

Book Reviews

***Sabbath and Sunday among the Earliest Christians*, by David W. T. Brattston. 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2017. 82 pp. \$13.00.**

“A method that can prove anything proves nothing” (52). David W. T. Brattston, retired lawyer and judge who authored *Sabbath and Sunday among the Earliest Christians*, said this of the Sabbatarian position, which he shows is built upon a faulty method of research. Brattston sets out to evaluate every reference to the day of worship found in the approximately five hundred Christian documents dated prior to the mass apostasy of AD 249–251. To substantiate his case, he shows the unanimity in early Christian literature and the fervency of early Christian for Lord’s Day meetings. He concludes his work by addressing the arguments of present-day Sabbatarian. Employing his exemplary approach to research, he concludes that “the earliest Christian literature . . . is unanimous that the main day of the week for early Christians to gather and worship was not the seventh-day Sabbath, but Sunday” (3).

While Lord’s Day gatherings described in Scripture may be descriptive in form (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2, Rev 1:10), the earliest Christians understood them to be prescriptive. After describing a first-century worship service in detail, Justin Martyr (AD 100–165) gives this rationale: “Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead” (3–4).

Present-day Sabbatarians claim that “the Lord’s Day” in Revelation 1:10 is something more like “the Day of the Lord,” which is used to speak of a day of judgement, but Brattston swiftly dispels this argument by citing the late second-century work, *The Acts of Peter*, which equates “the Lord’s Day” with Sunday: “On the first day of the week, that is, on the Lord’s day, a multitude gathered together” (4–5). After examining the approximately 500 documents available to modern scholarship from this time period, the author

concludes that “the chief day of the Christian week, even before the middle of the third century, was Sunday There is no extant record of it being on Saturday” (6).

Prominent early Christian voices also believed that Jesus abolished the Sabbath. Justin described the Jewish sabbaths as “utterly ridiculous,” “unworthy of notice,” and “superstition” (9). By the third century, Tertullian taught a form of Sabbath-keeping, but as Brattston points out, Tertullian maintained this practice in addition to keeping the Lord’s Day. A major debate during this time, before the start of the Decian Persecution, concerned *how* the Lord’s Day should be kept, specifically whether the New Covenant permitted work on the Lord’s Day (9–14). The author shows how Justin, Tertullian, and others weighed in on this topic, yet none advocated for a chief gathering on the seventh day.

Using the history laid out in the early chapters as his basis, Brattston addresses the arguments of present-day Sabbatarians. Brattston has this to say about Samuele Bacchiocchi (1938–2008), author of *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1985): “Professor Bacchiocchi quotes or cites a hodgepodge of authors so wide and varied and from so many time periods that any proposition at all can be proved by this method; my comment is that a method that can prove anything proves nothing” (52). The primary point promulgated by modern Sabbatarians is that the earliest believers originally worshipped on the seventh day, but then because of intense persecution against the Jews, these Christians gathered out of necessity on Sunday to differentiate themselves from the persecution. Brattston shows that this theory has no historical support. The main event that Sabbatarians identify is the Hadrianic Persecution of AD 132 to 135. Brattston’s most convincing argument is based on the extent of the persecution—for such a persecution to have a far-reaching impact it would need to be widespread, intense, and long-lasting. Brattston concludes that this persecution, although intense, was confined mainly to Judea for just a few years (32–50).

Brattston’s commitment to identifying the best sources from history is the greatest strength of this book. In this relatively short volume, the author imparts an approach to historical research that every student of theology should heed: “In Christianity today, too many people allege that an apostolic or other early state of affairs

had existed, without substantiation from original contemporary sources. All teaching and practice must be affirmatively proved from the best evidence available" (27). Brattston's interaction with the Talmud and other Jewish sources is especially helpful for understanding the motivations of Christians during this time by understanding Jewish thought (see chapter 11). This work would be strengthened if it rooted the case for modern-day perpetuation of worship practices in the New Testament text, rather than this case being made from just the practice of the early church. A subject that needs more substantiation and would make for an interesting research topic is the earlier church's view of rest on the Lord's Day (see chapters 4 and 15). Brattston concludes that early Christians "performed secular tasks without conscientious objection" on Sundays (58).

David Brattston presents his case with the precision of a lawyer, the fairmindedness of a judge, and the astuteness of a historian. I recommended this book as the starting place for this topic. This resource—and the author's approach—is an exemplary model for the pastor, layperson, student, and scholar.

Daniel A. Webster

***The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg*, by Robin Leaver. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2017. 206 pp. \$15.00.**

Martin Luther facilitated many changes in the liturgical practices of congregational singing, many of which Protestants still use in worship today. Robin Leaver, professor emeritus at Westminster Choir College and visiting professor at Yale University and Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, discusses what was happening musically within the church when Luther began instituting his reformation concepts. Lutheran studies often focus on the 1529 Klug Wittenberg hymnal as the first hymnal utilized by Luther and his constituents. However, Leaver's thesis is that Wittenberg churches employed vernacular congregational singing before then, citing hymnals and documents in circulation before this time, namely the 1526 *Enchyridion*.

Leaver delves deeply into the contents of hymnals published within the decade after Martin Luther posted his theses at Wittenberg, referencing numerous developments in hymn printing during the 1520s and 1530s. Leaver states the importance of the omission of the *Enchyridion* from other Lutheran studies and attributes much of the success of hymn preservation and renewal to this publication. As his research shows, there were many developments occurring around Luther's Wittenberg at the time of the Reformation, and hymn singing was a natural development within Luther's reforms. An influential poem that Leaver references early in the book is Hans Sachs's "Die Wittenbergische Nachtigall" ("The Wittenberg Nightingale"), dated July 1523 (45). He challenges the idea of the omission of this poem from other Lutheran studies and states its importance in supporting and expanding Luther's worship reforms.

The focus of Leaver's research lies mostly between 1523 and 1526, through which he compares numerous printings of hymn publications, including those printed both individually and in hymnals. He provides a brief discussion of musical happenings outside of the church in Wittenberg during the early sixteenth century, focusing on the oral folk-song tradition, especially the style used by the Meistersingers. This discussion transitions into Luther's theses, which led to the publication of many liturgical reforms issued by others around Wittenberg from 1517 to 1523. One of the sources utilized in Leaver's research is Luther's publication of "En neues lied" in 1523, the hymn considered to be Luther's martyr song and the inspiration of vernacular hymnody. Due to this publication, Leaver asserts that congregational singing was active in Wittenberg beginning in 1523 (162).

Leaver highlights the Meistersingers' use of bar form in their oral singing tradition, which Luther also used in his hymn writing because he wanted to give his hymns a "receptive hearing" (60), especially in his early hymns. When Luther was purporting the inclusion of vernacular hymnody, he sought competent poets that could clearly articulate accurate theology (69). Leaver points out that Thomas Müntzer fit this category, and a few of Müntzer's hymn translations were printed in either 1523 or 1524, a time when Luther was also actively translating Latin hymns into German (85). Through their combined efforts, vernacular hymnody was established in Wittenberg and slowly started its expansion throughout

the country with the aid of broadside printing. Leaver cites particular hymns, often with tune names, printed in specific hymnals throughout this time. Leaver also discusses Johann Walter's *Chorgesangbuch* of 1524 in detail (97) and uses it as comparison for many following hymnal publications.

With the publication of the *Enchyridion* in Wittenberg in 1526, congregational singing began to be strongly emphasized (104), as opposed to singing solely from the minister or choirs. Leaver details the hymns included in this volume and compares it with the *Chorgesangbuch*, stating the *Enchyridion* was created for the congregation and the *Chorgesangbuch* was created for the choir (106). Through further analysis, Leaver states that the 1526 *Enchyridion* refers to two earlier printings of a similar hymnal, meaning that Wittenberg congregations were most likely participating in congregational singing as early as 1524 (116). This research affirms Leaver's thesis that Wittenberg churches had already been introduced to vernacular congregational singing by the time of the printing of the Klug Wittenberg hymnal in 1529. He offers numerous helpful appendices that show Luther's hymn publications in specific hymnals (Appendix 3), as well as a list of hymn collections printed from 1524 to 1536 (Appendix 5).

Leaver continuously provides historical proof to support his thesis and leads the reader on a journey through his research. He is consistent with his analytical methods and clearly states the need for his research, citing the deficiency in previous Lutheran studies. This book is ideal for researchers wanting to know more about contextualization of Luther's liturgical points of the Reformation as it examines numerous publications that have not been mentioned in other research documents. Leaver's research is thorough, concise, and contributes greatly to the study of congregational singing at the time of the Reformation.

Kim Arnold

Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship, by Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017. 162 pp. \$29.99.

To echo a sentiment from Ira Gershwin: it's very clear contemporary worship is here to stay. Provided this reality, Lim and Ruth's *Lovin' on Jesus* communicates a thorough analysis of this profoundly influential development in liturgical history. Swee Hong Lim is the Deer Park Associate Professor of Sacred Music and Director of the Master of Sacred Music Program at Emmanuel College in Toronto. Lester Ruth is a historian of Christian worship and research professor of Christian worship at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina.

Lovin' on Jesus offers a clear, concise, and informative history of contemporary worship, presenting an expansive array of aspects of the movement. The writers aim to shed light on the many facets of contemporary worship that work in tandem to create what is now an identifiable liturgical phenomenon. The authors' primary intent is to provide a history of contemporary worship that reaches far beyond just the music associated with this worship style.

The authors' pervading research question is, "what makes contemporary worship, contemporary worship?" They formulate their argument by explaining the ethos and origins of the notable paradigm shifts of this movement. These evolutions are the nature of time, space, music, prayer, presentation of Scripture, and the perceived sacramentality of contemporary worship. Ruth and Lim claim these shifts inform nine key qualities that are the defining features of the movement and can be categorized into four groups: fundamental, musical, behavioral and key dependencies (2-3). These qualities include use of non-archaic English, dedication to adapting worship choices to meet the needs of a target group, extended times of singing, predilection for informality, and reliance on modern technology.

Lim and Ruth label the sources of contemporary worship as the Church Growth movement, Pentecostalism, with traces of the Second Great Awakening (16-17, 21). Much of what drove decisions leading towards contemporary worship was an anxiety to avoid losing youth membership of the church and a desire to seem relevant to the greater culture to prevent congregational boredom. This in-

volved a re-ordering of time with a high priority of maintaining a sense of seamless “flow” to simulate liturgical freedom and promote congregational engagement (32). This shift coincided with an evolution of space, with types of buildings and “liturgical centers” being re-configured with shifted focus to a platform with the musicians as a central focus (41, 52). Furthermore, the placement of technological equipment also becomes a semi-permanent fixture in the worship space (48).

Ruth and Lim detail the key features of contemporary worship music that accentuate its particularity. These features include use of colloquial, intimate, personalized language as a divergence from stately, archaic language (59). Moreover, in efforts to achieve “flow” building in emotional intensity, the “song set” with liberal use of stretching songs becomes prominent (66). Musical language also is both impacted and informed by the language of prayer, with extemporaneity and expressiveness being paramount (89). In this regard spoken prayer and sung prayer become nearly synonymous to the contemporary worshipper (92). As for the exposition of Scripture, intelligibility and relevance drive efforts to become more approachable and relatable to the non-churched individual (108). The authors lastly describe the concept of the “sacramentality of contemporary worship” in which God’s presence and power is invoked, encountered, and celebrated through the sequence and flow of praise and worship music, drawing scriptural support from Psalm 22:3 and Psalm 100:4 (124, 130, 137).

The strength of this book lies in the compressed nature of the writing that attains a significant depth of study delivered in a concise manner. In doing so, the authors analyze a phenomenon that few have approached from a historical standpoint. By highlighting key qualities of contemporary worship, the authors illustrate on a grander scale the formative nature of liturgical actions and environments. They helpfully show how the use, misuse, intensification, or degradation of liturgical space, foci, actions, language, and the arts are loaded with a particular theology that is perpetuated by liturgical choices. Similarly, the objective tone of the authors inadvertently calls to question the assumptions of the presumed benefits of contemporary worship. Lim and Ruth unearth many insights imbedded in the ethos of contemporary worship that provide helpful applications. In particular, the authors make the observation

that within the last twenty years, the top contemporary worship songs had very few to no songs that act as a form of intercessory prayer or confession (95).

The objective tone of the writing is on one hand positive and the other negative. At many points it appears as though the authors are hinting at an assessment to avoid saying it outright. For example, the authors explain the anxiety to avoid “dead time” in a service saying, “For many, to have dead time is the kiss of death in worship” (32). These types of statements, humorous as they are, sends the reader into a direction perhaps unintended by the authors by trying to ascertain their implied opinion or conclusion. Secondly, the authors’ assessment of musical qualities overlooked the pervasive influence of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) on contemporary worship. As pop-music in general has moved further away from guitar-driven music in favor of beat, loop, and electronically generated music, contemporary worship is beginning to follow the same trajectory. This development should be explored in a later edition of this book.

Finally, this text is immensely helpful for worship pastors, senior pastors, worship historians and worship professors. Contemporary worship is a widespread phenomenon that a large percentage of churches has seemed to willingly adopt for reasons of taste, personality, and comfort with little consideration to biblical instruction as to the content, form, and aesthetic qualities that should be implemented for corporate worship. For consumers and practitioners of contemporary worship, the book presents several convicting insights that serve to edify the church to pursue pure, biblical worship.

Braden J. McKinley

Redeeming Transcendence in the Arts: Bearing Witness to the Triune God, by Jeremy Begbie. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2018. 212 pp. \$13.42.

Jeremy Begbie is the Thomas A. Langford Research Professor of Theology at Duke Divinity School. He is a professional musician, a prolific writer, and a frequent speaker on the topic of theolo-

gy and arts. His writings include *Resounding Truth; Music, Modernity, and God*; and *Peculiar Orthodoxy*. In this recent publication, Begbie revisits the notion of divine transcendence and the way art (representational and abstract) bears witness to it. Among various approaches of transcendence discussed, the author dismisses the apophatic understanding but endorses connoting transcendence as divine *otherness* and *uncontainability*. By defining divine otherness as Father-Son outward commitment to the created world and divine uncontainability as the inexhaustible grace and goodness of God in the Spirit, the nature of art is capable of responding to language's ineffability by conveying things beyond itself.

In the first chapter of his book, Begbie examines a variety of artistic and theological conceptions of transcendence, many of which lean toward an understanding pointed beyond the creaturely system (radical transcendence). Chapter two explores two common notions of sublime transcendence: Kantian and postmodern sublimities. Both approaches lead us to an apophatic theology—a “negative gesture” (59) connotes ineffable, supra-rational, and disinterested sublimation—best exemplified by Mark Rothko's paintings that express the “what is *not*” of divine transcendence (17). However, in chapter three, Begbie shows from the Scripture (mainly from John's Gospel) that a “distinctive” picture of God's Father-Son self-communication in the Spirit shapes our understanding of transcendence and arts by expressing its own *otherness* and *uncontainability* (78). Far from pursuing “something” unknown and out of this world, the author pens in chapter four, “the arts testify to the transcendence (otherness) of God most potently when they are fully creaturely” (131). Meanwhile, through the agent of metaphor, art is able to bear witness to the divine uncontainability of transcendence (157).

Throughout the entire writing, Begbie urges visual and performing artists to ponder the expression of divine transcendence in art in three directions: (1) Transcendence does not equate “total otherness” as suggested in contemporary use, where God's otherness is not anything or something but the creation. On the contrary and paradoxically, divine transcendence is obligated to tie to God's commitment and faithfulness toward his creation (81). (2) Transcendence is not “out-of-the-box” uncontainability. Instead, it signifies his superabundance (unlimited, inexhaustible, unstoppable,

overflowing) toward his creation—even to humble himself as the Word incarnate (107). (3) Transcendence is not anti-language or anti-meaning, as if language is useless (112–15). Begbie challenges the notion that “art speaks where words give away” (116).

Begbie first notes that artistic (Kantian) sublimity perhaps is a logical link to transcendence. However, this espousal will lead to a wrong kind of unintelligibly and ineffability (53). Besides, he questions if such apophatic treatment in theology will lead us to “a zone of utter emptiness” and open up more uncertainties and unknowns (59). From his expositions of multiple passages in John’s Gospel and 1 Corinthians 8, he explains that who God is is fundamentally built upon the oneness, love, and communion between the Father and the Son (84). Therefore, the *otherness* of God does not mean an ontological detachment from the world nor a “disavowal of all things worldly” (81) but “is redolent of God’s unswerving commitment to what God has made” (89). Begbie proposes that when the moment that art reflects the full “creatureliness” of this world, God’s transcendence is unveiled.

Regarding the second focus of divine transcendence as uncontainability, Begbie states that in speaking of “God’s infinite life that the world cannot encompass or possess, we should be thinking of this not as an abstract ‘infinity’ but as a life of generative outgoingness, rooted in the triunity of God” (102). In other words, artistic means (language, sound, movement, etc.) can never enclose and grasp the inexhaustible goodness of God. He assures that, by using metaphor, art is able to express the uncontainability of God (157). Metaphor possesses both disruptive and disclosed power that is able to bring out inexhaustible and boundless meanings (160). From this, therefore, Begbie declines the notion that divine transcendence is against human language or the immanence of God (120).

In this book, Begbie repeatedly emphasizes that God’s transcendence should be understood as his commitment to engage with his created world (*otherness*) and his superabundant grace (uncontainability). Throughout this writing, Begbie is able to anticipate readers’ questions and provide answers in a round-table manner. In spite of Begbie’s clear articulation regarding the Father-given outworking love relation with the Son and his agency in the creation of all things, it still seems vague how this outward-imparting nature

applies to divine otherness and his involvement in the creation. Besides, there is an exclusion of the referential-associative perspective when Begbie discusses artistic transcendence, especially regarding artistic sublimity. He does hint at the end of the book concerning the complexity of the understanding of *how* music works, yet it seems lacking for such an important element.

With these being said, I think this is a breathtaking and enlightening writing with a brand new perspective on transcendence and Christian arts. This is not merely a lofty theological and philosophical discourse but also a biblical and exegetical dialogue.

Ian Yeung

***Work that Matters: Bridging the Divide between Work and Worship*, by Kevin Brown and Michael Wiese. 2nd ed. Lexington, KY: Aldersgate Press, 2018. 116 pp. \$14.99.**

Why does work matter? How is work life related to spiritual life? Do they clash, blend, or grow separately? Kevin Brown and Michael Wiese, professors in business and marketing with a strong passion for Christian entrepreneurship, propose a theology of work that allows the faithful Christian to “remain undivided” regardless of what his or her work entails and demands (6) and present ways to “live within the present fullness of God” in all life’s aspects (20). Brown and Wiese assert as their thesis that work is an act of worship, an act of faith; one can be a person of faith in a working world (viii). Both further conclude that living a holy life, in wholeness for God’s glory, “brings worship and work into harmony” (ix).

Brown and Wiese develop their thesis by first identifying misconceptions that create rifts between work and worship. Following that, they offer ways to achieve work that is treated as worship. Chapter 1 sets the stage by defining key terms such as “work,” “worship,” “holiness,” and “wholeness.” Moreover, it presents four work-worship misconceptions that thwart the Christian from living a holy and wholly life. Here, the authors play with different prepositions to explain these misconceptions. The first divide is the “work *not* worship,” a distorted view that assumes that who we are as workers has nothing to do with our faith, that one’s faith is separate

from one's work, creating a dual identity (9). "Work *then* worship" is an understanding that strives to bring the Christian formula of success to the workplace (11). However, the authors argue that even the use of Christian principles at work does not always promise success and profit (13). The inappropriate mixing of work and worship comes in as the third breach: "Work *and* worship" (13). It is the inapt blending of one's faith and work identity that leads to over-spiritualization of work life, leaving little space for the ordinary, and eventually leads the person to exhaustion (15). The last misconception is when one must either "work *or* worship" (16), an understanding that treats ministry as the "Christian route" and the secular work as the "non-Christian route" (16). Further, it is a view that categorizes only ministry professions as "calling"; ministers who decide to leave the ministry are seen as lesser persons who "abandoned true worship" (18).

To address these perversions, Brown and Wiese strongly recommend that a faithful narrative comes as a better alternative in the pursuit for wholeness and holiness: "Work *as* worship" (18). They argue that an appropriate marriage of work and worship is to begin with one's faith identity, and then one must "understand and act in the world based on that identity." To give a clearer picture of how this alternative looks, the authors offer four C's of Work *as* Worship: co-creation, catalyst, community, and contribution (19). A holy life should co-create with God, be a catalyst of good through the use of one's gifts, be willing to build a community by relating, not isolating, and offer a lasting contribution to people for the glory of God. Each of these is singly discussed in the subsequent chapters of the book.

Each work-worship misconception is clearly presented and discussed, supported with appropriate biblical references, examples, and testimonies. Further, the authors did an excellent job in discussing the four C's that helped solidify their argument, that indeed, work is an act of worship. Also, argumentation is well-supported with theological themes, biblical references, and examples that balance both secular and church settings.

Two areas for improvement, however, can be observed from the material. First, without any biblical foundation to support their definition, at the beginning of chapter 1, the authors simply describe worship as "spiritual activities and expressions, enabled by the Ho-

ly Spirit, that we engage in to honor God, express or love to God, and live in God's presence" (3). There is, however, in the conclusion a strongly supported and well-elaborated foundation of the term, which includes Greek words that relate to worship and how it powerfully links with work. Such a section could have been best placed in the introduction. As a major term used in the entire book, the loose definition presented in the beginning could cause misunderstanding on the part of the reader. How does their definition differ from an ordinary person's understanding of a Sunday worship service? If the distinctions are not clear, confusion is certainly bound to happen.

Second, the authors have honestly admitted that this topic is not new, that "other attempts have been made to bring together our worship and work" (19). While they are committed to add their perspective into the discourse, they have failed to show what is unique about their view, specifically their Christian view. For instance, how are they different from *Work as Worship*,¹ which offers a similar Christian standpoint? Identifying the distinct feature/s of their claim could have helped enhance an element of attraction to their contribution to the subject and could have strengthened their place with what sets them apart from those who have already written on a similar topic.

Reflection questions for self and group discussions provided at the end of each chapter are helpful for evaluation. For a claim with a strong paradigm shift such as theirs, the chapter-end questions could serve as stimuli for a life-changing decision. Chapters 2-5 have a "personalize it" section (36, 56, 75, 99), where the authors give concrete examples, tips, and suggestions for practical use; these help the readers actualize the concepts being introduced at the beginning of each chapter. End notes that show sources of more recent works give afresh more relevant situations to the contemporary reader. In the final chapter, a recapitulation of the work-worship divides and a concise discussion of the four C's on what to do about them brings the whole material to a proper closure.

¹ Mark L. Russell, Dave Gibbons, Brian Mosley, Matt Chandler, Norm Miller, J. R. Vassar, and Justin Forman, *Work as Worship: God Created Us to Work; God Created Us to Worship; for Us, Work Is Worship* (Richardson, TX: RightNow, 2012).

As it is, Brown and Wiese have successfully presented a unique way of looking at “work” in connection with “worship” and how both could blend appropriately. They offer a fuller understanding on how we could best live our lives in consistency with our faith, to be holy before God, offering our undivided selves for God’s glory. However, if topics similar to this have already been examined, they need to explain more clearly to their readers that indeed their perspective stands out among the rest.

Jean C. Nalam

***A 30-Minute Overview of a Practical Guide to Culture: Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today’s World*, by John Stonestreet. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2018. Kindle. \$2.99.**

This short ebook provides an overview of a longer book that John Stonestreet co-authored with Brett Kunkle. It is part of the Faith Blueprints series designed to give executive summary-type coverage of the main points from what the publisher says are “some of David C. Cook’s best books” so that people can “learn from some of the world’s best thinkers on the subjects of faith and culture” without having to read the full-length versions. Stonestreet, President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, and Kunkle, a former pastor, both speak and write about faith and culture. Although it is authored by Stonestreet, throughout the ebook he speaks on behalf of Kunkle and includes lengthy quotations from the book they wrote together.

The ebook is divided into four parts: “Why Culture Matters,” “A Read of the Cultural Waters,” “Pounding Cultural Waves,” and “Christian Worldview Essentials.” The authors’ target audience is Christian adults who want to help young people “navigate this cultural moment as champions for Christ” (loc 166). As the title and two of the sections indicate, the authors liken culture to water. However, they float from one water analogy to another, which makes it difficult to catch a definition or consistent description of what they mean when they use the word culture.

The title and cover suggest that culture is analogous to a body of water that needs to be navigated by boat. However, within

the ebook they depict culture as water in which people are trying to survive “cultural currents” that have “shifted and intensified” and “brought a tsunami of change” with “one issue after another after another [that] hits us like a series of waves at high tide” requiring people to “keep their heads above water” (loc 152). Elsewhere, they shift the analogy to that of culture being our natural habitat when they write, “Culture is for humans what water is for fish: the environment we live in and think is normal,” and “Like fish immersed in water . . . culture shapes our perceptions of reality” (loc 217).

Their motivation for addressing the topic is that “We make our cultures, and then our cultures shape us” (loc 339) and “culture is shaping the next generation’s understanding of faith far more than their faith is shaping their understanding of culture” (loc 740).

Most of the ebook is about teaching young people to not succumb to the pounding cultural waves of unbiblical ideas and practices regarding pornography, sexual orientation, gender identity, consumerism, addiction, and entertainment. Toward the end, the authors admit that they “have been talking mostly about defense” and they then pivot to offense when they write that “We’re also called to be faithful ambassadors to the culture” (loc 3635). They suggest accomplishing that by engaging culture in order to influence it for good because “When mature Christians engage the culture fully, deeply, and wisely, the culture won’t corrupt us. . . . We’ll teach it what is good, true, and beautiful” (loc 759).

The authors point to God’s Word as the source for what is true, but they do not elaborate on what constitutes good or beautiful. Other parts of the ebook lack needed explanations as well. For example, they recommend that young people read good books but do not define what qualifies as a good book.

In addition to inconsistent water analogies and the lack of needed explanations for certain terms and statements, another shortcoming is their use of *culture* and *world* synonymously in the title and throughout the ebook. One example of this synonymous use is when they write that they “dream of the day our kids will wade out into the culture and impact the world for Christ” (loc 143). Another example is when they state that unless we examine “the culture around us, it won’t occur to us that the world should be any different” (loc 217). Using *culture* and *world* synonymously brings

vagueness and imprecision to terms in need of clarity and distinction.

While this ebook is useful on its own for highlighting the authors' main points, it lacks clear explanations of key terms, such as *good*, *beautiful*, *world*, and *culture*, which are crucial to the topic the authors address. For those trying to decide if the overview or the full-length book could be useful to or for them, the concluding ebook paragraph that suggests Christians should "deal with the ideas, institutions, trends, fashions, and habits of our culture" by celebrating "beautiful art, brilliant ideas, and compelling stories," creating "new policy solutions and clever inventions . . . to solve contemporary problems," confronting "lies, slander, and false religions," co-opting "new technologies . . . for kingdom use," and correcting "false information and misperceptions about others" (loc 3673) provides insight to how the authors perceive and approach the topic of faith and culture.

Brenda Thomas

***Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, ed. by Kevin E. Lawson and Scottie May. 2nd edition. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019. 424 pp. \$49.00.**

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in children's spirituality. A flurry of research, literature, and conferences on children's spiritual formation abound. More than simply a second edition, this book is a reworking of the published presentations from the preliminary conference of the Society of Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives (2003), now called the Children's Spirituality Summit. Edited by two founding members of the society – Kevin E. Lawson and Scottie May – this 2019 publication includes new insights on children's spirituality. For example, chapter ten on the brain and child development has been expanded to include the most current research.

The book is divided into five main sections – the first devoted to research, history, and theology. The subsequent sections look at children's spirituality in the contexts of the church, home, and school, concluding with a reflection on the conference as a whole.

While the goal of the conference was to examine research pertaining to the spiritual experiences of children within a Christian worldview, due to the newness of this field of study, the definition of “spirituality” is intentionally “left open-ended” in the book (2). It would not be until a later conference that a working definition would be adopted by the society.¹ However, from the outset their purpose, as described by May, was built on a clear premise that “children are just as much spiritual beings as are the adults in their lives” (1).

While the first chapter gives a good overview of the book, if one is new to the field of children’s spirituality, chapter six by Rebecca Nye might be a good place to start. A developmental psychologist from the UK, Nye is well known for her theory of *relational consciousness*.² She defines “relational consciousness” as a means in which a child not only becomes aware of their own consciousness but also “exudes a capacity for conscious relationship” (87). Making the switch from studying children’s cognitive abilities, she became intrigued with the essence of their spiritual nature. Somehow, even if children did not yet possess the reasoning or language capabilities needed to communicate in the sphere of religious instruction, they seemed to intuit a godly sense. How exactly was this possible? Enter the field of children’s spirituality.

Nye points out that research from the previous century had yielded “watered down” religious training since children’s cognitive abilities were known to be limited. It was therefore assumed that so were their spiritual insights (86). Children are, after all, quite literal. She writes,

On one level their conventionally religious reasoning was bootstrapped to their cognitive development, but seeing past this surface layer there was much more going on that suggested profound engagement and motivation, and in an important sense a kind of spiritual maturity which adults often merely feign. (87)

¹ For the definition of “children’s spirituality” accepted by the 2006 conference, see Holly C. Allen, ed., *Nurturing Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008, 11).

² David Hay with Rebecca Nye, *The Spirit of the Child* (London: Fount, 1998).

Along with Nye's notion of "relational consciousness" is Jerome Berryman's concept of "silence" in chapter two. Before language takes place, a child relies heavily on non-verbal cues—such as touch, tone, and body language. A problem not only in communication but also in development can occur if these non-verbal cues are out of sync with the language concepts that the child is learning—a child's emotional intelligence can become stunted. Berryman carries this disjunct syllogism into the spiritual realm and posits that as an adult, one may or may not always intuit non-verbally what he or she communicates verbally as a Christian. In other words, does one walk the talk or just talk the talk? For example, "T. S. Eliot observed that the reason so much Christian poetry is of poor quality is that the authors wrote what they thought they ought to write instead of what they actually experienced" (23–24). How can the verbal and non-verbal be bridged? Berryman reports that the poetic nature of Scripture gives an answer: "The Christian language system is a complex repository of such 'poetry.' There are sacred stories, parables, and liturgical gestures combined with words in addition to silence in this linguistic domain" (25).

Klaus Issler offers insight in chapter four of how to "connect some of the theological dots" pertaining to the spiritual condition of children (49). Issler advocates a "before and after" approach to children's ministry, "nurturing the faith of children through corporate practices offered both *before* and *after* children reach an age of discernment" (48, emphasis original). Worshiping corporately is an ideal way for the child to receive both religious educational training and spiritual formation. Other chapters, such as "A Child's Concept of God" offer intriguing insights as well.

For the average children's ministry leader, the field of children's spirituality may sound nebulous and perplexing. While Berryman cautions against using religious language void of spiritual experience, Nye likewise warns against talking about spirituality without using religious language—"at some point psycho-babble could become a replacement for sacred-ese" (94). Berryman points to the power of poetry to communicate "what is silent in human relationships," but acknowledges that "the use of reason, logic, and tradition are needed to guard this language system against misuse" (25). Furthermore, the means of utilizing empirical research to study something "spiritual" is inherently problematic. Nye herself admits

that while qualitative social science has “promise” as a Christian method, “truth and knowledge” may be viewed more as “affected by context and subjectivity” instead of “objective facts” (100). She therefore rightly advises Christians to view the developing research on children’s spirituality in tandem with “historical, theological, and educational enquiries” (100).

Zelda Meneses-Reus

***The Gospel-Driven Church: Uniting Church-Growth Dreams with the Metrics of Grace*, by Jared C. Wilson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 240 pp. \$21.99.**

Jared Wilson is director of content strategy at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, managing editor of *For the Church*, and director of the Pastoral Training Center at Liberty Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri. His book presents the idea that the attractional model of church growth pioneered by Willow Creek and Saddleback Churches has become a paradigm for any size church: “While the seeker-driven megachurch is the common picture of the attractional church, plenty of smaller churches use pragmatic and consumeristic methodology in the hope of growing bigger and fulfilling their dream of becoming mega” (25). Traditional churches can also be a part of the “attractional” model as they pursue “whatever it takes to get people in the door” (25). While affording people the opportunity to hear the gospel is admirable and desired, Wilson believes that this model may not be attracting people to Jesus but to a program or event: “What you win people with is what you win them to. The best motives in the world cannot sanctify unbiblical methods” (25).

In *The Gospel-Driven Church*, Wilson argues that the attractional model is based on consumerism and pragmatism catering to the customer and attempting to satisfy their preferences to boost attendance. This is achieved through careful programming designed to appeal to a target audience and tailored to meet their needs. “In some churches,” Wilson continues, “you may not hear Jesus mentioned or featured prominently in a message. Worship songs aim at eliciting emotions or inspiring people with positive,

encouraging thoughts rather than rehearsing the gospel or teaching biblical content" (28). Wilson is convinced that the attractional model does not work because it fails to teach biblical principles, wins people to consumerism, and generally is not reaching unchurched people with the gospel (35–36). Because discipleship is not emphasized, the people remain biblically illiterate and are not able to live out their faith in a postmodern world.

Wilson believes that attendance is not the major factor in a healthy, growing church. Instead a church should look for signs of fruitfulness, and he suggests Jonathan Edward's "Distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God" as a guide (54). These metrics are a growing esteem for Jesus Christ, a discernible spirit of repentance, a dogged devotion to the Word of God, an interest in theology and doctrine, and an evident love for God and neighbor (55–66). Although not simple metrics to use, Wilson provides questions throughout the book to aid church leaders as they measure their fruitfulness.

The worship service, according to Wilson, is the setting to establish the gospel-driven model. Acknowledging the "seeker-focused approach to Sunday morning is widespread and influential," Wilson finds this "very unfortunate because it is also unbiblical" (94). He is emphatic that the church is charged with reaching the lost, but "the church's primary worship service should be designed with the saved in mind, not the seeker" (94). The service is constructed "as an encounter, not an experience" with the "four irreducible elements of gospel-driven worship" as the foundation (116). These elements are preaching, praying, singing, and eating. Preaching "is the centerpiece of the worship gathering because it is where we most declaratively and authoritatively hear from God" (116). It must be preaching that "proclaims, exults, and reveals the glory of God in Christ" (97–99). Prayer reflects the Christian's submission to God, and when absent, it "is because we are too busy trying to manipulate God rather than supplicating before him" (117). Singing in the service is based on Colossians 3:16, emphasizing not the individual but the corporate body. Unlike the attractional model that is creating a mood or "vibe," the gospel-driven model pursues songs that give opportunities to "tune our hearts to what Christ has done for us, which transforms our minds, our hearts, and our feelings into authentic worship of God" (119–20). Eating is the celebra-

tion of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Wilson states that the Lord's Supper "places us in a personal and corporate encounter with the sacrifice of Christ and presses us to meet God, confess our sin, and embrace afresh the gospel that saved us and continues to transform us" (121). This transformation leads to a "gospel culture that glorifies God in Christ and overflows out into Spirit-empowered gospel mission" (122).

In *The Gospel-Driven Church*, Wilson advocates for a model that is biblical, disciples believers, strengthens the church community, and reaches out to the lost. As he offers suggestions for transitioning from the attractional model to the gospel-driven model, Wilson acknowledges that it is not an easy path and may cause some people to leave. However, it will lead to a healthier congregation that is committed to Christ and seeks to obey him. To illustrate the concepts, Wilson includes a hypothetical story of a lead pastor and his church leaders as they transition from a successful attractional ministry to a gospel-driven model.

I found this book to be a breath of fresh air in the midst of the myriads of books on church growth solutions. It is a valuable contribution to the subject and a must read for pastors, worship ministers, and layleaders considering this issue.

Lori Danielson

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