

Schaeffer Lecture 1

January 30, 2023

1A: Course Overview

Objectives

Course outline:

- (1) Schaeffer's life and works (60%)
- (2) book reports (15%)
- (3) critiques of Schaeffer (20%)
- (4) implications and applications (5%)

Weekly schedule, assignments, quizzes; spring break

Canvas for Teachers

Grading policy

Extra credit opportunities

Supplemental *required* reading

Bibliography with suggested reading; web links (audio and video)

Teacher bio/background

Why Schaeffer?

Teaching philosophy and expectations

Book reports:

- Randy—*Death in the City* (qualifies for EC)
- Ely—*The Church Before the Watching World* (no EC)
- Leland—*The New Super-Spirituality* (no EC)
 - presentation format and expectations
 - points of emphasis: context; overview; general critique, e.g., best/worst arguments

Comprehensive Final Exam

1B: Schaeffer's Hobby Horses

Schaeffer as a polarizing figure. *Three types of people*. A life lived in full view of the public—subject to intense scrutiny.

What makes Schaeffer tick?

- evangelical—reaching the lost by answering serious questions (apologetics as a path to the gospel—“pre-evangelism”)
- passionate defender of truth in an age of humanism
- a thinker and a generalist with broad interests (not an academic specialist; consequently difficult to categorize/compartmentalize); intensely curious; *eclectic* and *iconoclastic*; naturally confrontational and controversial;
- “all things to all men”—adapting himself to the understanding of the audience
- not inclined to entertain his critics; not interested in public debates
- a man of enormous energy and considerable intellect; distinguished himself in his studies after conversion
- “a man for his times”—one who many regard as a modern prophet: one who understands the times and warns both church and culture
- our goal is not *imitation* or *duplication*, but extension: how do we take up where he left off?

Some recurring themes in Schaeffer's life and work:

- Inerrancy in all that the Bible teaches (history, science, etc.)
- modernist-fundamentalist controversy: “old” liberalism vs “new” liberalism (neoorthodoxy)
- separatism—coming out from liberal churches and seminaries
- integration of all of life: doctrine and practice; all spheres of life including all of “culture”
- truth and love: there can be *truth* without love, but not *love* without truth

- God as infinite and personal; Eastern gods are *impersonal*; Roman gods are *finite*
- constant theme of contrasting the *infinite personal God who is there* to the material-energy chance view of final reality
- fallen man's true moral *guilt*—not just guilt *feelings*
- the necessity of preaching apostasy and judgment
- “reformation” through the *Word of God* and “revival” through the *Spirit of God*; neither one alone is sufficient
- the idolatry of personal peace and affluence (PP&A)
- “the compassionate use of wealth”

- “the finished work of Christ”—living in the reality of our justification
- the present reality of the imperceptible supernatural realm
- reliance upon the Spirit in all aspects of his ministry
- demonstrating love through forgiveness and reconciliation

- the sanctity of human life and the battle against abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia
- children's ministry
- racism and ethnic discrimination (all men of equal value in the sight of God)
- an amazing array of influences: he was intimately familiar with the “cultural thought-forms”
- interest in philosophy (from a young age—when he first realized it asked the right questions but didn't have any answers)
- the *flow* of philosophy through the institutions; the Enlightenment as the proximal source of humanism: rationalism leading to mysticism (Existentialism); the “upper story leap”
- science (especially as it bears on man and nature)
- art (especially the visual arts)
- “hot” versus “cool” communication—rich with content, not manipulation; hence his inventive use of language: true truth, mannishness of man, brute facts, modern-modern science, etc.
- “taking the roof off” of the unbeliever's worldview; showing that no man can live consistently with an unbelieving worldview
- calling on the world to examine our life and doctrine
- form/freedom balance (with strong leanings toward individual freedom and a healthy fear of tyranny)
- the “integration point” between particulars and universals; Christians' failure to see connections between issues and battles; fragmentation: knowledge without understanding and without discernment
- the loss of Christian consensus and the rise of secular humanism with its inevitable effects: “mathematical certainty”
- the *inevitability* of civil disobedience in a humanistic culture; God does not intend for man to live under tyranny (such tyranny represents the replacement of God with the state); persecution as the consequence of loyalty to Christ

Apologetics after Schaeffer: Where are we today?

- Has despair turned to *resignation*? (Albert Camus—there is nothing left but the question of suicide)
- Nihilism has brought us a purposeless existence that is both boring *and* pointless.
- The Protestant *work* ethic has become the Progressive *entitlement* ethic (reward without effort).
- “Identity politics” is adding to the despair—people are not finding the answer there.
- Today's “progress” looks a lot like self-destruction.
- Earth worship makes man *worse* than nothing. Man is a *plague* that must be destroyed.
- Our “modern modern” apologetic may require posing the questions and providing the answers.
- Schaeffer: “I know who you are.” We must recover the dignity of man created in the image of God.