

**Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man & His Work**  
edited by Lane T. Dennis; Crossway Books,  
Westchester, Illinois, 1986; paperback, 237 pages.

Can one person really make a difference? Francis Schaeffer was such a person! He was unique. At once pastor, evangelist, apologist and activist, he invigorated evangelicalism. He left a legacy of thought as few other evangelical and Reformed leaders have.

Schaeffer has been misunderstood, caricatured, maligned and praised. He was not an academic specialist, nor did he claim to be. He saw his primary calling as that of an evangelist reaching out to troubled souls whom the Lord had sent to him in answer to prayer. He had a personal concern for individuals in need. I recall a L'Abri conference, which I had the privilege to attend. The crowd was large. Many were students. What struck me was Schaeffer's personal interest in the needs of individuals during the question and answer sessions. He genuinely tried to give "honest answers to honest questions." Schaeffer was not out to impress the academics but to bring the Gospel. His desire was to see the Lord honored in every sphere of life. He showed evangelicals how they had truncated the Gospel. He encouraged them to apply a Christian world and life view. He critiqued modern culture with bold and broad strokes, including the arts, philosophy and theology. He was a popularizer. He knew how to simplify complex issues. His aim was to communicate with the secular questioners. As a generalist Schaeffer has benefitted and influenced many. And generalists are still needed in our highly specialized society. We need thinkers who can give a comprehensive vision.

Schaeffer was a prophet, a fierce "defender of the foundations." He dared to take the consequences of his convictions. He did not care for the applause of man. As prophet he did not only expose the bankruptcy of secular thought but also warned against theological liberalism. He also affirmed the importance of biblical inerrancy. Whatever his critics may think of his theology, philosophy or methodology, I am sure that all can testify that he was man of integrity, who filled a crying need for an apologetic engagement with culture, philosophic trends and theological developments.

The book *Portraits* is essentially a tribute, a collection of 12 excellent essays by academic and personal admirers. The book is divided into two parts. Part one, "Knowing the Truth" treats Schaeffer's contribution to the various academic disciplines. The authors show his breadth of interest from art to law, from literature to politics, from theology to social action. Schaeffer often stressed that ideas have consequences. When you know the truth; you must do the truth. Part two, therefore, is entitled, "The Practice of Truth." The essays are written by friends and admirers whose lives have been touched by Francis and Edith Schaeffer. The variety of writers from such countries as Holland, Switzerland, the U.S.A., England and India show the trans-cultural nature of Schaeffer's work and his worldwide influence. The authors are appreciative of Schaeffer's ministry, but they don't attempt to canonize him. Constructive criticism is given. A chronology of the Schaeffers providing a helpful biographical overview is included at the end of the book.

Readers who are not familiar with the Schaeffers and L'Abri should obtain a copy of Portraits. It is an excellent introduction to Schaeffer's thought and ministry - must reading for all who seek a sound biblical perspective in our confused times.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer died of cancer on May 15, 1984 at the age of 72.

Johan D. Tangelder  
March, 1987