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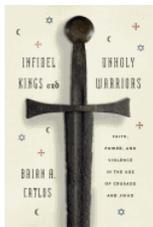
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FICTION NONFICTION CHILDREN'S RELIGION COMICS AUDIO WEB EXCLUSIVE PW SELECT SEARCH

Infidel Kings and Unholy Warriors: Faith, Power, and Violence in the Age of Crusade and Jihad

Brian A. Catlos. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$27 (416p) ISBN 978-0-8090-5837-2

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Contemporary accounts of the Crusades were written by dueling theologians and “sycophantic courtier-poets,” each with their own particular ulterior motives and axes to grind says Catlos, a professor of religious studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Aiming to strip “away the layers of literary varnish,” he notes that “we are left with frustratingly little, and much of it tentative.” Catlos alternates focus between figures whose stories have survived the passage of time—while accreting diverse myths and legends—and on those who have slipped into obscurity but who lived lives as fascinating and remarkable as they are unfamiliar. He concludes that violence in the era was more often a consequence of greed or external threat than of religious or ideological disagreements: religion “was as often as not disregarded by individuals and communities pursuing more worldly agendas,” but “with a crisis looming... or merely when enemy or rival kingdoms happened to identify with a different faith or denomination, the language of holy war was eagerly deployed.” Catlos can’t resist some romanticism of his own, but for the most part he succeeds in making his history of three religions and as many continents and centuries approachable, believable, and captivating. (Sept.)

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Reviewed on: 06/09/2014
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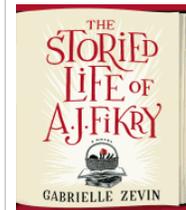
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