

Shorter Notices

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The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition. By Eugen J. Pentiu. New York: Oxford University, 2014. Pp. xxi + 414. \$99; \$35.

Pentiu has endowed biblical studies with a profoundly insightful and thoroughly comprehensive exposition of the ways the OT has been read, sung, visualized, and otherwise celebrated in Orthodox tradition. Uncannily, P.'s voice resonates quadraphonically—historically from the headwaters of Christianity's Hellenized Jewish and patristic beginnings and from today's Orthodox faith and practice, from deep within the stream of Orthodox tradition as much as from the detached vantage point of his rigorous Harvard training.

The book is ordered in two parts, "Reception" and "Interpretation." The former deals with the historical processes by which Christians generally acquired their Scriptures, with special attention paid to the distinctive ways Orthodoxy has appropriated both canonical and extracanonical texts. Non-Orthodox and Orthodox readers alike may be surprised to learn that, while the Septuagint remains the "default Bible" of the Orthodox Church, it has never been its sole authority, so that the witness of other writings, including the Hebrew text, is of value (xiii). The "open-endedness" of canon and the relationship between Scripture and tradition are also clearly explicated.

Part II discusses the interrelationship of the OT and NT in forming a unified Testament interpreted liturgically through integrative discursive, aural, and visual modalities. According to P., the challenge for Orthodox biblical scholars is to effect "some kind of synthesis between ancient and modern modes of biblical interpretation" (169). The final chapters discuss how aural and visual appropriations of Scripture integrate complementarily in liturgy, rising from this sanctified setting to permeate all aspects of Orthodox Christian life.

As an Orthodox biblical scholar, I am most impressed by P.'s critique of anti-Jewish language surviving in Orthodox liturgy (39–44); by his acknowledgment of the value of other text witnesses, including the Hebrew biblical text (xiii); and by his qualified affirmation of modern methods of biblical interpretation. This book is unparalleled and will not be surpassed anytime soon. Non-Orthodox readers will benefit greatly from its thorough, concise, and highly readable presentation; but for Orthodox adherents, reading it is a must.

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