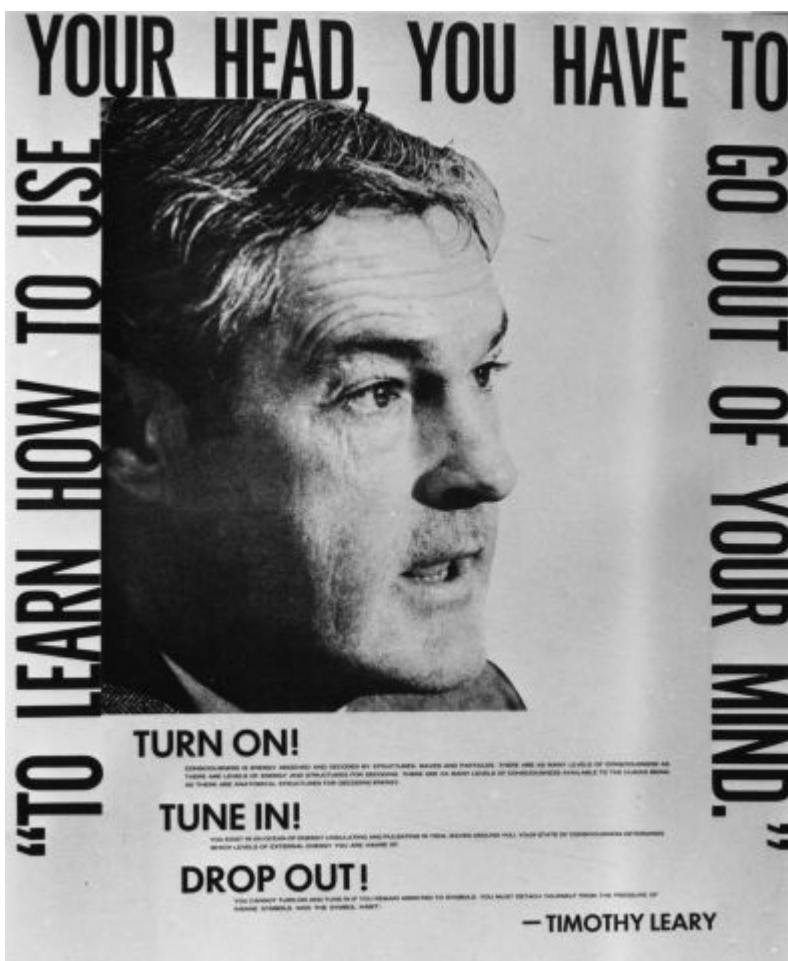


# Tune in! Turn on! Drop out!

Something with interesting worldview significance happened in the month of October. The “high priest of LSD,” Timothy Leary, had been convicted and imprisoned in the US for using and promoting illegal drugs, especially LSD, a popular hallucinogenic drug. President Richard Nixon called Leary “the most dangerous man in America.” Leary had escaped from prison and fled from the US. We had heard that Leary had taken refuge in Switzerland and was living in Villars, just a couple miles away from L’Abri. Apparently, Leary had heard of a Christian community just down the road where numbers of longhaired hippies were staying.



There was speculation about whether there might be a meeting

between Fran Schaeffer and Tim Leary. There was a desire that Leary might come into contact with biblical Christianity through Schaeffer but also a concern that Leary might try to use L'Abri as a platform for his views about drugs. That meeting eventually took place on October 2, 1971. My friend Greg recalls the meeting in these words. "At dinner, Leary was very self-absorbed and not a little blown out from all of the LSD he had taken. He proved to be very obnoxious company. But Schaeffer had been compassionate enough to spend an afternoon in conversation with him about the gospel, telling no one of his encounter with this famous man." There's no evidence that Leary's close brush with the Gospel left any lasting impression.

Some of the people who came to L'Abri came out of circumstances that were overwhelming and difficult for me to relate to. There was a young woman who stayed in the same chalet with Margaret and me. She was a student who had been swept up in the terror following the 1964 military coup in Brazil and imprisoned by the military regime. During her imprisonment, she endured terrible suffering including near starvation. The experience left her a broken woman. Some of the women who shared a room with her would discover food that she had taken at meal times and hidden away in her dresser. We were thankful that she had come to L'Abri (The Shelter). She did come to faith in Christ and began to experience mental, physical, and spiritual healing.

After I had put the garden to bed, I turned my attention to a long overdue indoor project at Chalet Les Mèlèzes. Ever since they had moved into Les Mèlèzes in April 1955, Fran and Edith Schaeffer's only place of refuge was their rather small bedroom. Fran placed a board at the end of the bed and worked there on sermons, lectures, books, correspondence and other writing projects. The picture by Sylvester Jacobs shows Fran

at work in his bedroom with a secretary behind him taking dictation at a small bedside table. If the Schaeffers wished to speak to guests privately, the Schaeffers would invite them to their bedroom.



Photograph by Sylvester Jacobs

On the other side of one wall of the Schaeffer's bedroom was a small room that was once used by their son Franky. By this time, Franky was married and living with Genie on the first floor of the chalet. It was decided that my friend Greg and I would be tasked with making an opening through the wall and turn Franky's old room into a proper sitting room and work area for the Schaeffers. Neither Greg nor I had any great carpentry skills, but we figured how hard can it be? You just remove the wood paneling on either side of the wall dividing the two rooms, exposing the studs, then frame in an opening between the two rooms. When we removed the paneling, we discovered not studs, but a wall of solid wood. That's how the older chalets in Switzerland were built to resist avalanches and heavy loads of snow on the roofs. Looking at the picture of Les Mèlèzes, you can see what look like decorative braces under the upper balcony. Those turn out to be a series of large planks that run from the front to the back of the house.



Greg and I discovered that L'Abri owned only antiquated hand tools for the task. We ended up using a brace and bit to make a line of holes through one of the boards, which we then opened up with chisels. We were then able to get a two-person saw into that initial opening. With Greg in one room and me in the other, we managed to saw down through the wall. It was then that we discovered that the boards were also pegged together. I cannot remember how many days the entire operation took. We were able eventually to clean up and box in the opening. We were pleased with the way the project turned out, and more importantly, so were the Schaeffers!

As a worker at L'Abri, I was able to take part in the rich life of the community. I attended lectures, seminars and uplifting worship on Sundays. I enjoyed the far-ranging discussions at meal times. I knew that I was always free to

seek out interactions with students. I remember one such conversation. I was speaking with a young man who, like me, came to L'Abri as an unbeliever but who was seriously pursuing the Truth. He had been reading in John's Gospel. He had just read the text in John 13 that speaks of Jesus stooping down to wash His disciples feet. He said that, if Jesus Christ was truly God in human flesh, as the Bible claims, this was one of the most stunning accounts he had seen in the life of Jesus. I could not agree more heartily.

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## **Trial by Fire**

September 1971 was quite a month, filled with delights and challenges. It began in a fairly relaxed way then quickly ramped up to a couple of my most challenging weeks as a young Christian. I enjoyed an amazing day off on September 10 with Birdie, Margaret and Bruce. We drove around all day enjoying the beauty of Switzerland. We ate dinner in the restaurant where Fondue Bourguignonne—skewers of meet cooked in a pot of oil, then dipped in various sauces—was first served. The highlight of the day was a concert in the Armory Hall of the Chateau de Chillon with music from the courts of Elizabeth and Henry VIII played by the Elizabethan Consort of Viols.



The challenging part of September came later in the month. My friends Bruce and Greg were responsible for dealing with new arrivals to L'Abri. Bruce took off for a couple weeks, and the



Schaeffers put me in charge of intake. It was a nerve-racking assignment for a young Christian. So many people were wanting to stay at L'Abri, but there was so little room. Some people were booked ahead, but others just arrived unexpectedly (as I had in April). They had to be sized up in about five minutes as to whether they were genuinely interested or just looking for a cheap place to crash. One of those who came was the brother of a close friend from my home town. He came with a friend, having got the idea in his mind that L'Abri was a Zen Buddhist monastery. He was understandably quite surprised to discover what L'Abri was all about.

Udo and Debbie left on their annual three-week vacation, so I was also given the additional responsibility of supervising Chalet les Sapins and heading up the table at breakfast. I realized that I needed a kick as far as taking responsibility, but WOW! Fortunately, the students living in the chalet at the time posed few behavioral problems. There were, however, *some* moments of levity that helped to relieve the pressure of those couple weeks! A couple of German women were students and staying at les Sapins—tall, statuesque, blond identical twins. Both were deeply committed believers. During one mealtime, the twins (we'll call them Emilia and Ella), were sitting on either side of me. I worked with delight to divide my attention equally between them! "You don't say, Emilia." "I couldn't agree more, Ella." Truly, I thought I was the perfect host and conversationalist. Margaret's analysis was, "GACK!"

By the end of September, we were enjoying beautiful fall weather, crisp and clear with daytime highs in the upper 50s and overnight lows in the lower 40s. The mountain peaks had a coating of fresh snow. That meant time to put my garden to bed for the winter—pulling out dead plants and working compost into the soil. My relationship with Margaret was developing into something more than friendship. We were spending more of

our free time together. One evening we went out to sit on a bench alongside the back path to our chalet. We were admiring the moon when we heard the sound of hooves quite close at hand. We clambered up onto the bench just in time to avoid a small herd of wild boars (which are not nice critters!) thundering by. We didn't take it as a portent of anything ominous in our relationship but decided it was time to call it a night.

