

Citation + Full Text

[Print](#)**★Infidel Kings and Unholy Warriors: Faith, Power, and Violence in the Age of the Crusade and Jihad.****Catlos, Brian A. (author).**

Aug. 2014. 416p. Farrar, hardcover, \$27 (9780809058372). 909.07.

[REVIEW](#). First published June 1, 2014 (*Booklist*).

Centuries after Pope Urban II launched the Crusades with heaven's blessings, Catlos adduces surprising evidence that the crusaders' religious rhetoric merely camouflaged their economic and political aims. Indeed, as Catlos transports his readers to eleventh- and twelfth-century Mediterranean lands, we discover a world where religious impulses shift, even disappear, when power brokers pursue terrestrial objectives. Readers see, for instance, how a Muslim king in Al-Andalus defies Qur'anic law in appointing a Jew to serve as his chief administrator. They see also how the soldier of fortune immortalized as the Cid jumps from the allegiance that makes him a hero for the Muslims of Zaragoza to a new affiliation that wins him fame as the Christian savior of Valencia. Similarly flexible are the Norman invaders of Sicily whose tactics win papal blessings even as they forbid Christian proselytizing among their Muslim subjects and import models of governance from Islamic Egypt. To be sure, the Fatimid rulers of Egypt are themselves remarkably ecumenical, filling key posts with Coptic and Armenian Christians. Medieval pragmatism hardly prevents all interreligious violence, but some of the bloodiest clashes Catlos recounts occur between combatants embracing the same credo. Clearing away distorted religious histories, Catlos opens prospects for interfaith realism in the future. — *Bryce Christensen*
