

The Great Evangelical Disaster

By Francis A. Schaeffer

The evangelical world has been celebrating the 50th anniversary of the beginning of L'Abri in Switzerland by Francis Schaeffer. At his prime, in 1984, he wrote a book called *The Great Evangelical Disaster: 1934-1984* (Published by Crossway Books) in which he traced out the downgrade in evangelicalism in the fifty years preceding 1984. How similar to Dr Lloyd-Jones were his convictions. These are some of the things Schaeffer said in what was one of his most important books.

"Make no mistake. We as Bible-believing evangelical Christians are locked in a battle. This is not a friendly gentleman's discussion. It is a life and death conflict between the spiritual hosts of wickedness and those who claim the name of Christ. It is a conflict on the level of ideas between two fundamentally opposed views of truth and reality. It is a conflict on the level of actions between a complete moral perversion and chaos and God's absolutes. But do we really believe that we are in a life and death battle?" (31, 32).

"Do you understand now what the battle is about in the area of culture and ideas? In the last sixty years the consensus upon which our culture was built has shifted from one that was largely Christian (though we must say immediately it was far from perfect) to a consensus growing out of the Enlightenment: that is, to a consensus that stands in total antithesis to Christian truth at every point- including the denial of the supernatural; belief in the all-sufficiency of human reason; the rejection of the fall; denial of the deity of Christ and his resurrection; belief in the perfectibility of Man; and the destruction of the Bible. And with this has come a nearly total moral breakdown. There is no way to make a synthesis of these ideas and Christian truth. They stand in total antithesis," (35,36).

"Here is the great evangelical disaster - the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. There is only one word for this - namely accommodation: the evangelical church has accommodated to the world spirit of the age. First, there has been accommodation on Scripture, so that many who call themselves evangelicals hold a weakened view of the Bible and no longer affirm the truth of all the Bible teaches - truth not only in religious matters but in the areas of science and history and morality. As part of this, many evangelicals are now accepting the higher critical methods in the study of the Bible. Remember, it was these same methods which destroyed the authority of the Bible for the Protestant church in Germany in the last century, and which have destroyed the Bible for the liberal in our own country from the beginning of this century. And second, there has been accommodation on the issues, with no clear stand being taken even on matters of life and death" (37).

"Within evangelicalism there is a growing number who are modifying their views on the inerrancy of the Bible so that the full authority of Scripture is completely undercut" (44).

"Unless the Bible is without error, not only when it speaks of salvation matters, but also when it speaks of history and the cosmos, we have no foundation for answering questions concerning the existence of the universe and its form and the uniqueness of man. Nor do we have any moral absolutes, or certainty of salvation, and the next generation of Christians will have nothing on which to stand" (46).

"What the Bible clearly teaches about the limitations placed upon divorce and remarriage is now put by some evangelicals in the area of cultural orientation. They say these were just the ideas of that moment when the New Testament was written" (59).

"Do we not have to agree that even much of the evangelical church, which claims to believe that the Bible is without error, has bent Scripture at the point of divorce to conform to the culture rather than the Scripture judging the present viewpoints of the fallen culture? Do we not have to agree that in the area of divorce and remarriage there has been a lack of biblical teaching and discipline even among evangelicals?" (63).

"It seems to me that by the end of the 1930's almost all the major Protestant denominations in the United States came under the control of those holding liberal theological views, and that now in the 1980s those denominations not dominated by liberal theology in the 1930s are in the same place of decision as the others were in the 1930s. It should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church now also has many in the hierarchy, many theologians and teachers, called progressives, who are existential theologians who believe and teach the same things as the existential theologians in the Protestant churches do, but using traditional Roman Catholic, rather than Protestant, terms" (80).

"Let us again go back to the Presbyterian struggles of the thirties when true Christians did not remember to keep this balance. On the one hand, they waited far too long to exert discipline, and so they lost the denomination, as did the Christians in almost every other denomination. On the other hand, some of them treated the liberals as less than human, and therefore they learned such bad habits that later, when those who formed new groups developed minor differences among themselves, they continued to treat each other badly" (85).

"Discipline had not been consistently applied by the faithful men of the church. The church was able to discipline Dr. Briggs in the 1880s, but after that faithful men waited too long. Though they had achieved one outstanding victory, after that first burst of discipline they did nothing, until it was far too late. Discipline in the church and in our Christian organizations - as in the family - is not something that can be done in one great burst of enthusiasm, one great conference, one great anything. Men must be treated in love as human beings but it is a case of continual, moment-by-moment care, for we are not dealing with a merely human organisation but with the church of Christ. Hence, the practice of the purity of the visible church first means discipline of those who do not take a proper position in regard to the teaching of Scripture" (86).

"The socialist mentality as promoted by Evangelicals for Social Action and others, and endorsed by much of the evangelical world, is based upon a double error. First and foremost it is wrong theologically, fundamentally distorting the meaning of the gospel. But it is equally wrong in its naive assessment of the redistribution of wealth and its consequences. The answer is not some kind of socialistic or egalitarian redistribution" (113).

"Unilateral disarmament in this fallen world, especially in the face of aggressive Soviet materialism with its anti-God basis, would be altogether utopian and romantic. It would lead, as utopianism always has in this fallen world, to disaster," (129).

"The world spirit of our age espouses an extremely strong and subversive feminist view which teaches that the home and family are ways of oppressing women; that personal fulfillment and

career must come before one's marriage and the needs of children; that housework and child care are demeaning; that it is a waste of one's talents to be a full-time homemaker" (134).

"If we accept the idea of equality without distinction, we logically must accept the ideas of abortion and homosexuality. For if there are no significant distinctions between men and women, then certainly we cannot condemn homosexual relationships. And if there are no significant distinctions, this fiction can be maintained only by the use of abortion-on-demand as a means of coping with the most profound evidence that distinctions really do exist" (136).

http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?812

It should not be assumed that any statements of fact or of opinion appearing on this website have been approved by or represent the views of the Trust, its Trustees or employees.