SBJT Forum

SBJT: In your life, you briefly interacted with Francis Schaeffer and were influenced by him. Reflect on Schaeffer's legacy and importance for the evangelical church.

Mark T. Coppenger was Professor of Christian Philosophy and Ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, prior to his retirement. In addition to pastoring churches in Arkansas and Illinois, he has done denominational service with the Indiana Baptist convention, the SBC Executive Committee, and Midwestern Baptist Seminary, as well short term missionary stints on five continents. Dr. Coppenger has also taught at Vanderbilt, Wheaton, Elmhurst, Trinity, and Midwestern. His columns have appeared online for *The Gospel Coalition, Cornwall Alliance*, and *The American Spectator*. His most recent book is *Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians* (B&H 2011); *For Such a Time as This* (Westbow, 2018); *Cases and Maps: A Christian Introduction to Philosophy* (Wipf & Stock, 2019); *God and Humanity at Marshall: Toward November 14, 1970 and Beyond* (Wipf & Stock, 2020).

Mark T. Coppenger: As I was beginning my doctoral work in philosophy at Vanderbilt in 1970, I became aware of a Christian mentor of some sort in Switzerland, one sporting knee pants and a billy goat beard. I somehow laid my hands on his little book, *Escape from Reason*, and was intrigued and pleasantly surprised that he was conversant and engaged with some secular philosophers. Most of the Christian literature with which I was familiar came in the form of commentary, devotion, and biography. But here was a fellow mixing it up with the likes of Kant and Rousseau.

Little did I know that, in the years ahead, I would lead the discussion of his film series *How Should We Then Live?* in Wheaton, at College Church and Bethany Chapel (Plymouth Brethren); that Francis and Edith would come speak to my bioethics class at Wheaton College; that Udo Middelmann (their son in law) would meet with my Baptist Collegiate Ministry group at Northwestern University; that our *Kairos Journal* (kairosjournal.org) editorial team would spend a day in conversation with Os Guinness (who lived with the Schaeffers in Switzerland) and that I would use his Os's book, *The Call*, in my freshman

Christ-and-culture classes at Wheaton. I was meeting Francis Schaeffer and L'Abri at every turn.

I think I am (and perhaps we are) most indebted to Schaeffer for three things: (1) His work in cultural apologetics; (2) His engagement with the heavyweights of Western civilization, whether philosophical or artistic; (3) His advocacy for the unborn. Let me take them in reverse order.

Regarding abortion, he and C. Everett Koop, were well ahead of the SBC moral curve with the release of the film series, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* in 1979. That was the year Adrian Rogers was elected SBC president, launching the Conservative Resurgence. We were almost ten years away from Richard Land's appointment to head the Christian Life Commission ([CLC] now the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission), and the CLC was still in the hands of those at peace with *Roe v. Wade*. Indeed, they had led the SBC to indulge this court decision in resolution form. Pro-abortion professor Paul Simmons was still ensconced in the faculty at Southern. (I remember my astonishment when, as a pastor in Arkansas, I received a 1980s call from Simmons, asking me to join in the fight against a referendum denying the use of state funds for abortion.) It took us a while to turn the denominational ship in a pro-life direction, and in this we were helped by non-SBC evangelicals like Schaeffer who sounded the alarm early on.

Next, he called out by name a range of thinkers relatively or utterly unfamiliar to the vast majority of evangelicals—folks like Aquinas, Hegel, Sartre, Picasso, and Capote, who appear in the aforementioned *Escape from Reason* (1968). While a fair number of us had seen C. S. Lewis confront various idols of the age, e.g., in *Screwtape Letters* (1942) and in *Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), with its "Mr. Enlightenment," our reading habits ran more to Hannah Hurnard's *Hinds' Feet in High Places* (1955), Elisabeth Elliot's *Through Gates of Splendor* (1957), and Jesse Fletcher's *Bill Wallace of China* (1963). Here now was a scrapper addressing the panoply of European thought and practice and not at all intimidated by the conceits of secular academics or seduced by their conceptual blandishments. A tough, discursive guy.

It was not so much the content of his analysis that blessed many of us, but rather the very fact that he offered it at all. I'm reminded of the flak that *Eternity and World* magazines got for their film reviews (by Harvey Conn and Gene Veith respectively). The evangelical gainsayers were not questioning the details of a particular take on this or that movie, but instead the wisdom in offering

film commentary in the first place, thus dignifying "Hollywood Babylon."

In that context, in the mid-1970s, I broke off my job application to King's College (then in Briarcliff Manor, New York) when I learned that the faculty had to avoid the commercial theater (whether movies, plays, or musicals), with *The Sound of Music* and *The King and I* beckoning from Broadway, not that far down the Hudson from the college. Analogously, here was Francis Schaeffer not only reading the toxic Nietzsche and Heidegger, but offering us "reviews" of their thought. Pretty audacious (and exhilarating) of him.

Then there was his argument that ideas had social consequences, and manifestly so, thus demonstrating the superiority and even indispensability of a Christian worldview in generating sound civilization. Surprisingly, some evangelicals were not thrilled with this strategy. In the intro to my book, *Moral Apologetics*, I quote (from *A Reasonable Faith*) the estimable William Lane Craig as he ranks down Schaeffer's enterprise:

> [T]he apologetic for Christianity based on the human predicament is an extremely recent phenomenon, associated primarily with Francis Schaeffer. Often it is referred to as "cultural apologetics" because of its analysis of post-Christian culture. This approach constitutes an entirely different sort of apologetics than the traditional models, since it is not concerned with epistemological issues of justification and warrant. Indeed, in a sense it does not even attempt to show in a positive sense that Christianity is true."

I then go on to suggest ten reasons that Craig was wrong on this point and to argue that Schaeffer's approach is a legitimate species of the venerable Design/Teleological Argument. I note, too, that Craig himself observed, "In Europe, we have seen the bitter fruit of secularization, which now threatens North America."

It's been decades since I saw the film series, *How Should We Then Live?* (yes, back then it was a *film*, a reel-to-reel projection), but I think my memory serves me right when I recall the image of a Swissair 747 flying above the Alps, with Schaeffer's voiceover saying that Christianity provides the conceptual, moral, and institutional base for such high tech achievement. (As I've written elsewhere, in the spirit of Schaeffer, there's no such thing as a Muslim car.)

Indeed, as Schaeffer well knew and ably demonstrated, "ideas have consequences." And I might extend that to a notion I distilled (and awkwardly worded) from Catholic writer, E. Michael Jones—Consequences have ideas,

which, in turn, have consequences. In *Degenerate Moderns*, he argues that so much of our cultural madness, with its proliferation of toxic ideologies, comes from people who slid or charged into sin (primarily sexual sin) and then scrambled to come up with notions which would normalize their decadence—folks like Sigmund Freud, Margaret Mead, Pablo Picasso, Alfred Kinsey, and John Maynard Keynes. Their "consequences" (the shameful spectacle of their contemptible behavior) generated "ideas" (theories and pleadings to excuse, build upon, and even celebrate that behavior) that fostered fresh ruinous "consequences" (corruption of society by those buying their wicked foolishness). In other words, social catastrophe starts in the evil willfulness of the heart, not in the muddling of the mind, and then the muddled mind serves the projects of the depraved soul. I think this template would satisfy Schaeffer.

Of course, there are so many applications, including, I would argue, the rat's nest of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, so fetching to many in our land. Driven by perpetual and virtually insatiable envy and resentment; relentless in searching out slights and generating excuses for one's own shortfalls; brewing semantic moonshine and wielding slander (of the living and the dead) with ease; fostering churlishness rather than amiability; injecting acrimony while diluting the antiseptic promise of the gospel; spinning false narratives in a patronizing spirit, and pushing relativistic, tribal epistemologies upon us; wielding the class-struggle hammer, counting arguably good people as nails to be slammed; gathering *mea culpas* like scalps from those too addled or fearful to dissent. Yet there are those who would visit these toxins on the church. What could go wrong?

Though Schaeffer made a great contribution to the Christian mind, we Wheaton philosophers who were tapped to lead church discussions on the film series were underwhelmed by some of his judgments. Steve Evans thought his treatment of Kierkegaard was unfair; Art Holmes thought Aquinas got a raw deal; and I was less than enthusiastic over his harsh treatment of pre- and post-Reformation art. He seemed to doing philosophy by machete rather than with scalpel. (I'm reminded of the popular characterization of knee jerk, sweeping dismissal of anything thing President Trump does: "Orange Man, Bad." Except that Schaeffer would go with "Michelangelo, Bad," "Dürer Good.") Of course, there are secularists who track with Schaeffer on much of what he says regarding latter day art, e.g., Peter Gay's *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*. But there is a lively and important dispute among evangelicals over the perspective Hans Rookmaaker

offered in *Modern Art and the Death of Culture* (1970), the viewpoint that much influenced Schaeffer. Witness, for instance, Anderson and Dyrness's *Modern Art and The Life of a Culture: The Religious Impulses of Modernism* (2016). The point is that the gentle reader might get the impression that, from a Christian perspective, the solutions to the range of philosophical puzzles are obvious and covered sufficiently in a "Cliff's Notes" edition.

It strikes me as indicative and productive of a certain approach to philosophy, which I'll call "Taxonomical/Genealogical/Cafeterial." It's well adapted to PowerPoint note taking, with a handy place for everything and a tidy thing for every place. It gives us one-line critiques such as "Descartes's *Cogito* fostered subjectivism, which gave birth to relativism." You've really got to be careful with this sort of thing, for it nurtures such slippery-slope reasoning as, "Paul preached grace, which birthed antinominanism." Yes, you can overdo nuance, qualification, and circumspection, but you can underdo it as well, and into this second bog Schaeffer was prone to slide. Of course, there's real value in a 1:20,000,000 scale map, where an inch represents about three hundred miles. It lets you put the U.S. on a single sheet of typing paper. But if you want to be effective in combat operations against a savvy enemy, you need the standard 1:50,000 military map, with about a mile per inch. Schaeffer gave us something more akin to the former. And, I would suggest, the details were sometimes doubtful, as if one extended the Alleghenies into Mississippi and gave Maryland's Eastern Shore to Delaware. To be sure, comprehensive classifications have their place of honor. I'm grateful for "King Phillip Came Over from Greece Seeking Variety" (Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species, Variety), but I'd still like to hear a bit more on why whales aren't fish. And what are we to make of those who claim that Linnaeus's Phylum category is bogus, an unfortunate straitjacket on nature, a distinction without a clear difference?

What's missing in much evangelical assessment of philosophy is that philosophy is something you *do* and not just something you *catalogue*. It's more than cheers or boos from the bleachers. In the hands of Christians, it should be deployed to answer "What is it?" questions not settled with a simple appeal to the Bible. We know from Scripture that murder, the willful taking of innocent life, is a sin. We don't know with the same precision what constitutes a just tax system (whether flat, progressive, or regressive); what sculpture, if any, should the city commission for its parks; and when

the state has gone too far with its "pandemic" strictures. So we have to find or provide tools for digging some fresh ground. To my seminar students, I suggest ten, the sort that Socrates used to delve into the nature of such matters as friendship (*Lysis*), courage (*Laches*), and knowledge (*Theaetetus*). I call them "Elements of Dialogue," ways to begin *doing* philosophy:

1. Can you give an example? (illustration)
2. What's at stake? What difference does it make? (application)
3. Where are you going with this? (destination)
4. But wouldn't that mean . . . ? (implication)
5. What exactly do you mean by . . . ? (clarification)
6. So it is kind of like . . . ? (analogy; comparison)
7. But what about . . . ? (counter-example)
8. Wouldn't it be better to look at it this way? (alternative paradigm)
9. So you're saying . . . ? (summarization)
10. But how does this square with . . . ? (cohesion)

To put it another way, it prompts you to do more than travel down the buffet line of others' ideas, picking out what you want to eat and shunning the rest. Rather, it puts you in the kitchen where you work to cook up something palatable and nutritious.

When the chaplain at the Defense Intelligence Agency called to ask if I'd bring one of the ethics lectures he was allotted each year, we discussed our way to a topic. It was a time when the intelligence breaches of Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, and Bradley/Chelsea Manning were much in the news. I didn't much care for these guys, but I hadn't given it much thought, so I suggested a session on what I lumped together as "Snowdenism." I ended up appealing to Aristotle, with his notion that there are rocks on both sides—there can be too much and too little surveillance and secrecy—but I didn't just say, "Oh, that's easy, Snowden bad." I worked through the aforementioned, ten dialogical elements, with the emphasis on *worked*. Grunt work.

I'm not suggesting that Schaeffer was a slacker. He was prodigious in his research, discourse, and production. What I am saying is that his style encouraged quick takes and short cuts in his followers, an impatience with mining primary sources for gems amidst the dross and for searching out mold amidst the treasure.

In philosophy, one of the Utilitarians observed, "Better Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied." In other words, it's better to go to bed with an

unresolved, earnestly-engaged, question still bugging you than to get a snappy fix from the trough and hit the sack with a smile on your drowsy face. I'm simply saying, "Beware in reading Schaeffer lest you think too quickly that you know what it takes more effort to know."

All this being said, "Thank God for Francis Schaeffer."

Andrew T. Walker is Associate Professor of Christian Ethics, Associate Dean in the School of Theology, and the Executive Director of the Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, where he also earned his MDiv, ThM, and PhD. Prior to teaching at Southern Seminary, he served as Senior Fellow in Christian Ethics at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is the author of *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say about Gender Identity?* (Good Book, 2017), and the co-author of *Marriage Is: How Marriage Transforms Society and Cultivates Human Flourishing* (B&H, 2015). In addition, he has contributed chapters to several books, delivered papers at academic conferences, and has done independent study through the Witherspoon Institute.

SBJT: What lessons can we learn from Francis Schaeffer as we face an increasingly post-Christian world and a moral revolution that is directly affecting the Church and Christian institutions of higher education?

Andrew T. Walker: We are the products of the institutions that shape us. I have been fortunate to take the long march through several Christian institutions that have been unabashedly Schaefferian in their understanding of the Christians' responsibility to the cultural order. Schaeffer's thought in Christian institutions represents a sort of necessary countermove to the long march that progressivism has taken in secular institutions. As Schaeffer's thought beckons, standing athwart secular progressivism is a necessary project that reflects the ongoing antithesis at the heart of Schaeffer's cultural analysis. More than ever, Christians need Schaefferian confidence in proclaiming God's clear moral commands for the sake of a civilization that has rejected its Christian roots, a rejection resulting in misery and collateral damage left in the wake of the cultural revolution.

That antithesis has particular verve when discussing Schaeffer's understanding of morality and ethics. Schaeffer's moral realism originates not only with his doctrine of God, but interestingly, the uniqueness of God's revelation. Apart

from God's revelation, Schaeffer insists, it is impossible to determine whether man's current state is normative, and thus intrinsically cruel, or whether a change in man's moral estate occurred from a prior a moral state. Agreeing with French philosophers Charles Baudelaire and Albert Camus, Schaeffer grants that if "there is an unbroken line between what man is now and what he has always intrinsically been, then if there is a God, He must be the Devil" (*He is There and He is Not Silent in Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* [Wheaton: Crossway, 1990], 296). This is why Schaeffer is not content to leave morality to theism alone, but revelation. Schaeffer insists that impersonal theism void of revelation could just as easily created man to be a moral monster. Theism, without disclosure, posits no certainty about whether the divine account of morality is necessarily good. For perhaps the divine being is a cruel god who creates cruel creatures. Schaeffer writes, "With an impersonal being, morals really do not exist as morals. If one starts with an impersonal beginning, the answer to morals eventually turns out to be the assertion that there are no morals (in however sophisticated a way this may be expressed)" (*He is There and He is Not Silent*, 292). Without revelation, for Schaeffer, ethics is merely descriptive, and can in no way be confidently prescriptive.

For Schaeffer, in contrast, the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture posits a picture of immoral man's present lot cast against his original moral estate. Genesis 3 is not the prescription for Christian ethics. Genesis 1 is. We were not created to be cruel. Sin corrupted man's moral stature. This clarification makes all the difference in the possibility of a Christian ethic. If man's current moral estate is a departure from his original position, it leaves open the possibility for prescriptive ethics. It means man's present cruelty is not intrinsic to his nature but a privation. Prescriptive ethics are the foundation for a Christian ethic that is capable of making moral judgments and obligations. It is why Schaeffer's adamancy that "He [God] is There" entails the declaration "He is Not Silent." According to Schaeffer (*He is There and He is Not Silent*, 300):

> The only answer in the area of morals, as true morals (including the problem of social evil), turns upon the fact of God's being there. If God is not there (not just the word of God, but God Himself being there objectively —the God of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures), there is no answer at all to the problem of evil and morals. Again, it is not only necessary that He be there, but that He is not silent. There is a philosophical necessity in both metaphysics and morals that

> He is there and that He is not silent. He has spoken, in verbalized, propositional form, and He has told us what His character is.

The significance of this formulation for Christian ethics and cultural Christian engagement cannot be overstated. The Christian's ability to proclaim morally binding obligations upon society, to insist upon the standards necessary for cultural survival, rests on the scandalous notion that there *is* a Christian ethic, and it is known. Schaeffer insists that it is the combination of both God's existence and God making known the moral order through propositional revelation that makes possible the intelligibility of Christian social engagement. The idea of an objective, truthful, authoritative, binding, and intelligible moral order separates an ethic that is extra nos from an ethic formulated according to convention, custom, and consensus. It shapes everything about the possibility of social engagement. "On this basis," Schaeffer writes, "we can have an adequate ground for fighting evil, including social evil and social injustice. Modern man has no real basis for fighting for evil" (*He is There and He is Not Silent*, 299). Schaeffer's argument is clear: Without Scripture grounding our moral norms in a prescriptive direction, the Christian is without a moral arsenal.

It is the idea of the Christian ethic as a revealed ethic that has put it at odds with prevailing secular winds. But if we follow a Schaefferian argument, Christians do not take a cafeteria-pick-or-choose approach to morality. We must be unbending to accept the canons of secular morality that pretends to traffic in authority, but whose power is derived only from the strength of its own impulse. Whether it be gender, sexuality, or the status of the unborn, Christians have a word to proclaim. Secularism posits a word as well, but it is a word that lacks the sufficient explanatory power to make its claims binding.

Thus, there is no warrant for Christian engagement that would purport to be Christian apart from our understanding of divine inspiration. If justification by faith is the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls, it is divine revelation that is the impetus for Christian ethics. Schaeffer would see it no other way, as should we. This rejection of God's Word over matters of morality is why Christian denominations that jettison the authority of God's revealed Word look less and less recognizably Christian as time proceeds. A Christian strategy for social engagement without the Word at the center of its moral demands will necessarily result in a Christianity looking more

like the world. While theology informs our ethics, it is our ethics that reveal the real contours of our theology.

From where I write in my office, I am but a mile away from a noted progressive Baptist Church whose staff and members have photos of themselves marching in gay pride parades. How can a church that purports to be Christian offer an approach to social engagement so devoid of the authority of Christ? It is because they have rejected the authority of God's Word, which makes distinguishing this church impossible from the world outside of it. I often tell my students, if God's Word is errant on matters of morality, there should be no field of study called Christian ethics. For if God's Word is not inerrant, we have no sure guide to morality.

A strategy for Christian social engagement must take its cue from a Schaefferian impulse. As the message of Christ comes to us in the Word, so do Christian ethics. If God's Word is not trustworthy, and if Christ is not raised according to what Scripture reveals, we might as well just eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. How interesting a juxtaposition that Paul connects Jesus' bodily resurrection to the impact it has on one's ethics. But the obverse is true: If Jesus is raised, let us eat and drink—and do everything else—for his glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Schaeffer would see it no differently.

Douglas S. Huffman is Professor of New Testament and Associate Dean of Biblical and Theological Studies Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in La Mirada, California. Dr. Huffman earned his MA and PhD from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. He has written numerous articles and chapters in books, and he is the author of *Verbal Aspect Theory and the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament* (Peter Lang, 2014); *The Handy Guide for New Testament Greek* (Kregel, 2012); and the editor of *How Then Should We Choose?* (Kregel, 2009) and *God Under Fire* (Zondervan, 2009).

SBJT: How has Francis Schaeffer influenced your life and teaching ministry?

Douglas S. Huffman: As I remember it, I first encountered the work of Francis Schaeffer as an undergraduate student in an art appreciation course at a Christian college. One of the textbooks for this course was Schaeffer's *Art and the Bible* (InterVarsity Press, 1973). Why wouldn't the God of Scripture who had created the universe be interested in art? This made perfect sense to me. Indeed, I was perhaps more surprised that an art class would

have a textbook (!) than I was that God could be connected to art. God was responsible for the beautiful things in the world—yes, even for the definition of "beautiful." And humans were made in the Creator's image—yes, even with the urge to create beautiful things. Despite the fact that some artists make ugly things (and my amateur works might be so classified!) and despite the fact that some professional artists choose to speak out against God with their artistic media, the connection of God to the discipline of art made sense to me. If this could be the case in the academic discipline of visual art, why not in the realms of the hard sciences, behavioral sciences, humanities, communication and performance arts, philosophy, and even theology.

A Christian Worldview. Having grown up in a Christian home, I had always believed in the God who is there, who had designed the entire universe, and who desired to communicate with humanity. Hearing the gospel often and responding to it at a young age, the concept of approaching life with a Christian worldview not only made sense to me but necessarily seemed to be the mark of the Christian. So, for example, despite my conservative Christian upbringing—or was it because of it?—I never really saw Christianity and science as being at odds with one another. It never really occurred to me that the world God created would not fit together with the Word God had spoken. Thus, Schaeffer's way of thinking and speaking, his way to follow the flow of biblical history right into our own time, encouraged me to continue in this same direction. True spirituality must be far more than mere religious words and calendars of cultural holidays; it is an all-inclusive way of living not merely in religious circles but in every sphere of human endeavor.

Dignified Honest Searching. As I matured in faith and in academic acumen, I gained an appreciation for the fact that there were differences in opinion about the existence of God and about the claims of the Bible. And even among Christians there are different nuances to what it means to think Christianly. But herein I came to appreciate opportunities for people to ask questions and even to express doubts in their honest searching for the truth. Later I came to understand that this was something of a central value at Schaeffer's L'Abri. If God is real and has something to say, if he is there and he is not silent, then what his Word says still matters for believers in all generations. There is no final conflict between the truth of God's Word and the truths available in God's world, and we should respect one another enough to freely and honestly and humbly search for those truths, getting

back to freedom and dignity in how we treat one another.

Disciplined thinking Christians. Nevertheless, I was to learn that Christians don't all want to do the hard work of thinking. This reluctance is actually a widespread continuing cultural trend seeking to escape from reason, a trend Christians must encourage one another to fight against. While Schaeffer traced the rise and decline of Western thought and culture so as to note the place of the Church at the end of the twentieth century, it was not merely as a doomsday notice to bemoan Christian compromise and the great evangelical disaster of lost influence. Rather, Schaeffer offered a penetrating analysis of trends in modern thought and asked his famous question, "Whatever happened to the human race?" in order to call believers of his own and subsequent generations to renewed commitments to robust faithful living with a truly Christian worldview. Indeed, his other famous question, "How should we then live?" is aimed to get believers to think in a disciplined manner about how to live for Jesus moment by moment in all areas of life.

Francis Schaeffer's Impact on My Classroom. Thus, Schaeffer's work encouraged me to continue viewing God's world as one that is fully integrated, as a place that already fit together under the Creator's purview. But his work also encouraged me to notice the needs of people in a world that has been tainted by sinfulness, our own sinfulness and the sins of others. We live in a cause-and-effect world where even our acts of rebellion against God can have premediated motives and sometimes merely pretrained reactions. Our own acts of rebellion might need patient reflection. The unwillingness to learn must be patiently unlearned. So, reading Schaeffer taught me the value of safe conversations that allow silent questions to be spoken aloud so that progress can be made in addressing them. Students today (as always) are exploring their world and looking for the integrated unity that is inherently there someplace. But the cacophony of disparate, desperate, and sometimes despairing messages that are being shouted all around them calls for a place where they can have safe conversations about their questions and doubts and struggles. They need their struggles to be acknowledged not denied, addressed and not merely refuted or ratified. This is how I want to run my classroom, pointing to the Scriptures as God's Word for us still today.

Concluding Reflection. I saw Francis Schaeffer once when he came to speak at my Christian college during my undergraduate years. His white fluffy hair and beard were as the photographs often picture him. I really don't

remember the topic of his address. In fact, he struck me as a rather quiet and unremarkable man—apart from being dressed in his signature knickers. Schaeffer died not long after that visit, and I remember being grateful for this opportunity to see a man whose thought and writing had influenced me (something of a celebrity siting, I suppose). I saw him from a distance that day, and it strikes me now that the work of this quiet and unremarkable man has influenced me from a distance of both space and time. I never attended a L'Abri retreat, and I never sat under Schaeffer's teaching in a classroom, but his influence on my classroom ministry continues these decades later, and for this I am grateful.

Interestingly, the title of Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?* (Revell, 1976) was influential in the title of a multiple-view book I edited on finding God's will: *How Then Shall We Choose?* (Kregel, 2009). While this title idea came from my publisher, my agreement to it is perhaps indicative of my sharing in Schaeffer's passion for the Christian conviction that our relationship with God ought to affect the choices we make in our lives.

David Closson is Director of Christian Ethics and Biblical Worldview at the Family Research Council, Washington, DC. He is completing his PhD in Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas and earned his MDiv and ThM at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of Family Research Council's Biblical Worldview Series.

SBJT: How did Francis Schaeffer and the L'Abri home shape how evangelical Christians engage in culture?

David Closson: When Francis and Edith Schaeffer opened a retreat center in the Swiss Alps in 1955, their vision was fresh and innovative. L'Abri (French for "shelter") was a refuge from the world, a place where people could bring their real burdens and find real answers. With a warm fire and a shared meal, the Schaeffers taught a faith in Christ that transcended every sphere of influence and penetrated every waking thought. No question was beyond reach, no sinner too lost.

Francis Schaeffer profoundly shaped mainstream evangelical Christianity. A theologian, philosopher, and Presbyterian pastor, he is known as the father of Protestant evangelical worldview thinking. Schaeffer authored influential books such as *The God Who is There* (1968) and *How Should We Then Live?*

(1976). He modeled how Christians ought to engage with—not disassociate from—the culture in order to reclaim the truth.

Schaeffer's fresh ideas have borne great fruit. But perhaps his most remarkable characteristic was the way he prized every person that walked into his home. L'Abri—serene and substantive, yet accessible and genuine—manifested a vision for Christian engagement in the world. Students and seekers from all over the world came to stay with the Schaeffers, and many eventually gave their lives to Christ. L'Abri still exists today, and it has expanded to other countries and locations.

Schaeffer's understanding of Western culture was both intellectually thoughtful and deeply personal. After becoming a Christian at a revival in 1930, Schaeffer followed an academic path and became a pastor. He grew increasingly troubled by the church's separatist tendency to shrink away from the present culture as if it were a leper (particularly amid the turpitude of the 1960s). Also, Schaeffer was staunchly opposed to modernist cultural influence that sought to separate experience from reality and the religious from the natural (see Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 984). He was convinced that God's Word had substantive, authoritative answers about how the real world worked and why humans experienced what they did.

Schaeffer powerfully articulated that everyone lives according to their fundamental assumptions or convictions about what is true and real. Although Schaeffer did not coin the term "worldview" (the term dates back as far as German Romanticism and the word *Weltanschauung*), he did remind evangelicals of its importance. Moreover, Schaeffer understood that modern culture was increasingly shaped by worldview assumptions that were contrary to Scripture and that Christian faithfulness in the modern world required a strong biblically informed worldview.

Unfortunately, Schaeffer's forecast about the trajectory of culture has proven prophetic. A 2018 survey revealed that even though an overwhelming percentage of Americans identify as Christian (65%), only 6% hold a biblical worldview (see "In US, Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace, *Pew Forum* [Oct. 17, 2019]; Brandon Showalter, "Record low number of Americans hold biblical worldview, survey says," *Christian Post* [March 31, 2020]). This discrepancy clearly shows that self-identifying Christians are not looking to the Bible for answers to life's biggest questions and that

discipleship—an intentional pursuit to become more like Christ—remains an urgent need for the church.

Despite discouraging signs in the culture of his own day, Schaeffer took God at his word and believed Paul's assertion in Colossians that Christ is preeminent over all things. He unashamedly believed that all true, good, and beautiful things originated from Christ. Thus, Schaeffer saw the study of subjects such as literature, art, and philosophy as a means of engaging and winning back the culture for Christ. Schaeffer boldly integrated the reality and *logos* of Christ into every profession and field, urging Christians that they should not shy away from recovering the remnants of goodness and truth in a world that is lost.

Francis Schaeffer and L'Abri have left a firm imprint on the Christian evangelical movement of the twenty-first century. Tremendously influential minds within evangelicalism, including Nancy Pearcey, Os Guinness, and Wade Bradshaw, were guests or served as staff at L'Abri. Schaeffer reminded the evangelical community that Christians could contribute richly to the culture and the intellectual arena. At Family Research Council (FRC), where I work in the area of Christian Ethics and Biblical Worldview, we owe a great debt to the trailblazing work of Schaeffer.

FRC's mission statement is to "advance faith, family, and freedom in public policy and the culture from a biblical worldview." We think a biblical worldview can inform and affect public policy and the culture at-large because ideas have consequences. We want to see beliefs properly shaped and effectively implemented. In this way, we trade a chalet in the mountains for an urban office building and continue Schaeffer's mission to win the world for Christ.

In many ways, the intellectual environment Schaeffer's mission grew out of—a stridently secular world and a Christian church softening on core doctrine—is much the same in 2020. It is also fitting that we commemorate the 65th year of L'Abri in a year that has wounded many, resurfaced past pain, and stripped many of us of our future hopes. In this environment, it is easy to wonder where to turn or how to proceed faithfully amidst cultural disarray.

The title of Schaeffer's most famous book, *How Should We Then Live?* echoes a question Simon Peter asked Jesus during His earthly ministry. When many of the people who had been following Jesus deserted Him, Jesus asked his disciples, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,

and we have believed, and come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:67-69).

Whenever we encounter questions difficult to answer or pains that burden our soul, we can ask ourselves, "To whom shall we go?" At the Schaeffers' L'Abri, ideas and lived experiences intersected in life-altering ways. Christians should reject the message that ideas are irrelevant to our daily lives or that Christianity cannot substantially contribute to the mainstream cultural discussion. Our biblical convictions deserve thoughtful application; we rob the world of answers when we stay silent. Embracing the enduring vision of L'Abri can help us tackle the particular challenges of today's world. May our homes and hearts be a true shelter for others, holding within them the words of eternal life for people who have nowhere else to go.