

Schaeffer Lecture 4

February 20, 2023

4A: 1938-1950

- 1938: after graduation and ordination, Fran's first call is at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Grove City, PA (BPC)
- Priscilla was 11 months old
- Covenant had only 18 adults and few children (parents sent their kids elsewhere for Sunday school)
- Edith cultivated the habit of praying while Fran preached—that the Spirit would work through his words
- Fran put his scouting skills to use by having hotdog roasts in the summer; he would round up kids in his Model A Ford
- Edith organized Vacation Bible School—about a hundred kids showed up; meanwhile their efforts at the local college were unfruitful
- Fran engaged everyone in the work of the church according to their gifts; he put a particular emphasis on prayer ministry
- in less than three years the church numbered more than a hundred and they dedicated a new building
- during this time Fran served as moderator for the Great Lakes Presbytery BPC
- 1940 Frank has a stroke; Fran and Edith return to Germantown and share the gospel; Fran's parents visit Grove City later in the year and present them with electric appliances: a washing machine and a refrigerator
- after three years, one of his elders encouraged him to move on (friendly or hostile?); Fran/Edith pray for a door to open

- 1941 receives a call as associate pastor from the church in Chester, PA (also BPC); they see it as an opportunity to be closer to their parents and friends at FTS
- Chester congregation has more than 500 members; working class neighborhood with all kinds of backgrounds in the church; Fran saw each one as having value
- May 1941 Susan born; Fran's Model A is replaced with a used Chevrolet; Pearl Harbor
- Fran had a soft spot for special needs children; he often prayed over the sick according to James 5:13-15, and in many cases healing was granted (including at least one case that was considered a terminal illness); he believed in using all of God's gifts including doctors and medicine
- 1942 organize a summer camp for all ages; more than a hundred turn out; Edith takes over the kitchen when the cook doesn't show up
- by 1942 Frank had become a Christian; he was impressed with the true value of the work of ministry and how Fran and Edith modeled genuine faith
- 1942 fall—air raid drills;
- 1942 winter—girls had chicken pox, whooping cough, and mumps (all in turn)
- they served in Chester less than two years; Fran was frustrated that the senior pastor was building beyond the means of the congregation

- June 1943 Frank died in the Lord but Bessie remained bitter
- 1943 called to BPC St Louis; Fran preached twice on Sundays and led prayer/Bible study Wednesday evening
- here they started the program that will later become Children for Christ; Fran develops an interest in international youth ministry
- the children's ministry started in their basement—training others to lead from their homes; soon they had 20 homes around St Louis that were hosting children's ministry
- C4C spreads to other churches but Fran limits it to those part of ACCC (American Council of Christian Churches founded by Carl McIntire in 1941 to oppose the National Council of Churches)
- Fran served on the ACCC board; started a local council in St Louis
- spent time in the museums around St Louis; later wrote *Art and the Bible* to encourage creative expression (1973)
- visited the zoo and took picnics during warm weather
- 1943 wrote a tract on antisemitism:
- “Let us note the command of God in Romans 11:31. It tells us clearly what our attitude in this age should be to natural Israel. We should have mercy unto them. And, my friends, mercy and anti-Semitism in any form do not live in the same household. We cannot seek to win them individually to the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour if we despise them as a people in our hearts.”
-
- May 1945 Deborah (just a few days before Germany surrendered)
- August 1945 atomic bombs dropped on Japan, ending the war in the Pacific
- Fran became active in the IBPFM (board meetings in Philadelphia); rekindled the desire for missionary work
- church wanted to help those recovering from war; returning soldiers; Christians in Europe
-
- by 1947 Europe is recovering from the war
- Fran takes leave to tour Europe and assess the state of the church; both ACCC and IBPFM are involved; Fran was the American Secretary, Foreign Relations Department, ACCC
- he went without a plan of where he would visit and whom he would see
- while Fran was in Europe Edith stayed with her sister Janet in MA; Elsa also comes to visit; the sisters enjoy their time together with each other and their children
- Fran arrives in France first, then goes on to Geneva; here he feels a strong connection to the Reformation
- 1947 Young People's Congress Oslo Norway; Visser't Hooft calls for driving out the grayheads so more churches would join the ecumenical movement; at the same conference Reinhold Niebuhr expressed a socialistic interpretation of scripture; modernism leaves Fran feeling lonely for Christian contact
- visits several other countries; before returning, stops in England and meets with DMLJ; he shared Schaeffer's concern for the WCC (World Council of Churches founded by liberals in 1948) and the negative tone of the separatists (in 1966 he would call evangelicals to leave churches belonging to WCC—which put him at odds with John Stott)

- October Fran returns to US but feels the pull of a call toward Europe; comes back with a greater appreciation for the connections in Christianity (but found that the church was in worse condition than he expected); by the time his trip is over, he is even more adamant about separating from liberals and bringing the true churches together; wanted to start an International Council to help unite Bible-believing churches
- returns exhausted—burnout—months of recovery
- late 1947 asked to return the following year for the launch of ICCC; IBPFM wanted Fran to do a speaking tour
- ICCC was to be an international extension of ACCC
- Edith was reluctant—didn't want Fran taken out of ministry and put into administration
-
- 1948 February left St Louis for Germantown; stayed with Bessie (which was a trying experience); Priscilla admitted to Philadelphia Children's Hospital for violent illness; the first doctor didn't help and her condition worsened; she was seen by a young pediatrician who diagnosed her with mesenteric adenitis requiring removal of her appendix; the doctor who treated her was C. Everett Koop; he had only recently been converted under the ministry of Donald Grey Barnhouse at Tenth Presbyterian Church
-
- 1948 August set sail for Holland
- Edith would later say "Our nomadic life had started"
- while in Holland Edith hastily worked on her typing and shorthand skills so she could serve as Fran's secretary
- during his time in Holland for ICCC, met and befriended Hans Rookmaaker; they became friends for life with their mutual interest in art and culture; Rookmaaker would later contribute to the production of *How Should We Then Live*
- Rookmaaker was a grad student at Free University of Amsterdam writing a dissertation on Gauguin; his then-fiancee Anky was a secretary in the ICCC office
- Sept: from Holland, the family proceeded to Lausanne, Switzerland via Belgium and France; they hired a French tutor and began learning the language;
- from this "home base" in Lausanne, Fran traveled through Europe speaking against Barth and liberalism, encouraging the churches and helping them start chapters of Children for Christ; the Rookmaakers would help translate C4C for use in Holland
- Fran spent part of his time studying churches and synods for possible admission to ICCC
-
- 1949 kids are sickly in their original boarding house; at the suggestion of their French tutor, for improved health, they rented a summer chalet in Champéry (Bon Accueil) and then found a permanent residence in the fall (Chalet des Frenes); whereupon they were finally reunited with their household belongings
- in Champéry—at the urging of their girls—they set up a chapter of Children for Christ in a predominantly Roman Catholic village
- first Christmas Fran invited to conduct a Protestant service in English; 150 came to that first service—including young people from England and Scotland; afterward, discovered that he could preach every week; continued to lead Christmas Eve services for 32 years
- after Christmas, went on a family ski trip in the Alps

-
- seeds of L'Abri were already sprouting in Champéry with an assortment of guests and intense discussions
- befriended a doctor who became the motivation for writing *Basic Bible Studies*; after two years the doctor was converted
-
- by this time Fran is writing articles; Feb 1950: "The Balance of the Simultaneous Exhibition of God's Holiness and Love" may have marked the beginning of the spiritual crisis that would flower the following year
- Fran's dual concerns about the separatism movement—there was on the one hand a sense of discouragement and on the other a sense of coldness
-
- 1950 trip to Dachau to teach VBS for children of American servicemen; later returned to Dachau to film part of *Whatever Happened*; Fran saw the connections between abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia
- lectured in France, Germany, Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark); the girls stayed in a boarding school while Fran and Edith took longer trips
-
- 1950 ICCC conference in Geneva (August)
- Schaeffer and Buswell met with Barth before ICCC, along with three others (Aug 19); the two-hour conversation was very cordial but Barth was elusive and hesitant; for Schaeffer, the meeting confirmed what he intended to say about the New Modernism
- at the end of the meeting Fran offered to send a copy of his address; Barth was receptive and Fran followed up with the paper and an offer to speak further; Barth's response was curt and dismissive
-
- Schaeffer ("The New Modernism"): "Calvin and Luther could speak with authority and clarity concerning the things of the Faith because their feet were fixed on the Bible as the Word of God, and therefore they had an objective, an absolute standard. The Modernist cannot speak with clarity or true authority because his basis of judgment is subjective. . . . Because these men work in the subjective realm, differences in doctrine are unimportant to them."
-
- Barth (personal correspondence): "Rejoice, dear Mr. Schaeffer (and you calling yourselves 'fundamentalists' all over the world!) Rejoice and go on to believe in your 'logics' (as in the fourth article of your creed!) and in yourselves as the only true 'bible-believing' people! Shout so loudly as you can! But, pray, allow me, to let you alone. 'Conversations' are possible between open-minded people [. . .]. Your paper and the review of your friend Buswell reveals the fact of your decision to close your window shutters. I do not know how to deal with a man who comes to see and to speak to me in the quality of a detective-inspector or with the behaviour of a missionary who goes to convert a heathen. No, thanks!"
-
- Nov attended "The Assumption of Mary" proclamation in Rome; Fran saw the same kind of changes taking place in RCC—by the 1960s *Vatican II* would reflect the influences of modernism in RCC

4B: HIT (all)

chapter 1 – metaphysical necessity

- this book addresses necessity of God's being there and not being silent in three aspects: **metaphysics** (being/existence), **morals**, and **epistemology** (knowledge)
- Sartre: the basic philosophic question is that something is there; no finite point has meaning except in relation to an infinite reference point
- behaviorism/determinism (e.g., Skinner, Crick): man is not personal; consequently, man has no free will and no moral responsibility
- **the nobility of man**—*he is fallen but he is still great*; to which the narcissist heartily agrees, since no one could possibly be greater than himself; in fact, he sees himself as God—completely autonomous (and this may be the most dominant “thought form” of our age)
- twofold dilemma: man is finite yet personal; man is noble yet cruel
- philosophy and religion have the same basic questions (being, morals, epistemology)
- philosophy with two meanings: let's call it capital-P Philosophy (the discipline) and little-p philosophy (worldview—i.e., *presuppositions*); every man is a philosopher (and we could add that every religion is a philosophy)
- Schaeffer's critique: “Our theological seminaries hardly ever relate their theology to philosophy, and specifically the current philosophy. Thus, students go out from the theological seminaries not knowing how to relate Christianity to the surrounding worldview. It is not that they do not know the answers. My observation is that **most students graduating from our theological seminaries to not know the questions.**”
- not many possible answers in the three areas of thought
 1. no logical answer—all is chaos; this is where we are today (and we could observe that Darwin helped us right along); and yet, the universe shows order and man must live within that order; those who hold this view are selective; if it were true we could not communicate;
 2. logical answers that can be communicated; (1) everything comes from “nothing nothing” not “nothing something” or “something nothing”; (2) alternatively everything came from something impersonal (“mass, energy, or motion”); but without a personal beginning there is no meaning in the particulars; all must come from “impersonal plus time plus chance”; “There are no other factors in the formula, because there are no other factors that exist.”; pantheism is not an explanation (in fact, “pantheism” is a connotation word that is better stated “pan-everythingism”); we end up with situational ethics; (3) lastly there is a personal beginning
- “There are not many basic answers to any of the great questions of life.”
- “If we begin with less than personality, we must finally reduce personality to the impersonal. . . the word *personality* is only the impersonal plus complexity.”
- “To have an adequate answer of a personal beginning, we need two things. We need a personal-infinite God . . . and we need a personal unity and diversity in God. . . . Christianity has this in the Trinity.”

- “Without the high order of personal unity and diversity as given in the Trinity, *there are no answers.*”
- without the Trinity, “we would have had a God who needed to create in order to love and communicate.”
- the Triune God is all-sufficient and in no way dependent upon his creation; he does not “need” the universe, or anything else
- Christianity is true to what is there: “when evangelicalism catches that—we may have our revolution.”
- the full answer must come from revelation
- “The infinite-personal God, the God who is Trinity, has spoken. He is there, and he is not silent. . . . We have the answer to existence.”

chapter 2 – moral necessity

- man’s estrangement from man is a moral problem
- “With an impersonal beginning, morals really do not exist as morals. . . . Everything is finally equal in the area of morals. . . . we cannot talk about what is really right and what is really wrong.”
- man has a feeling of “moral motions” but this is out of line with what is really there
- when it comes to finding a “point of contact” I have never yet encountered someone who is truly relativistic in regard of morals—everyone has “hot buttons” (in fact, they are getting hotter all the time)
- without a standard, right and wrong are never more than connotation words—we must see that there are only preferences, not moral absolutes
- example of Hinduism: no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty; I like Schaeffer’s use of these terms (more descriptive and less morally loaded than “right” and “wrong”)
- “statistical ethics”—based on some measure of what society prefers at each moment
- Marquis de Sade ethics: “what is, is right”
- parenthetically, what answer comes from Darwinism—if progress is merely “survival of the fittest”? are we back to Camus’ dilemma—hindering man’s progress by improving his chances for survival? (e.g., 19th century TB outbreak)
- how is the dilemma of cruelty explained? either man has always been cruel, or he was different at some point
- if God created man cruel, then God is cruel (Baudelaire); or if God created the world cruel, then we cannot fight against God (Camus)
- liberal theology: the irrational (mystical) answer is that we assume God is good against all reason and evidence
- two kinds of tension from irrationality: one in the direction back toward reason (which creates tension between *blind optimism* on the one hand and *rational pessimism* on the other); the other is to make everything irrational
- furthermore, if man has always been the same way (cruel) then there is no hope for a qualitative change (from bad to good)
- but if man has not always been this way, there is a possibility of real change
- if man changed, who changed him? if God, he’s still bad

- but if not God, man changed himself: “Man, by his own choice, is not what he intrinsically was. In this case, we can understand that man is now cruel, but that God is not a bad God.”
- if man was once good and then changed by his own choice, the dilemma of his cruelty is now a true moral problem and not merely metaphysical (i.e., a property of his being)
- four points follow:
 1. we can explain God’s goodness and man’s cruelty
 2. there may now be a solution to man’s moral problem; “In liberal theology, the death of Christ is always an incomprehensible god word.”
 3. we have a reason to fight evil: “I have a basis to fight the thing which is abnormal to what God originally made.”
 4. we have real moral absolutes
- Plato: unless you have absolutes, morals do not exist
- “It is God Himself and His character who is the moral absolute of the universe.”
- without the historic, space-time fall of man the answers to man’s moral dilemma do not exist

chapter 3 – epistemological necessity: the problem

- epistemology as the theory of knowledge—how can we know?
- Plato: there must be more than particulars in order to have meaning—hence the need for universals to join particulars into a unity
- “In learning, we are constantly moving from particulars to universals.”
- Plato’s solution: “ideals”
- in the area of morals, the Greeks tried to find an answer in society and in their gods; neither was sufficient
- nature and grace: “In nature you have the particulars; in grace you have the universal.”
- Aquinas brings back an interest in particulars, but grace gets eaten up—both in morals and epistemology
- da Vinci “was so far ahead of his time that he really understood that everything was going to end up only as a machine, and there were not going to be any universals or meaning at all.”
- with the rise of modern modern science, we end up with the idea of *positivism*—“a theory of knowledge which assumes that we know facts and objects with total objectivity. Modern ‘scientism’ is built on it.”
- Rousseau gives us the concept of “nature and *freedom*”—i.e., autonomy
- without universals, we have not only moral chaos but an epistemological dilemma: *how do we know reality from nonreality?*
- Kant and Hegel follow Rousseau and changed the concept of epistemology: antithesis is gone
- after Kierkegaard meaning is separated from reason; the “universal” is a mystical experience
- “Rationality, including modern science, will lead only to pessimism. Man is only a machine; man is only a zero, and nothing has any final meaning.”
- unlike the earlier form of mysticism, modern mysticism is *semantic mysticism*—there is nothing there
- Polanyi argues against positivism; as a philosophy it is dead but scientists keep on as if it were still there; it fails because it does not account for the observer’s presuppositions (he is never neutral); you can never be sure that anything is there, nor can you ever be sure you know it

- “Science cannot exist without an observer.”
- Popper: a thing is meaningless unless it is open to verification and falsification; no, sorry about that—you cannot verify anything, *you can only falsify it* (we agree with the latter statement—scientific “proof” requires omniscience—analogy to presumption of guilt)
- positivism therefore leaves one with *possibilities* and not *certainties* (this is the best science can do; we could call it contingent knowledge)—and if this is so (and we are sure that it is), then *science can never be a source of authority*
- Wittgenstein: there is only silence in the upstairs (meaning and morality)
- two antiphilosophies: *existentialism* (no rationality) and *linguistic analysis* (neither values nor knowledge)
- “Modern man has no categories to enable him to be at all sure of the difference between what is real and what is illusion.”

chapter 4 – epistemological necessity: the answer

- Heidegger and Wittgenstein: knowledge depends on language, but there is no one there to speak
- Christianity doesn’t have this problem: God has spoken about himself, history, and creation
- “God speaking gives the unity needed for the nature and grace dilemma.”
- “What I urge people to do is to consider the two great presuppositions—the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system and the uniformity of natural causes in an open system, in a limited time span—and to consider which of these fits the facts of what is.”
- if God made man as a “verbalizer” then “propositional revelation is not even surprising, let alone unthinkable, in the Christian framework.”
- “Science as we have known it is going to die. I think it is going to be reduced to two things: mere technology, and another form of sociological manipulation.”
- “The reason why the East never produced a science of its own is that Eastern thinking has never had a certainty of the objective existence of reality.”
- God interacts with the world that he has created, but usually by way of natural laws that govern cause-and-effect; miracles are rare events historically
- the dangers of sociological science: “More and more we are going to find them [scientists] manipulating science according to their own sociological or political desires rather than standing upon concrete objectivity.”
- we have a name for this: **The Science** (where the definite article disallows any dissenting view)
- we have seen this problem in spades over the course of centuries: e.g., demographic science, environmental science, psychology, sociology, “public health”. . .
- Carl Sagan as an illustration of manipulated science: “He mixes science and science fiction constantly”—which the media then presents to the public as factual information
- remember Sagan’s Credo? “The universe is all that is, or was, or ever will be.”
- the problem of knowing one another: people “are always trying to know each other, and all they find is a façade”
- how much worse is this problem with social media—where we’re expected to create a persona that is completely fabricated or else risk being ignored? what does it take to stand out from the crowd of your peers? and yet, how strong is the pressure to conform? (is this part of our social

dilemma? we are caught between expressing our unique individuality, and yet our identity gets bound up in some kind of group identity; we are groping for the “universal” in the sea of “particulars”)

- here I will suggest that social media is “trans”-formative: where we all pretend to be something different than what we are objectively
- Schaeffer uses the expression “wooden façade” but I prefer the analogy of *plastic*—it is not what it appears to be; it has neither strength nor substance
- the inward reality of man is the one made in God’s image: therefore we can say to the lost, “*I know who you are*”
- the universal of God’s law binds us inwardly and outwardly—and we must be aligning these to be more consistent
- my thought world is full of creativity because God made me to be creative, but I must know the difference between fantasy and reality; “As a Christian I have the epistemology that enables me not to get confused between what I think and what is objectively real.”
- concluding thought: identity is directly related to epistemology, for if I cannot know anything with certainty then I can never really know myself, either

appendix A – is revelation nonsense?

- the Bible is “a book in which the whole structural framework, implicitly and explicitly, is historic”
- scripture “repeatedly appeals to the history open to verification as a proof of the truth of what is given”
- Schaeffer’s argument is that people have given up the infallibility of scripture not because of careful consideration, but because they operate from the presupposition of “the impersonal + time + chance”