

justifying modern theocratic ambitions, but rather, underscoring a republic that rejected both rigid secularism and enforced religious establishment, while embracing a friendly accommodationism.

Furthermore, Boedy would benefit from greater ideological self-awareness. While he critiques the alleged encroachment of conservative Christian influence across the “seven mountains” of culture—government, education, media, and so on—he gives no attention to the ways in which progressive ideologies have themselves become coercive within those same spheres. In education, media, and entertainment in particular, one can observe not a neutral public square but a landscape often shaped and enforced by progressive moral assumptions. This does not necessarily negate Boedy’s underlying concerns, but it does suggest that cultural influence is not a one-directional phenomenon.

Boedy’s work is far from a balanced analysis. It is an ideological polemic. Again, his warnings about the politicization of Christianity are not without merit, particularly where they highlight genuine excesses born from what orthodox Christianity already understands to be heresy. Yet his failure to examine actual Christian theological traditions, combined with an eisegetical reading of American history, limits the book’s overall usefulness. An approach that distinguished between orthodoxy and extremism and recognized the complexity of both religious and secular influences in public life would have made for a far more compelling and credible critique.

Finally, one other thing should be mentioned. Even if the motive cannot be proven, Boedy’s work certainly does betray a sense of payback for Charlie Kirk placing him on TPUSA’s Professor Watchlist.

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***Archaeology and the Ministry of Paul: A Visual Guide.* By David A. deSilva. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2025. 299 pages. Paperback. \$32.99.**

David A. deSilva takes the reader on a fascinating journey through the major places in St. Paul’s life mentioned in his epistles and in Acts, from his native Tarsus to Rome. DeSilva puts the places in their biblical setting, describes their relevant archaeological remains including many photographs, and draws helpful historical insights from the material culture of each ancient place to aid the reader’s understanding of Paul’s life and literary heritage.

Two minor things deserve some criticism. First, the book lacks maps, and the reader would surely appreciate putting the places on a map of the Roman Empire

and sometimes even a map of the ancient cities described in quite some detail. Secondly, I cannot claim to be an expert on all the places described, but my travels did cause me to notice one major deficiency in deSilva's account of Puteoli (Pozzuoli): it mentions nothing of the significant underground Acropolis of Rione Terra opened to visitors several years ago now, where one may walk the same streets trodden by Paul on his way to Rome. As many readers can feasibly visit the Bay of Naples area, it is a pity that nothing is said of this wonderful yet all too unknown site.

For anyone interested in Paul and archaeology, this book is a must read. One need not in fact even be an archaeology enthusiast but simply someone who wants to learn more about the historical context of the apostle to greatly enjoy the reading experience. Although not written as a travel guide, I would take this book with me when visiting ancient Pauline sites to enrich the experience.

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***Extra Nos: Discovering Grace Outside Myself.* By Flame. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2023. 208 pages. Softcover. \$17.99.**

***Because Jesus Taught It: Christianity Through the Eyes of the Church Fathers.* By Flame. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2025. 208 pages. \$17.99.**

Marcus Gray (better known as Flame) is a rap artist, a writer, a careful student of the word of God, and most of all: a theologian. His two books: *Extra Nos* and *Because Jesus Taught It*, take us along on his personal theological journey, from Pentecostalism (which moved toward the prosperity gospel), through Calvinism in the Reformed Baptist tradition, to his arrival in the clear and comforting confession of the Lutheran Church. Marcus calls this "Ancient Christianity as preserved through confessional Lutheran thought" (*Because Jesus Taught It*, 191).

I remember being introduced to Flame's music some years ago and being delighted to find such profound theological gems presented in such an unexpected way. Not a big rap guy, but how can you not smile when you hear "Calvin started placing his limits / on Jesus' metaphysics (in the Institutes) / and lead with his presuppositions / and keeping them over the Scriptures, facts" ("That Long," quoted in *Because Jesus Taught It*, 155). Or: "This is how Jesus the man can be talked about as the one that's giving us life / 'Cause that ain't what human beings do / Right? / Unless we are talking about Christ / The emphasis of MAIESTATICUM / Is what His divinity brings / To his human nature / Like divine power / His humanity only

receives" ("3 Genera," quoted in *Because Jesus Taught It*, 159). These profound theological truths show up in a place I didn't expect: rap music.

Marcus's books work the same way. Theological truths are presented as theological discoveries, interwoven with personal stories and narratives. He shares stories of his mother's mental illness, his father's addictions, the car accident that caused him to rethink his life and commit to spiritual seriousness, his early attempts at writing and rapping, his connection to the Christian rap industry and his life as an artist, and his own theological despair. He is able to explore Pentecostal and Reformed Christianity from the turmoil that it caused in his own mind and heart. If you have been through it, it will resonate. If you were born and raised in the Lutheran confession, you should shudder as the common experience of theological despair is articulated, and the glorious comfort of the gospel is set against the comfortless wasteland of American Christianity.

He also recounts many conversations with Lutheran theologians, including his professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as well as the backlash he received when he became Lutheran. "I really thought they would hallelujah / the closest to ya will cock-and-shoot ya / Standing too close to Dr. Luther" ("Another Man's Shoes," quoted in *Because Jesus Taught It*, 186).

Extra Nos is a "How I got here" story. I listened to most of it as an audiobook that Marcus recorded himself, and I would commend it to you. You can hear why he is a talented vocal artist in the way he reads the text and brings it to life. I was particularly delighted with his exegetical work on Romans 9–10, and his argument for the Lutheran view of predestination against the Reformed (*Extra Nos*, 55–62). Marcus longs for all Christians to know the profound comfort that has been delivered to him as a Lutheran. "This makes my heart go out to all those who are stuck in that same cycle I was. I think about them often and pray for Christians who have never encountered the things I've discovered in the Lutheran tradition that took me back to the purity of the Bible and the rest we have in Christ" (*Extra Nos*, 193).

Because Jesus Taught It deepens the argument by extending it to the ancient church, especially on the three topics of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Christology. Especially in the Baptism chapter, Marcus will explore the controversies in which the church fathers confessed the power, promise, and importance of Baptism. St. Augustine and the Donatist controversy, Irenaeus and the Gnostic controversy, and Ignatius and his apology for the bishop in the church all provide the background for the confidence we have as God's baptized children. After exploring Irenaeus against the Gnostics and rejoicing in the clear confession of Baptism, Marcus breaks into prayer: "May God, by His Holy Spirit given to us in our baptism, help His church resist the ancient foe, the devil, the liar who spews deadly venom, saying that God would not stoop so low as to use physical means to save sinners" (*Because Jesus Taught It*, 86).

Regarding the Supper, Marcus tells a delightful story about a seminary class with Dr. Kolb. He raised his hand, asking how the body can be in the Supper, “To which the dear professor replied, ‘I didn’t say it; Jesus did’” (*Because Jesus Taught It*, 115). Amen! Marcus continues, “In that moment, I knew all confessional Lutherans were crazy. Crazy enough to take Jesus at His word” (*Because Jesus Taught It*, 116).

Just as Article VIII of the Formula of Concord follows Article VII, Marcus follows up his exploration of the church fathers’ views on the Lord’s Supper with a discussion of Christology. He highlights the importance of the three genera in combating Calvinistic reductionism. But the argument is not only presented as an apologetic, but also as a prayer: “So we’re not walking around nervous, thinking, *Man, maybe God doesn’t forgive me, maybe he’s mad at me*. When we receive His body and blood, we receive that comfort as we move out into the world. . . . So I pray that the Holy Spirit will lead His church back to the essence of His words that comfort us in the Lord’s Supper. Beautiful” (*Because Jesus Taught It*, 168).

These books will be a treasure for anyone, for any young theologian wrestling through the Reformed/Lutheran distinction. These books will be a beacon for any fan of Flame or theological Christian rap. These books will help the lifelong Lutheran get a glimpse of the distress caused by different heterodox confessions. And these books will be a helpful resource for all those extolling the comfort of Christ to terrified consciences.

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40 Questions about Mormonism. By Kyle Beshears. Edited by Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2026. 348 pages. Softcover. \$26.99.

Beshears has the admirable goal of encouraging Christians to interact respectfully with Mormons. He rightfully shows how this greatly enhances the chances of having meaningful conversations. To achieve this goal, Beshears divides his forty questions into five main parts: 1) “Studying Mormonism” (12 pages); 2) “The Story of Mormonism” (58 pages); 3) “Authority in Mormonism” (73 pages); 4) “Beliefs of Mormonism” (139 pages); and 5) “Approaching Mormonism” (26 pages). Evidence that he is a historian permeates the book, as he emphasizes the historical background of most topics.

Parts 3–4 constitute the bulk of the book. Each chapter explores and explains a specific aspect of Mormonism. In addressing each subject, Beshears also gives a

scholarly, albeit Reformed, explanation of Christian doctrine. Especially helpful was how he frequently showed how a certain belief evolved through Mormonism's history.

Not as helpful was how he described modern-day Mormonism. He frequently described its beliefs with interpretations not officially espoused by the Latter-day Saints (LDS) Church. Consider, for example, the most quoted Book of Mormon passage, 2 Nephi 25:23: "by grace that we are saved, after all we can do". Beshears only mentions it in passing and then weakens it by saying, it "could be understood as communicating salvation *despite* all we can do" (109). But Mormonism says this passage teaches that "grace cannot suffice without total effort in the part of the recipient."¹

He is also fond of quoting *non-authoritative* LDS scholars. This is disconcerting because they often present Mormonism in ways much more comparable with Christian beliefs. To learn Mormonism's official current position, one needs to look at what is said at its semi-annual General Conferences and taught in current church manuals.

In his last two chapters, he encourages Christians to dialogue with Mormons so that each conversation points "every participant to the Lord Jesus Christ" (330). To that we offer a hearty "Amen." But what should be the focus of these dialogues? One can only assume that the dialogue he envisions centers on the beliefs he unpacked in Part Four. But the eleven key doctrines addressed there barely touch on topics like sin, repentance, forgiveness, and grace.

Even when he talks about Mormonism's view of salvation, he does not mention how it lays stress on many LDS members. Especially troubling is that he does not address the perfectionism that pervades LDS culture. Although Mormonism has undergone many cosmetic changes and has softened its message over the last two decades, it has not rid itself of perfectionism. Still today you can read statements like this in current church manuals: "We are commanded to be supermen. Said the Lord: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' (Matt. 5:48). We are gods in embryo, and the Lord demands perfection of us."² Such statements often give Christians openings to talk about how God can change their stress points into rest points through Christ.

One cannot escape the feeling that the dialogue Beshears encourages is one aimed more at the head than the heart; one more suited to the college classroom than around the kitchen table.

¹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Bible Dictionary," in *Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), s.v. "Grace," 654.

² Spencer W. Kimball, *Teaching of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006), 96.

Overall, this book has limited value. It is helpful when studying the history of Mormonism and the development of its doctrines. But for us who treasure law and gospel proclamation, it comes up short.

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***The Cambridge Companion to Christian Liturgy.* Edited by Joris Geldhof. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2025. 425 pages. Softcover (\$39.00) and hardcover (\$120.00).**

This volume of essays from twenty-two liturgical scholars from across a wide spectrum of traditions is not written from a unified perspective. Yet a decidedly progressive bent soon (progressively!) becomes evident, notwithstanding the editor's claim that "ossified oppositions between conservative versus liberal ideas . . . have no place in the present volume" (3). The opening essays are mostly straightforward surveys of the history of liturgical development. The sixth deals with the "Liturgical Movement," the rise, beginning in the 19th century, of post Enlightenment-era thinking that led to advocacy "for concrete social change" (99). Patrick Prétot traces the virtually universal (and beneficial) shift in liturgical emphases in the West toward inclusion of the laity that led to Vatican II. Prétot's analysis is refreshingly thought-provoking, if lending itself toward neo-orthodox thought by insisting that it is "essential to think of the Eucharist in terms of the ritual process . . . which opens up to an experience of encounter" (128). Clare Johnson's essay admits that thus "the process of liturgical evolution continues" (154).

Essays on the liturgical hours and the liturgical year are beneficial, particularly Maryann Madhavathu's tracing of the predominance of Sunday and Easter (175–81). Commendable essays on music and architecture follow, if occasionally studded with progressive ideas on environmentalism (212), or the "ecological crisis" (225) and "the prospect of a near future in which the universe is likely to become uninhabitable" (226). Natalie Carnes' essay on icons and images is intriguing, though not without reference to a new icon billed "Our Lady of Ferguson and All Those Killed by Gun Violence" (238).

Part IV (of five) gets to the heart of the matter. Bridget Nichols references "an urgent summons to the assembly to look in new ways at the world outside as global ecological crisis accelerates" (253), and warns that "[t]o use 'Father' and 'Son' language is to open up the contested area of relational description in exclusively masculine terms," preferring "feminine and ungendered metaphors for God" (263) and

calling for sensitivity toward “gender identity” (264). Samuel Goyvaerts asks “how our liturgical celebrations can be more inclusive and transformative” (291), and Cas Wepener alleges that preaching must be “more than just a set of propositional truths . . . but . . . an *event* in which the preacher and the hearers cocreate meaning through the experience of the performance” (307).

This blending of neo-orthodox theology with progressivist thinking brings an alarming shift away from the gospel we know. No wonder this volume finally approves of a *rapprochement* with Jews, as recent popes have done (340–44), and with other religions of the world (341–51). Anyone who disapproves of this shift is demeaned as less than constructive (348). In short, as Juliette Day declares, “It is possible for worshippers to create and appropriate new meanings for themselves at each worship event, even if the text itself does not change” (368), and that leaves wide open the gate for even the most radical kind of thinking, including “gendered diversity” and “LGBTQ+ rituals” (375) from “postcolonial, decolonial, and queer liturgical theologians” (379). With new iterations of neo-orthodoxy comes the judgment that “[w]hen the church no longer has a living encounter with the manifestation of God . . . then it is easy for the church to fall into a stiff or rigid historicism” (394). Instead, “Liturgy is itself the chief Christian interpretation of Scripture” (403), meaning that what Scripture actually says is now, condescendingly, set aside.

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***Between the Swastika and the Sickie: The Life, Disappearance, and Execution of Ernst Lohmeyer.* By James R. Edwards. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019. 341 + xvi pages. Softcover. \$37.99.**

The book’s title conjures images of Ernst Lohmeyer being flattened between Hitlerian Nazism and Stalinism, the two repressive totalitarianisms of the early- and mid-twentieth century. Ever an outspoken critic of the Nazi menace, Lohmeyer not only miraculously survived the Third Reich, but even thrived—completing serious scholarship in the trenches on the German side during WWI and being called up to serve as a senior administrative officer on the eastern front until 1943 in WWII. In spite of spending nearly nine years of his life as a soldier, Lohmeyer produced some of the best New Testament scholarship ever published in the German language (see Lohmeyer’s bibliography, 323–26), and twice rose to the position of university president—at Breslau (61, 87–88) and Greifswald (197) respectively.

However, following the capitulation of Greifswald to the Red Army in late April 1945, Lohmeyer was swept up into efforts to reopen the university in the Russian

zone, and was thus vulnerable to insinuations that he had collaborated with the Nazis. The charges were manifestly untrue, and Edwards details Lohmeyer's efforts to shield even the occupied Russian people from Nazi brutality between late August 1942 and March 1943, the months Lohmeyer assumed command of the Wehrmacht in the Caucasus Mountains. Nonetheless, NKVD agents¹ arrested Lohmeyer in the early morning hours of February 15, 1946, the very day he was scheduled to deliver his inaugural address as the new president of the newly reopened Greifswald University. About seven months of imprisonment followed, while rumors flew. Nearly twelve years *later* it came out from the Russian Red Cross that Ernst Lohmeyer died on September 19, 1946, "in camp [im Lager]" (242). Almost certainly this meant he was shot to death in some secluded place, his grave never to be found.

Hence, this is a biography consisting of seventeen chapters, detailing (roughly) Lohmeyer's ascent to prominence, his indefatigable energies expended upon scholarship, his speaking up for Jewish colleagues when no one else would, organizing the Pastors' Emergency League for the Confessing Church (against the Nazis' so-called "German Christianity"), and the elegant grace with which he withstood the attacks of corrupt superiors who attempted to banish Lohmeyer for his "anti-National Socialistic attitudes and behavior" (153). In other words, he was "a sitting duck" during times of extreme peril, but survived on account of his courageous pluck, demonstrable service to Germany during WWI, and (probably also) divine intervention.

Between pages 146–147, there appear fourteen black-and-white photographs of Lohmeyer, his wife Melie, daughter Gudrun, and various buildings, such as the NKVD prison in Greifswald. A striking image of Lohmeyer appears on the first page of these photos when he was president of the University of Breslau in 1930—with flashing eyes, and in full academic regalia. Perhaps Lohmeyer looked something like this while attempting to quell anti-Jewish riots at the University of Breslau in 1932–33 ("The Cohn Affair," 97–101), or facing down thuggish students who broke into the library to burn anti-German books (135–36). A former student recalls a meeting she had had with a gaunt Lohmeyer in 1943, upon his miraculous return from Russia:

I almost didn't recognize him. Before me no longer stood the young and winning professor whom I once knew, so capable of impressing his students. He had lost his teeth, his face was sallow, and he had aged terribly. Only when he spoke did his old self return, considered and thought-provoking. "You're shocked by my appearance. Loss of teeth. Scurvy. Malnourishment. No vitamins" (182).

¹ The NKVD (*Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del*) was the secret police of the Soviet Union from 1934 to 1946.

And that is how it was for someone who held the power of life and death over, literally, tens of thousands of Russians on the eastern front until the war turned against Germany. That Lohmeyer did not have to compromise his high moral resolve—more than this, that he left Russia without being killed—must testify to divine intervention: “I escaped the sentence of death in the war. You have no idea how dispensable life was” (182).

Again, the book consists of seventeen chapters, with illuminating subtitles in each. The endnotes (beginning on page 279) contain not only citations, but the original German texts, documents, and transcripts which Edwards himself translates in what constitutes the bulk of the book. Investigations into “the Lohmeyer puzzle”—how he was clandestinely arrested, spent months in prison, shot, then the entire matter covered up by Soviet authorities—are interspersed with the remarkable telling of Lohmeyer’s life story. It was not enough that Lohmeyer was abruptly arrested, detained, forced to appear before a sham trial procedure, and secretly executed; rather, when the communists labelled him “enemy of the state” they sought not only to take his life but expunge all memory of him, *als ob er nie existierte*—“as though he never existed” (6). They nearly succeeded. It was only because of the persistence of Melie and Gudrun that thousands of letters were gathered and eventually preserved in the Secret State Archives of the Prussian Cultural Academy. So Edwards really is an *Ausländer* who, nonetheless, had to learn German on his own, arrange funding to come to Germany several times to consult out-of-the-way archives, and for years collaborate with family members to recover Lohmeyer’s lost memory. Gudrun puts the matter thus: “We must all die. There is no tragedy in dying. The tragedy is dying without honor. You [Edwards] have helped restore his honor” (262).

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***Enacting Atonement: The Narrative Logic of Sacrifice and Sonship in Leviticus.* By Roy McDaniel. Edited by Daniel J. Treier and Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Downers’ Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2025. Softcover. 228 pages. \$45.99.**

Roy McDaniel’s *Enacting Atonement* is an exciting book. It is exciting in that, while many commentaries and monographs on the third book of Moses try to persuade the reader of its interest or connection for the biblical witness as a whole, *Enacting Atonement* makes one interested to read Leviticus without any attempt to persuade. It is also exciting insofar as McDaniel’s thoughtful research uncovers thematic emphases of the Pentateuch, such as sonship, ascension, and the

tabernacle/temple rituals as a re-enactment of and return to Eden. McDaniel accomplishes this with an unashamed Christian reading of the Old Testament and careful attention to systematic Christian doctrine as a whole.

This book is about the role of burnt offering in Leviticus and its theology of atonement. At the same time, it is an engagement with the interlocking relation between the scriptural text and Christian doctrine. This is reflected in the wide range of authors with which McDaniel engages. At central points in his discussion of the themes of Leviticus and his dramatic reading of it, McDaniel brings critical scholarship into conversation with classical Christian authors. Richard Hays methodology of “retrospective prophecy” for harmonizing the Old Testament and New Testament is brought into dialogue with that of Irenaeus, for instance (82–84). For McDaniel, it is Irenaeus who proves to be the more fruitful interpreter, since he preserves the divine integrity of Scripture, and besides this gives us a good foundation for reading.

The form of the project is that of a drama. McDaniel wishes for us to approach Leviticus by asking about its setting, plot, hero, and ritual actions with their incumbent meaning. Can the most ritually-detailed tome of the Old Testament bear this approach, or is it too artificial? Leviticus is, after all, largely composed of material for the enactment of ritual sacrifice in a context that no longer exists and that Christians have no interest in resurrecting. It seems to me, then, that the manner of this approach is somewhat artificial. McDaniel asks what the “plot” of the text of Leviticus is and defines plot along Aristotelian lines: “In Aristotle’s famed definition, plot consists of a beginning, middle, and end” (37). This literary assessment is undoubtedly foreign to cultic context in which the *acts* of the tabernacle’s worship were to be carried out, rather than a drama to be enacted.

In spite of this alien importation, it also seems to me that McDaniel is able to utilize the series of questions that follow from this framework in uniquely fruitful ways. For instance, a “plot” has a central character (74). Who is that in the context of Leviticus? A hasty read might assume the Aaronic priesthood are the central actors. McDaniel, however, asks us to consider the *offeror*—defined in Leviticus 1 as “any of you [who] brings an offering” (Lev. 1:2)—as the central actor/hero (85). Since this could be any Israelite, McDaniel can interweave the significant emphasis on Israel *as* son. And if a son who returns to God by way of sacrificial death, then a clear line of connection can be drawn with the New Testament depiction of Christ, the true Israelite and Son of God, as sacrificial victim who makes satisfaction (128–37) by way of his own death, resurrection, and ascension (143).

For anyone who has read Leviticus and felt befuddled, lost, or confused about the importance of its ritual detail, or for pastors who dread teaching Leviticus and can find little doctrine in it, McDaniel’s book is a welcome remedy. I heartily recommend it.

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***Grace and Life: Studies in the Pastoral Letters.* By Paul E. Deterding. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2025. 548 pages. Hardcover (\$69.00) and Softcover (\$59.00).**

Geared more toward contemporary application than scholarly research, *Grace and Life* offers an accessible Lutheran exposition of the pastoral epistles. Its greatest strengths lie in pastoral application, while some editorial decisions impede its use as a reference commentary.

Readers will first appreciate the helpful introduction to the volume, which ably defends Pauline authorship (4–12), situates the epistles within the timeline of Paul’s life (12–13), and surveys the false teaching that occasioned the epistles’ emphasis on the pastoral duty to teach sound doctrine while responding graciously but firmly to error (14–20).

The reader should next note the book’s two appendices. The “Essays” (401–469) synthesize what the pastoral epistles teach about dogmatic categories, such as Christology or eschatology. In contrast, the “Extended Notes” (471–511) consist of brief word studies on key terms. Due to their brevity, the latter have perhaps less reference value. For example, the clearest treatment of justification appears not in the “Extended Notes” on the term (499–500) but rather in the essays “He Saved Us” (420–28) and “Not by Works . . . Zealous for Good Works” (440–52).

Relegating this content to appendices presents practical difficulties. While sometimes the book repeats paragraphs of commentary nearly verbatim (see 49, 217–218, 296; also 78–79, 306), at other times a keyword occurs in the main text with little to no comment. Instead, the author refers readers to the “Essays” or “Extended Notes,” citing them by title rather than page number. Combined with the absence of chapter and verse references in the commentary page headers, this significantly reduces the book’s ease of use. Readers would therefore do well to follow the author’s recommendation to read *all* the appendices *before* approaching the main text (1).

The layout of the main text is clear and accessible. Each section begins with the author’s translation of the biblical text, followed by Greek textual notes, English commentary, and a concise summary. The Greek notes are designed for readers who depend on grammatical and lexical aids, with frequent footnotes referencing resources like Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Readers proficient in Greek will find many of these notes somewhat cursory, except in 2 Timothy, whose treatment is the most probing in the volume.

In harmony with his faithful emphasis on the authority and inerrancy of Scripture (120–21, 362–63), Deterding demonstrates how Lutheran theological convictions arise from careful biblical exegesis. This is evident in his discussions of justification (421, 423, 443–44), the distinction between law and gospel (57–59), baptism (275, 281), and election (221, 426–28). On a few occasions, the footnotes cross-reference the Lutheran Confessions (428 fn. 30) and *Luther's Works* (81), illustrating how they rightly confess biblical teachings.

Deterding must also be commended for upholding the biblical teaching that the office of the ministry is open to men only. However, a few minor exegetical decisions in that context seem unwarranted. For example, Deterding inserts the word “first” into 1 Timothy 2:14, arguing that Adam *too* was deceived, albeit after Eve (92). While this emendation helps avoid the false notion that Paul was portraying women as particularly gullible, it also unintentionally undermines two important aspects of Paul’s argument. First, the subversion of divinely established gender roles is one of the devil’s key tactics; he sought to deceive Eve *rather than* Adam. Second, since Adam was *not* deceived, he was particularly blameworthy for *knowingly* acquiescing to this gender role subversion. The insertion of “first” somewhat obscures these points. Similarly, Deterding’s comparison between Eve’s submission to Adam and Christ’s submission to the Father (98) would have benefited from a fuller treatment, especially in light of current popular notions about the “eternal subordination” of the Son—a false position that Deterding does not appear to hold, but which some readers might.

The book’s greatest strength is its contemporary applications. Deterding’s concern for the formation of pastors is evident throughout. He draws thoughtful parallels between Timothy’s preparation in Scripture and the importance of seminary education today (70–71, 73, 134, 137, 229), carefully examines the qualifications, character, and duties of the pastor (90–99, 224–32), and consistently presents the word of God as both the basis and content of pastoral ministry (218, 220, 232–34). Practical illustrations abound.

In summary, *Grace and Life* is a faithful, pastorally oriented volume that succeeds in applying the pastoral epistles to the contemporary life of the church.

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***The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Testament, Second Edition.* By Bill T. Arnold. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2026. 442 pages. Hardcover (\$150.00) and Softcover (\$72.00).**

To whom does the Old Testament belong? Bill T. Arnold calls the Old Testament a “library” the Israelites presented to the world (3). Arnold contends that this Israelite library contributes an advance in human thought, a conception he consistently calls “affective monotheism” to distinguish it from what he understands as the “ontological monotheism” beginning with the Enlightenment and continuing to this day. According to Arnold, those practicing “affective monotheism” do not deny the existence of other deities (at least in principle), but asserts that Israel’s God is the only one to be worshiped and adored (11–12).¹

As Arnold makes his way through the books of the Old Testament, he finds a progression in monotheistic thought. The usual historical-critical points are present, as, for example, the JEDP theory still prevails (along with H, a holiness code), the book Isaiah is asserted to have been written by three separate individuals, and Old Testament dating is claimed to be unclear until Saul and David become king. In some ways, though, these appear as necessary filler for Arnold’s main thesis of affective monotheism as Israel’s “gift to the world” (3).

The monotheistic development goes something like this: Abraham makes a covenant with El, who may or may not be synonymous with a Canaanite god of the same name (103). Moses assigns the attributes of El to Yahweh, equating the God who appeared to Israel’s ancestors with the God who led Israel out of Egypt (165). The Psalms begin to solidify the uniqueness of Yahweh while still allowing other deities to exist (313). The so-called “Deutero-Isaiah” exemplifies the final Israelite turn to praising Yahweh as incomparable with all other gods, while not excluding those gods completely (345–46).

Arnold’s last chapter contains his assessment of what “affective monotheism” has done for the world. In a way it is refreshing, for Arnold fights against the common assertion that the Enlightenment, not Christianity, is responsible for “values” considered “foundational for civil society” (391).² Too often Christianity suffers abuse for repressive values and norms. Yet Arnold, in a textbook fit for an introduction to the Old Testament in a secular college, makes the case that Christians reading the Old Testament produced these modern values that many take for granted today.

Conservative Christians who believe that the Bible is infallible and inerrant will find little in this volume that is helpful. Arnold provides lengthy bibliographies for further reading at the end of each chapter, with an eye toward contemporary

¹ “Ontological monotheism” is, in Arnold’s definition, a strict limiting of the category of “God” to a singular deity.

² Arnold mentions individual rights, the right to self-govern, and religious tolerance by governments.

scholarship or books that he has written or edited. Anyone looking to this book to provide a Christian introduction to the Old Testament will be generally disappointed.

And that leads back to the opening question: To whom does the Old Testament belong? Arnold wants it to be a universal book, accessible to everyone, no matter what they believe (1, 388). Yet the Old Testament must first belong to Christ, since it testifies to him (John 5:39; Luke 24:27; etc.). By extension, then, the Old Testament belongs to the Christian church, for it is her history, her hymnal, her prophecies, her people. There is both continuity and continuation of the Old Testament in the New. Without Jesus, the monotheism and other teachings of the Old Testament mean nothing. But with Jesus, the Old Testament is full of direction, promise, and encouragement.

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