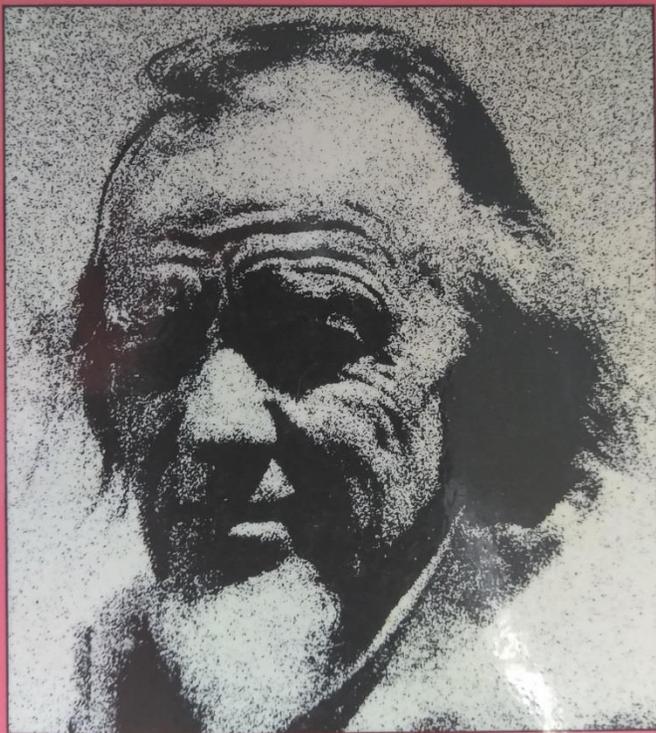


THE COMPLETE WORKS OF  
**FRANCIS A  
SCHAEFFER**  
A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW



VOLUME 5  
A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF  
THE WEST

**POLLUTION AND THE  
DEATH OF MAN**

In his book *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Schaeffer's focus is so timely and insightful that even though this book was written over 30 years ago, the relevance is poignant in a time where "saving the earth" is so dear to so many. The following are the insights captured.

First, the *earth's ecology* is suffering because man, instead of being a good steward of the earth, is ravaging it. According to American historian, Lynn White, the Christian worldview is responsible for said crisis. With its theology of *dominion* and this *mentality* still reigning, a religious solution must be sought because the plight is grounded in a belief (i.e., a "religious belief").

Thus a pantheistic solution is suggested by Richard Means. This worldview holds that "We're all one essence"

and as such, could solve the problem. But is it true?

First, Schaeffer argues that rather than being a solution to the ecological problem we face, *pantheism's base* has no categories for particulars. This means that if all is one, then "One" is all. This means that no distinctions can be made. Thus to argue or berate the Christian worldview (which emphasizes distinctions

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and Means caricatures) is self-defeating. One must not also forget that nature is not always “kind” but often ruthless.

Again this distinction only obtains in categories that pantheism does not permit, when the moral problem is only a pragmatic one, the baselessness of the assertion slips down a slippery slope. Relativism here wins the day and an elite hierarchy is poised to dominate the masses through manipulation. This ought not to be.

Second, while **pantheism is not the answer** to our ecological crisis, neither is a Christianity that is “so heavenly minded that it is no earthly good.” A Christianity of this ilk will not value the creation as intrinsically valuable because God created it. Instead it will unfortunately make the unbiblical Platonic bifurcation that only the spiritual is valuable, but the material of no eternal good. Protestant Reformation Christianity however understood that God spoke in both Particular (i.e., Bible) and General (i.e., Nature) Revelation and as such gave unity to all of creation.

Third, the **Christian answer** is that the God who is there created all things. While the order of each creature/creation is distinct, it is nevertheless interdependent for flourishing. Now while the creation is good and reflects God it is not an extension of His essence (i.e., of “What” God is). Nevertheless, because the creation comes from God the good creator, it has intrinsic value and as such must not be despised. The Platonic view of matter (i.e., its evil) is antithetical to the Biblical view of creation, to God’s covenant with the creation, to our future resurrected bodies and to how God has ordered the good. Believers must come under Gods view of creation and live in the balance of its non-autonomous dependence. While there are distinctions, there’s also unity. Remember this!

Fourth, a **substantial healing is to guide the believers cause** as Gods agent on the earth. Christ’s work inaugurated the future kingdom in this present evil age. After the *fall* of man, Christ would come to rectify our separation from the creation and the creator. This would be accomplished through Him justifying the many, through sanctifying His own, and through the implications of those two realities as God’s people interact in this world in a truthful, humble, loving, and courageous way.

Schaeffer accentuated therefore that believers must see themselves as stewards over **all of** God’s creation, live in its order (including marriage) and

speaking up when injustice occurs because the world will. Doing this, will bring about a beauty for the world to savor and behold.

Lastly, the *critiques of White and Means* while they touch on some important issues regarding our religious views and how they practically impact the ecologic dance we're in, it seems to me that they both missed the issues of: the Fall and our rebellion, God's simultaneous transcendence and immanence, White's lower story/upper story tension (i.e., "Fact of evolution –where's the person?"), Means utilitarian bent though true in some respects ultimately removes distinctions between nature and humans, and clearly both caricature the Christian position "mastery" vs. "stewardship" of the earth. This is huge.

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## HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE?

In his book *How Shall We Then Live?* Schaefer presents a history of western civilization that is very helpful. The fact remains that ideas have consequences and Rome's influence and example is insightful.

### ***The Roman Impact on Western Civilization***

Our presuppositions (i.e., things we assume to be true without arguing for them) naturally work themselves out through our actions. Roman culture has left its' mark on Western culture with the good and the bad. Once the gods and the polis could no longer sustain civilization, the people looked to an authoritarian Caesar. This cruel task master eventually contributed to the inevitable destruction of Rome from within. Why? Because it's ultimate ground or base was a *finite man*. It was under Rome's ruthless persecution that Christianity actually flourished because their base is placed in a personal infinite benevolent God whose revelation was absolute and final.

***Contrasting the Renaissance from the Reformation*** is instructive. During the *Renaissance* period, man was understood to be the measure of all things. As such, no ultimate reference point obtained (but the finite creature). This resulted in the lack of meaning to ***particulars*** because no absolutes were present. No answer could be given for both the greatness of man and his cruelty.

The *Reformation* contrarily emphasized the supremacy of God as revealed in the Bible in all of life. As such, an ultimate reference point obtained (the

infinite uncreated Creator) which gave meaning to particulars. Thus, absolute truth obtained, the dilemma of man's greatness and cruelty were explained and Christ's work of redemption on our behalf was the solution offered. Thus, while culture mattered, it was to come under the lordship of Christ.

**The Enlightenment** among other things ultimately jettisoned absolutes which resulted in the discarding of true freedom and civility. It was in this setting where the maxim "Might Makes Right" would flourish. Man-centeredness practically results in an ultimate blood bath—French Revolution. Contrarily, God-centeredness is the base for true civility to obtain because it affords freedom with restraints. That's the essential difference between these two Worldviews as considered in the Enlightenment. A "utopia" awaits...but only oppression results.

**Modern Science** owes flourishing not to a Darwinian naturalistic worldview, but to the Christian Worldview. As creator God both made and sustains everything that exists and thus provides uniformity to natural causes in an open system. This cause/effect reality spurred scientists to discover with confidence the world and its phenomenon (contra a Buddhist or Pantheistic worldview that denies the real world for illusion).

The disciplines of Science and Philosophy started rotting at the tap root when the God who is there was jettisoned. A prevailing presupposition for example is that *matter is eternal* (i.e., the physical is the only reality) which if true means that there is no being with free will, man is only a machine. When this is the case, the notion of "ought" is discarded because there's no soul choosing, only a mechanism determined to act according to a "design".

When *man is the measure of all things*, all we have are particulars, no universals and thus achieving a unifying hub evades us. When this takes place, *only despair awaits* and that's where modern man is today.

**Ideas matter** and eventually express themselves with vicious force. A potent venue through which ideas are spread is the academy whose idea of reality overflows into the public sector...often poisoning the soul of men, dismembering the fabric of culture, and offering the carcasses of humanity to the elite and powerful to devour. *Personal peace and affluence* is a case in point.

When peace and affluence are attained and remain the goal of life, people will at any cost fight to maintain that status quo. But there's a price to pay here,

for to live in this “peace” or “safety” requires an elite ruling class that offers protection from harm and insulation from “raiders“. If those ruling operate under the worldview that man is the measure of all things, thus denying the God who is there, we end up with monstrous results (e.g., Nazism, Marxism, Communism, Fascism, etc.). Inevitably, those who “save the day” become “tyrants“. But why does this occur?

This tyrant arises because finite creatures don’t have the capacity of the Creator to be “ultimate”, “absolute“. When this occurs; the weak and poor, the old and helpless will be in grave danger. Schaeffer put it like this: “if there are no absolutes by which to judge a society, then society becomes absolute” [pg.224]. This state of affairs ultimately leads to chaos, stirs people to cry out for relief, gives way to the tyrant rescuer, which leads to injustice, and what the mighty elite say justice is...then it is. Conclusion, we’re back at Rome.

***When the Christian consensus no longer obtains*** which gave us freedom with restraints, because of its view of man and justice, what results is a manipulative elite that arise. Said “rulers” through a naturalistic framework in science, sociology, and psychology will de-humanize people such that the weak will be discarded, exploited and brutally murdered. Quote: “When freedom destroys order, the yearning for order will destroy freedom” [pg.244]. This is ominous and however we are manipulated be it through media, music, computers, etc., the end will be an authoritarian ruler. Rome is a scary example.

***What alternatives therefore remain?*** The Achilles heel of the West is personal peace and affluence and when these idols are threatened a forced order will be summoned and the forfeiture of freedom will be simultaneously exacted. But, the other alternative is the Christian worldview where the God who is there is the absolute reference point to which we anchor all of reality. It is here where freedom with order can co-exist, rulers can be held in check, and justice for the voiceless marginalized can be exercised. The fact is, according to Schaeffer, “To make no decision in regard to the growth of authoritarian government is already a decision for it.” [pg. 255]

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## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE HUMAN RACE?

This book of Schaefer is very well done, difficult to consider in light of the subject matter, immensely applicable in our day, confronts our passivity as salt and light, and flat out well written.

The first chapter ***“The Abortion of the Human Race”*** is a powerful expose of our dilemma as humans. Every culture in history will be eventually judged by how it treated people. Our choices do make us who we are, and who we are aids our choosing. When we reject God as the ultimate (I Am), inevitably we bite and devour one another through incest, child abuse, de-humanizing the fetus, its procedures, its cruelty and its viciousness is absorbed by the child and mother. This is a human issue, not a religious one. How the “mighty humans” have fallen!

Chapter two ***“The Slaughter of the Innocents”*** continues considering the results of the aforesaid accentuating that the abandonment of the biblical worldview of human beings not only leads to abortion on demand, but naturally leads to infanticide and euthanasia. The verdict is in: the unwanted fetus, the crippled and the old are absolutely dispensable according to the *minority elite* in (e.g., Law, Ethics, Biology, Medicine, and Philosophy).

These champion a relativistic view of man. If we continue in this, and it’s only a matter of time the Nazi Third Reich will rule in the “Land of the free and the home of the brave”. The absolute monstrosity of people toward the weak and helpless is none other than a return to the Abyss!

When we devalue our own flesh and our neighbor, we unwittingly kill ourselves. For the constant slicing open of the soul with cruelty will eventually cause our own doom. I’m exceedingly perturbed!

Chapter three ***“Death by Someone’s Choice”*** is a heinous reality check here! If those set apart to protect and to heal the weak and the aged, become their killers, then what hope have we? When language is euphemistically employed to destroy the helpless, then we’re no different than the Nazis. We’re there! And we must not only point out the problems, but we must also become part of the solution! Apathy is killing. But through love, money, and our time, we can yet be hope for those utterly vulnerable.

Chapter four ***“The Basis for Human Dignity”*** argues that the book of Genesis grounds our dignity, for unlike every other worldview, Genesis unfolds the origins of everything, the source of all, and explains the reason for the abnormality that now obtains. The basis for all knowledge moreover is grounded

in Gods freely choosing to reveal the world to us in both special revelation and general revelation.

Chapter five “**Truth and History**” deals with the interrelatedness between the aforesaid, and can’t be separated from the Biblical accounts. If the narratives between Genesis and Revelation are false, the gig is up. If especially the resurrection of Christ is false and did not occur in space-time-history, then there’s no Christianity! There’s no veridical voice to heed. End of the story!

The last chapter “**Our Personal Response and Social Action**” has two major issues: First, there’s the need for us to be clear on the God who is there. Which then means that there’s absolute truth, that we are all accountable to our Creator for how we live, that Christ alone is the remedy for the abnormality—sin—that plagues society.

Second, there’s the need to live in light of the above mentioned...really. He encourages activism which among other things will dearly cost us, but the alternative apathy is not love. The rewards are worth it—God being glorified by creatures recognizing Christ as Savior and the dignity and freedom of people simultaneously being maintained.

Where are we thirty years after Schaeffer’s writing? It seems our culture is **utterly** lost. Oh God! May I and your church be what you’ve made us to be: salt and light!

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## A CHRISTIAN MANIFESTO

In chapter one, *The Abolition of Truth and Morality*, Schaeffer accentuates the fact that the Biblical worldview and the Humanistic worldview can never produce the same results, but necessarily their opposite effects. This is because the base from which each operates is antithetical to one another. The former grounds all of reality on the infinite God of creation, who is absolute and from whom all things are measured, whereas the latter, bases reality on finite human beings, which are the measure of all things. The result of God being passé is that humanity loses its humanness and society and the state become ultimate. Here “Might Makes Right”. The humanistic worldview tells me, “You’re no different than a bug.” Hence, law (i.e., the state and society) arbitrarily become ultimate because their base is false.

In chapter two ***Foundations for Faith and Freedom***, many key figures are presented as stalwarts in the founding of the USA. John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister, president of what is now known as Princeton University and the only clergy to sign the Declaration of Independence. Clearly the Judeo-Christian worldview based the signing and forming of this country understanding that there's a law above the law, and that the lawgiver is God. After the revolutionary war Witherspoon is quoted, "A republic once equally poised must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty." This virtue was grounded on a Protestant Reformation view of reality. Many others helped shape the founding of this country, but of interest to me is the First amendment and its dual purpose.

First, its purpose was to assure that there was no nationally established church (i.e., there'd be no Church of the United States). Second, its purpose was also to assure that government should not impede or interfere with the free practice of religion, but its interpretation is reversed today. Separation of Church and State today is used to silence the church. The view is that religion is not to have a voice in influencing civil government in any way. So much for original intent!

In chapter three ***The Destruction of Faith and Freedom***, we see that when the majority rules, "Might Makes Right," absolutes don't exist, society's fabric is coming undone, and now *sociological law is king*. Now, the law and the courts are the vehicle for coercion which is based on a humanistic concept of reality. This worldview inescapably necessarily produces a final picture of reality diametrically opposed to the Christian worldview. We're in tough times some thirty years later from this writing.

In chapter four ***The Humanist Religion*** reveals that through the Media the humanistic worldview is propagated with its naturalistic base and the dissenting voices are shut up being labeled as "un-enlightened, unreasonable, or even unscientific." The Media not only distort reality but often make it up for a story. They are the unelected federal bureaucracy. Bias here blindly blinds.

In chapter five ***Revival, Revolution, and Reform*** affirms the gospel call's impact in pre-revolutionary America to personal salvation and social action which its preachers thundered. We will never know how deeply their message afforded the founding of said country and unfortunately their contributions are conveniently set-aside. Sadly, our present day evangelical leadership doesn't have the clarity and resultant back-bone in areas of social action that the

preachers of the Great Awakening displayed. To forget their example only aids our voice and lives from not being salt and light.

Chapter six ***An Open Window*** stresses that windows seemingly open are superfluous when the laws waiting to be enacted are so anti-Christian/Jewish. Our passivity as seeing Christ as Lord over all creation has deeply hurt our voice in the public square of ideas which those in power will not without a vicious struggle go to all lengths to silence. I'm increasingly perturbed and beside myself.

In chapter seven ***The Limits of Civil Obedience*** reminds us that if *Lex Rex* is under God's Law which is ultimate, then not to resist tyranny is evil. To not resist tyranny which is Satanic; is to oppose God who is holy. Wow! This is much to consider. Moreover, when our restrictions on education are the same as Russia's who do not allow any view contrary to that which the state deems worthy (this is humanism), how then are we any different than they?

In chapter nine ***The Use of Force*** many Christians will find difficult because of their lack of understanding of living in a fallen world, not a utopian one. That is, civil disobedience has a place not only in the OT and NT but also in this country's history. Engaging said acts must be done *thoughtfully, courageously, tactfully, and lovingly*. For it is one means in which the Gospel was ordained by God to flourish. At times it will be very costly—death to some, but then again for the Christian, our lives belong to God.