

Anthropology Embedded in Worldview Studies:  
Modernity's Failure and the Response of Christian Philosophy of Life in a  
Postmodern Age of Expressivism

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
Liberty University  
Spring 2019

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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**Abstract**

This thesis examines two divergent streams of thought in Christian philosophy of life represented by the works of Francis Schaeffer and James K. A. Smith in an effort to help Christians live in a postmodern culture. Schaeffer and Smith ultimately address differing, but complementary, realms of anthropology and the human experience. To see how these two authors might complement each other effectively, this thesis will analyze each author's work and then explore whether or not the application of Smith's liturgical anthropology and utilization of phenomenology can improve Schaeffer's system of thought and the worldview concept.

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*Truth is only hearsay*

*We're just left to decay*

*Modernity has failed us*

*And I'd love it if we made it*

*Yes, I'd love it if we made it<sup>1</sup>*

Secular culture has been deplored by Christians as a post-truth era. They accuse mainstream society of embracing relativistic morality and eschewing absolutes of any kind.<sup>2</sup> However, in “Love It If We Made It,” from their 2018 album, *A Brief Inquiry Into Online Relationships*, the secular British artist, The 1975, also expresses that sentiment with the stunning sentence, “modernity has failed us.”<sup>3</sup> As the *New York Times* describes the line, “in its recurring, all-caps hook, the track also provides a thesis statement for the album and maybe the 1975 as a whole. . .”<sup>4</sup> In the wake of modernity’s failure, the band attempts to create a sense of meaning and “something to believe in” to make sense of the

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<sup>1</sup> The 1975, “Love It If We Made It,” track 5 on *A Brief Inquiry into Online Relationships*, Dirty Hit, 2018, Spotify streaming audio, 320 kbps.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis McCallum, “Are We Ready?” in *The Death of Truth*, ed. Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 14.

<sup>3</sup> The 1975, “Love It If We Made It.”

<sup>4</sup> Joe Coscarelli, “Can a Quote-Unquote Band Drag Rock into the Future? The 1975 Is Trying Its Hardest,” *New York Times*, October 11, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/11/arts/music/the-1975-matty-healy-interview.html>.

world.<sup>5</sup> In an interview, the band’s lyricist and lead vocalist, Matty Healy, laments: “It’s difficult because everything’s so postmodern and self-referential and hyperaware of everything being bulls---. As I grow as an artist, I just want to be sincere.”<sup>6</sup> With that sentiment, the band perhaps sums up exactly where the modern era has left society — and it has indeed failed.

Today’s culture finds itself feeling the effects of a centuries-long shift in thinking that is attempting to combat an ever-present nihilism, which James W. Sire describes as “the problem of our age.”<sup>7</sup> As society shifts from modernism to postmodernism, the Christian response to the crisis of this age remains as important as when Francis Schaeffer wrote, “every generation of Christians has this problem of learning how to speak meaningfully to its own age. It cannot be solved without an understanding of the changing existential situation which it faces.”<sup>8</sup> The shift begins with, as Schaeffer argues, the distinction Thomas Aquinas made between nature and grace, which led to centuries of absolutizing either the objective or subjective aspects of life.<sup>9</sup> During the Enlightenment,

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<sup>5</sup> Lauren O’Neill, “The 1975’s New Album Is a Hopeful Chronicle of Our Times,” *Noisey*, November 30, 2018, [https://noisey.vice.com/en\\_us/article/xwjaj3/the-1975s-new-album-is-a-hopeful-chronicle-of-our-times](https://noisey.vice.com/en_us/article/xwjaj3/the-1975s-new-album-is-a-hopeful-chronicle-of-our-times).

<sup>6</sup> Dorian Lynskey, “How The 1975’s Matty Healy Kicked Heroin and Took the Band to New Heights,” *Billboard*, August 2, 2018, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/magazine-feature/8468029/matty-healy-the-1975-billboard-cover-story>.

<sup>7</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 117.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, in *Trilogy: The Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 207.

<sup>9</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 209-211. Schaeffer also describes this divide as a split between the universals and the particulars, or the nonrational and the rational, as part of his concept of the “lower story” and the “upper story” divide in modern thinking (see 214-215, 241). This will be discussed below at greater length.

naturalistic thinking dispensed with the notion of God, and reason became “the sole criterion for truth,”<sup>10</sup> possessing “the ability to reach the truth about human beings and the world.”<sup>11</sup> Commonly characterized as the modern period or modernity, this period and its model of objective reason as the sole basis for knowledge, is generally understood as identifying “the forces, structures, and historical patterns of the period from the late 16th century forward.”<sup>12</sup> As a philosophy of life, modernism gives “the impression of being honest and objective . . . [and] sees human beings as the makers of value.”<sup>13</sup> As James W. Sire bluntly describes it, “here is the essence of the modern: the autonomy of human reason.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, it also views human beings as only composed of matter: “we are that and only that. . . We do not transcend the universe in any way.”<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, the optimism of the Enlightenment project and the materialist philosophy of modernity failed to fulfill the desire for meaning inherent in humans. Additionally, the failure of World War I to make the world safer and the growing list of inhumane acts by socialist regimes across the world led to a sense of “frustration and

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<sup>10</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 67.

<sup>11</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 76.

<sup>12</sup> J. Wellman & Wellman, “Modernity,” *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, ed. by J. G. Melton, & M. Baumann, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/abcrw/modernity/0?institutionId=5072>.

<sup>13</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 92.

<sup>14</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 219.

<sup>15</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 72.

cultural discontent,” ending in a feeling of meaninglessness.<sup>16</sup> As a result, a pervasive nihilism emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a reaction against modernism; indeed, “nihilism is the natural child of naturalism.”<sup>17</sup> To address the failure of modernity and naturalism to provide meaning, existentialism then attempted primarily “to transcend nihilism.”<sup>18</sup> Existentialism argues that human significance is “not up to the facts of the objective world over which we have no control, but up to the consciousness of the subjective world over which we have complete control” — it “emphasizes the disunity of the two worlds and opts strongly in favor of the subjective world.”<sup>19</sup> Existentialism exacerbates the divide between the objective rational and the subjective personal created by modernism in an effort to make sense of the world. In describing the thought of the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, Schaeffer states, “rationally the universe is absurd, and you must try to authenticate yourself . . . by an act of will.”<sup>20</sup> Once again, however, the absolutizing of either the subjective or objective reality of life led to other problems, such as the relativizing of ethics and morality,<sup>21</sup> and the search for a final experience to authenticate reality through narcotics.<sup>22</sup> Yet, while the existentialists recognize that within the confines of modernity, “on the basis of all reason, man is

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<sup>16</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 97.

<sup>18</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 117.

<sup>19</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 121.

<sup>20</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 238.

<sup>21</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 130.

<sup>22</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 242.

meaningless,”<sup>23</sup> existentialism itself ultimately represents the end result of modernism’s absolutizing of the rational and discarding of God.

During the 20th century, a shift from modernism to postmodernism occurred in the wake of the failure of “any rational hope of a unified answer”<sup>24</sup> by modernism or existentialism — both require dispensing with an essential part of being human by absolutizing either the objective or subjective aspect of life. Postmodernism has subsequently emerged from the wreckage of modernity. As a philosophy, postmodernism is difficult to narrowly define; however, it is “concerned with a single but central theme: the shift from knowing to meaning,”<sup>25</sup> where knowing represents the intellectual, and meaning the practical living out of the intellectual. Because of this shift, an accelerated “conceptual relativism . . . now serves not just religious experience but all aspects of reality.”<sup>26</sup> Although the heart of postmodern philosophy comes from its roots in literary criticism<sup>27</sup> and thus is concerned with the limits of language to convey accurate meaning, its conceptual relativism ultimately means that there is no “single story, a metanarrative . . . that holds Western culture together. . . All stories are equally valid, being so validated by the community that lives by them.”<sup>28</sup> As James K. A. Smith defines it, postmodernism “can be understood as the erosion of confidence in the rational as sole guarantor and

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<sup>23</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 238.

<sup>24</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 236.

<sup>25</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 220.

<sup>26</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 221.

<sup>27</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 222-224.

<sup>28</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 216-217.



deliverer of truth, coupled with a deep suspicion of science — particularly modern science’s pretentious claims to an ultimate theory of everything.”<sup>29</sup> In this way, postmodernism accurately identifies the breakdown of modernist thought; however, after dispensing with modernism, meaning for the postmodern is found in the “. . . notion of an insubstantial self constructed by the language it uses to describe itself.”<sup>30</sup> Postmodern society thus is “an age of authenticity” in which the goal is to make sense of a disorienting reality by “expressive individualism,” laying the basis for existence and meaning through the individual expression of personality.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, that is the sentiment summed up in The 1975’s statement, “I’d love it if we made it,”<sup>32</sup> which is accomplished through their exhortation to “just give yourself a try.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Bridging the Culture’s Gap of Meaning**

In the midst of this philosophical and cultural upheaval, Christianity struggled against the “secularizing forces in contemporary culture [that] have been virtually irresistible and the consequences for the church and her conception of the faith,”<sup>34</sup> which have been substantial. Against the secularizing impact of modernity which relegated Christianity to the subjective and personal spheres of life, the concept of a worldview

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<sup>29</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 62.

<sup>30</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 227.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) 473.

<sup>32</sup> The 1975, “Love It If We Made It.”

<sup>33</sup> The 1975, “Give Yourself a Try,” track 2 on *A Brief Inquiry into Online Relationships*, Dirty Hit, 2018, Spotify streaming audio, 320 kbps.

<sup>34</sup> David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 4.

emerged as a tool for demonstrating “Christianity’s comprehensive scope.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, David K. Naugle argues that “conceiving of Christianity as a worldview has been one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the church.”<sup>36</sup> Sire concisely defines a worldview as “a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world.”<sup>37</sup> As a member of “a steady stream of pioneering disciples”<sup>38</sup> in the first movement of worldview thought, Francis Schaeffer impacted countless Christians in the 1970s and 1980s who were grappling with an existentialist “age of relativity” by recovering “an emphasis on *truth*.”<sup>39</sup> Schaeffer affirmed the burgeoning concept of worldview studies as an inescapable aspect of life that every individual must address.<sup>40</sup> In this way, Schaeffer made an important contribution to reclaim Christianity from the consequences of modernity and Enlightenment thought — relativism, existentialism, and nihilism.

Writing before the advent of the most complete expression of postmodernism, Schaeffer responded primarily to existentialism and modernity’s separation of the objective and subjective realms of life. Significantly, he gave Christians confidence in the

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<sup>35</sup> Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Naugle, 4.

<sup>37</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2015), 19.

<sup>38</sup> Naugle, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, in *Trilogy*, 196, emphasis original.

<sup>40</sup> Naugle, 29-30.

rationality of their faith in propositional revelation and the existence of God.<sup>41</sup> He did so with an understandable emphasis on the rational; thus, while he avoided a Christian rationalism, he emphasized understanding human nature in cognitive terms. His and other worldview thinkers' emphasis on the fact that "Christianity is a system . . ." <sup>42</sup> and that "rationality defines and provides a form for the whole" <sup>43</sup> justifies Naugle's question for Christians: have they "been co-opted by modernity in employing the vocabulary of worldview as an objectified way of relating to reality?" <sup>44</sup> If this is true, and worldview thinking implicitly capitulates to the Enlightenment's emphasis on rational thought as the pathway to right action and a rightly ordered society, Schaeffer and other worldview writers will fail to address society's current inability to attach objective truth to a meaningful existential reality that encompasses the whole of being. In this case, the rational answers of worldview might fall flat to a society that is already disillusioned with the answers of rationality, Christian or not. To the broader culture, worldview analysis may simply beg the questions, "so what?" or "who cares?" despite perhaps the best expositions of rational truth, because the need for basic meaning that truth builds on still needs to be established outside the confines of solely rational thinking.

With this context surrounding his work, James K. A. Smith examines cultural liturgies of desire and embodied practices as a possible escape from the rationalist

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<sup>41</sup> See Schaeffer in Appendix A to *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, in *Trilogy*, 343-347.

<sup>42</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 186.

<sup>43</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 124.

<sup>44</sup> Naugle, 147.

confines of modernism — constituting an effective reclaiming of the subjective and personal from the existentialists and postmodernists. As he describes his aims, “the goal is to push down through worldview to worship as the matrix from which a Christian worldview is born. . .”<sup>45</sup> In doing so, Smith does not argue for “rejecting worldview-talk, only situating it in relation to Christian practices. . .”<sup>46</sup> and finding a method that “thinks even deeper than beliefs or worldview,”<sup>47</sup> where the processes of feeling and desiring, rather than the faculty of reason, are primary to existence.<sup>48</sup> As an example of the limitations worldview thinking runs into, Smith identifies the “cultural liturgy” of the shopping mall as an experience with an inherent “set of assumptions about the shape of human flourishing, which becomes an implicit *telos*, or goal, of our own desires and actions”<sup>49</sup> that an “idea-centric or belief-centric approach will fail to see.”<sup>50</sup> Additionally, Smith incorporates concepts from the field of phenomenology to explore the embodied nature of being and how it shapes an individual’s perception and search for meaning.<sup>51</sup> In his development of the concepts of a liturgical anthropology and the embodiment of human beings, Smith contributes to the effort of communicating comprehensive Christian

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<sup>45</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24.

<sup>48</sup> James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 5.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25, emphasis original.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24.

<sup>51</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 21.

truth to a postmodern culture by reorienting the individual's entire being to Christ and understands life in a way that is sufficient "for real people," and not "paper people."<sup>52</sup> By addressing the entirety of being, Smith speaks to the needs of an expressivist, postmodern society for tangible practices that create meaning and make sense of the liturgical environments individuals inhabit.

### ***Praxis: The Personal Before the Public***

For Christians, the consequences of these philosophical questions are incomparable. They not only make an impact at the individual level, but they also have a corporate impact on the Christian approach to cultural and political engagement. Historically, worldview thinking and the religious right, for example, have had a very close relationship. Schaeffer "has been credited with getting a generation of Christians involved in politics"<sup>53</sup> through his ideas on the political implications of his philosophy of life. This philosophy largely aligns with dominion theology<sup>54</sup> and its essential idea that "Christians, and Christians alone, are Biblically mandated to occupy all secular institutions until Christ returns."<sup>55</sup> Among those whom Schaeffer influenced was Jerry

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<sup>52</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 173.

<sup>53</sup> Ryan Lizza, "Leap of Faith," *New Yorker*, August 15, 2011, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/08/15/leap-of-faith-ryan-lizza>.

<sup>54</sup> Otherwise known as dominionism, "dominion theology refers broadly to a range of movements within North American Protestantism that seek to make the legal precepts of the Bible the basis for the reform and governance of civil society. In line with this perspective, advocates of dominion theology tend to deny the virtue of religious tolerance and promote instead a vision of the United States as a Christian nation" (Ian A. McFarland, "Dominion Theology," in *Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland, David A. S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby, and et. al. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], [http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/cupdct/dominion\\_theology/0?institutionId=5072](http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/cupdct/dominion_theology/0?institutionId=5072)).

<sup>55</sup> Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 246.

Falwell, founder of Liberty University and a key leader of the Moral Majority movement.<sup>56</sup> This movement ultimately developed a “political playbook designed to win America for their Christian agenda. . . [which] teaches, and has taught, Christians that the best way to reclaim America would be to elect a president and members of Congress who would pass laws granting privileges to what Schaeffer called a ‘Christian worldview.’”<sup>57</sup> Obviously, for Christians, how the nature of man, life and God is understood has a real impact on the approach taken to public theology, political activism and cultural engagement.

The politics of the Moral Majority or the Christian Left, however, are not precisely the form of Christian practice that Smith is advocating and not what this thesis discusses.<sup>58</sup> As another worldview writer, Nancy Pearcey, points out, “once we discover that the Christian worldview is really true, then living it out means offering up to God all our powers — practical, intellectual, emotional, artistic — to live for Him in every area of life. The only expression such faith can take is one that captures our entire being and redirects our every thought.”<sup>59</sup> This would obviously include the political and public policy spheres of life. Smith, however, describes the practices of Christian worship as “a

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<sup>56</sup> John Fea, *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 58.

<sup>57</sup> Fea, 60

<sup>58</sup> In fact, both Schaeffer and Smith delineate their vision for Christian engagement with culture in works that go beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, these works will be excluded from this study and merit further exploration and comparison at a later time. See Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, study guide edition (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 55-56.

uniquely intense site of the Spirit's transformative presence . . . These are not just rituals that are unique because they are aimed at a different *telos*; they are also unique because they are practices that bring us face-to-face with the living God."<sup>60</sup> These practices of Christian worship go hand-in-hand with the principles of a Christian worldview,<sup>61</sup> and include "the traditional sacramental practices of baptism and Eucharist but also the practices of Christian marriage and child-rearing. . ."<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, these are practices in which participants "recognize the holiness of our Creator, confess our sin, seek his grace, are assured of his mercy, give him thanks, petition his aid, seek his instruction, and in loving response to all his mercies, live for him."<sup>63</sup> Although all of life is worship for the believer, for the purpose of this thesis, this is the sense in which the term Christian practice is meant.<sup>64</sup> Thus, this thesis strictly examines the philosophical and theological foundations for the intentional practice of the faith in the Church which should subsequently inform the faith of the public square.

### **Francis Schaeffer**

Francis Schaeffer, in his work at L'Abri and in various writings, influenced a generation of Christian thinkers and young people through his work on presuppositional

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 150, emphasis original.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 138.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 19-20.

<sup>64</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, trans. A. Stewart Todd and James B. Torrance (London: SCM, 1953), 12-26.

apologetics as a method of meeting the challenges of modern thinking, including relativism and the existential crisis of being.<sup>65</sup> He joined a group of “watershed evangelical thinkers who contributed significantly to thinking about worldview. . .”<sup>66</sup> and provides a helpful case study of first-generation worldview thought through his trilogy of books, *The God Who Is There*, *Escape from Reason*, and *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. These books “formed the hub of his system. . .”<sup>67</sup> Overall, he perceived that, throughout all of the disciplines, “the basic issue is the shift in epistemology,”<sup>68</sup> resulting in “a change in the concept of truth.”<sup>69</sup>

In the aftermath of the Enlightenment’s promise to “provide a unified answer on the basis of the rational,”<sup>70</sup> Schaeffer discerned that society finds itself holding on to sincerity and authenticity as a basis for truth in order to bridge the gap between a lack of absolutes and the reality of existence, rather than understanding truth “on a basis of antithesis.”<sup>71</sup> While in the premodern era,<sup>72</sup> humanity had based rationality on the

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<sup>65</sup> Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Naugle, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Naugle, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 55.

<sup>69</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 253.

<sup>71</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 8.

<sup>72</sup> This term is understood historically for the purpose of this thesis as the period of time before the Renaissance shift in the 14th and 15th centuries towards modernism in the 16th century. In terms of how premodernity envisioned the world, Philip E. Steinberg describes premodernity as, “an epistemology wherein encounters with objects are understood through reference to underlying, unobservable properties that, in turn, reflect underlying essence. . . The certainty of the subjective individual observation is paired with the unassailability of the worldly object” (Philip E. Steinberg, “The Condition of Premodernity,” *Dialogues in Human Geography* 5, no. 1 [March 2015]: 96,



premise that A and non-A were diametrically opposed, meaning only one could be true, modernism redefined epistemology beginning with the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.<sup>73</sup> As Schaeffer puts it, Hegel determined that “philosophic humanistic thought had tried to hang on to rationalism, rationality, and a unified field, and it had not succeeded. Thus, he said, we must try a new suggestion. . . Let us think rather in terms of thesis—antithesis, with the answer always being synthesis. All things are relativized.”<sup>74</sup> Consequently, the answers that Enlightenment thought, or rationalism, had contrived within a framework that denied the existence of God began to fall through, leaving man in a position of despair.<sup>75</sup>

Caught between the absence of rationality without God and the existence of a rational world, humanity contrives an irrational dualism that Schaeffer describes as the “upper story” and “lower story” to life, constituting the non-rational and the rational, respectively.<sup>76</sup> As a result of this dualism which pits “faith against rationality in an unbiblical manner,” society has no basis for morality or law, no answer to the problem of evil, and no ability to find a “unity of thought . . . for the whole of life.”<sup>77</sup> This change from the method of antithesis to a Hegelian synthesis “was made out of desperation,

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<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2043820614565877>). Thus, the premodern world equally emphasized subjective perception insofar as it connected to objective reality.

<sup>73</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 232.

<sup>74</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 232-233.

<sup>75</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 258.

<sup>77</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 262.

because for hundreds of years rationalistic thought had failed.”<sup>78</sup> In *Escape from Reason*, Schaeffer traces the beginning of this shift all the way from Aquinas’ tension between grace and nature to their separation in the Renaissance to the mysticism and despair of the 1970s resulting from the choice to hold “onto rationalism at the expense of rationality”<sup>79</sup> by separating faith and nature into different spheres of life.

It is important here to emphasize that the loss of unity of thought, absolutes, and certainty came from modernism’s over-emphasis of the autonomous power of reason in the individual man, which Schaeffer recognizes by identifying the divide created by modernism between the “upper story” and the “lower story.” In fact, Schaeffer foresaw the expressivism of today’s culture when he identified the problems inherent in the autonomous freedom of Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and Rousseau, who argued for “a freedom in which the individual is the center of the universe . . . a freedom that is without restraint.”<sup>80</sup> With such freedom, as Sire points out, “ethics thus are personal and chosen.”<sup>81</sup> The guiding principle, Schaeffer argues, “which is left is individual *self-expression*.”<sup>82</sup> As Charles Taylor describes it, “the relativism was itself an offshoot of a form of individualism, whose principle is something like this: everyone has a right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important

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<sup>78</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 233.

<sup>79</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 233.

<sup>80</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 228.

<sup>81</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 80.

<sup>82</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 228.

or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment.”<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, these are the threads in modern thinking which led to the breakdown of modernism and subsequently the advent of existentialism and postmodernism. Thus, Schaeffer is best understood in the context of the height of existentialist thought, though he can also be applied to identify the weak spots in postmodern thinking.

In response to the dualism resulting from modernist thought, Schaeffer argues for reclaiming the rational aspect of biblical thinking, because, “with the propositional communication from the personal God before us, not only the things of the cosmos and history match up, but everything on the upper and lower stories matches too: grace and nature; a moral absolute and morals; the universal point of reference and the particulars, and the emotional and aesthetic realities of man as well.”<sup>84</sup> In contrast to the modern mysticism or new theology that demands people “believe or not . . . without the exercise of reason,”<sup>85</sup> Schaeffer seeks a balance between “the truly rational and . . . the involvement of the whole man at every level of his being as something which flows on from the first.”<sup>86</sup> By recovering the rationality of the Christian faith, Schaeffer makes a significant contribution to Christian thought that is essentially in agreement with the Reformation’s emphasis upon the whole of being in contrast to the dualism of the

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<sup>83</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 14.

<sup>84</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 120.

<sup>85</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 101.

<sup>86</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 125.

Renaissance and early modernism. Opposing the divide between nature and faith, “the Reformation’s biblical view was . . . [that] the soul is not more important than the body. God made the whole man, and the whole man is important.”<sup>87</sup> Equating this position with the biblical position, Schaeffer identifies its distinctions from Platonic and humanist-rationalist thinking and posits that the Reformation answer provides a solution to “modern man’s sorrows” stemming from Renaissance thinking.<sup>88</sup>

Ultimately, what this results in is “a Lordship of Christ in culture” that is equally emphasized in both the areas of grace and of nature — the rational and the nonrational, the objective and the subjective.<sup>89</sup> For Schaeffer, the emphasis is on the reclaiming of the rational end of the dualism due to his culture’s loss of absolutes and resulting crisis of truth. His emphasis on rational faith reveals itself in his concern that “there tends to be a drift towards a monolithic and uniform whole” in culture that rejects antithetical thinking,<sup>90</sup> representing the “drift of modern culture into relativism.”<sup>91</sup>

Because of this emphasis on the rational aspect of existence, he was charged with giving in to rationalism and defended himself against this claim in the first appendix to *The God Who Is There*: “the rationalist thinks that on the basis of man’s reason, plus what he can see about him, final answers are possible. My books stress that man cannot

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<sup>87</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 223.

<sup>88</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 224.

<sup>89</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 224.

<sup>90</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Naugle, 30.

generate final answers from himself.”<sup>92</sup> He then discusses the distinction between rationalism, which he denounces, and rationality on the basis of antithesis, which he seeks to recover in biblical thinking.<sup>93</sup> This antithesis, he stresses, is based on the fact that “our minds are so created by God that we think in antithesis: so much so that the only way a person can deny antithesis is on the basis of antithesis.”<sup>94</sup> Schaeffer is correct in defending himself against the charge of rationalism because the “age of relativity”<sup>95</sup> he experienced eschewed truth for subjectivity, leaving Christians at a loss with how to respond to a culture that, only in recent centuries, found itself on the defensive intellectually.<sup>96</sup> By reacting to this relativism, Schaeffer significantly recovered a commitment to orthodoxy and the existence of absolute truth on the basis of both divine revelation and rational thinking.

Indeed, Schaeffer himself recognized the limitations of rationality, stating, “although rationality is important, it should never become exclusively so. Rationality is not the end of the matter.”<sup>97</sup> Additionally, he reaffirms the fact that the end goal of

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<sup>92</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 184-185.

<sup>93</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 183.

<sup>94</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 184.

<sup>95</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 197.

<sup>96</sup> For further discussion on the development and nature of Christian civilization, see John Baillie, *What is Christian Civilization?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945). Particularly helpful and relevant is his point that after the Reformation, a “new type of Christian civilization” emerged that was “an open as contrasted with a compulsive Christian civilization. And not towards the close of the eighteenth century did this situation begin to be overtaken by radical change” (15). Consequently, what the Church experiences now is a relatively new development in the Christian cultural experience, resulting in a time that needs redeveloped and rediscovered ideas. This is precisely where Schaeffer found himself when combating existentialism and where the Church finds itself now with the advent of postmodernism.

<sup>97</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 123.

rationality in the Christian life — its *telos* as Smith may put it — is worship,<sup>98</sup> and that the work of the Holy Spirit comes before man’s reason.<sup>99</sup> What Schaeffer argued was that “rationality defines and provides a form for the whole.”<sup>100</sup> He “perceived the primacy of reason in each individual’s makeup and the potency of ideas in the human mind.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, the question is not one of whether or not Schaeffer falls into rationalism — he absolutely does not — but one of whether or not Schaeffer’s emphasis on the primary role of rationality in understanding life and being places man’s reason at the center stage among his other faculties. In a sense, Schaeffer is criticizing the Renaissance and Enlightenment’s epistemology while remaining *implicitly* within the framework of its anthropology. Although a biblical understanding of the role of man’s reason is crucially important, Schaeffer’s anthropology relates to Descartes’ classically modernist statement, “I think, therefore I am”<sup>102</sup> in understanding individual rationality. Of course, for Schaeffer, his assertion of reason comes from an understanding that human rationality reflects the image of a personal, rational, and relational God. The issue is merely a matter of emphasis.

In many respects, Schaeffer’s approach is understandable and not entirely inaccurate; however, it is based on a limited anthropology that overemphasizes man as a

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<sup>98</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 125.

<sup>99</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 185.

<sup>100</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 124.

<sup>101</sup> J.I. Packer, “Forward - Francis A. Schaeffer: The Man and His Vision” in *Trilogy: The Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), xii.

<sup>102</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. A. Cress, 4th edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 18.

rational creature who seeks knowledge in order to believe through the primary faculty of reason. Of course, this process of utilizing reason and acknowledging God's propositional revelation occurs, but may not be the fullest understanding of what it means to be human. Whether accepted wholeheartedly in the case of modernism or implicitly written into the framework of a Christian view of reason in the case of Schaeffer, an overemphasis on human beings as rational creatures is dangerous and must be balanced out with the rest of human nature, including the capacities to love and perceive, in addition to the capacity to think.

### **James K. A. Smith**

Writing from the perspective of the postmodern twenty-first century, James K. A. Smith implements an anthropology that both builds from and expands Schaeffer's reclaiming of the rational in the Christian faith. Smith himself was influenced by Schaeffer's work and finds himself in the Reformed circle of faith and Christian philosophy, describing it as "a home I've never left;"<sup>103</sup> in fact, he lectured at L'Abri in Switzerland in 2003.<sup>104</sup> In the preface to one of his books, he states that he finds himself "on the path of Christian philosophy today because of an encounter with the work of Francis Schaeffer when I was a sophomore in college. . . this book is an attempt to render thanks and honor to Schaeffer's legacy — even if I might take that legacy in directions that Schaeffer would not."<sup>105</sup> In this way, Smith is a helpful case study in examining a

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<sup>103</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), xi.

<sup>104</sup> Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 12.

<sup>105</sup> Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 12.

somewhat divergent area of thought within the Reformed tradition of philosophy and how it may complement worldview thought. Smith argues that the Reformation “was a recovery and rearticulation of a basically *Augustinian* worldview, which was itself first and foremost an unpacking of Paul’s vision of what it meant that Christ is risen.”<sup>106</sup> Consequently, his efforts focus on returning to a premodern vision of what constitutes the nature of man by undoing the effects of the Enlightenment’s dualist rationalism on modern thinking that would lead to existentialism or the individualism of postmodernism.

In his work, Smith seeks to initiate a “shift of focus from ideas to practices, from beliefs to liturgy. . .”<sup>107</sup> in a way that counters “a massive blind spot in much of the Christian cultural critique that takes place under the banner of worldview-thinking.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, he does not “want to entirely abandon” worldview thinking and works from its criticisms of “rationalist accounts of the human person that would reduce us to thinking machines.” However, Smith points out how worldview thinking “still tends to exhibit a fairly ‘heady’ or cognitive picture of the human person.”<sup>109</sup> Smith’s criticism, then, is that the worldview thinking, as an “idea-centric or belief-centric approach,”<sup>110</sup> fails to analyze a deeper level of human existence and understanding that is liturgical, formative and “pretheoretical, that is on a different register than ideas.”<sup>111</sup> The liturgies which Smith

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<sup>106</sup> Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist*, 39, emphasis original.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 92-93.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 85.

<sup>109</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24.

<sup>110</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24.

<sup>111</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.



argues are inherent in daily life “shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world.”<sup>112</sup> In this way, he analyzes the formative and counter-formative nature of life that impacts one’s ultimate loves, desires, and vision of the good life, which he argues “is a way of raising the stakes”<sup>113</sup> in Christian philosophy, worldview studies, and worship.

At the heart of Smith’s work are two interrelated arguments: first, the development of a liturgical anthropology “that emphasizes the primacy of love and the priority of the imagination in shaping our identity and governing our orientation to the world. . .”<sup>114</sup> and second, a view of embodiment which understands that “the way into the heart is through the body, and the way into the body is through story.”<sup>115</sup> Smith essentially argues that humans learn and embody worldview thinking through living it out in practice after receiving or rejecting divine revelation, which Schaeffer’s work provides a foundation for understanding. Through developing these two arguments, Smith hopes to explain how “we might have a highly developed, articulate ‘worldview’ and yet *act* in ways that are remarkably inconsistent with such a ‘perspective.’”<sup>116</sup> His aim, as he describes it, is not to set up “a dichotomy: *either* practice *or* reflection. To the contrary, my hope is to foster intentional reflection *on* practice in order to encourage reflective

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<sup>112</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.

<sup>113</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 27.

<sup>114</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>116</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 8, emphasis original.

immersion *in* practice.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, he hopes to create a theoretical framework, or toolbox, from which an assessment of practice can take place in much the same way that the framework of worldview allows for the assessment of ideas.

Beginning with his liturgical anthropology, Smith defines it as a model that emphasizes “the way we inhabit the world . . . not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around it.”<sup>118</sup> In order to flesh out what this concept looks like, he works through three components of the argument: intentionality, teleology, and habit.

Intentionality is Smith’s way of describing the fact that “the way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around it.”<sup>119</sup> Essentially, Smith argues against an intellectualism that “reduces human beings to brains-on-a-stick.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, individuals are not simply existing in a mental vacuum but are always practically acting towards *something* — “the human person or consciousness . . . is always ‘aimed at’ something: it *intends* something as an object.”<sup>121</sup> As he further states, “to be human is to be *for* something, directed toward something, oriented toward something” which is meant to be in “the Creator who is known in Jesus Christ.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 186, emphasis original.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 47.

<sup>119</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 47.

<sup>120</sup> Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 48, emphasis original.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 8.

Drawing from Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger's study of consciousness, Smith argues that "our most fundamental way of intending the world is not cognitive but noncognitive."<sup>123</sup> Regarding this claim, he warns that he is not adopting an anti-intellectualism by asserting the primacy of the heart at the expense of the mind, but rather argues that "we love *in order* to know. . ."<sup>124</sup> In this sense, then, he invokes<sup>125</sup> Augustine's classic claim in *The Confessions* that "you [God] have made us for yourself, and our *hearts* are restless until they rest in you."<sup>126</sup> Smith then concludes that, "the center and seat of the human person is found not in the heady regions of the intellect but in the gut-level regions of the heart. . ."<sup>127</sup> Thus, phenomenological observations about consciousness and perception, which will be discussed more below, give insight into how humans understand the world beneath the level of rational arguments.

In addition to being intentional creatures, Smith argues that humans are "*teleological* creatures. . . As intentional, love always has a target, something that it intends or aims at . . . [and] implicit in that love is an end, or *telos*."<sup>128</sup> Combined with the idea that humans are always intending that aim or *telos* at something, even when they are not thinking about it, understanding that process becomes dramatically important.

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<sup>123</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 50.

<sup>124</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 18, emphasis original.

<sup>125</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 77.

<sup>126</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, IL: New City Press, 2002), 1.1.1, emphasis added.

<sup>127</sup> Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 52, emphasis original.

Therefore, while still working on the basis of antithesis that writers such as Schaeffer developed, Smith is assessing an even deeper and more fundamental level of antithesis — the very “vision of the good life . . . a *telos* that we desire,” which will either be aimed at the kingdom of God or at secular, competing visions of the good life.<sup>129</sup>

With this need to aim one’s desires towards God established, Smith turns to how this is done, emphasizing as he did earlier that this is not simply on the basis of ideas that “convince” one into the good life. This vision of the good life “becomes operative in us (motivating actions, decisions, etc.) by becoming an integral part of the fabric of our *dispositions* — our precognitive tendencies to act in certain ways and toward certain ends. . . ‘habits.’”<sup>130</sup> Habits “constitute the *fulcrum* of our desire. . .”<sup>131</sup> and are the means by which the values and practices of one’s desire become second nature in the precognitive consciousness. Ideas imbed themselves in an individual’s being by the act of *enacting* them through habit. Smith then uses this idea to develop “a philosophy of action”<sup>132</sup> that accounts for the intentionality and teleology of human nature, as well as the embodied nature of human being that operates on the level of habits and practices, rather than ideas.

Of course, this is not to suggest an essentially determinist or behaviorist model that argues that humans have no control over the outcome of their desires because it is

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<sup>129</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53-54, emphasis original.

<sup>130</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 55, emphasis original.

<sup>131</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 56, emphasis original.

<sup>132</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 9.

determined in their habits. Rather, the point of developing a liturgical anthropology is to reassert the act of reflection over these areas of being human and affirming the “need to *consider* how the unconscious is shaped and formed.”<sup>133</sup> Although habits shape individuals in noncognitive ways, those habits are still determined by the individual who has complete control over which habits are chosen. Additionally, Smith points out that “we don’t just ‘naturally’ desire particular configurations of the kingdom; we are formed or trained to be aimed at particular configurations of the good life” in the communal institutions of either the Church or the world.<sup>134</sup> Thus, the process of desiring God — and indeed, sanctification — requires careful reflection over not only the beliefs and ideas at play in the world, but also the habits and liturgies that individuals adopt of their own free will, whether consciously or unconsciously. It is still a matter of choosing the truth, but it is truth in the form of practice rather than proposition.

With this liturgical anthropology in place to understand the importance of desire, pre-intellectual consciousness, and habit, Smith argues that, “being desiring, imaginative animals, our primary orientation to the world is visceral, not cerebral — which is also why our attunement and behavior is so profoundly shaped by bodily practices that connect with us on this visceral register.”<sup>135</sup> Keeping this concept in mind, Smith describes his concept of embodiment and how it impacts daily life and Christian worship in particular. As stated earlier, Smith argues that “the way into the heart is through the

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<sup>133</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 61, emphasis added.

<sup>134</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 62.

<sup>135</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 60.

body, and the way into the body is through story.”<sup>136</sup> Through the body, one perceives an understanding of the world that is precognitive and carried in learned habits that constitute “an embodied orientation that is acquired.”<sup>137</sup> The imagination, which he defines as “a way to name this everyday capacity for such unconscious ‘understanding’ of the world,”<sup>138</sup> is fundamental to this process because “imagination precedes desire.”<sup>139</sup> To explain this point, Smith employs the works of French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu in order to appreciate how this unconscious understanding carried in the body through the imagination is neither “a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action.”<sup>140</sup> It is in “this middle space of our being-in-the-world — between instinct and intellect, between reflex and reflexivity.”<sup>141</sup> Therefore, as he draws from Bourdieu, “ritual is the way we (learn to) believe with our bodies.”<sup>142</sup> With an understanding of desire and the heart, as well as an understanding of habit and the body, Smith moves into the final portion of his argument for reclaiming humanity’s embodiment for Christianity: the power of narrative in forming the imagination.

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<sup>136</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>137</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 57.

<sup>138</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 18.

<sup>139</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 125.

<sup>140</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 166.

<sup>141</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>142</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 92. See also Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Liberating Eros: Confession and Desire,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26, no. 1 (2006): 115-36, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23561500>. Papanikolaou gives the example of “the phenomenon of Alcoholics Anonymous” as a community in which the practice, or ritual, of confession “that one is a recovering alcoholic . . . offers the hope of freedom from the tyranny of desire for alcohol” (117).

Thankfully, the body does not just learn rituals from its environment that cannot be altered — Smith argues that “our hearts traffic in stories. . .”<sup>143</sup> which impact the habits that ‘stick’ so to speak. He continues: “for finite, embodied creatures like us, meaning is fundamentally rooted in metaphor because that is the inferential ‘logic’ of the body. . . an adequate *liturgics* needs to be rooted in a phenomenological appreciation of a kind of *kinaesthetics* that is, in turn, the basis for appreciating the *aesthetics* of human understanding.”<sup>144</sup> Thus, the “general poetics” of life inherent in liturgies “is a phenomenology of our being-in-the-world that recognizes that meaning-making is, for us, a primarily aesthetic matter.”<sup>145</sup> The stories that are told in culture create a desire in the practitioner that fuels those very practices cementing this desire towards a specific *telos*. As a result, the gospel narrative, for example, is exceptionally powerful when encapsulated in the “material practices of Christian worship . . . that our gracious God deigns to inhabit for our sanctification.”<sup>146</sup> As he argues, individuals have the free will to “choose to submit myself to different rhythms and habit-forming routines in order to rehabilitate my wants and desires to a different *telos*.”<sup>147</sup> Story is then incredibly important for that physical action of worship, which orients and directs one’s desire towards a vision of the good life and corresponding actions to support that vision. As Timothy Keller puts it in the example of preaching, “preaching, then, must not simply tell

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<sup>143</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 108.

<sup>144</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 124, emphasis original.

<sup>145</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 127.

<sup>146</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 15.

<sup>147</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 186, emphasis added.

people what to do. It must re-present Christ in such a way that he captures the heart and imagination more than material things. This takes not just intellectual argumentation but the presentation of the *beauty* of Christ.”<sup>148</sup> In other areas of the practice of worship, such as confession, communion, the reading of scripture, and song, the goal is to reinforce the story of the Gospel in a way that catches the imagination and the heart in addition to the mind.

Thus, because of the constant presence of secular formative liturgies in day-to-day life, from strolling the mall’s inherently consumeristic halls<sup>149</sup> or participating in the baseball game’s nationalist practices,<sup>150</sup> Smith argues that implementing counter-formative practices through the gospel story of Christian worship is of paramount importance so that one can “imagine the kingdom in certain ways — and come to desire that kingdom in unconscious, automated ways. . .”<sup>151</sup> Consequently, the point of understanding these practices is, again, not “meant to denigrate or neglect the role of reflection and intellectual analysis. . .”<sup>152</sup> He concludes: “in short, liturgical catechesis will encourage reflection on worship precisely so we constitute worship as that ‘suite’ of disciplines that are habitations of the Spirit, into which we’re invited in order to learn

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<sup>148</sup> Timothy Keller, *Shaped by the Gospel: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 139, emphasis original.

<sup>149</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 19-24.

<sup>150</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 103-110.

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 126.

<sup>152</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 186.



how to imagine the kingdom.”<sup>153</sup> Smith’s liturgical anthropology and reclaiming of humanity’s embodiment then is ultimately for the purpose of reflection and reorientation towards Christ through practices and rituals that inscribe belief into the body. In this way, Smith builds from a philosophy of mind to one of heart and body as well.

### **Integration of Schaeffer and Smith**

Given how different these two approaches to developing a Christian philosophy of life and anthropology can seem in terms of what it means to be human, it is crucial to examine where their points of agreement can be found and whether they can complement each other. Although Smith states that he does not seek to reject worldview thinking but wishes to supplement or support it,<sup>154</sup> he does not give very much detail in how that task can be accomplished. At first glance, it appears that to embrace Smith’s thesis necessitates the rejection of Schaeffer’s arguments, or vice versa; this section attempts to remedy this dilemma by examining where these two writers overlap in their thinking. Ultimately, to accept Smith’s theses allows for a more well-rounded anthropology, building from the foundation of worldview thinking, while tempering the role of reason to allow for man’s embodied nature as well as his mind. While Schaeffer sets man to the task of “recovering his rationality,”<sup>155</sup> Smith on the other hand wants to recover his practices and desire.<sup>156</sup> A proper Christian philosophy of life requires both.

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<sup>153</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 189.

<sup>154</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 8.

<sup>155</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 263.

<sup>156</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 18.

Fundamentally, it should be noted that both Schaeffer and Smith have the same stated goal: to provide humanity with meaning in order to be fully human and alive. For example, Smith argues from the viewpoint of a liturgical anthropology that “because we are fundamentally *creatures*, being aimed at the Creator, so to speak, is a necessary condition for being fully or properly human. . . [and] what’s going on in worship has relevance not just for my religious or spiritual life but also for my *human* life.”<sup>157</sup> On a similar note, Schaeffer argues that “the Christian is called to exhibit the characteristics of true humanity, because being a man is . . . being that which goes back before the Fall, to man made in the image of God. Therefore, Christians in their relationships should be the most *human* people you will ever see.”<sup>158</sup> Thus, they are both trying to address humanity’s need for meaning and current crisis of meaninglessness, albeit Schaeffer to an existentialist audience and Smith to a postmodern one.<sup>159</sup> For Schaeffer, the answer is found in the Biblical Christian system of thought that reveals a personal God, which he says defines Christianity — “Christianity is a system . . .”<sup>160</sup> — whereas Smith explicitly argues that “Christianity is not fundamentally a worldview. . .”<sup>161</sup> and quotes Pope Benedict XVI as saying that “Christianity is not an intellectual system. . . Christianity is

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<sup>157</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 169, emphasis original.

<sup>158</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 173, emphasis original.

<sup>159</sup> Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 285.

<sup>160</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 186

<sup>161</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 216.

instead an encounter, a love story; it is an event.”<sup>162</sup> Although Schaeffer makes a similar statement at one point,<sup>163</sup> the issue of emphasis as pointed out above is problematic. Of course, the rational side of being is a true aspect of life and one the Christian faith speaks into, but it is not the primary understanding of life or the Christian faith, which describing Christianity as a system would seem to imply. The issues and points of departure between Schaeffer and Smith are largely in terms of emphasis and which model of human being is primary.

To be fair, however, this development from worldview thinking and ideas to desire and practice by Smith relies heavily on the work of thinkers such as Schaeffer. For example, Schaeffer developed the key connection between God’s nature and an individual’s end, or *telos*, stating: “if we begin with an impersonal, we cannot then have some form of teleological concept.”<sup>164</sup> In this regard, Smith is truly working off of a foundation of teleology and antithesis built by Schaeffer. Additionally, both Schaeffer and Smith are working from a perspective of Christianity as “a creation-centered teaching”<sup>165</sup> that emphasizes the created goodness and importance of every facet of humanity. Smith argues for understanding “the Reformed tradition as an outgrowth of the central affirmation of the incarnation: God’s breaking into time for our sakes,”<sup>166</sup> which

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<sup>162</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Homily for Msgr Luigi Giussani,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 31 (2004): 685. <https://www.communio-icr.com/articles/view/funeral-homily-for-msgr.-luigi-giussani>.

<sup>163</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 169.

<sup>164</sup> Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 283.

<sup>165</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 186.

<sup>166</sup> Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist*, 47-48.

naturally impacts every area of life. In this common understanding of creation and the incarnation, Smith and Schaeffer's works can interact and complement one another.

What is needed, then, is a complete, well-rounded philosophy of heart, mind, and body: desire, reason, and embodiment must all be taken into account and subjected to Christ. Thus, Schaeffer presents a necessary understanding of reason as created good by God and impacting faith, and Smith presents an understanding of desire and embodiment that balance out one's understanding of man. Neither emphasis should be absolutized and subsequently turned into fundamentalism on one hand, or a postmodern Christianity on the other.

Finally, while Schaeffer is critical of Heidegger and Sartre for absolutizing the subjective side of life,<sup>167</sup> Smith relies heavily on the ideas of Heidegger and other contributors to phenomenological study, such as Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu and Husserl, which necessitates an investigation into the possible implementation of phenomenology to worldview thinking. The hope in doing so is that phenomenology may be incorporated into the theoretical framework of Christian philosophy of life to balance the rational with the subjective, resulting in a more well-rounded view of life and the nature of man. Just as Schaeffer reclaimed the objective rational for Christians from modernity, Smith contributes to a reclaiming of the subjective personal from the postmoderns and existentialists — the lower story, as Schaeffer puts it — which merits further investigation given the personal and expressive nature of the postmodern age.

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<sup>167</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 238-239.

### **Application of Phenomenology**

In examining the impact of embodiment and liturgical practices, Smith is essentially taking a phenomenological approach to assessing worship and the Christian life. Phenomenology is “understood as the philosophical approach originated by Edmund Husserl in the early years of the twentieth century. . . [Phenomenologists] start with experience.”<sup>168</sup> It “involves the description of things as one experiences them, or of one’s experiences of things.”<sup>169</sup> Thus, for example, “we can recognize the cat as she focuses her attention upon the morning squirrel, selecting this particular creature out of the vast complexity of the background of other beings and events. . . For us to observe the cat watch the squirrel is to have placed both in a familiarly placed context. . .”<sup>170</sup> Phenomenology, then, calls these perceptive contexts to attention and examines that perception and framework for experience from the individual’s point of view.

Traditionally speaking, phenomenology and worldview thought have been at odds with one another as disciplines; for example, Husserl himself argues that worldview studies undercut phenomenological pursuit of “a rigorous scientific philosophy. . .”<sup>171</sup> and Heidegger distinguishes worldview thinking as “the positing of specific things about beings” while philosophy focuses “on being as such.”<sup>172</sup> However, Smith’s use of

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<sup>168</sup>Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2012), 6-7.

<sup>169</sup> Michael Hammond, Jane Howarth, and Russell Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology* (Cambridge, MA: Basi Blackwell, Inc., 1991), 1.

<sup>170</sup> Don Ihde, *Consequences of Phenomenology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 27.

<sup>171</sup> Naugle, 115.

<sup>172</sup> Naugle, 139.

phenomenological concepts in defining his liturgical anthropology, which emphasizes the primary role of desiring and feeling in being human, and his concept of embodiment, which reasserts the biblical role of narrative story and ritual in communicating truth, questions whether this separation between worldview thinking and phenomenology is valid. Once again, David Naugle's question posed in light of the thought of Heidegger is extremely pertinent for Christian thinkers: have they "been co-opted by modernity in employing the vocabulary of worldview as an objectified way of relating to reality?"<sup>173</sup> Consequently, in light of Smith's thesis, further research should be devoted into how phenomenology may help bring a subjective framework into worldview's largely objective way of thinking, and whether its conclusions are truly antithetical to biblical thinking. The subjective side of life and reality is also created by God and must be understood and subjected to his authority in practice and reflection. Indeed, recovering the subjective in worldview studies may help guard against a capitulation to a modernistic mode of thinking and provide a useful tool for exploring additional aspects of life beyond the rational as created by God. In this way, it may be possible to effectively balance the rational and nonrational, the pull of modernity and postmodernity — to not surrender absolute truth and logic as embodied in Christ by starting with personal subjectivity as the source for truth, meaning, and values.

### **Conclusion**

To address humanity's essential need for meaning and truth, both rational thinking and a desiring, visceral vision of the good life is required to meet humanity's

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<sup>173</sup> Naugle, 147.

existential needs. This thesis concludes that it is possible and necessary to integrate the thought of Francis Schaeffer and James K. A. Smith, which creates a significant link between the worldview thinking predominant in the twentieth-century and the positions of writers such as Smith who find themselves slightly outside of that circle of thinkers in the postmodern era. Ultimately, the work of both of these Christian philosophers gives individuals an understanding of their need for a unified mind, heart, and body, as well as a vision of the good life that meets them at the level of their desires, inviting them into it as an expression of meaning for their lives.

As Schaeffer points out, Scripture “teaches that though man is hopelessly lost, he is not nothing,”<sup>174</sup> which provides an essential starting point for rediscovering meaning and purpose. This starting point is developed further by Smith’s liturgical anthropology that focuses man’s meaning towards the *telos* of a life united with Christ. While Schaeffer points out the need for true spirituality as “a continuing moment-by-moment proper relationship with the God who exists,”<sup>175</sup> Smith provides an embodied philosophy of action for pursuing that relationship in practice.<sup>176</sup> By uniting ideas with practice and desire, Christians can address the needs of a postmodern culture to express belief, but in a rightly ordered way. An anthropology that equally emphasizes the embodied and the rational is necessary to meet humanity in its fundamental craving for meaning and its expression through love. The worldview framework is not broken, but its theoretical

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<sup>174</sup> Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 268.

<sup>175</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 158.

<sup>176</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 189.

toolbox needs to be expanded to better unite the subjective and objective sides of life for a postmodern world. The end, or *telos*, of this expansion is ultimately, as both Schaeffer and Smith reaffirm, worship – to attempt at knowing in “a kind of splendid confusion” the light of Christ who, like the sun, is “both shining and shapeless, at once a blaze and a blur.”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 51.



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