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Eugen Pentiuc opens his book with a striking image, the icon of Christ Pantocrator from St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. The icon portrays Jesus with two contrasting eyes, the right one mild, and the left dilated and forbidding. The Jesus of this icon, he writes, is 'at once a compassionate friend and a stern judge.' Which one of them is the 'real' Jesus? In Eastern Orthodox tradition, Pentiuc notes, the answer is 'both.' Jesus cannot be fragmented; like the Mount Sinai icon, Orthodox interpretation of scripture sees him simultaneously as intricate and simple, unable to be reduced to a single facet (4–5). The icon and the simile are wonderfully appropriate ways to introduce the book, foreshadowing its methods, content, and conclusions.

The book is divided into two parts, 'Reception' and 'Interpretation.' Part 1 is composed of four chapters: (1) 'One Bible, Two Covenants,' which explores the tensions resulting from the fact that Christians have claimed the Jewish scriptures as their own; (2) 'Text,' explaining how the Eastern church both considers the Septuagint its default text type and respects other versions of the scriptures; (3) 'Canon,' which argues that the Orthodox have always maintained an open canon, and (4) 'Tradition,' on the relationship between scripture and tradition. Part 2, 'Interpretation,' includes main three chapters: (5) 'Discursive,' on patristic exegesis; (6) 'Aural,' on 'the most important part of Tradition, the liturgy, and liturgical exegesis' (xiii), and (7) 'Visual,' on how scripture is reflected in the church's iconography. A final Postscript concludes the volume.

Chapter 1 discusses several major ways the earliest Christians appropriated the Hebrew scriptures: using them as proof-texts about Jesus, rejecting them as incompatible with the gospel, and overestimating them. Proto-orthodox Christians drew from the Jewish scriptures to make Christological arguments, to validate their own writings, and to demonstrate the antiquity and authority of their doctrine, e.g., as Origen asserted against Celsus that Moses predated Plato (it is worth noting here that Pentiuc's positive use of Origen throughout the book is a welcome move from an Orthodox scholar). Marcion is the premier example of a Christian who rejected the Hebrew scriptures even when they were interpreted allegorically

to Christological ends. Pentiuc addresses the topic of Christian supersessionism and its implications several times, deploring the fact that Tertullian's dictum 'the continuance of the Old Testament has been buried in Christ' still lives on in some Eastern Orthodox circles. He urges both Orthodox hierarchs and the grass-roots faithful to take a stand against 'these perilous teachings,' beginning with a plea to revise anti-Jewish statements in hymns and liturgy, especially those on Good Friday. He refers favorably to the changes Pope John XXIII instigated in the Roman Catholic church when he interrupted the 1959 Good Friday liturgy to ask that the adjective 'perfidious' be removed from the prayer for the Jews (39–40). This section exemplifies two notable aspects of the many that make Pentiuc's book so valuable: it acknowledges the unsavory treatment Jews and their scriptures have suffered at the hands of Christians, and it puts Orthodoxy into conversation with the Western church in a refreshingly sanguine fashion. At the same time, Pentiuc suggests that a mild Christian supersessionism may be unavoidable if the Orthodox church is to remain consistent with its historical hermeneutics, which it most certainly will do. Christian triumphalism, on the other hand, is 'easily discarded,' and the author punctuates his point with a nod to Ephrem the Syrian: 'Humility is so powerful that even the all-conquering God did not conquer without it.' Pentiuc argues that the strongest blow against supersessionism is in fact the complementarity of the two biblical testaments. As Origen wrote, there is one God, whose main attributes are love and justice, and both attributes are present in both testaments (59). Pentiuc gracefully allows his readers to draw the connection between Origen's dictum and the Mount Sinai icon that introduced the book for themselves.

Pentiuc takes pains to nuance the widespread but misleading claim that the Septuagint (LXX) is the only 'approved' Orthodox biblical text type, and chapter 2 demonstrates that actual church usage has been more complex than many might assume. Unlike Roman Catholics with their Vulgate, the Eastern Orthodox never designated an 'official' Old Testament. While the LXX 'truly is *the* Bible of the Church,' many other text types have been welcome, especially Theodotion, the version that transmits the Book of Daniel in almost all LXX manuscripts. This fact alone throws a wrench into any argument for treating the LXX as the official Orthodox Bible (93). In summarizing Orthodox opinions on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, Pentiuc notes that in general, they are 'not against the Hebrew text. Nonetheless, with few exceptions, Eastern Christian writers, ancient and modern, have accorded minimal attention to the Hebrew textual witness.' Outliers include Julius Africanus, who notices a pun in Greek that does not work in Hebrew, and especially John Chrysostom and Photius, both of whom were acutely aware that they were reading the Hebrew scriptures in translation. Pentiuc concludes the chapter by expressing a desire to see the Orthodox take concrete steps to increase awareness of the value of the Masoretic and other textual witnesses. He writes, 'I am dreaming of a day … when those seeking God's word in Scripture will hold both versions, Hebrew and Greek, in "reverence as sisters"' (100).

Chapter 3 discusses the Eastern Orthodox Old Testament canon of scripture and compares and contrasts it to its Jewish and Western Christian counterparts, focusing on 'additions to the Septuagint' or 'apocrypha.' Athanasius' festal letter of 367 CE frames the chapter. The letter names three main categories of books: (1) canonized (*kanonizomena*), i.e., the twenty-two enumerated by 'the Hebrews'; (2) non-canonized (*ou kanonizomena*) or readable (*anaginōskomena*), which includes Wisdom, Sirach, and others, and (3) apocrypha (*apokrypha*), which Athanasius defines as heretical books. The definition of 'apocrypha' in the early church depends upon the author; e.g., Cyril of Jerusalem uses it both in the second and third senses of Athanasius. As late as the eighth century, John of Damascus deems Wisdom and Sirach 'virtuous and noble,' but does not count them with the twenty-two 'because the Hebrews did not place them in the ark' (122). In contrast to the Eastern church, Western

church synods such as Hippo and Carthage tended to formally recognize the additions to the LXX, influenced more by Augustine's favorable judgment of them than Jerome's less positive one. The advent of Protestantism forced the question. The Reformers preferred the narrow canon, calling books outside it 'apocrypha,' but not immediately rejecting them. In reaction to the Protestants, Roman Catholics officially accepted Septuagintal additions at the Council of Trent (1545–1563), shortly thereafter coining the word 'deuterocanonical,' a term that, contrary to its appearance, maintains the equal authority of all the books. The Protestant Reformation also affected the Eastern Orthodox conception of canon, which for a short time lost the flexibility that had characterized it up to that point. It rejected Septuagintal additions via the Confession of Cyril Loukaris (1629), which in turn catalyzed the Synod of Jerusalem (1672). Like the Council of Trent, the Jerusalem synod recognized additions to the LXX as 'sacred scripture.' Thus, Pentiuc notes, both Loukaris and the Jerusalem synod departed from 'the nuanced terminology of Athanasius' (127–128). Today, the question of the Old Testament canon is not entirely clear in the Orthodox church, a state Pentiuc approves. Septuagintal additions are used in Orthodox worship, but opinions vary about the implications of that use. Some assert that liturgical use in itself makes a book 'canonical,' while others insist on a definitive statement from an ecumenical council (which the Synod of Jerusalem was not). Pentiuc prefers the third way of Athanasius, observing that a rush to canonize LXX additions would depart from the ancient praxis of the church whereby a book of the Bible may be 'normative' but not 'canonical.' Therefore, the Orthodox Old Testament canon is today, as it has always been, neither 'narrow' like Jewish and Protestant canons, nor 'broad' like the Roman Catholic canon, but rather something in between.

Part 1 concludes with a chapter on tradition. Pentiuc puts the Orthodox concept of tradition into conversation with Roman Catholic and, to a lesser extent, Protestant views. As with issues about canon, polemics with Protestants also influenced Orthodox thought about tradition. But tradition is harder to define even than canon since it is experienced through such diverse means as 'sacraments, hymns, readings, interpretations, icons, asceticism, and social involvement' (143). In Orthodoxy, 'liturgical testimony is as valid as dogmatic testimony,' and the former has the advantage of being accessible to many more people. Pentiuc notes that for a truth to become a dogma, it must be accepted by the church as a whole, and not simply imposed by the ecclesiastical elite. For that reason, no council is deemed authoritative in advance; it takes time to see if its decrees are 'certified within the Church' (153), as the canon of scripture itself has been. At the same time, 'the church does not possess the Bible in such a way that it can do whatever it pleases with it, for example through virtual neglect or excessive allegorisation' (quoting Theodore Stylianopoulos, 159). Scripture is preeminent. Its interpretation is guided by the church, and tradition can add nothing to it. While Roman Catholics talk about scripture *and* tradition, and Protestant reformers proclaimed scripture *alone*, Pentiuc argues that the Eastern Orthodox understand 'scripture *within* tradition.' That is, 'Scripture is to be found not only *in* one place, but everywhere *within* tradition' (164–65), as readers of this book learn in the next three chapters.

Part 2, 'Interpretation,' explores the wealth and beauty of scriptural interpretation within Orthodoxy, first in the fathers, then aurally and visually. Chapter 5, 'Discursive,' acknowledges that 'there is still a seemingly impassible gulf between patristic exegesis and historical-critical methods,' and that the challenge for Orthodox students is to strike a balance between the two (169). Later, he notes that some of his students wonder why anyone would use historical-critical methods. This question reflects a widespread misconception that 'patristic interpretations are the climax and endpoint' of exegesis (210). In fact, Pentiuc believes, 'excessive' allegorization at the expense of historical and literary context is a 'downside' and 'shortcoming' of the fathers. Nonetheless, the fathers of course have enormous riches to offer students of the

Bible. Pentiuc discusses four assumptions ancient interpreters held: the Bible is cryptic, relevant, perfectly harmonious, and divinely inspired. He rightly distinguishes the ancient view of inspiration from modern Protestant definitions of it, e.g., the dictation model that leads to an alleged 'inerrancy' of scripture (174). While the chapter contrasts Antiochene and Alexandrian interpreters, it does not pit them against one another through the 'literal vs. figurative' dichotomy of older scholarship, but demonstrates that the older understanding is actually a caricature. Pentiuc argues there is no such thing as objective exegesis, either by modern historical-critical scholars or by the fathers, and hence the moderns should 'not be harsh' with the ancients. After a short but sophisticaticated investigation of the meaning of 'historical' ('there is no pure historical event in the Bible;' everything comes to us through interpretation), he concludes with a case study of Cyril of Alexandria, Theodore of Cyrus, and Theodore of Mopsuestia reading Hosea.

Chapter 6, 'Aural,' explores the imaginative 'decanting' of biblical texts, images, and themes in liturgy. This chapter and the next are the most valuable and original contributions of this most valuable book, and the hardest to review, because a summary fails to do them justice. As Pentiuc writes, 'precious little ink has been spilled to bring forth these interpretive gems to the frontline of today's reevaluation' of Old Testament interpretation (199–200). Byzantine hymnography is 'the zenith of the Eastern Orthodox contribution to biblical hermeneutics,' and it 'challenges the reader's familiarity with the written Word of God, in all its vast and densely thicketed historical, symbolic, and metaphorical landscape' because no footnotes or commentary help worshippers grasp the biblical references (212). Pentiuc illustrates his points by drawing on Marian feasts. While patristic exegesis tends to the Christological, liturgical exegesis is more Mariological. Take, for example, the treatment of Genesis 28:10–17 for the feast of the Dormition, or 'falling asleep,' of Mary. Jacob dreams of a ladder, and in the Septuagint, 'the Lord leaned on it.' In the hymn, Mary's grave becomes 'a ladder to heaven's heights.' As Ephrem the Syrian explains, Mary is the 'heavenly ladder, though whom we […] are running up to heaven, [the] ladder through which the heavenly angels came down to us' (234).

Chapter 7, 'Visual,' opens with the requisite greatest hits on the topic: the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787; the first celebration of the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843; the famous quote from Vladimir of Kiev's envoys upon visiting Hagia Sophia; John of Damascus's foundational work, and definitions, descriptions, and defenses of icons in general. The heart of the chapter, however, is an intricate analysis of how icons themselves use the Bible. While even John of Damascus called icons 'the Bible for the illiterate,' their main function in the East, as opposed to the West, is liturgical and anagogical; that is, they seek to 'form and transform (more than merely inform) the faithful' (276). Pentiuc analyzes several images, but the 14th-century scenes from the Life of Cain and Abel at the Visoki Dečani Monastery in Kosovo will serve as a fine exemplar of the whole because they epitomize how Pentiuc's work interweaves the Bible, the Pseudepigrapha, later Jewish literature, hymnography, and visual representation. In Genesis 4:1, Eve remarks that she has 'acquired a man through God' when she gives birth to Cain. A fresco in the monastery may reflect this odd phrasing, since it shows an adult Cain approaching his parents as they embrace. Another fresco depicts Cain killing Abel with a stone. The scriptures do not specify how Cain killed his brother, but the pseudepigraphal Book of Jubilees reports that he did so with a stone. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan notes that Cain 'drove a stone into his forehead.' Later Midrash gives more detail, claiming that Cain hit him with a stone all over his body. A Lenten hymn in the Great Canon of St. Andrew echoes this idea: 'My soul, truly you come to resemble those first two murderers, Cain and his descendent Lamech; for you have stoned your body with evil deeds and murdered your inward being with senseless passions.' Pentiuc leaves the question of influence open, but

whatever one might think about which influenced what, there is no doubt that pictorial interpretations ‘often result from a rich and complex mix of aural and textual material’ (306–308).

The last chapter, ‘Postscript,’ summarizes five hallmarks of the Eastern Orthodox reception and interpretation of the Old Testament: (1) the centrality of Scripture within Tradition, (2) strictness and flexibility (another quiet nod to the bifurcated Mount Sinai icon), (3) integrative and holistic, (4) discursive and intuitive, and (5) formative and informative. While the Orthodox church ‘cannot compliment herself’ for a large number of scholarly works on the Old Testament, Pentiuc writes, it is nonetheless integrated into ‘her ethos.’ This integration has preserved the church from the extremes of either rationalism or emotionalism. He notes that throughout the book he has tried to discredit the cliché that patristic exegesis is the only way that the Orthodox may approach scripture, which idea, he argues, is ‘as counterproductive as the exaggerated optimism’ some historical-critical scholars hold about their discipline. Likewise, he wants to emphasize there is no unified ‘mind of the fathers.’ Instead, there is a ‘polyphany of a diversified patristic chorus’ (326–327). He concludes by reiterating that his work is preliminary, an invitation to others to join him in uncovering the wealth of the tradition.

This volume is a treasure house from which one may draw riches old and new. As an Orthodox priest, Pentiuc is immersed in his ancient tradition; as a biblical scholar he is *au courant* with the methods and controversies of 21st-century scholarship – a rare combination indeed. He builds on solid historical and textual foundations to urge the church forward. The book offers the clearest, most complete, and most accessible treatment in English of topics such as the Orthodox use of the Septuagint, the canon, and issues around the ‘apocrypha,’ not to mention its analysis of scripture in the liturgy. Its faults are vanishingly few. As with many books recently published by Oxford University Press, there are too many typos, but this is a criticism of the publisher rather than the author or the content. The absence of an index of biblical passages is surprising. But these are negligible critiques of a book that will remain an indispensable text on the Old Testament in the Eastern Orthodox tradition for years to come.

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