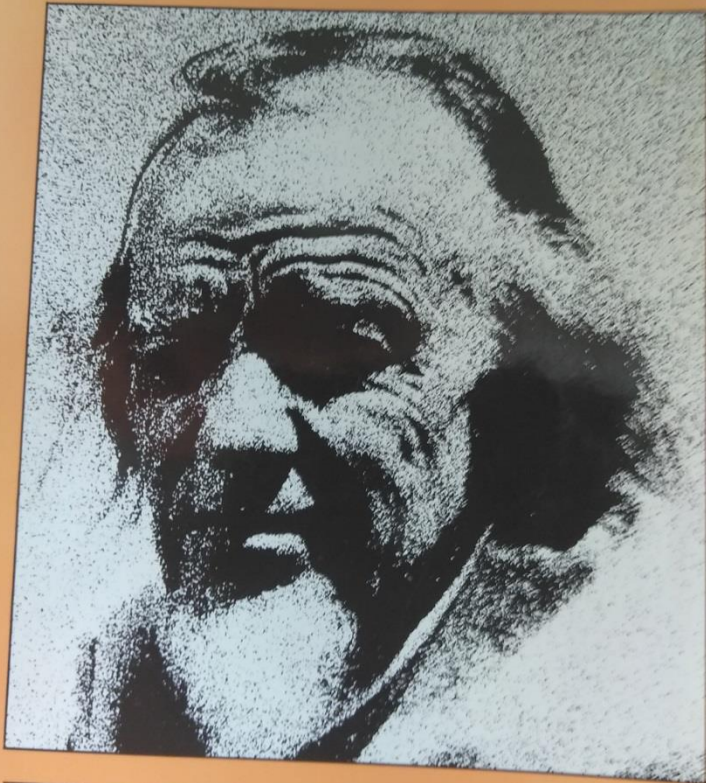


THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
**FRANCIS A
SCHAEFFER**
A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW



VOLUME 4
A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF
THE CHURCH

THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In his book *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* Schaeffer considers where in history we have come. He considers how to understand the then current student revolt of the 60's and how we as the church can make an impact. As he argued in; *The God Who is There*, the results that accompany denying God's existence in space time history are inescapable.

If there's no ultimate reference point of God, we have no absolute truth, what then follows is man, not God becoming the measure of all things, and as such sends us down a slippery oblivion of utter despair.

The core of the book concerns the absolute need to make the essential things of the Christian faith essential, and those that are not, not essential while still being

important. It's an issue of degreed importance.

Hence, orthodoxy is essential to have true Christianity for God has communicated to us in propositional form. But that's not everything. We must have orthodoxy in community. If it does not work itself out practically in our relationships through love, we will be seen as ugly. As we should be! Overcoming

1

The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, *Volume 4: A Christian View of The Church*
© 1982 Francis A. Schaeffer, Crossway Books. (424 pages)
2017 Summaries by Sergio R. Tangari
www.AnswerstoToughQuestions.com

the hurdles required to walk in loving community can only be done through the Holy Spirit's power poured in and through humble servants.

In other words, we need to teach the Christianity that has content and purity of doctrine. And in our ecclesiastical affairs we must practice that truth in our religious cooperation if both young and old are going to be attracted to us. Where changes need to be made (e.g., Korean church going underground or the times we meet for worship, or where we meet) must be considered graciously rather than given some "divine authority" which the Scriptures do not support. Cultural relevance necessitates a "hot orthodoxy" that is savvy, not belligerent.

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE WATCHING WORLD

In his book *The Church before the Watching World*, Schaeffer makes as some very penetrating observations concerning the Christian in this world. First, in the chapter *Adultery and Apostasy: The Bride and Bridegroom Theme* he insists that we remember our union to the Bridegroom and consider how we live in light of our loyalty to our husband—Christ Jesus. To commit apostasy is equal to spiritual adultery, which is to be whoring around, and this grieves God, it saddens Him and often dooms us forever.

Second, in the chapter *Practicing Purity in the Visible Church*, he holds that to practice purity in the visible church, three things are essential which if removed, then the practice of purity can't be realized. First, there must be *church discipline* for those who hold not to historic Scriptural orthodoxy and the creeds. Second, exiting the church or the denomination has its place (Mic.6:8) and third, we must remember that the world is under God's judgment—on fire! So, we must exemplify a commitment to scriptural historic Christianity, a commitment to courageous loving discipline, a commitment to a winsome departure when necessary, and a commitment to a lost and dying world.

Third there are *Absolute Limits* that must be maintained if our witness will remain faithful to Christ. There are again three essential pillars that must be upheld for our view to be truly Christian. They come under the *pre-fall and post-fall categories* and can be stated as Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.

Pre-Fall: First, *The truth of the Trinitarian God* who is there, who is the ultimate Creator and sustainer of everything that exists. Post-Fall: Second,

Human rebellion is real and consequently needs genuine rescue. Third, the God/Man is the Redeemer of man by virtue of his life, death, and resurrection and his work secures the believers hope. Lastly, final judgment is assured. For believers this means life, for non-believers eternal torment.

To jettison absolute truth is to dispose of the Historic Christian faith as a system of thought. Hence while disagreements obtain among true believers, there still remains a circle of orthodoxy that has boundaries. These lines must be clearly maintained so that the essence of Christianity is not lost.

THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN

In his book *The Mark of the Christian* Schaeffer points out the great Commandment to love God and neighbor is at the core of our message and it must be lived out if two things are to occur. First, if men are to know that we are Christ's disciples, there must be the humble preference toward one another that Jesus demonstrated to the disciples when he washed their feet in (John 13). *Love among the brothers* lets the watching world see if we actually belong to Jesus or not.

We may very well be his, but if our actions are contradictory then the unbeliever has the right given by God to judge us. This kind of life is costly, painful and accompanied by great loss, but our love for the Savior and for the lost must be what motivates us.

Second, we must be unified with believers so that our evangelistic endeavors are not hindered and the world may know that the Father sent the Son (John 17). This unity must be evident in word and in deed. Even when there are differences among us, and there will be, it's critical that forgiveness, repentance, humility and kindness be evident when we part ways with our brothers and sisters.

This unity, according to Schaeffer, is not organizational, nor our mystical union with Him, it's not our positional unity in Christ, not even a legal unity before Him. But it's a real, observable, practical unity that practices both God's holiness and love. Schaeffer rightly accentuates that this unity is never to be separated from His propositional truth (scripture) for it is these propositions that believers are called to live out before the world.

DEATH IN THE CITY

In his book *Death in the City*, Schaeffer accentuates six sobering observations. First, the reason for why there's death in the city is that we have turned away from our Reformation roots. God has been discarded by not only our culture but also by many professed Christians. The propositional force and nature of the Scriptures is what has been abandoned and what we must return to in order for life to spring forth in said desolation.

Second, just as the God who is there exists, it follows biblically that He is both holy and gracious in revealing to us His propositional truth. To neglect Him and thus His self-disclosure (which we have) is to fall into judgment. Jeremiah wept for the church and the culture. We must also. His message was one of truth and grace. When said truth is trampled, judgment follows. Nothing has changed. To speak prophetically to our culture it will require us to preach the two sides of the same coin with humility and love. That's a tall task and one which God enables us to accomplish.

Hence, there must be a dual weeping, a knowing that preaching judgment is hard but indispensable. For where false religion, adultery, extortion, lying, and the oppression of the poor by the powerful exist, there's judgment. We must call sin, sin; beware of our affluence and its trappings, and put our hope not in man's power but God's strength ultimately. If we preach this way coupled with humility and love, then the world might start taking us seriously. We're truly in Jeremiah's days.

Third, are we perturbed that the message of judgment is ever lingering before men but do we love God and people in such a way that we cry out with the truth compassionately? Jeremiah did and his message of judgment on both great and small brought a price on his head. The people wanted him dead. Nothing's changed, people want us dead as well. Disdain for God's word is ever real, nothing new and always our doom. God help us in our weakness.

Fourth, in light of the aforesaid, persistent compassion is vital and yet costly. Jeremiah illustrates the physical and psychological price that will be paid by those who follow in his footsteps. Like Jeremiah we must: a) preach the truth of judgment, b) recognize that our country is already under God's judgment, c) practice the truth, d) know it will be costly, e) persevere doing the above regardless of the price. When historically the church fails to do the above, defection is followed by destruction.

Fifth, the man without the Bible will be judged according to his own standards which he has broken. The man with the Bible will be judged according to the light of Scripture which he has broken. The fact is that all are under judgment. But in Christ, God's rescue is available and can be realized by the compassionate clear preaching of the Gospel. We are debtors to the lost and often we don't feel this. God help us here.

Lastly, we must live as Christians before the lost. This includes a life of dependent prayer to the God of Creation who is there. He will hear the cry of our hearts and respond to believing supplication. And when He is silent, we must continue to trust the Faithful One who is amazing.

THE GREAT EVANGELICAL DISASTER

In his book *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, Schaeffer considers what he pens to be the most important piece of writing among all his other books. The following are what to me seemed he was emphasizing.

First, ***ideas have consequences*** and when culture reaps the benefits from a country whose roots are largely from the Reformation, and later abandons these ideas based which are based on the God of Scripture (as so many of our churches have done), then what follows is the disintegration of the culture. This is due to rationalism—the idea that man is the measure of all things. And yet, while the culture seems hopelessly lost, believers must battle with the weapons God has given: all but one is defensive—the word of God (Eph.6)! Battling must be done lovingly, courageously and persistently bathed in prayer. The mark of the Christian must inform all we do; evangelism, discipling, and nurturing. The absolute God and His Son are the only cure for the culture's ills. We must be healers and surgeons.

Second, the ***watershed in evangelicalism*** is Scriptural authority. We must hold to the inerrant, infallibility of the Bible in all of its teaching. This includes those things that pertain to historical and cosmological issues. To falter here is to succumb to the rebellion and relativism of our day which is destroying our culture. Moreover, to hold to this view of Scripture, means that we must live under the Bible's authority and we must stand firm here, plain and simple.

Third, ***practicing the truth*** will be difficult, unpopular and misdiagnosed by many. Biblical inerrancy must not only be professed, but it must be lived out.

Where disagreements over secondary doctrinal issues arise, we must lovingly interact. But at the same time there must be church discipline for those who go past the boundaries of historic Christianity. The church and the culture desperately need such a stand, for if there' no such stand, all will be lost.

Fourth, both the "*pietistic fundamentalists*" and the "*accommodating evangelicals*" have committed the same error of compromising one of Christ's commands in order to do the other. The former don't want to compromise holiness but they neglect their need to be salt and light. The latter want to walk in love, but neglect to placard God's absolutes. Neither of these extremes will do at the end of the day. Believers are called to be holy as the heavenly Father is holy while simultaneously being salt and light in a corrupt dark age.

Both holiness and love must be founded in the truth that Christ is the Lord over all creation and the affairs of man. When absolute truth is not the lenses we see to understand reality, and when the Bible is discarded as God's truth for all mankind, then man becomes the measure of all things.

The result is that image bearers are seen as a myth (i.e., the creation account of being created in God's image as male and female is discarded for a naturalistic Darwinian account) and thus the weak and marginalized are at the mercy of the elite and powerful. If we are not image bearers but chance matter, why should we treat our 80 year old mother any different than our 2 year old German shepherd? Ultimately, there's no difference between man and animal, people have no intrinsic value. But is that objectively true? I think not.

Fifth, the *world-spirit* confuses the kingdom of God with this world and its power structures. It advances a utopian ideal (e.g., you can have your best life now, not the future promised by God in his word), it prevents Micah 6:8 from being done among believers, it devalues history by denying the past and reconstructing it to suit our present sensibilities, it suppresses the truth of God in unrighteousness in the academy, it confuses human sexuality and the consequences are destructive for the family, the home and the society. In feminism the driving force is equality without distinctions. When this wins the day confusion gets ever more dominant evidenced in Western civilization's gender identity crisis.

Sixth, *the stakes are massive* and if we evangelicals continue to *accommodate* the world-spirit we have nothing to say, we will be remembered as the generation that championed relativism at the expense of God's absolute

truth as revealed in the Bible. This must be lovingly confronted and lamented at the same time.