



IVP  
CLASSICS

Escape  
from Reason  
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## ESCAPE FROM REASON

Escape from Reason was first published in 1968, and thus in that setting we are able to understand the nature of Schaeffer's writings.

The foundational premise which motivated him was his sense that truth, which was once based on reason, had morphed into a truth which was based on feelings.

- He felt that feelings had become the truest source of reality

He felt that there was an obsession with the emotive and the experiential, without a relief from societies still facing anxiety, despair, and purposelessness.

*Escape from Reason* was written to discover how we got to this place and what is the remedy for this mindset shift.

In the book, Francis A. Schaeffer traces trends in key thinking from the "Age of Reason" to the 20<sup>th</sup> century have shaped our society.

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So far in our review of the book, we have seen that he was wide-ranging in his analysis, examining philosophy, science, art and popular culture to identify dualism, fragmentation and the decline of reason.

- He anticipated a rekindling of Christianity's promise of a scriptural purpose and hope “We still have not exhausted this subject of the leap. There are other areas where it shows itself. A recent book by Michel Foucault called *Madness and Civilization*<sup>1</sup> is important here. In a review of the book in *The New York Review of Books* (November 3, 1966), entitled “In Praise of Folly,” the reviewer Stephen Marcus of Columbia University comments, “What Foucault is finally against, however, is the authority of reason. . . . In this Foucault represents an important tendency in advanced contemporary thought. In his despair of the transcendent powers of rational intellect he embodies one abiding truth of our time—the failure of the nineteenth century to make good its promises.” In other words, the heirs of the Enlightenment had promised that they would provide a unified answer on the basis of the rational.

[Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 89-90). InterVarsity Press]

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Chapter 6 takes the downgrade one step further, stating that the upper-story loss of morality eventually turns into complete madness in antithesis to the concept that man is dead: “The logical end of the dichotomy, in which hope is separated from reason, is the giving up of all reason” (P 91).

- Here Schaeffer takes us to cinematic influencers like as Ingmar Bergman (Sweden), Federico Fellini (Italy) and Michelangelo Antonioni (Italy), Truman Capote (USA) and Stephen Slesinger (USA).

Have we gotten to the place where it no longer matters what “faith” a person has (literally, ANYTHING can write into one’s upper story), because Reason in the lower story states that both God and Man are dead.

Nothing “religious” or dealing with “faith” can be separated from the authority of the very reasonable Word of God which abounds with meaning.

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I understand how Schaeffer can conclude that in this time of “madness” without reason, practical and pragmatic feelings can become a danger to people finding the true Jesus

Schaeffer concludes *Escape from Reason* with four “consequences of pitting faith against rationality (p. 103),” particularly in establishing a relationship from an upstairs Christianity down into the area of morals in daily life.

I. that we have a **society with relative morality** based upon public opinion

- Cultures differ widely in their moral practices and diversity is evident even on those matters of morality where we would expect to agree
- We might suppose that in the matter of taking life all peoples would agree on some form of condemnation and retribution for taking another’s life.
- On the contrary, in the matter of homicide, it may be held that one kills by custom his two children (filicide), or that a husband has a right of life and death over his wife or that it is the duty of the child to kill his parents before they are old (euthanasia).

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- For those who aspire to a Judeo-Christian ethic, these are unacceptable practices
- Among some peoples, a person suffers torment at having caused an accidental death, among others, it is a matter of no consequence (Cities of refuge – Joshua 20).
- Suicide may be offensive in some societies, while it might be noble if it's harakiri
- Anthropologically there is a wide range of practices considered morally acceptable in some societies but condemned in others, including infanticide, genocide, polygamy, racism, sexism, and torture.
- Such differences may lead us to question whether there are any universal moral principles or whether morality is merely a matter of "cultural taste."
- Differences in moral practices across cultures raise an important issue in ethics -- the concept of "moral/ethical relativism."
- Ethical relativism is the theory that holds that morality is relative to the norms of one's culture.

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- That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced.
- The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another.
- For the ethical relativist, there are no universal moral standards -- standards that can be universally applied to all peoples at all times.
- If ethical relativism is correct, there can be no common framework for resolving moral disputes or for reaching agreement on ethical matters among members of different societies (moral/ethical absolutism)
- **Moral absolutism** is an ethical view that all actions are intrinsically right or wrong. Stealing, for instance, might be considered to be always immoral, even if done for the well-being of others (e.g., stealing food to feed a starving family), and even if it does in the end promote such a good.
- Moral absolutism stands in contrast to other categories of normative ethical theories such as consequentialism, which holds that the morality of an act depends on the consequences or the context of the act.

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## II. that we have **no adequate basis for law**

- **Antinomianism** is any view which rejects laws or legalism and argues against moral, religious or social norms or mores.
- Theologically, antinomianism is the belief that there are no moral laws God expects Christians to obey.
- Antinomianism takes a biblical teaching to an unbiblical conclusion.
- The biblical teaching is that Christians are not required to observe the OT law as a means of salvation.
- When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He fulfilled the OT Law
  - **Rom. 10:4** For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
  - **Gal. 3:23-25** But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

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- **Ephesians 2:14-15** For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace
- The unbiblical conclusion is that there is no moral law God expects Christians to obey.
  - Paul also dealt with the issue of antinomianism in **Rom. 6:1-2**, “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”
    - ❑ The most frequent attack on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is that it encourages sin.
    - ❑ People may wonder, “If I am saved by grace and all my sins are forgiven, why not sin all I want?”
    - ❑ That thinking is not the result of true conversion because true conversion yields a greater desire to obey, not a lesser one.

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- ❑ God's desire and ours, when we are regenerated by His Spirit—is that we strive not to sin; for out of gratitude for His grace and forgiveness, we want to please Him.
- ❑ God has indeed given us His infinitely gracious gift in salvation through Jesus (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- ❑ Our response is to consecrate our lives to Him out of love, worship, and gratitude for what He has done for us (Rom. 12:1-2).
- ❑ Antinomianism is unbiblical in that it misapplies the meaning of God's gracious favor.
- Another reason that antinomianism is unbiblical is that there is a moral law God expects us to obey.
  - ❑ I John 5:3 tells us, “This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome.”

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- ❑ What is the law God expects us to obey? It is the law of Christ – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:37-40).
- ❑ No, we are not under the OT law; but we are under the law of Christ which is not a list of legal codes – rather it is a law of love.
- ❑ If we love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we will do nothing to displease Him and if we love our neighbors as ourselves, we will do nothing to harm them.
- Antinomianism is contrary to everything the Bible teaches, for God expects us to live a life of morality, integrity, and love.
- Jesus Christ freed us from the burdensome commands of the OT law, but that is not a license to sin -- rather, it is a **covenant of grace**.

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- We are to strive to overcome sin and cultivate righteousness, depending on the Holy Spirit to help us.
- **I John 2:3-6** declares, “We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. The man who says, ‘I know Him,’ but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.”

## III. that we have **no answer to the problem of evil**

- There are various Christian responses to dealing with the problem of evil and suffering.
- Some Christians believe it is pointless trying to understand why evil and suffering exist, as God’s will is beyond human understanding.
- Others take a theoretical approach to tackling the problem and try to make sense of it using reason.

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- Some Christians believe the presence of evil is an opportunity to respond in a practical and compassionate way.
- A. **The biblical response** suggests suffering is a part of human existence and enables Christians to demonstrate their commitment to God.
  - ❑ Therefore, people cannot understand why God allows evil and suffering to exist.
  - ❑ The biblical response uses the Book of Job, which is found in the OT.
  - ❑ As you recall, Job was a devout and sinless man who led a good life, yet Satan convinced God that the only reason for this pleasant life, was because God made it easy for Job
  - ❑ God decided to allow Satan to test Job in several ways, and although Job began to question God's goodness, he defended God to his friends.
  - ❑ Additionally, the Psalms show that suffering is intended to be a part of life and that joy and suffering cannot exist without each other.
  - ❑ They also show that suffering can bring Christians closer to God.

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**B. The Theoretical response** argues that evil and suffering are not God's fault; but evil is caused by humans' misuse of the free-will granted by God.

❑ Additionally, evil and suffering in this life are part of God's long-term plan, and people who suffer will be rewarded with eternal paradise.

❑ This is known as the vale of soul-making response (John Keats 1819) – suggesting the world exists as a place for humans to develop their soul by being tested.

**C. The Practical response** is to show compassion to people who are suffering, offering those people help and trust that God will deliver an answer to the problem.

❑ One example of this help is intercessory prayers, which are prayers asking for God's help for people in need.

❑ They purport that even Jesus taught that evil is something that can be fought, for example by feeding the hungry and healing the sick.

❑ Thus, Christians can therefore follow the example of Jesus by working hard to tackle evil and suffering.

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❑ For example, they can do this by setting up food banks, donating money to charity and becoming doctors and nurses.

IV. and that we have **no way to evangelize humanity** where they are.

- Responsible Christians must be more concerned about the souls of those evangelized than they do about “church growth”
- Despite we do not see the fervor of practical evangelism that was witnessed after WW II until the mid-90’s.
- There are number of factors which have impacted the evangelistic thrust inclusive of community ordinances and safety concerns.
- Nevertheless, we are still call to make disciples and teach doctrine by Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20) and we should not allow restrictions to be restrictive
- The early church did not have all the conveniences, mobility advantages and technological methods we have – yet the “word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24)
- The trend of waning church loyalty and decreased membership that has long characterized the Church in Europe seems to be spreading to America.

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- Are we truly entering a post-Christian period? Is the Christian Church really unable to reach an affluent, sophisticated, and materialistic society?
  - (1) A prerequisite for spiritual revival is the proclamation of a mighty Savior. We shall never reach a lost world with a Noble Example.
    - Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."
  - (2) The next requirement of any church that desires effective evangelism is that it be a community of faith. If the Church is simply the expression of the prevailing culture, it has little to offer a lost world.
  - (3) The Church must be a fellowship of believers who worship and serve the risen Christ, a communion of committed, disciplined souls who are crusading for Christ and witnessing to his saving grace and power.
  - (4) There must be renewal within before we can effectively witness to the world. That which will renew will evangelize. The path toward renewal is the way to effective evangelism.

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(5) We must stop trying to present a better philosophy; rather we need to demonstrate a loving Savior. The world does not need a new morality; it needs new life -- it does not need reformation; it needs regeneration in Christ

(6) So, another requirement for effective evangelism is authority which does not reside in creative and imaginative programs.

- The Church now has better prepared leadership than at any other time in its history.
- It has the finest equipment and the most beautiful buildings it has ever had.
- Yet with all these advantages we are failing to give an effective witness to a lost world.
- The great need of our day is not methods but message. We have the methods, but in some places it seems we have lost the message.
- I Cor. 14:8 "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

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- When the Church simply echoes contemporary philosophy, it never attracts a needy world.
- When it is confused about the person of Christ and His power, who will turn to Him for salvation?
- When its theology reflects a pagan culture, who will be convicted of his sins?

Schaeffer reminds his readers that, because man has personality, he also has the right to begin with that knowledge and therefore seek the “why” behind this reality of personality.

But since the only rational answer comes from Scripture—that an infinite-personal God existed first—the honest seeker could only come to one true conclusion.

Schaeffer then closes this book by reiterating his original thesis: that one cannot reach his generation without first knowing and understanding—and finally engaging—the thought-forms of his own generation, as Hudson Taylor did in with the 19th century Chinese

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