

the Reformers and thinkers in the 'orthodox' line, but also liberal, existential and feminist theologians. The author quotes Roman Catholic Thomists and Protestant liberals with the same respect and esteem. But although the choice of sources is broad, McGrath always selects material that ultimately supports his theological views on related matters.

On a critical note, this broad ecumenical and irenic approach may be somewhat confusing to a student who is looking for spiritual advice for his or her personal relationship with God. McGrath avoids partisanship so well that he does not always tell the student what is close to historical orthodoxy. In so doing he tends somewhat to blur the importance of differences that there may be between opposing opinions or contradictory doctrines.

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Biblical Interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church

Alexander I. Negrov

BhTh 130. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, xvi + 348 pp., € 89,--, cloth, ISBN 978-3-16-148371-4

SUMMARY

This volume surveys the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church from the 10th century until 1917. The main features of Russian Orthodox hermeneutics are that the church and tradition are indispensable guides to our understanding of Scripture. Christ is considered as the beginning, centre and end of biblical interpretation, and exegesis is based upon cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the human interpreter. The church demands that the reading of the Scriptures be guided by church doctrine. Negrov presents a comprehensive *description*, which helps the non-Orthodox to better understand Orthodox biblical interpretation and theology. His attempt to describe Orthodox hermeneutics from within leads primarily to a sympathetic presentation. At times one misses a more critical distance and assessment. Unfortunately the historical survey stops at 1917.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Band bietet einen Überblick über die Geschichte der Bibelinterpretation in der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche vom 10. Jahrhundert bis 1917. Das Hauptmerkmal der russisch-orthodoxen Hermeneutik besteht darin, dass die Kirche und die Tradition unverzichtbare Führer für unser Verständnis der Schrift sind. Christus wird als Anfang, Zentrum und Ziel der Bibelinterpretation angesehen, und die Exegese wird auf die Kooperation zwischen dem Heiligen Geist und dem menschlichen Interpreten gegründet. Die Kirche verlangt, dass das Lesen der Schriften von der kirchlichen Lehre geleitet wird. Negrov präsentiert eine umfassende *Beschreibung*, die den Nicht-Orthodoxen hilft, orthodoxe Bibelinterpretation und Theologie besser

zu verstehen. Sein Versuch, orthodoxe Hermeneutik aus einer Innenansicht heraus zu beschreiben, führt vorrangig zu einer sympathetischen Präsentation. Zeitweise vermisst man eine kritischere Distanz und Bewertung. Unglücklicherweise endet der Überblick mit dem Jahr 1917.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage retrace l'histoire de l'interprétation biblique au sein de l'Église orthodoxe russe du X^e siècle à 1917. L'herméneutique russe orthodoxe se caractérise principalement par l'importance accordée à l'Église et à la tradition comme guides indispensables à l'interprétation de l'Écriture. Christ est considéré comme étant le début, le centre et la fin de l'interprétation biblique, et l'exégèse est basée sur une coopération entre le Saint-Esprit et l'interprète humain. L'Église requiert que la lecture des Écritures soit guidée par la doctrine de l'Église. Negrov livre ici une présentation très complète, qui aide celui qui est étranger à l'Église orthodoxe à mieux comprendre l'interprétation biblique et la théologie orthodoxes. Sa tentative de décrire l'herméneutique de l'Église orthodoxe de l'intérieur donne lieu à une présentation essentiellement favorable. On aurait parfois aimé plus de distance et d'évaluation critiques. Il est dommage que la présentation s'arrête à l'année 1917.

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The present monograph had its origin in a doctoral thesis at the University of Pretoria under the direction of Jan van der Watt. The author presently teaches New Testament at St. Petersburg Christian University. His study seeks to survey the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church from the 10th century until the end of the Synodal period (1721-1917). 'Its purpose is not to argue either *pro* or *contra* Russian biblical scholarship, but rather to present a coherent analysis of the essential elements of Orthodox biblical hermeneutics as it developed over a period of several centuries critical to the defining of the Orthodox Church' (v). Negrov particularly writes for biblical experts outside the Russian Orthodox confessional borders, both in the East and the West. He endeavours to do so from inside the Orthodox theological framework.

After the introduction and brief methodological considerations in the first two chapters, Negrov describes in chapter three biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox church in a historical perspective during different periods: historical beginnings in the Kievan period in the 10th to 13th centuries, the period of Tartar invasion (1280-1480), ecclesiastic self-establishment in the 15th to 18th centuries, and biblical interpretation in 19th century Russia. Chapter four examines the sources and distinctive features of 'Orthodox anthropology and its implications for biblical hermeneutics', including the conviction of the superiority of the Orthodox in understanding and knowing God which can come across as arrogant.

Chapter five presents as a case study the hermeneuti-

cal approach of Dimitrii Bogdashevskii (1861-1933). Discussion includes his life and activities, fundamental philosophical ideas and hermeneutical analysis of Bogdashevskii's contributions to NT studies, covering the theological axiomatic assumptions, methodological presuppositions, NT ethics and hermeneutical strategy.

Chapter six provides a fine summary of the hermeneutical perspectives of the Russian Orthodox church. The hermeneutical principles include the reverence for patristic exegesis, the close and unbroken relationship between Scripture, church and dogma (reminiscent of pre-Enlightenment Western Protestant positions), the significance of church tradition for interpretation, the nature of revelation, inspiration and authority of the Bible, the christological basis for biblical interpretation, the process of actualising the value of Scripture, the scope of historical-grammatical interpretation and the ethics of interpretation.

A summary and conclusion rounds off the well-produced volume. There is a detailed bibliography as well as indices of references, names and subjects. According to Negrov, the main features of Russian Orthodox hermeneutics are that the church and tradition are indispensable guides to the understanding of Scripture. Christ is considered as the beginning, centre and end of biblical interpretation and exegesis is based upon cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the human interpreter. The church demands reading the Scriptures guided by church doctrine as well as a multi-disciplinary approach to biblical texts.

These features resemble the position and practice of the Roman Catholic church before its opening to critical scholarship since the middle of the 20th century. While there is much here that warms an evangelical heart (e.g. the clear christological focus of interpretation and the emphasis of the Holy Spirit in interpretation) and challenges evangelicals, they will have reservations over against the significance of church tradition, at least in theory, and in relation to certain other questions. Negrov is to be thanked for this comprehensive treatment which helps to understand the Orthodox church better. His particular merits are the use and presentation of many sources only available in Russian and the comprehensive scope of the volume. The attempt to describe Orthodox hermeneutics from within leads primarily to a sympathetic presentation rather than a critical analysis. At times one misses more critical distance and assessment. Would it take a non-Russian to do so?

Unfortunately the historical survey stops with 1917. Negrov's examination of Bogdashevskii's engagement with the social-critical hermeneutics of Marxism, though perhaps not representative, suggests that later developments would also be of interest. On the subject, see also I. Z. Dimitrov, J. D. Dunn, U. Luz *et al.* (eds.), *Das Alte Testament als christliche Bibel in orthodoxer und westlicher Sicht*, WUNT 174 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

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Introduction to the Prophets

Paul L. Redditt

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Redditt bietet eine fundierte Einleitung zu den großen und kleinen Propheten des Alten Testaments für interessierte Laien, Studierende der Theologie und Pastoren. Das Buch ist so aufgebaut, dass der Leser ohne entscheidendes Vorwissen Inhalt und Bedeutung der Bücher präsentiert bekommt. Redditt führt in die (wissenschaftlichen) Problemfelder der jeweiligen Propheten-Bücher ein, ohne sich in Detaildiskussionen zu verlieren. Sein kommunikativer Stil erleichtert dabei das Lesen. Seine ausgewogene Darstellung ist wohlthuend und ermutigt gleichzeitig für das weitere Studium der Propheten.

RÉSUMÉ

Voici une introduction à la littérature prophétique de l'Ancien Testament qui s'adresse aussi bien au grand public qu'aux étudiants en théologie et aux pasteurs. L'ouvrage est rédigé de manière à fournir au lecteur une information sur le contenu et le sens des livres des prophètes, sans requérir de sa part une connaissance préalable. L'auteur présente pour chaque livre les points critiques de la recherche sans s'embarrasser de discussions détaillées. Son style communicatif favorise la lecture. Sa présentation équilibrée est utile et encourage à aller plus avant dans l'étude des prophètes.

SUMMARY

Redditt presents an essential introduction to the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament for interested lay people, students of theology and pastors. The book is arranged in such a way that the reader is informed about content and meaning of these books without the requirement of prior knowledge. The author introduces the contested areas (of research) of each individual prophetic book without getting side-tracked by detailed discussions. His communicative style facilitates reading. Redditt's well-balanced presentation is beneficial and encourages further studies of the prophets.

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Dieses Werk wird von einem ausgewiesenen Kenner der alttestamentlichen Propheten geschrieben, der sich vorgenommen hat, seine Ausführungen verständlich für eine breite Leserschaft zu präsentieren. Er richtet sich gezielt an Theologiestudenten und interessierte Laien und will wissenschaftliche Fachsprache vermeiden. Er möchte die wichtigsten Informationen der AT-Wissenschaft zu den Propheten so bündeln und darreichen, dass sie jeder ernsthafte Bibelleser verstehen kann und so entsprechend ausgerüstet ist, seine eigenen Schlussfolgerungen zu ziehen. (Preface, x) Sein Ansatz ist moderat-kritisch. Er stellt sich zu Beginn als „believing Christian“ vor. Um Missverständnisse vorzubeugen, erläutert er