

“Hidden Art”

The Christian Worldview Expressed Through Cake

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Editor

Foundations

“A biblical worldview assumes one basic presupposition: ‘the living and personal God intelligibly known in his revelation.’”² This revelation is found in the universe He has created and in the Word He has given to mankind. Psalm 19:1-3 tells of how God’s creation is a revelation of Him:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. (NIV)

¹ See <http://www.covenantseminary.edu/worldwide/> .

² Gary W. Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview* (Salem, Wisconsin: Sheffield, 1996), 81.

The second medium by which God reveals Himself is the Bible. The authors of *Making Sense of Your World* discuss this form of revelation: “The Bible tells me that God exists, that the world is His creation, and that I am accountable to my Creator. God’s Word tells me...in short, my view of and for the world” (Phillips and Brown, 102).

Consequently, the worldview that should be held to by those who claim to be followers of Christ should be one that is based on God’s revelation. What God has said in the Bible should be the foundation and guide for what Christians do and think. This applies in every area of life, including the arts. With God’s Holy Spirit, by Whom “revelation is made alive... to those who embrace it,”³ Christians can understand what God wants art to be and conform to God’s standards in their attitude towards art.

Schaeffer’s Worldview and the Bible

Edith Schaeffer’s book, *The Hidden Art of Homemaking*, adheres to the standard for the Christian worldview as it goes to the Bible to show the Source of all art, God. “God, the Artist!” Schaeffer writes:

We read in... Colossians: “For by him were *all* things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.” *All* things! Visible! The things my eyes can see – the poinsettia plants in Bermuda lanes and the blue gentians on Alpine paths, ...and the breathtaking beauty of a full moon lighting up snow-covered peaks and valleys. *All* things! Invisible! Things I know are there, but cannot see – wind and gravity, atoms and electrons, oxygen and sound waves.⁴

God’s creative ability brought all this into being; He truly is the Source of art.



³ See 1 Corinthians 2; Phillips and Brown, 83.

⁴ Edith Schaeffer, *The Hidden Art of Homemaking: Creative Ideas for Enriching Everyday Life*, illust. Deirdre Ducker (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1971), 15.

In addition to this, God's art speaks to its viewers. As mentioned in Psalm 19, above, "The heavens declare the glory of God." Schaeffer writes of this:

In these words we learn that the whole of creation *communicates* something... The stars and the planets, the sun and the moon...are not only there for other useful reasons, but also as an art form, a communication of the glory and the greatness of the Artist. (Schaeffer, 16)

Like God's art, all art communicates some philosophy or other. The Christian worldview, when applied to art, appreciates and produces art that communicates in some way the truth about God.

In addition to being communicative, God's artistry, as seen in creation, is often outstandingly beautiful. This can be seen in His design of the Garden of Eden. Schaeffer points out that "God was the first landscape architect." Genesis 2:8-9 says, "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the East, in Eden... and the Lord God made all kinds of trees to grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." Schaeffer continues:

He designed it so that it might contain things that were good to eat, but they were also to be *pleasant* to look at. It mattered enough to God that it should be pleasant to look at... [He] deemed it important to make a beautiful garden, artistic to the highest degree, taking what had already been made and arranging it as an artist would take his paintings and pieces of sculpture and group them for an exhibition, or as a musician would arrange the sequence of selections for an evening. (Schaeffer, 23)

Not only was there great beauty in God's creation of the whole universe, but He took the time to arrange this particular part of His creation attractively.

Schaeffer then moves on to speak of "the most important aspect of God's art... one that concerns us personally", His creation of man in His own image (Schaeffer, 23). As one considers God's creative ability, it becomes clear that man has creative ability as well. Schaeffer writes,

Man was created that he might create. It is not a waste of man's time to be creative. It is not a waste to pursue artistic

or scientific pursuits in creativity, because this is what man was *made* to do. (Schaeffer, 24)

She qualifies this with the fact that man is not quite like God; man creates “on a finite level... needing to use the materials already created – but,” Schaeffer concludes, “he is still the creature of a Creator” (Schaeffer, 24).

And yet, despite all this potential to create, Schaeffer faces up to the reality that man cannot create as God creates. She admits,

We cannot do everything that comes into our minds, nor can we create everything that comes into our imaginations, whether it be in a very great and complicated area of science or art, or in a very mundane area, such as whether we should make a chocolate, vanilla or spice cake for the evening meal... We are limited by time and by areas of talent and ability. So our creativity is not on God’s level at all. His creativity is unlimited and infinite. (Schaeffer, 25)

Even the greatest of artists cannot come close to the perfection of God’s artwork.

Nonetheless, Christians are called to create. Schaeffer suggests that it is not an option for Christians to be creative. Because man has been given the gift of being able to create, in greater or lesser degree, he *must* create. Schaeffer writes,

Man has a capacity both for responding and producing, for communicating as well as being inspired. It is important to respond to the art of others, as well as to produce art oneself. It is important to inspire others to be creative as well as to communicate by one’s own creative acts. (Schaeffer, 25)

Application

The Christian worldview is a practical worldview. Jesus indicated that those who love Him will use their strength and abilities in His service (Mark 12:28-31). Principles learned must be applied to daily life; in decisions, in actions, and in thoughts. *Making Sense of Your World* states, “A biblical worldview cannot be developed in a vacuum but must be active in changing the individual and society.” (Phillips and Brown, 96)

Schaeffer reflects this Christian mindset in the rest of her book, as she practically applies these principles regarding art to the daily lives of ordinary Christians:

If we have been created in the image of an Artist, then we should look for expressions of artistry, and be sensitive to beauty, responsive to what has been created for our appreciation. Does this mean that we should all drop everything to concentrate on trying to develop into great artists? No, of course not. But it does mean that we should consciously do *something* about it. (Schaeffer, 32)

With directness, Schaeffer writes, “The fact that you are a Christian should show in some practical area of a growing creativity and sensitivity to beauty, rather than in a gradual drying up of creativity, and a blindness to ugliness” (Schaeffer, 33).

Christians, more than anyone else, understand and appreciate God’s artistry. Schaeffer writes, “It seems to me that the marks of personality – love, communication, and moral sensitivity – which are meant to sharpen as we are returning to communication with God, should lead to an *increased* rather than a decreased creativity.” (Schaeffer, 28) This worldview, encased as it is in the context of God being the source and example for art, reflects the biblical understanding that Christians are gradually being transformed into the glorious image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).

Hidden Art

With this foundation, Schaeffer introduces the concept of what she calls “Hidden Art”. By this she means “art which is found in the ‘minor’ areas of life... the ‘everyday’ of anyone’s life, rather than his career or profession”. She suggests that everyone “has some talent which is unfulfilled in some ‘hidden area’ of his being, and which could be expressed or developed” (Schaeffer, 31).

This talent, rather than remaining unused, should be brought out, she suggests.

Art... gives outward expression to what otherwise would remain locked in the mind, unshared. One individual personality has definite or special talent for expressing, in *some* medium, what other personalities can hear, see, smell, feel, taste, understand, enjoy, be stimulated by, be involved in, find refreshment in, find satisfaction in, find fulfillment in,

experience reality in, be agonized by, be pleased by, enter into, but which they could *not* produce themselves. (Schaeffer, 14)

For this reason, she encourages everyone to consider what sort of art they could produce. It does not have to be great or perfect or complex; indeed, no one can produce perfect art but God. Complexity and greatness may not be possible for many ordinary everyday artists. “But,” Schaeffer writes,

...it may be helpful to consider some of the possibilities all of us have of really *living* artistically... People so often look with longing into a daydream future... without ever considering the very practical use of that talent *today* in a way that will enrich other people’s lives, develop the talent, and express the fact of being a creative creature. (Schaeffer, 33)

With this as a basic framework of ideas, Schaeffer pinpoints several specific areas of life in which she believes there is potential for nearly everyone to use the creativity God has given them. These areas include music; painting, sketching, and sculpturing; interior decoration; gardens and gardening; and flower arrangements. She also explores creativity in food, writing, drama, creative recreation, and clothing. Her last two chapters deal with creativity as it relates to integration and environment.

Music

The first thing Schaeffer considers is music. “Think of sound,” she writes. “God created not only the sound, but He created ears to hear the sound” (Schaeffer, 19). Music and song are obviously important to God. He calls for praise of Himself on all kinds of musical instruments and promises that, when He takes His people to be with Him in glory, they will be singing: “Some from every single tribe and people will be there, singing together with true joy.”⁵

Schaeffer then presents a few practical suggestions for exercising creativity in music. She encourages musicians to play together, to develop and strengthen bonds of friendship and unity through the shared experience of playing and creating music. And “in the process... the freedom to express yourself in a medium that is your own will develop, and so will your personality” (Schaeffer, 38-39). Schaeffer

⁵ See, Schaeffer, 21; Ps. 150, Job 1.

concludes her chapter on music with these words: “For Christians... the reality of the Holy Spirit should free us to joyful expression in the form of melody and song. This is what is meant to be *now*, and what will continue in eternity” (Schaeffer, 44).

Sculpture, Painting, and Sketching

Secondly, Schaeffer takes a look at sculpture, painting, and sketching. “God,” she points out, “was the first Sculptor,” the Maker of everything from the intricate human body to the vast mountains (Schaeffer, 19). Many people have a gift for these art forms, and Schaeffer urges them to use and develop their gifts. In daily life, Schaeffer suggests sketching on the edges of grocery lists, drawing pictures for oneself or others instead of writing notes, or painting murals on the bedroom walls. She writes,

Be satisfied with the fact that although your area of talent may never be accepted by the world as anything “great”, and may never be your career, it can be used to enrich your day by day life; enrich it for you, and for the people with whom you live. (Schaeffer, 48)

She also suggests using painting, sketching, or drawing to communicate with God. “If you are a Christian in communication with the living God,” she writes, “and you find you communicate better in drawing than in writing or speaking (and some people are like that), then sketching can have a place in your communication with God” (Schaeffer, 61). She concludes: “Remember that your communication with God is to be not *less* vivid than with men, but *more* vivid and real” (Schaeffer, 63).

Interior Decoration and Gardening

Schaeffer next focuses on using our talent to improve the places we live in. Everyone has “*some* kind of spot in the world... the place we call ‘*home*’, no matter how temporary that place may be” (Schaeffer, 66). Rather than putting off decoration until the dream house has been built, Schaeffer urges people to work with what they have.

Trying out all the ideas that come to you, within the limits of your present place, money, talents, materials and so forth, will not use up everything you want to save for the future, but will rather generate and develop more ideas. (Schaeffer, 66)

She suggests restoring old furniture, sewing projects for the home, making various home accents, or even making a child's playhouse in the backyard or attic. Schaeffer reminds her readers,

If you are “decorating” with clothes draped on every chair, with scratched or broken furniture – it is still your interior decoration! Your home expresses *you* to other people, and they cannot see or feel your daydreams of what you expect to make in that misty future, when all the circumstances are what you think they must be before you will find it worthwhile to start. (Schaeffer, 76)

Stressing the shortness of this life, Schaeffer deplores “always to dream of a cottage by a brook, while never doing anything original to the stuffy boarding-house room in a city...” (Schaeffer, 66).

When travelling, bringing a few small homelike decorations such as a tablecloth and candle can provide a sense of continuity. Whether travelling or not, Schaeffer writes, “To have familiar things around us is to feel ‘at home’” (Schaeffer, 79).

While it is true that Christians are always looking forward to their ultimate home with Jesus in Heaven,

...this does not erase the fact that as human beings made in the image of God we have all the marks of personality.... In the midst of carrying out the purpose God has for us... we can still have the fulfillments which help us to be balanced and whole creatures, rather than torn, lonely, unbalanced, splintered people. As human beings we do respond in certain ways to certain *things* as well as to other personalities, and God. (Schaeffer, 79-80)

God has created things like the stars and the cycles of the seasons that give humans this sense of continuity. He provides this for His people as they wait for “the wonder of all that is ahead for all eternity” (Schaeffer, 80).

Throughout these chapters, Schaeffer urges parents to exercise creativity with and for their children. ““A child won't notice,”” she states, “is a very bad and untrue phrase to admit into your mind.” Instead, “a child *will* be affected by originality, beauty, and creativity. And a child in a Christian home should connect being in communication with the Creator God with having been made creative, in His image” (Schaeffer, 74).

Gardens and Gardening

The chapter on interior decorating closes with these words:

And for the Christian who is consciously in communication with the Creator, surely his home should reflect something of the artistry, the beauty and order of the One whom he is representing, and in whose image he has been made! (Schaeffer, 82)

But this does not only apply to the insides of Christian's homes, but the outside as well. No matter where you live, Schaeffer advises at least a small amount of gardening. Knowing his mandate to "be creative on a finite level, [a Christian] should certainly have *more* understanding of his responsibility to treat God's creation with sensitivity, and should develop his talents to beautify his little spot on the world's surface" (Schaeffer, 88). To destroy the natural world God has given us, on the other hand, is "creativity and artistic production in reverse. Man the artist, upside down!" (Schaeffer, 87)

Spiritual lessons can be learned from gardening; Jesus used examples from nature to teach his disciples. These include the parable of the sower, the vine analogy, and the kernel of wheat analogy (Matt. 13, John 12 and 15). Schaeffer quotes from the Gospel of John 12:24-25:

Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Like Jesus, Christians can use their gardens to communicate with people; by drawing others into conversation through the beauty of the garden, by showcasing the amazing productions of the Creator, by the way growing things illustrate biblical truths, or simply by the disciplined effort that gardening requires (Schaeffer, 94).

Flower Arrangements and Food

"This," Schaeffer writes, "is the day of the 'TV frozen dinner'... The art of living together, of being a family, is being lost" (Schaeffer, 100-101). Though the healthy relationships that make a home and a family successful are based on good communication, Schaeffer argues that small things like flower arrangements or extra touches to ordinary meals have a lot to do with that communication. Both at home alone

with one's family and while showing biblical hospitality to guests, an atmosphere of "welcome and understanding" can be created (Schaeffer, 99):

Great moments of trust and confidence do not spring out of concrete.... An atmosphere of love and consideration, in which one is trying to anticipate the mood of others, requires something tangible, something that can be seen, as well as a feeling inside oneself. Expression which is felt and understood is not just conveyed in words, but in words accompanied by actions. (Schaeffer, 107)

This idea that meals are not just about food is reflected in the book of Revelation. In chapter 19, John writes about the day when all God's people will sit down to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Schaeffer, 126). This meal together will be a grand expression of unity in Christ.

Schaeffer suggests making floral centerpieces for the table or bringing a flower to an elderly friend. She suggests variety in menu planning and experimentation with recipes. "God could have created all food as a bland mixture of proper nutrients," she writes, but instead He gave many diverse kinds of food and gave man the ability to enjoy the differences (Schaeffer, 114). She urges taking "this form of 'Hidden Art' seriously, with at least some degree of sensitivity for producing and enjoying the beauty which will increase and enhance communication" (Schaeffer, 132).

A major theme of *The Hidden Art of Homemaking* is that "beauty is important to God". In this chapter on flower arrangements, Schaeffer points out that God *invented* beauty. For example, He planned a tabernacle of great beauty and called his people to make His beautiful plans reality. He gave beauty "to Adam and Eve as a background for their walks in the cool of the evening". And so,

...if you have been afraid that your love of beautiful flowers and the flickering flame of the candle is somehow less spiritual than living in starkness and ugliness, remember that He who created you to be creative gave you the things with which to make beauty and gave you the sensitivity to appreciate and respond to His creation. (Schaeffer, 109)

Writing

Writing, in prose or poetry, is another way in which we can communicate and enrich our own and other's lives.

If you feel you have an unrecognized talent for writing, or if you simply love to write and want to do it, my advice is *write*. But write without ambitious pride, which makes you feel it is a 'waste' to write what will never be published. (Schaeffer, 136)

Schaeffer urges writing letters and notes both to family members away from home and those at home. A benefit to this would be that "it is also possible to write of spiritual things, establishing a relationship which can continue in conversation when the homecoming takes place" (Schaeffer, 139).

For those who have trouble expressing their ideas when attention is focused on them, she suggests that "writing and outlining his ideas enables him to explain what he wants to say so much more easily, and enables the other people to know him, the real person who has disappeared behind the wall of incoherence" (Schaeffer, 144). Additionally, writing out the things one has to say to God can be an aid to focused, worthwhile prayers, especially for the one whose "mind wanders off to a dozen different thoughts in a dozen different directions while praying" (Schaeffer, 144). "After all," Schaeffer concludes, "God has communicated with us in writing. His word, the Bible, is just this... God has spoken" (Schaeffer, 145).

Drama

Closely connected with Schaeffer's ideas on writing are her ideas for people with dramatic ability. She urges the use and practice of dramatic skills at home, domestically, for one's friends and family, especially children. Reading aloud, besides being an excellent way to "exercise the use of one's voice and expression", has the potential to lead to helpful, enriching discussions of the ideas the book presents. "Attitudes and ideas come out which might never be brought out in ordinary conversation. It gives the family a background for thinking and growing in their concepts and understanding, *together*, rather than always separately" (Schaeffer, 149).

Creative Recreation

Creative recreation is Schaeffer's next topic. This is the practice of some of the ideas already presented in previous chapters, as well as an inspiration for more creative ideas. She defines:

Firstly, it is recreation which produces creative results, stimulates creativity, refreshes one's ideas and stirs one to

“produce”. Secondly, it is recreation which is the *result* of original ideas, creative because someone has creatively *planned* an evening, a day, an occupation which in itself is fresh and different. (Schaeffer, 165)

She suggests planning special entertainments for one’s family or going hiking or picnicking far away from daily routine. She points out that getting tired out this way is very different from “mental and nervous tiredness”, but leads to more refreshing sleep and clearer thought (Schaeffer, 169).

Creative ideas are apt to flow in the midst of the creativity expressed in God’s creation, as one is temporarily separated from the confusion of conflicting voices which would separate us from the simple basic realities of what “is” – and this is especially true today, when so much of what man builds, paints, and writes, not only has not place for God but has no place for nature or man either. (Schaeffer, 170)

Clothing

Within Christianity, there are many different ideas about what sort of clothing is proper. But Schaeffer does not make these sorts of distinctions, but rather urges modesty, good stewardship, beauty and charity in not being extravagant and dressing fittingly for the situation. Her main focus is “creativity, beauty, and aesthetic taste” in clothing, citing the example of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 (Schaeffer, 191). She quotes Matthew 6:28-30, where Jesus says,

Why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?

Schaeffer explains,

He is claiming much more than simple “utility”, since He says that He who designed the clothing seen on the flowers is the same One who will provide for us... We are told here that He not only created the flowers but that we can think of this in relationship to our clothing... Yes, we can see the kind of

clothing God designs when we look at the flowers.
(Schaeffer, 185, 184)

Integration and Environment

Just as our clothing should not, by ugliness or oddness, “erect petty but damaging barriers to communication”, neither should our environment. As Christians who have an important message to communicate, every possible creative aid to communication should be used to aid integration (Schaeffer, 189). Because of the differences between people of different age, color, social status, and more, integration is a very important issue for Christians. Schaeffer explains how this relates to creative living:

True integration is a matter of people really feeling a oneness with others and attempting to understand them – in personal communication of the sort that takes place around fireplaces, washing dishes together, and discovering things in common together.... (Schaeffer, 200)

Artistically creating environments which encourage communication is one way in which Christians can begin to practice on earth the glorious unity that will be found in Heaven, as people “from every nation, tribe, people and language” together praise the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-11).

Conclusion

Throughout her writing, Schaeffer frequently places emphasis on beauty – beauty that reflects the beauty of the universe in which God has placed mankind; beauty in the art mankind has been given the ability to create; and, most of all, “the... beauty in human relationships” (Schaeffer, 205). Considering the fact that Jesus came to earth and died so that we could have a beautiful relationship with God, Schaeffer’s focus on ideas that help relationships reflects a biblical mindset.

While there is much more to art than the ordinary, everyday kind that Edith Schaeffer discusses, her book is very helpful to those who are trying to develop a biblical worldview regarding the arts. Her emphasis on using the talents God has given, in the place God has put you, agrees with the Bible’s teaching. For example, Paul says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men... It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col. 3:23). Schaeffer lays down the necessary biblical foundations for the practical aspects of practicing a Christian worldview in each of the areas she

discusses. She urges Christians to use their God-given capabilities and to take their responsibilities seriously.



The chapel fireplace

Illustration from Edith Schaeffer's L'Abri

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⁶ Edith Schaeffer, *L'Abri* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992), 101.