

From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha. By Andrei Orlov. (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 114). Leiden and Boston, Brill 2007. Pp. xiv, 483. Cloth with dust jacket. €159.00 / US\$207.00. ISBN 978-90-04-15439-1.

In this book, Orlov seeks to make a “preliminary step in the larger task of appropriating the Slavonic pseudepigraphic evidence for understanding the origins of early Jewish mysticism” (105-106). Orlov rightly notes that the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha (which includes *2 Enoch*, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, and *The Ladder of Jacob*) have never been given a systematic study focusing on their origins in Jewish Mysticism the way his volume seeks to do. He also correctly notes this is likely due to the challenges that the Slavonic language poses for most scholars. His impressive book clearly addresses this gap in the secondary literature. Moreover, it surpasses its stated goal, going much further than just an initial step.

A number of the chapters have been published elsewhere, but one should not suppose this book is a mere collection and re-publication of articles. This volume contains seventeen chapters that show the breath of Orlov’s work on the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha. It also contains an impressive (96 pages) bibliography of the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha. New pieces are included in this book such as a helpful introduction to the works themselves that seeks to lay out the purpose of the book as a whole, as well as the connectedness of its individual chapters.

Given the space constraints of this book review and the size of this book itself (483 pages), it is not possible to examine it in any detail here. Thus, a few comments that cover the volume broadly must suffice to give a sense of what is contained therein. Orlov believes that the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha may “represent an important transitional stage in early Jewish mystical testimonies, serving as a bridge from the matrix of early Jewish apocalypticism, as it was manifested in early Enochic literature, to the matrix of early Jewish mysticism as it became manifest in rabbinic Merkabah and Hekhalot materials” (105). One of the clearest ways in which Orlov sees this transition manifesting itself in the literature is through the debates and polemical appropriations of features of the exalted patriarchs and prophets. So, Orlov, who used typological interpretation to great effect in his first book, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Mohr Siebeck, 2005), organized his new book into sections based on typologies of famous Hebrew Bible personages: Enoch (7 chapters), Adam (3 chapters), Moses (3 chapters), Noah (2 chapters), and Jacob and Melchizedek (1 chapter each). Having Orlov’s individual pieces about the same patriarch side-by-side allows the reader to see his development of thought, as well to compare and contrast insights and ideas about the patriarchs. This is a real strength of the volume.

I would raise only one minor point with regard to the overall presentation. Though space was certainly a consideration, the volume might nevertheless have been served by a conclusion section that sought to weave together the vast and

insightful materials contained therein, but as Orlov himself makes clear this volume is only a first step. We can look forward to his continuing analysis in future articles and books.

In addition to the copious Slavonic bibliography noted above, there is a bibliography of a further 23 pages that supports the individual chapters. These bibliographies alone are a great service for any scholar seeking to study the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha, for they bring together in one place an immense amount of references and many of these are in Russian and other works generally not known or regularly engaged by Western scholarship. The rest of the book, though, with its erudition and insights, is where its real value lies. The book is nicely rounded out with useful source and modern author indices.

A wide range of scholars will find this book valuable. Not only those working in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha, but also those working in the Enoch literature and the pseudepigraphic literature more generally will find much with which to engage in this volume. This amazing collection demonstrates the major contribution that Orlov has made in the past decade to our understanding of the origins of Jewish and Christian mysticism. Orlov is fast becoming one of the foremost scholars of the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha as well as the Enoch literature of this generation.

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