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"I'm Just Making a Point": Francis Schaeffer and the Irony of Faithful Christian Scholarship

Barry Hankins, Baylor University

In the 1970s, Christian philosopher and Wheaton professor Arthur Holmes attended a Francis Schaeffer lecture during which Schaeffer gave his rather standard critique of existentialism, stressing how it was the antithesis of Christianity. Many evangelicals recall this line of Schaeffer reasoning, one that usually included his treatment of Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard. As was often the case, Schaeffer's lecture lacked the sort of nuance and balance that scholars such as Holmes take for granted. Schaeffer painted with broad strokes in order to develop a portrait of the world of ideas where Christian thinking was on one side and secular thinking, such as existentialism, on the other, the two standing in antithesis to one another.[1]

Taken aback by Schaeffer's oversimplified portrayal of existentialism, Holmes caught up with Schaeffer outside the lecture hall and asked if he were aware of the more positive existentialist philosophers such as Martin Buber or Gabriel Marcel, or some philosophy of language that dealt with classical philosophical questions, as opposed to just defining words, as Schaeffer had characterized the philosophy of language. Schaeffer answered, "Oh yes, but I'm just making a point."[2]

Making a point was Schaeffer's specialty, and he often did it with great rhetorical skill. In doing so, he inspired many young evangelicals to become scholars by convincing them that the Christian faith was relevant in all areas of culture. But what kind of model of Christian intellectual life did Schaeffer provide, and how did he react when some of the Christian scholars he had inspired took issue with him? In the early 1980s we get a glimpse of this through a debate that pitted Mark Noll and George Marsden on one side and Francis and Franky Schaeffer on the other. The debate reveals that while Schaeffer had inspired a generation of Christian young people to become scholars, he had little idea of what scholars actually do. Moreover, the debate reveals that by the 1980s Schaeffer's notion of Christian apologetics was wrapped in the American flag, as he argued that the United States had been founded on a uniquely Christian base.

[1] Much of this article is excerpted from Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer: Fundamentalist Prophet of American Culture* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, forthcoming).

[2] Thomas V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics: A Critique*, Foreword by Arthur Holmes, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987), 7.

Francis August Schaeffer IV was born in 1912 in the Germantown area of Philadelphia. According to family lore, the doctor who delivered Schaeffer was so drunk that he forgot to legally register the birth. Not until 1947, when he applied for a passport, did Schaeffer learn that he had no official birth certificate. Schaeffer grew up in a working class family with little appreciation for high culture or the things of the mind. The family was only nominally Christian, occasionally attending the mainline Presbyterian Church in Germantown. Schaeffer attended Germantown High School, where he was listed in his senior yearbook as "FRAN, Friendly, Restless, Ambitious, Nonchalent." He was his class secretary and was listed as "a straight shoot'n youngster and an enthusiastic member of the Engineering Club."[3]

Schaeffer would later recall his conversion experience as a highly intellectual event. At the age of seventeen, as the story goes, he was enlisted by his Sunday School teacher to tutor a Russian immigrant in English. Schaeffer went to the local bookstore to purchase an English grammar book, but the store proprietor sent him home with a book of ancient Greek philosophy by mistake. Intrigued, Schaeffer began reading the ancient Greeks and was fascinated. He came to believe that Greek philosophers had raised several important questions but had provided unsatisfactory answers. Schaeffer said that since he was reading ancient Greek philosophy, he decided also to give the Bible a try. As he put it later, "In my reading of philosophy I saw that there were innumerable problems that nobody was giving answers for. But in the Bible I began to find answers, not individual answers that shot down problems one at a time, but a series of answers that bound all the problems together. The Bible, it struck me, dealt with man's problems in a sweeping, all-encompassing thrust."[4] In conjunction with his study of the Bible, Schaeffer attended a tent revival meeting held by evangelist Anthony Zeoli. Zeoli was a product of the streets of Philadelphia and had served time in prison for crimes related to drug and alcohol use. After someone gave him a Bible, he was converted and emerged from prison as an evangelist. Roughly six months after Schaeffer's reading of the ancient Greeks and the Bible, he attended a Zeoli meeting and was converted.

After graduating from high school, Schaeffer attended the Drexel Institute for a semester, where he studied engineering. This was in accordance with his parents' desire that he learn something "useful." Schaeffer yearned for a broader education, however, and wound up transferring to Hampden-Sydney College, an all-male Presbyterian school in Virginia that he had heard about from his Sunday School teachers in Germantown.

[3] "Day of Discovery: The Story of Francis and Edith Schaeffer," Part I, (video) (RBC Ministries, n.d.). The yearbook photo and words describing Schaeffer appear in the video.

[4] Schaeffer, "Why and How I Write My Books," *Eternity*, March 1973, 64. See also Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason*, 264. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Schaeffer's books are from Francis Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 5 vols. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982).

While Schaeffer always portrayed the church of his youth as mainline and liberal, there seems to have been some evangelical influence there in the form of these Sunday School teachers. Hampden-Sydney had been founded in 1775 as the southernmost version of the Log College phenomenon of the First Great Awakening. Patrick Henry and James Madison were on the original board, the school name was suggested by John Witherspoon, and the first president was Samuel Stanhope Smith, a Princeton alum and influential Christian intellectual. By the time Schaeffer arrived, Hampden-Sydney, like the mainline Presbyterian denomination itself, was coming under the influence of theological liberalism, but to what degree is difficult to say. Schaeffer remembered the president, chaplain, and Bible professor as being orthodox.

After graduating from Hampden-Sydney in 1935, Schaeffer went to Westminster Theological Seminary, back in his hometown of Philadelphia. Westminster had been formed in 1929, when J. Gresham Machen left Princeton Seminary as a result of the moderate/liberal party's victory in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy there. While Schaeffer may well have found his way to Westminster on his own, his wife Edith was instrumental in his selection of a seminary, as she was in almost all areas of Schaeffer's life. Edith and Francis met at a youth meeting at the Germantown Presbyterian Church. Edith Seville was reared in a warmly evangelical home. Her mother and father met in China as part of the China Inland Mission. Edith was born in China in 1914 and lived there for the first years of her life, before her family returned to the United States. After pastoring in Newburgh, New York, Edith's father became editor of the magazine *China's Millions*, which moved its headquarters to Germantown when Edith was in high school. There she met Francis, after both stood to refute a liberal speaker at a Presbyterian youth rally. They dated, mostly by letter, while Francis was at Hampden-Sydney, then married in 1935, just before Francis enrolled at Westminster. Edith's father was friends with Robert Dick Wilson, an evangelical Princeton Seminary professor and colleague of Machen's, and Edith's defense of the faith at that Presbyterian youth rally consisted mostly of quotes from Wilson and Machen. One of the couple's early dates consisted of their reading and discussing passages from Machen's classic *Christianity and Liberalism*.

Before Schaeffer's third year of seminary, Westminster underwent a schism, as several faculty and students left to form Faith Seminary in Wilmington, Delaware. Schaeffer was among those who left and became one of the first graduates of Faith–and, allegedly, the first minister ordained in the Bible Presbyterian Church, which had been formed by the Faith Seminary group. Among the leaders of Faith Seminary and the Bible Presbyterian Church was the fundamentalist firebrand Carl McIntire. McIntire became well-known for his relentless attack on all things liberal; and, for a decade from 1938 to 1947, Schaeffer pastored in this classic militant fundamentalist context. In 1947, the denomination selected Schaeffer to be a fundamentalist missionary in post-War Europe. The Bible Presbyterians planned to plant fundamentalist churches while theologically liberal denominations were still recovering from the war, thus saving Europe for the gospel. While Europe would not be transformed as Schaeffer hoped, the move to Europe had a profound and transformative effect on him. Put simply, he concluded that the

nitpicking battles that McIntire and the Bible Presbyterians usually engaged in were insignificant in a European culture where young people were struggling with existentialism and other philosophies that were the antithesis of a Christian worldview.

By 1955, Schaeffer had wearied of McIntire and the other hardliners, and he and Edith severed their ties with the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions, the institution that had sent them to Europe eight years earlier. Through a set of fortuitous and possibly providential circumstances, they were able to buy a chalet in Huemoz, Switzerland, where they started L'Abri, "the shelter." Over the next ten years, a time when the Schaeffers hardly set foot in America, European and American college students began to hear about L'Abri, which became a sort of Christian commune where young people could stop off and talk about the big issues of life. A typical evening at L'Abri saw Schaeffer sitting on an elevated chair that was cut from an old barrel, while the young people below–many of them into drugs, sex, alternative lifestyles, radical political groups, eastern religions and New Religious Movements–asked him questions. Typically, a question might take forty-five seconds, and Schaeffer's answer forty-five minutes. All this eventually led to Schaeffer's being invited to Boston to lecture to students in 1964. From that time forward he traveled a regular circuit of speaking tours across the Christian colleges of America. The lectures were taped, the tapes transcribed, and the transcriptions edited into books. Among the earliest and most famous were *The God Who is There* (1968), *Escape from Reason* (1968), and *He is There and is not Silent* (1972), which came to be called Schaeffer's trilogy. Through these and the rest of his more than twenty books, Schaeffer became known popularly as the most influential evangelical intellectual of the era. Indeed, he became an evangelical star.

In an era when evangelical denominations and colleges were still under the fundamentalist influence of cultural separatism, Schaeffer spoke a message of cultural and intellectual engagement that was unlike anything most college-age young people had heard, and it was invigorating. He became an inspiration for many evangelical college kids to go to graduate school and become Christian scholars, and that is when some of the trouble began for Schaeffer. Most of those who were inspired by Schaeffer to take seriously matters of the mind found that when it came to the intellectual history of western culture, the details of Schaeffer's arguments were problematic to say the least. Few who studied philosophy, to take a primary example from Schaeffer's line of thinking, could accept his view that the move toward secular humanism began with Aquinas and was completed by Kierkegaard. And this is to say nothing of Schaeffer's pitting the Renaissance and Reformation against each other, as if the former were the complete antithesis of the latter. Details aside, however, most of those who were inspired by Schaeffer look back to him with a significant level of appreciation for alerting them to the importance of Christian scholarship. He remains an inspiration and early mentor for a whole generation of Christian scholars today.

The debate that pitted Noll and Marsden against the Schaeffers started in conjunction with Schaeffer's final book, *A Christian Manifesto* (1981). The book was a call to Christian Right activism. Schaeffer wrote *Manifesto* with the help of The

Rutherford Institute founder John Whitehead. Whitehead was a young lawyer who converted from the life of a drug-using, quasi-hippy to the Christian faith through reading Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), which Whitehead originally purchased because he thought it was science fiction. After becoming a Christian, Whitehead turned his law practice toward defending the rights of Christians who had been discriminated against because of their faith. His first notable breakthrough was a case in San Francisco in 1980, where the tiny First Orthodox Presbyterian Church found itself in violation of a city ordinance protecting gays because the church had fired its homosexual organist. Whitehead won the case when a judge ruled that churches have a First Amendment right to hire staff in accordance with their beliefs and that such a right trumped gay rights.[5]

Not long after the case, Whitehead was dumbfounded when he received a call from Franky Schaeffer, Francis's son. Whitehead had already become an avid reader of Francis Schaeffer's books, and had come to believe that Schaeffer was correct in his argument for a deep Christian base on which the nation was founded. Both Schaeffer and Whitehead had been influenced on this issue by the Christian Reconstructionist founder, Rousas John Rushdoony. When he lived in California, Whitehead had attended Rushdoony's church, held at Westside Chapel, which was part of the mortuary where Marilyn Monroe and other famous individuals were interred. Whitehead had frequented Rushdoony's home library, which was stacked with books about America's founding era.[6] Schaeffer's interest in Rushdoony had come in the sixties. Folks at L'Abri recall his being enamored with Rushdoony and for a brief time talking almost incessantly about his writings.[7] It should be noted that while Whitehead and Schaeffer were both enamored with Rushdoony's argument for a Christian-based America, neither accepted Rushdoony's call for the reinstitution of the Old Testament as the law of the land in America. Schaeffer, for his part, saw this as part of Rushdoony's postmillennialism, which as a fundamentalist Schaeffer rejected.

Franky presented a proposition to Whitehead: If Whitehead would write a book about the Christian foundation of America, the Schaeffers would help him get it published. Franky suggested the title *The Second American Civil War.* Whitehead had

[5] See Francis Schaeffer, "Looking Back 44 Years for Lessons for Today and Tomorrow," undated, unpublished address, Schaeffer Papers, Box 4, File 55. This address was given in the summer of 1980 to about one hundred Presbyterian ministers in Pittsburgh. Schaeffer was looking back forty-four years to when fundamentalists had left the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, to form the Northern Presbyterian Church. In the address he referred to the San Francisco case. Whitehead tells of the case in John W. Whitehead, *Slaying Dragons: The Truth Behind the Man Who Defended Paula Jones* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 167-74.

[6] John W. Whitehead, Interview by author, 18 May 2005. Audio tape in author's possession.

[7] William Edgar, Interview by author, 15 February 2005. Audio tape in author's possession.

written one book on church-state relations, and he had done a lot of research in Rushdoony's library and was adept at constructing coherent legal arguments. He completed the manuscript, gave it the title *The Second American Revolution*, which he liked better than Franky's suggestion, and sent it to the Schaeffers in early 1981. Franky wrote back that his dad was so moved when he read the manuscript that he cried. This led to a meeting where the Schaeffers asked Whitehead to do the research for Francis's next book for an upfront advance and portion of the royalties. Whitehead agreed and said he would incorporate some of the material from his as yet unpublished *Second American Revolution*, so that Schaeffer's book would be a precursor. Whitehead did the research, about 130 pages, and sent it off to the Schaeffers. Schaeffer wrote back asking for further details and footnote references, and within months Schaeffer's *A Christian Manifesto* appeared, followed by *The Second American Revolution* (1982), and then Franky's film version of *The Second American Revolution* (1982). The Schaeffers envisioned the two books joining the film as "a triad the Lord can use as a unit."[8]

Whitehead's *Second American Revolution* manuscript had made Schaeffer cry, and in a different way and for different reasons that book and Schaeffer's *A Christian Manifesto* made American historians cry as well. One of these was George Marsden. The earliest available letter from a Christian scholar to Schaeffer after the appearance of *Manifesto* was from Marsden, and it was written to correct a factual error related to the Arkansas Creation Science court case of 1982. Marsden had participated in the case as an expert witness for the ACLU, testifying that Creation Science was essentially the view of only a small segment of fundamentalist Christianity, not one widely held among Christians. The implication of Marsden's testimony, and the eventual ruling of the district judge in Arkansas, was that the Arkansas law mandating the teaching of Creation Science was an unconstitutional establishment of religion because Creation Science was actually a sectarian religious view masquerading as science.[9]

Marsden wrote to Schaeffer primarily to correct an error in *Manifesto* where Schaeffer had said the Arkansas law allowed the teaching of Creation Science. The law actually mandated Creation Science. For Marsden, this turned the case from free exercise, as Schaeffer saw it, to one of "establishment of the views of a rather small group of Christians."[10] Schaeffer wrote back to Marsden, saying, "I must say, I think you were mistaken in taking an active part on the side of those who are tyrannically shutting out the possible freedom of Christians to speak in our public school system."[11] Schaeffer used

[8] Whitehead, *Slaying Dragons*, 178-88; Whitehead, Interview by author; Schaeffer to Whitehead, 22 May 1982, John Whitehead, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[9] *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*, 529 F. Supp. 1255 (1982).

[10] George Marsden to Francis Schaeffer, 15 February 1982; Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[11] Francis Schaeffer to George Marsden, 21 April 1982. Copy in author's possession.

the word "tyranny" four more times on that page of his letter to Marsden and even said that the tyranny of the public schools in America "is just as tyrannical in regard to Christian teaching as are the Soviet schools."[12]

Marsden's participation in the case also had angered Franky and helped inspire his screed against evangelical scholars, which appeared in book form as *Bad News for Modern Man* (1984). Privately, Franky wrote to a friend, "It really does not matter what Mr. Marsden's motivation was for working with the ACLU. Like sin, motivation is to be judged by God. However, as human beings we are free to judge actions and issues....There is no nice way to say that Marsden worked with the ACLU, given where the ACLU is currently coming from."[13]

Marsden had been following Francis Schaeffer's career since the sixties, having visited L'Abri himself. Marsden's first occasion to write about Schaeffer came in 1968, during one of Schaeffer's lecture tours, when Marsden was a young assistant professor at Calvin College. Marsden covered Schaeffer's visit for an underground newspaper called *The Spectacle*, where he wrote: "For a Calvin Faculty member the most startling aspect of this achievement is that Mr. Schaeffer, without displaying any particular academic credentials and with an apparent disregard for the usual academic standards and precautions, did exactly what we always have hoped to do–make Christianity appear intellectually relevant to the contemporary era."[14] Noting the strengths and weaknesses of Schaeffer's style, Marsden compared his lecture to a person sketching a map of the world in five minutes. There would be many erroneous details, but the general outline would be quite helpful. "Within a typical hour," Marden wrote, "he may present the thought of Antonioni, Aquinas, two Francis Bacons, the Beatles, Bergman, Berstein, Camus, Cezanne, Cimabue, Francis Crick, Leonardo Da Vinci, Eliot, Fellini, Gauguin, Giotto, Hegel, Heidegger, several Huxley's, Jaspers, Kierkegaard, Leary, Henry Miller, Picasso, Rousseau, Marquis de Sade, Sartre, Terry Southern, Slessinger, Tillich, and Zen Buddhism. Intellectual modesty is not Schaeffer's long suit. One might sympathize if in the audience another scholar who had spent most of his adult life trying to understand, for instance, Kierkegaard, was appalled."[15] In contrast to Calvin College at the time, which had censured the official school newspaper for suggesting that students go to movies, Schaeffer, in Marsden's words, "has seen the dirty movies, read the dirty books, and even

[12] Schaeffer to Marsden, 21 April 1982.

[13] Franky Schaeffer to Cliff Cornelius, 17 June 1983. Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession. See Franky Schaeffer, *Bad News for Modern Man: An Agenda For Christian Activism* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1984). Marsden's testimony in the Arkansas case can be accessed at the website http://www.antievolution.org/projects/mclean/new_site/pf_trans/mva_tt_marsden.html#pg62.

[14] George Marsden, "Twentieth Century Fox," *The Spectacle* 1:5 (1 November 1968): 1.

[15] Marsden, "Twentieth Century Fox," 1.

heard the dirty words, yet for all that he is a better Christian Doubtless such evident empathy for the contemporary culture accounts largely for Schaeffer's remarkable appeal "[16]

That was 1968 In 1982, Marsden was less taken by Schaeffer's five minute sketch of the world and more concerned about details, and not just the facts of the Arkansas case, but rather Schaeffer's whole interpretation of the American founding Marsden's correspondence was the beginning of a major falling out between the Schaeffers, on the one hand, and Christian historians, on the other

The dialogue between Schaeffer and Marsden, and soon other Christian scholars as well, heated up in November 1982 after Kenneth Woodward wrote a one-page article on Schaeffer in *Newsweek* entitled, "Guru of Fundamentalism " In the article Woodward quoted Arthur Holmes as saying, "Many of our students arrive here [at Wheaton] with some exposure to Schaeffer We then use Schaeffer as an example how not to do philosophy "[17] Holmes had said many positive things about Schaeffer as well, none of which were quoted [18] Wheaton professor and historian Mark Noll was also quoted in the *Newsweek* article, saying, "The danger is that people will take [Schaeffer] for a scholar, which he is not Evangelical historians are especially bothered by his simplified myth of America's Christian past "[19] Like Holmes, Noll had also told Woodward much that was positive about Schaeffer's influence, but Woodward quoted only the negative [20]

After the article appeared, Noll wrote a letter to Schaeffer, in which he said, "I apologize if my comment on your work in a recent NEWSWEEK did you unintended harm I was quoted correctly but also very incompletely " Among the positive things Noll told Woodward were that Schaeffer was a very effective evangelist, a beneficial influence in the recent history of conservative Protestantism, and that Schaeffer had pioneered in fundamentalist-evangelical circles an interest in the importance of the history of ideas and in taking the arts more seriously [21] Noll explained why he said that Schaeffer was not a scholar "[Y]our work does not take advantage of the crucial technical studies (often by Christians) which illuminate the past " This, of course, was true *Manifesto* was based on Whitehead's research, not the findings of professional historians Whitehead was a lawyer with little training in history Noll told Schaeffer that, after ten years of study on the American founding era, he had concluded that "it is very difficult to see explicit biblical influence on the founding documents of the United States or in the political

[16] Marsden, "Twentieth Century Fox," 6

[17] Quoted in Kenneth Woodward, "Guru of Fundamentalism," *Newsweek* (1 November 1982) 88

[18] Arthur Holmes, Interview by author, 18 May 2004

[19] Quoted in Woodward, "Fundamentalist Guru," 88

[20] Mark Noll, Interview by author, 18 May 2004

[21] Mark Noll to Francis Schaeffer, 3 November 1982, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

thinking of even the evangelical Founders like John Witherspoon." Noll pointed out that Witherspoon based his lectures at Princeton on Scottish thinker Francis Hutcheson "whom [Jonathan] Edwards rightly opposed for letting ideas of natural capacities become more important than convictions concerning regenerate righteousness."[22] In other words, Noll told Schaeffer that even the thought of an evangelical Calvinist such as Witherspoon was based more on nature than on the Bible. Moreover, with regard to seventeenth century Scottish thinker Samuel Rutherford, whom Schaeffer had held up as the key influence on the founders, Noll told Schaeffer that Rutherford and his treatise *Lex Rex* had no influence on Witherspoon, and by implication on any other founder as well. This letter touched off a year-long round of correspondence among Noll, Marsden, and Schaeffer, largely about the Christian influence on America's founding.

The same day that Noll wrote to Schaeffer, he also sent a letter to Woodward in which he lamented that the *Newsweek* religion editor had used none of the positive things Noll had said about Schaeffer. "I wish your article on Francis Schaeffer could have quoted some of my positive estimates of his overall value. I would also have appreciated a stronger awareness of Schaeffer's beneficial place in the history of fundamentalists and evangelicals." Noll acknowledged, however, that he did not find Woodward's article offensive. "And," he wrote, "I think you are exactly right on the way in which the Far Right is co-opting Schaeffer. It might interest you to know that during the 1960s, Schaeffer was an inspiration to some evangelicals on the political left."[23]

Apparently Woodward never responded to Noll, but Schaeffer replied with a twelve-page, double-spaced, typed letter, telling Noll he had been naïve to think Woodward would not use the quotes the way he did. Schaeffer then moved to the more substantive issue of the American founding. Along with his original letter to Schaeffer, Noll had sent an essay entitled "The Bible in Revolutionary America." Schaeffer responded primarily to the essay in his first letter replying to Noll. Schaeffer believed that Noll was demanding proof texts from the American founding fathers–in other words, places where the founders cited chapter and verse from scriptural passages that influenced them. By way of analogy, Schaeffer said that while he often did not cite chapter and verse from the Bible in his writings, Noll would surely acknowledge that Schaeffer's work was biblically based. Similarly, without citing verses of scripture, the founders' writings were biblical, Schaeffer argued. He said there were two errors to avoid: 1) to baptize the founders as wholly Christian; and, 2) to insist on finding proof texts instead of broad biblical knowledge on the part of the founders. Schaeffer believed he avoided the first pitfall but that Noll had slipped into the second, the result being that the founders were rejected as unbiblical in their thinking. Schaeffer insisted that America's founding fathers

[22] Noll to Schaeffer, 3 November 1982.

[23] Noll to Kenneth Woodward, 3 November 1982, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

"showed more biblical influence politically than today's 'evangelicals' are showing in comprehension and leadership in today's cultural and political situation "[24] Slipped into the argument was Schaeffer's query as to why Noll could not acknowledge the biblical influence in the founders' work, *especially when the stakes were so high in the cultural battles of the time* (emphasis mine) In other words, Schaeffer was telling Noll that his view of the past should be shaped by the incipient culture war that was beginning to take shape in the early 1980s The idea of writing history without a political agenda—that is, merely to get the story straight—was difficult for Schaeffer to grasp

Noll rejected Schaeffer's analogy about proof texts, saying that he did not need to see proof texts to know that Schaeffer's commentary about the arts was biblically informed This was because Noll knew that Schaeffer had spent his life trying to bring his thinking under the authority of scripture The situation with founders such as Jefferson and Franklin, however, was different, because they had spent their lives trying to evade the authority of scripture James Madison was at best ambiguous about biblical authority, while Witherspoon and other explicitly evangelical founders deliberately set aside the Bible and the whole category of revelation when they entered the political arena [25]

For Noll, all this meant that there was very little to go back to in the founders in terms of finding a Christian approach to politics There simply was no distinctly Christian or biblical foundation in their work Noll acknowledged that there was a good deal of biblical influence in early America, much more than today, but he rejected the idea that the founding era was marked by explicitly or even substantively Christian thinking about politics In a passage that must have sent Schaeffer over the edge–in his view that Noll, Marsden, and other Christian scholars were suspect–Noll told Schaeffer that he did not see how Christians "who took the Bible seriously and who understood the course of events in the 1760's and 1770's as they really were, could have supported the American Revolution "[26] From Noll's perspective, there was no tyranny in the form of a British attack on fundamental rights "In this regard," he wrote, "the series of charges against George III in the Declaration of Independence constituted propaganda of the most irresponsible kind "[27] Noll then argued that rather than looking to America's past for the answer to current moral dilemmas in America, it would be more helpful to look for continuity between the sins and omissions of America's founding, and the current social and cultural conditions that Schaeffer decried, abortion being prime among them Whereas Schaeffer argued that *Roe v Wade* showed that an America based on secular

[24] Francis Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 20 November 1982, 9, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

[25] Mark Noll to Francis Schaeffer, 8 December 1982, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

[26] Noll to Schaeffer, 8 December 1982

[27] Noll to Schaeffer, 8 December 1982

humanism had resulted in dehumanization, Noll pointed out the similarities between *Roe v. Wade* and the Dred Scott decision of 1857, where the Supreme Court ruled that slaves were property and thus could not gain freedom merely by escaping to free territory. The implication of the decision was that no state or territory could outlaw slavery, just as after *Roe v. Wade* no state could outlaw abortion. "Early America was more theistic than popular culture today," he acknowledged, "but so inconsistently and with so many lapses is [sic] very difficult to regard it as a proper guide."[28]

Noll's wholesale refutation of the core argument of *Manifesto* became a Schaeffer obsession. At L'Abri, Schaeffer would check the mail each day to see if there was a letter from Noll. If there was, he would immediately become absorbed in Noll's argument, then write a response. He would read his response to others at L'Abri to see what they thought. He wanted the entire community to be engaged in the conversation. Some who were staying at L'Abri at the time worried that Schaeffer was too absorbed in this question about the Christian nature of America's founding and about criticism of his views by Christian scholars.[29]

Schaeffer's thin skin, and his view that there was a culture war that necessitated that Christians stand together, revealed themselves in letters he wrote to Whitehead at the same time he was corresponding with Noll and Marsden. In one letter, Schaeffer wrote: "[Noll's] view of history and toning down the Christian influences in the early founding of the country is, unhappily, a rather prevalent one among a number of 'weak Christians' and does influence definitely in colleges like Wheaton and Calvin. Of course, if this view prevailed it would wipe out *A Christian Manifesto* and the book and film *The Second American Revolution*—happily his is not correct historically but it is one more threat in any kind of a clear stand today."[30] A few months later Schaeffer began lumping Christian historians who did not believe in America's Christian-based founding with evangelicals who were weak on the inerrancy of scripture and with political liberals. Schaeffer wrote:

> I think with Noll and others like Ronald Wells at Calvin, however, that it is something deeper. I am convinced that they really wish to flatten out the difference between what the country was and what it is. If this is not conscious at least it seems to be an obsession. I am increasingly convinced that this stream of 'Christian historians' is one more element, along with those who devaluate the Scripture and those who confuse the socialistic program with the kingdom of God, who really must be challenged. This is not only a necessary thing if there is going to be a battle fought that needs to be fought against the collapse of our generation, but especially if the students in these Christian

[28] Noll to Schaeffer, 8 December 1982.

[29] Edgar, Interview by author.

[30] Francis Schaeffer to John Whitehead, 25 November 1982, John Whitehead, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

schools are really going to be any help at all in trying to turn around the sad situation which we face [31]

Schaeffer was not talking behind Noll's back In April 1983, he asked Noll outright, "I am curious—I have wondered whether you also hold this weakened view of Scripture?"[32] While Schaeffer said that there was no necessary connection between a weak view of scripture and a weak view of the Christian base of America's founding, the latter clearly made him suspicious about the former, and Schaeffer at times accused Noll of unwittingly joining the anti-Christian side of the culture war "And to seem to join the deliberate debunkers who mean to cause the U S , including the Christians, to be anesthetized as to the present consensus of all nature and no grace in the stream of life, is negative and not a positive contribution," he wrote to Noll "In summary, I am sorry but I do think unless you change the direction of your writing toward the direction I have suggested above that you will prove to be as destructive in the midst of the severe needs of our day as you did in not realizing how Ken Woodward would use you as he did "[33]

Schaeffer's words revealed a clear disconnect between himself and Noll, Marsden, and other Christian scholars He had written *Manifesto* not as a dispassionate historical treatise, but as a tract in the culture wars His agenda was to mobilize evangelicals politically, to get them to do something While all scholars work from a point of view and even have scholarly agendas, Noll and Marsden were far less concerned than Schaeffer about the immediate political consequences of their interpretation of the past They wanted almost the opposite of what Schaeffer hoped to accomplish Rather than inspiring evangelicals to act, Noll and Marsden wanted evangelicals to stop acting and engage in sober reflection As Noll wrote a decade later in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* "The tendency of American evangelicals, when confronted with a problem, is to act For the sake of Christian thinking, that tendency must be suppressed "[34] Noll believed that the kind of agenda-laden call to arms Schaeffer presented in *Manifesto* undercut the sort of Christian reflection that Schaeffer had been advocating throughout his career He responded to Schaeffer's charges by saying, "In return, I would say that you should not undermine what you are trying to do by an unduly favorable opinion of the nation's founding "[35]

[31] Francis Schaeffer to John Whitehead, 14 January 1983, John Whitehead, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

[32] Francis Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 25 April 1983, 3, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

[33] Francis Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 20 December 1982, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

[34] Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Michigan Eerdmans, 1994), 243

[35] Mark Noll to Francis Schaeffer, 13 January 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

The same day that Noll wrote those words, Marsden also composed a letter to Schaeffer. Marsden was privy to the Noll-Schaeffer debate and decided to jump back into the fray in January 1983. He assured Schaeffer that while it was possible that anti-Christian forces might use the scholarship of Noll and himself for ill ends, this was certainly not their motive; neither was this something they could control. He reminded Schaeffer of the super-patriotic evangelists in the Christian Right who were using Schaeffer's *Manifesto* in ways he did not intend, specifically to mix Christian faith and patriotism. Like Noll, Marsden again tried to educate Schaeffer as to what Christian scholars do. The first goal is to be accurate, not to fashion a story that is useful for an agenda, however just that agenda might be, Marsden chided Schaeffer. In a more critical vein, Marsden charged Schaeffer with his own inconsistency, in that throughout his career as a Christian author he had argued that Aquinas and theological liberals were similarly guilty of creating a nature/grace dualism, yet America's founding fathers seemed to get a free pass when they engaged in the same type of thinking. Elaborating on Noll's arguments, Marsden charged that at no time in the history of Christianity had the nature/grace dichotomy that Schaeffer had criticized for two decades been more prevalent than in Britain and her colonies in the eighteenth century. Portraying such thinking as broadly Christian, as long as it was not militantly anti-Christian like the French Revolution, was in Marsden's view precisely what had opened the door for the twentieth century secular revolution that he, Noll, and Schaeffer all lamented.[36]

Marsden offered Schaeffer a syllogism: 1) If America's founding was, as Schaeffer had begun to admit in his letters, merely a mixture of Christian and non-Christian themes; and, 2) If you designate that mixture as "Biblical, Biblically-based, Judeo-Christian, Reformation-based, Christian, and the like," all of which Schaeffer had; then, 3) "You are appearing to (even if you do not intend to) attribute the authority of God's Word to what is in reality a compromise between Biblical and extra-Biblical influences." Marsden listed a "corollary": 4) "It is such confusions, i.e. designating large sections of the American heritage as more-or-less Christian, that have helped lower the guard of Christians in distinguishing what is truly Biblical from what is merely part of their cultural heritage."[37] The result, therefore, was that Christians in twentieth century America had actually facilitated the development of secularism by failing to recognize the absence of Christian influence in much of America's founding or by confusing the secular or natural with Christian ways of thinking.

Editor Lane Dennis of Crossway Books, which had published *Manifesto,* was also privy to the correspondence among Noll, Marsden, and Schaeffer, and Dennis tried to play the role of mediator. He suggested that Noll did not give enough credit to the

[36] George Marsden to Francis Schaeffer, 12 January 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[37] Marsden to Schaeffer, 13 January 1982.

influence of the Christian ethos in America's founding, while Schaeffer did not give enough credit to the non-Christian Enlightenment influences Dennis believed that the delicate balance or harmony between the Christian and Enlightenment influences in the nation's founding was lost as the Enlightenment began to take over [38] In an addendum to his letter, Dennis also took Noll to task for his comment to *Newsweek*, saying that the quote was unfortunate and that Woodward was not interested in being fair to Schaeffer, but rather wanted to distort his views to achieve his own agenda "But I think the quote was also unfortunate because it was untrue," Dennis wrote Using Webster's dictionary, which defined "scholar" as merely "a learned man," Dennis argued that Schaeffer was indeed a scholar "The effect of the *Newsweek* quote was to leave the impression that since Dr Schaeffer is not a 'scholar' he is therefore a charlatan " Dennis also rejected Noll's view that Schaeffer held to a myth of a Christian America [39]

The criticisms notwithstanding, Noll thanked Dennis for his analysis, commending him for stating the case well Seemingly weary after three months of letters on this topic, Noll also wrote, "I am regretting more and more the preemptive strike in Newsweek " Acknowledging that he should have known what Woodward would do with his quote, Noll continued, "In sum, I am afraid that the Newsweek piece badly damaged the chance for constructive and edifying dialogue, which the book is seeking And for this I am mostly to blame "[40]

If Francis Schaeffer was worked up about Noll's and Marsden's interpretation of the founding fathers, it is no surprise that the petulant Franky would be even more irate He jumped into the debate with a letter to Noll the week after Noll had first written to apologize to Francis Twelve days before his father said the same thing, Franky wrote to Noll saying he was naive for making a negative statement to Woodward and *Newsweek* "[W]hat I do find unfortunate is what I must regard as an example par excellence of the political naiveté which accompanies so much real or imagined 'Christian' scholarship "" Continuing, he said that *Newsweek* had tried to get a negative remark out of him in a recent interview about another person, but failed and did not quote him "Had I wanted to see my name in print (for some unknown reason), or had I been a 'Christian scholar' attempting to 'give all points of view,' they would have found something substantial and,

[38] Lane Dennis to Francis Schaeffer, Mark Noll, and Franky Schaeffer, 16 February 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession Apparently, Will Barker, President of Covenant Theological Seminary, also attempted to mediate the dispute Francis Schaeffer to William S Barker, 27 August 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession Also, William S Barker, Interview by author, 12 March 2005 Audio tape in author's possession

[39] Dennis to Schaeffer, Noll, and Schaeffer, 16 February, addendum B

[40] Mark Noll to Lane Dennis, 18 February 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence Xerox copy in author's possession

I dare say, nasty to lend weight to their argument." Peeved that Noll had said his father was not a scholar, Franky wrote in a P.S., "I must add that I find your reasoning in regard to why you do not consider my father 'a scholar' provincial nit-picking in the extreme." Mocking Noll's first letter to Francis, Franky responded, "I read you when you say, 'Your work does not take advantage of the crucial technical studies (often by Christians) which illuminate the past. I have, for instance, spent much of the last ten years...' as really saying, that in order for Dad to be a scholar in your eyes he should have quoted you and your associates more frequently! The 'Christian' academic community has a well deserved reputation for clannish irrelevance which can surely only be enhanced (if that's the word) by those who would make such pettily arrogant distinctions about what is or is not scholarship"[41]

When Noll wrote back to Franky he included an addendum on scholarship in which he defined the term again, listed several Christian scholars of American history, and said that none of them had ever concluded that the United States government had been founded on a biblical base. Noll closed, "Those in our day who draw such conclusions–and then urge Christians to take public action on the basis of those conclusions–have themselves a burden to show how they can (apparently) disregard all of this excellent work." As he had with Francis, Noll also cited for Franky America's sorry record in dealing with African-Americans, Native-Americans, and other underrepresented minorities, and he argued that if the U.S. government stepped into the abortion issue to defend the unborn, "it would represent a great and glorious break with precedent, and it would contradict an entire history of benign neglect or active persecution of the unrepresented."[42]

Noll's response had a profound, even if momentary, impact on Franky, who responded with an apology for his earlier letter, which was, in Franky's words, "full of peek [sic] and ill humor." Franky said it was one of those letters that was written but should never have been sent.[43] He followed with a reasoned and at times eloquent plea that Noll carefully reconsider how the facts and interpretations of history could either serve or stand in the way of the Christian effort to battle the cultural forces of hostility to the faith. As was the case for Noll and Francis Schaeffer, Noll and Franky disagreed over the purpose of writing history. Franky believed that historical interpretation should serve the interest of the evangelical cultural agenda. This is why the Schaeffers would not publicly criticize Jerry Falwell's mixing of Christianity and patriotism, even though they

[41] Franky Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 8 November 1982, 1-3, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[42] Mark Noll to Franky Schaeffer, 7 December 1982, 1-2, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[43] Franky Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 15 December 1982, 1, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

had private misgivings about Falwell. In his letters to Noll, Franky distanced himself from Falwell's "God and Country fundamentalism," yet praised Falwell's efforts for good.[44] Noll, by contrast, believed that the Schaeffers and by implication the entire Christian Right, including Falwell, were unlikely to find proper remedies for the present if their views of the past were skewed.

Franky's soft side would be brief. The next year he published *Bad News for Modern Man,* lambasting Christian colleges, evangelical publishers, and Christian scholars, Marsden and Ronald Wells by name, attacking their motives as well as their interpretations. Franky lumped Wells and Marsden into a "revisionist throng" that was downplaying America's Judeo-Christian heritage and called Marsden's testimony in the Arkansas Creation Science case perhaps "the most blatant example of the evangelical sell-out [to liberal culture]."[45] Franky did not mention Noll by name, but referenced evangelical historians who quibble about whether the Enlightenment or the Reformation had more influence in America's founding, which was ironic given that Francis had brought up the issue in the first place in *Manifesto.*

Marsden tried to intervene with Crossway editor Lane Dennis in early 1984, before Franky's book was even published, requesting that Dennis require Franky to soften or remove offensive references like the ones that had appeared in an earlier article. In reply, Dennis told Marsden he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade Franky to moderate his criticism. Even though Dennis was not a young earth proponent, as Creation Science teaches, he lamented Marsden's participation in the Arkansas case, believing that such testimony against Creation Science was unproductive for the evangelical cause. He then defended Franky on abortion, calling him "the Stokely Carmichael" of the pro-life movement.[46] Marsden wrote back to Dennis, parodying Dennis's logic. "[S]ince Franky is doing such good consciousness raising on the abortion issue," Marsden wrote sarcastically, "it is alright that he attempts to damage the reputation of fellow Christians on other issues."[47] Dennis attended the same church as Noll and several other Wheaton College professors, and the rift created by Crossway's publication of Franky's book, with its repeated criticism of Wheaton, became a point of tension within the congregation.[48]

The degree to which the Schaeffers found Noll's and Marsden's interpretation of American history disconcerting paled when compared to their reaction to Ronald Wells's interpretation of the Reformation. Wells published in the *Reformed Journal* a review of *A*

[44] Franky Schaeffer to Noll, 15 December 1982.

[45] Franky Schaeffer, *Bad News for Modern Man,* 69 and 83, quote on 83.

[46] Lane Dennis to George Marsden, 1 March 1984, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[47] George Marsden to Lane Dennis, 6 March 1984, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[48] Roger Lundin, Interview by author, 19 May 2004. Audio tape in author's possession.

Christian Manifesto entitled, "Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad," and a year later followed with an article called, "Whatever Happened to Francis Schaeffer?," a clear play on Schaeffer's *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*. Having spent time at L'Abri in the 1960s, Wells was put off by Schaeffer's seeming move into the Christian Right. Like most Christian scholars, Wells had deep reservations about the details of Schaeffer's interpretation of western intellectual history, and he called parts of *Manifesto* "sophomoric bombast and careless simplicity."[49] Wells critiqued Schaeffer's argument that pitted the Renaissance and Reformation against each other and Schaeffer's contention that humanism was a product of the Renaissance but had no part in the Reformation. Wells argued that humanism was a methodology developed during the Renaissance and had been used to challenge authority. Given that the Protestant Reformation challenged the authority of the medieval Church, Wells went so far as to say that Protestantism was "the religious form of Renaissance humanism."[50] Schaeffer, Wells continued, missed the tragic and ironic in the story of the Reformation. The very methodology that made the Reformation possible "loosed a methodology on the world which results in modernity."[51]

In a rambling and at times incoherent letter to Noll in early March 1983, Schaeffer said he had recently read Wells's article, "Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad." Responding to Wells's view that Protestantism was "the religious form of Renaissance humanism," Schaeffer wrote, "I would suggest that if those in your school of thought are trying to be responsible and really mean to be taken seriously that this type of thing should not be allowed to come out of this school of thinking."[52] This reference to interpretations that "should not be allowed" was a harbinger of things to come from Schaeffer. Over the next several weeks he asked Noll and Marsden first to repudiate Wells then possibly to have him silenced.[53] Believing erroneously that Marsden had taken a public stand against an individual in the Christian Reformed Church who was allegedly soft on inerrancy, Schaeffer wrote, "I do not think you will mind my asking if you have taken the same energetic effort concerning this defaming of the Reformation [by Wells] as you have about Sheppard? [sic]"[54] The same day he asked Marsden to take a public stand against

[49] Ronald Wells, "Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad," *The Reformed Journal*, May 1982, 17.

[50] Wells, "Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad," 18. See also, Ronald Wells, "Whatever Happened to Francis Schaeffer?," *Reformed Journal,* May 1983, 11.

[51] Wells, "Francis Schaeffer's Jeremiad," 18.

[52] Francis Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 11 March 1983, 2, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[53] Francis Schaeffer to George Marsden, 14 March 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[54] Francis Schaeffer to George Marsden, 25 April 1983, 3, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

Wells, Schaeffer told Noll that what Wells had written about the Reformation was "about the most destructive as anything [sic] anyone could write in a journal entitled 'Reformed.'"[55]

The correspondence debate went on throughout the spring and into summer 1983, with Schaeffer intransigent and Marsden increasingly forceful in his critique of Schaeffer's and Whitehead's political project. Referencing his brief stay at L'Abri, Marsden wrote, "To be frank, I think that L'Abri was better off in the 1960s when the most politics that were around were a few tapes about Rushdoony (even though I do not share your estimate of Rushdoony as a political guide)."[56] Furthermore, Marsden told Schaeffer, political causes tend to "obscure the Gospel and divide the church if they are put into the forefront of a ministry."[57] In May, Marsden threw caution to the wind and told Schaeffer that Whitehead's *The Second American Revolution* was an "embarrassment" and Creation Science "nonsense." Whitehead's work, wrote Marsden, was a "compilation of half-truths slanted to support current causes," so much so that "it automatically loses its influence among almost everyone who knows much about contemporary scholarship on the subject (i.e. history)." Similarly, Marsden described Creation Science as "a mixture of half-truths and nonsense," and said he was "very embarrassed that my well-intentioned brothers in the faith are promoting such views."[58] Marsden tried to convince Schaeffer that if Christians were going to make any headway in the political world they were going to need moderate allies, and "Creation-science and other half-baked attempts at Christian scholarship do not help at all on this front....The problem is that when the Tim LaHaye's or (I'm afraid) the John Whitehead's get hold of these issues the crucial people you want to reach stop listening as soon as they run into the outrageous statements. Then you are left just preaching to the converted."[59]

Noll, Marsden, and fellow Christian historian Nathan Hatch believed the interpretation of America's Christian past sufficiently important to warrant their co-authoring *The Search for Christian America* (1983), which was a book-length response to Schaeffer's, Whitehead's, and the Christian Right's views. In *Manifesto*, as elsewhere in his late writings, Schaeffer bemoaned the fact that Christians had been "utterly foolish in our concentration on bits and pieces, and in our complete failure to face the total world

[55] Francis Schaeffer to Mark Noll, 25 April 1983, 2, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[56] George Marsden to Francis Schaeffer, 31 March 1983, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[57] Marsden to Schaeffer, 31 March 1983.

[58] George Marsden to Francis Schaeffer, 7 May 1983, 2, Mark Noll, personal correspondence. Xerox copy in author's possession.

[59] Marsden to Schaeffer, 7 May 1983.

view that is rooted in a false view of reality."[60] It is only an advantage to see things whole, however, if they really are whole. In other words, if the prevailing worldview of American culture is really a hodgepodge of bits and pieces, then attempting to see it whole is a distortion. Likewise, if the founding of America was a hodgepodge of influences, part Christian and part secular, then attempting to see the founding as largely Christian based is skewed. Noll, Hatch, and Marsden acknowledged the importance of Christian influences in the American Revolution. Hatch had previously written an entire book on that subject alone, as had Noll.[61] They argued in *The Search for Christian America*, however, that those who portrayed the American founding as uniquely or distinctly Christian were distorting history. Clearly, they had Schaeffer and Whitehead in mind. Unlike Schaeffer, they saw many other influences at work and also recognized, as do virtually all historians, that even the most Christian influences during the era of the American Revolution were only more or less Christian, and at times Christian themes were pressed into political causes in theologically questionable ways. The Revolutionary era in American history, while in many ways religious, was in many others the highpoint of secular Enlightenment influence until probably the mid-twentieth century.

The correspondence debate among the two Schaeffers, Noll, and Marsden, with published contributions from Wells, eventually ran its course and ended with the 1984 publication of Franky's *Bad News for Modern Man* and Noll, Hatch, and Marsden's *The Search for Christian America* as the last words.[62] So, what is left to say about Schaeffer?

As was the case with the trilogy, Schaeffer's agenda was not to fully explicate the nuances of history. Rather, he was calling Christians to the important task of worldview formation, which is perhaps his signal achievement and most lasting influence. To do this he engaged in a lot of cultural analysis, and here his influence has not been so positive. The argument that twentieth century American culture was nearly monolithic in its secular humanistic base leaves too much unexplained to be helpful; interpreting America's founding as Christian-based does likewise. Still, for all the criticism of Schaeffer's Christian Right activism and the interpretation of American history that facilitated it, Noll to this day believes that on balance Schaeffer's influence has been

[60] Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, vol. 4 (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982), 493.

[61] Nathan Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium In Revolutionary New England.* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977); and Mark Noll, *Christians in the American Revolution* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian University Press, 1977).

[62] Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch, and George Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1983), expanded edition (Boulder, Colorado: Helmers & Howard, 1989).

mostly positive within evangelicalism, because he called people to think in Christian ways about all of life and culture [63]

Still, while inspiring young evangelicals to take matters of the mind seriously and to engage culture actively, Schaeffer ended his life completely at odds with the most influential Christian historians of the era He simply could not comprehend that faithful scholarship would result in anything other than an undiluted and useful apologetic for the Christian Right side of the early culture wars As was the case the day he told Arthur Holmes that he was "just making a point" about existentialism, so it was in Schaeffer's thinking about America's founding and a variety of other issues The point he was making was that we live in a culture that is divided pretty much between secular humanism and a Christian worldview This had always been his message, from the founding of L 'Abri in 1955 until his death in 1984 Schaeffer's training and early career in McIntire's brand of militant fundamentalism had left him ill-prepared to deal with complexity and nuance and to acknowledge the ways in which Christian influence can be mixed together with, and diluted by, secular forces, even secular forces that are rather friendly to the faith Instead, as has been fundamentalism's penchant, he divided the world neatly between the religious and the secular Antithesis was his watchword His exposition of western intellectual history and his call to engage culture were subservient to the point that there is always a stark antithesis between what is secular and what is Christian He wanted Christian historians to join the culture war, and he was dumbfounded when they would not Most Christian historians readily appropriate Schaeffer's call to take matters of mind and culture seriously, and to do so from a Christian perspective At the same time, however, they reject his call to use their scholarship to make a point in the culture wars Instead, Christian historians seem to believe they are called to a form of faithful scholarship that, rather than making a point, seeks to tell a story that is often riddled with complexity and paradox Such scholarship may be of only marginal value in winning a culture war, but we are called to be faithful, not victorious

[63] Mark Noll, Interview by author This assessment is shared by nearly every Christian scholar I interviewed for the book It is also my own view Reading Schaeffer when I was in my early twenties, I was inspired to take matters of the mind seriously and was motivated to go to graduate school