



Links Players

Finishing Strong

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (II Tim. 4:7)

The finishing holes of a round of golf are crucial. Finishing well makes us want to come back and play again. A friend always says about par on 18: "That's a good one to quit on." Finishing well is even more important in life. What good is a promising start if we're not able to echo the apostle's ringing confidence at the end: "I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

M. Scott Peck's book, *The Road Less Travelled*, published in 1978, sold ten million copies. No wonder he has been called "the baby boomer's guru." Links readers will find him interesting because of his passion for golf, seen in the book, *Golf in the Spirit*, published in 1999, and his Christian conversion.

The success of *The Road Less Travelled* made Peck rich and famous. His second book, *People of the Lie*, published in 1983, included the stunning revelation of a new religious commitment:

After many years of vague identification with Buddhist and Islamic mysticism, I ultimately made a firm Christian commitment—signified by my non-denominational baptism on the ninth of March 1980, at the age of forty-three—long after I had begun working on this book. In a manuscript he sent me, an author once apologized for his "Christian bias." I make no such apology. I would hardly have committed myself to something I regarded as a bias. Nor do I desire to disguise my Christian outlook. In fact, I couldn't. My commitment to Christianity is the most important thing in my life and is, I hope, pervasive and total.

What seems to have drawn Peck to the Christian faith was the undeniable presence of evil that he saw in certain of his clients. Evil in this world cannot be explained rationally; only a supernatural, personal presence of evil can account for it. Believing in a devil became a gateway for Scott Peck to believe in a Redeemer.

His confession of faith in *People of the Lie* is inspiring. He is unapologetically Christian. He declares that his commitment to Christianity is the most important thing in his life. In a line that is an example of courage that we desperately need in our day, he says this about referring to God as "he" or "him," as the Scriptures do:

Many readers are likely to be concerned about my use of masculine pronouns in relation to God. I think I both understand and appreciate their concern. It is a matter to which I have given much thought...He chases after us with a vigor in the hunt that we most typically associate with males. As C.S. Lewis put it, in relation to God we are all female.

When you read *Golf in the Spirit*, written some 16 years later, you are still encouraged by how Peck discerns God's ways in his life as they come to light on the golf course. You also are drawn to the way Peck talks about his wife, Lily, as his companion in golf, as in all other areas of life. There seems to be a lot to love about M. Scott Peck.

But as you move along the course he calls *Exotica*, some things make you wonder. Peck characteristically looks to transcendence when writing about mentors: "God has been my primary mentor; golf has been one of Her primary agencies."

What happened to his earlier, edgy insistence on using the masculine pronoun for God? We could cite other instances of unorthodoxy. That these departures from the faith are significant becomes clear when you read how Peck's life was accessed at his death in 2005:

He spent much of his life immersed in cheap gin, chain-smoking cigarettes, and inhaling cannabis, and being persistently unfaithful to his wife, who eventually divorced him. He also went through estrangement with two of his three children.

This is a grim epitaph. What happened to Scott Peck? For one thing, it is no small consequence to treat cultural fads as rigid orthodoxies that demand more respect than the ancient dogmas of the Church. If you convert to the Christian faith, you place your intellect, as your will and your morality, under the lordship of Christ. When confronted with the choice between being applauded by cultural elites or despised Christians, we must stand with the believers.

Also, sin must be mortified. Peck seems comfortable with the vices he knew so well before his conversion. That he became rich and famous, earning himself a place on the banquet circuit, with thousands hanging on his words of wisdom and gladly buying his books and tickets to his lectures, evidently did his soul great damage. Reading his books while knowing how he finished his course is profoundly disappointing.

Prayer: Jesus, convict our consciences of those sins that offend and disappoint you. Keep us on the "straight and narrow."

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Dr. Stephen Carter
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