

# Lessons from Church History (Part 2)

## WEEK 16: Lessons from Modern Evangelicalism

### Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984)

- Francis August Schaeffer was born on Jan 30, 1912 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Raised in a blue-collar working-class home of German & English ancestry, he learned the value of hard work from his parents. However, it was his intellectual effort that would characterize his legacy in the Church.
- In late summer of 1930, when he was 18 years old, Schaeffer attended a revival and was converted to Christ from his previous self-proclaimed agnosticism.
- In 1935 Schaeffer graduated with honors from Hampden-Sydney College and married Edith Seville, who was the daughter of missionary parents serving with China Inland Mission.
- Schaeffer enrolled at Westminster Theological Seminary and studied under J. Gresham Machen and Cornelius Van Til, then followed Dr. Carl McIntire to Faith Seminary in Delaware.
- Schaeffer pastored Presbyterian churches over the next 7 years, then in 1945 he went to Europe, visiting churches to learn their situations following the war. In 1948 his family moved to Switzerland, beginning 30+ years of Christian missions and activity in Europe.
- In 1951, Francis Schaeffer experienced a crisis of faith, brought on by the challenges of evangelizing people of a different culture and who'd seen their world destroyed by two wars. He emerged three months later from his "hayloft experience" with a new stronger belief in the reality of the Christian faith, rooted in the revelation of God in the Bible.
- In 1955, Francis and Edith founded the community L'Abri ("the Shelter") in the Swiss Alps. Due in part to their daughters' experiences in college, the Schaeffers began to evangelize and minister to students from diverse backgrounds from all over the world – atheists, Buddhists, liberal Christians, Roman Catholics, Hindus, agnostics. Based on the conviction of delivering "true truth" with an extraordinary balance of love, Schaeffer was fiercely opposed to relativism in all its forms.
- Schaeffer thought the best apologetic method was presuppositional, meaning it is impossible to navigate any meaningful discussion as though God does not exist, when in reality He does. He had an uncanny sense of the disconnect between what a person espouses as belief versus how they lived. No matter how bold a person's declaration that life is meaningless and there is no God, their lives betray a deeper awareness.
- Schaeffer was a remarkable student of the arts and he traced the rise and decline of Western Civilization as being connected to the abandonment of truth (falling below The Line of Despair), with tragic consequences observed in philosophy, to art, to music, to theology, and within culture as a whole. His *Trilogy* - consisting of *The God Who is There*, *Escape From Reason*, and *He is There and He is Not Silent* – best expresses his Christian worldview and sets the foundation for his other books, as he stated "All the others fit into these as spokes of the wheel fit into the hub."
- Diagnosed with cancer in 1978, Schaeffer felt he accomplished more in the last 5 years of his life than he had before cancer. He was influential in evangelicalism and beyond by exposing countercultural ideas for what they are – non-rational escapes leading to nothing but despair.
- "Christianity provides a unified answer for the whole of life" – Francis Schaeffer

# Lessons from Church History (Part 2)

## R. C. Sproul (1939-2017)

- Born in Pittsburgh, PA. Offered a baseball scholarship at the University of Pittsburgh but turned it down to go Westminster College on an athletic scholarship to play basketball and football.
- Received BA in Phil. from Westminster College in 1961; his MDiv. from Pittsburgh Theological seminary in 1964 where he was mentored by John Gerstner. He pursued doctoral work for a year at the Free University of Amsterdam under G. C. Berkouwer.
- RC first met his wife Vesta Voorhis when he was in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and she was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. He said to himself he was going to marry that girl someday. RC inscribed "RC + VV" on all the trees near his house, even though early on she had no interest in him.
- RC's father had a stroke and became incapacitated, and his speech was slurred. RC had to help him move around the house. Eventually he died in their home. He was 53. RC was 17.
- In 1957, during his first year at Westminster College, RC was converted by reading Ecclesiastes 11:3: "If a tree falls to the north or to the south, in the place where the tree falls, there will it lie." It illustrated the truth of James 1:18.
- At this time, RC and Vesta were dating seriously but she going to a college 4 hours away. She visited him and he took her to a prayer meeting where she trusted Christ. They were later married in 1960.
- Afterward, had a second "conversion" when he was compelled to go the college chapel late one night where he was overwhelmed by God's presence, described in *The Holiness of God*.
- After graduating from Pittsburgh Theological seminary, Sproul taught at a variety of institutions, but grew bored with it. He was more excited about teaching adults. In 1971, he founded Ligonier Valley Study Center modeled after Francis Schaeffer's L'Abri Fellowship.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> video series they produced was *The Holiness of God*. They also produced *Tabletalk Magazine*.
- In 1973, Sproul held a symposium on the inerrancy of Scripture with a host of international scholars including J. I. Packer, John Warwick Montgomery, John Frame, and John Gerstner. The battle over inerrancy heated up after Harold Lindsell published *The Battle for the Bible* in 1976.
- In 1977, Sproul spear-headed the formation of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. It produced the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy including 19 articles of affirmation and denial. It galvanized the most important evangelicals across the world.
- The *Renewing Your Mind* radio broadcast started in 1994. The first episodes were the audio version of *The Holiness of God*. The book came out in 1985.
- In 1994, Sproul was embroiled in the Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ETC) controversy sparked by a document produced by Chuck Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran turned Catholic. It pitted men like J. I. Packer and Bill Bright against Sproul, D. James Kennedy, and John MacArthur. In 1996 Sproul and James Montgomery Boice produced the Cambridge Declaration in response which reaffirmed the five *solas* of the Reformation.
- In 1995, he edited the *New Geneva Study Bible* (revised in 2005 as *The Reformation Study Bible*).
- In 1997, Sproul became the pastor of St. Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, FL where he served for the next 20 years. They began construction on a new building in 2001 and it was completed in 2009.
- In 2005 Sproul had a stroke which compromised his health but didn't keep him from his schedule.
- In 2011 Sproul started the Reformation Bible College.
- Sproul preached his last sermon on Heb. 2:1-4 on Nov. 26, 2017. His final sentence was this: "So I pray with all my heart that God will awaken each one of us today to the sweetness, the loveliness, the glory of the gospel declared by Christ." On Wednesday he got a severe cold that incapacitated him for the next several days. He went to the hospital on Saturday where he remained for two weeks before he died. His tombstone reads: "He was a kind man redeemed by a kinder Savior."