

Article

To Be Seen and Heard: Toward a Child Liberation Theology Framework for Contemporary Praise and Worship Practice

Kelsey Kramer McGinnis

Grand View University, 1200 Grand View Ave, Des Moines, IA 50316, USA; kkmcginnis@grandview.edu

Abstract: “If there is no space in our faith communities where children can participate in theological work, how can children create a theology that will liberate them?” R.L. Stollar asks in his book, *The Kingdom of Children: A Liberation Theology* (2023). Popular Christian parenting literature since the 1970s has encouraged adults to view children as undisciplined trainees with little of value to offer their families and churches other than their obedience. Exploration of the recent history of Christian parenting literature and its intersections with politics and other Christian media reveals that there is substantial overlap between the communities most impacted by these books and those that utilize contemporary praise and worship music (CPWM). Using a child liberation theology framework, I examine the ways that prevailing ideas in parenting books have enabled a “parent-centered” model of musical worship in many evangelical churches. By observing the ways children are invited into or implicitly discouraged from participation in corporate musical worship, we can better understand the ways that CPWM practice might be reshaped in a more liberatory direction—one that will benefit children and adults, and foster a more radically unified church.

Keywords: contemporary praise and worship; children; sacred music; evangelicalism



Academic Editors: Steve R. Guthrie and Adam A. Perez

Received: 1 November 2024

Revised: 1 December 2024

Accepted: 13 February 2025

Published: 19 February 2025

Citation: Kramer McGinnis, Kelsey. 2025. To Be Seen and Heard: Toward a Child Liberation Theology Framework for Contemporary Praise and Worship Practice. *Religions* 16: 261. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020261>

Copyright: © 2025 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

In an article for the Reformed-leaning parachurch organization and online publication *The Gospel Coalition*, a pastor recounted a story about briefly pausing a sermon to ask someone to help his wife manage their youngest child, who was having a meltdown during the service (Boekestein 2022). He narrated the episode to begin an article about the importance (and complications) of including children in corporate worship. “Children are learning to worship at church with God’s people, or somewhere else in some other way”, he wrote. “So, including them in worship is a godly discipleship goal. How can we do that effectively?” The author went on to offer several recommendations, the first of which was, “train your children at home”.

Enthusiasm for “family worship”¹—whether referring to domestic practices in the home or the participation of all family members in corporate worship services—ebbs and flows among American evangelicals,² and the thoughtful inclusion of children in corporate worship requires ongoing renegotiation of norms and logistics as musical styles change. A church that adds a new sound system has to consider whether the volume level is too high for young children. New lighting equipment may raise questions about photosensitivity. It’s hard enough to find keys that are suitable for both male and female voices, harder still when children’s voices are also taken into account.

Historically, the challenge of management has been a barrier to family-inclusive corporate worship and has inspired churches to find solutions by providing alternative

spaces for children or insisting upon strict discipline and training.³ In modern contexts, cry rooms, nurseries, and Sunday school provide set-apart spaces for children that also, simply by their existence, create the expectation that the sanctuary is a place for quiet, orderly behavior. Furthermore, the growth of contemporary praise and worship music (CPWM) is closely linked to evangelical youth culture, offering a set of performance practices and expectations related to the tastes and preferences of adolescents and young adults (Ingalls 2018, p. 23; Porter 2016). In the name of attracting and keeping young congregants, many churches have adopted a set of practices around corporate musical worship that reflect mainstream youth culture and entertainment media, assuming that everyone outside the 16–35 age bracket will adjust accordingly, and that children who are able to participate quietly and compliantly will be welcome.⁴

The training of children to be active and orderly participants in the musical worship of the church is a logistical concern that requires parental cooperation. Historically, evangelicals have embraced the teachings of earlier figures like Martin Luther and John Chrysostom, who taught that the nuclear family is its own little church and that the authority structures and ordering of the home can reinforce and reenact the order of the larger church family—and vice versa (Bunge 2001, pp. 22–23).⁵ In the family-as-church framework, the patriarchal authority structure of the home reflects (or ought to reflect) the patriarchal authority structure of the church, teaching children to obey and behave according to their position in that network of relationships. Much of the modern Christian parenting literature assumes this family-as-church framework and places relational hierarchy as the primary organizing principle of both.

The prevailing wisdom of the Christian parenting book market has shaped American evangelicals' expectations of children's behavior in church and participation in worship. Since the 1970s, authors and teachers like James Dobson, Chuck Swindoll, Tedd Tripp, Larry Christensen, and many others have argued that obedience and adherence to familial order is the highest calling of children. The framework of child liberation theology proposed by R.L. Stollar in *The Kingdom of Children* (2023) offers a more expansive view of children than what is found in popular Christian parenting books and by extension opens new paths toward the empowerment and full inclusion of children in corporate musical worship.⁶

2. Methodology

During the final three decades of the 20th century, two media phenomena grew side-by-side in American evangelical circles: contemporary praise and worship music (CPWM) and the Christian parenting book market. My aim is to synthesize a brief survey of the popular Christian parenting literature and analyses of musical practices in churches that use contemporary praise and worship music. I approach an array of popular parenting books as primary sources, providing evidence of the ideological goals of the authors and the anxieties of the readers they attracted. Several of the books included in this survey still circulate in evangelical circles, and serve as the foundation of parenting classes and studies in churches across denominations.

Bonnie Miller-McLemore argues that a practical theology of children and childhood “demands study of the conceptual schemes and vocabulary that develop within the practices surrounding children, and those that have arisen in history and culture” (Miller-McLemore 2019, p. xix). I do not propose here to offer a novel framework for a practical theology of childhood, but I do hope to contribute to a constellation of historiography and analysis that will support emerging work in this area by demonstrating that the “conceptual schemes and vocabularies” related to children in American evangelicalism are inseparable from the popular Christian parenting literature, and have observable effects on congregational worship.

Finally, by bringing this analysis into conversation with a child liberation theology framework informed by the work of R.L. Stollar and Janet Pais (Stollar 2023; Pais 1991), I argue that we can newly envision musical worship that affords non-coerced, creative participation, and we can acknowledge the independence and dignity of children's spiritual lives. Stollar's liberation theology framework does not assume that all efforts to encourage spiritual formation and education are unethical or coercive. Neither does he naively imagine the upending of parental authority altogether. Rather, he suggests that those called to help guide children can and should approach that privilege with, first and foremost, a focus on the dignity and full humanity of children.

Stollar recognizes, as have other theologians, sociologists, and historians (Burt and McGinnis 2025; Greven 1991; Setran 2022; McGowin 2018; Ingersoll 2015; Ellison and Sherkat 1993), that much of the popular Christian teaching treats parental (and by extension, adult) authority as the first principle that governs relationships in families and in church communities. Books by authors like James Dobson (1970, 1985) and Larry Christensen (1970) often reduce a child's purpose and calling to the performance of obedience. Stollar engages the language of rights and dignity to argue for a position toward children that de-centers authority structures and instead assumes the full personhood of children, accepting the particularities of childhood as human characteristics rather than deficiencies.

Unlike the work of Dobson and his cohort, who offered advice rooted in a fundamentalist approach to biblical text and an explicit rejection of both mainstream psychology and social justice frameworks, Stollar utilizes Christian ethics and evidence-based literature on child development and abuse prevention to argue that Christian adults ought to embrace relational frameworks rooted in mutuality and empathy. The global statistics on child abuse and exploitation are arresting (Stollar 2023, pp. 2–3). Church communities actively seeking to promote the flourishing of all, do not (as Dobson suggests in *Dare to Discipline*) need to protect parents from the domination of selfish children,⁷ but rather become the rare settings in which children are seen and treated as fully human.

I should note that my use of “children” throughout this article generally refers to individuals who aren't yet teenagers, but that doesn't mean that the marginalization of young people described here doesn't apply to teenagers, or that teenagers aren't “children” in many respects—legal and social.⁸ One reason for this admittedly imperfect distinction is the influence of youth culture since the 1970s on both Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and CPWM. Another is that the developmental needs and appropriate behaviors of elementary-age children are different from those of teenagers, and most popular Christian parenting books focus on behavior in children under the age of twelve.⁹ And finally, in the Christian parenting book market, there is a whole subgenre for those with kids in their teen years. Books that focus on child behavior are heavily weighted toward the toddler and early elementary years.

A final note on methodology and scope: this article is offered as a potential framework that I hope will be useful and thought-provoking for practitioners, lay leaders, volunteers, and anyone who interacts with children. It suggests a direction for communities interested in moving away from hierarchal authority structures that automatically place children at the bottom. I do not attempt to prescribe what it might look like for particular churches to utilize a framework of liberation theology to reshape or reimagine the inclusion of children in corporate worship. This is not to dismiss the importance of application. Rather, it is to embrace the framework I describe, one that is not top-down, but relies on adults asking for (and listening to) the input of children. Each church community has its own children to listen to.

3. Parent-Centeredness and Its Effects

Ann Hulbert describes the cohort of self-proclaimed parenting experts to which James Dobson (one of the most prominent voices on parenting in evangelicalism and the founder of the media company Focus on the Family) belongs as “parent-centered” (Hulbert 2003, p. 326). This label highlights the fact that most books in the modern Christian child-rearing library privilege parental authority and parental experience or perception of children.¹⁰ Dobson built his career on the success of his first book, *Dare to Discipline* (1970), which framed child discipline as the solution to disorder in the home and disorder in society. Writing at the height of US involvement in the Vietnam War and animated by cultural change—hippies, drug use, rising divorce rate, and a shifting sexual ethic—Dobson and his evangelical colleagues helped create a parenting book boom. In 1997, five times as many parenting books were published than in 1975 (Hulbert 2003, p. 326). Parents were anxious and desperate for both guidance and some explanation of why the world felt upside down, and Dobson claimed to have the answers. He founded Focus on the Family in 1978, and by the mid-1990s, the company had its own zip code in the Colorado Springs area to handle all the mail from parents seeking counsel from Dr. Dobson.

One legacy of Dobson’s success is the widespread belief among American evangelicals that mainstream parenting advice is not to be trusted, and in fact was responsible for much of the social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s. Permissive parents of the 1950s had produced the young adults who burned bras and draft cards. While most Christian parenting books tend to present “biblical” parenting advice as timeless wisdom, the authors and the ideas they espouse are often best understood as reactionary conservative texts, responding at times explicitly to the social and political upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s.

Dobson was clear about the social problems he was out to fix when he described the youth culture of the era: “Emotional maladjustment, gang warfare, teenage suicide, school failure, shoplifting, and grand larceny are symptoms of a deeper illness that plague [*sic*] vast numbers of America’s young. . . It is our parental responsibility to get off our corpulent behinds and take steps to eliminate the problems which threaten our children. . . it is accurate to say that many of our difficulties with the present generation of young people began in the tender years of their childhood” (Dobson 1970, pp. 8–9).

The success of *Dare to Discipline* fertilized the Christian parenting book market and created the expectation that good Christian parents would read *Christian* parenting books. This paved the way for a cohort of authors to offer their parenting advice as pastors, biblical counselors, or self-platformed Christian teachers. The success of Dobson’s books whetted the appetites of publishers; by the 1990s, there were seemingly endless parent-centric Christian resources like Zondervan’s *The Parenting Bible* (an NIV study Bible with “wise words” from figures like Chuck Swindoll, Dobson, Tony Campolo, H. Norman Wright, Bruce Narramore, Larry Christenson, Kevin Leman, and Gary Smalley). These books simultaneously met and created growing demand. They also helped establish norms and a vocabulary of Christian parent–child relationships that carries forward to the present and shapes expectations of children in the context of faith community.

Popular books like Tedd Tripp’s *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (1995) described children as worshippers and aimed to help parents view their task as a form of spiritual mentorship and guidance that can orient children toward either the one true God or a false one. In Tripp’s¹¹ view, most child behavior can be put into the category of either God-oriented or idolatrous or “self-oriented”. While most parenting books have little to say about musical worship, they have a great deal to say about the inner lives of children, their capacity to discern goodness and beauty, and crucially, what adults are to expect and demand of children in the family of God—whether at home or in the assembly. These expectations

generally center parental authority as the first principle, the filter through which adults are to perceive and interpret child behavior.

In the chapter “Biblical Methods: The Rod”,¹² in *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* Tripp wrote of the foolishness of children and their “natural state” of being driven by wants and passions, constantly resisting parental authority:

God says there is something wrong in the child’s heart, folly or foolishness is bound up in his heart. This folly must be removed, for it places the child at risk...The fool’s life is run by his desires and fears. This is what you hear from young children. The most common phrases in the vocabulary of a three year old are, ‘I want. . .’ or ‘I don’t want. . .’ The fool lives out of the immediacy of his lusts, cravings, expectations, hopes, and fears.

It is a question of authority. Will the child live under the authority of God and therefore the authority of his parents, or under his authority—driven by his wants and passions?

. . . This is the natural state of your children. It may be subtly hidden beneath a tuft of rumpled hair. It may be imperceptible in the wry smile of a baby. In their natural state, however, your children have hearts of folly. Therefore, they resist correction. They protest against your attempts to rule them. Watch a baby struggle against wearing a hat in the winter. Even this baby who cannot articulate or even conceptualize what he is doing shows a determination not to be ruled from without. This foolishness is bound up in his heart. (Tripp 1995, p. 128)

Tripp seems to suggest that parents can see a child’s emergent sinful nature in every resistance to authority, whether a baby is struggling during a diaper change, or a toddler is refusing to eat dinner. A child’s desire to exert herself against whatever the parent dictates in a particular moment is, if not outright sinful behavior, foolishness and anti-authoritarianism.

Influential megachurch pastor and author Chuck Swindoll also wrote about the importance of establishing and maintaining parental authority in his book, *The Strong Family: Growing Wise in Family Life* (1991). Swindoll described a parent’s duty in the face of open rebellion and laid out what he considered to be a key principle for parents in dealing with their children: “multiple authority figures in the same family spell chaos”, “You are the parent. You cannot allow your authority in the home to be undermined” (Swindoll 1991, p. 174).

Fifteen years after *Dare to Discipline* was published, Dobson wrote *The Strong-Willed Child* (1985), still a mainstay in conservative evangelical circles. In the introduction to the book, Dobson described a “strong-willed child” as a frustrating individual who “even in infancy. . . bristles when his dinner is late”, “insists that someone hold him every waking hour”, and “during toddlerhood. . . declares total war on all forms of authority, at home or abroad” (Dobson 1985, p. 10). Throughout his career, Dobson returned to the theme of parental authority and taught that a child’s tendency to push against that authority is a symptom of sin that needs to be dealt with swiftly and decisively.

Kenneth Gangel wrote *The Family First* in 1972, when he was serving as president of Miami Christian College. The book addresses parents and offers advice on marriage and child-rearing, animated by Gangel’s concern about the “disintegration” and “dissolution of the family unit” (Gangel 1972, p. 10). Like Dobson, Gangel wrote about the importance of discipline and household order. He also wrote specifically about the importance of family worship, and the home as a “veritable school of Christian instruction” (Gangel 1972, p. 58). While Dobson focused primarily on child behavior, Gangel emphasized the family unit and its spiritual function, in cooperation with the local church: “Church education is, of course,

extremely important, but most severely limited unless it receives constant support from the home. . . the home and the church play strategic and complementary roles in the nurture of their children” (Gangel 1972, p. 59).

However, Gangel looked at the state of American evangelicalism in the 1970s and feared that the church wasn’t doing its job. “[The church] has to build and strengthen Christian homes within the evil context of a disintegrating society. . . Some local churches are beginning to realize that the teaching and preaching ministries which they carry on are exercised largely in the theoretical realm. They are beginning to admit that the home must be the laboratory for practical application of these biblical ideals” (Gangel 1972, p. 130). In other words, the family is the first place where a person learns to live under the authority of God and in orderly relationships. Without the family, such lessons can never really be internalized. Here, Gangel provides a useful example of the harmonization of evangelical family life/parenting teaching and the “family values” agenda of the Christian Right, a political coalition that grew alongside the Christian parenting book market.

The final three decades of the 20th century saw the rise of the Christian Right, the parenting book boom, and the rapid growth of the Christian music industry. The confluence of these movements and markets created a dense web of overlapping and twisting ideological threads. Reading Dobson’s *Dare to Discipline* with this in mind, one realizes that it is far more conservative than it is explicitly theological. In fact, for the most part, religious language doesn’t appear until the final chapter, “A Moment for Mom”, but even the final sentence of that chapter—and of the whole book—does not address the well-being of the church or Christian families, but of *America*: “Self-control, human kindness, respect, and peacefulness can again be manifest in America if we will *dare to discipline* in our homes and schools” (Dobson 1970, p. 197).

Family values became one of the key rallying cries of the Christian Right as its coalition of social conservatives and evangelical Christians mobilized during the 1970s and achieved the height of its political influence in the 1980s. Margaret Bendroth has argued that as *family values* became closely associated with figures on the right, mainline Protestants backed away from family-centered teaching and advocacy, ceding that ground to avoid association with vocal reactionaries (Bendroth 2002). The Christian Right and the evangelicals who wielded influence within it were successful in convincing a large portion of the American electorate that they had a firmer commitment to families and children than their opponents (Williams 2010; Brown 2002; Dowland 1997).

Another tenet of the agenda of the Christian Right was *law and order*. Considered together, Dobson’s *Dare to Discipline* and the “tough on crime”, law and order agendas of Republican presidents like Nixon and Reagan are part of a shared socio political project, animated by the volatility of the 1960s and 1970s. Fringe fundamentalist figures like Bill Gothard also benefited from the ascendance of the new conservative movement, who found an enthusiastic ecumenical audience for his teachings about the “umbrella of authority” and the God-ordained patriarchal structure of the family and church.¹³ Figures like Gothard and Dobson catered to different audiences, but they were both part of the big tent of conservatives who capitalized on public anxiety about social change and unrest. The Christian Right’s answer to these anxieties was stronger authority and a return to family values. In many ways, Christian parenting authors offered the same thing: encouragement to Christian parents (and by extension, adults in the church) to consider child discipline to be a spiritual and social task. The enforcement of authority structures in the home (and in the church) became an undertaking with high stakes: the future of America, and the future of the American church.

4. Music for the Whole Family?

When Dobson started writing publicly in the 1970s, prominent evangelicals were questioning the efficacy of Sunday school programs modeled after the mainline tradition. In a 1974 article in *Christianity Today*, Arthur Criscoe wrote, “Every year it seems, we hear another round of predictions that the Sunday school is about to die”. He then pointed out that growing conservative evangelical churches seemed to be defying the dour predictions: “While the Sunday schools of some mainline denominations continue to decline in attendance, those in evangelical denominations appear to be steadily growing”. Margaret Bendroth has examined the decline of mainline Sunday school programs, and links their fade in the 1960s and 1970s to the growth of conservative evangelicalism, which linked arms with the political coalition of the right and its family values agenda (Bendroth 2002, p. 124). In his article, Criscoe noted the rise in sales of Sunday school curricula from interdenominational publishers, as well as the production of modern audiovisual media to meet the growing demand for material.

The growth of evangelical churches during the final three decades of the 20th century helped drive a surge in the production of Christian media for children. Dobson contributed through his organization, Focus on the Family, producing radio and video content. The same Christian entertainment industry that produced Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) helped recreate Sunday school, making available everything a church could want to create fun, colorful, engaging children’s programs.

Leah Payne has described how the growth of CCM was closely tied to the social and political interests of evangelicals, functioning as both an evangelistic endeavor and a protective media ecosystem that was safe and separate from the sex, drugs, and disorder of the mainstream entertainment industry (Payne 2024).¹⁴ While CCM was not marketed or sold exclusively to American evangelicals, it helped form evangelical identity, along with other forms of media marketed to the fluid, interdenominational group. CPWM did not “emerge” from CCM, but it did ascend through the same corporate structures in the 1990s and early 2000s, becoming a force in the entertainment industry and an economically viable and distinct subgenre. Like CCM, CPWM has shaped evangelical subculture and identity. It has changed how evangelicals “socially structure their music-making, experience worship, and, ultimately, understand themselves as a religious group” (Ingalls 2018, p. 1). The act of musically organizing around CPWM and its conventions is a way of *being evangelical*.¹⁵

Ruth and Lim describe the new normal, or “generic pattern” of musical worship practices that have taken root as CPWM has grown in popularity and cultural power:

... a band on a platform; music derived from some style of popular music; vocalists and instrumentalists front and center; informality; hands raised in the air; an extended time of congregational singing; reliance upon electronic technology featuring screens, projectors, and large soundboards, updated English and other nods toward establishing accessibility and relevance for worshipers; and the pastor nowhere to be seen until the time for the sermon. (Ruth and Lim 2021, p. 1)

Like CCM, CPWM borrows conventions and style characteristics from popular genres, bringing with them associations from other niches and cultural spaces. Crucially, borrowing from popular genres has meant that CPWM reflects trends in the teen and young-adult-centric entertainment industry.¹⁶ Prior to the late 1990s, when CPWM gained commercial success and established itself as a distinct marketable genre within the Christian niche, the sound of praise and worship music generally mirrored “adult contemporary” styles (Ingalls 2018, p. 10), but as seeker-sensitive churches adopted the trappings of CPWM, current-sounding music became a means of attracting and keeping teens, young adults, and young families.

Where were children in all of this? Throughout the renegotiation of musical identity and worship practices during the final decades of the 20th century, the tug-of-wars over musical style, new technologies, and performance practices was always between camps of adults, and sometimes adolescents. In evangelical churches across North America, the adopters of CPWM were the clear winners of the “worship wars” of the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁷ For many churches, this meant redesigning Sunday morning services in pursuit of the model described by Ruth and Lim, one based largely on pop or rock concerts: musical sets in which the songs are often linked together, dim lighting (or no house lights at all), the expectation of sustained mental and emotional focus for participants. Because this kind of “worship experience” (Ingalls 2018) relies on willing emotional and spiritual participation, the entrainment of the worshiper, and a cognitive network of experiences that give the music emotional resonance, children are almost inevitably outsiders; not because they cannot learn to participate or because the music is necessarily inaccessible for them, but because the reshaping of musical worship had little to do with their ideas, preferences, or desires.

CCM and the Christian entertainment industry arose in part to protect children from the negative influence of mainstream media. But this was, as Ann Hulbert might say, a “parent-centered” effort. It was parent-centered from top to bottom; not only were parents the ones playing music for their kids, the Christian music industry itself considered its primary customer to be “Becky”, a mother in her 30s, driving her kids from school to soccer practice (Mall 2021, p. 124). Similarly, churches that decided to go the way of CPWM to help attract and keep younger members were also enacting a very parent- or adult-centered approach: if we build it the way we think they want it, they will come.

It’s hard to blame churches for chasing younger congregants this way. In fact, some Christian parenting literature of the late 20th century encouraged parents to seek out churches that their kids thought were cool and exciting. Writing in the early 1970s, Christian psychologist and professor Bruce Narramore wrote in his book, *An Ounce of Prevention*, “every parent needs to choose carefully a church and Sunday school. Parents of teenagers may need to re-evaluate their present church home; although they are happy with a church. . . nothing does more to turn off a sharp teenager than a boring youth program led by a spiritually committed but socially inadequate person!” (Narramore 1972, p. 57).

Even prior to the worship wars, it seems, parents were being primed to seek out a church that wouldn’t bore their teenagers. This, again, saddled parents with the burden of envisioning what kind of environment their teen might want and church leaders with the task of trying to create that environment. In this process, though, parental authority is still intact; *parents* need to find the right church community for their teens. There is little discussion about catering to the preferences and interests of younger children, though. This is most likely due to the uncomfortable fact that, for the most part, elementary-age children have very little say in where and how they spend their time. And within the framework given to most evangelical parents, it would be a catastrophic upending of the family authority structure to give children a say in whether they go to a particular church, or any church at all.

I’m not suggesting here that in evangelical churches using CPWM, children have less of a say in their musical activities than they have historically had in other Christian traditions. Although children have always been valued in Christian thought—as gifts, a “heritage from the Lord”, innocents to be protected—their treatment in the church often reflects their marginalization in the surrounding world. Stollar argues that we do and have always lived in an anti-child world, where the values and experiences of adults are considered both normative and more valuable (Stollar 2023).

5. Toward a Liberatory Vision for Children in Congregational Worship

The aim of this article is to propose a framework shift, a directional change away from the well-worn outworking of parent/adult-centered authority. What theological and ideological underpinnings need to be dismantled? And where have those underpinnings shaped corporate worship in ways that hamper mutuality between children and adults and the freedom of children to exercise autonomy?

The influence of parent-centered writers and teachers like Dobson and Tripp is evident in the ways some influential pastors and church leaders today write and talk about the role of children in corporate worship. Even those who urge churches to “welcome” children often do so while emphasizing the training of children to behave appropriately in grown-up-centered places. Discussions of child participation and how to encourage it almost always involve adult-led decision-making and program design. The focus on training and behavior implicitly encourages parents to be concerned about their children’s ability to behave in ways that align with what is expected of adults.

The author of the article cited in the introduction entreats parents to train children at home by regularly singing and reading the Bible as a family, in a more relaxed and familiar environment. An article in Ligonier’s *Tabletalk* magazine, the author advocates for the inclusion of children in corporate worship because to do so is to bring them into the presence of the Holy Spirit: “Public worship is the nursery of faith. . . . Your children need to be born again; they need the gift of faith to embrace Jesus as their Savior. If this is the case, bring them where the Holy Spirit especially does that work—public worship”.¹⁸

Common language used to describe or encourage children’s participation in corporate worship almost always positions adults and God as the actors, and children as the acted-upon. The assumption is that properly trained children will receive what they need from corporate worship regardless of the design or content of the service. They simply need to be trained, brought, taught, given, and disciplined. Anna Strhan suggests that this way of seeing children fails to consider how “particular forms of children’s agency are not given a priori but emerge through practices and forms of relationship, and how the figure of “the child” exerts agency shaping the hopes, fears, and imaginations of adults, and how these processes enable or constrain children’s agency in lived experience” (Strhan 2019, p. 4). The presence of ‘the child’ in corporate worship changes the experience and relational environment of the service. To fail to take this into account in the music selection and service planning is to deny the reality of the reciprocal relationships between children and adults, and children and God. The framing of scholarship and advocacy work around “child participation” in community life has often obscured the relational exchange between children and adults, a problem that some researchers try to address by using a framework of “child-adult relations” rather than “child participation” (Mannion 2007).

Liberation theology, Stollar writes, “is about equipping and empowering groups of people to discover and speak about God on their own terms and with their own language” (Stollar 2023, p. 5). Inviting children into spaces to participate in musical worship designed by and for adults and adolescents does little to help children encounter God on their own terms unless there is an accompanying effort to allow them to change existing practices and even introduce new ones. However, in much of the popular Christian parenting literature, children are not described as capable of generating ideas that would benefit the worshiping congregation. Consider apologist Ken Ham’s view of a child’s capacity for the recognition of goodness: “Children are not miniature adults. They are unable to discriminate between good and evil” (Ham and Ham 2008, p. 180).

When generations of evangelical parents have been instructed to view their children as having an extremely limited ability to perceive goodness or beauty, why would they seek out a child’s input in shaping musical worship? Furthermore, when authors and

teachers instruct parents to see themselves as the embodiment of God's authority for their children, they implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) say that seeking feedback or privileging children's ideas and desires opposes God's design for families and churches.

Larry Christensen's *The Christian Family* (1970) was one of the best-selling Christian parenting books of the 1970s. In it, he warned parents not to give too much weight to a child's "intuitive sense of right and wrong, of fairness and unfairness", saying, "something as important as a child's obedience cannot be made to hinge upon the perfection of a parent's judgment in every situation. . . The child's responsibility is simply to obey" (Christensen 1970, p. 57).

Tedd Tripp offers similar counsel to parents as they teach their children to become worshipers of God: "part of the parent's task is to shepherd [the child] as a creature who worships, pointing him to the One who alone is worthy of his worship" (Tripp 1995, p. 38). Parents are to shepherd, teach, correct, but also to exercise absolute authority: "you have the authority to act on behalf of God" (Tripp 1995, p. 46).

The ideas in books like Christensen's and Tripp's permeate evangelical thought about children. Strhan argues that "the ways in which some conservative evangelicals understand childhood today enacts a narrative of declinism", noting that in her ethnography of evangelicals in the UK, some described their approach to family life as "increasingly countercultural, moving against the grain of pervasive norms of individual agency and autonomy as they prioritize norms of submission and obedience not only for their children, but also in family life and how individuals should relate to God" (Strhan 2019, p. 10). For some conservative evangelicals, resisting calls to grant children more autonomy and agency is godly parenting. In this framework, training children to adhere to their hierarchical vision of family life and corporate worship is one way parents can exercise their God-given authority, and their children's ability to perform that vision is evidence of godliness.

Children can be (and have been) enculturated in particular traditions of musical worship across time and place. Music-making in community can be a powerful tool of socialization and relationship-building, as "humans also share emotional states and form interpersonal bonds when they dance, sing, or play music with others" (Ilari et al. 2018). Musical entrainment in children has been associated with increased empathy and prosocial behavior in a small number of studies, but such studies have focused on the facilitation of rhythmic movement and the playing of instruments (Rabinowitch and Meltzoff 2017). Musical enculturation of children almost always involves adult influence, but the degree to which children are allowed to improvise, deviate, or choose how to participate impacts their relationships with each other and the facilitator.

Musical meaning-making occurs in relationship; Tia NeNora observes, "musical affect is contingent upon the circumstances of music's appropriation", and is "constituted reflexively, in and through the practice of articulating or connecting music with other things" (Denora 2000, p. 33). If a child's experiences with CPWM are always in the context of being brought into a space in which they have no perceivable autonomy, influence, or agency, the meaning they make with that music will almost certainly center the adults and the experiences they appear to be having and trying to create. The music will almost certainly be associated with a world where they do not yet belong.

Stollar suggests that moving toward practices that allow children to be teachers and leaders is key in the cultivation of liberatory communities: "Moving to a place where we can see and appreciate that children are existential and spiritual explorers is key to moving the church one step closer to child liberation" (Stollar 2023, p. 155). While many evangelical adults would agree that children have inner spiritual lives, many find it quite uncomfortable to allow children to take on some form of leadership in the church. This is unsurprising, and also understandable given the obvious practical concerns that arise

when one imagines the shifts that would be necessary to implement such a change. What would that look like in practice? “The question is”, writes Stollar, “are adults willing to follow children?” (Stollar 2023, p. 165)

The habitual separation of children and adolescents from adults in the congregation for worship and spiritual instruction has, in Stollar’s view, contributed to the marginalization of young people in the church:

... children are put in children’s church settings or youth groups and other religious programs where they are bombarded with entertainment (loud music, silly games, video content). This is unhelpful. Entertaining children has its place in the larger scheme of church life, but reducing the participation of children in church to entertainment alone is dehumanizing. It is a soul-sucking extension of capitalism: the transformation of children from agents into consumers. . . Children know they are more than objects to babysit. They are living, growing human beings who can contribute to the world. (Stollar 2023, p. 171)

One way Stollar suggests churches might begin to develop a vibrant and practical vision for child inclusion and empowerment is by embracing a theology of play. He cites the work of Pentecostal theologian Nimi Wariboko, who describes God’s grace as the “play” of God rather than the “work” of God because grace is spontaneously given, “with no purpose or instrumentality” (Stollar 2023, p. 177). One interesting trend in CPWM over the last 15 years is the growing popularity of the “worship ballad-anthem”, prolonged songs that tend follow a trajectory of quiet contemplation toward heightened, ecstatic praise and a decrescendo to the end, at a moderately slow tempo. These songs are characterized by an affect of introspective contemplation and reverence. They require emotional labor on the part of the worshiper; they are not “playful”.

In many charismatic and Black churches in the US, improvisation, call and response, clapping, and movement are often features of musical worship—sometimes understood as “play” and sometimes as celebration or being filled with the Holy Spirit (Williams 2020; Wilkinson 2020). For many evangelicals, though, “freedom in worship is expressed through personal choice of a finite range of worshipful gestures once considered to belong to pentecostal-charismatic worship”. Ingalls also observes that in some conservative evangelical churches, there are “strong social inhibitions on expressive movements during worship”, and parachurch conferences, festivals, and concerts serve as places where evangelicals can experiment with movement (Ingalls 2018, p. 54).

In churches that utilize CPWM, experimentation is usually limited to gestures like hand-raising, swaying, and clapping, although the decline in the popularity of upbeat songs means that even clapping as a form of physical expression is becoming less common. Because musical play is physical, it may be fruitful for communities to invite children to help imagine what it would look like to intentionally make space for movement. For some churches, this might include reevaluating music selection. For others, it might involve using more house lighting during musical worship and creating more open spaces in the sanctuary or auditorium.

Stollar cites Zechariah’s prophetic vision of children playing in restored Zion as evidence that “children at play” is an image of “divine favor and wisdom”. He further suggests that everyone in a faith community will benefit from allowing children to lead, play, and theologize in relationship with their peers and elders: “when we start to see children playing as an act of theology, we open ourselves up to the possibility of *adults* playing *also* being an act of theology. . . in this way, play becomes a holy act for disciples of all ages” (Stollar 2023, p. 183).

6. Conclusions

The application of a child liberation framework to worship practices may open up discussions about how particular norms constrain or limit *everyone* in a community. Introducing playful, responsorial, improvisatory, physical elements of musical worship gives the benefits of those things to adults and children. Furthermore, just as children may learn by observing adults as they worship together, adults may learn by observing children's as own encounters with God, unmediated and uninterpreted by adults.¹⁹

Often, when children are welcomed to participate in corporate worship—particularly in churches using CPWM—they are essentially invited to be enculturated into practices shaped by adult perceptions of youth culture. If they are unable to adhere to particular norms, they are separated from the congregation. I make no attempt here to suggest what kinds of changes to musical worship a church might consider because I am not a child. I may ask my children what they wish musical worship was like at our church, but I also acknowledge that the group “children” is not a monolith, even when speaking about children in evangelical communities. There is no shortcut when it comes to *listening to children*. Young children don't have Spotify accounts that we can use to aggregate data about their music-listening habits. Their media consumption is generally overseen and managed by parents.

In keeping with the aims of this article, I will not propose solutions that I imagine might make corporate worship more inclusive, accessible, interesting, or engaging for children. This research is, in my view, a starting point and a proposed change in direction. The path forward for any church that tries to reorient its practices using a child liberation theology framework will depend on the particular children in that community. The only specific practical guidance I offer here is to invite children to speak into the planning process, and to listen.

Progress in the direction of child liberation will require local efforts with groups of children within church communities. It simply cannot be done without letting children speak, influence, and dissent. By seriously considering the emerging field of child liberation theology and the work of scholars of childhood, church communities may begin to unearth deeply rooted, harmful beliefs about children and see clearly the ways those beliefs are shaping corporate worship and preventing children from being fully seen and heard.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Visions of the worshiping family have varied drastically across time and place; of particular relevance here are the ways American Christians have continuously redefined the ideal faithful family. As David Setran notes in his history of Christian parenting practices in America since the Colonial period, 18th-century Puritans emphasized *bringing* children to church, specifically for baptism during the first weeks of life (126). Setran also observes that participation in the “covenantal community” was central for Puritans, whose theology affirmed depravity and original sin, but also promise and belonging (41). Many American Puritans also practiced daily family worship in the home, which was described by figures like Cotton Mather as “family sacrifice” (43). Family worship and family sacrifice were governed by the authority structure of the home, with fathers assuming “priestly oversight” (43). Victorian Christians like Horace Bushnell embraced a softer, more sentimental view of family prayer and devotions, prioritizing nurture and spiritual formation through observation rather than ordered ritual. Bushnell's admonishments

for families were informed by his own negative view of revivalism. “For a growing number of Protestants [during the Victorian period]”, Setran observes, “it was the daily and informal parental interactions with their children, rather than formal Christian practices of teaching and worship, that mattered most” (129). The pendulum swing in parenting philosophies outlined by Setran—from authoritarian practices to more permissive ones—is observed in teaching about the significance of family worship at church and in the home. In our current context, writers and church leaders intentionally and unintentionally evoke both Puritan and Victorian schools of thought.

2 For purposes of this article, I’ll note that my use of the term “evangelical” draws on Daniel Vaca’s (2019) exploration of the role of media in evangelical identity formation in the United States. Vaca contends, “both the evangelical market and the evangelical population have taken shape continually, through commercial and cultural efforts. And if evangelicalism’s growth has fueled industries that have supplied the demand of evangelicalism’s consumers, the inverse has also occurred: industries have helped generate evangelical demand, evangelical identities, and the very idea of a coherent evangelical population” (2). This definition is particularly relevant here as this article explores the role of books (particularly parenting books) in forming evangelical identity, community norms, and even expectations of child behavior.

3 Eighteenth-century German pietists like August Hermann Francke were committed to the religious education of children but were also strict disciplinarians who insisted upon the importance of “breaking the will” through corporal punishment. This breaking of the will was considered necessary to secure orderly, immediate compliance from children, which was necessary for spiritual learning and character formation. There is evidence that Francke’s initial articulation and application of these ideas was more temperate than that of his successors. See Marcia Bunge, “Education and the Child in Eighteenth-Century German Pietism: Perspectives from the Work of A.H. Francke”, in *The Child in Christian Thought*, edited by Marcia Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 247–278. Bunge notes that historians such as Philip Greven have traced the influence of German pietism in American Protestantism, and that language of “breaking the will” as well as commitment to corporal punishment can be traced back to figures like Francke, who championed the religious education and conversion of children. See also Philip Greven’s books, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1977) and *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

4 There is a growing body of writing about the ways that modern church services exclude or marginalize neurodivergent and disabled children and adults. See, for example, Waldock (2023).

5 Bunge notes that Chrystotum, more so than Luther, was convinced that proper Christian child-rearing would ensure the faith of children, adding that later Victorian figures like Horace Bushnell adopted a similar view of the power of Christian nurture.

6 Stollar’s framework draws from James Cone’s seminal writing on liberation theology in *God of the Oppressed* (1975), *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969), and *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (2011). Cone’s work lays the foundation for subsequent articulations of a theology that assumes God identifies with the oppressed and is always for their liberation. Cone (2011) argued that “until we can identify Christ with a ‘recrucified’ black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America” (xv). Stollar extends this call to see Christ in the oppressed, suggesting that we should also identify Christ with a vulnerable child. By engaging Cone’s liberatory theology, Stollar seeks to humanize and dignify children through the observation that children are uniquely vulnerable in the world, and that God entered into that vulnerability through the incarnation.

7 A mainstay of Dobson’s books is the use of anecdotes about domineering, spoiled children and parents who seem unable or unwilling to secure compliance. The primary thesis of *Dare to Discipline* (1970) is that too many children and adolescents have the run of the roost at home, and that a return to social order will follow if parents can reclaim authority in the home. Its introduction includes a story about a three year-old child named Sandy who “dangled her harassed mom back and forth like a yo-yo until she tired of the sport” (1).

8 For an exploration of the sociological and geographic constructions of the terms “teenager”, “children”, and “young adult”, see Weller (2006). I’ll also note here that some of the major gains made for children’s rights globally during the 20th century had a profound impact on the lives of children over the age of 13, in public commitment to education, child labor regulations especially.

9 One reason for this is that many popular Christian parenting books advocate for corporal punishment, but suggest beginning to phase out the practice as children approach puberty.

10 David Setran (2022) argues that the fundamentalist-modernist divide of the 20th century extended to ideas about parenting, with the mainline world adopting views built on Victorian interest in nurture and opposition to rigid, austere discipline (218) and the fundamentalists leaning toward colonial authors’ more pessimistic view of the sinfulness of children and their teaching on “God-directed practices within the Christian home” and the “vision of the father-led family altar” (219).

11 *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, first published in 1995, launched Tedd Tripp’s career as a highly sought Christian parenting teacher among American evangelicals. It was endorsed early on by John MacArthur, as well as prominent champions of the biblical counseling or nouthetic counseling movement like David Powlison and Ed Welch. Tripp produced video lectures to accompany the book; these lectures are still in circulation and available for purchase today. The book is still widely used in American evangelical churches; a revised and updated version was published in 2005.

- Tripp is a committed advocate of corporal punishment and argues that not only is it effective, it is “biblical” and a requirement for Christian parents. He acknowledges that the practice is “unfashionable” in the first edition of the book.
- For more on fundamentalist family life teaching and the centrality of rigid authority structures, see Emily McGowin, 2018, *Quivering Families: The Quiverfull Movement and Evangelical Theology of the Family* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press).
- Payne has suggested that CCM was itself a sort of parenting tool, a resource that allowed Christian parents to audiovisually program their children’s world with lyrics that reinforced their faith. See Leah Payne (2024).
- Daniel Vaca (2019) suggests that evangelical consumption of books is a process of self-identification and self-construction. CCM and CPWM function quite similarly; they are forms of media that evangelicals consume, co-create, and participate in, and by doing so simultaneously define what it means to be an evangelical and identify themselves with the group “evangelical”.
- Ingalls has traced the development and shifts in worship music styles toward the “youth-oriented, radio-friendly pop-rock of the late 1990s and 2000s” (Ingalls 2018, p. 10).
- The “worship wars” has become a catch-all term for the cultural shift in western Protestant Christianity (particularly in charismatic and evangelical churches) toward musical practices that borrowed from pop and rock. For a fuller explanation of the shift, see Ruth and Lim’s *A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship* and Lester Ruth (2017), “The Eruption of the Worship Wars: The Coming of Conflict”, *Liturgy* 32.1: 3–6.
- Hyde (2018). *Tabletalk* is a publication of the Reformed-leaning Ligonier outreach and discipleship ministry founded by R.C. Sproul.
- Child liberation theology frameworks foreground a child’s capacity for real, unmediated spiritual experience. Whereas writers like Tedd Tripp seem to suggest that parents essentially act as the Holy Spirit, interpreting and judging a child’s actions and the inclination of their heart, Stollar insists that a child’s spiritual life is *theirs*, and that they have the capability to meet with God on their terms, and that those terms are not lesser or deficient.

References

- Bendroth, Margaret. 2002. *Growing Up Protestant*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Boekestein, William. 2022. Include Children in Worship: A Simple Plan. *The Gospel Coalition*. June 24. Available online: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/children-worship-plan/> (accessed on 10 September 2024).
- Brown, Ruth Murray. 2002. *For a Christian America: The Making of the Religious Right*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Bunge, Marcia. 2001. *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Burt, Marissa, and Kelsey McGinnis. 2025. *The Myth of Good Christian Parenting: How False Promises Betrayed a Generation of Evangelical Families*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.
- Christensen, Larry. 1970. *The Christian Family*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship.
- Cone, James. 2011. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Denora, Tia. 2000. *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dobson, James. 1970. *Dare to Discipline*. Wheaton: Tyndale House.
- Dobson, James. 1985. *The Strong-Willed Child: Birth Through Adolescence*. Wheaton: Tyndale House.
- Dowland, Seth. 1997. *Family Values and the Formation of a Christian Right Agenda*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ellison, Christopher, and Darren Sherkat. 1993. Obedience and Autonomy: Religion and Parental Values Reconsidered. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32: 313–29. [CrossRef]
- Gangel, Kenneth. 1972. *The Family First: Biblical Answers to Family Problems*. Winona Lake: BMH Books.
- Greven, Philip. 1991. *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse*. New York: Knopf.
- Ham, Ken, and Steve Ham. 2008. *Raising Godly Kids in an Ungodly World: Leaving a Lasting Legacy*. Green Forest: Master Books.
- Hulbert, Ann. 2003. *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Hyde, Daniel. 2018. Training Children in Worship. *Tabletalk*. March. Available online: <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2018/03/training-children-worship/> (accessed on 10 September 2024).
- Ilari, Beatriz, Cara Fesjian, and Assal Habibi. 2018. Entrainment, theory of mind, and prosociality in child musicians. *Music & Science* 1: 2059204317753153.
- Ingalls, Monique. 2018. *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Forms Evangelical Community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ingersoll, Julie. 2015. *Building God’s Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mall, Andrew. 2021. *God Rock, Inc.: The Business of Niche Music*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Mannion, Greg. 2007. Going Spatial, Going Relational: Why ‘Listening to Children’ and Children’s Participation Needs Reframing. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 28: 405–20. [CrossRef]
- McGowin, Emily. 2018. *Quivering Families: The Quiverfull Movement and Evangelical Theology of the Family*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. 2019. *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Narramore, Bruce. 1972. *An Ounce of Prevention: A Parent’s Guide to Moral and Spiritual Growth of Children*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

- Pais, Janet. 1991. *Suffer the Children: A Theology of Liberation by a Victim of Child Abuse*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Payne, Leah. 2024. *God Gave Rock and Roll to You: A History of Contemporary Christian Music*. New York: Oxford.
- Porter, Mark. 2016. *Contemporary Worship Music and Everyday Musical Lives*. London: Routledge.
- Rabinowitch, Tal-Chen, and Andrew Meltzoff. 2017. Synchronized Movement Experience Enhances Peer Cooperation in Preschool Children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 160: 21–32. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Ruth, Lester. 2017. The Eruption of the Worship Wars: The Coming of Conflict. *Liturgy* 32: 3–6. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Ruth, Lester, and Swee Hong Lim. 2021. *A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship: Understanding the Ideas that Reshaped the Protestant Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Setran, David. 2022. *Christian Parenting: Wisdom and Perspectives from American History*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Stollar, Ryan L. 2023. *The Kingdom of Children: A Liberation Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Strhan, Anna. 2019. *The Figure of the Child in Contemporary Evangelicalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swindoll, Chuck. 1991. *The Strong Family: Growing Wise in Family Life*. Portland: Multnomah.
- Tripp, Tedd. 1995. *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. Wapwallopen: Shepherd's Press.
- Vaca, Daniel. 2019. *Evangelicals Incorporated: Books and the Business of Religion in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Waldock, Krysia Emily. 2023. The Impossible Subject: Belonging as a Neurodivergent in Congregations. *Journal of Disability & Religion* 27: 568–83.
- Weller, Susie. 2006. Situating (Young) Teenagers in Geographies of Children and Youth. *Children's Geographies* 4: 97–108. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Wilkinson, Michael. 2020. Worship: Embodying the Encounter with God. In *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*. Edited by Wolfgang Vondey. London: Routledge.
- Williams, Daniel K. 2010. *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, Khalia J. 2020. Love Your Flesh: The Power and Protest of Embodied Worship. *Liturgy* 35: 3–9. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.