



The Great Evangelical Disaster

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Have Christians compromised their stand on truth and morality until there is almost nothing they will speak out against? Has the evangelical church itself sold out to the world?

A provocative and challenging book--but one that is tempered by Dr. Schaeffer's deep commitment to Christ and love for the church.

The Great Evangelical Disaster Details

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Author : Francis A. Schaeffer

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From Reader Review The Great Evangelical Disaster for online ebook

Karla Perry says

This book is a must read! Written in the 80's but clearly addresses our time. We must get back to the authority of Scripture - both in belief and practice.

Mark Marshall says

For the first time in decades, I picked up and read my well marked copy of Francis Schaeffer's The Great Evangelical Disaster this week. And I noticed more the sadness of it than I did in my callow 20's. In both the preface and text, Schaeffer acknowledged his health was failing, and he died a few months after publication in 1984. This was to be his last book.

I think his health affected the book. He told in the preface of his hospitalization with a deadline to meet. With help he made the deadline. But the result does not seem as well written or as tightly reasoned as his earlier work.

Nonetheless – and this is part of the sadness as well – it is a prophetic work. Most of what he decried in culture and church in the West have only gotten worse. Perhaps his saddest statement comes early on: "It is a horrible thing for a man like myself to look back and see my country and my culture go down the drain in my own lifetime."

His warnings about the direction of Evangelicals may have seemed alarmist at the time. But the Neo-Evangelicals of today have pretty much proved him right.

Schaeffer's warnings about American culture have proven too true as well. Have I mentioned this is not a happy read?

And, although I revere the man, I concede his last book is probably not his best book. Nonetheless, it should not be neglected by those who acknowledge the importance of Francis Schaeffer and of his critique of church and culture in the West. Nor should it be overlooked by those concerned by the current direction of evangelicalism.

mike hatcher says

Schaeffer makes a great point stating that the influence of the Enlightenment created a shift that has taken place in the 20th century whereby man now sees himself over all things with authority to pick and choose what is right and wrong in his own eyes.

Josh Dockter says

Found this one in my in-law's library a while back. Schaeffer takes Christians to task for being "accommodating Christians". He pleads with Christians to stand up and draw a clear and loving line between true Christianity and "blue jean" Christianity. He does an excellent job of pointing out the consequences of what happens when Christians sit idly by. This is a prophetic book especially when he deals with the sexual revolution.

Schaeffer rightly understands Jesus' Lordship as "The Lordship of Christ in the totality of life." Put another way, if Christ is not lord of all then he is not lord at all.

If you want to be spurred on to love and good works then I suggest you buy this book and read it carefully.

Kyle Houlton says

Although it is essentially a contemporary resurrection of Machen's work and although much of the content of the book is a restatement of much of his own prior work, Schaeffer's prophetic voice is spot on. In identifying the watershed of the evangelical world as the authority and inerrancy of God's Word thirty years ago, Schaeffer predicted the trajectory of those on either side of the line. And now, reading his work in 2015, The trajectory has proven to be in almost the exact direction he predicted, despite the naysayers. If I'm left with one dominant conclusion after reading every one of Schaeffer's books it's that today, perhaps more than ever, the importance of standing on the authority of God's inerrant word cannot be understated.

John says

This book is a contemporary take on Machen's Christianity and Liberalism. Schaeffer argues that the evangelical church is (as of 1984, when the book was published) at a watershed moment--where it can go one of two ways--each of which will end far from the other.

The church could turn back to a firm reliance upon Scripture as authoritative, speaking to all of life, or it can continue on the path of compromise, believing the Bible has errors, and only speaks authoritatively in matters of salvation.

Schaeffer is very solid, and it is easy to admire him for his prophetic stances, especially on abortion. He knew what was at stake before the church even engaged on the issue. That being said, the book is a little dated, but most of the book stands as an pillar from a different time (1984 seems so distant from 2015!), and it is sad to see that we've descended much lower from the time when Schaeffer wrote this work. However, as they say, the darkest time of day is right before the dawn! So I take hope, knowing Schaeffer's influence, and those like him, are still being read today, and their work is advancing, even if slowly.

This isn't the book to start with, on Schaeffer. Readers should begin with "How Then Shall We Live", "He is There and He is Not Silent", and "Escape From Reason". But this is perhaps one of his more pastoral works, at least that I've encountered, and I really appreciated that side of him.

John says

This was Francis Schaeffer's final book, completed in 1984, the year he died.

The disaster in this prophetic work is the accommodation by many evangelical Christians and churches to the world system. The starting point, in Schaeffer's view, is the abandonment of regarding the Bible as the infallible, inerrant Word of God. At the outset, the difference may seem slight, he writes. But he compares it to the watershed in a high ridge near his home in Switzerland. From one side of the ridge, the snow when it melts ultimately flows into the North Sea. From the other side, it ultimately arrives in the Mediterranean.

There's very little difference at the beginning, but a huge difference in the endpoint.

Accommodation, Schaeffer writes in a section on feminism and sexual morality, produces "a direct and deliberate bending of the Bible to conform to the world spirit of our age at the point where the modern spirit conflicts with what the Bible teaches."

What Schaeffer saw coming in 1984 certainly has largely come to pass in our day. I suspect that if Schaeffer were with us 30 years later, he would be saying the same things only ever so much more so. But each prophet is responsible for only his own generation.

I want to also mention an illustration Schaeffer uses in a section on "Utopianism" to explain why he is not a pacifist. I mention it because I think it has application to the present situation regarding Syria, although I hasten to add that I realize the situation in Syria is complex and there are no easy answers. I still think the illustration is relevant:

"I am walking down the street and I come upon a big, burly man beating a tiny tot to death -- beating this little girl -- beating her -- beating her. I plead with him to stop. Suppose he refuses? What does love mean now? Love means stopping him in any way that I can, including hitting him. To me this is not only necessary for humanitarian reasons: it is loyalty to Christ's commands concerning Christian love in a fallen world. ...

"We all grieve at any war, and especially at the prospect of nuclear war. But in a fallen world there are many things we grieve over but must nevertheless face."

"The Great Evangelical Disaster" also includes as an appendix Schaeffer's booklet "The Mark of a Christian."

Rex Blackburn says

A bit repetitive in places, but some good thoughts on worldview and accomodation of the Church to the culture..

Marty says

This book, written in 1984 near the end of Francis Schaeffer's life, reflects on the modernist/fundamentalist division of the 1920s and 30s and when America's Christian consensus was lost, and proclaims that the contemporary state of evangelicalism is equally disastrous.

Schaeffer says the fault lies with vast numbers of American Christians who are unwilling to bring the fight to the enemy and stand for Christ in their communities. Furthermore he says that the watershed issue for which we must stand is the inerrancy of scripture. "The real chasm is between those who have bowed to the living God and thus also to the verbal, propositional communication of God's inerrant Word, the Scriptures, and those who have not" (77). He warns of a new wave of neo-orthodox evangelicals, not just those in liberal denominations, who are abandoning Biblical absolutism. Evangelicals have become worldly, he says, because of their accommodation of the spirit of the age, their refusal to engage the enemy while their freedoms, based upon the Christian consensus inherited from the reformation period are slipping away.

My only critique of this book is that I wonder whether Biblical inerrancy is in fact the "real chasm" or the

ONLY chasm, the only watershed issue. Aren't there plenty of Christians who believe every word of the Bible or at least claim to, including all that it says about history and science and morality, and yet still do not take the fight to the enemy? I think there are far too many Christians who just lack vision. They are sheep without shepherds. They don't work together and do courageous things because no one is out in front saying "forward!" Or perhaps even though there are a few of these leaders who have a vision for American Christian life, people are just too distracted, too focused on making money or trying to drag their spouse to counseling or whatever it may be.

QUOTES I LIKE:

"When the memory of the Christian consensus which gave us freedom within the biblical form is increasingly forgotten, a manipulating authoritarianism will tend to fill the vacuum. At this point the words 'right' and 'left' will make little difference. They are only two roads to the same end; the results are the same. An elite, an authoritarianism as such, will gradually force form on society so that it will not go into chaos--and most people will accept it" (23).

"The primary battle is a spiritual battle in the heavenlies. But this does not mean, therefore, that the battle we are in is otherworldly or outside of human history. It is a real spiritual battle, but it is equally a battle here on earth in our own country, our own communities, our places of work and our schools, and even our own homes.... In the realm of space and time the heavenly battle is fought on the stage of human history" (25).

"There is only one perspective we can have of the post-Christian world of our generation: an understanding that our culture and our country deserves to be under the wrath of God. It will not do to say the United States is God's country in some special way. It will not do to cover up the difference between the consensus today and the Christian consensus that prevailed sixty years ago. The last few generations have trampled upon the truth of the Bible and all that those truths have brought forth" (29).

"But do we really believe that we are in a life and death battle? Do we really believe that the part we play in the battle has consequences for whether or not men and women will spend eternity in hell? Or whether or not in this life people will live with meaning or meaninglessness? Or whether or not those who do live will live in a climate of moral perversion and degradation? Sadly, we must say that very few in the evangelical world have acted as if these things are true. Rather than trumpet our accomplishments and revel in our growing numbers, it would be closer to the truth to admit that our response has been a disaster" (32).

"Then in the mid 1930s, there occurred an event which I would say marks the turning point of the century concerning the breakdown of our culture. By 1936 the liberals were so in control of the Northern Presbyterian Church that they were able to defrock Dr. J. Gresham Machen.... It was the culmination of a long trend toward liberalism within the Presbyterian Church and represented the same trend in most other denominations" (35).

"Many who left [the mainline liberalizing denominations] broke off all forms of fellowship with true brothers in Christ who had not left. Christ's command to love one another was destroyed. What was left was frequently a turning inward, a self-righteousness, a hardness. The impression often was left that coming out had made those who departed so right that anything could then be excused. Having learned such bad habits, they later treated each other badly when the resulting new groups had minor differences among themselves" (75).

"Some people think that just because the United States of America is the United States of America, because Britain is Britain, they will not come under the judgment of God. This is not so" (90).

"Jesus cannot be said to be Savior unless we also say he is Lord. And we cannot honestly and rightly say he is our Lord if he is only a Lord of part of life and not of the totality of life, including all the social and

political and cultural life" (91).

Jayson says

The final book Schaeffer wrote, and the capstone to all his other writings, this book gives a sobering view to where the world and the church are headed. Being published over thirty years ago, it would appear his predictions are spot on. Great work!

Jason Garwood says

It's good. He sounded the alarm, what will we do?

Linda says

By chapter 3, I'm convinced that Francis Schaeffer has predicted America's current struggle against totalitarian rule as a safeguard against the breakdown of anarchy, resting on the shaky foundation of no-rules-is-good and my-feelings-trump-all.

By the end, I was convinced that his bigger point of speaking the truth IN love, without compromising either, was more important. If our country falls, it falls. That would be tragic, but not as much as the church becoming a corrupt and vampirish shadow of its true nature as Christ's spotless bride. A country's stand for or against God does much to predict its rise or fall in the world, but there won't be countries in heaven. People will be there - or not.

Wrote a blogpost with a fuller review: <http://reformedfiction.blogspot.com/2...>

Jonathan Wylie says

This book I wish I would have read 10 years ago. Accommodation to the world is truly a great disaster. This is what I have been trying to fight for the last 10 years but did not have the words or even the concept of how to do it. It is simple: The Word provides us with absolute Truth. We cannot bend from this at all. This should be a must read on everyone's bookshelf in my opinion.

Laura Verret says

This was an excellent book addressing the problems of pluralism and worldliness in the modern evangelical church.

"It does seem to me that evangelical leaders, and every evangelical Christian, have a very special

responsibility not to just go along with the "blue-jean syndrome" of not noticing that their attempts to be "with it" so often take the same forms as those who deny the existence or holiness of the living God."

Lorna says

Absolutely incredible book! Here's an excerpt from it, one of many really good parts! This is in the opening chapter titled: What really matters?

(Talking about the commands to Love God and Love your Neighbour etc.):

"And the other half of what really matters is to love your neighbour as ourselves. The two go together, they cannot be separated. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets." BECAUSE we love the Lord Jesus Christ and know him personally as our Saviour we MUST, through God's grace, love our neighbour as ourselves. And if we love our neighbour as Christ would have us love our neighbour, we will certainly want to share the gospel with our neighbour; and beyond this we will want to show forth the love of God in ALL our relationships with our neighbour. But it does not stop here. Evangelism is primary, but it is not the end of our work and indeed cannot be separated from the rest of the Christian life. We must acknowledge and then act upon the fact that is Christ is our Saviour, he is also our Lord in ALL of our life. He is our Lord not just in religious things and not just in cultural things like the arts and music, but in our intellectual lives, and in business, and in our relation to society, and in our attitude toward the moral breakdown of our culture. Acknowledging Christ's Lordship and placing ourselves under what is taught in the bible includes thinking and acting as citizens in relation to our government and its laws. Making Christ Lord in our lives means taking a stand in a very direct and practical way against the world spirit of our age as it rolls along claiming to be autonomous, crushing all that we cherish in its path." Also another GREAT quote: "to be really bible believing Christians, we need to practice, simultaneously, at each step of the way two biblical principles. One is that of purity of the visible church. scripture commands that we must do more than just talk about the purity of the visible church; we must actually practice it, even when it is costly. The second principle is that of observable love a,one all true Christians. In the flesh we can stress purity without love or love without purity; we cannot stress both simultaneously. To do so we must look moment by moment to the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Without that, a stress on purity becomes hard, proud, legalistic; likewise, without it a stress on love becomes sheer compromise. Spirituality begins to have real meaning in our lives as we begin to exhibit simultaneously the holiness of God and the love of God. We never do this perfectly but we must look to the living Christ to help us do it truly."
