

*[A Review of Francis Schaeffer's A Christian Manifesto by Gordon H. Clark]*

Francis Schaeffer begins this book with a strong insistence on the excellent and profound principle – so widely unrecognized by a large majority of conservative Christians – that Christianity is a total and unitary system, not a disjointed aggregate of separate truths. Anti-Christian Humanism is also such a system. Because ignorant of this principle, Christians have been unable to prevent the courts, including the Supreme Court, from legalizing abortion, homosexuality, and anti-religious discrimination against Christian schools. Schaeffer does not put it in precisely these words, but Christians have been reduced to the status of second class citizens.

In chapter two Schaeffer brings to our attention certain fact of American political, legal, and religious history which present day liberals, by their control of the media and the public schools, are trying to erase from the public's memory. Their substantial success has already enabled them to gain wide acceptance of their anti-Christian principles. The goal is to suppress Biblical Christianity altogether. Humanism is a total system that inevitably and unrelentingly aims at that goals.

Of course consistent systems have their details. In chapter three Schaeffer mentions (p 41.) Oliver Wendell Homes [A Christian View of Men and Things, by this reviewer, p. 111] and Frederick Moore Vinson, former Chief Justice, both of whom made anti-Christianity the basis of their decisions. In 1973 the Supreme Court by an arbitrary decision invalidated the laws against abortion in all fifty states. Nine men spoke and it was so. The vote of only five men can overrule the votes of millions.

Abortion, the murder of innocent infants, is not the only anti-Christian activity inherent in the humanistic system. On page 83-85 Schaeffer lists 31 attacks on Christianity that are before the courts this year. So court cases they may be stated as questions.

It is hard to write a review of the book. The temptation is to quote page after page. The book should be read. Do not discount the recommendation as if the reviewer refuses to see any flaw in anything Schaeffer writes. The connection he makes between the Pietist Spener and Platonic mentality (pp. 18-19) is simply not the case. But who except the Biblical writers are infallible.

Lengthy books often have an appendix or two. Is a short review permitted to have one?

Schaeffer is to be complimented, complimented considerably, in defending the unitary and integrated character of world-views, which therefore inevitably produce their logical results, in spite of the fragmented and confused minds of individuals. When these minds are somewhat Christian, their

lack of understanding leaves them without weapons to combat an increasingly immoral paganism. Schaeffer sees the present inability of Christians to detect the satanic evils of our day as the result of seventeenth century's Pietism. This is surely a tremendous oversimplification. Though one may argue that Spener influences Kant and Schleiermacher, he hardly accounts for Hegel and Kierkegaard. The liberalization of American seminaries is less due to the Amish and Mennonites than to the English Deists, The New England Unitarians, and German Higher Criticism, and in fact Schaeffer mentions the Huxley's, George Bernard Shaw, and Charles Hartshorne.

Furthermore, Schaeffer's description of Pietism is faulty and even self-contradictory. He characterizes Pietism as a type of “platonistic spirituality” (pp. 18,19, 63, 68, 124): “I had a deficient, 'platonistic spirituality. It was platonistic in the sense that Pietism made a sharp division between the 'spiritual' and the 'material' world – giving little or no importance to the 'material world.' But the truth of the matter is that Pietism was about as non-platonistic as any view could be. Certainly Pietism “neglected the intellectual division of Christianity (p. 19) but this is precisely the reason Pietism is non-platonistic. Further, it is not true that Plato gave little or no importance to the 'material' world. After the prisoner in the Cave had ascended into the world of light and returned, he was able to understand the shadows of the wall much better. The following two books of the Republic are serious in their analogies of social and political forms. The Laws, as lengthy as The Republic is a treatise on practical politics. And not only in writing, but personally Plato tried to organize a good government in Syracuse. He risked his life in doing it.

Is this criticism trivial? I think not. Both the outright secularist, abortionist, and homosexual, if educated, and also the perfunctory none-too-serious Christian, if educated will read to p. 19, and set aside the book as worthless. This is unfortunate, for the book contains much that should be impressed on the minds of the populace.