

IVP
CLASSICS

Art and the Bible




FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER

FOREWORD BY MICHAEL CARD



“The Christian is the one whose
imagination should fly beyond the stars.”



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Two Essays



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Foreword



And with truth comes beauty and with this beauty a freedom before God.”

In 1812, Dr. Benjamin Rush wrote a letter of congratulations to his close friend John Adams. He had been encouraging Adams and Thomas Jefferson to renew their long fractured friendship. Adams had responded, offering an “olive branch” letter written to Jefferson on New Year’s Day. Jefferson responded shortly afterward. Upon hearing the good news, an overjoyed Rush wrote back to Adams, “Some talked, some wrote, and some fought to promote and establish it [the American Revolution], but you and Mr. Jefferson *thought* for us all.”

Two hundred years later, another revolution took place, a revolution of the Spirit. It was called the "Jesus Movement," and unless you were caught up in the midst of it, you might have difficulty appreciating what a liberating word, what a breath of fresh air *Art and the Bible* was. A lot of people talked, wrote and even fought over the Jesus Movement, but Francis Schaeffer did a good deal of thinking for us, and more importantly, he taught us how to think.

Almost as soon as the movement began it was plagued with confusion. While some of us were trying to embrace the gifts God was pouring out on the body, others were calling them a curse. They claimed that contemporary styles, even certain instruments (like the guitar) were not appropriate or acceptable in the church.

Into the midst of this confusion stepped a quirky, goateed man in lederhosen. He spoke words of faith and freedom. Into a world that had become suspicious of the beautiful Schaeffer reminded us that the Father of Jesus was also the God of beauty.

At a time when we needed concrete, biblical objectives, Schaeffer provided perspectives and struc-

tures (major and minor) while at the same time insisting again and again that it is our lives that are supposed to be the lived out works of art (*poiema*). We were free, he insisted, our imaginations were free. We were free to create, as long as we never forgot that we are slaves to Jesus.

Schaeffer moved freely from Heidegger to Eliot to Filippo Lippi to Luther, expecting those of us who weren't familiar with these creative giants to go look them up. In the process he exposed us to a wide scope of thinkers we would never have known otherwise. His insistence on the integration of content with vehicle and what he called "validity" provided a directive that cut through the confusing fog caused by all the dissension. But his encouragement was not a *carte blanche*; it was a defense of artists to the church and a challenge to the artists themselves to remain redemptively within the church.

This book, a primer on biblical creativity, sought to drum into us the idea that we create out of a worldview and that it is our responsibility to align that point of view with Scripture before we continue on. He encouraged artists to take seriously the lord-

ship of Christ in every aspect of their creative lives. He brought biblical clarity at a time when the movement badly needed it. He warned us that our creative struggle should and indeed would last a lifetime. My experience has shown that he was right. At a time when doors were being slammed in our faces he sought to open them, or at least to hand us a key. He liberated an entire generation of artists while at the same time placing us under the easy yoke of the authority of Scripture, everything under the Word of God

Perhaps you are thinking, *All that was almost a generation ago. What place does Schaeffer have today?* Though it might be true to repeat the worn out notion that "this book can speak to a whole new generation," that does not really say enough. Today, over thirty years after it was written, many of us believe a new movement is coming. What we believe and hope and trust is that the timing of this new edition of *Art and the Bible* is in accordance with a new revolution of the Spirit that is soon to come.

So, young artist, invest yourself in the truth of this little book. Open your eyes to the beauty that is un-

veiled through the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ. And finally, come alive to the freedom that is uniquely yours to create to the glory of God. *Think.*

Michael Card

Singer, songwriter and author of Scribbling in the Sand

ONE

Art in the Bible



What is the place of art in the Christian life? Is art—especially the fine arts of painting and music—simply a way to bring in worldliness through the back door? We know that poetry may be used to praise God in, say, the psalms and maybe even in modern hymns. But what about sculpture or drama? Do these have any place in the Christian life? Shouldn't a Christian focus his gaze steadily on "religious things" alone and forget about art and culture?

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

As evangelical Christians we have tended to relegate

art to the very fringe of life. The rest of human life we feel is more important. Despite our constant talk about the lordship of Christ, we have narrowed its scope to a very small area of reality. We have misunderstood the concept of the lordship of Christ over the whole of man and the whole of the universe and have not taken to us the riches that the Bible gives us for ourselves, for our lives and for our culture.

The lordship of Christ over the whole of life means that there are no platonic areas in Christianity, no dichotomy or hierarchy between the body and the soul. God made the body as well as the soul and redemption is for the whole man. Evangelicals have been legitimately criticized for often being so tremendously interested in seeing souls get saved and go to heaven that they have not cared much about the whole man.

The Bible, however, makes four things very clear: (1) God made the whole man, (2) in Christ the whole man is redeemed, (3) Christ is the Lord of the whole man now and the Lord of the whole Christian life, and (4) in the future as Christ comes back, the body will be raised from the dead and the whole

man will have a whole redemption. It is within this framework that we are to understand the place of art in the Christian life. Therefore, let us consider more fully what it means to be a whole man whose whole life is under the lordship of Christ.

The conception of the wholeness of man and the lordship of man over creation comes early in Scripture. In Genesis 1:26-27, we read, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." From the very beginning, therefore, man and woman, being created in the image of God (both of them!), were given dominion (lordship) over the whole of the created earth. They were the ones who bore the image of God and, bearing that image, they were to be in charge, to tend the garden, to keep it and preserve it before their own Lord. Of course, that dominion was spoiled by the historic, space-time Fall, and there-

fore it is no longer possible to maintain that dominion in a perfect fashion.

Yet, when a man comes under the blood of Christ, his whole capacity as man is refashioned. His soul is saved, yes, but so are his mind and body. As Christians we are to look to Christ day by day, for Christ will produce his fruit through us. True spirituality means the lordship of Christ over the total man.

There have been periods in the past when Christians understood this better than we have in the last few decades. A few years ago when I started to work out a Christian epistemology and a Christian concept of culture, many people considered what I was doing suspect. They felt that because I was interested in intellectual answers I must not be biblical. But this attitude represents a real poverty. It fails to understand that if Christianity is really true, then it involves the whole man, including his intellect and creativeness. Christianity is not just "dogmatically" true or "doctrinally" true. Rather, it is true to what is there, true in the whole area of the whole man in all of life.

The ancients were afraid that if they went to the

end of the earth they would fall off and be consumed by dragons. But once we understand that Christianity is true to what is there, true to the ultimate environment—the infinite, personal God who is really there—then our minds are freed. We can pursue any question and can be sure that we will not fall off the end of the earth. Such an attitude will give our Christianity a strength that it often does not seem to have at the present time.

But there is another side to the lordship of Christ, and this involves the total culture—including the area of creativity. Again, evangelical or biblical Christianity has been weak at this point. About all that we have produced is a very romantic Sunday school art. We do not seem to understand that the arts too are supposed to be under the lordship of Christ.

I have frequently quoted a statement from Francis Bacon who was one of the first of the modern scientists and who believed in the uniformity of natural causes in an open system.

He, along with other men like Copernicus and Galileo, believed that because the world had been created by a reasonable God they could therefore

pursue the truth of the universe by reason. There is much, of course, in Francis Bacon with which I would disagree, but one of the statements which I love to quote is this: "Man by the Fall fell at the same time from his state of innocence and from his dominion over nature. Both of these losses, however, can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by the arts and sciences." How I wish that evangelical Christians in the United States and Britain and across the world had had this vision for the last fifty years!

The arts and the sciences do have a place in the Christian life—they are not peripheral. For a Christian, redeemed by the work of Christ and living within the norms of Scripture and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the lordship of Christ should include an interest in the arts. A Christian should use these arts to the glory of God, not just as tracts, mind you, but as things of beauty to the praise of God. An art work can be a doxology in itself.

Nonetheless, while the concept of the lordship of Christ over the whole world would seem to include the arts, many Christians will respond by saying that

"THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST SHOULD INCLUDE AN INTEREST IN THE ARTS," writes Francis Schaeffer. "A Christian should use these arts to the glory of God, not just as tracts, mind you, but as things of beauty to the praise of God."

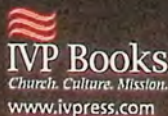
Many Christians, wary of creating graven images, have steered clear of artistic creativity. But the Bible offers a robust affirmation of the arts. The human impulse to create reflects our being created in the image of a creator God.

Art and the Bible has been a foundational work for generations of Christians in the arts. In this book's classic essays, Francis Schaeffer first examines the scriptural record of the use of various art forms, and then establishes a Christian perspective on art. With clarity and vigor, Schaeffer explains why "the Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars."

"Excellent. . . . For both artists and non-artists."

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Francis A. Schaeffer founded L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland and was the author of many books, including *The God Who Is There* and *Escape from Reason*. Until his death in 1984, he was a noted speaker with a worldwide ministry. His ministry continues through his books, with over two million in print.



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