

"A.c." is new school-babble for the process of determining the location of the holy (i.e., what is of ultimate sanction force, in contrast to sanctions of consequence) in the life of a person or of a movement or institution. This thinksheet applies this to the case of the founder of L'Abri, FRANCIS SCHAEFFER. Its occasion: I was interviewed today (10Oct82) about him by NEWSWEEK. (See also #1654.)

1. Like me, F.S., after wanderings in the wilderness of pluralism, got his feet on authoritative ground largely by personal exposure to Scripture: he and I are "scribal," i.e., book-oriented, in our life-stories of commitment and action. This means (1) I know him from the inside and (2) I like/hate about him what I like/hate about myself: I am not, in this thinksheet, arrogating myself above him. To me in a recent book of his he wrote, "Willis, when are you going to get rid of all that shit and come to the truth?" Here's how I translate that: when am I going to get rid of all my truth and come to his shit? But I do not know--it is deep in my way of seeing and living in the world that I cannot know--which of us defends-lives more truth/error. So I'll give him hell modestly, while he immodestly gives me hell.

2. Right there is the difference between us: he sees me as heretical and I see him as arrogant. I know his arrogance from the inside: in my late teens I was as arrogant a "scribe" (bibliolater) as ever was, and the god delivered me by focusing my attention on the errors and limits of my Book. (I say "the god"--rather than "my God," my confessional way to put it--in order to speak history-of-religions-wise, neutrally, objectively; others may say "life" or "luck.")

3. Revelation/reason is a traditional category for dealing with what I'm dealing with in this case. (Natural/revealed religion is another way of saying it.) F.S. believes he can by reason prove revelation: I believe I can evidence it by community (i.e., the community that believes and traditions the revelation--in my case, the Church), by personal history (including my 9Mar34 conversion), and by reason (in that order). I can no longer, as he does, go around laying on people what the god has said; but I can, and must, and do go around witnessing to how I see the world and how I am trying to shape my life and the world. He can be unilingual; I must be bilingual, using both the world's speech and the Christian tradition-community's speech. I agree with him against all who let the holy sounds of our biblical heritage die, for then soon dies also the biblical community (Jewish and Christian).

4. I have seen firsthand F.S.'s tyranny over his community, mind-control frighteningly People's-Temple-like. I was refused a corner in which to talk with anyone wanting to talk about NY Theol. Seminary; and I saw F.S. take, after lecture, only such questions as he could use to continue his lecture (in consequence of which, deviants walked out on him). Having the truth (*versus* some of the truth having some of you) is momentarily comforting and finally demonic, undemocratic, antibiblical. And seductive: in the battle of the fundamentalisms (scribal, Marxist, natural-"scientific," etc.), a biblical fundamentalism seems a more powerful protagonist than does our (and my) historical-critical and philosophical-critical modesty. On our side is the increasingly obvious fact that our poor old shrinking globe cannot much longer bear the devastations of fundamentalisms' loud-clashing swords.

5. Self-"inflation" (Gk. & Lat. of 1Cor.13.4), an adolescent quality, characterizes the writings of F.S. (and all fundamentalists, religious and secular) and resists maturation into kindness and modesty.