

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
**FRANCIS A
SCHAEFFER**
A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW



VOLUME 3
A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF
SPIRITUALITY

NO LITTLE PEOPLE

This is one of Schaeffer's most powerful books. In *No Little People* he focuses on the significance of the smallest details both in the life of God's servants and the places in which they find themselves.

According to the Bible says Schaeffer, "With God there are no little people" (pg.5). He then considers how significant a simple stick of wood was to become in Moses hands as a source of judgment—plagues, deliverance—Red Sea, and supply—water from the rock.

This stick, considered "insignificant", became the rod of God. As this rod became God's, so to must the believer. Essentially there are no little people, only those that are and are not consecrated to God. That's sobering!

At the end of the day we as believers must follow Christ' humble approach of service,

nothing else. In fact, humility is not an option for honoring Jesus, but a requisite.

In the chapter *The Weakness of God's Servants*, attention is given to just that—their **weakness**. I found this sobering and encouraging. It's sobering because I can identify with my own struggles with sin. It is among other things

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refreshing to know God reveals our heroes faults—to embarrassing heights often. Why? Because the Bible is a realistic book with flesh and blood, sweat and tears, highs and lows revealing the “mannishness” of man.

We even in the church are sometimes too blinded to this reality. Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Gideon, David, Solomon, Elijah, Peter, Paul represent different aspects of our common problem: sin before a holy God. Honestly, I’m glad my name’s not in the bible and my deeds on display for all to see. They may one day however, and that’s scary.

Lastly, not because there’s not much more to consider, but in the chapter *David: Lawful and Unlawful Vindication*, the hard lesson is that personal sin can and too often does paralyze our duty to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before God. Post Bathsheba and Uriah, David’s life was never the same. Being in leadership is no small task however great or small the band may be. Our actions have far reaching consequences the likes of which can be utterly daunting to consider. Nonetheless, ponder I must for the sake of the Name of God.

This book is must reading for anyone in, aspiring to, or presently going into church leadership for it gives in my view a sober and realistic assessment of our human plight even though we are part of the covenant people.

TRUE SPIRITUALITY

In *True Spirituality*, Schaeffer considers so many precious gems of wisdom that to do it justice I would have to do a report on the book, not give a summary. To begin with, his understanding of the gospel and its application to life are liberating because he (rightly) does not have too much of a realized eschatology. This prevents a triumphalism from creeping in that’s so pervasive in many Evangelical circles today. This is especially true in the areas of justification, sanctification and final glorification. Rightly understanding the biblical teaching of the above as we rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and look to the Trinity for direction, wisdom, and instruction, there’s the opportunity for our brokenness to be healed, substantially that is.

The chapter on *Freedom in the Thought Life*, there’s a massive thought that, “true spirituality in the Christian life rests...in the realm of my thought life” (pg.310). While I’m finite, my limitations don’t prevent me from creating

something in the external world what my internal thoughts influence (e.g., a sculptor, painting, etc.). Yet, even though I'm a Christian, my thoughts can be a *death producing machine* if I yield myself to Satan instead of Christ. Wow!

Made in the image of God, our choices determine whether or not life or death will overflow into the lives of other human beings. Capable for committing acts of kindness or cruelty, able to create beauty or produce horror. In this section Schaeffer concludes with three thoughts:

First, the reality of communion with God, and loving God, must take place in the inward self. Our thought life is the proving ground.

Second, the real battle for men is in the world of ideas, rather than in that which is outward. "Where a man will spend eternity depends on his reading or hearing the ideas, the propositional truth, the facts of the gospel in the external world, and these being carried through the medium of His body into the inner world of his thoughts...either his believing God on the basis of content of the gospel or his calling God a liar" (pgs.312-313).

Third, the Christian life...always begins in our thought-world. The spiritual battle, the loss or the victory, is always in the thought life. When our thought life as believers is set Godward, substantial healing can be experienced in our psychological, personal problems, interpersonal relationships can be healed and even healing in the church can be a reality.

He concludes this book with an appendix *The Dust of Life* where at the end of the day we believers are called to live our lives in this present evil age in light of the future coming kingdom of God. We are to model now what is still future. We are to be a redemptive tool in God's hands displaying His personal care for the souls of men and the earth in which they were designed to live.

This book is must reading for anyone in leadership or anyone desiring to go into leadership in the church. In fact, this should be read by all who desire to glean from the godly wisdom this broken man offers. We'll be the better for it if we consider and act.

THE NEW SUPER SPIRITUALITY

In Schaeffer's *The New Super Spirituality*, he considers how among non-Christians and in the church we came full circle as a culture in America with our problems all the while oblivious to said reality. A generation that found itself in a post Christian world became that which it despised, that which it rejected. For example, in the sixties the youth rebelled against their parents' love of affluence and peace and saw their "plastic reality" to provide no real answers to life's difficult questions.

Instead of reasoning through hard issues, the youth were encouraged to just maintain the status quo. This anti-intellectualism the youth ironically accepted through the *transcendental mysticism* of Eastern thought in the sixties which down-played reality as we know it—drug culture sprang up, and thus a denial of reason flourished. The source of these ideas was a mixture of mysticism, the occult, and some demonic. It's easy to become that which you criticize if care is not taken.

In the Christian community, of the many problems that obtained were not understanding what it means for *Christ to be Lord over all creation*. Instead of giving answers to tough questions, the youth were told to just believe...they turned away. There was also no beauty in the community; divorce became rampant, families torn apart—in church—because of an anti-intellectual approach to their orthodoxy. Moreover, strong legalism set in and many taboos were put in place of Scripture. This led to an unbiblical Platonic world-view that denied the importance of the physical world and only spiritual themes mattered. And while in the new Pentecostalism that unlike their predecessors, experience trumped content, however important experience is.

There are certain marks in the new super spirituality; 1) an unbiblical exegesis of the use of reason and the intellect from 1 Corinthians 1, 2 as if God upheld stupidity as a virtue, 2) a disdain for apologetics thinking it to be "non-spiritual", 3) the despising of the body and embracing asceticism for its own sake, 4) certain questions are altogether not being asked, thus showing where people's interest consist, 5) a longing to experience the spectacular and the extraordinary, and 6) an eschatology-centered theology. How are we to respond to these trends?

Schaeffer says, first it's important to remember that these people are our Christian brothers and that how we deal with each other determines whether or not the world can know we belong to Christ (Jn.17).

Second, in light of the new Platonism, we must be saturated with the content based propositional revelation of truth in the Scriptures and we must place our freedoms under the lordship of the Holy Spirit.

Third, we must resist the new super-spirituality, and while difficult, steer aright new converts to worship in churches that are orthodox in both doctrine and in their community.

Fourth, we must not overreact when confronting these problems—this is so critical and difficult to do. It's truly difficult to strike a balance. If we are to live in the reality that *Christ is Lord over all creation*, then as Christians it is incumbent on us to love God in word and deed, prayerfully study our Bible, love the Church and the Culture, care for both Body and Soul, and in all this avoiding extremes and making it our goal to live Scripturally saturated lives.

TWO CONTENTS, TWO REALITIES

In Schaeffer's *Two Contents, Two Realities*, he holds to the view that for the church to encounter the mounting challenges of the culture and increasing pressures upon her, four things are essential to be in place. Without these, he doesn't see how we can be truly light and salt.

First, we must have the content of *sound doctrine*. There can't be any compromise here, for where essential Christian doctrines are denied, true Christianity disappears. And clarity of content to those making a profession of faith is indispensable. Otherwise, what will result are many false conversions. Moreover, relativism must be smashed with true truth, the cost of discipleship must be real and love must ground all the above.

Second, we must with content give *honest answers to honest questions*. Because Christianity is true truth from God, the Scriptures have an answer to our deepest fundamental questions as human beings. For Christ is Lord over all creation, and as its master, He has the solutions for our deepest concerns. This will mean that Christians like Paul must love the culture enough to understand its functional gods/idols and show their inadequacy when compared to the Gospel.

Whether rich or poor, educated or working class the same questions concern us all.

Third, true spirituality must demonstrate what it means to love God and neighbor. We may have orthodox doctrine and know how to provide the answers our generation is asking or not asking, but if among believers there's no true (though imperfect) love, than we have utterly failed! The way we treat others is a massive indication of our understanding of what it means for them to be image bearers. Without minimizing the first and second contents, if this third reality is not in place, the gig is up.

Fourth, the beauty of human relationships in Christian community must be evident. This is costly and smashes every racial and class barrier. The rich and poor, rulers and servants are to understand that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. The church cannot just be a place where preaching and activities occur, where no community is really being experienced. In the church of Antioch, the race issue was not an issue for the early Christians and while they had their problems the Gospel was able to destroy these barriers in a way that in America it hasn't been a reality in too many of our churches. If we are going to touch our generation with the Gospel, this must be remedied by Christ's power in our lives.

It is when we begin to see these two contents, and two realities that a profound impact will be experienced by our generation.