<sup>1011</sup> Keyes argues that the classical method is largely ineffective<sup>1012</sup> since we no longer live in an era where conditions are right for their effectiveness. Keyes' comments that the classical method of presenting people with what he calls 'positive evidences and rational arguments' is only useful when, 'there is a strong Christian consensus in the society'.<sup>1013</sup> Moreover, he remarks that the, 'classical approach contains an irony: its rationalistic methodology is akin to taking an enlightenment approach and beating it at its own game.'<sup>1014</sup> Accordingly, as Schaeffer did

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<sup>1007</sup> Quoted by Edgar in Van Til and Edgar, 4.

<sup>1008</sup> Van Til and Edgar, 131-32.

<sup>1009</sup> Van Til and Edgar, 7-8.

<sup>1010</sup> Van Til and Edgar, 130.

<sup>1011</sup> *TGWIT*, 175-87.

<sup>1012</sup> PC, 21 September 2020.

<sup>1013</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *The Contribution of Francis Schaeffer to Christian Apologetics* <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 15 October 2020].

<sup>1014</sup> *Ibid.*

before him, Keyes concludes that in a post-Christendom culture – where people no longer think in absolutes of true/false and right/wrong – the correct approach to apologetics lies in unpacking a person’s presuppositions and helping them assess whether they comport to reality and human flourishing.<sup>1015</sup>

There is a noteworthy distinction between Schaeffer/Keyes’ caution towards classical apologetics and Cornelius Van Til’s. As we have seen above, the Van Tillian apologetic is driven by expressly theological commitments and concerns. Obviously, it would be absurd to argue that Schaeffer and Keyes were void of theological concerns in *their* apologetic. After all, apologists are trying to win people to the truth of a *theological* worldview. But while Van Til’s concern is crafting an apologetic approach consistent with Reformed Theology, Schaeffer, is more concerned with what is effective in getting through to the specific person he is ministering to.<sup>1016</sup> Keyes can be thought of as being somewhere in the middle. He is not constrained by Van Til’s presuppositional project, but he is more consistent in his approach than Schaeffer in terms of drawing his apologetic out of Scripture and in accord with Biblical presuppositions.

Keyes is aware that Van Til and Schaeffer think about presuppositional apologetics differently.<sup>1017</sup> He writes, ‘I do fear that Van Til got stuck thinking that there was only one argument that you must use to start a discussion with a non-Christian – that he/she could not predicate or make a logical connection without assuming the Christian God (this is a

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<sup>1015</sup> Keyes, *Contribution*.

<sup>1016</sup> It has been said that whereas Cornelius Van Til was self-consciously and very deliberately crafting a theological-apologetic, Francis Schaeffer expressed far less interest in systematic formulations or strict methodological concerns. Whereas Van Til embraces a ‘principle consistent’ approach, Schaeffer embraces ‘person-variability’ in his apologetic work. Mark Ryan PC, 17 June 2024.

<sup>1017</sup> PC, 21 September 2020.



little exaggerated, but not too much).<sup>1018</sup> Schaeffer, suggests Keyes, is more flexible than Van Til in his starting point, keeping before him that the believer and non-believer share the same world and a common humanity.<sup>1019</sup> Accordingly, points of contact can be found by identifying points of tension. A point of tension could, for example, be what Schaeffer calls the 'mannishness of man'<sup>1020</sup> or alternatively what he calls the 'form of the universe'.<sup>1021</sup> Stated in non-Schaefferian language, one might say that whatever one's worldview, humans are unique within the created (or natural) order and possess a capacity to appreciate the wonders of the natural world. Keyes comments that for Schaeffer, 'these points can be used as a starting point for apologetic discussion: can the person's worldview account for them?'<sup>1022</sup> Van Til would likely approve but insist on making the point that only in a world where the God of the Bible frames reality can anything be useful as evidence. On this point Schaeffer would be in close agreement. In his article *Review of a Review* on this point Schaeffer quotes Oliver Buswell approvingly, 'The Philosophy of the Christian evidences, which I am advocating does not differ from Presuppositionalism in that I am ever willing to admit or assume anything whatsoever contrary to Christian theism, except in the well-known logical form of an admission 'for the sake of the argument'.<sup>1023</sup>

Keyes summarises the difference between Schaeffer and Van Til in this way:

Schaeffer was just as sensitive to the role of presuppositions [as Van Til was] but felt the need to be very flexible in where to start the conversation, where the Holy Spirit might be putting pressure on someone, or as I often say, where is general revelation pushing back against the folly of someone's unbelieving thinking, behaviour or whatever? Start conversation there, where he or she might be in pain or confusion.

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<sup>1018</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1019</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1020</sup> The 'mannishness of man' is term coined and used by Schaeffer to describe the uniqueness of human beings over and against the rest of the creation. Cf. *TGWIT*, 178.

<sup>1021</sup> See *TGWIT*, 119-125. By form, Schaeffer means the design and order of the universe.

<sup>1022</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1023</sup> Francis A Schaeffer, 'A Review of a Review'.

Challenging someone's ultimate epistemological presuppositions [as Van Til advocated] might have nothing to do with what they care about, whereas a lot of other things might.<sup>1024</sup>

This flexibility of approach and attention to where a person is on their life-journey is a hallmark of the Schaeffer mind and has been embraced by his successors, who shaped the evolving L'Abri mind we observe today.

As was noted above, another subtle but significant difference between Van Til and Schaeffer is that the former considers it blasphemous for created creatures to make the call as to whether or not God exists.<sup>1025</sup> In contrast, Schaeffer considers it reasonable to make that call since faith is never blind. Rather, it has good reasons for believing that God 'is'.<sup>1026</sup> At this point, in granting that the human mind can verify the legitimacy of the claims of the Christian faith, some tend toward seeing Schaeffer as being more of a verificationist than a presuppositionalist.<sup>1027</sup> However, it deserves to be noted that Van Til would agree with Schaeffer in noting that faith is never blind. From Van Til's viewpoint, faith is amply attested to, making it folly to not believe God and trust His Word. As for Keyes, he follows Schaeffer in openly commending the reasonableness of Christian faith. For example, his book, *Seeing Through Cynicism* is – among other things – a plea for the reasonableness of the Christian Faith.<sup>1028</sup>

*Seeing Through Cynicism* offers a detailed analysis of cynicism in western societies, with a strong apologetics flavour.<sup>1029</sup> Keyes' comments, 'Cynicism [and sentimentality] are not 'attacks on Christianity', but Christianity suffers under them. They are important lenses

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<sup>1024</sup> PC, 21 September 2020.

<sup>1025</sup> Van Til, 'My Credo', 34.

<sup>1026</sup> See for example, *TGWIT*, 45

<sup>1027</sup> For example, Bryan Follis, *Truth With Love: The Apologetics of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Crossway, 2006): 114ff.

<sup>1028</sup> Keyes, *Cynicism*.

<sup>1029</sup> *Ibid*, 9-13.

through which we see so much: How do we see God? How do we see ourselves? How do we see other people?’<sup>1030</sup> The book moves on to explore the antidote to cynicism, namely hope, which Keyes argues emerges when we come to know God who is good, seeks our redemption, and will one day ensure the redemption of the cosmos.<sup>1031</sup> *Seeing Through Cynicism*, with its finger on the pulse of cultural confusion and the gospel narrative crafted to explain and address the problem is vintage L’Abri. In the book Keyes un.masks and engages with the presuppositions of the times and engages with them, but also seeks to show how the New Testament writers used evidence and appeals to reason as they point to the identity of Jesus Christ.<sup>1032</sup>

The point is that, following in the footsteps of Schaeffer, Keyes has a flexibility in his approach to apologetics that is not readily found in Van Til. Even Jesus, Keyes argues, can be seen harnessing a classical approach on one occasion but a presuppositional approach on another. Keyes writes, “Even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”<sup>1033</sup> [This is] something like, if you don’t believe, look at what you see in front of you. The idea is to use your senses and draw a conclusion.<sup>1034</sup> However, suggests Keyes, on another occasion, ‘Jesus could say to a different group, “How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God.”<sup>1035</sup> In other words, you can’t possibly believe, given your priorities (presuppositions) in life.’<sup>1036</sup>

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<sup>1030</sup> Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>1031</sup> Keyes, *Cynicism*, 101-45.

<sup>1032</sup> Keyes, *Cynicism*, 134-44.

<sup>1033</sup> Jn. 10:38.

<sup>1034</sup> PC, 21 September 2020.

<sup>1035</sup> Jn. 5:44.

<sup>1036</sup> PC, 21 September 2020.

Although Schaeffer's apologetic is never formulated as technically as is Van Til's, it does have some sophisticated nuances to it. Van Til's approach centres around showing a person that their beliefs have no valid epistemological basis. For example, the Van Tillian apologist may be in dialogue with a philosophical naturalist arguing as to why racism is wrong. In response, the apologist may point out that in his or her worldview, the very mechanism by which humankind came to exist – Darwinian evolution – is based upon the survival of the fittest, stronger races surviving at the expense of weaker ones. Since in his or her worldview all living things are merely a collection of accidentally assembled molecules, how can anything be said to be 'wrong'? Ultimately, statements of right and wrong are no more than the preferences and sentiments of a person or a culture.<sup>1037</sup> The apologist may then point out that the naturalist – when claiming human value for all people regardless of their race is in fact unwittingly borrowing from the true worldview – that found in the Bible. The apologist wants the person to see that as an image of God, even though they claim allegiance to naturalism, they cannot escape the real world, God's universe. To try to do otherwise results in contradiction and absurdity. The point is that the apologist – following a Van Tillian methodology – looks to expose and exploit the faulty yet ultimately governing foundations in a person's thinking.

As we have seen above, Schaeffer, like Van Til, is also interested in unpacking presuppositions during apologetic encounters. However, there is a subtle distinction between them. Schaeffer is less interested than Van Til in looking back to faulty epistemological foundations in a person's belief system and more interested in helping

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<sup>1037</sup> For a suggestion as to how science can shape morality, see Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (Black Swan, 2012).

them work through the conclusions that those beliefs lead to.<sup>1038</sup> For Schaeffer there is a clear connection between foundations and destination. Whereas a non-Christian might adopt varying ideas or sets of presuppositions on offer, only the presuppositions of the Bible match reality or prove to be livable. Here, the point is that Schaeffer intentionally makes the connection. Doubtless there is a contextual reason for this. During his years at L'Abri, Schaeffer was ministering among young people whose worldview had been shaped by the existentialist philosophers, including Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. Accordingly, he knew that his listeners were more interested in understanding how to live in the face of a meaningless universe than in the epistemological foundations of their worldview. Although aware of the epistemological questions, Schaeffer was always asking them to think about how their deepest beliefs played out in life.<sup>1039</sup> Or to put this another way, he found that focusing on existence rather than foundations facilitated meaningful engagement with the generation with whom he worked. As we have seen in chapter 3, Schaeffer describes his attempt to expose the outworking of a faulty worldview as 'Taking the roof off'.<sup>1040</sup>

In Keyes' apologetic approach – although sophisticated in its own way – he is never trying to cleverly lever the argument in his favour. Although Keyes may seek to explore a person's presuppositions to help them to see their inconsistencies, he is not interested in a finale where he is able to claim victory and say 'gotcha'! Even Schaeffer's mild 'Taking the roof off' does not specifically figure in Keyes' discussion of the practice of apologetics. By extension we can say that Keyes, like Schaeffer, is not slavishly wedded to a given

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<sup>1038</sup> Koukl suggests that this method means to, 'mentally give the idea a test drive and see where it leads', Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 181.

<sup>1039</sup> *TGWIT*, 129-50.

<sup>1040</sup> *TGWIT*, 140.

methodology. There is considerable thoughtfulness, and certainly there is an embrace of Schaeffer's commitment to allowing the person to drive the encounter, but there is no mere replication of a method (whether Schaeffer's or Van Til's).

Drawing this section to a close, to what extent does Keyes follow Van Til in his presuppositionalism?<sup>1041</sup> On the one hand, and as with Schaeffer, clearly the influence of Van Til is present. Like Van Til (and Schaeffer), Keyes also has a strong focus on making implicit beliefs about the world explicit, to see whether or not they are biblically valid. On the other hand, there is divergence from Van Til. Keyes seeks points of contact with unbelievers, in ways that Van Til struggled to countenance. Contrary to Van Til, Keyes does not consider the noetic effects of sin to be so deep or consistently expressed that reason cannot be appealed to or enlisted. For Van Til this is unthinkable, representing a rejection of Calvinistic orthodoxy and a foray into the realm of Arminianism.<sup>1042</sup> Finally, Keyes – like Schaeffer before him – does not expect unbelievers to accept Scripture as an authority from the outset. Instead, he seeks to meet people without Christ in their existential dilemma. From there he seeks to lead them back to the Bible which for him contains answers to the inescapable questions of life.

## 5. Keyes and Cultural Apologetics

### a. Definition

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<sup>1041</sup> Keyes comments 'I don't use the term "I am a presuppositional apologist" because it has been so fraught with conflicts that I really do not want to join. I guess what I'm trying to say is that there must be a lot of room in our apologetics for how we use presuppositions and that must be person-relative to person or group we are talking to – as with Jesus and Paul', PC, 20 September 2020.

<sup>1042</sup> Van Til and Edgar, 126-127.

As we noted above, Keyes uses the term ‘cultural apologetics’ to describe his own apologetic approach. Attention will now be paid to defining what is meant by this term and how Keyes sees apologetics working out in practice.

Keyes summarises his understanding of the apologetic method in the following way:<sup>1043</sup>

A sharp apologetic will include an understanding of the surrounding culture, such as its hopes, habits, fears, idols, social structures, and basic ideas. It will also include a grasp of the way these ideas and practices interact with biblical truth. At what points do biblical faith and today's ideas and ways collide? Where is there friction? And where is there some commonality, and therefore possible points for conversation or cooperation?<sup>1044</sup>

On another occasion, Keyes’ simply comments, ‘[in apologetics] the goal is to help a person see that the Biblical view is a better, more honest analysis of the broken world we live in.’<sup>1045</sup> With the above definitions in mind, we will now attempt to construct the contours of Keyes’ cultural apologetic.<sup>1046</sup>

## **b. Relational and existential**

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<sup>1043</sup> Although Keyes does not link the term cultural apologetics to this definition, clearly that is what he means by it.

<sup>1044</sup> Keyes, *Chameleon*, 58.

<sup>1045</sup> PC, 27 September 2020.

<sup>1046</sup> To my own mind cultural apologetics can be thought of as the Christian engaging with rival stories to the Christian story, always mindful as to how a worldview’s outworking could be seen in both the ideas of intellectuals but also of novelists, artists and musicians. Andrew Fellows comments that ‘Cultural Apologetics is simply bringing *sola scriptura* into a conversation with the culture and its adherents [...] it is following cultural trends and asking how do they line up with the Biblical worldview?’, PC, 3 June 2022. For helpful definitions and discussion of cultural apologetics, see Clark H. Pinnock, ‘Cultural Apologetics: An Evangelical Standpoint’, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 127.505 (1970), 58–63, William Edgar, ‘Reversing the Sandman Effect: Cultural Apologetics Today’, *Modern Reformation*, 7.2 (1998), 32-34 and Andrew Fellows, *Subverting Civilization: A Case for Cultural Apologetics* (2016) <<https://resources.covenantseminary.edu/programs/stand-firm?cid=2682570&permalink=stand-firm-lecture-5>> [accessed 8 June 2022].

First, Keyes' apologetic is relational, involving what he calls, 'crossing horizons of meaning and culture'.<sup>1047</sup> Rather than being driven by a pre-packaged top ten set of answers to current objections to Christianity, Keyes is convinced, like Schaeffer before him, that one of the keys to reaching a person is taking the time and trouble to listen carefully to their life-story and gain trust.<sup>1048</sup> He comments, 'At L'Abri, we've concluded that it's impossible to love God and neighbour without involving yourself pretty deeply with the way that your neighbour happens to be thinking [...] not to do so is a matter of lack of love'.<sup>1049</sup> He further states, 'Time, not killer arguments, are key'.<sup>1050</sup> Forever seeking to ascertain where a person is in their journey (or, 'where they are awake?'<sup>1051</sup>) and recognising that people come to God in diverse ways, Keyes' identifies at least four types of people: (a) those ready to believe; (b) those open to listen; (c) those closed and rejecting and (d) those who are distracted.<sup>1052</sup> And when the time comes to speak, there is a need for flexibility. Keyes is looking to find tension to gain leverage for establishing the credibility of Christianity and help a person see things in a new light. Keyes writes:

I think of apologetics [...] as being like going down the road with the non-Christian, able to speak of areas of agreement [...] then at some point we must make a sharp turn off that road and hope to have persuaded the non-Christian person to take that turn with us. That means there must be a disenchantment [with their current path] and some level of re-enchantment with Christ. *This is all so relational* that the idea of reducing it to a method or technique seems counterproductive.<sup>1053</sup>

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<sup>1047</sup> Keyes, *Cultural Apologetics*.

<sup>1048</sup> Ibid. Keyes comments that one reason why Schaeffer was successful in reaching non-believers was that he wore several hats at once: pastor, apologist and theologian. His point is that effective apologists span several roles at once. Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>1049</sup> Keyes, *Cultural Apologetics*. On another occasion Keyes' comments, 'The Great Commission is an expression of the great commandment, to love', Ryan interviews Keyes.

<sup>1050</sup> Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>1051</sup> Keyes, *Contribution*.

<sup>1052</sup> Keyes, *Cultural Apologetics*.

<sup>1053</sup> PC, 27 September 2020, EA.



Keyes is keen to point out that his stress upon relational encounters does not mean that sound arguments are not important. They are, he insists, but ‘as expressions of love. The great commission is an expression of the great commandment, to love. We take time to listen and we take time to share answers out of love.’<sup>1054</sup>

### **c. Cultural**

Keyes’ apologetic is cultural in that he is seeking to understand the way in which the culture limits the ability of a person to understand the gospel. To put this another way, he has forever got one eye on rival stories to Christianity and is seeking to make the message of creation, fall, redemption and restoration plausible to the person with whom he is engaging.<sup>1055</sup> This means that Keyes is concerned with issues of language, ideas, and longings. He recognises that people are not the sum of their thoughts but are also profoundly shaped by experiences, desires, disappointments, and existing commitments.<sup>1056</sup>

### **d. Flexible**

Arguably Keyes’ cultural apologetic is less technical than others because it is loosely defined, and it is more flexible because the point of tension does not have to arise in the sphere of epistemology (Van Til) or when taking an argument to its logical conclusion (Schaeffer). As far as Keyes’ is concerned, if Jesus is Lord of the whole cosmos – and he is continuing his plan to redeem every part of it – nothing is outside the scope of apologetic engagement. If the creation is fallen and profoundly out of kilter with how it was designed

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<sup>1054</sup> Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>1055</sup> PC, 27 September 2020.

<sup>1056</sup> Edgar, *Sandman Effect*, 32-34.

to be,<sup>1057</sup> there will be tensions in every sphere in which the apologist can legitimately engage. Keyes comments favourably about what he learned from Schaeffer: ‘He turned all of reality into fair game for discussion.’<sup>1058</sup> Furthermore – and related to the last point – a fallen world will always have a broken feel about it; where there is the absence of *shalom*<sup>1059</sup> a measure of implausibility will exist across the cosmos. In cultural apologetics, the role of the apologist is to help the unbeliever see the plausibility of the Biblical Story of creation, fall, redemption and restoration in every sphere of life.<sup>1060</sup> Keyes’ work on cynicism gives us an insight into how he attempts this. He writes,

The cynicism book was pretty much straight cultural apologetics in its intention [...] it took a recognized and lamented cultural problem, tried to describe it in a plausible way for Christian and non-Christian, and then tried to show that the Biblical view is a better, more honest analysis of the broken world we live in.<sup>1061</sup>

#### e. Breadth

The apologetic implications that stem from an apologetic with ‘Jesus is Lord’ at its centre gives a profound breadth to Keyes’ interests. Whereas many approaches involve something of a narrow tactical method,<sup>1062</sup> Keyes’ is the precise opposite. He is interested in doing apologetics out of a deep understanding of both Christianity *and* contemporary ‘street philosophies.’<sup>1063</sup> A helpful way to understand the comprehensive nature of Keyes’

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<sup>1057</sup> For an account of this theme, see Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 5. reprint (Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>1058</sup> Keyes, *Contribution*.

<sup>1059</sup> For a discussion of the Hebrew idea of Shalom, see John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, IVP Classics (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2008), chapter 1.

<sup>1060</sup> Keyes stresses the centrality of Biblical Theology in apologetic engagement, see *Contribution*.

<sup>1061</sup> PC, 27 September 2020.

<sup>1062</sup> See for example, Koukl, *Tactics*.

<sup>1063</sup> By ‘street philosophies’ I mean widely believed worldview stories in a culture that pertain to existence and the meaning of life. See Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2009), 11-26.

apologetic is to list the topics he covers in his introductory course on cultural

apologetics:<sup>1064</sup>

Cultural Apologetics by Dick Keyes	
Session 1	Introduction to the Course
Session 2	The Dynamics of Idolatry
Session 3	Giving A Word Back
Session 4	Polarities in Modern Apologetics
Session 5	The Apologetics of Jesus & the Role of Questions
Session 6	The Uniqueness of Christ – Jesus as The Truth & The Way
Session 7	Tolerance, Old and New
Session 8A	Loss of Belief in Sin, Pt 1 – Coherence of Biblical Teaching on Sin
Session 8B	Loss of Belief in Sin, Pt 2 – Sin as a Key to Human Understanding
Session 9	Cynicism, the Last Stopping Place of the Honest Mind?
Session 10	Cynicism about God
Session 11	Postmodern Roots – Deconstruction
Session 12	The Postmodern Challenge
Session 13a	Two Faces of Postmodernism –High

<sup>1064</sup> <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org> [accessed 01 January 2018].

	Culture & Pop Culture
Session 13b	Money & Consumer Materialism – 1st Class on the Titanic
Session 14	Feminism & Gender Issues
Session 15	Sexual Freedom
Session 16	Questions that Will Not Go Away – Meanings in Life
Session 17	God and morality
Session 18	The Presence of Islam, A New Apologetic Factor?
Session 19	Designer Religion
Session 20	Is Christianity Too Trivial to Be True? – The Bottom Line of Spiritual Integrity

#### **f. Apologetics in community**

In some contexts, Christian apologists may be seen as ‘lone rangers’, travelling around to debate their opponents or giving presentations and answering questions at universities. Doubtless during his life Keyes has done some of this. However, this is not the L’Abri way. As we have seen previously, The Fellowship was set up by Schaeffer as a vehicle to demonstrate the reality of God through hospitality, prayer, and shared life. Clearly, then, community is part of the apologetic process for those – like Keyes – who have devoted their lives to it. Keyes comments, ‘What is supposed to be most true of Christianity is experienced as we live together, collectively [...] being in community gives me a huge sense

of confidence [...] It is in the context of community that people are nurtured, prayed for and counselled.<sup>1065</sup> In Keyes' experience, people do not usually come to faith in a moment but over a period of time.<sup>1066</sup> Apologetics in a community context facilitates the process of coming to faith.

## 6. The Apologetic of Jesus

Keyes is keenly interested in the four gospels and the apologetic lessons that can be derived from them. In so far as a judgement can be made, Schaeffer leans towards Paul. His categories are theological, forensic, and shaped mainly from the epistles.<sup>1067</sup> Keyes, on the other hand, leans towards Jesus and Acts.<sup>1068</sup> If Schaeffer is a theological systematician, Keyes is a Biblical theologian, reading Scripture as narrative.<sup>1069</sup> This is relevant for this discussion of apologetics, since Keyes spends time thinking through not just questions of truth but how Jesus and the early church lived out truth in real life.<sup>1070</sup> Ryan describes the difference between Schaeffer and Keyes this way: 'Schaeffer defends a body of knowledge – a position, but he does not make us a better reader of Scripture; Keyes does.'<sup>1071</sup>

More importantly for this study, Keyes is interested in the role of questions in apologetics and draws much of his inspiration from the life of Jesus.<sup>1072</sup> Before discussing<sup>1073</sup> the apologetics of Jesus, Keyes observes that, in the Old Testament, God is the

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<sup>1065</sup> Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

<sup>1066</sup> PC, 30 May 2020.

<sup>1067</sup> Arguably in *BBS* and *TS* the bias of argument is Pauline.

<sup>1068</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *The Life of Christ*, 7 vols <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/searchtest2>> [accessed 11 August 2022]. For an example of Keyes' engagement with Paul, see *Cultural Apologetics*.

<sup>1069</sup> Ibid. See also Lectures: *The Book of Amos*, 6 vols.

<sup>1070</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1071</sup> PC, 22 May 2020.

<sup>1072</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *The Apologetics Of Jesus - The Role Of Questions*, Cultural Apologetics, 20 vols, v <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 11 August 2022].

<sup>1073</sup> Ibid.

Great Questioner. He states that there are two 'prototype questions' which occur early on in Genesis. The first is asked by God of Adam: 'Where are you?'<sup>1074</sup>; the second is asked by God of Cain: 'Where is your brother Abel?'<sup>1075</sup> Keyes suggests that these questions concern loving God and loving neighbour, respectively; Adam is hiding from God in the Garden, whilst Abel has slain his brother Cain. Keyes goes on to mention numerous times where God asks questions in the Old Testament, no more so than when God asks Job sixty questions in rapid succession.<sup>1076</sup>

Coming to the New Testament, Keyes' main apologetic focus is on Jesus the questioner;<sup>1077</sup> he estimates that in Matthew Jesus asks 82 questions, in Mark, 48, in Luke, 76, and in John, 50. He suggests that it is ironic that Jesus, the God-Man – who, out of his inexhaustible wisdom could have taught any number of things – asks finite human beings questions. He reminds us that Jesus' questioning approach has nothing to do with him needing to learn anything or gain information, but everything to do with him seeking to break through human confusions, self-deceptions and idolatry.<sup>1078</sup> Moreover, when questions emerge from the lips of Jesus Christ, they remind us that humans are accountable to him, and it is better that we answer them now than on the Day of Judgement. Hearing, he suggests, is very difficult for human beings, and questions force the person to be an active thinker, to think through their position and self-correct, a process which, given human pride, is easier than being simply challenged head on.<sup>1079</sup>

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<sup>1074</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1075</sup> Genesis 4:9.

<sup>1076</sup> Job 38-39.

<sup>1077</sup> Others have engaged with this issue. See for example, Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did*, Second edition (Kregel Publications, 2017).

<sup>1078</sup> Keyes, Lecture: *Jesus the Questioner*.

<sup>1079</sup> Ibid.

Keyes' remarks that God's questioning of us is an expression of His patience and love for us. God wants us to understand our position and rethink it in order that our understanding should conform to truth.<sup>1080</sup> Clearly – and as Keyes points out – this use of questions by Jesus provides a pattern for the approach his followers are to take in apologetic engagement. Skilful questions enable the apologist to tailor an encounter to the person's worldview, to penetrate their defences, to gently help them spot inconsistencies and insufficient foundations for beliefs, and to break the cycle of unbelief.<sup>1081</sup> Jesus here is our model: he was able to make penetrating points by asking powerful questions. Keyes lists some of them: 'Have you not read the scriptures? What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Who do you say that I am? Give me a denarius; whose inscription is found here?'<sup>1082</sup>

The deliberate use of questions in engagement with unbelievers reminds us that Keyes' still sees the value of a presuppositional approach.<sup>1083</sup> Whereas classical apologetics is mostly concerned with presenting evidence for the veracity of the Christian Faith, presuppositionalism is concerned with unearthing a person's assumptions and assessing whether those assumptions are consistent with the world as we experience it. Questioning is a critical part of this process. Jesus led the way in this practice, and arguably Keyes has

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<sup>1080</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1081</sup> C.S. Lewis compared the mind's defences against gospel truth to 'watchful dragons' and sought to 'tiptoe past' them by seeking to communicate truth indirectly, through stories', C. S Lewis, 'Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What Needs to Be Said', *New York Times* (18 November 1956) <<https://www.nytimes.com/1956/11/18/archives/sometimes-fairy-stories-may-say-best-whats-to-be-said.html>> [accessed 18 November 2022].

<sup>1082</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1083</sup> He comments, 'it seems to me that cultural apologetics [...] assumes a basic grounding in presuppositional apologetics [...] a real understanding of where specific non-Christians are coming from at a deep level, as well as a grasp of our own theology, to know where the collisions and places of contact might be', Ryan interviews Keyes, 2009.

appreciated the significance of questioning as part of the apologetic process far more than Schaeffer.

### **7. Commentary: The Shaping of the L'Abri Apologetics' Mind**

Apologetics is an essential component of L'Abri. The foundation was laid by Francis Schaeffer from L'Abri's inception in 1955 until his death in 1984. I will now attempt to summarise the extent to which Dick Keyes continues in the same apologetic vein as Schaeffer and the extent to which he has developed it, further shaping the L'Abri mind.

Firstly, there can be no doubt that Keyes follows Schaeffer in profound ways. For example, he demonstrates a profound familiarity with the ideas of the culture in which he is working, the people shaped by that culture and how best to influence them. In words that could have been written by Schaeffer, Keyes comments, 'Paul [the apostle] did not merely preach a sermon and then go home. Instead, he listened to his hearers and interacted with their ideas, beliefs, objections, questions, gripes, doubts, and struggles. He took his hearers seriously, respecting and loving them.'<sup>1084</sup> Like Schaeffer before him, although Keyes recognises the need for every person to come to faith in Christ, he is committed to an apologetic that involves a relationally driven exploration of an individual's life, in the context of love and community. Along the way Keyes seeks to unmask tensions, build a case for the plausibility of Christian beliefs, give room for reflections and questions, and seek the person's conversion, always with a sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom.

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<sup>1084</sup> Keyes, *Chameleon*, 57.



He comments, ‘apologetics is never a dry academic exercise but a spiritual battle [...] a matter of life and death.’<sup>1085</sup>

Second, we ask the question, where do they differ? The answer is subtle but significant. Although Schaeffer believes in the integration of all aspects of life under God, arguably to some extent he still thinks of apologetics as involving a ‘technique’, that of taking the roof off. Keyes, on the other hand, sees apologetics in a more integrated and holistic way than Schaeffer. It is for this reason that it can be said that Keyes takes Schaeffer’s apologetic further and integrates it with the central theme of L’Abri, the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. Moreover, although both Schaeffer and Keyes owe a debt to Cornelius Van Til for his focus on presuppositions, in Keyes’ caution towards a methodology that fits every apologetic encounter, his approach represents a further distancing from Van Til than Schaeffer. Keyes comments, ‘no one thing wraps it up for me. I am keen to deconstruct a one-size-fits-all apologetic – the world is always more complex than we make it out to be.’<sup>1086</sup>

Third, there is the issue of Biblical Theology. Keyes’ holistic apologetic includes a deeper development of the question, ‘What is the faith that we are trying to defend?’ Keyes displays a deeper immersion in the Biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption and restoration<sup>1087</sup> than Schaeffer does. In answering the same question, Schaeffer arguably dealt in the categories of systematic theology rather than the story of redemption.

Fourthly, moving on to the shaping of culture. Mark Ryan suggests that the second generation of L’Abri leaders came to believe that Schaeffer’s apologetic, with its historical

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<sup>1085</sup> Dick B. Keyes, *An Introduction to the Course*, Cultural Apologetics, 20 vols (L’Abri Fellowship), 1 <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 20 December 2020].

<sup>1086</sup> PC, 15 June 2020.

<sup>1087</sup> Dick Keyes, *Contribution*. For an introduction to Biblical worldview theology, see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

underpinnings, relied too heavily upon the history of ideas and paid too little attention to social structures, events and inventions.<sup>1088</sup> Ryan believes it was Os Guinness who introduced the Fellowship to the sociology of knowledge to complement the ideas-based categories they had learned from Schaeffer.<sup>1089</sup> Keyes suggests that studying under Peter Berger<sup>1090</sup> at Oxford helped Guinness realise,

Why [in contemporary western societies] it's so darn hard to believe [...] we need to take into account [for example] the industrial revolution and how ideas from that have trickled down to us [...] changes in social structures in their own right [...] what has technology and modernity done to us [...] religious pluralism [...] increased mobility [...] urbanisation [...] what forces have led to the privatisation of religion?'<sup>1091</sup>

Keyes considers that such thought does not replace Schaeffer's analysis but adds to it, commenting 'There is a two way street between ideas and changes in social structures.'<sup>1092</sup> Such a realisation, comments Keyes, 'helps us understand why belief in a transcendent God is so difficult in the modern world and demands that we find ways to make Christianity plausible.'<sup>1093</sup> His methodology is revealed in these words: 'We need to reframe how we present our own position, because invariably it is not as absurd as the world sees it, and we need to take the arguments and reverse them [...] challenging those who are making

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<sup>1088</sup> PC, 16 October 2020.

<sup>1089</sup> Os Guinness, 'Towards a Reappraisal of Christian Apologetics : Peter L. Berger's Sociology of Knowledge as the Sociological Prolegomenon to Christian Apologetics' (unpublished DPhil, Oxford, 1981) <[https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=SOLO&docid=oxfaleph012065500&context=L&search\\_scope=LSCOP\\_OX](https://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=SOLO&docid=oxfaleph012065500&context=L&search_scope=LSCOP_OX)> [accessed 18 November 2022]. In the signature edition of Guinness' book, *The Dust of Death*, Guinness comments [of the original edition, 1971], 'I was over reliant on the history of ideas as a tool. Today, I would see the complementary approach of the sociology of knowledge as equally important. The former work top down from thinkers to their influence on the everyday world (how ideas wash down in the rain), whereas the latter works bottom up, from the everyday world to its influence on the thinking and living of all of us, thinkers included [...] the neglect of the sociology of knowledge was a serious mistake', 5.

<sup>1090</sup> Keyes also lists John Seel and David Wells as influences on Guinness, PC, 12 June 2020.

<sup>1091</sup> Keyes, *Contribution*.

<sup>1092</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1093</sup> Ibid. Charles Taylor has engaged deeply with the issue of plausibility. For a discussion of Taylor's thinking on this theme see Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 18-25.

them.<sup>1094</sup> Augmenting Schaeffer's categories with a more holistic understanding of how societies evolve and the people they shape arguably added a dimension of understanding his mentor did not possess.

Fifthly, although Schaeffer established in L'Abri's DNA the practice of answering 'honest answers to honest questions',<sup>1095</sup> Keyes has helped the Fellowship consider how Scripture and Jesus in particular help us to use questions in ministry.

Sixthly, as has been argued in this thesis, central to the L'Abri mind is the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. As we have seen in Part 2 of this study, Schaeffer's commitment to the Lordship of Christ may be demonstrated in four ways: firstly, his integrated view of truth; secondly, his sense of human significance; thirdly, his 'sanctification of the ordinary', and fourthly the sheer breadth of his thought. There can be no doubt that Dick Keyes is committed to Christ's Lordship over all of life. During more than 50 years working for L'Abri, Keyes communicated this theme. He repeatedly gave a lecture carrying the title, 'The Lordship of Christ over the Whole of Life'.<sup>1096</sup> And his book, *True Heroism in a World of Celebrity Counterfeits*,<sup>1097</sup> is a celebration of human significance in ordinary life lived under Christ's Lordship.

The issue of the considerable extent to which Keyes follows Schaeffer has been discussed in detail above. But what makes Keyes' apologetic important is that he takes the theme of the Lordship of Christ at the centre of engagement and *makes it live*. Building on Schaeffer, but not forgetting him, his method reaches beyond technique to a life apologetic. For Keyes, Christianity is not merely adhering to some new credal code; it is submitting to a

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<sup>1094</sup> Keyes, *Contribution*.

<sup>1095</sup> See chapter 2 of this study.

<sup>1096</sup> L'Abri Ideas Library.

<sup>1097</sup> Keyes, *Heroism*.

whole new way of seeing the world that both unravels contrary worldviews and aims to bring gospel light into every darkened room of human existence.

A good example of where Keyes does this effectively and consciously is in his book, *Beyond Identity*.<sup>1098</sup> This work of cultural apologetics is both an exposé of the deficiencies of secular conceptions of identity and the application of Biblical theology to the question of what it means to be human. With connections to chapter 6 of this study, *Beyond Identity* is a work of apologetics driving a core theme of the L'Abri mind, humanness. This combination of the story of reality derived from Biblical theology, humanness and apologetics is as close to what we mean by the L'Abri mind and it encapsulates the ingredients of Keyes' ministry. He comments,

I wrote first about identity, openly using Biblical theology as the framework for the whole thing. But I spent quite a lot of time [...] to make sure any non-Christian could relate to the way I dealt with problems of identity. I was very conscious of the timing being right in the middle of the “therapeutic revolution” where everything was becoming understood psychologically and the therapist was the new expert of choice [...] *It was also an application of the lordship of Christ over all of life needing to be expressed on this very current issue.*<sup>1099</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to chart the development of the L'Abri mind with respect to apologetics. What began with Schaeffer's apologetic approach in chapter 2, has been developed and traced through the thought of Dick Keyes, one of the Fellowship's key leaders and thinkers. If we affirm that the central motif of the L'Abri mind is the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life then, ironically, the conclusion of this analysis must be that Dick Keyes – with his cultural apologetic – has developed an approach to engagement with non-

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<sup>1098</sup> Keyes, *Identity*.

<sup>1099</sup> PC, 27 September 2020, EA.

Christians that is truer to the spirit of the L'Abri mind than that of Schaeffer himself. Keyes and others held on to what is helpful about the work of Cornelius Van Til – that the correct approach to apologetics lies in unpacking a person's presuppositions and helping them assess whether they comport with reality and human flourishing – but developed an apologetic that is pragmatic, flexible, intelligent, and relational, i.e. cultural apologetics. But Keyes knows – as Schaeffer before him did – that having all the best arguments in place can never be a substitute for someone encountering the risen Christ personally. This blend of cultural apologetics and true spirituality represents a major part of what constitutes the L'Abri mind.<sup>1100</sup>

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<sup>1100</sup> For a discussion of what I mean by the L'Abri mind, see Part 3: Introduction and Conclusions.

# Chapter 10

## Engaging with Rival Stories

### Wade Bradshaw

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#### 1. Introduction

In this third exploration of the L'Abri mind – with its central motif of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life – we turn to another of its fundamental features, its ability to engage with rival stories. As we saw in Parts 1 and 2 of this study, Francis Schaeffer led the way in this endeavour, seeking to understand and engage with the worldviews of those with whom he differed and sought to convert. At the risk of generalising, we can say that the major rival story Schaeffer engaged with was the naturalist narrative of the non-existence of God: that there is no transcendent reality and humankind is the product of matter, time and a series of chance events.

As we explore the evolution of the L'Abri mind, there are several L'Abri voices who have followed Schaeffer in seeking to engage with rival stories.<sup>1101</sup> For this study I have chosen Wade Bradshaw as a L'Abri leader who follows Schaeffer in the sense that he has engaged with a rival story. Bradshaw calls the story that Schaeffer engaged with, 'The Old Story'.<sup>1102</sup> Clearly this story has not gone away, but Bradshaw argues that there is now another story which asks if God does exist, is He good and really worthy of our

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<sup>1101</sup> For example, Jerram Barrs, Andrew Fellows, Ranald Macaulay and Guilherme de Carvalho would all fall into this category.

<sup>1102</sup> Wade Bradshaw, *Searching for a Better God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Authentic, 2007), 16. In his writing Bradshaw capitalises both Old Story and New Story. Except when I quote him directly, I have chosen not to do so.

devotion.<sup>1103</sup> Bradshaw calls this narrative ‘The New Story’.<sup>1104</sup> This chapter will explore Bradshaw’s old and new stories, and argue that this kind of engagement with rival stories represents a continuation of the Schaeffer mind into the formation of the L’Abri mind.

## 2. Biography

Wade Bradshaw was born in 1957 in Houston, Texas. After a private school education,<sup>1105</sup> in 1984 he graduated as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Later, in 1992, he graduated from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School with a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy and Church History. Between studying for these degrees, Bradshaw served as a veterinary missionary in Nepal during a time when the Christian church was experiencing significant persecution.<sup>1106</sup>

Bradshaw’s life has involved considerable commitment to the L’Abri Fellowship. After completing theological training, Bradshaw, and his wife Chryse worked at English L’Abri Fellowship for 12 years. During a period of leave from English L’Abri, Bradshaw worked for four years as the Director of the Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Seminary in St Louis, Missouri. Towards the end of his time at English L’Abri – and to mark the 50th anniversary of the Fellowship’s inception – Bradshaw wrote an account of L’Abri’s ministry with a special focus on its commitment to hospitality.<sup>1107</sup> Bradshaw returned to the United States in 2006 and served for sixteen years as a pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. Currently he is involved in a church plant and the establishment

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<sup>1103</sup> *Searching*, 17-19.

<sup>1104</sup> Consideration will be given later to the usefulness of the distinction between Bradshaw’s old and new stories and the relationship between them.

<sup>1105</sup> *Searching*, 71.

<sup>1106</sup> His first book provides an account of his time in Nepal: *Near the Far Bamboo*, (Camp Hill, Pa: Christian Publications, 1993).

<sup>1107</sup> *Demonstration*.

of a monastic community. In 2007 he published *Searching for a Better God*<sup>1108</sup> and recently completed another – as yet unpublished – book, *We Have Issues with God: A Month of Spiritual Explorations for the Hesitant, the Disconnected, and the Cynical*.<sup>1109</sup>

### 3. Tone and Practice

Bradshaw describes himself as being one of the first L’Abri workers who never knew Francis Schaeffer.<sup>1110</sup> Nevertheless, his tone follows in the same vein as Schaeffer’s. Bradshaw has been described to me variously as intense, good with people, winsome and generous with his time.<sup>1111</sup> Like Schaeffer, both his voice and pen are devoid of anger except perhaps when he detects injustice. Reading through Bradshaw’s books and listening to his lectures it becomes apparent that Bradshaw embraces the L’Abri ‘being human’ message – the privilege of being made in the image of God.<sup>1112</sup>

As popular but intelligent works on life in L’Abri community and apologetics respectively, *By Demonstration: God* and *In Search of a Better God* are interesting pieces of writing, containing reflections useful to our understanding of the L’Abri movement and mind.

### 4. Defending God to the Contemporary Mind

We will now set out Bradshaw’s new story thesis in some detail. I will present firstly, an outline of what he calls the new story, contrasting it with the old story. Secondly, I will

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<sup>1108</sup> *Searching*.

<sup>1109</sup> Privately shared with me.

<sup>1110</sup> *Demonstration*, 90.

<sup>1111</sup> PC with Mark Ryan (2 December 2020) and Bradshaw’s former colleague at English L’Abri, Andrew Fellows (4 May 2021).

<sup>1112</sup> See for example, *Demonstration*, 3.



outline his defence of God in the face of the new story and thirdly offer some comments about how this thesis fits in with the overall L'Abri mind.

### a. Deriving Hope

Bradshaw sets out his thoughts on the old and new stories in his book, *Searching for a Better God*. In typical L'Abri style, much of the material is replicated in a series of lectures available on the L'Abri Ideas Library website.<sup>1113</sup> His book, *By Demonstration God* contains some references to the old and new story thesis, but perhaps more importantly it provides helpful context to Bradshaw's years at L'Abri, where doubtless much of his thinking on this issue was forged.

Bradshaw's lead-in to the old and new stories is the subject of hope. He writes,

It seems people cannot flourish without hope. As a species, we need to be able to imagine a future that is better than our present [...] When someone truly feels hopeless, he withers. Other things may also be necessary for humans to flourish, but hope is crucial.<sup>1114</sup>

From a discussion of the necessity of hope, Bradshaw outlines the backdrop to human existence, what he calls 'living in a death camp'.<sup>1115</sup> Another related image he uses is of humankind living in a 'cooling and dying world'.<sup>1116</sup> He explains, 'Everything that is precious to us, everything we know, is in the process of perishing [...] without exception everything is dying.'<sup>1117</sup>

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<sup>1113</sup> <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/ideaslibrarydatabase/Wade-Bradshaw> [accessed 05 November 2019].

<sup>1114</sup> *Searching*, 3.

<sup>1115</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>1116</sup> *Searching*, 38. Bradshaw's potentially confusing use of a 'cooling world' has nothing to do with climate change. He means that planet earth will eventually cool and die as the sun slowly burns itself out.

<sup>1117</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

Bradshaw takes time discussing various options for deriving hope in the midst of a dying existence and an expiring universe.<sup>1118</sup> One is to maximise pleasure on the journey of life; another is a strong acceptance of decay and death, celebrating them as part of the normality of life. But, he insists, the best kind of hope must be both *true* and *good*. In other words, it must be more than a fiction that we persuade ourselves of and it must be able to cope with the worst aspects of human existence – suffering and death.<sup>1119</sup> In the Christian story, he contends, the better hope that people have imagined is heaven, a joyful eternity lived with God without suffering or pain.<sup>1120</sup>

### **b. The Old Story and the New Story**

We now come to the crux of Bradshaw's argument; objections to the Christian faith. In the old story, the challenge offered to the Christian message of hope was simply that it is not true. Accordingly, Bradshaw's old story is the naturalist's challenge to the veracity of the Christian worldview. In it there exists only the natural and no supernatural. Everything in the world has a material explanation. At the risk of generalising,<sup>1121</sup> this thesis is the one put forward by the 'old atheists' such as Bertrand Russell<sup>1122</sup> and 'new atheists' such as Christopher Hitchens<sup>1123</sup> and Richard Dawkins.<sup>1124</sup>

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<sup>1118</sup> Ibid, 5-8.

<sup>1119</sup> *Searching*, 8.

<sup>1120</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>1121</sup> Some of the old and new atheists use arguments from the new story. For example, Richard Dawkins is adamant that the God of the Bible is deeply immoral, see Dawkins, *Delusion*, 268-88.

<sup>1122</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2004).

<sup>1123</sup> Hitchens, *God is Not Great*.

<sup>1124</sup> Dawkins; John C. Lennox, *Gunning for God: Why the New Atheists Are Missing the Target*, 1st ed (Oxford, UK: Lion, 2011), 16-17.

What Bradshaw calls the old story is the one that the Schaeffer mind challenged at length, especially in his Trilogy.<sup>1125</sup> In this collection of books Schaeffer's point is that the Infinite-personal God is the source of true hope, and the world is meaningless without Him.<sup>1126</sup>

We will return to this matter later, but before introducing Bradshaw's new story, it is worth reiterating that the old story has not gone away. Clearly, many people remain unpersuaded of God's existence and for them the issue of His goodness or otherwise is redundant. In fact the 'God is not good' thesis is simply more confirmation that Christianity is not true. Doubtless Bradshaw knows this, but he could have been more explicit, avoiding inference that the old story has been replaced by a new story. His point seems to be that previously, during days when the old story formed the common objection to Christianity, those who did investigate, assumed that the Christian story was a good one and in particular that the God of the Bible is good. His suggestion is that this can no longer be taken for granted. In other words, the new story concerns people who may be open to God's existence but are concerned that the Bible's message is not a good story. All this to say that the new story cannot be thought of as replacing the old story but as operating in parallel to it and even playing off the old.

To introduce the new story, Bradshaw returns to the subject of hope, commenting that in the past, when the Christian story was believed, the hope of heaven was part of the story and it was assumed that heaven must be good, a place one aspired to be. But what would happen, asks Bradshaw, if heaven were our true destination, but not a good one? If

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<sup>1125</sup> This is not to say that Schaeffer did not spend time refuting other worldviews such as pantheism and paganism. It is just that his focus was on naturalism whether it took the form of atheism or agnosticism.

<sup>1126</sup> *CETC*, 12.

that were so, ‘someone can believe in the reality of Heaven and yet that belief doesn’t cause her to flourish. What if heaven were real but isn’t good?’<sup>1127</sup> He continues,

The great suspicion here is that God exists but is not worthy of our affection or devotion [...] he would not be good to know, and to live with forever [...] living with God for eternity would be like a hideous marriage that went on forever without hope of a divorce.<sup>1128</sup>

For Bradshaw, this is the central contention of the new story. The issue is not that God is not real, but that, ‘He would not be good to know and to live with forever.’<sup>1129</sup> His point is that if our destination – to be with God – is not good, it cannot provide our necessary source of hope. He comments, ‘There would be no better future we could imagine that would help us to hang on. You couldn’t even die your way out of the situation.’<sup>1130</sup>

### c. ‘Common Sense’ Objections to the God of Scripture

We come now to reasons Bradshaw gives for why modern people may consider the God of the Bible not to be good or trustworthy, places where He jars against our current sense of what is right. The term that Bradshaw employs to collectively describe objections to God is ‘common sense theology’.<sup>1131</sup> This term attempts to capture contemporary people’s perceptions about God and how His character and ways jar against the *zeitgeist*.

Common sense theology – Bradshaw suggests – raises questions about the Christian message which, when we think about it, ‘Pour in like a torrent as if from a broken pipe’.<sup>1132</sup> Following Bradshaw’s order – and doubtless reflecting the priority our society gives to the

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<sup>1127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1128</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>1129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1130</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>1131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1132</sup> Ibid, 26.

issue – he begins with sexuality. A Biblical view of marriage, if taken at face value – is considered, according to ‘common sense theology’ – to be

An institution that imposes life-long roles based on gender rather than personal strengths, and one that lacked the safety net of a friendly divorce when either of them ceased to find the relationship fulfilling, [it sounds] [...] as bad as slavery [...] [especially with] the Creator [...] [set up] as the authority behind the evil.<sup>1133</sup>

With common sense theology, the same incredulity felt towards traditional marriage extends to all aspects of Biblical thought surrounding sexuality. He writes,

[God is nothing less than] a paternalistic misogynist [...] [whose] laws about sex in both Judaism and Christianity [are] hopelessly archaic and repressive, designed to meet the concerns of long-gone societies – and certainly not a recipe for happiness and fulfilment in our day.<sup>1134</sup>

He concludes, ‘If God knows so little about what will allow us to flourish in this area of our lives, we can only distrust his understanding of everything else.’<sup>1135</sup>

After sexuality, objections from common sense theology come thick and fast. Firstly, the Christian doctrine of eternal punishment makes God seem cruel and vindictive; in any case the very notion of hell is indefensible.<sup>1136</sup> Secondly, what kind of a Being demands worship from His creatures? Since we would not tolerate such egotism in a human being, why do we tolerate it in God, who is supposedly more moral than we are?<sup>1137</sup> Thirdly, since not everyone in the world knows or follows teaching as found in the Bible, why is God so exclusive, accepting only those who come to Him through Jesus?<sup>1138</sup> Common sense theology asks why ‘the God of the Bible expresses hatred for other deities and even

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<sup>1133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1134</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>1135</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>1136</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>1137</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>1138</sup> Ibid.

describes Himself as “jealous”<sup>1139</sup>. Fourthly, common sense theology raises concerns about Christ’s atonement. Couched as ‘The Father kills the Son’, the atonement sounds remarkably like child abuse. In any case, the very idea of one innocent person bearing punishment for others who are guilty is simply immoral.<sup>1140</sup> And fifthly, if God really exists in spite of so many doubters, why does He not reveal Himself and settle the question once and for all?<sup>1141</sup>

In the old story,<sup>1142</sup> when we asked by what authority God exists and acts, the answer was simply, ‘His own; He is God after all’. But in the new story, such an answer is no answer at all. For moderns, everything, including God’s character and legitimacy, is weighed by each one of us personally. Submitting to an outside authority – even if it is God’s – is never the path to personal integrity. Everything must be placed before the bar of our own judgement.<sup>1143</sup> Even God is weighed in our scales – and in many found wanting. This is the new story.

#### **d. Responding to the New Story**

As I mentioned earlier, for many, these ‘objections’ to the God of Scripture provide confirmation of his non-existence. But for those open to a theistic understanding of the world, Bradshaw proceeds to outline how concerned Christians have variously responded to this narrative, a narrative in which the goodness of the Biblical God is questioned and with it the claim that He can provide the hope that humans need to flourish.

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<sup>1139</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>1140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1142</sup> Arguably, here and in other places, Bradshaw uses the term ‘old story’ with some flexibility. At some points the old story is the naturalist’s narrative that God does not exist, whereas here the old story represents the classic doctrine of God as believed in the past.

<sup>1143</sup> Ibid, 32.

The first response is one of retrenchment and involves restating the classic doctrines of Christian theology.<sup>1144</sup> For these believers, all that is required is for the church to faithfully tell the old story out of Scripture. If our churches empty, so be it.<sup>1145</sup> In this view it is never our role to justify God by '[s]tooping to engage the culture on its own ground [...]' You can't subpoena God to a human court and require Him to answer complaints about His nature and behaviour [...] [instead] preach the simple, unadulterated word, in season and out of season – that is the sum of the Church's mission.'<sup>1146</sup>

A second – and opposite approach to the first – is the way of sympathy for the new story and surrender to it. It is the task of contemporary Christians to change the old story to make it palatable for today's generation to swallow and '[o]vercome the ethical tensions they feel.'<sup>1147</sup> The example he gives is John Shelby Spong's work, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*,<sup>1148</sup> which seeks to save Christianity by stripping it of its supernatural elements and reconfiguring it so that it serves the needs of humanity.<sup>1149</sup>

Rejecting both above, Bradshaw is persuaded that a third way is possible. In keeping with the Schaeffer and now L'Abri tradition of taking rival stories seriously, he writes, 'One thing seems clear: we have no alternative but to be people of our day, confronting this situation.'<sup>1150</sup> This third response, he comments, '[c]limbs between the easier routes of refusing to listen to the suspicions of our day and capitulating to the New Story and its

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<sup>1144</sup> *Searching*, 33.

<sup>1145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1146</sup> *Searching*, 33.

<sup>1147</sup> *Searching*, 33-34.

<sup>1148</sup> John Shelby Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, 1st ed (HarperSan Francisco, 1998).

<sup>1149</sup> *Searching* 34-35. Doubtless what is known as progressive Christianity is an attempt to reconcile contemporary concerns with Scripture. See for example, Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally*, 1st ed (HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

<sup>1150</sup> *Searching*, 37.

persuasive advocates.<sup>1151</sup> This approach listens to and takes seriously objections raised by the new story but it also works hard to make the Bible's teaching comprehensible to a new generation, insisting that the God of the Bible is still the true source of hope.<sup>1152</sup> Moreover, it looks at the objections raised by the new story and subjects them to scrutiny, to see if they really do offer a serious challenge to God as He has been conceived historically.

#### **e. Bradshaw's Threefold Defence of the Traditional View of God**

Rather than critique every aspect of the new story, *Searching for a Better God* focuses in on the character of God, asking three questions: (i) 'Is God Angry?'; (ii) 'Is God Distant?'; and (iii) 'Is God a Bully?' The L'Abri Ideas Library contains lectures that cover three connected topics, 'Is God Fair?', 'Is God Open?' and 'Is God Shy?'<sup>1153</sup> For reasons of space, this chapter will focus discussion on the three questions discussed in the book, questions (i) to (iii) above, but interact with other questions where profitable.

#### **i. Is God Angry?**

Bradshaw begins his discussion of the anger or wrath of God<sup>1154</sup> at the place where a number of his concerned students also appear to do – the subject of hell. Whilst some of the concerns expressed are with the threat that hell presents to people personally, Bradshaw's focus here is on what it reveals about God. He writes, "What kind of a god would create hell?"<sup>1155</sup> The subject of hell is but one feature of God's anger as found in Scripture that Bradshaw explores. Bradshaw defines God's anger as 'The Reaction that God

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<sup>1151</sup> Ibid, 37-38.

<sup>1152</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>1153</sup> <https://www.labriideaslibrary.org/ideaslibrarydatabase/Wade-Bradshaw> [accessed 27 March 2019].

<sup>1154</sup> Bradshaw comments that he uses the two words interchangeably, *Angry*.

<sup>1155</sup> *Searching*, 50.



has to evil and wickedness'.<sup>1156</sup> Reiterating that wrath is not an attribute of God, Bradshaw then asks whether He could be morally perfect and not react to evil.<sup>1157</sup> Continuing, he asks us to consider God's creation of humankind. The moment that God creates a being in the category of 'non-God' and with the ability to make its own choices, there comes into existence the potential for that being to reject His will and act in a way that is evil. He comments, 'If God created us to trust Him and to love each other, this brings with it the potential that we shall not do so.'<sup>1158</sup> The ability to reject God's way and act and think independently from Him means that we not only have the capacity to disagree with God, but to act in a way that invokes His intense anger.<sup>1159</sup>

Bradshaw then seeks to increase the forcefulness of his argument that God can be justly angry with humankind. He asks his readers to consider radical human evil, asking, 'How seriously do we want Him to take it?'<sup>1160</sup> He comments, 'Of course we want Him to react to the *gigantic* evil perpetrated by the monsters we read about in history [...] In fact, much of our complaint is that He doesn't seem to react against evil when we can see it, and He doesn't respond in the way we wish He would.'<sup>1161</sup> Bradshaw suggests that, 'If I were to say, 'immorality' rather than 'evil', we might be less sure. That sounds such a prudish, hyper-opinionated thing to be concerned about.'<sup>1162</sup>

Having introduced a contrast between two matters – evil and immorality – the latter being the subject upon which contemporary 'common-sense theology' is likely to think God's anger inadmissible, Bradshaw comes to the heart of his argument that God's anger is

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<sup>1156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1158</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>1159</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>1160</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>1161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1162</sup> Ibid.

appropriate, even necessary. He asks what makes something ultimately good or evil and suggests that it is here that the consequences of ‘common-sense theology’ wrongly denying that God can be justly angry have the most serious repercussions.<sup>1163</sup> There are times, he suggests, when God invites us to reason with Him, pondering why His ways are good and why He acts in the way that He does. But – Bradshaw continues – ultimately, the Bible insists upon what he calls, ‘the rights of the Creator’ which, stated succinctly, are that ‘this is His universe and He can do as He wishes with it.’<sup>1164</sup> Commenting that he finds this answer hard to accept – since it seems to belittle humans and their value – he nevertheless insists that the ‘rights of the Creator’ approach is something that humankind must come to terms with. Bradshaw comments, ‘Common-sense theology gasps when it begins to sense how things are. We are so used to dealing with equals.’<sup>1165</sup> The problem, he suggests, is that we have made God too small, and think of Him as we might a pet gerbil in our pocket.<sup>1166</sup> Bradshaw’s point is that we have tamed and diminished God, and one consequence is that we are left in a state of moral confusion. He concludes, ‘Only God is good by definition because only He is, in reality, God. He is the ultimate ground of good and the ultimate judge of evil.’

In his discussion of whether God is angry and having set up his thesis of the ‘rights of the Creator’ argument, Bradshaw presents the goodness of God with a traditional defence of the doctrine of God’s justification of the ungodly. Having defended the idea that God is angry with sin, and that all of us stand guilty before Him, Bradshaw sets out God’s response: God sends His Son into the world to save us from His own judgement. He comments, ‘The

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<sup>1163</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>1164</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>1165</sup> *Searching*, p. 62.

<sup>1166</sup> *Angry*.

Christian message is that we are justified by being credited by someone else's innocence [...] My hope rests not in my own innocence but in the perfection of the sacrifice with which I am united.<sup>1167</sup> God has provided a means to escape his anger; in this, God's goodness is established, Bradshaw contends.<sup>1168</sup>

Bradshaw's second concluding argument identifies a connection between judgement and meaning. He comments, 'I don't think it is a coincidence that a generation that has lost sense of God's final, unavoidable, and impartial judgement also has a weak grasp on any ultimate meaning to human life and action.'<sup>1169</sup> He continues,

If the Bible is correct, everyone is going to stand before the judgement of God [...] This is why my thoughts and actions are not completely meaningless [...] it matters what we do [...] Our hope for significance flows back to us from the future judgement of God. If God loved us without regard for what we do, it would rob us of that gift of significance.<sup>1170</sup>

Bradshaw's point is that, whilst 'common-sense theology' may be appalled at the idea of God's judgement, the price paid by its adherents may be high – a huge loss of meaning and significance in the present.

## ii. Is God Distant?

Bradshaw's defence of God in the face of the charge that He is distant spans four chapters of his book. Although there is overlap between chapters, each one establishes a discrete point. Bradshaw suggests that the sense of God's lack of care of his creatures – and even feelings of abandonment we experience – when God has put within us a need for

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<sup>1167</sup> *Searching*, 68.

<sup>1168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1169</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>1170</sup> *Ibid*, 66-68.

Himself, leads people to ask why they should care about God or believe that He is good. It is the reason why some raise 'destructive hell'.<sup>1171</sup>

Bradshaw summarises the contemporary charge that God is distant by setting out three assumptions that accompany the new story. Firstly, that people are searching for God and want to discover the truth about Him; secondly, that the search for God leaves people feeling frustrated because it does not lead to Him; and thirdly, God holds us guilty for not finding Him, even though the reason for our failure lies with God and not the seeker.<sup>1172</sup>

Bradshaw's counter argument is that, according to the Bible, these assumptions are essentially incorrect. It is in fact more accurate to say that it is people who keep God distant and not God who keeps Himself distant.<sup>1173</sup> Bradshaw defends this view by making four points.<sup>1174</sup>

Bradshaw's first point is that one answer that the Bible gives is that using the 'God is distant' argument can be an excuse to reject the authority of God because we find it inconvenient to our own plans.<sup>1175</sup> To make this point, Bradshaw makes extensive use of Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard and concludes, 'The story tells us that some of us use God's distance as an opportunity for evil [...] If we wish to complain about God's distance, we must be willing to stand up to a very thorough scrutiny ourselves.'<sup>1176</sup>

The second point Bradshaw makes is that the reason why God seems distant is that humankind in fact prefers it that way. In making this point, Bradshaw bases his argument on Romans 1:18-32. Commenting that the points made in the passage are unpopular in

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<sup>1171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1172</sup> *Shy*.

<sup>1173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1174</sup> Luke 20: 9-18.

<sup>1175</sup> *Searching*, 73-76.

<sup>1176</sup> Ibid.

today's culture, he picks up on two themes – that human beings suppress the truth, and that we tend to be ungrateful towards God. Both have implications for the 'God is distant' argument.<sup>1177</sup> Concerning the suppression of truth, Bradshaw remarks that it can be inconvenient for us to face up to our true motives, which too frequently are to seek to live life on our terms rather than God's, and so we choose to deceive ourselves. On the issue of gratitude, he notes that ingratitude has the capacity to create distance between ourselves and God, causing us to miss His true character.<sup>1178</sup>

Bradshaw's third point is that the distance we perceive to exist between humans and God is all too often the result of a contemporary inadequate appreciation of what he calls, the 'problem of the sacred'.<sup>1179</sup> In Eden God was not distant from Adam and Eve; He walked with them in the cool of the day.<sup>1180</sup> But after the fall, and the coming of sin, God's very presence became lethal for humans.<sup>1181</sup> He comments, '[now] God's distance is a kind of protection from things we can barely imagine.'<sup>1182</sup> Picking up a metaphor, he writes, 'We have to be protected from God's presence just as we have to be shielded from a nuclear reactor; but there was a time when this was not so.'<sup>1183</sup> Moreover, this side of the incarnation we see things differently. Bradshaw comments, the new story maintains that, 'God has been unkind. The Bible however tells a very different story, and we must decide which is true [...] He has visited us as one of us, and we again proved ourselves unworthy of His friendship.'<sup>1184</sup>

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<sup>1177</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>1178</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>1179</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>1180</sup> Genesis 3:8.

<sup>1181</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>1182</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>1183</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>1184</sup> Ibid.

Fourthly, and finally, Bradshaw wraps up his discussion of God's distance with what he calls the most difficult thing of all for the Christian to believe, i.e. 'that the God who exists lives with me'.<sup>1185</sup> But in spite of this promise, and using a series of metaphors, Bradshaw goes on to discuss various ways in which we fail to recognise His closeness to us. He compares our failure to recognise God's closeness in various ways including the distance between a husband and wife during a difficult time in their marriage, and the complexity of reading a foreign language until we learn its alphabet and sounds. His point is that God *is* near and yet it takes time and a willingness to overcome our pride so that we can recognise and experience His presence.<sup>1186</sup>

### iii. Is God a Bully?

Bradshaw's third and final defence of God we will discuss is against the new story charge that one of the things that makes Him immoral, and primitive is that He is a bully. Seeking to press this claim of the new story he notes that bullies seek to wield authority over their victims on account of their size and strength. In the case of God, the potential for Him to be the ultimate bully is established by Him being an all-powerful Giant coupled with the fact that there is nowhere we can flee to escape his tyranny.<sup>1187</sup> For many young people who visit L'Abri he remarks, 'the suspicion that God is a tyrant and a bully puts a cold vapour right in the centre of their heart where their love for God is supposed to be generated. It is very difficult to love a God who you suspect of being a tyrant.'<sup>1188</sup> Some students, suggests Bradshaw, remark that if God is in fact the ultimate bully who seeks to bulldoze everyone in

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<sup>1185</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>1186</sup> Ibid, 94-96.

<sup>1187</sup> Wade Bradshaw, *Is God a Tyrant?* (2003) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 12 December 2020].

<sup>1188</sup> Ibid.

the universe into accepting His will and thwarting all other wills, our response to Him should not be submissive fear but resistance.<sup>1189</sup>

According to the old story,<sup>1190</sup> suggests Bradshaw, if the question were asked, ‘What gives God the right to tell us what to do’, the answer would be given, ‘Well, He is God’. And the issue would be settled. In that story, God had the right to all authority by virtue of Him being the Creator.<sup>1191</sup> But today he suggests that two factors mitigate against this argument being permitted. The first is an unrelenting commitment to equality – no one, not even God – is permitted a greater status or opinion than anyone else. The second is a deep suspicion of all external authority. If we are told to do something because a powerful Person tells us to do it, we think ‘tyranny’.<sup>1192</sup>

Bradshaw’s defence of God against the charge that He is a bully comes from his persuasion that the God of the Bible cannot be understood in these simple terms. What is missing, he contends, is an understanding of the rights and wisdom of the Creator.<sup>1193</sup> God is not an *elected* Creator. Moreover, while Bradshaw concedes that God is all-powerful, this, he insists, does not make Him a bully. It is simply a consequence of Him being God. Moreover, as the only One who is omnipotent and omniscient, God is in the best position to know, morally, the best way for us to live – ‘in bed and in business, in our words and our actions, in our ambitions and our longings. He can't help himself.’<sup>1194</sup>

Bradshaw remarks that the mistake being made is that of arguing upwards, from the human to God, minimising the difference between us and Him, and maximising the wisdom

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<sup>1189</sup> *Searching*, 97.

<sup>1190</sup> Here and at other points Bradshaw uses the term ‘old story’ with some flexibility. See footnote 1157.

<sup>1191</sup> *Tyrant*.

<sup>1192</sup> Wade Bradshaw, *Is God A Bully?* (2003) <<https://www.labriideaslibrary.org>> [accessed 2 May 2021].

<sup>1193</sup> *Searching*, 59-60.

<sup>1194</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

and perspective that we have. He comments, 'One reason that the 'New Story' prospers today is that the church does such a poor job of expressing how enormous and different from us is the Bible's God [...] what we need to hear more and more is how big the Christian God is.'<sup>1195</sup> In contrast with the new story, which argues from below – from ourselves to God – we do much better, argues Bradshaw, if we concentrate on how God has revealed Himself in Scripture. When we do, he suggests, we find that God is not a bully.

#### **f. Bradshaw's Conclusion: The Eclipse of Doctrine**

Bradshaw ends his critique of the new story with the observation that, at its core, the new story is driven by a rejection of Christian doctrine and that this rejection is of our own making.<sup>1196</sup> Using the illustration of a lunar eclipse that he once witnessed, he writes 'The strange thing about a lunar eclipse is that the shadow passing over the distant surface of the moon is our own [...] As I consider the New Story and its suspicions and common-sense theology, I see a similar shadow over Christian doctrine [...] And as with the moon, the shadow is our own.'<sup>1197</sup> In other words, in diminishing or rejecting doctrine, adherents of the new story have paved the way for more subjective measures of God and His actions. Detached from the Bible's deep engagement with reality, the new story too readily comes to shallow conclusions.

### **5. Discussion and Contribution to the L'Abri Mind**

We will now move onto some analysis of Bradshaw's defence of God and his contribution to the L'Abri mind. Firstly, a comment about methodology. Bradshaw's work

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<sup>1195</sup> *Tyrant*.

<sup>1196</sup> *Searching*, 133.

<sup>1197</sup> *Ibid*, 134.



in defending God in the face of contemporary objections provides us with an example of the L'Abri mind's approach to apologetic engagement and is doubtless indicative of ten years spent at English L'Abri, hearing the stories of students, and engaging with their concerns and objections. Reading through *Searching for a Better God* and listening to the lectures which gave birth to the book, one comes away with the impression that like Schaeffer before him, Bradshaw has put considerable thought into how to communicate effectively and winsomely with those who adhere to a different worldview from his own. The approach is lively and engaging, avoids archaic and 'religious' language and is attuned to the concerns of the culture. Rather than moralise his readers or simply inform detractors that they are wrong – as is the way of some apologists<sup>1198</sup> – Bradshaw seeks to enter their mindset and appreciate how the world looks when beginning with differing assumptions. All of this is part of the DNA of L'Abri Fellowship.

Secondly, moving from style to substance. As we saw in chapters 1 and 6, a key feature of the Schaeffer mind was its capacity to contextualise the Christian message for a new era. Admittedly with the assistance of mentors like Rookmaaker, Schaeffer broke out of prevailing evangelical paradigms, and while still preserving the Christian message of forgiveness and salvation, applied the gospel to the existential concerns of the 1960s generation. Seeing further than a set of salvation doctrines and addressing questions of meaning and significance, Schaeffer engaged extensively with the rival story of naturalism and relativism, pointing out its deficiencies and inability to offer lasting answers for the human condition.

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<sup>1198</sup> See for example, William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed (Crossway Books, 2008). Although an excellent book on apologetics, it is hard to avoid the sense of being chastised if you disagree with Craig's theism.

Stepping in the footsteps of Schaeffer – with his gift of contextualisation and rival story engagement – other L’Abri leaders have followed, and the L’Abri mind has taken shape. Wade Bradshaw is one of these. In his book and lectures, Bradshaw engages with a rival story, and in doing so makes a significant contribution which is in keeping with the spirit of Schaeffer and the L’Abri Fellowship. He engages arguably not with an altogether new rival story, but with an adaptation of the one that Schaeffer wrestled with. In Schaeffer’s day, the prevailing objection of modernity was the inviolable laws of the universe rendering revelation and miracles impossible and reducing humans to machines. The new twist builds on that story, adding that the God of the Bible is so outrageous, we have yet another indicator of His non-existence. For others, wishing they could believe in God, He seems unworthy of our allegiance; we know better than Him. Setting out his thesis, Bradshaw refuses to be dismissive and instead addresses these objections one point at a time and seeks to show that the Christian story is in fact both a true and good one. In doing so Bradshaw makes a significant contribution to the L’Abri mind.

# Chapter 11

## Nancy Pearcey: A Contemporary Schaeffer

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### 1. Introduction

The contributors to the L'Abri mind aforementioned in this study<sup>1199</sup> have been selected on the basis of having spent a significant amount of time working for the L'Abri Fellowship. By that strict criteria, Nancy Pearcey cannot be thought of as being a direct contributor to the L'Abri mind. However, Pearcey was converted through the ministry of Francis Schaeffer and undertook two periods of study at Swiss L'Abri.<sup>1200</sup> Moreover, she has retained close associations with the L'Abri movement in its broader sense, lecturing at L'Abri Fellowships and at The Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Seminary in St Louis.<sup>1201</sup> Pearcey is introduced here because arguably she is the person who has done most to appropriate, correct and update Francis Schaeffer's thought. In this sense her legacy is her contribution to the Schaeffer mind rather than the L'Abri mind. Since the present study is primarily concerned with the latter, this chapter will be considerably shorter than the previous three. Nevertheless, since Pearcey is perhaps today's foremost Schaefferian thinker, it is proper that an outline of her thought is provided here. This will be followed by some commentary on the extent to which Pearcey follows Schaeffer as well as identifying areas where she differs.

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<sup>1199</sup> Ranald Macaulay, Jerram Barrs, Dick Keyes and Wade Bradshaw.

<sup>1200</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 53-57.

<sup>1201</sup> Information supplied by Mark Ryan, PC, 22 May 2020.

## 2. Biography

Born in 1952 in the United States into a Scandinavian Lutheran home, Pearcey began her education in a Lutheran elementary school.<sup>1202</sup> In her writings she frequently explains the story of how she transitioned from the simple faith of her childhood to the avowed agnosticism of her late teens. Her parents and pastors had not given her reasons for believing that Christianity was true, and in what she calls a ‘very dark and difficult period in her life’, she ‘embraced relativism and subjectivism and several other popular ‘isms’ of modern culture.’<sup>1203</sup> At the end of her high school years she wrote a paper entitled ‘*Why I Am Not a Christian*’.<sup>1204</sup> Later – after deciding that the rejection of her simple childhood faith left her with no answers to the most basic questions – she stumbled across Swiss L’Abri and the ministry of Francis Schaeffer whilst studying violin at the Heidelberg Conservatory in 1971.<sup>1205</sup>

L’Abri’s impact on Pearcey is typical of many young people of her era raised in Christian homes. She writes,

I was stunned by this place. It was the first time I had ever encountered Christians who actually answered my questions – who gave reasons and arguments for the truth of Christianity instead of simply urging me to have faith. Schaeffer himself used to strike people as somewhat odd [...] But when he opened his mouth and began to speak, people were transfixed. Here was a Christian talking about modern philosophy, quoting the existentialists, analysing worldview themes in the lyrics of Led Zeppelin [...] Seeing Christians who engaged with the intellectual and cultural world was a complete novelty.<sup>1206</sup>

Returning to the United States and Iowa State University, Pearcey signed up for a first philosophy class and – in her own words – began to test whether the ideas she found in

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<sup>1202</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 52.

<sup>1203</sup> *Ibid*, 52-53.

<sup>1204</sup> Pearcey comments that it was only later that Bertrand Russell wrote his own manifest of unbelief under this heading, *ibid*.

<sup>1205</sup> *Ibid*, 52-53.

<sup>1206</sup> *Ibid*, 53-54.

Schaeffer's *Escape from Reason* could withstand academic scrutiny. She concluded, 'Again and again, I tested these ideas in my university classes, and I saw that Christianity really does have the intellectual resources to stand up in a secular academic setting.'<sup>1207</sup> Pearcey explains how she went on to read C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, Os Guinness, James Sire and David Wilkerson's, *The Cross and the Switchblade*.<sup>1208</sup> Eventually, 'The only step that remained was to acknowledge that I had been persuaded – and then give my life to the Lord of Truth.'<sup>1209</sup>

After graduating with a Liberal Arts BA Degree, Pearcey returned to Swiss L'Abri for a longer period of study. She later went on to obtain an MA from Covenant Theological Seminary – where she studied under Jerram Barrs – and later pursued graduate work in the history of philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. In 2007 she received an honorary doctoral degree from Cairn University.<sup>1210</sup>

Pearcey is currently Professor of Apologetics and Scholar in Residence at Houston Baptist University, editor at large of 'The Pearcey Report', and a Fellow at The Discovery Institute. Previously she has been a visiting scholar at Biola University, Professor of Worldview Studies at Cairn University, and the Francis Schaeffer scholar at the World Journalism Institute.<sup>1211</sup>

### 3. Published Works

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<sup>1207</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>1208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1209</sup> Ibid, 54-55.

<sup>1210</sup> <http://www.nancypearcey.com/about.html>

<sup>1211</sup> Ibid.

Pearcey is the author of several books. In 1994, she published – jointly with Charles B. Thaxton – *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*.<sup>1212</sup> In this work, Pearcey and Thaxton provide a detailed history of the scientific project and seek to demonstrate that the modern scientific endeavour emerged within the context of a Christian worldview. Their aim is not only to refute the suggestion that Christianity and science are in conflict with one another but to demonstrate that the belief in a created and ordered universe was necessary for the flowering of science.

With a view to updating Francis Schaeffer's 1976 book, *How Shall We Then Live?*, in 2000 Pearcey co-authored *How Now Shall We Live?*<sup>1213</sup> with Charles W. Colson. The book represents an attempt to state the Christian faith as a worldview that better fits reality than its rivals – especially secular atheism – and then apply worldview thinking to all of life: family, education, ethics, work, law, politics, science, art and music.

In 2004 Pearcey published what is arguably her *magnum opus*, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*. The thesis of the book is that Christians are held in cultural captivity by the acceptance of an unbiblical dualism that divides the spiritual from the secular. The result is that the secular worldview rules the public sphere and Christianity is squeezed into a private world of family and church. Pearcey's plea is that Christians in the West break out of the exile from public life in which they find themselves, reclaim the Christian Faith as a worldview and work towards the redemption of every sphere of life. Her contention is that Christianity is the 'Total Truth' about the world, not just 'Religious Truth'. The book is divided into four sections. The first section seeks to chart in detail how the sacred/secular split emerged in the first place. The second is devoted to

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<sup>1212</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, Turning Point Christian Worldview Series (Crossway Books, 1994).

<sup>1213</sup> Charles W. Colson and Nancy R. Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Tyndale House, 2004).

the question of origins and seeks to show the inadequacies of a Darwinian explanation for life and the coherence of arguments for an intelligently designed universe. The third critiques the evangelical church in America for its acquiescence to, and acceptance of, a sacred/secular divide. The fourth and final section seeks to demonstrate that Christians must apply the gospel to the whole of life rather than a narrow 'spiritual' segment of life. *Total Truth* is replete with advice and examples of how this can occur.

*Total Truth* was followed in 2010 by *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals and Meaning*.<sup>1214</sup> *Saving Leonardo* is a book bulging with prints of paintings, book covers and film posters. The work can be thought of as a companion volume to *Total Truth*, but instead of a discussion of the ideas that shaped the modern world, in *Saving Leonardo* Pearcey considers how these ideas have found expression through the arts – films, books, music and fine art. Her aim is to equip readers to discern the times and learn to 'read' the contemporary secular worldview with the aim of engaging with it and changing its direction through the creation of Christian-inspired culture.<sup>1215</sup> As with *Total Truth*, Pearcey's deep concern about the sacred/secular split is forever in view, as is the increasing relativism and subjectivism of western culture.

Pearcey's next book was published in 2015 and carries the title, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*.<sup>1216</sup> In this work Pearcey offers readers practical help to unpack worldview commitments to see if they stand the test of reality. The book places great emphasis on idolatry as the principle guiding non-Christian worldviews, which – to her mind – consequently fail to correspond to reality. Of

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<sup>1214</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, & Meaning* (B & H Publishing Group, 2017).

<sup>1215</sup> *Leonardo*, 1-4.

<sup>1216</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*, First Edition (David C. Cook, 2015).

all Pearcey's books this one is simpler and more practical than the others. Pearcey comments that part of her motivation for writing *Finding Truth* was a request from parents to produce a book accessible to young people to prepare them to engage with the secular worldview they may encounter at university.<sup>1217</sup>

Pearcey's most recent book<sup>1218</sup> carries the title, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (2018).<sup>1219</sup> In this work Pearcey applies the ideas she explains in her other books to the issue of human sexuality: homosexuality, transgenderism, abortion, euthanasia and 'the hook-up culture'. Her motivation is explained in the first line, where she states, 'Human life and sexuality have become *the* watershed moral issues of our age.'<sup>1220</sup> She seeks to show that current trends in our understanding of sexuality cannot be comprehended without appreciating the worldview context that has given birth to them.

Pearcey argues that contemporary views of human sexuality risk driving a wedge between our 'essential self' and our body. She suggests that current personhood theory, in maintaining that our gender-designation or sexual orientation may differ from the biological witness of our bodies, dehumanises us.<sup>1221</sup> We are not valuing our bodies as we ought. And – she maintains – following the same logic, there are consequences for abortion. When the 'essential human self' gets divorced from the human body, it is all too easy to conclude that since the unborn have yet to develop a full human consciousness, they do not qualify for human status. If personhood theory is correct, merely having a human body does not make one a human.

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<sup>1217</sup> Nancy Pearcey: *Finding Truth*, dir. by Jeanne Dennis <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWfxJf9RQ0s>> [accessed 23 March 2021].

<sup>1218</sup> Since this chapter was written Pearcey has produced another book, one which I do not engage with here. See Nancy Pearcey, *The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2023).

<sup>1219</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Baker Books, 2018).

<sup>1220</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>1221</sup> *Ibid*, 20.



Pearcey's solution is what she contends to be the Biblical worldview, which deals with us as whole persons, bringing together the mind, soul and body.<sup>1222</sup> In particular, she suggests, in the modern era we need to learn to love the human body as a gift from God and see its value in steering our worldview. She comments, 'You cannot be a whole person when your emotions are at war with your physiology.'<sup>1223</sup> The created body is a part of general revelation; its design informs us of intentionality for our sexuality. Moreover, the unborn and elderly are not merely matter to be discarded if unwanted or incapacitated. Rather, they are whole persons possessing a body, soul and mind and thus to be afforded full rights.<sup>1224</sup>

#### **4. Nancy Pearcey and Francis Schaeffer: Areas of Similarity**

Of all the writers who have drawn on Schaeffer's thought, arguably Nancy Pearcey has followed most closely lines drawn by her mentor. There are some subtle differences between Pearcey and Schaeffer which we will explore later, but we will begin with areas of distinct continuity.

Pearcey is deeply loyal to Francis Schaeffer and clearly derives much of her inspiration from his life. As we considered above, Pearcey was converted to Christianity after spending time at L'Abri Fellowship and listening to Schaeffer lecture and engage with questions put to him by his students.<sup>1225</sup> But the connection to Schaeffer goes deeper than her conversion: both are worldview thinkers, interested in applying the Lordship of Christ to the whole of life; both are interested in art and the way that it reflects a culture's deepest

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<sup>1222</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>1223</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>1224</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>1225</sup> *Total Truth*, 53-54.

assumptions; both are deeply concerned about secularism and the direction in which western societies are developing. Overall, the way that Schaeffer thought about the world seems to have been hugely instrumental in establishing not only what Pearcey has written about, but also how she organises her thought. We will look at three examples of where this close connection to Schaeffer is seen: the two-storey model of reality, their approach to apologetics and their respective political involvements.

Firstly, in Pearcey's attempt to understand the historical development of thought and competing worldviews, without fail she harnesses (and develops) Schaeffer's two-storey model of reality.<sup>1226</sup> To some Schaefferian thinkers, the grace/nature or value/fact model lingers in the background – as for example in Dick Keyes' analysis of contemporary idolatry<sup>1227</sup> – but with Nancy Pearcey it forms the central lens through which she looks at the world. As Schaeffer attempted before her in *Escape from Reason*, in *Total Truth* Pearcey offers an overview of ideas and events that have shaped the present day. In both works, the glue that holds the analysis together is the two-storey model. In this sense alone Pearcey proves herself a true disciple of Schaeffer. This is not to say that Pearcey does not differ from him. In fact, her formal training in Philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, has doubtless equipped her to be a helpful corrector and updater of the largely self-taught Schaeffer, particularly in the realm of ideas and philosophy. For example, in *Finding Truth*, Pearcey explains the contribution of Friedrich Nietzsche to the subjectivism

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<sup>1226</sup> Ibid, 9-15; 31-62; See also chapter 4 of this study.

<sup>1227</sup> Dick Keyes, *The Idol Factory*, 29-48. In his model Keyes suggests that idols come in pairs. It could be argued that each one represents one aspect of the grace/nature realms.

found in contemporary thought.<sup>1228</sup> Schaeffer by contrast hardly gave Nietzsche a mention.<sup>1229</sup>

Although Schaeffer made extensive use of the two-storey model, arguably Pearcey applies it further than he did. This can be seen with particular effect in her work on human sexuality, *Love Thy Body*. Here she suggests that the model helps us understand a fundamental dichotomy in modern philosophy, between The Enlightenment tradition which claims public truth and objectivity, being the realm of 'facts', and the romantic tradition which emphasises justice, freedom and meaning, being the realm of 'values'.<sup>1230</sup> She argues that the lower storey (facts) equates with modernism and the upper storey (values) with postmodernism. She writes, 'The split between them has grown so wide that one philosopher says it's almost as if western thought has split into two philosophical worlds.'<sup>1231</sup> From here Pearcey suggests that this split finds damaging expression in the modern world, where the 'person' is located in the realm of values and the 'body' in the material realm. The self is afforded rights but not the body.<sup>1232</sup> As discussed above, Pearcey's book goes on to discuss the implications for a range of ethical issues. The point of note here is that Pearcey not only works with Schaeffer's two storey methodology but makes it the very principal around which she organises her thought.

A second example of how Schaeffer's approach impacts upon Pearcey and shapes her thought is found in *Finding Truth*. The book was written by Pearcey to help young people detect and evaluate worldviews. The book is far from being a manual about how to

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<sup>1228</sup> *Finding Truth*, 94-96; 119-120.

<sup>1229</sup> The index to Schaeffer's *Complete Works* lists eight references for Friedrich Nietzsche. None of them gives his thought the attention it deserves. Nietzsche is mainly used in the context of someone who celebrated the death of God and the tragedy that followed in his own life, see *HSWTL*, 193-94).

<sup>1230</sup> Pearcey, *Body*, 13.

<sup>1231</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>1232</sup> *Ibid*.

do apologetics, but it is noteworthy that in seeking to train young people to develop a Christian mind, she follows Schaeffer's method in seeking to train her readers to identify inconsistencies between the world as we experience it and the non-Christian worldviews that claim to explain it. As we saw in chapters 2 and 7, Schaeffer's apologetic method centres around the notion that the Christian faith is true and therefore 'fits' with the world as it really is; reality is the believer's best ally. Following this logic, all non-Christian worldviews will contain tensions that can be fruitfully exploited by the apologist. *Finding Truth* applies this approach in considerable detail. For example, Pearcey writes,

[There are] two major ways to test a philosophy or worldview: Does it fit the facts? And is it logically consistent? These are the same questions we raise in testing an idea – whether in a science lab, a court of law, or when asking a friend why she showed up late. First, does the explanation match what we know about the world? [...] Second, does the explanation hold together logically?<sup>1233</sup>

This is how Schaeffer trained his readers to think.<sup>1234</sup>

Like Schaeffer, Pearcey's approach to apologetics arguably represents a hybrid of presuppositionalism and evidentialism. Pearcey's books are forever seeking to uncover hidden presuppositions to see whether they stand up to the scrutiny of our reasoning minds. But like Schaeffer before her<sup>1235</sup> – and contrary to Van Til – Pearcey believes that there are points of contact between the believer and the non-believer; the world is full of evidence that can be used as a starting point in discussion. She writes,

Where does Paul [in Romans 1] begin his training manual? His first major point is that all people – everywhere and at all times – have access to evidence for God's existence. How? Through the created order: 'the things that have been made'. This is called general revelation because it is evidence that is accessible to everyone.<sup>1236</sup>

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<sup>1233</sup> *Finding Truth*, 181.

<sup>1234</sup> See *The Question of Apologetics, TGWIT*, 175-87.

<sup>1235</sup> *FWC*, 29-33.

<sup>1236</sup> *Finding Truth*, 24.

Schaeffer could have penned these words.<sup>1237</sup> The difference between Schaeffer and Pearcey is that whereas the former's apologetic approach is *ad hoc*, needing to be assembled from across his writings and lectures, Pearcey's approach is carefully structured and codified into five steps.<sup>1238</sup>

A third example of continuity between Pearcey and Schaeffer is seen in their political activism. More than all of the authors emerging from the L'Abri tradition, Pearcey is the most politically inclined. As we considered in chapter 6, Schaeffer's involvement with the Moral Majority in the early 1980s is something that sits uncomfortably with the wider L'Abri Fellowship. Leaders such as Dick Keyes and Mark Ryan express serious misgivings about Schaeffer's willingness to ally himself with American Conservatives.<sup>1239</sup> Issues such as American exceptionalism, excessive patriotism, and a lack of concern for social and racial justice figure in the discussion. It appears that, since Schaeffer's death in 1984, no one in the Fellowship has expressed any appetite for political involvement despite the Fellowship's rejection of privatised Christianity. Instead of seeking political influence, the focus has been on the teaching and counselling of individuals as they arrive at the various branches of L'Abri around the world. Os Guinness – although leaving the L'Abri fold at an early date<sup>1240</sup> – is a partial exception. He has written extensively about political freedom and its Biblical basis but has not actively been involved in political action.<sup>1241</sup>

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<sup>1237</sup> See chapter 9 of this study.

<sup>1238</sup> *Finding Truth*, 55-219.

<sup>1239</sup> PC, Dick Keyes 14 April 2020; PC, Mark Ryan 22 May 2020.

<sup>1240</sup> As far as I can ascertain, Guinness left L'Abri in the early 1980s.

<sup>1241</sup> See for example, Os Guinness, *Last Call for Liberty: How America's Genius for Freedom Has Become Its Greatest Threat* (IVP Books, 2018).

Pearcey stands out as the one person in the Schaeffer tradition who carries into the modern era her mentor's concerns<sup>1242</sup> about the battle for ethics and morality in the public square. The place where this is most clearly seen is not her books but in articles posted at [www.pearceyreport.com](http://www.pearceyreport.com), a website that she maintains with her husband. Titles of articles include: 'Is Love Enough? Recreating the Economic Base of the Family'; 'Facts,' 'Values,' and the Redefinition of 'Marriage'; 'A New Foundation for Positive Cultural Change and Science and God in the Public Square'.<sup>1243</sup> As with Schaeffer himself, these articles have a decidedly conservative flavour to them. Tellingly, Pearcey's book *How Now Shall We Then Live* was co-authored with Chuck Colson (1931-2012), a conservative political activist.<sup>1244</sup>

## 5. Areas of Difference

We now move on to consider where Pearcey differs from Schaeffer. If Schaeffer is an evangelist and apologist, Pearcey is a polemicist and prophet. Schaeffer thought and wrote in generalisations, whereas Pearcey's razor-sharp mind gets to the point immediately. Schaeffer was gracious in conversation; Pearcey is perhaps a touch more antagonistic.<sup>1245</sup> There are more substantive differences, and we will now consider three of these.

Firstly, in one sense Pearcey's thought is narrower than Schaeffer's; the priorities of the preacher found in Schaeffer are not found in Pearcey. Although both are conservative in their approach to Scripture and take the text seriously, unlike Schaeffer, Pearcey's writings contain no sermons, no Bible Studies, no commentaries on books of the Bible and

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<sup>1242</sup> *CM*, 413-97.

<sup>1243</sup> <http://www.pearceyreport.com>

<sup>1244</sup> For a summary of Colson's political views, see Charles W. Colson, *God and Government: An Insider's View on the Boundaries between Faith & Politics* (Zondervan, 2007).

<sup>1245</sup> This is not the case in her writings, where she is quick to repudiate the angry tone present in many conservative critics of American culture, see *Total Truth*, 57-58.

little defence of the authority of Scripture. It is not that Pearcey considers these things unimportant, but rather that her major concerns lie elsewhere. Moreover, although arguably Pearcey makes better use of Biblical Theology than Schaeffer,<sup>1246</sup> she is not an exegete in the way that he reveals himself to be in, for example, *True Spirituality*.<sup>1247</sup> Pearcey can never be said to build her arguments bottom up from the text of Scripture. On the other hand, for someone significantly influenced by Herman Dooyeweerd's *Theory of Modal Aspects*,<sup>1248</sup> Pearcey avoids the trap of divorcing philosophy from the Biblical text into which many of Dooyeweerd's followers fall.<sup>1249</sup> Pearcey's writings contain plenty of reference to Scripture, but they tend to be included in order to support her argument rather than being handled exegetically.

A second point of difference between Pearcey and Schaeffer concerns precision in narrating the history of ideas. In *Escape from Reason*<sup>1250</sup> and especially in *How Should We Then Live?*,<sup>1251</sup> Schaeffer attempts to chart the main thinkers and ideas that have contributed to the current shape of the world. That he even tried is commendable; in an age when the legitimacy of all metanarratives is increasingly treated with suspicion, few even attempt such an enterprise, and the result is the fragmentation of historical knowledge into narrow specialisms. Nevertheless, Schaeffer's account of how historical ideas created the modern world is certainly not without its critics.<sup>1252</sup> Many of these have been explored

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<sup>1246</sup> For her use of the Biblical Theology paradigm of creation, fall, redemption see *Total Truth*, 134-50.

<sup>1247</sup> *TS*, 193-378.

<sup>1248</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, ed. James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia Press, 1999), 7-10.

<sup>1249</sup> For a sense of Pearcey's indebtedness to Dooyeweerd, see *Total Truth*, 399, 25n.

<sup>1250</sup> *EFR*, 207-70.

<sup>1251</sup> *HTSWL*.

<sup>1252</sup> Pearcey herself comments, 'Schaeffer has been criticised by some academic specialists for various aspects of his treatment of intellectual history. However, one need not agree with Schaeffer's analyses at every point in order to appreciate the way he conceptualised basic themes in philosophy, art and culture so that questioning students and other seekers could understand and apply them.' *Total Truth*, 400, 35n.

in chapters 3 and 6.<sup>1253</sup> As we have seen above, Pearcey's account<sup>1254</sup> of the shaping of the modern world is heavily indebted to Schaeffer; it harnesses the framework of the two-storey universe used by him and takes the reader on a similar journey from the time of the Greeks up until the present.<sup>1255</sup>

Although Pearcey – like Schaeffer before her – addresses the non-specialist mind and reaches similar conclusions to him, her thought is better organised and has a more robust feel about it. Reading through her writings one senses that her time spent formally studying philosophy equipped her to be much more careful in her analysis than Schaeffer. Moreover, and again unlike Schaeffer, Pearcey's writings abound with quotes from specialist authors and contain hundreds of footnotes. She strikes the reader as being widely read and learned. A couple of examples of her expertise must suffice. Schaeffer is prone to providing a snapshot of historical philosophers and sometimes leaves the reader wondering how their ideas link together to show historical development. In contrast, Pearcey is thorough in explaining key thinkers and links them together effectively to explain the evolution of thought. For example, her explanations of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas are in a different class to Schaeffer, as is her explanation of how they relate to one another.<sup>1256</sup> A second example of Pearcey's competence concerns how she adds personal stories to her writings to illustrate how the ideas she is discussing have shaped people in the real world, for good or for ill. For instance, in *Total Truth* we are introduced to a lawyer who feels like a

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<sup>1253</sup> For a sympathetic critique, see Dennis, *Critics*, 99-126. For unsympathetic critiques see Rogers, *Promise 1 and 2* and Wells, *Jeremiad* and *Whatever?*

<sup>1254</sup> There is a subtle distinction between the broad objectives of Pearcey and Schaeffer in charting the history of ideas. Schaeffer seeks to chart why the world became secular and, to his mind, meaningless. Pearcey is more interested in the question of why Christianity has succumbed to a grace and nature split, rendering it 'religious truth' about the world rather than total truth. See *TFWIT*, 5; Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 62.

<sup>1255</sup> In fact, Pearcey's works contain a full discussion of what is called the Postmodern era. Schaeffer, dying in 1984, was only able to anticipate postmodernism. See Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 114-115; 242-44.

<sup>1256</sup> *Total Truth*, 74-80.



second-class believer because he considers himself not in ‘full-time Christian work’.<sup>1257</sup> The result is profound depression and the absence of joy. In time, the lawyer discovers a whole-of-life Christian perspective and realises that he can serve God through his work. Pearcey remarks, ‘[he discovered that] the law is not merely a set of procedures or an argumentative technique. It is God’s means of confronting wrong, establishing justice, defending the weak, and promoting the public good.’<sup>1258</sup> Through this realisation, Pearcey comments, the lawyer rediscovered Christian joy.<sup>1259</sup>

A third key difference between Pearcey and Schaeffer concerns their respective approaches to defending the doctrine of creation. Both recognise that the Christian worldview hangs upon the notion that this world is *created*,<sup>1260</sup> and that the Lordship of Christ over all of life demands it to be so. But their defence of creation is indicative of different knowledge and different skills. Both devote considerable space to the doctrine of the creation: Schaeffer’s main account is found in his book, *Genesis in Space and Time*<sup>1261</sup> and is largely a theological and apologetic treatment of the doctrine. In particular, he repeatedly asks how the absence of a Biblical doctrine of creation can answer the existential lostness of a generation. One example must suffice:

It is either not knowing or denying the createdness of things that is at the root of the blackness of modern man’s difficulties. Give up Creation as a space-time, historic reality, and all that is left is what Simone Weil called uncreatedness. It is not that

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<sup>1257</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>1258</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>1259</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>1260</sup> For example, Schaeffer writes, ‘I wish to point out the tremendous value Genesis 1-11 has for modern man. In some ways, these chapters are the most important in the Bible, for the put man in his cosmic setting and show him his particular uniqueness. They explain man’s wonder and yet his flaw. Without a proper understanding of these chapters we have no answer to the problems of metaphysics, morals or epistemology...’, *GITAS*, 3-4. For her part, Pearcey comments, ‘Part 2 [of her book] zeros in on Creation, the foundational starting point for any worldview’, *Total Truth*, 25.

<sup>1261</sup> *GITAM*.

something does not exist, but that it just stands there, autonomous to itself, without solutions and without answers.<sup>1262</sup>

The point is that when Schaeffer approaches the creation and the account in the early chapters of Genesis, we find him as we would expect him to be, the theologian and apologist.

Pearcey's writings abound with an understanding of the issues that concern Schaeffer about the centrality of the creation. For example, on humans deriving their value from creation, she writes,

The Bible does not begin with the Fall but with Creation: our value and dignity are rooted in the fact that we are created in the image of God, with the high calling of being His representatives on earth. In fact, it is only *because* humans have such high value that sin is so tragic. If we were worthless to begin with, then the Fall would be a trivial event. [...] It is because humans are the masterpiece of God's Creation, that the destructiveness of sin produces such horror and sorrow.'<sup>1263</sup>

Schaeffer would heartily agree and could have written these words himself. Moreover, as we saw above, Pearcey has co-authored an extensive account of the dependence of science upon Judeo-Christian worldview assumptions.<sup>1264</sup> This is an issue that Schaeffer also devoted considerable attention to.<sup>1265</sup> But in spite of these similarities with Schaeffer, in *Total Truth*, the locus of her thinking about creation goes beyond Schaeffer to expose what she sees as the inadequacies of Darwinian evolution to explain the existence of life and the worldview implications that follow.<sup>1266</sup> She presents a one hundred page attack on the failures of Darwinism and a defence of Intelligent Design, revealing a competence with detailed scientific ideas and arguments far beyond that found in Schaeffer.<sup>1267</sup>

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<sup>1262</sup> Schaeffer, *TGWIT*, 19.

<sup>1263</sup> *Total Truth*, 87.

<sup>1264</sup> Pearcey and Thaxton.

<sup>1265</sup> *HSWTL*, 155-82.

<sup>1266</sup> *Total Truth*, 25.

<sup>1267</sup> *Ibid*, 153-250.

## 6. Conclusion

Although Nancy Pearcey cannot be thought of as a direct contributor to the L'Abri mind, she has put the evangelical world in her debt. Not only has she reminded a new generation of Schaeffer's existence, but by translating his thought into language easier to digest, she has made his whole-of-life thought more accessible to a wider audience. Moreover, it may be argued that she has corrected deficiencies in his writings in addition to updating him and applying his thought to contemporary concerns. Pearcey has helped to remind a new generation of the importance of developing a Christian mind in every arena of life.

# Conclusions

# Chapter 12

## What is the L'Abri Mind?

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### 1. Introduction

The point of this thesis has not been to set out and evaluate the validity of every strand of Schaeffer's thought and that of the L'Abri Fellowship. Such a task would be huge, requiring numerous doctoral theses spanning several subject specialities. Instead, the aim has been to demonstrate that, although the events and people considered in this study fall under the rubric of evangelical history, the theology and practice of Francis Schaeffer and the L'Abri Fellowships have characteristics that distinguish them from those of others. Moreover, when the various components of this theology and practice are assembled together, the distinctness is sufficiently arresting that the term 'L'Abri mind' is warranted. However, use of the term 'L'Abri mind' must be made with care, requiring a significant qualification. It would be misleading to suppose that the L'Abri mind is concerned with ideas alone; it is equally concerned with the various ways in which ideas find expression, and with how life is to be approached and lived out in the 'whole of life'.<sup>1268</sup> Inevitably, in addition to defining what the L'Abri mind is, this study has also been concerned with how it came about. Drawing upon material presented in previous chapters, an attempt will now be made to conclude by summarising the essential ingredients that make up the L'Abri mind. But first a word about Francis Schaeffer, and then L'Abri's 'strategic corrections'.

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<sup>1268</sup> In the light of this I considered whether to call the thesis, 'Francis Schaeffer's whole-of-life theology and the making of the L'Abri ethos'. Although I decided against this title, in chapter 2 I outline the tone and practice which are essential ingredients for any understanding of the L'Abri mind.

Part 1 of this study offered an exploration of the life of Francis Schaeffer. He – and his wife Edith – embodied what I called in Part 2 the Schaeffer mind, which in turn evolved into the L’Abri mind. The Schaeffers brought into twentieth-century evangelicalism an outward-looking, confident gospel that had been contextualised for a new time and a new generation. By any standards, their vision, energy, generosity, and compassion made them an extraordinary couple. The first L’Abri was the Schaeffers’ home. They opened their home to seekers and questioners with the vision of living out their Christian faith in the ‘whole of life’ before them and with them. In time others, blessed by their ministry and example, were inspired to come, and work alongside them, taking the vision forward to other places and nations. The L’Abri mind can then – in a very real sense – be thought of as the vision of the Schaeffer mind expanded. However, as has been shown by this study, the Schaeffer mind, in its journey to the L’Abri mind, has been subject to clarification, development, and enhancement.

Before turning to a summary of what the Schaeffer and L’Abri minds represent, another clarification is necessary. As we saw in the introduction to Part 3 – when we explored the Five Themes of L’Abri – although there is something eminently positive about the Christian vision set out by Schaeffer and his successors, the Schaeffer/L’Abri mind is a corrective mind. From L’Abri’s inception in 1955, L’Abri sought to ‘correct’ deficits that Schaeffer and later leaders perceived to exist within the wider evangelical world. Dick Keyes has labelled these ‘strategic corrections’.<sup>1269</sup> This reality will be reflected in the discussion below.

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<sup>1269</sup> Dick Keyes uses the language of L’Abri’s strategic corrections in, ‘The Spiritual Integrity of Francis Schaeffer’, *Southern Baptist Theological Journal*, 24.2, 79-97 (p.80).

## 2. The Schaeffer Mind

We turn now to the specifics of the Schaeffer mind discussed in Parts 1 and 2 of this study and attempt to summarise these in three paragraphs.

First, at its core the Schaeffer mind stands for a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the whole of life. It is the recognition that Christ is in the business of redeeming all of life, not only some spiritual part of it. It stems from the conviction that Christianity is the truth about the universe, not just a set of salvation doctrines. Part 2 of this study sought to demonstrate Schaeffer's affirmation of his whole-of-life theology and how he endeavoured to contextualise the 'old-time' gospel for a new time and generation. Coming at it from four perspectives, we saw that the Lordship of Christ saturated all of his thought, life, and ministry choices. It is found in his interpretation of history, in his two-storey model of reality, in his high view of humanity, in his teaching concerning the sanctification of ordinary life, and in the astonishing breadth of his interests. It is, in my opinion, the cornerstone of the Schaeffer mind and as such it holds together everything that L'Abri stands for.

Secondly, and following from the first point, since for Schaeffer all truth is God's truth, the Schaeffer mind aspires to understand and engage with every subject and issue that pertains to human existence. As Bradshaw comments of the Fellowship, 'Our commitment to the principle that Jesus Christ is Lord over all of life means that this material [the contents of a L'Abri library] covers an enormous diversity of topics'.<sup>1270</sup> The Schaeffer mind makes a serious attempt at bringing a Christian perspective to everything. No subjects are off limits. Coupled with this – and as we saw especially in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 7, the

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<sup>1270</sup> Bradshaw, *Demonstration*, 133-34.

Schaeffer mind attempts to engage with rival stories and defend the Christian faith in the light of them. Schaeffer's L'Abri is therefore not a 'salvation movement'. Although seeking to lead people to salvation, it is convinced that we are saved *for* something – to think well and live out the truth of Christianity in every part of God's world as restored human beings. As we have seen throughout this study, both with Schaeffer and those who followed him, we should not think that L'Abri is attempting to establish a final academic position on everything. Nevertheless, L'Abri takes Christian thought seriously, introducing people with enquiring minds to the questions we should be asking and formulating helpful answers. Encountering Schaeffer and L'Abri has for many been the start of a journey towards the development of a Christian mind. To this end the L'Abri Library has evolved into a serious online learning resource.

Thirdly, as we explored in Part 1 of this study, the Schaeffer mind is one that reaches out to others in need through sacrificial community. L'Abri (The Shelter) was the name the Schaeffers gave to their Swiss home, but critically it was the place where they would seek to demonstrate the reality of God's existence and character.<sup>1271</sup> The Schaeffer mind is therefore interested in community and hospitality with an emphasis on listening to people's life stories, answering their questions, and discussion. As we saw in Chapter 2, tone is a critical part of the Schaeffer and L'Abri way: the Schaeffer mind is a compassionate mind, one devoted to the needs of others, convinced that through prayer, word and action, Christianity has answers for the broken human condition.

### **3. From the Schaeffer Mind to The L'Abri Mind**

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<sup>1271</sup> Chapter 2, under, Community: By Demonstration God.



The question that remains to be answered in this summation, derives from the material presented in Part 3. With the coming of a new generation of leaders and thinkers, to what extent can the Schaeffer mind now be called a L'Abri mind? Before coming to detail, we can affirm that all of the Schaeffer mind is found in the L'Abri mind. This in turn explains what often makes L'Abri distinct from other spheres of the broader evangelical world, and the reasons for its particular impact upon lives, despite the relatively small size of L'Abri Fellowship. In the wider evangelical world, the mind that is found is frequently defensive, even angry; in L'Abri, we find a confident and unthreatened mind. The wider evangelical mind is often slow to listen and quick to answer; the L'Abri mind, although rarely short of answers, is first a listening mind. In the wider evangelical world, piety and emotion often trump careful reasoning; the L'Abri mind although devoted to prayer and encountering God is also an intelligent and curious mind, yet at the same time it avoids intellectualism. In the wider evangelical mind, at times the approach to doctrine can seem harsh and legalistic; the L'Abri mind, while committed to evangelical theology, is also affirming, compassionate and gentle, committed to the importance of human flourishing. Frequently, the evangelical mind despairs at the 'world'; the L'Abri mind recognises the damage caused by a worldview controlled by naturalism and relativism, but is nevertheless a hopeful mind, combating the cynicism and suspicion of the age. The wider evangelical mind, feeling threatened, frequently seeks escape from challenges to its ideas; the L'Abri mind invites hurting people into community and lets them challenge anything, but is at the same time deeply committed to their redemption and welfare.

We turn now to what we learned from Part 3 and the question of the evolution of the Schaeffer mind into the L'Abri mind. We will consider each chapter in turn, beginning with the 'being human' thesis of Chapter 8. Here the argument is that human redemption is

to be understood primarily as the restoration of the image of God, and by implication, the recovery of true humanity. As we saw, although not found extensively in Schaeffer's writings, the concept of the Christian recovering their true humanity is present. Interestingly, it was also present in the work of his key intellectual mentor, Hans Rookmaaker. Undoubtedly the idea falls under the Schaeffer commitment to the Lordship of Christ over all of life: we recover our humanness to take part in the redemption of the whole cosmos. When the 'being human' idea is taken up by Barrs and Macaulay, their work represents both a continuation of Schaeffer and a departure from him. In terms of continuity, Barrs and Macaulay have taken the 'being human' motif, developed it and given it a central place in L'Abri thought. It presents a departure from Schaeffer, not so much in terms of content, but in emphasis, focus, priority and even starting point. Whereas Schaeffer located true spirituality first in the supernatural realities of God's work in a life and second in 'being human', Barrs and Macaulay seem to locate true spirituality primarily in the recovery of true humanness. It is the difference between a transcendent and an immanent theological starting point. Schaeffer focuses on who the believer is in Christ and the Christian's destiny; Barrs and Macaulay look back to the recovery of Eden and of that which Adam lost. Insofar as the notion of spirituality in the 'being human' thesis of Barrs and Macaulay has become the dominant one, we can say that the Schaeffer mind has evolved into a broader L'Abri mind.

Moving on now to apologetics, we considered the apologetic method of Francis Schaeffer in chapter 2, and that of Dick Keyes in chapter 9. Defending Christianity in the face of challenges is unquestionably a significant part of the Schaeffer mind. Although the question of how we define Schaeffer's apologetic is complex, in chapter 2 we reached the conclusion that he should be considered a presuppositionalist who is sufficiently flexible to

take each person's story seriously. Also of significance is that Schaeffer worked within a methodological and historical framework, albeit a flexible one. In chapter 9 it was shown that Keyes retains an interest in presuppositions and has a strong historical sense regarding ideas. However, he strives for a looser approach than Schaeffer, one that he calls 'cultural apologetics'. As I argue previously in this study, cultural apologetics should be considered as nothing less than a whole-of-life apologetic. Engagement with an unbeliever's commitments and objections occurs in the context of deep worldview and cultural awareness, prayer, community and relationship, the aim being to further a person to come to faith in Jesus Christ. This small but significant shift from Schaeffer to Keyes thus represents a shift from the Schaeffer mind to the L'Abri mind. Cultural apologetics is arguably now the majority report in what makes up the L'Abri mind and a key part of the definition of what I mean by this term.

Finally, we considered the contributions of Wade Bradshaw and Nancy Pearcey in chapters 10 and 11 respectively. Engaging seriously with rival stories – rather than dismissing or denouncing them – represents a major component of the Schaeffer mind. We considered Schaeffer's engagement with The Enlightenment project in chapters 4 and 6, and his insistence that the gathering secular narrative has dire implications for human meaning and purpose. Bradshaw continues in the same tradition as Schaeffer, revealing not so much an evolution, but a continuity, seeking to bring up to date engagement with the times in which we live. In this sense the Schaeffer mind and L'Abri mind coalesce, albeit in a new context. Both Schaeffer and Bradshaw apply the Lordship of Christ to our understanding of history and culture. Nancy Pearcey brings a valuable voice to the thesis. Although as we saw, she cannot strictly be called a L'Abri voice, she is important for understanding Schaeffer and the L'Abri movement. As we explored in chapter 11, arguably her

contribution is the updating and correcting of Schaeffer's worldview theology. Additionally, she takes up Schaeffer's thought and methodology and applies it to new contexts and issues such as the arenas of human sexuality and science. No analysis of the L'Abri mind is complete without her serious contribution to our understanding both of Francis Schaeffer and the L'Abri Fellowship.

We finish by asking why we should still listen to Francis Schaeffer and learn from the L'Abri mind? The easy answer is that Schaeffer was a remarkable man who alongside his equally remarkable wife Edith attempted great things for God and through him many people came into the kingdom. A fuller answer is that in Schaeffer's life and thought, and the L'Abri Fellowships that emerged, we find vital lessons for today's evangelical church as it struggles to establish a Biblically faithful identity in a rapidly changing world. In an age of uncertainty and cynicism, L'Abri's blend of piety, intelligent engagement and compassionate community stands out as a contemporary example and guide for how Christians today might contextualise the gospel for a new generation. Understanding the various strands of the L'Abri mind is never without profit.

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