

of these authors, it offers a vibrant evaluation of these presentations: the unfolding of the topography of Jerusalem combined with rich close readings of the text make these writings and spaces quite literally approachable for the reader. It is a really dynamic contribution to the field.

Meg Boulton
University of Edinburgh
doi:10.1017/S000964072000147X

***Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages: From Muhammad to Dante.* By Michael Frassetto. Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2020. xxiii + 287 pp. \$95.00 hardcover; \$90.00 e-book.**

Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle Ages is a topic of immense importance and relevance to the world today: misconceptions regarding the character of interaction between the two faiths have distorted public debate, are used to justify misconceived policy, and are held up as proof of either the purported “clash of civilizations” or the equally dubious notion of a premodern age of innocent tolerance. Michael Frassetto’s *Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages: From Muhammad to Dante* promises “to complement and supplement [previous works] by undertaking a new examination of the long and complex history of Muslim-Christian relations in the Middle Ages, and perhaps examining the relationship in new ways and addressing old questions from new perspectives” (xviii). Unfortunately, it not only fails on these various fronts but stands as an example of uneven and superficial scholarship.

The book begins with a first chapter, “Enemies, Brothers, and Scholars: Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages,” which reviews the twentieth-century English-language historiography surrounding European views of Islam, and to a lesser extent, of Muslim-Christian relations, noting a handful of well-known “greatest hits,” such as the work of Donner, Said, Menocal, Nirenberg, Kedar, “Wolff” [*sic*; xvi] and Tolan, while missing some important recent additions, including the reviewer’s considerable work on the subject, not to mention virtually the entire corpus of crucial non-English historiography (for example, see Brian A. Catlos, *Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, ca. 1050–ca. 1614* [Cambridge University Press, 2014]; and Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain* [Basic Books, 2018]. Together these two books cover much of the ground examined in this study). Chapter 2, “Initial Christian Response to Islam,” amounts to an uncritical canned history of early Islam, again based on English-language studies and a handful of sources in translation, which sets the tone and level for the succeeding chapters. Next, “Convivência: Christians and Muslims in Early Medieval Spain” rehashes the tired conventional narrative of the Islamic invasion and settlement in the Iberian Peninsula. “Convivência” [*sic*; *passim*], it should be noted, is Portuguese and is not generally translated as “coexistence” (63), nor is it used by scholars not writing in Portuguese to describe interfaith relations. The term of art is, of course, the Castilian *convivencia*, which means “[harmonious] living together.” Chapter 4, “Islam and the Early Medieval West,” continues to focus on medieval Spain, with lengthy sections on the Battle of Tours and *The Song of Roland*. The fifth chapter, “New Beginnings, New

Attitudes,” centers on such characters as “al-Hakim the Mad” (which readers may be led to assume is a translation of “al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah” [123]), and his destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, or the anecdote of the abduction of Abbot Maiolus of Cluny by Muslim raiders a half-century earlier (raiders, it should be noted, who were Andalusis from Provence, not from “North Africa,” [ix]). Chapter 6, “Spain and the *Reconquista*,” flies in the face of decades of scholarship by historians in Spain (and elsewhere) to baldly declare, “the *Reconquista* can be understood as a holy war against Islam and the Muslims,” the origins of which “are sometimes traced to the victory of the Spanish hero Pelayo” at some place called “Covadongo” [sic]. Among the howlers one encounters here, we find that under “Ibn Tashin” [sic] and the Almoravids, “Christian symbols were desecrated, the cross openly mocked and churches were destroyed” (195), while under the Almohads, described as “another revivalist religious movement” (195), we learn that “Christians were forced to go into exile, to convert, or die” (196). The next chapter, “Crusade and Counter-Crusade,” skips through a series of well-known episodes and sources, from the Pisans’ 1087 raid on the Zirid port of Mahdia, through Urban II’s Council of Clermont, and on to the memoirs of Usama ibn Munqidh, and the encounters of Richard the Lionhearted and “Saphadin.” The eighth chapter, “Islam and the *Renaissance* of the Twelfth Century,” begins with another lengthy and obsolete section on the *Chanson de Roland* as an exemplar of Latin attitudes toward Muslims, before reviewing polemical works such as those undertaken by Peter the Venerable and his ilk, before noting the impact on Christian culture of “the Toledan Collection of Islamic texts” [sic; 223]. The study wraps up with a short conclusion, “Looking Backward and Forward,” which offers a summary of the book, together with predictable blandishments about how “understanding the history of a relationship that was marked by great animosity and great mutual benefit can offer important insights into our contemporary world” (265). There are no maps, figures, or illustrations, and the book ends with a short bibliography (or “Bibliogrphaphy,” as it is titled in the page headers).

This reviewer takes no joy or satisfaction in writing such an unremittingly critical review, but we have a duty as scholars, as we teach and write, to produce coherent, responsible, informed scholarship that reflects an understanding of the topics we work on and a respect for our discipline and our subjects (particularly when we presume to write about people’s religious cultures). As reviewers we have a duty to serve as the guarantors of our vocation and as guardians for the students and readers we serve. Nevertheless, it saddens me to conclude that the only two questions this book raises are “Why was it written?” and “Why was it published?” This study is stunningly uninformed, and rarely rises above the level of a good undergraduate essay or a decent Wikipedia article. The lack of disregard for the important and revisionary scholarship that has been published recently, particularly in languages other than English, is inexcusable and an affront to those scholars who have carried it out. The book is superficial, facile, and essentializing—rife with errors of both fact and of interpretation. The author appears to be wholly out of his depth when it comes to Islamic history and culture (and scarcely better as regards Latin Christendom), displays little familiarity with the primary and secondary literature or the debates and currents of interpretation which characterize this field, and demonstrates little critical capacity when it comes to assessing either primary or secondary sources. One also wonders how a publisher—this one owned by a respectable trade press (Rowan & Littlefield)—could have allowed such deficient scholarship to be published, and then do so in such sloppy form. Presumably, the motive has something to do with the cover price of \$95.00, which together with the lack of care put

into production, suggests a mercenary and cavalier contempt for both our profession and their readers. The book is littered with typos, misspellings, missing spaces, and strange constructions: italics are deployed or not deployed seemingly at random, and foreign names and terms are not consistently transliterated. In sum, *Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages: From Muhammad to Dante*, will be of no interest to specialists, and should not be used by scholars who are unfamiliar with the field. It should not be assigned to graduate or undergraduate courses, not only because of the exorbitant price but for all of the reasons enumerated above. Nor can I think of any reason why any library should acquire it, given that whatever literary merits it may possess do not compensate for its deep and numerous deficiencies. This is the reason why it is crucial for publishers to adhere to a rigorous process of review. By evidently not doing so in this case, the publisher has deprived the author of what could have been an opportunity to gain valuable feedback prior to publication, which could have resulted in a study that would have better served both the author and his readers.

Brian A. Catlos
University of Colorado Boulder
doi:10.1017/S0009640720001481

***Damnation and Salvation in Old Norse Literature.* By Haki Antonsson. Studies in Old Norse Literature 3. Rochester, N.Y.: D. S. Brewer, 2018. xiv + 259 pp. \$99.00 hardcover.**

In *Heimskringla*, Snorri Sturluson tells about the gruesome end of the Norwegian King Haraldr Gille Magnússon, who was murdered in 1136 by the pretender and his half brother, Sigurðr *Slembidekan* Magnússon. Haraldr's tumultuous reign had included the blinding of his nephew, and his life ended as he lay in a drunken stupor in the arms of a woman who was not his wife. All that suggests he was not an exemplary Christian, so the modern reader is startled when Snorri observes that Haraldr was generally considered a saint. Why? He was famous for his ostentatious piety and observation of the Christian holy days. As Haki Antonsson demonstrates in his important book *Damnation and Salvation in Old Norse Literature*, medieval Scandinavians had their own ideas about what condemned a person and what saved them. Antonsson asks the question, "what did people in Scandinavia believe was a sign of either their salvation or damnation?" This is joined by the question, "how was this expressed in literature?" His search for an answer ranges through many texts well-known and obscure, secular and ecclesiastical. There are seven thematic chapters: "Confession and Penance;" "Life's Journey towards Salvation;" "Betrayal;" "Outlaws and Marginal Figures;" "Salvation, Damnation and the Visible World;" "The Hours of Death;" and "Last Things and Judgement Day." The subthemes are varied: prophecy; dreams; near-death experiences; art; and, of course, changing ideas in theology.

Although his narrative concerns primarily the golden age of saga writing in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the investigation frequently strays farther, especially when discussing the two great royal missionaries Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, better known as Saint Olaf. Popular perception of their careers and deaths differed. While both men converted to Christianity as adults, Saint Olaf was always