

Intro-

Francis Schaeffer's Death in the City (DITC) was his third published book in the United States with a copyright date of 1969. As with most of his books, Schaeffer based DITC on his recorded lectures, given at Wheaton College from September 30 to October 4, 1968. In the book's preface, Schaeffer urged readers to include The L' Abri Story (1969) with The God Who Is There (1968) and Escape From Reason (1968) and read the four books together. He said, "The work of L' Abri has become known for the way it brings historic Christianity into contact with twentieth-century man and his intellectual and cultural questions. But without the spiritual reality set forth in The L' Abri Story or without the constant exegetical and expository base of L' Abri, which is partially exhibited in Death in the City, L' Abri cannot be understood. We believe God has used all of these elements as a unity in the whole work. To separate them would destroy it, grieve the Holy Spirit, and sever the link with modern man." Schaeffer later said that He is There and He is not Silent would have been a better logical choice for the third book because of its emphasis on what we know and how we know it (Epistemology). Still, we have the books in the order they were published, and it seems good that Schaeffer dealt with history, philosophy, and culture to address man without the Bible first, then immediately present the biblical and exegetical basis for man's condition in DITC.

In the first two books, Schaeffer described how western culture had gradually changed from having a biblical base for its view of men and things. Although there were references and statements about Christianity, their primary focus was not a statement of biblical measure. In DITC, though, Schaeffer says in his very first sentence that "we live in a post-Christian world." This reference is the first use of "post-Christian" in his work. **Much of the book will answer what individuals, institutions, and orthodox Christians should have as a perspective in that light. He will address how we should view the post-Christian world and then function in it.**

I. Chapter One – Death in the City.

A. Schaeffer's Plan - To answer the following questions.

1. What should our perspective as individuals, institutions, and orthodox Christians be toward the post-Christian state of the world?
2. Schaeffer will assert a proposition about the basic need of the Christian church in our world.
3. Consider the coming proposition biblically in the context of Romans, Jeremiah, and Lamentations.
4. He will look at our contemporary situation and the perspective we need as Christians.

B. The proposition; the church in our generation needs three things.

1. The first two needs.
 - a. Reformation. This refers to a restoration of pure doctrine. This is a return to the teachings of Scripture.

b. Revival. This refers to a restoration in the Christian's life—a life brought into its proper relation to the Holy Spirit.

c. There cannot be true Revival without Reformation; there cannot be Reformation without complete Revival.

2. The third need.

a. Such a combination of Reformation and Revival would **need to be revolutionary**, not only referring to the liberal church but constructively revolutionary in the evangelical church.

b. At this point, Schaeffer simply says that a reformation and revival would be revolutionary regarding the liberal church and constructively revolutionary regarding the evangelical, orthodox church, too.

c. Schaeffer ends this introduction with a prayer that says, “may we be those who know the reality of both Reformation and Revival, so this poor dark world may have an exhibition of a portion of the church returned to pure doctrine and Spirit-filled life.

B. First biblical statement.

1. Romans 1:21, 22. Because when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God. They were not thankful but became vain in their reasoning.”

a. The Greek word is “reasoning.” So, it involves man's cognitive thinking instead of “imaginings.”

2. Man cannot consistently live in this position of vain reasoning, resulting in tensions.

3. The passage speaks of the Original Fall and any period afterward when men knew the truth and deliberately turned away.

4. He says that men of our time knew the truth (the Christian consensus) but turned away from the truth **and** the total culture that came from the truth. Here he includes the form and freedom that came from the Reformation.

C. First crucial question.

1. What should be our perspective as we acknowledge we are in a post-Christian culture?

a. There is only one perspective we can have of the post-Christian world. **Our culture and country are under the wrath of God.**

b. Romans 1:21 says that when they knew God, they didn't glorify Him as God. They weren't thankful but became vain in their reasoning. As a result, their foolish hearts were darkened. 1:18 also says that God reveals His wrath because men turned away from God.

c. **This is very significant at this time in our American history. Many patriotic Americans are working and striving to get America back on a sound footing, but**

these efforts focus on improving conditions without addressing root causes. As Schaeffer said above, many perspectives and actions are commendable, but few believe our country is under God's wrath.

d. We need to hear Schaeffer's message, even 50 years after its publication.

D. The message

1. Schaeffer will draw from the Biblical books of Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Romans as they parallel our day.

2. Schaeffer writes that true religion is a historical religion, and the history occurred in space and time. The Bible is meant to be read in its normal literary form.

3. Schaeffer (pg. 17) says not all that occurs in history is explainable by natural cause and effect or chance and that God has entered into significant history. He says, too, history must be partially a product of economic, military, and economic forces. **Schaeffer does not allow any forces to act independently of God or outside His rule.** It is just that God does not always or only act immediately into history but allows secondary means.

4. While we understand history as partly a product of natural forces, Schaeffer calls us back to understand the real existence of the holy, loving, infinite-personal God and that He works into true significant history.

5. In Lamentations 1, Jeremiah said that the city sat solitary when it was once full of people. It was once close to God but had changed because significant men turned away from God. The city was under siege, and there was death in the city.

6. In Lamentations 1 again, Jeremiah said that the betrothed of God had become filthy. She was filled with spiritual adultery and did not remember her last end.

7. The hallmark of the generation Schaeffer was addressing, the 1960s and '70s, is that they think no one is home in the universe. No one is there to love or comfort man.

8. Israel and Judah were under siege and were physically starving. In contrast, most modern people are not physically starving but have other longings, such as for intellectual answers, beauty, morality, or love.

9. But God has turned away in judgment.

10. The freedom the Reformation brought to our culture has eroded. Now we are living in a world seeking freedom without form. Instead, there is **death in the city!**

II. The Loneliness of Man

A. Not only is Modern Man hungry for the significance of love, beauty, meaning, and so on, but he is also yearning for an adequate comforter.

1. In Lamentation 1:16, Jeremiah said, "For these things I weep. . .because the comforter who should relieve my soul is far from me."

2. Schaeffer says that we quote from WSC Q. 1, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God.”
That is only half the answer, and we ought to finish with “and to enjoy Him forever.”
- B. Although ancient Jews turned to false Gods, Schaeffer says that modern, post-Christian man is worse off. The reason is that ancient Jews turned from God but still knew “something was there,” Modern Man denies any existence of “something there.”
 1. Modern man has no one home in the universe. Only a personal comforter can comfort Man, who is personal.
 2. The reason for the loneliness of ancient Jews and modern man is the same. Both have turned away from God.
 3. Not only is Man under judgment, but Lamentations 1:11, 16, 18, and 19 stress again that man is alone. He says, from Jeremiah, that man’s soul is unrelieved.
 4. We should have two reactions to this, to our culture turning away from God’s revelation and from God Himself.
 - a. First, Schaeffer says **we should weep**. Not only are individual men lost, but our culture is being destroyed.
 5. Second, we should realize that our culture was built on biblical Reformation thought. Significantly, the generation before Schaeffer is the one that turned away from Reformation truth and structure.
 6. Schaeffer is surprised at evangelical leaders of the 1950s and 60s who were surprised by cultural changes and said they should have predicted them.
 7. Schaeffer also says modern artists and writers understand there is death in the city.
 8. To this point, we have not asked what sort of death we are speaking of.
 - a. Are people dropping like flies on the street?
 - b. Are people disappearing from society and everyday life?
 - c. Schaeffer denies this is the case but says that the death of Man as Man is what is happening.
 - d. This death means that Man’s personality is gone.
- C. What should we say about our country?
 1. Schaeffer says that, of course, we should be thankful for our freedoms.
 2. we should also understand that without the Christian base, the death of Man will occur and become all-consuming unless we have Reformation in the church.
- D. Jeremiah would have told us, “you do not have the correct perspective. So instead of taking comfort in our liberties or the cultural benefits and accomplishments, we should weep.
 1. God “worked into history based on His character and judged ancient Israel, and He will do the same to our generation.”
 - a. Schaeffer identifies turning back to God as more than just affirming the correct doctrines.
 - b. Closing this chapter, Schaeffer says, “if we aren’t totally convinced that there is no other way, we are not ready for a Reformation and Revival.”
 - c. We cannot think there are other “final” answers elsewhere.

III. The Message of Judgment

- A. Schaeffer returns to the life and ministry of Jeremiah, who is called the “weeping prophet,” in the third chapter.
1. Schaeffer says the Christians must weep over the church and the culture because much of the church has turned from true Christianity. Culture has both gone its way, and the church has not done its work to warn it.
 2. Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, and we think he died in Egypt.
 - a. His life was not easy, and Schaeffer thinks Hebrews 11:36-37 may refer to Jeremiah as the one who was “sawn asunder.”
 - b. Jeremiah’s message was not easy either. First, he had to preach a negative message of judgment, then a positive message of salvation.
 - c. In Jeremiah 1:18-19, God warned Jeremiah that his message would not be well received, but he was not to let his opponents cause him dismay because God was with Jeremiah.
 - a. The message of a difficult ministry ahead is also meant for modern ministry, as well.
 - b. Jeremiah focused on several faults; merely external religion is inadequate, specific sins, the church was in general apostasy, and there was a tendency to look for meaning and safety apart from the true God.
 - c. They practiced their religion externally in the wrong way. Unfortunately, modern Christianity often does these same things.
 - d. Schaeffer says our generation has been “infiltrated by relativism and synthesis.” As a result, we use the term “apostasy” less or not at all.
 - e. The adultery and apostasy themes are fundamental in DITC. Schaeffer will develop it further in later books (CATE and CBTWW).
 - f. As to specific sins, Schaeffer says that if the church does not speak against prevailing sins, it is not following God’s pattern through Jeremiah. The culture does not believe in absolutes, so Jeremiah says that our culture is “cutting down the ‘force of truth.’”
 - g. The church is guilty of looking to the world for help. Israel appealed to Egypt, and today the church seeks cultural approval or direction.
 - h. Schaeffer will use Hudson Taylor’s phrase, “**the Lord’s work, in the Lord’s way,**” throughout his ministry. He uses it here for the first time.
 - i. A church, a culture, or a generation that turns from God and his propositional revelation becomes a city of destruction. **Reference Jeremiah 21:4-7.**
 - j. Schaeffer ends this chapter with a statement as he did in chapter two. **He asks the Christian, “do you really believe it is true?”** The final reality is that God is there and has spoken propositionally and verbally. Anything else is a sociological belief or the dead orthodoxy of mouthing the correct doctrines.

IV. Chapter Four – An Echo of the World

- A. Schaeffer described death in the city in chapter one, the loneliness of man in the second chapter, and the need for God’s message of judgment in chapter three. Now he looks at the people Jeremiah preached to in this fourth chapter.

1. The **kings of Israel and Judah** were corrupt and would be judged. In Jeremiah 22, Shallum, king of Judah, would be sent to exile and die there. In the same chapter, Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, would die like a donkey, be dragged out of the city, and cast on a trash heap.
2. A severe judgment was coming, and God would use a foreign nation and army to deliver it.
3. Schaeffer says that when he prays for his country and our culture, he does not pray for God's justice but pleads for God's mercy. We are in a situation like Jeremiah's day.
4. Jeremiah preached against dignitaries and politicians, and all leaders.
 - a. Today, Schaeffer says this includes church, government, and judicial leaders, and those in education, media, and culture.
 - b. Jeremiah told the priests they were handling the law but didn't know God.
 - c. The prophets prophesied by Baal, not God, and pursued unprofitable things.
 - d. Religious leaders were not worthy of their former honor.
5. Modern religious leaders are guilty. They, like the others, have walked through God's field and destroyed it.
6. Schaeffer says again that today's Christians are scattered even more than ancient Jews.
 - a. He saves blame for the greatest guilt for the evangelical church because we've allowed ourselves to be infiltrated by relativism.
 - b. The infiltration, Schaeffer says, came from within God's house of the church.
7. The chapter is titled "An echo of the world." So, Schaeffer is saying that the church then and now is merely repeating what the world is saying.
8. **Naturally**, Jeremiah's message was not well received, and the people of his town told him to be quiet, or they would kill him.
9. Schaeffer tells us that if we are preachers to our generation, we will hear that we are not being positive enough. We are foolish if we expect anything else.
10. In Jeremiah 36:22, ff. is the passage of the king cutting Jeremiah's scroll to pieces and throwing it in the fire.

V. **The Persistence of Compassion**

- A. The threats to Jeremiah and his liberty were not idle.
 1. In Jeremiah 20, Pashhur was a priest, the son of Immur, the chief officer in the temple. On hearing Jeremiah's preaching, Pashhur beat Jeremiah and put him in the stocks.
 2. Pashhur was a common name, but after being released from the stocks, Jeremiah renamed him "Terror on every side" because his actions indicated the judgment that would fall on Israel.
- B. Jeremiah's punishment didn't stop. The stocks were not enough. In chapter 32, Babylon's army laid siege to Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was imprisoned in the king's house.
- C. The princes beat Jeremiah again and put him in a dungeon, which was a deep well that had no water at the bottom, but muck and mire

- D. Jeremiah's woes were physical, psychological, and emotional. There were times he was discouraged and overwhelmed, Jeremiah 15:10.
- E. Schaeffer warns us that if we really preach the Word of God, we may or are likely to end up like Jeremiah.
- F. It is possible to be faithful to God but be overwhelmed and discouraged. In fact, Schaeffer thinks if we don't experience those things sometimes, we might be in actual battles. It is important to learn to say and mean, "Lord, make your strength perfect in my weakness."
- G. Schaeffer's key points in this chapter are;
 - 1. Ours is a time when a negative message is needed before anything positive.
 - 2. We must face that our culture is under God's judgment. We must do so with tears for those around us.
 - 3. We must also practice truth, especially if we believe it. We cannot live as relativists, and he refers us to an appendix in TGWIT, *The practice of truth*.
 - 4. Knowing and practicing the truth will be costly.
 - 5. We must keep on speaking and practicing the truth
- H. Martin Luther was discouraged by the news of the first Protestant martyrs and wanted to quit, but realized the gospel was the truth, and he had to persist.

VI. **The Significance of Man**

- A. Schaeffer says we emphasize some form of determinism despite all modern man's claims to independence and free will.
 - 1. Chemical determinism, e.g., de Sade or Francis Crick.
 - 2. Psychological determinism, as in Freud and those who followed.
 - 3. Environmental determinism, per B. F. Skinner.
- B. The Bible teaches differently. In Romans 1, Paul said that man had known the truth, turned away from it, and brought consequences
- C. Schaeffer focuses on Romans 1-8 in what follows.
 - 1. Man needs salvation and the negative message (chapters 1-3).
 - 2. Justification is taught in chapters 3-4.
 - 3. Sanctification is taught in chapters 5-8.
 - 4. Lastly, the promise of glorification touches on the future and eternal life.
- D. Contrary to an anti-intellectualism and false intellectualism, there are also true and intelligent answers in the gospel.
- E. We don't have to be ashamed of the gospel because it is for the whole man.
- F. Schaeffer stresses again that while salvation is individual, it is not individualist. We are saved into the community of the church.
- G. The basis of our salvation is not our faith, Schaeffer says. Faith is the instrument by which we receive and accept the gift. Unfortunately, modern liberalism and even some evangelicalism slips into the problem of thinking that we are saved by faith in faith.
- H. We become Christians by faith, but we also have to live moment by moment or day by day by faith. Schaeffer says this is existential living, but it is not philosophical existentialism.

- VII. Chapter Seven – The Man Without The Bible
- A. In Schaeffer’s later book, CATE, he spoke to the man without the Bible. There, he emphasized man’s innate sense of right and wrong and that creation declared the existence of God. Man suppresses natural revelation.
 - B. Much modern evangelical preaching leads people to a profession of faith by presenting good news, but Schaeffer says this is faulty because the bad news is necessary.
 - C. Schaeffer says men refuse to bow to God, who is there, and they hold their presuppositions as an implicit faith.
 - 1. A man doesn’t carry their beliefs to their logical conclusion because those conclusions contradict their presuppositions (which we have read before.)
 - 2. Men are under God’s judgment precisely because they are significant. God didn’t just scatter men like gravel. Instead, this reflects man created in the image of God.
 - D. Schaeffer closes this chapter by restating the idea of natural theology but also asks how the man without the Bible is finally judged.

VIII. Chapter Eight – The Justice of God

- A. The question is, how is man without the Bible judged by God? Also, is God just making this judgment?
 - 1. Schaeffer points out that although the standard of moral judgments may be lower than those in the Bible, moral judgments are still made.
 - 2. Schaeffer gives the example of every baby born getting a tape recorder when they make moral judgments. When a person dies and stands before God, those judgments are replayed. Thousands of moral judgments come out. Then, God turns and says, “based on your own words, have you kept those moral standards? Each man is silent, and their judgment on others judges them.
 - 3. God is not unjust in this standard and His judgment because they are judged by the standard they have set.
- B. Men are lost, and there are only two ways to get rid of the lostness.
 - 1. Either one gets rid of the holiness of God. This is the atheistic man who says that God is dead. It could also be the existentialist man who says that man is dead.
 - 2. One can give up man and history as significant. That will avoid God’s judgment, but Schaeffer says this means man has no meaning or significance himself.
- C. Schaeffer also addresses man with the Bible and clarifies that there are standards in the Bible, and his people are to live by them. Therefore, all fail, and all are lost.
- D. This sense of lostness applies to man with and without the Bible.
 - 1. God asks the man without the Bible, “have you kept the moral judgments you bound others by?”
 - 2. To the man with the Bible, God says, “have you kept 100 percent of the Scripture standards?”
 - 3. The answer from both types of men is “No.”

- E. God has provided the means to remove the guilt of our sin through Jesus Christ.
 - F. The guilt of sin and the solution affects people at all levels. The “bushman” and the modern educated man are under God’s judgment but are also saved from judgment in the same way.
- IX. Chapter Nine – The Universe and Two Chairs
- A. The final chapter addresses in more detail people who have the Bible and have responded in faith, relying on the finished work of God.
 - B. Though we have learned more about the universe and seen its complexity, the biblical view of it is still simple, yet more complex than a material view.
 1. Consider two men in a room representing the universe. One is a materialist, and the other is a Christian living by the Bible as God’s revelation.
 2. The materialist turns and studies the universe and eventually returns with the results of his study.
 3. The Christian assents that it is a fine study and gives a lot of detail. But, he says, it is still very incomplete. The materialist asks what he missed.
 4. The Christian says that the Bible tells him things the materialist doesn’t know; the origin of the universe and where man came from.
 5. The Christian also says there is more than just the visible universe, but the unseen. The same thing applies to history without a sense of the unseen portion.
 6. The materialist thinks the Christian is crazy because he talks about unseen things. On the other hand, the Christian thinks the materialist is unbalanced because he only knows half the universe.
 - C. Schaeffer says these opposing views cannot be synthesized. One is right, and one is wrong.
 - D. The Christian cannot only affirm the correct doctrines but live as if the unseen realm was far off, and they contact it only twice, when they become a Christian and when they die.
 - E. The materialist world, the inconsistent Christian, and the modern liberal are essentially the same. They are unbelieving.
 - F. We ought not to live like that if we profess faith in Christ. There are many examples of how we fall short, but Schaeffer is fond of reminding us of prayer. Prayer is our contact with the unseen. By it, we have the privilege of acting into the unseen realm and affecting the outcome, even as we are submissive to God.
 - G. Schaeffer summarizes the book by saying that Reformation and Revival are related to God’s people sitting moment by moment in the believer’s chair. When that happens, constructive revolution in the orthodox church will result.