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Hauerwas and Willimon's "Resident aliens: Life in the Christian colony" (Book Review)

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Dunkley, V. (2015). *Reset your child's brain: A four-week plan to end meltdowns, raise grades, and boost social skills by reversing the effects of electronic screen-time*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 384 pp. \$18.95 ISBN: 9781608682843

This book is well-suited to collections devoted to counseling, family therapy, and child-rearing. The author has provided parents with an extremely well-researched and yet usable tool for diagnosing and treating childhood misbehavior caused by spending too much time on electronic devices, and too little time experiencing life in a natural way. The book is not one mother's rant against electronic devices; it is a marvelous combination of both professional level research and honest, practical advice for the parent whose child's behavior has been adversely affected by digital overload. The author takes the reader step by step through the whole process of weaning a child off electronic devices and setting him or her back on the course of healthy emotional, physical, and intellectual development. The text is helpful, straightforward, and above all else, realistic. So, though it begins with theory and data and statistics, it also guides the parent through the reality of exactly what he or she will experience in the day-to-day, nitty-gritty process of resetting the child's brain. The tone remains helpful, redemptive, and positive, not dogmatic or preachy.

The author has provided a comprehensive synopsis of the contents of the book at her website: <http://drdunkley.com/reset-your-childs-brain/>.

Reviewer

J. James Mancuso, Northeastern Baptist College

Hauerwas, S., & Willimon, W.H. (2014). *Resident aliens: Life in the Christian colony* (25th Anniversary ed.). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 172 pp. \$19.99. ISBN 9781426781902

The Apostle Paul uses the word *politeuma*, which roughly translates as 'colony' or 'commonwealth', to describe the visible body of Christ in his letter to the Phillipian church (Phil. 3:20). This motif of church as a colony is central to Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon's ethic of the church in *Resident Aliens*. Hauerwas and Willimon cast a vision for a church that eschews the materialism, moral subjectivity, and the secularizing of the clergy and the mission of the church. As two disillusioned Methodists, Hauerwas and Willimon advocate a robust, Catholic-esque ecclesiology and hermeneutical method that rebuts the historical-critical method and revisionist accounts of the Gospel. The authors view the church as an inherently 'political' structure, inasmuch as political is defined as being a tangible community whose values are countercultural to the spirit of the age. *Resident Aliens* wryly observes that

many Christians still operate as if Christianity is the state religion, a false assumption nurtured by Christian thinkers since the reign of Constantine. The attempts of modern church leaders to mirror secular calls for ‘peace and justice’ and lobbying Congress to legislate their vision of justice, per Hauerwas and Willimon, are the marks of a disempowered church. While *Resident Aliens* primarily addresses the problems of mainline Protestantism, the authors equally condemn the conservative Religious Right’s assumption that the United States is an inherently Christian nation. A quarter century after its original publication, *Resident Aliens* is still a highly relevant critique of modern American Christianity. Neither liberal nor conservative factions of the church have managed to truly transform the dominant culture before or since then. *Resident Aliens* is a relevant book for all Christians who are hungry for an authentic, countercultural community that is neither a sounding board for progressive causes nor an Erastian apparatus of the state.

Reviewer

Seth Allen, Bryan College

Witherington III, B. (2012). *The rest of life: Rest, play, eating, studying, sex from a Kingdom perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. 168 pp. \$18.00. ISBN 9780802867377

This is a very understandable and thought provoking offering in Ben Witherington’s practical Kingdom Perspective series. As he looks at each topic, Witherington considers Old and New Testament teachings, which bring light to the topic under discussion. For example, in studying the concept of rest, Witherington points to the Old Testament practice of keeping the Sabbath. He then explores the discussion of rest in Hebrews 3 and 4 in the New Testament. He looks at the need for withdrawal from our daily work; he questions the concepts of retirement and nursing homes. He closes the section on rest with a consideration of the gift that rest is and explores how it is a foretaste of the Kingdom.

Both play and food are somewhat touchy topics for Christians. Considering play, Witherington says, “Just because something is neither rest nor work nor worship doesn’t make it a waste of time” (p. 43). Witherington sees play as an opportunity to practice ethics and as a time to do something just because you like doing it. Eating is considered from the moral aspect of caring for the Temple of the Holy Spirit. He says “gluttony, once described as one of the seven deadly sins, is now seen as the guilty pleasure of choice, even by many Christians” (p. 73). Witherington looks at the biblical teachings on drinking wine and alcohol. Then he discusses Christians’ use of food in a world plagued by poverty.