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# Francis Schaeffer's Relevance to Contemporary Apologetics

## ABSTRACT

*Thirty-five years have elapsed since the passing of evangelist/apologist Francis Schaeffer. He has been criticized by many but lauded by more. He was one who could not escape the ire of his own son, but one thing remains true: he has touched more people than one could count. His legacy as a gentleman evangelist remains and a number of aspects used in his apologetics approach that came so naturally for Schaeffer can not be emulated even three and a half decades after his death. The context in which Schaeffer taught and lived in the tumultuous sixties and seventies were not so different than the context in which we live today. Culture has largely abandoned Christianity and hedonism is one of the hallmarks of (post)modern culture. We might find a resurgence of spirituality in the twenty-first century but we discover that this spirituality is largely based on personal experience and preference. We are called to confront this culture that has abandoned the truth and is steeped in a materialism and consumerism that have somehow been made part and parcel of the spiritual experience of those living in the twenty-first century. In this regard, in order to be most effective, our apologetic task must be biblical, reasonable, relational, conversational and incarnational.*

**Keywords:** Apologetics, incarnational, postmodern, reason, Francis Schaeffer, fundamentalism, worldview

## 1. Introduction

After the Enlightenment, in the Age of Reason, Western Europe slowly began to move away from the Christian principles it had stood upon for so long. Now looking at the twenty-first century, the influence of Christianity in Europe has come to an all-time low, and the European assumptions have now fully reached the North American continent. The post-Christian sentiments of Canada reflect the European tendencies far more than the religious position and attitudes of her counterpart south of her border in the United States. Throughout the tumultuous years of the twentieth century some have continued to stand firm and continued the work of apologetics against disbelief, scepticism, blatant atheism and liberal theology. One such man was the American Francis Schaeffer, whose apologetic impetus still has clear relevance in the twenty-first century.

Although the deterioration of Christianity in Europe began much earlier, the decline of Christian influence reached its zenith in the twentieth century. Liberal theology and the progression of postmodern thought that started in the nineteenth century with liberal Protestant David Strauss, German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach and Nietzsche caused, in large part, the erosion of Christian influences that had stood the test of time for centuries. In the theologically and religiously turbulent years of twentieth century America, Francis August Schaeffer was born on January 30, 1912 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Although he never explicitly promoted a particular doctrinal viewpoint, educationally Schaeffer was very much influenced by great Reformed thinkers such as Gresham Machen and Cornelius Van Til, who acquainted him with neo-Calvinist greats such as Abraham Kuyper. Schaeffer never considered himself a scholar, but his Reformed scholarly influences certainly coloured his apologetic method that has often been dubbed "presuppositional". However, it was distinctly different from that of his mentor and teacher Cornelius Van

Til. It can be said that Schaeffer took his specifically Reformed apologetics to the masses—students who were disenchanted with Christianity and those who were seeking hope amidst the chaotic culture of the 60s and 70s. The American evangelist/apologist enjoyed a wide audience and still to this day has numerous admirers. Francis Schaeffer brought the Christian intellectual mind out of the doldrums of fundamentalism, and as Mark Edwards (1998:193) confirms, “Schaeffer became one of the leaders in the resurgence of evangelical intellectual endeavor.”

Some have argued that Francis Schaeffer’s apologetics can only be appreciated in the context in which he lived because of his heavy emphasis on reason. As Barry Hankins (2008:235) suggests in his work *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, “The weakness of Schaeffer’s apologetic was that he consistently over-emphasized the power of human reason to lead to correct conclusions about ultimate matters.” For this particular reason Schaeffer’s apologetic method has little effect in a postmodern context, according to Hankins; this essay will assert that the contrary is true. After carefully investigating Schaeffer’s work pertaining to the task of apologetics, we can come to the conclusion that, besides his emphasis on reason, more important aspects such as love, lifestyle and community are present in his apologetics, making it applicable to a postmodern audience. Additionally, for his valiant attempt to underscore and submit all aspects of life under the dominion of Christ, Francis Schaeffer remains extremely relevant in a postmodern context.

## 2. Francis Schaeffer in context

Theologically, twentieth-century America was mired in a war between Christian conservatives and liberals who questioned the applicability and the relevancy of the Christian religion in contemporary America. Nancy Murphy (1996:1) affirms, “American Protestant Christianity is often described as a two party system. The division between ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’ is a deep one, and often marked by acrimony and stereotypes.” As today, the question was asked how we could interpret the Scriptures in light of modern science and whether the Christian religion still had relevancy in contemporary twentieth-century culture. As in postmodern culture, scriptural interpretation was often dictated by the prevailing cultural mind-set of the time. Christian theology of the twentieth century was firmly influenced by a modernism that was characterized by German higher criticism and German philosophy. The influences took to task the authoritative nature of Scripture and the supernatural aspects of the Christian faith, together with Christian doctrines, such as salvation, which were seen to be in need of re-interpretation.

Gresham Machen (1923:69), professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in the early twentieth century, states in his work *Christianity and Liberalism*, “Modern liberalism has lost sight of the two great presuppositions of the Christian message—the living God and the fact of sin. The liberal doctrine of God and the liberal doctrine of man are both diametrically opposite to the Christian view.” Machen (1923:79) continues to explain that the aforementioned Christian presuppositions are clearly stated in the Bible, but when the authority of the Bible is questioned and denounced, the foundation of the Christian faith shifts as it did in liberalism. Whereas Christianity is founded upon the Bible, liberalism is founded upon “the shifting emotions of sinful man.” The authority of the Bible became the battleground of the war between conservatives and the liberals. Conservative Christians, such as Gresham Machen, reiterated the fundamentals of the Christian faith, which slowly turned into a movement that became known as “fundamentalism.” The fundamentalist movement was not without its pitfalls; one of its unintentional characteristics was its anti-intellectualism. Mark Noll has strong words about the state of intellectual endeavours within the evangelical movement and names fundamentalism as the culprit. Noll (1994:123) boldly states that “fundamentalism hurt the effort to use the mind for the glory of God and for a better understanding of the world he had made by indulging in new forms of anti-intellectualism.” Noll (1994:239) concludes in

his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* that the actual scandal of the evangelical mind is that "no mind arises from evangelicalism."

Amidst the theological wrangling, Francis Schaeffer began his educational career and, under the influence of his wife Edith Schaeffer, the daughter of missionaries to China, he went to Westminster Seminary, where he studied under Gresham Machen and apologist Cornelius Van Til; thus he became well acquainted with the fundamentalist movement. During his time at Westminster, the seminary was not without its own controversies and experienced a schism whereby a number of faculty members left to form Faith Seminary in Wilmington, Delaware (Hankins, 2007:17). The fundamentalist rhetoric became increasingly abrasive and Francis Schaeffer became more influenced especially by the likes of the most well-known militant fundamentalist Carl McIntire, who relentlessly attacked liberal theology and all things that reflected religious modernism (cf. McIntire, 1967:10-47). As Philip Yancy (1982:104-105) confirms, "Schaeffer followed the arch-fundamentalist Carl McIntire to the newly formed Bible Presbyterian Church and Faith Theological Seminary, and he continued his training amid controversy and doctrinal hairsplitting."

During the early years of Schaeffer's ministry he had a difficult time shaking the fundamentalist principles taught at Westminster Seminary and Faith Theological Seminary in the 1930s. As a fundamentalist missionary in Europe he discovered that the "nit-picking battles that McIntire and the Bible Presbyterians usually engaged in were insignificant in a European culture where young people were struggling with existentialism and other philosophies that were antithetical to a Christian worldview" (Hankins, 2007:18). Although tired of the fundamentalist hard-line rhetoric, this fundamentalist legacy remained and followed him like a dark cloud well after his passing in 1984 (cf. Frank Schaeffer, 2008:14, 116). Although Francis Schaeffer's theology was formed within the fundamentalist-modernist conflict of the early twentieth century, it can be said that he never really adopted the edgy, sometimes confrontational, attitude that seemed to be part and parcel of the fundamentalist movement of the twentieth century. The fundamentalist attitude of Schaeffer, however, expressed itself most noticeably in his battle for the inerrancy of Scripture.

When we closely examine the theology of Schaeffer we discover that, although he relentlessly held to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, he was surprisingly progressive in his Christian views, and his apologetic endeavours showed this progressiveness. As a matter of fact, Schaeffer on several occasions spoke out against the rhetoric and the anti-intellectualism of the fundamentalist movement. His own description of "fundamentalism" was non-threatening and non-problematic, but as Schaeffer (1984:96) attests, "the term *fundamentalism* took on a connotation for many people which had no necessary relationship to its original meaning." He (1984f:96) continues to explain in his work *The Great Evangelical Disaster*:

It [fundamentalism] came to connote a form of pietism which shut Christian interest up to only a very limited view of spirituality. In this new connotation, many things having to do with the arts, culture and social involvement were considered to be "unspiritual" and not a proper area of concern for the Christian. Spirituality had to do with a very narrow sphere of the Christian's life and all other things were considered to be suspect. Fundamentalism also, at times, became overly harsh and lacking in love, while properly saying that the liberal doctrine that was false to the Bible had to be met with confrontation.

Can Francis Schaeffer be counted among twentieth-century fundamentalists? Some might concur solely on the basis of Schaeffer's militant rhetoric in his cultural engagement later in his life. Barry Hankins reports that in 1982 the magazine *Newsweek* published an article titled "Guru of Fundamentalism" devoted to Francis Schaeffer. In the strictest sense of the word, Schaeffer was indeed a fundamentalist who adhered to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but to put Francis Schaeffer in the camp of fundamentalism would be going too far. In

the July/August 1984 edition of the *Fundamentalist Journal* Francis Schaeffer (1984g:50-51) wrote the article "The Practice of Truth: Fundamentalism as it should be" where he refrained from dismissing fundamentalism outright, but offered a corrective on a legitimate form of fundamentalism guided by love, which he found sorely lacking in the fundamentalist movement of early twentieth-century American evangelicalism.

This lack of love and true spirituality drove Francis Schaeffer to his own spiritual crisis. Francis Schaeffer experienced his own "dark night of the soul" in which he wrestled with his faith that he had held on for so many years. Although he might have admitted that his "first" conversion was an intellectual one (Hankins, 2007:16), his "second" conversion was far more existential. He retells his spiritual struggle that occurred while in Switzerland between 1951 and 1952 in his pamphlet *2 Contents, 2 Realities*. Schaeffer (1974:20-22) admits that he failed to see true spiritual reality among those who called themselves Christian. He felt the need to rethink the Christian teachings for their truthfulness, and after he came to realize that he had been right in becoming a Christian, he set out to re-examine his own spirituality and what it really meant to be a Christian. This experience shaped Francis Schaeffer's entire apologetics, for he came to know that becoming a Christian is not only an intellectual struggle, true as it may be, but also consists of an existential conflict.

Francis Schaeffer is best known for his work at L'Abri in Huémoz in the Swiss Alps. It was there that Edith and Francis Schaeffer met with intellectuals from Europe and other parts of the world. The Schaeffers not only confronted the intellectual questions of the day, but also met the physical needs of disgruntled youths. In all, for Francis and Edith Schaeffer, apologetics was not merely intellectual but must be viewed as a holistic effort. It was often the latter that left an indelible impression on those who visited L'Abri over the years. Barry Hankins (2008:63) explains, "True it [L'Abri] was a place where ideas and intellectual exchange were taken seriously, but L'Abri was not a place where people were simply argued into the Kingdom of God. Here they were also drawn in by Christian hospitality and love." Making Christianity intelligible and intellectually relevant in the latter part of the twentieth century convinced many, such as Os Guinness and Nancy Pearcey, to pursue successful academic careers (Hankins, 2008:63-73). Many of the questions that Francis Schaeffer was confronted with could still be asked today by many of our contemporary youths. What appealed to the twentieth-century existentialist sceptic was Schaeffer's broad interest from philosophy to art to environmental care that he brought under the Kingship of God. This holistic apologetic approach can still be appreciated today by the postmodern millennials who are educated and action-driven regarding social injustices and environmental exploitations.

The postmodern spirit of the age of twenty-first century contemporary culture has close affinities to the modern mind-set in which Francis Schaeffer was steeped. For that reason, the principles of Schaeffer's thought that expressed itself in his apologetic discussions are extremely relevant to an apologetic method employed in a postmodern setting. Schaeffer understood very well that, in order to know how to reach the contemporary culture, one must have a good perception of the prevailing presuppositions. Much of what Schaeffer observed from his surrounding modern culture can be applied to the postmodern culture, which is nothing but a ramped-up version of modernism. The ills of twentieth-century modernism seem to have germinated in twenty-first-century postmodernism, thus for that reason Francis Schaeffer's voice can, at times, be considered prophetic. For Schaeffer, cultural hermeneutic and thought form examinations are essential for a proper Christian apologetic, a sentiment that must be emulated by all contemporary apologists. In the foreword of *Escape from Reason* Francis Schaeffer (1970a:7) explains, "Every generation of Christians has this problem of learning how to speak meaningfully to its own age. If we are to communicate the Christian faith effectively, therefore, we must know and understand the thought forms of our generation." Here lies the attractiveness of Schaeffer's entire apologetic method.

One of the aspects that is compatible with Reformed and Calvinistic theology is the neo-Calvinist notion of an all-encompassing Christian worldview that is characteristic of Schaeffer's apologetic. In addition, the emphasis on human significance (humanity as created in the image of God) and our paradoxical state (great as God's creature yet lost because of the Fall), has affinities with Calvinism. Mankind as significant being, created in the image of God, stood out in Schaeffer's theology; it is the Christian message of meaning and love and the clarifying biblical worldview that Francis Schaeffer stressed, which makes his apologetic so relevant in the twenty-first century. Another aspect that cannot be ignored is the importance of "incarnational apologetics," the idea of the integrity of the messenger or the concern for authenticity in action. Schaeffer concerned himself as much with the authenticity of the message as he did with the authenticity of the messenger. In addition, Schaeffer called for an intellectual apologetic to give honest answers to honest questions, always characterized by love. Finally, although Francis Schaeffer encouraged a pre-evangelistic apologetic for individuals, he also emphasized a corporate Christian apologetic employed by the church that is marked by love.

### 3. Francis Schaeffer's Cultural Hermeneutics

Francis Schaeffer, more than any other apologist of his time, understood the importance of cultural awareness. He was not averse to reading or analysing the books of the time that were making an impact among young university students in Western Europe. He was acutely aware that he was living in a post-Christian world that had left the Reformation principles upon which it had stood for well over three hundred years. Schaeffer (1969:14) notes in his work *Death in the City*,

Men of our time knew the truth and yet turned away, turned away not only from the biblical truth, the religious truth of the Reformation, but turned away from the total culture built upon that truth, including the balance of freedom and form which the Reformation brought forth in northern Europe in the state and society, a balance which has never been known anywhere in the world before.

The reason we now live in a post-Christian society, according to Schaeffer (1969:58), is that we have turned away from the God who is there and the truth which He has revealed. Like the prophet Jeremiah, Schaeffer suggests that death resides in the post-Christian city, because the city has abandoned the love of her God and His propositional revelation, and stands, for this reason, under the judgment of God. He understood that one needs to be in tune with the thought patterns of secular society in order to grasp the needs of the people, and to therefore know how to bring the gospel to them in a way that is not only effective but also speaks to those who have abandoned the propositional truths of the Scriptures.

In a number of his works, Francis Schaeffer identifies his culture as "plastic" (Schaeffer, 1984c:385; 1970a:24; 1970c:1; 1984c:385). At times he is unclear in his precise definition of the "plastic culture," but he considers it an applicable term for a culture ruled by the New Bourgeois who are motivated by the two cardinal values of peace and affluence. Francis Schaeffer asserts (1970c:1) in the article "Shattering the Plastic Culture" in *His Magazine*, "Plastic is a good word here, for plastic is synthetic and has no natural grain or form." Schaeffer is also astute in his discernment and minces no words, pointing his finger at the church for their neglect and lack of recognition and, ultimately, for their accommodation to the surrounding culture that has lost its way. The characteristic of the plastic culture, according to Schaeffer, is the loss of "true truth," and the infatuation with new absolute freedom (Schaeffer, 1970c:1, 3). The new generation saw the pitfalls of this plastic culture and abandoned the values of their parents but had no base for their own beliefs. Schaeffer put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the evangelical church, who, "being so committed to middle-class norms, and often elevating these norms to an equal place with God's absolutes, have slid without thought into accepting the Establishment elite"

(Schaeffer, 1970c:8). Schaeffer expressed this sentiment in further detail in his book *The Evangelical Disaster*.

In this work, Schaeffer often accuses the evangelical of not standing for truth as truth, which results in accommodation to the world's spirit of the age (Schaeffer, 1984f:37). Although perhaps valiant in their opposition to the current culture, the hippies "hoped for something better though they have no reason for hope" (Schaeffer, 1970c:3). The generation that stood up against the values of personal peace and affluence adhered to by their parents had come of age but produced little change, sliding further into hedonism and narcissism. The current generation opposes the values they see in their parents and we can boldly proclaim, as did the students at Berkeley in 1964, that we are still living in a plastic culture. History will again repeat itself unless this generation returns to a scriptural foundation and recognizes the propositional truths as objective norms. Francis Schaeffer's warnings in the 70s and 80s still ring true in the twenty-first century, and additionally the call for an incarnational apologetic must still be heeded (Schaeffer, 1970d: 27-28, 31). The denial of objective truth and the assertion of absolute autonomous freedom must be addressed in order for this generation to hope for something better. Schaeffer (1990:152) warns, "We must prepare Christian young people to face the monolithic twentieth-century culture by teaching them what the particular attack in our generation is, in contrast to the attacks of previous generations."

#### 4. Francis Schaeffer's worldview and the Lordship of Christ

By teaching and preparing Christian young people, Schaeffer meant to make them aware of the thought-forms of the time and the presuppositions that animated them. It was his understanding that there was not only one particular area in culture that was under attack; all aspects of culture from philosophy and theology to the arts are affected by the lack of any real concept of truth or moral objective standard. Thus the notion of an all-encompassing worldview and the principle of Lordship in relation to all aspects of culture are essential elements of Francis Schaeffer's thought. Here we see the intellectual influence of neo-Calvinism on Francis Schaeffer, especially through his association with Hans Rookmaaker, who introduced Schaeffer to the Dutch neo-Calvinist Herman Dooyeweerd (Gasque, 2005:73-74). Schaeffer must have been familiar with the neo-Calvinist terminology used by both Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd through his education at Westminster, and especially through Cornelius Van Til, but never overtly applied the principles until after his acquaintance with Rookmaaker. Francis Schaeffer adopted the neo-Calvinist concepts of worldview and antithesis and applied these to his apologetic method and his exposition on the culture wars. Critics of Schaeffer's approach (cf. Mark Edwards, 1998:201, Barry Hankins, 2008:81-83) have objected to an apparent lack of clarity in his use of the "neo-Calvinist" terminology throughout his works. This is a valid critique, for nowhere in any of his works does Schaeffer actually refer to either Abraham Kuyper or Herman Dooyeweerd to credit them for the ideas adopted by him. Laurel Gasque (2005:99) reiterates this exact sentiment and asserts, "Schaeffer had the utmost respect for Herman Dooyeweerd, but he also admitted he had been virtually untouched by his formal philosophy." It is true that Schaeffer never slavishly followed a particular philosophy or theological viewpoint. Although he had his own theological outlook, he shied away from putting himself in a certain theological box; his overall theological/apologetic approach revealed his views nonetheless.

Schaeffer used the terminology indiscriminately throughout his work, without precisely defining the terms. He never felt that the terminology so familiar among neo-Calvinists, such as the concepts of worldview and antithesis, needed to be explained. Schaeffer's statement "I'm just making a point" (Hankins, 2007:15) is indeed a good indicator why Schaeffer was reluctant to communicate some of the details regarding the terminology he used throughout his writings; apparently he saw no need to give further comments and regarded his descriptions as adequate. It must also be taken into consideration that

Francis Schaeffer never meant to give philosophical treatises regarding his apologetic approach using neo-Calvinistic concepts, but always sought to emphasize the adequacy of the Christian worldview in juxtaposition to the humanistic worldview, in order to better understand the people he would come into contact with. Additionally, we must also take into consideration that the books that are available from Francis Schaeffer are transcribed lectures, so a thorough exposition on the terms used would not have been included.

## 5. The Lordship of Christ

Closely connected to the concept of worldview is the idea of the Lordship of Christ. In the January 1982 edition of *Moody Monthly* Francis Schaeffer (1982a:13) made an astute observation: "The basic problem of the Christians in this country in the last eighty years or so - in regard to society and in regard to government - is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals." The idea of unity was extremely important to Francis Schaeffer, and in his work *The Christian Manifesto* (1982b:19) he explains that Christianity was reduced to only a small isolated part of life and that "the totality of reality was ignored by pietistic thinking." This idea of unity in life and totality of reality became a driving force in Francis Schaeffer's thinking. This important facet of Francis Schaeffer's thought and theology is the concept he would later dub as "the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of life." Even here we detect the influence of neo-Calvinism, especially of Abraham Kuyper, on Francis Schaeffer. Although Schaeffer was not immediately explicit in his explanation of this particular concept, an overall sense of the Lordship of Christ applied to different topics can be recognized in all of Schaeffer's writings. It is not until Book IV of his complete works that he (1984d: 303-304) explains the importance of the Lordship of Christ:

Throughout all of my work there is a common unifying theme, which I would define as "the Lordship of Christ in the totality of life." If Christ is indeed Lord, he must be Lord of all of life—in spiritual matters, of course, but just as much across the whole spectrum of life, including intellectual matters and the areas of culture, law and government. I would want to emphasize from beginning to end throughout my work the importance of evangelism (helping men and women come to know Christ as Savior), the need to walk daily with the Lord, to study God's Word, to live a life of prayer, and to show forth the love, compassion, and the holiness of our Lord. But we must emphasize equally and at the same time the need to live this out in every area of culture and society.

Schaeffer has been criticized by some for his lack of clarity and the reason and meaning concerning the concept of "Lordship of Christ" in most of his work (cf. Mark Edwards, 1998:194). As well, the critique extended to his application of the Lordship concept to only social and ethical ethics such as the anti-abortion movement. Some might have assumed that Schaeffer "subordinated the Lordship idea to a conservative, unreflective political agenda" (Edwards, 1998:209). To the first charge we can only say that all of his works assumed the Lordship of Christ over all of life. Francis Schaeffer (1990:8ff; 230ff) is more than clear in his indication that his first works, *The God Who is There*, *Escape From Reason* and *He is There and He is Not Silent*, call for the Lordship of Christ in the arts, literature and philosophy. His later works emphasize the Lordship of Christ in the whole of life as a citizen, especially in the areas of law and government (Schaeffer, 1984b: viii). Already in his 1973 edition of his book *Art and the Bible*, Schaeffer devotes a section to the Lordship of Christ, where he asserts that this concept was relatively novel in Christian circles. He (1984b:376) notes, "Some years ago when I started to work out a Christian concept of culture, many people considered what I was doing suspect." He fully understood that if Christianity is really true it must involve the whole person; thus the charge of Edwards that Schaeffer is arbitrary in his approach must be dismissed.

To the second charge, we can say that Francis Schaeffer saw the protest against the pressing anti-biblical cultural agenda such as the pro-abortion movement as a natural outworking of his entire theological impulse driven by the Lordship of Christ over all of life. We can extrapolate from this that both allegations regarding the ambivalence of the Lordship of Christ are unfounded and that Schaeffer's commitment to the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of the life of the Christian, privately and corporally, is apparent. The reason for Schaeffer's seeming lack of refinement of definition in regard to the concept of Lordship could be that his emphasis had always been on the notion of Christian worldview, which assumes the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of life.

The impetus of the Lordship of Christ in all aspects of intellectual and artistic life, according to Schaeffer, lies in the fact that salvation does not only affect the spiritual condition but involves the whole person. Schaeffer (1990:224) asserts, "... there is redemption for the whole man ... There is real Lordship of Christ over the whole man." Thus true spirituality encompasses the whole person and subsequently all areas of life. Schaeffer (1990:156) notes, "True spirituality cannot be abstracted from truth at one end, nor from the whole man and the whole culture at the other. If there is a true spirituality, it must encompass all." True spirituality is characterized by the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of life, beginning with the whole person: the will, the mind, the emotions (Schaeffer, 1971:89). Schaeffer suggests that this has not always been a given; in the past, Christianity had created a false dichotomy (a dichotomy that is very much still present in contemporary evangelicalism), which had its roots in seventeenth-century Pietism under the leadership of P.J. Spener (Schaeffer, 1982b:18).

Pietism made a sharp division between the spiritual and the material, resembling ancient Platonic thought. Schaeffer (1982b:19) asserts, "The totality of reality was ignored by the pietistic thinking." The result was that Christianity shied away from any involvement in cultural and intellectual activities. Neo-Calvinism and Francis Schaeffer called for a renewed interest in intellectual life and stressed the Lordship of Christ over all disciplines and cultural activities. According to Schaeffer (1982b:19), "It is not only that true spirituality covers all of life, but it covers all parts of the spectrum of life equally. In this sense there is nothing concerning reality that is not spiritual." Francis Schaeffer brought a radical message to young people who were brought up with a "one-sided" spirituality and subsequently asked questions regarding Christianity's importance in the "secular" disciplines such as philosophy and the arts which were taught at the universities in both Europe and North America.

## 6. The characteristics of Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics

Since the death of Francis Schaeffer in 1984 his apologetic methodology has been scrutinized, criticized, analysed and lauded (cf. Morris, 1987; Burson & Walls, 1998; Follis, 2006). There has been the temptation to neatly fit Francis Schaeffer into an apologetic box and to attach labels to his apologetic methods. Schaeffer himself was reluctant to call himself an apologist and did not set out to formulate an apologetic method that could be applied "mechanically as a set formula" (Schaeffer, 1990:176). This study will not analyse Schaeffer's method as such but rather will focus on the aspects that fit well in a postmodern context. Schaeffer worked during a time when postmodernism was coming of age, thus much of his apologetic input is very much applicable in the twenty-first century. Stephen Wellum (2002:12) puts it more starkly and asserts, "Even though Schaeffer himself never used the term, he certainly anticipated and described it [postmodernism] long before its popular use."

Schaeffer was ground-breaking in several ways in that his apologetic "method" addressed a way of thinking he anticipated more than forty years ago and his apologetics focused far more on the well-being of the individual than on evidences presented to convince people of the truth of Christianity. Additionally, five distinctive features can be detected in Schaeffer's works that are effective for a Christian apologetic in a postmodern context. For that reason,

Schaeffer's apologetic can best be defined as a five-point apologetic method: biblical, reasonable, relational, conversational and incarnational.

However important these features are in Schaeffer's apologetic "method" there are other facets that colour Schaeffer's apologetic that must first be looked at. As already mentioned, some of the aspects that define Francis Schaeffer's apologetic thrust are his worldview thinking and his doctrine of the Lordship of Christ as applied to all aspects of life.

The biblical message that Schaeffer brings is more pertinent and relevant now than ever before. It is the message that on the basis of being made in the image of God we have personality and thus understand the possibility of true fellowship. Schaeffer (1972:49) notes, "We understand that because we are made in the image of God and because God is personal, both a personal relationship with God and the concept of fellowship as fellowship has validity." It is this news that Francis Schaeffer wanted to convey to the students at L'Abri, and it is this message that the apologist needs to bring to the postmodern audience. In order to do that most effectively we do well to take Schaeffer's "five point apologetic" method seriously.

## 7. The five-point approach of Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics

Many have tried to pigeon-hole Francis Schaeffer into a particular apologetic camp (cf. Morris, 1987). Schaeffer was very adamant not to attach any particular apologetic label to himself. Jack Rogers (1977:12-13) recounts a story in which a student began with a statement, "since you are a presuppositionalist, rather than an evidentialist..." to which Schaeffer replied, "I am neither. I'm not an evidentialist or a presuppositionalist. You're trying to press me into the category of a theological apologist, which I'm really not. I'm not an academic, scholastic apologist. My interest is in evangelism." Additionally, some have bemoaned Francis Schaeffer's use of reason and in so doing have placed him firmly in the modernist camp, relegating much of his apologetic impetus to the dustbins as irrelevant to the postmodern audience of the twenty-first century. Thomas Morris negatively critiques the terminology used by Schaeffer that seems to indicate rationalistic tendencies. He (1984:18) scathingly remarks, "The reader is almost led to imagine men formulating syllogisms and proof lines over lunch."

Francis Schaeffer was not averse to using evidences and invited Christianity to seek verification; it is also true that he used presuppositions in his apologetics. We must remember that Schaeffer also believed that there is not a particular apologetic method that meets the needs of all people, or "a set formula that could be applied mechanically" (Schaeffer, 1990:176). Contrary to Morris' assumptions, Schaeffer knew all too well that it is impossible to argue people into the body of Christ, that "the attainment of a full Christian belief-set is a major conversion experience involving the totality of the person" (Morris, 1987:119-120). Schaeffer unapologetically contends that the conversion experience never occurs short of an act of God's mercy (Schaeffer, 1990:176). To understand and appreciate Schaeffer's Christian apologetics we must also look at Francis Schaeffer the man. When we look at his character and his holistic approach we detect an evangelist who is concerned for the well-being of the person he is conversing with rather than for winning an argument. Not underestimating the rational aspect of Christianity, other aspects come into play when presenting a more holistic apologetic method to a contemporary audience. The five aspects most important in Francis Schaeffer's apologetic are, firstly, the centrality of the Bible; secondly, the reasonableness of the Christian faith; thirdly, the importance of cultivating and nourishing relationships; fourthly, the conversations he was able to have with those who struggled; and lastly, the demonstration of the Christian life that served to show the truth of the Christian faith.

## 8. Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics is Biblical

It cannot be denied that the foundation for Francis Schaeffer's apologetics has always been the Bible. All through his writings he shows the reasonableness of the Christian faith from a biblical standpoint; apologetics begins and ends with the truth articulated in the Scriptures. Schaeffer is convinced that the chaos in post-Christian Europe and North America began with the abandonment of the full view of Scripture (Schaeffer, 1984f:49). By that, Schaeffer meant the rejection of the Scriptures as infallible and inerrant, giving way to the abnegation of a strong view of absolutes (cf. 1984a:86-89; 1984d: 110, 328, 344). Schaeffer (1984f:48) contends that "only a strong view of Scripture is sufficient to withstand the pressure of an all-pervasive culture built upon relativism and relativistic thinking."

Schaeffer's view of Scripture might draw the ire of many postmodern theologians regarding the inerrancy and propositional nature of Scripture (cf. McLaren, 2011:33ff; Raschke, 2004:123ff), but he staunchly defended the Bible's ability to communicate propositional truths concerning all areas of life. In this aspect, Schaeffer has also been accused of violating the basic rules of biblical interpretation: a passage must be understood in its context (Rogers, 1977:16). Rogers recounts Calvin's assertion that God's speech is an accommodation and that even those of slight intelligence should understand that God's speech is like a nurse's speech to an infant (Calvin, 1960:121). Jack Rogers claims that Schaeffer disconnects the Scriptures from culture, saying that he wants to fit biblical assumptions into a contemporary setting where they do not belong, or to allow Scripture to speak into areas where it has very little to say, such as in science and history. In some ways, Schaeffer's views on Scripture, the inerrancy conflict in particular, show remnants of his fundamentalist leanings.

Although Schaeffer can be accused of a too literalistic interpretation of Scripture, his main concern was always to stress the relevancy of Scripture to a modern culture. William Edgar (2013:85) adds, "His [Schaeffer's] central apologetic concern is that we do not dichotomize the Bible's message as being true only in the religious sphere while fallible in the realms where science and history can verify its claims." Schaeffer is convinced that God chooses to communicate clearly because he cares for his human creation and on the basis of the link between God's personality and ours we are able to grasp the propositional truths that God communicates in Scripture (Edgar, 2013:87). Contrary to Roger's accusation, Schaeffer realizes that we must approach the Bible as fallen creatures and so are not able to know more than we are actually given. Schaeffer (1984a:52) explains, "Wherever it [the Bible] touches upon anything, it does so with true truth, but not with exhaustive truth. That is, where it speaks of the cosmos, science, what it says is true. Likewise, where it touches history, it speaks with what I call true truth—that is, propositional, objective truth."

Additionally, because of the propositional nature of the Bible, the Scriptures are rational. Schaeffer asserts that we, as autonomous people holding to our own presuppositions, are unable to provide the answers to our dilemma. Because the Bible is a coherent whole providing the answers to the whole unified field of knowledge, Christianity is reasonable and rational and thus its apprehension does not require a "Kierkegaardian" leap in the dark. As well, "not only the things of the cosmos and history match up, but everything on the upper and lower stories matches too: grace and nature; a moral absolute and morals; the universal point of reference and the particulars, and the emotional and aesthetic realities of man as well" (Schaeffer, 1984a:120). For this reason, the centrality of the Scriptures in Schaeffer's apologetics becomes clear: only the Bible as a unified whole is adequate to provide a unified answer to the reality in which we as modern people find ourselves.

## 9. Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics is rational

As we saw above, Francis Schaeffer was never averse to the rational aspect of apologetics. He (1984a:163) states, "Christian apologetics must be able to show intellectually that Christianity speaks of true truth." He never saw Christianity as anything but a rational

and reasonable religion that could be defended using rational arguments. It would be inconceivable for Schaeffer to neglect that aspect of his apologetic method, for it was his position that rationality only concerns the possibility to reason (Schaeffer, 1990:183). Much like Pascal, Schaeffer accepted the use of rationality but abhorred the rationalist who "is someone who thinks man can begin with himself and his reason plus what he observes, without information from any other source" (Schaeffer, 1990:183). In other words, it is autonomous reason that Schaeffer argues against. Schaeffer never proposed that autonomous reason could even comprehend or grasp the truth without the aid of the Holy Spirit (Schaeffer, 1984a:270). He did assert a balance between the work of the Holy Spirit and human responsibility, however. We are unable to find the final answers by means of finite reason alone, but, at the same time, we cannot be regarded as a zero either.

The balance that Schaeffer speaks of is "man's responsibility to be humble enough to give up his or her autonomy to bow to the adequate answers" that are ultimately given to him through the work of the Holy Spirit (Schaeffer, 1984a:185). It is the task of the apologist to give reasonable and rational answers to those who ask. That task can never be separated from the work of the Holy Spirit. In his work *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History*, Schaeffer (1984b:272) affirms the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian in the midst of an apostate culture, saying, "The Holy Spirit will be Christ's agent in us—producing a dynamite-power so we can witness to this rebellious world." Reasonable and rational arguments cannot be discarded in the task of apologetics, for "we, in love, looking to the work of the Holy Spirit, must reach down into that person and try to find where the point of tension is" (Schaeffer, 1984a:135). It is love in the power of the Holy Spirit that drove Francis Schaeffer's apologetic. Thus Thomas Morris' (1987:43) critique that rationality and reason motivated and directed Schaeffer's apologetics is wrongheaded, for the reason that it is exactly Schaeffer's love that made him evade mechanically formulated arguments. However important rational arguments may be, they must always be wedded to the relational, conversational and incarnational aspects of apologetics. Once rational arguments are taken in isolation and are separated from the relational, conversational and incarnational, apologetics is nothing but an academic exercise that leaves the unbeliever unmoved.

## 10. Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics is relational

One of the hallmarks of Francis Schaeffer's apologetics is his desire to develop relationships with all those he would come in contact with. It is clear that without relationships any presentation of the case for the Christian faith falls on deaf ears. As a matter of fact, for the Schaeffers, relationships were the driving force at the L'Abri Centre. It is in Edith Schaeffer's book *The Tapestry* that we gain a glimpse of the vital work and the valuable relationships Francis and Edith Schaeffer made. The relationship between the Schaeffers and the students that walked through the door of the L'Abri centre took precedence over the conversations that would undoubtedly follow. Harold Brown (1986:26) glowingly compares Schaeffer to Athanasius as the defender of the truth and recalls, "In Schaeffer's case we know the rigor of his convictions was always tempered with love and understanding in person-to-person relationships as well as in public debates." Edith Schaeffer (1981:499) recalls her husband's work and contends that "Francis Schaeffer never had time to 'sit in an ivory tower' thinking up answers to possible questions ... he gave answers to real people with whom he had real discussions." These discussions followed after cultivating real relationships, and Edith Schaeffer was a vital part of that endeavor; cultivating relationships happened to be a family affair. Chuck Colson and Timothy George (2012:45) recall, in their article titled "Flaming Truth," that L'Abri was far more than a study centre; as a matter of fact, "Francis and Edith Schaeffer demonstrated the power of persuasive hospitality lived out in community."

His entire apologetic method was driven by compassion for every person whom he saw as created in the image of God. It was only after having cultivated a genuine relationship with

the unbeliever that he was able to talk to them. According to Schaeffer (1984a:180), "If we love people enough, and we have compassion enough, we can usually find ways to talk to them, no matter how deep in the well they are." He warns us not to give the sceptic or the unbeliever a pre-packaged answer but instead to show the compassion of Christ, so that we can take the person where he is and step into his world in order to have a meaningful conversation with him (Schaeffer, 1984a:177).

Francis Schaeffer was extremely sensitive to the feelings of the person he was talking to. Instead of bombarding unbelievers with evidences that might point to the reasonableness of Christianity, we must move them away from the logical conclusions of their position. At this particular point we must be aware that this is not a game we are playing or merely an intellectual exercise. Schaeffer (1990:138) stresses that as we push unbelievers or sceptics off their false balance we must be able to feel that we care for them. Christian apologetics must involve the well-being of the person we talk to, regardless of the belief system they may hold to. In a postmodern pluralistic setting we must emulate Francis Schaeffer's care for those we encounter and build relationships with those of different faiths or spiritual interests before we are able to have a meaningful and spiritual dialogue with them. Burson and Walls (1998:154) contend, "Only then will the truly closed person open up to the intellectual and existential potency of the Christian faith." Closely connected to the relational aspect Francis Schaeffer promoted in his apologetic method is the fact that apologetics must be conversational.

## 11. Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics is conversational

Postmodern philosophers, pastors and theologians (cf. Penner, 2013; McLaren, 2001; Raschke, 2004) have abandoned apologetics for a variety of reasons but the main grounds for disapproval seems to be a lack of integrity and amicableness when dealing with unbelievers. Myron Penner (2011:77ff) in his book *The End of Apologetics* recalls an incident between an atheist and an apologist that was less than cordial, pointing out that, ultimately, apologetics is futile at best and un-Christian at worse. To disregard apologetics entirely because of incidents like these would be wrongheaded. A more irenic approach must be taken which has the well-being of the unbeliever in mind; thus a more conversational tone needs to be employed. Francis Schaeffer (1990:139) points out that the purpose of our apologetic conversation is "not to make them admit we are right in a superior way and push their noses in the dirt, but to make them see their need so that they will listen to the gospel."

We can appreciate McLaren's (2001:16) assertion as well, who claims, "Good evangelists are people who engage others in good conversation about profound topics such as faith, values, hope, meaning, purpose, goodness, beauty, truth, life after death, life before death and God." David Clark in his work *Dialogical Apologetics* explains the importance of dialogue in the context of relationship (Clark, 1993:116). Like Schaeffer he promotes an apologetic that is audience-centred, which tends to avoid a particular method and adopts varied strategies for different persons. Clark (1993:99) suggests that the way we do apologetics must be re-evaluated in order to avoid the conception that there exists a perfect system of assertions that will prove the Christian faith once and for all. Francis Schaeffer would agree, and employs the Pauline assertion "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Schaeffer avoided the use of any particular apologetic method because he did not believe that there was any apologetic method that would meet the need of all people. He warned Christians not to build a safe house to live in, but he urged Christians to be "in the midst of the world as both witnesses and salt, not sitting in a fortress surrounded by a moat" (Schaeffer, 1990:175). To be in the midst of the world, for Schaeffer, meant to build meaningful relationships and to deal with people with genuine love. He (1990:177) asserts, "If we are to deal with people where they are, we have got to have enough genuine love for them and concern, as a human being, that we would take seriously what they are preoccupied with."

Dialogue has become a religious buzz-word, especially in light of inter-faith relationships. Within ecumenical circles, inter-faith dialogue involves conversations that have capitulated to the cultural pressures of inclusivity. Rev. Ariaraja of the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka epitomizes this exact sentiment and contends, "One of our sins in the past has been to absolutize the Christian religion and theology, implying that the other religions were false, or at any rate 'not true'" (Ariaraja, 1997:40). Dialogical apologetics, as David Clark has labelled his approach, or conversational apologetics in a more Schaefferian fashion, abhors this kind of discourse and calls for conversations that present the case for Christianity, by the Spirit's power, with rational force, cultural appropriateness and personal sensitivity in the context of relationships (Clark, 1993:122).

Although apologetic conversations are to be laced with love, they must avoid the mistake of accommodation and must unapologetically stand for the truth; apologetic conversations must be compassionately confrontational. Francis Schaeffer (1984d: 110) affirms, "Truth carries with it confrontation. Truth demands confrontation—loving confrontation, but confrontation nevertheless." Schaeffer understood full well that the truth communicated to the unbeliever must not merely be a dogmatic statement of the truth of Scripture, but rather the truth of the external world and of the nature of humanity. Not unlike Calvin's and Pascal's approach, Schaeffer's order of apologetics began with accentuating the nature of human lostness and the answer to it (Schaeffer, 1990:140). Because Schaeffer's emphasis was centred on the relational aspect, he recognized the difficulty he might put his conversation partner in; thus he asserted that when we move people towards the logical conclusions of their presuppositions they must always feel that we care for them. In our conversations, we must remove the shelter, or as Schaeffer calls it, "take the roof off," in order to "allow the truth of the external world and of what man is to beat upon him" (Schaeffer, 1990:140). Again, Brian McLaren is, in this regard, very much in line with Francis Schaeffer when he declares, "The evangelist is never coercive, pushy, combative; rather, she is patient and gentle like a midwife, knowing that the giving of life takes time and cannot be rushed without potentially lethal damage" (McLaren, 2001:30).

Although we can applaud McLaren for pointing out the conversational tone, he departs from Francis Schaeffer in regard to content. The goal of apologetics is for the unbeliever to understand that his system has no answers to the crucial questions of life and to ultimately give him the answers to these questions. The answers, according to Schaeffer, centre on the truth of Scripture. He emphasizes in his pamphlet *2 Contents, 2 Realities* that if we are to meet the need of our age the content of our conversations must be clear in doctrinal content concerning the elements of Christianity (Schaeffer, 1974:7).

For Brian McLaren content is secondary: the content of the Christian faith must be re-interpreted in light of the cultural needs in the twenty-first century. Doctrinal content capitulates to make Christianity relevant to the contemporary audience. Conversations, according to McLaren, are necessary, as a call to action to the prosperity crisis, equity crisis, security crisis and spirituality crisis (McLaren, 2011:253-254). However commendable this may be, Christian action can never be divorced from the biblical truth of the gospel and must ultimately be grounded in the truth of the Scriptures. The content we convey in Christian apologetics must be uncompromisingly and unapologetically biblical, but cannot, and, must never be, just conversational but must also be resolutely practical. To emphasize one over the other would misrepresent Francis Schaeffer's entire apologetic impulse.

## 12. Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics is incarnational

Besides the relational and conversational facets of Schaeffer's apologetics, the practical or incarnational aspect of Schaeffer's apologetics has often been neglected when assessing Schaeffer's apologetic method. Schaeffer's aim was to remove apologetics from the "ivory tower" and bring it to the level where people were at, both intellectually and practically.

Thus to judge Schaeffer merely on intellectual grounds would be a mistake. We can agree with Ken Harper, who is convinced that we can only understand Schaeffer as a prophet and an evangelist and not as a pure scholar. His intent was not to create an apologetic method but rather to call an apostate culture to repentance (Harper, 1976:140). Harper (1976:140-141) explains, "Schaeffer denounces a Christ-less culture, shows its emptiness, holds out the gospel as a viable alternative, and encourages a loving lifestyle that will convince others."

In assessing the incarnational aspect of Schaeffer's apologetics we can deduce three main aims of his L'Abri ministry that have proven vital and highly effective for those who spent time with the Schaeffers. These goals can be summed up as follows: (1) to build relationship with whoever walked through the doors of the L'Abri chalet, (2) to conduct meaningful spiritual conversations with those who were seeking answers, and (3) to demonstrate the Christian truth in community. Edith Schaeffer (1972:5) in her work *L'Abri* states it well:

The work of L'Abri has two inter-related aspects. First there is the attempt to give an honest answer to honest questions—intellectually and upon a careful exegetical base ... The second aspect is the *demonstration* that the Personal-Infinite God is really there in our generation. When twentieth-century people come to L'Abri they are faced with these two aspects simultaneously, as two sides of a single coin.

As can be deduced from the above quotation, Schaeffer was convinced that the demonstration of the truth cannot be divorced from the reasonable and intellectual explanation of the biblical content. Schaeffer (1970d: 28) sums up this vital combination well when he states, "[I]f we must first speak Christianity with a clear content and an emphasis on truth we must also practice that truth, even when it is costly." In other words, truth is not only important when we convey the message of Christ to the unbeliever, but the practice of truth bears as much, if not more, weight to our apologetics. Abraham Kuyper (1980:52) also states this: "What one confesses to be the truth, one must also dare to practice in word, deed, and whole manner of life." Prophetically, Schaeffer (1974:12) makes this clear in *2 Contents, 2 Realities* where he asserts, "It will not do in a relativistic age to say that we believe in truth and fail to practice that truth in places where it may be observed and where it is costly." Francis Schaeffer repeatedly accentuated a balance of true content in conversation and true content in demonstration; both are needed for an effective Christian apologetic. Conversation alone will be ignored, and demonstration alone will lead to cultural accommodation only to remain relevant to a sceptical postmodern audience. Schaeffer (1990:165) contends, "The final apologetic, along with the rational, logical defence and presentation, is what the world sees in the individual Christian and in our corporate relationship together."

What is most important to Schaeffer is not so much our individual incarnational apologetic that may or may not appeal to the sceptic, however important this may be, but the relationship that we demonstrate within the Christian community. In his book *The Mark of the Christian* Schaeffer makes abundantly clear that the final apologetic concerns the unity of the church, referencing the high priestly prayer as recorded in John 17 (Schaeffer, 1984d:190-191). Having the most eloquently presented air-tight argument will not do, as Schaeffer (1984d:190) affirms:

If the world does not see this down to earth practical love, it will not believe that Christ was sent by the Father. People will not believe only on the basis of the proper answers to their honest questions. The two should not be placed in antithesis. The world must have the proper answers to their honest questions, but at the same time there must be a oneness in love between all true Christians. This is what is needed if men are to know that Jesus was sent by the Father and that Christianity is true.

For Schaeffer, then, incarnational apologetics is not only an enterprise conducted by individual Christians but Christian apologetics must be embraced corporately; it must begin and end with the true content of biblical Christianity demonstrated through observable love within the Christian community.

After a mere glance at bookshelves in Christian bookstores, and having casual conversations with millennials disenchanted with the church, one can discover quite quickly that the millennials and those of Generation Z imbued with postmodern philosophy have strong opinions regarding the way the gospel has been presented and defended in the last fifty years. Sam Eaton (2016), a millennial blogger, bemoans the church's discrepancies between the time spent on Bible studies and Christian church activities, and spending times "serving the least of these." Millennials are action-driven and call for a more relational incarnational Christianity, which not only speaks to those who have turned their back on the church but also gives Christianity credibility among those who do not believe (Eaton, 2016).

Francis Schaeffer would agree with much of what the millennials have to say, and would admit that a corrective is needed. However, he would also give proper balance to the critique levelled against the church. Although an incarnational apologetic and an authentic Christian life are imperative to making a difference in our culture, the rational defence cannot be neglected. This rational aspect has created hostile responses from the postmodernist, but, according to Schaeffer, we cannot neglect it from apologetics; however, it can never be divorced from the other aspects of apologetics such as the relational, conversational and incarnational. The combination of the rational, relational, conversational and incarnational aspects of apologetics that Schaeffer promoted proved to be compelling to a modern audience and still has bearing on the postmodernist of the twentieth-first century.

### 13. Conclusion

It is difficult to deny the influence of Francis Schaeffer's apologetic approach on the twentieth-century intellectual ethos in North America. In spite of all the criticism he received from influential scholars, the legacy of Francis Schaeffer lives on well into the twenty-first century. Intellectuals like Donald Williams (scholar at Toccoa Falls College), Os Guinness and Nancy Pearcey continue to draw on Francis Schaeffer's assumptions. Neo-Calvinist thinking, especially regarding the issues such as presuppositions, worldview and the Lordship of Christ, popularized by men like Kuyper and Dooyeweerd, ran deep through Francis Schaeffer's apologetics, a man who brought these aspects of Christian thought into a broader intellectual context. All of these matters are again brought to the fore in a postmodern context by neo-Calvinist philosophers such as James K.A. Smith. Smith suggests that postmodernists like Derrida agree with Christian thinkers such as Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Van Til and Schaeffer, who all assumed that "ultimately religious presuppositions govern our understanding of the world." The point can be made here, regardless of how we read Smith's interpretation of postmodern thinkers, that Francis Schaeffer and other thinkers who influenced him are still part of the conversation in philosophical circles in the twenty-first century. It can be argued that the reason for Schaeffer's continued popularity is that he defied the fundamentalist trend of the twentieth century and stood as an exception to the prevailing mind-set that evangelicalism was anti-intellectual.

Some regard Schaeffer as a prophet (Yancey, 1982:104) and in many ways this is true (although he would probably abhor having been assigned this label). He was a cultural interpreter who made it his life's mission to understand the *zeitgeist* of the culture in both Europe and North America. Additionally, Schaeffer focused his apologetics to show that the modern presuppositions could only lead to nihilism; that Christianity was the only answer to the meaninglessness of (post)modern thought. The beauty of Schaeffer's apologetic is that he presents the Christian message reasonably and intellectually and that he continually

keeps his focus, not on the argument itself, but on the well-being of the whole person. In this regard, Francis Schaeffer remained true to the words of Paul the apostle, who told the church in Colossae, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person" (Col. 4:5-6).

The danger of apologetics has always been the accommodation of Christian doctrine to the prevailing mind-set of the culture. At times, apologists and theologians have fallen to the cultural pressures and have jumped on the postmodern bandwagon in order to remain relevant in a culture marked by tolerance and pluralism (cf. Gschwandtner, 2013:293; McLaren, 2011:207-224). In so doing they might have gained popularity among postmodernists but have ultimately called into question the authority of Scripture. Scott Burson and Jerry Walls (1998:253), in recognizing the dangers of accommodation, caution, "While there is certainly nothing wrong with understanding and engaging culture on its own terms and shaping our apologetics accordingly, this can easily slip into cultural accommodation." These words could well have come from Francis Schaeffer, who perceived the same dangers but who was unwavering in his biblical assertions, and remained steadfast in his defence of objective truth. It is true that objective truth may not be the most fruitful point of entry in an apologetic conversation, Schaeffer never soft-pedalled on this issue (Burson & Walls, 1998:253). In sum, Schaeffer, although he was an apologist in the latter part of the twentieth century and was raised and educated in an environment that was thoroughly modern, was well in-tune with the progression (or regression) from modernism into postmodernism. This cultural awareness can be seen in his assessment of postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault (Schaeffer, 1984a:251-254).

Schaeffer critiqued the modern intellectual ethos and saw the move from modernity into postmodernity especially in intellectual and creative disciplines well before evangelicalism caught on to its dangers that have come to fruition today. Not all agree that Schaeffer's apologetic is pertinent in a postmodern context. Barry Hankins (2008:237) suggests that Schaeffer "fought against postmodernism with the modern weapons of Enlightenment reason," and is therefore irrelevant to Christianity in the southern hemisphere where Western rationalism does not dominate. Hankins concludes that Schaeffer's apologetic method is deemed time-bound and relative only to his own particular context, thus not germane to a postmodern audience. We must conclude, however, that although Francis Schaeffer presented Christianity as a reasonable and rational religion, he rejected the Enlightenment emphasis on autonomous reason, and stressed the relational, conversational and incarnational facets of apologetics that deem him extremely relevant to a postmodern audience.

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