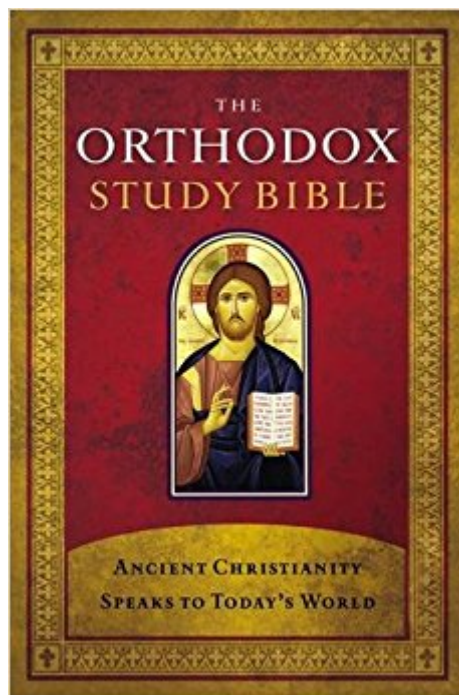




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The Orthodox Study Bible, Hardcover: Ancient Christianity Speaks To Today's World



Synopsis

The FIRST EVER Orthodox Study Bible presents the Bible of the early church and the church of the early Bible. Orthodox Christianity is the face of ancient Christianity to the modern world and embraces the second largest body of Christians in the world. In this first-of-its-kind study Bible, the Bible is presented with commentary from the ancient Christian perspective that speaks to those Christians who seek a deeper experience of the roots of their faith. Features Include: Old Testament newly translated from the Greek text of the Septuagint, including the Deuterocanon New Testament from the New King James Version Commentary drawn from the early Church Christians Easy-to-Locate liturgical readings Book Introductions and Outlines Subject Index Full-color Icons Full-color Maps

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Customer Reviews

This is the only resource Bible written with study aids and articles written from an Orthodox Christian perspective- the New Testament and Psalms are interpreted from the doctrinal foundation of the Orthodox Church. For the guidance of respected scholars of the Orthodox faith working within a tradition of biblical interpretation which goes back to the apostles themselves.

For purposes of full disclosure allow me to say, first of all, that I'm a practicing Catholic Christian of the Latin Rite who hopes to grant a unique perspective regarding the offerings of this particular Bible. I've been in possession of the leather-bound edition since I received it two months after my original pre-order. It's taken me a couple years, but I've really come to love it. As I mentioned in the

title of this review, the Orthodox Study Bible has recently dethroned my trusty, old-RSV, New Oxford Annotated Bible as my study Bible of choice. I had little notion this would happen. I do have an extensive collection of Bibles in various translations that I use for comparative study; but probably like yourself, I also have a preferred Bible to go to by default for prayerful reading. Over the last two years, I just found myself picking up the OSB more and more and the NOAB less and less. Allow me to articulate exactly why:

The case for the Septuagint Old Testament: The unique and most compelling reason to acquire the OSB: it is the only complete Bible in English to be published with the Greek OT right next to the NT. If you have one of those reference Bibles, I'm sure you've noticed that many of the OT quotes used in the NT mismatch when you actually look them up, sometimes to a great degree--this is because Jesus and the disciples apparently quoted from the Septuagint Greek, as opposed to other Hebrew sources, a vast majority of the time. This is so, because Greek was the common language of antiquity in the region and the Septuagint translation (which includes the apocryphal/deuterocanonical "hidden books" of the "second canon") was completed more than a century before Christ's birth. By the time of Jesus' ministry, it was in widespread use by Jews throughout the Diaspora, particularly outside of Palestine and, especially, Jerusalem by those who couldn't speak or read Hebrew. Bear in mind: the Hebrew OT, from which 99% of modern English Bibles are translated, relies on Masoretic Hebrew (Hebrew with fixed vowels) whose manuscripts didn't exist until the high middle ages, approximately the 9th century AD--almost a thousand years after Christ! By then, the methodology behind Jewish biblical scholarship had evolved immensely and the original meaning of certain passages were irrevocably changed. Isaiah 7:14 is the classic casualty of this: Masoretic Hebrew renders "young woman" while Septuagint Greek renders "virgin"--a pretty significant paradigm shift. Ever wonder why the OT books of the Christian Bible are in their current order as opposed to the way the Hebrew Bible orders them? That's right, the Septuagint lists them in order of Law, Histories, Writings, and Prophecy; the NT books are similarly ordered by Gospel, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. In the end, the Masoretic/Septuagint wars will rage on; but the latter is still the most ancient and reliable source of the OT, it's quoted extensively by the ancient Church Fathers, and it was the de facto source of scripture for Jesus and His Disciples. If you don't already have a Septuagint, it's well worth picking one up, and the OSB version is preferable to the aging Brenton translation and even to the flawed-NRSV-based NETS (if you're a conservative practitioner of your faith, it's really hard to take the NRSV seriously with its literal-but-intentionally-unorthodox renderings of scripture as well as its politically-motivated gender-sterilized language).

The case for the NKJV New Testament: Other reviewers have mentioned a distaste for the New King James Version and, as someone who also

affirms most of the critical methods of modern NT scholarship, I can certainly empathize. Though the NKJV relies on the Textus Receptus (a Reformation Era-variant of Byzantine text-type manuscripts, compiled by Erasmus) and maintains such renderings in the body of scripture, its footnotes are the most comprehensive of any translation. In fact, all variations from the Majority Text as well as the Nestle-Aland/UBS editions (the "Critical Text" based on Alexandrian text-type manuscripts) are comprehensively documented. The overriding benefit to the selection of the TR is that the NKJV retains the same eloquent, familiar phraseology and literary grace that caused its predecessor to leave such an indelible mark on English language and literature ever after. And because it adheres to the principle of formal equivalence in translation, the NKJV maintains a vocabulary and style in accordance with high English--this is not a "dumbed-down" translation like many other popular ones out there. The result is that the Bible reads less like a contemporary novel or a daily newspaper, and more like dignified prose--which is befitting of sacred scripture. The case for the commentary: If you're strictly an academic, you may find this to have a limited appeal; but if you consider yourself a member of the faithful laity, you'll get quite a lot out of this. Even if you're a Christian of Reformation descent, you'll appreciate the uniqueness in character of the OSB notes because it's the only modern commentary available that doesn't depend on the historical-critical method to elaborate on passages. Instead, it's comprehensively Christological, even in the OT where it succeeds in pointing out both significant and obscure messianic prophecies. The result is an OT commentary that approaches scripture holistically, with the same Christ-centered worldview that is readily present in the NT. If you're an Orthodox Christian, you'll love it more than not, even though the brevity characteristic of its notes contrasts with the immense depth and breadth typical of Church Fathers. In my humble opinion, the commentary's simplicity is its strength for ordinary study or prayerful reading. As someone who occasionally refers to the Haydock edition of the Douay-Rheims Bible to shed light on certain difficult scripture passages, I find the OSB's concise, pointed commentary to be a refreshing change, in contrast to Haydock's excessive wordiness for normal use. Sure, for more in-depth study you'll want a deeper commentary, but the vast majority of the time, and for the vast majority of people, the OSB's solidly patristic explanations are a sight for sore eyes. If you're an Eastern Catholic, this will fit you like a glove since all scripture references cited during Byzantine Divine Liturgy are clearly referenced and the appendix even includes a lectionary for the entire liturgical year. If you're a Roman Rite Catholic, like me, trust me: there's no better modern, complete Bible out there that's made to bolster your faith like this one. To wit: the single-volume Navarre Bible is hopefully in the works and, as of this writing, the NT of the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible is available for pre-order with the OT probably years away. The potential

benefits to such future volumes would be references to papal encyclicals, pertinent teachings from the Catechism, and explanations by intellectual giants like Dr. Scott Hahn, Curtis Mitch, or other faithful scripture scholars. The OSB commentary, along with the introductions to each book, purposely limits its scope to the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils of the first millennium. While this may sound like a detractor at first, it has one substantial benefit: these are the teachings that predate any Reformation, or subsequently needed Counter-Reformation, as well as the Great East-West Schism. Essentially, these are the teachings of Christ's Church when that Church was One: singular and united.

Formatting notes: The full biblical text is set in a two-column format and is graced with section headers within the chapters themselves for easier searching. The font is a nicely-readable 11-point for the text and about 8-point for the footnotes and commentary. Overall, the page layout is among the most practical and beautiful I've seen in any Bible. One major upshot to the OSB is the page thinness. In order to pack the wealth of information contained in this veritable library into a single volume, the pages evidently had to become nearly tissue-paper thin. Despite this, text ghosting from the other side is surprisingly minimal--I just worry about dropping this one day and forever creasing a couple hundred pages for its potential lack of resilience. Also, the tome measures about 7x10x2, so it's a bit larger than your average personal Bible. The bonded leather is elegant and sturdy but suffers some minor-but-still-irritating curl after use. The pages are gold-edged and the Bible has that humble and reverent look and feel that they surely ought to have for the sacred scripture they contain. Finally, the full-color, high quality, icons interspersed throughout are a blessing and further aid the sense of actually being "in church" as you read.

Other observations of note: The OSB does suffer one logistical drawback shared, for example, by the Douay-Rheims (the traditional Catholic Bible translated from the Clementine Vulgate): the verse numberings occasionally deviate from the standard (which has been set by an OT in Hebrew and a NT in Greek). In the case of the Douay, this is a result of translating from the Latin text. With regard to the OSB, similar verse discrepancies occur only in the Greek-based OT. Outside the Septuagint Psalter, I've found such a phenomenon to be a rare occurrence, at least. The stock NKJV NT obviously follows standard versification. As someone who, admittedly, is accustomed to Masoretic Hebrew renderings in the OT from my NOAB, adjusting to Septuagint ones is an occasionally surprising endeavor, but always a fruitful one. Since the NKJV OT was the base translation for this particular version of the Septuagint, many beloved passages you're used to are nearly identical; Psalm 23 is a good example that remains virtually unchanged. Others, like Proverbs 3:5 are completely different; showing, instead, a much closer relationship to the deuterocanonical book of Wisdom, chapter 8. Such "Easter eggs" are prevalent throughout the text and make having the

Septuagint well worth it, even just for comparative study. For all that you're getting, the OSB's price point is just right for both bonded leather and hard-bound. Also, the publisher has more or less recently come out with a red, genuine leather edition that is significantly pricier, but which sports a beautiful and ornate gold cover design. In the end, the Orthodox Study Bible is a God-send (quite literally in many senses). If you're less interested in getting to know the "historical Jesus" as portrayed by scholars in most study Bibles, and more interested in meeting with Our Lord and Savior as understood by saints, "Highly recommended" would be an understatement. *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam!*

I'm sorry, I wish I could give this Kindle edition of the Orthodox Study Bible a better review. I own the print version, which has extensive articles and notes that bring out the Orthodox perspective of the Bible in terms of liturgics, sacraments, the Incarnation, Baptism and Chrismation. The notes in the print version emphasize these doctrines of the Orthodox faith in both the Old and New Testaments. I bought the Kindle Version because the print version was too heavy to carry through airports from terminal to terminal (I lugged it for what seemed like miles in a "book bag"). I reasoned that the Kindle was lighter, and I could have the whole OSB as an eBook, so I forked out \$15.00 and downloaded it, only to find that the notes are absent, and what this version calls "notes" are just references of one passage to another, much as you will find in any version of the Bible. This greatly diminishes what I have in the print version -- I might as well have bought a NKJ. Don't get this Kindle version if you are expecting to get what you find in the print version of the Orthodox Study Bible.

This is now my favorite "go to" Bible, for all the reasons stated in the very learned reviews below. There IS no other Bible that uses the Septuagint for its OT text, and the NKJV for its NT text...this version is *sui generis*. The reason the Septuagint is important is, it's about 1000 years OLDER than the Masoretic text commonly used, even in today's so called 'critical' texts. Older doesn't 'always' mean better, but it's worth considering carefully, since the Septuagint was translated from the Hebrew scriptures of the day (something they are now calling "Proto Masoretic"). This was what Jesus and the Apostles were quoting from. The Orthodox commentary is very helpful; I am making a lot of connections I've never made before. Now if they could just come up with a leather UltraSlim version.... Note: This Bible is NOT exhaustively chain referenced or concordanced like other study bibles. That's not its forte. But if you want to start reading the scriptures thru Orthodox eyes, I promise it will be very enlightening! I love this Bible like no other I've ever had.

As a Christian of the Roman Catholic tradition, I also love this translation. It seems to really read side by side with the NRSV-CE, in my humble opinion. I am not a Biblical Scholar. I love the language and the words, and this Bible brings out the poetic language that I yearn for in *lectio divina*. One thing that I had to adjust to was the way the Canon is laid out. There are some differences in the order of the Canon that took a while to get used to but the effort is worth it. I know we have a lot to do, but one day I hope and pray the Eastern and Western choices reach communion.

This version of the Gospel pulls in commentary from multiple early and contemporary church fathers, bringing their collective wisdom to the interpretation of Scripture. An invaluable resource for any Orthodox Christian, this would also be useful for anyone interested in understanding the perspective of the ancient Christian church. The greatest weakness of this book is the absence of more extensive commentary on the Psalms, and the inability to juxtapose the commentary with the text without flipping the screen back-and-forth which can inadvertently make page turning difficult. The translation of the Psalms is also not one that is used commonly in Orthodox worship. It would have been helpful if a version could have been agreed upon that would have been academically acceptable and yet not awkward and unsingable as is this one. If you need a copy of the Orthodox Study Bible on the run, the Kindle version is nice to have.

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