

The concern of the book however is not with which of the two ideologies is true, but with how the two occasion a dialogical movement in Dostoevsky's art.

The hard question of injustice in the modern world is trumped by a theology of forgiveness, and thus left unanswered in rational terms.

The treatment of the two views of Christ exemplifies, however, the movement. Ivan's Christ draws on Renan's account, which exalts Jesus as the benefactor of humanity and the model of human perfection. This Jesus of liberal humanism falls in the hands of Ivan to the blows of nihilism. The other by Dostoevsky draws also on the Gospels and Russian religious tradition. His view, Jesus as holy fool, accommodates the images of the apocalyptic prophet and preacher, giving expression to the tension between worldly wisdom and spiritual foolishness that is understood as an exercise in self-humiliation. But what is to be made of the silent Christ confronting and breaking the silence of the Grand Inquisitor?

The book contends that the confrontation of silence is a play within a play re-enacting the Christian vision of spirituality causality. In this case it draws on Kierkegaard in its interpretation of the Inquisitor's silence as defiant self-disclosure of demonic despair. Ivan's refusal to believe how the suffering of innocent children can be forgiven is one form of Kierkegaardian offense. A second form is refusal to believe in the lowliness of Christ, the God-man. Now, this is quite insightful—to find within the Inquisitor's monologue a subtext instancing Kierkegaard's indirect communication and two forms of offence. But does the Inquisitor really experience the second form of Kierkegaard's offence? That is, for Kierkegaard the second form occurs when one enters into a free reciprocity of love that comes with accepting the offer of forgiveness of sins. This love, with its restorative power to build community, is crucial to the book's discussion on political ethics, especially chapter 6, which considers also Arndt's interpretation of Dostoevsky in her *On Revolution*. But is forgiving love, the work of "divine drawing," enough to reverse the present life-threatening experiences of global violence, victimization, retributive justice, greed and corruption?

Altogether, an insightful book of seven chapters framed according to the memory of a Christian ethical vision. Its perceptive treatment of political ethics, with reference to Christ as slain Lamb and hence the crux of the theology of this book, adds little to understanding and meeting the current challenges of the modernity—economic injustice, political torture, victims of political corruption. The real strength of this work is in its celebration of what might be considered a theology of glory, of Dostoevsky as prophetic voice of modernity, and thus it is well worth reading from that perspective.

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Rashbam's Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers: An Annotated Translation

Martin I. Lockshin, editor and translator

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This volume is the third in a major project that has occupied the author for more than a decade. The initial volume in the series appeared in 1989, and since then

Lockshin (York University) has established a position as arguably the leading North American authority on Rashbam's commentaries. The present work incorporates Rashbam's relatively short interpretations of the books of Leviticus and Numbers. These two biblical books provide fine examples to showcase Rashbam's distinctive approaches to both narrative and legal passages.

This volume does not include an index; a cumulative one for all four projected volumes is presumably planned for the completed series, as is a summary assessment of Rashbam's contributions as an interpreter. In the meantime, the editor has provided the reader with some of the advantages of an index in his Introduction, by assembling references to several of the recurring phenomena related to broader evaluation of the commentary's distinctive features. The editor has not attempted to produce a new edition of the Hebrew text, but has relied on D. Rosin's 1882 version.

Viewed within the broader context of medieval Jewish exegesis, Rashbam (Rabbi Samuel ben Meir) inspires special interest as the foremost representative of a school of non-traditional philological exegesis that arose in France, largely owing to his own influence. The success of his enterprise marked a surprising departure from the typical cultural patterns of northern European Jewry, which were relatively untouched by the philosophical rationalism and scientific philology that had led to parallel developments in the biblical scholarship of Arabic-speaking lands. Not only does Rashbam's methodological rigour set him apart from his grandfather, the great Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac) renowned for his eclectic wavering between critical contextual judgment and midrashic homiletics, but his cryptically terse writing style in his biblical commentaries contrasts sharply with his own commentary to the Talmud Tractate Baba Batra, which is distinguished by its longwinded determination to examine every imaginable interpretative possibility.

It is Rashbam's extreme brevity that constitutes the great challenge to the editor and translator. Many of his comments are so puzzling that it requires a major effort of imaginative reconstruction to figure out his point, and this only hesitantly. The original Hebrew of the commentary is characterized by an awkwardness that is minimized by the thoughtful elegance of Lockshin's English. The deceptiveness of that elegance is revealed in the detailed scholarly notes that occupy the bulk of the book.

In order to uncover what is important or novel in Rashbam's comments, Lockshin compares them with the full range of exegetical alternatives, extending from talmudic, midrashic and targumic literature; medieval authorities such as Dunash ben Labrat, Menahem ben Saruq, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Nahmanides, Qimhi and Hizquni; neglected modern writers like N. H. Wessely and Y. L. Shapira; through to recent critical scholarship and historical studies. As is to be expected, the closest attention is given to Rashi, whose commentary obviously was intimately familiar to Rashbam and his readers as the standard against which any alternative interpretation must be measured. Indeed, in many instances, Lockshin is able to point out how peculiarities in Rashbam's wording make sense once we have understood them as allusions to Rashi's comments with which he has taken issue. The general question of the grandson's attitude toward his illustrious grandfather is an intriguing one: On the one hand, the delicacy with which he usually shies away from overt contradiction suggests a dutiful reverence; on the other hand, the frequency with which he makes Rashi the focus of his disapproval, diplomatic though it may be, argues for a more fundamental dissatisfaction with his predecessor's exegetical method. This ambivalence is skilfully evoked in the editor's remarks in several places in the book.

The erudition that Lockshin must bring to bear in his quest to elucidate Rashbam's meaning constitutes a serious methodological question of its own. How successful can we consider a commentary whose significance cannot be deciphered without such exhaustive comparative exegesis and literary speculation?

There is scarcely a page in this volume that does not delight the reader with Rashbam's intriguing insights into the meanings of the verses and with Lockshin's erudite excursion through the breadth and depth of exegetical history. To cite some random examples: The discussion (107-9) about the prohibitions against hybridization and mixed fabrics (in connection with Lev. 19:19) has Rashbam proposing rational explanations for precepts that the Talmud (and in its wake, most traditional commentators) had relegated to the status of unfathomable "*huqqim*." In his notes to the passage, Lockshin does not limit himself to explaining Rashbam's position or even to comparing him with other medieval exegetes and as the precursor of an explanation later suggested by M. Noth; he also elucidates, with appropriate references to scholarly literature, the broader cultural context for Rashbam's commitment to seeking rational justifications for the Torah's laws, as a response to charges of narrow literalism that were current in the writings of 12th-century Christian polemicists like Gilbert Crispin.

To cite another instance, Rashbam explains the blossoming of Aaron's staff in Numbers 17:23 as having taken place in two stages, so that the chief miracle occurred in the sight of the entire congregation. Lockshin guides us through the difficulties in establishing the text of Rashbam's commentary, taking sides in a prior dispute over how best to emend the problematic passage. He subtly indicates how Rashbam's interpretation was influenced by the traditional punctuation (the placement of the *'etnahta*) as well as by the requirements of the narrative. He goes on to compare Rashbam's understanding with those of Moses Mendelssohn and S. D. Luzatto.

In sum, this is an important volume that is to be savoured for its fascinating details, as an important contribution to the understanding of the Bible and as an absorbing excursion through the byways of medieval culture and religion.

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Le péché et le mal

Ramon Martinez de Pison Liébanas

« Brèches théologiques »

Montréal/Paris, collection Médiapaul, 2000. 184 p.

Le péché et le mal de Ramon Martinez de Pison Liébanas constitue le trente-deuxième volume de la collection « Brèches théologiques » des éditions Médiapaul. « Ouverte à toutes les questions de l'heure débattues en Église, cette collection veut assumer un rôle de leadership dans le développement de la pensée théologique contemporaine » <www.mediapaul.qc.ca>. Dans cette perspective et à l'occasion du jubilé de l'an 2000, qui rappelle aux chrétiens « la primauté de l'amour de Dieu révélé en plénitude en Jésus-Christ » (8), l'auteur, membre des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée et professeur de théologie à l'Université catholique Saint-Paul d'Ottawa, propose une courte mais rassurante réflexion traitant des rapports com-