James K.A. Smith. *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013)

James Smith's *Imagining the Kingdom* has been much anticipated by those captured by the author's first volume in this series on Cultural Liturgies, *Desiring the Kingdom*, which provided a rich, stimulating reflection on Christian education and Christian formation. Geared simultaneously to the renewal of both the church and the Christian university, that book hinged on the assumption that humans are fundamentally "liturgical animals"—"desiring" creatures who can't *not* worship and who are fundamentally shaped by the worship practices they engage in, whether "secular" practices (habitual actions that take on a ritualized forms, such as shopping at the mall, running, interacting with an iPhone, going to a movie or concert) or Christian worship practices.

Desiring the Kingdom argued that liturgies are formative because they shape what we love, and we *are* what we love; our desires provide the impulse for action. Liturgies, secular or sacred, shape us with an "implicit social imaginary." *Imagining the Kingdom* continues in the same trajectory, providing an expanded account and more robust vision of our being-in-the-world as embodied, liturgical, habituated, imagining creatures. At the heart of Smith's critique in both volumes is the inadequate view that humans are fundamentally motivated by what they *think* and the intellectualist world of ideas; that is, the belief that people can change their lives by changing their ideas.

The author contends that "by focusing on what we think and believe, such a model misses the centrality and primacy of what we *love,* by focusing on education as the dissemination of *in*formation, we have missed the ways in which Christian education is really a project of *form*ation" (7). While the bias towards humans as first of all thinking beings is difficult to break, Smith is tenacious in providing an account where thinking comes second to "bodily interaction with the world" (82).

The book is divided into two distinct parts. In the first part, Smith creates a theoretical well from which to draw in reconsidering how and why liturgical formation happens. Using phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, he gives an account of how human

beings primarily make meaning through bodily knowing ("kinaesthetics") and a recognition that this bodily basis of meaning creates a disposition to be oriented by story, by the imagination ("poetics"). "It is because I 'picture' the world as *this* kind of 'environment,'" Smith argues, "that I then picture 'the good life' in a certain way that draws me toward it and thus construe my obligations and responsibilities accordingly" (125). What we love is shaped by our actions, and our actions are shaped by imagination or *habitus*; and the way to the imagination is through the body.

In the second part Smith develops a type of Christian liturgical anthropology and an account of how worship does its work. In the author's words, "if we are going to be agents of the coming kingdom, *acting* in ways that embody God's desire for creation, then our imaginations need to be conscripted by God. It is not enough to convince our intellects; our imaginations need to be caught by—and caught up into—-the Story of God's restorative grace for all of creation" (157). Christian worship, based on ancient practices, and its embodied vision of the "good life" are key to this kind of spiritual formation and to the Christian imagination, for the liturgy at its best engages the entire person and shapes their habitus through bodily and narrative repetition.

Like Smith's first volume, *Imagining the Kingdom* is a hybrid. Geared to scholars and pastors, to the church and the Christian university, it aims to be both accessible and scholarly. This creates perhaps one of Smith's biggest challenges, resulting in critiques from both sides. The strangest irony of the book, which the author acknowledges, is that he uses an intellectual, rational process to convince the reader that persons are primarily formed by non-intellectual, habituated, and embodied experiences. Despite its emphasis on a "sanctified incarnational" approach, the book treads along a dangerous precipice of "ex-carnation." Yet the author's narrative approach has integrity.

While Smith has found a remarkably fresh new way of appealing to the embodied sensual nature of human knowledge and action, his perspective is also curiously consistent with what feminist theologians and theorists have been saying for some time but perhaps has not been heard in the same way.

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