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Ever Ancient, Ever New by Winfield Bevins (review)

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Correction: In this review, the name of the author of Ever Ancient, Ever New was transposed. It should read Winfield Bevins. The online version has been corrected.

study's attempt to integrate social-religious history and the discipline of spirituality. Protestant prayerbooks "regarded a right concept of faith, spiritual transformation, and social commitment and fellowship as critical to spirituality . . ." (164). Early Protestant prayerbooks turned their readers away from a "routinized or mechanical piety" toward "a wholehearted, sincere approach focused on the biblical understanding of prayer" (164-65).

Only in recent years have scholars focused closely on prayer in the early modern period. Much work remains to be done and the available sources are rich. This study opens up important areas of inquiry and points to transnational influences. But it disappoints in some respects. Some examples: The author does not explain how she selected the works she did from all the English Anglican and Puritan and German Lutheran prayerbooks available. In some places the author offers little support for the assertions made. Sometimes the evidence offered seems to bear only a tenuous relationship to the conclusions drawn. Chapter six uses mostly secondary literature to support its assertions, rather than primary source material from the prayerbooks. Generally, this work devotes more attention to English than to German prayerbooks; it would have been helpful to read the reasons for that choice. Finally, this book needed a skilled editor. Numerous errors in English expression mar the study, sometimes leaving the reader uncertain as to the author's meaning.

We can be grateful for the author's interest in prayer and piety and hope that this work spurs further research.

LUTHER SEMINARY
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Mary Jane Haemig

Ever Ancient, Ever New. By Winfield Bevins. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 219 pp.

Research into the phenomenon of evangelical Millennials and Gen-Xers embracing liturgical communities of faith is driven by this author's own narrative of growing up in the free church tradition but of finding his way into the Anglican tradition. He addresses the research question, "What is the allure of liturgy for a new

generation?” in three main sections: “foundations, journeys, and practices” (18). The first asks why young evangelicals are attracted to liturgy; the second “examines various paths . . . leading them into embracing liturgy”; and the third focuses on “practices” for daily living (21). Each chapter concludes with “reflection questions and practices” (43), included to help the reader “find fresh ways of exploring and engaging with these historic practices in meaningful ways” (22). Thus, his primary audience is free church evangelicals who, like him, have grown tired of “a passive consumerist Christianity where the church is ‘all about me’ and my wants and needs”—a Christian spirituality and life formed by worship that is primarily “entertainment” (191).

While written for a general audience, the lack of description of the author’s research methodology is a weakness. Still, he defines “young adult”—a term used widely—as “those born from the early 1970s through the mid-1990s” (20). We get a clue to his sample size when he thanks “the dozens of young adults” interviewed (209). He states that his sample comes “from across the United States, all of them from radically different Christian traditions” (33). Nowhere does he provide any details supporting these claims. While I agree with his assertion that “Liturgy . . . is one of the best ways for us to make disciples in a postmodern context” (207), his evidence is anecdotal and supports his own experience.

In the first section, interviews revealed eight reasons for the “allure of liturgy,” many related to a post-modern context. The liturgy, as “embodied” and “tactile,” is holistic (33) and sacramental (39–40); liturgy evokes “a sense of mystery” that “transcends any single culture” (34–35). Young people today are rootless and thus looking for “historical rootedness” and “an anchor” in the midst of “constant change” (41). They are seeking “a countercultural faith” (37) yet a “gracious orthodoxy,” defined as “correct belief” that is held “in a way that is ‘full of grace’” (40). He defines and describes liturgy. It “tells a story,” “forms us,” and, most powerfully, “is participatory” (48–54). A chapter covers the beauty of creeds and catechesis as he narrates his path to the ancient treasures of the church. He concludes that the certainty (of beliefs) and “identity within community” offered by historic Christianity create the allure of liturgy (69).

Section two narrates stories of evangelicals migrating to the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican faiths; of young people drawn to monastic writings, communities, and practices; and of “neo-liturgical churches,” that is, evangelical congregations following aspects of the historic liturgy and celebrating the Lord’s Supper weekly. More stories populate chapter seven, in which he attempts to show that the discovery of liturgy by charismatics and evangelicals may provide a path toward Christian unity (153).

The final section begins by describing the value of such things as the daily office and *lectio divina*. More anecdotal evidence supports his claim that “this generation is reaching the world through mission rooted in liturgy” (176). In the final chapter, the author, with the zeal of a convert, discusses ways in which the liturgy can form families and support their faith development in the home.

For those long-suffering lovers of liturgy, there are only old treasures in this book. Yet, criticisms of “contemporary” worship made for decades by serious liturgical scholars may be what is new, for the author critiques his tradition from the inside. Hence, a possible audience may be leaders in historic liturgical denominations who have sold their birthright of living baptismal waters and Eucharistic feasting for the pot of porridge—so-called contemporary worship—that cannot satisfy. Perhaps the Esaus among us can be convinced by the zeal of this convert.

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Rhoda Schuler

More than Luther: The Reformation and the Rise of Pluralism in Europe. Edited by Karla Boersma and Herman J. Selderhuis. *Refo500 Academic Studies* 55. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019. 348 pp.

The quincentenary of the Reformation has come and gone, yet scholars continue to publish works stemming from its commemoration in 2017, and rightly so, as the Reformation continues to influence societies across the globe. This book is a collection of papers presented at the Seventh Annual RefoRC Conference, held in Wittenberg, May 10–12, 2017. Of the ninety papers presented at the