

*Isaac on Jewish and Christian Altars: Polemic and Exegesis in Rashi and the Glossa Ordinaria*, by Devorah Schoenfeld. Fordham University Press, 2012. 240pp. Hb., \$55.00. ISBN-13: 9780823243495.

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biblical exegesis, medieval, *Glossa ordinaria*, Rashi, sacrifice of Isaac, *akedah*, Genesis 22

This remarkable book is the fifth in the Fordham Series in Medieval Studies edited by Mary C. Erler and Richard F. Gyug. The author's aims are multi-fold, but focused tightly on two of the signal sources of medieval exegesis of the Bible: the *Glossa ordinaria* was foundational for Christian exegesis from its late eleventh-century beginnings, through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the cathedral schools, unrivaled in authority until after the fourteenth-century *Postilla super totam bibliam* of Nicholas of Lyra; the commentary of Rashi on Torah was foundational for Jewish exegesis in Europe until well into the Enlightenment and beyond. Schoenfeld addresses a touchstone passage for both traditions, namely the *akedah*, or near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, provides a critical edition of the pertinent exegesis for both Rashi and the Gloss, annotated with a critical discussion of manuscript and textual variants in each case. These are given in substantial appendices to her book, and are reason enough in themselves for scholars to welcome her work. Her bibliography of primary and secondary sources is thorough.

Scholars of late medieval exegesis will find her reliable on the *Glossa ordinaria* and illuminating on Rashi. Her design in comparing them is not to suggest a mutuality of influence (though Rashi was an influence on later Christian exegetes, particularly among the Victorines and Lyra, he was not influenced by Christian exegesis to any significant degree, as he did not read Latin). Her demonstration is rather that Rashi and the Gloss developed in the same era a way of reading the text contextually as part of a unified canon, despite there being no contact between them. Each work drew extensively on previous commentary from its own religious tradition, but synthesized the sources in such a way as to project a view of the Bible as, essentially, a self-interpreting text. At the same time consciousness of the presence of each other's tradition more generally and the major lineaments of difference led each of them to build in an element of polemic against each other's religious views of a common text. This polemical element, as she shows, is more explicit in the Gloss than in Rashi, but evident in both cases when pivotal texts are considered. Her choice of Genesis 22 as a *locus* for her thesis is ideal.

The book opens with a chapter on medieval anti-Semitic polemic and Jewish attempts to resist both the polemic and its tendency to provoke more than academic prejudice and persecution. The second chapter, closely considers Rashi's sources and his use of them so as to downplay rabbinic multiplicity and dialogical pluralism; Rashi is shown citing the Targum of Onqelos explicitly whilst drawing on other more dissonant sources (especially *Bereshit Rabbah*) anonymously so as to give an impression of more unity. Her demonstration here is brilliantly achieved. In her third chapter, on the Gloss, she builds on the work of Beryl Smalley and her students but makes some important corrections to that work. In comparing the two approaches (Rashi and the Gloss) hermeneutically, Schoenfeld illuminates the theodicy inherent in each approach to the *akedah*; for Rashi the analogue to the "test" sacrifice of Abraham is found in the book of Job, not, as in Christian typology, in the Cross of Christ.

The final chapter is, in effect, a rescension of her demonstration, with a special focus on the divergent theological emphases which result. While both view the vindication of Abraham's faith as a "witness to the nations," Rashi gives attention to the obedience of Isaac also, and sees the event as foreshadowing the Temple sacrifice.

This is an excellent work of detailed, historically informed and philologically competent scholarship. The lucid prose and clarity of exposition, plus the model edition of both commentaries, makes Schoenfeld's book a desirable addition to scholarly libraries and a worthy example for graduate students.

Finally, it has come to the reviewer's attention of another recent publication which considers several of the same issues in Schoenfeld's book. Those interested may find it worthwhile to check the following:

Agnès A. Nagy, Francesca Prescendi, ed. *Sacrifices humains: dossiers, discours, comparaisons*. Actes du colloque tenu à l'Université de Genève, 19-20 mai 2011. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études - Sciences religieuses, 160. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.