

Reflections on Francis Schaeffer, edited by Ronald W. Ruesegger.
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Dr. Francis Schaeffer, founder of the L'Abri Fellowship, author of at least 22 books, theologian, philosopher, lecturer and evangelist, died in 1984. He is sorely missed by many and his legacy continues to spread.

I had the privilege of meeting with Schaeffer at the NorthWest L'Abri Conference in Calgary, and also listened, in a Toronto church, to his introduction of his film series *How Then Should We Live?* Some years ago I spent three weeks at the Dutch L'Abri. The fellowship at that place was great and stimulating. Later, on the way to the Philippines in 1977, our family spent four weeks travelling through Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. Our weekends were spent at the Dutch L'Abri so that we could attend its bilingual (Dutch-English) church services. We also had the opportunity to talk with L'Abri workers and guests.

Francis Schaeffer has made a great impact on the evangelical world. How history will judge him, time alone can tell. *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer* is one more attempt by evangelical scholars to analyze the man and his ministry. The writers aim to provide readers with a better understanding of Schaeffer's thought.

The essays in this book are arranged as follows: Part one investigates Schaeffer's thought by examining both its intellectual roots and apologetic methodology. Part two examines his analysis of four key disciplines: philosophy, art, music and modern theology. Part three offers an evaluation of Schaeffer's critique of culture. It appraises his analysis of the history of Western civilization, examines his views on the United States, considers his statements about ethics and reviews his assessment of evangelicalism.

The editor rightly claims that the evaluation of Schaeffer in this book will not please everyone. It certainly did not please me. Readers are told that we must avoid the tendency to either accept or to reject completely what Schaeffer says. This is true. But I believe that the authors have been too critical, generally speaking. Perhaps a more appropriate title would have been "Critical Reflections on Francis Schaeffer." I offer my comments under four headings.

Ageneralist

Francis Schaeffer was a generalist in an age of specialists. He used broad strokes and popular language.. He was an able communicator who possessed a gift of discernment that enabled him to articulate a great many truths. He was not a careful scholar. His broad-brush analysis sometimes led him to describe events or personal attitudes in a way that were factually inaccurate. He was a general practitioner with a heart burdened for the millions in spiritual darkness. He sought to present the Gospel to 20th century people, showing what it means "to believe it, to think it through, and to live it out."

In this book Schaeffer is severely criticized for his lack of in-depth scholarship. But the authors are not consistent in their critique and expect too much of him. You can't specialize in every subject.

Evangelist and pastor

Schaeffer considered himself primarily an evangelist. He was more concerned about people than procedures. "The exposure of basic presuppositions was central to his method of encounter with all opinions on any subject. As a pastor he had a positive influence on the average church person. He aimed to bring a clear, strong and honest Christian message and to demonstrate its cultural relevance and reality.

Schaeffer had a high view of the nature and authority of scripture. He considered a move away from a commitment to a verbally inspired, propositional revelation as a move away from the foundation that provides life's answers. He was sharply critical of non-inerrantist students of scripture. He pointed out that anything less than a position of full inerrancy would lead to a rejection of the authority of scripture.

Schaeffer spoke from a Reformed-evangelical perspective. He persuaded many Christians to adopt a positive attitude towards culture. In this way he was instrumental in bringing about the transformation of evangelicalism. The contributors to *Reflection* don't mention the strong impact in this area made by Dr. Hans Rookmaaker and the Dutch Calvinists; only passing references are made. But Schaeffer's works demonstrate how strongly influenced he was by Abraham Kuyper's thinking. In his book, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Schaeffer refers to Kuyper's sphere sovereignty. And in line with Kuyper, he said that Christians are to act like Christians in every sphere of life. Everyone is always under the norms of scripture, whether in the classroom or at home.

Schaeffer often acknowledged his indebtedness to Rookmaaker, who was an art professor at the Free University of Amsterdam and director of the Dutch L'Abri. Schaeffer was a member of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. He was also influenced by Dr. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

The essays in *Reflection* provide the readers with timely material for an ongoing discussion on the many facets of Schaeffer's work. I highly recommend it to college and seminary students, teachers and pastors.

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