

Dear Correspondent:

Most parents are eternally hopeful that their children will mature to a point where they can appreciate and muster some genuine gratitude and honor...before their parents die. However, life doesn't always work out that way. This was clearly the case with Francis and Edith Schaeffer and their son, Frank.<sup>1</sup>

You say, "...I still think he [Frank] has some valid points (per the [Fresh Air, December 9, 2008 interview](#)).” Please share what these might be. If I were to make an educated guess, I'd say it has something to do with evangelical Christians involved in politics. Grant me the liberty to make some general observations.

A majority of Christians (both those *born-again*<sup>2</sup> as well as those who assume the label in a more broad sense) have been engaged, on and off, in the realm of politics for the past two thousand years. Current generations of Europeans and Americans somehow seem unaware of the broad sweep of Christian political involvement and positive influence upon a great number of societies and cultures<sup>3</sup>.

The rise of secularism as a philosophy and purely secular government, both in Europe and now in America, are historical aberrations in the sweep of Western civilization. Dr. Francis Schaeffer was one of several evangelicals who sought to analyze and explain the rise and spread of secularism using his chain of influence model: philosophy > art > music > general culture > theology. I hope you continue to enjoy what he has to say.

American secularists, in the opinion of many Christians, are making a conscious effort to re-write the Christian religion out of history<sup>4</sup>, since they have successfully expunged it from American public education.

Modern day secularists, atheists, and liberals are generally angry, and in some cases enraged, over the fact that evangelical Christians in America re-engaged society at the political level, beginning in the decade of the '60s. Charles Colson makes this point in this *Speaking of Faith* discussion -> "[3 Generations.](#)" For the record, I don't consider Boyd or Claiborne "evangelical" in the historical sense of the term.

This re-engagement occurred following an unfortunate 100-year hiatus<sup>5</sup> (1850-1950) in which evangelicals had more-or-less abandoned the political realm. The abandonment was an overreaction to 1) the "social gospel"

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<sup>1</sup> Orthodox Presbyterians (OPs) believe in "family/covenant" salvation, which is contrary to the belief of a majority of American evangelicals. OPs believe children are automatically saved (born again) by reason of "covenant" relationship together with "infant" paedobaptism. Understandably, Frank grew up under this illusion. I believe this was part of his dad's "crisis of faith" mentioned in his *Crazy for God*, Os Guinness's response comments ("[Fathers and Sons](#)"), and the NPR interview. As brilliant as Francis was, his Reformation heritage was crippling in certain ways, and I believe he became aware of this. I've not spoken directly with Os, but I speculate that Francis and Edith assumed Frank was "born again," and thus should have understood and appreciated his parent's evangelical ministry. Because "family/covenant" salvation is false, Frank neither understood his father nor shared appreciation for his parent's evangelicalism. Frank was, and remains, simply religious and lost—a 'wandering soul'. There is another interpretation for the "secular moments" Frank supposedly shared with his parents, one which sails right over his head. It wasn't hypocrisy on their part; rather, his parents had given up trying to communicate at a spiritual level (1 Cor. 2:12-14) with their son.

<sup>2</sup> The English language and Scriptural term "*born again*" comes from the compound Greek verb: *anagennaō*. *Ana* means again or from above, and *gennaō* means born or to beget. An example is 1 Peter 1:23:

*"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."* New International Version (NIV).

In John 3: verses 3 and 7, the Greek adverb *anōthen*, meaning anew, or from above, accompanies the simple verb *gennaō*. The NIV reads:

*"In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

*"You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"*

<sup>3</sup> [What's So Great About Christianity](#), Dinesh D'Souza, Regnery Publishing, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> One of dozens of examples: [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2008462123\\_center03.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2008462123_center03.html)

emphasis of [theological liberalism](#), and 2) orthodoxy's loss of mainline denominational control to liberalism (the "New Theology" mentioned by F. Schaeffer).

Ironically, many liberals feel conservative Christians forfeited their right to full civic/political participation and thus view the re-engagement as an unwelcomed intrusion into realms that are now theirs to possess and control. They believe themselves fully justified when engaging in efforts to disenfranchise and marginalize evangelical Christians. Separation of 'church and state'! Genuine evangelicals find this imposed 'second-class' citizenship and the Left's belligerency unacceptable.

The widespread Christian "re-engagement" set the stage for what we know today as the "culture wars." An exposé by Ronald Nash entitled, [Why the Left Is Not Right: The Religious Left : Who They Are and What They Believe](#), Zondervan, 1996, pretty much nails it. Two reviewers write:

No one, it seems, ever talks about the Religious Left in America. Well, this book does. In fact, it is probably still the only detailed examination of the movement. Thoroughly researched, the book offers important information about the political left's attempt to gain control of evangelical Christian institutions.

And

Ronald H. Nash in "Why the Left is Not Right," has written a much-needed treatment explaining who the Religious Left is and what they believe. This book answers many questions no doubt put forth by conservative Christians who are totally baffled by this group.

This book is not a comprehensive refutation of liberal Christian biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. Instead, Nash chronicles the antics of the so-called Christian Left whose god is really Marx, but who try to hide their Marxian golden calf inside a Christian facade.

Since the main emphasis of the Christian Left is liberal social policy involving economics, Nash does take time to refute what the Left considers to be the biblical basis for socialism (as weak as this basis turns out to be.) He also gives a basic economics lesson to the reader demonstrating why the Religious Left's preferred methods of "economic justice" simply won't work. Nash states, "[T]he Left's economic illiteracy is responsible for several of its more serious errors, such as its attack on capitalism. When it comes to economics, the Left simply has had no idea what it is talking about." [\[It is not capitalism that's to blame for our current economic crisis, rather the libertarian application. drs\]](#)

Nash also profiles three leaders of the Christian Left: [JIM WALLIS](#), Tony Campolo and Ron Sider - including mini-biographies of each, detailing their past leftist radicalism. [\[By the way, Gregory Boyd is also, more-or-less in the Wallis/Campolo/Sider camp. All of these men are indebted, directly or indirectly, to the religious views of the radical Anabaptist/Mennonite John Howard Yoder. I'm not interested in refuting the views of Yoder, but rather calling attention to Yoder's influence upon the Religious Left. drs\]](#)

Overall, Nash demonstrates that the Christian Left is not an authentic representation of biblical Christianity. As he writes, "...the far-left extremists have not been faithful to the social message of the Scriptures. They have simply surrendered to the prevailing ideology of the political Left and have read the content of that message into God's Word." In other words, the Christian Left is simply attempting to fit a Marxian square peg into the Christian round hole.

No such evangelical re-engagement has occurred in Europe. So today, Europeans are in the process of even secularizing their national churches. Read Albert Mohler's comments here: [http://www.albertmohler.com/blog\\_print.php?id=2894](http://www.albertmohler.com/blog_print.php?id=2894)

By His sovereign love, grace, and mercy,

Dan

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<sup>5</sup> The dynamics of the period are well documented by historians of all perspectives. Back when you sent me the book by Gregory Boyd, I mentioned the far more objective and scholarly work, *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*, edited by Christian Smith, University of California Press, 2003. See the Table of Contents here: [http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0520235614/ref=sib\\_dp\\_pt#reader-link](http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0520235614/ref=sib_dp_pt#reader-link)