

Her second chapter is a broad study of counsel and the Union question in the seventeenth-century. This piece clearly is the foundation of a much larger piece, but her discussion of the rarity of, and problems associated with, 'British' councils, is certainly thought provoking.

The collection is incredibly cohesive, with chapters engaging with each other. Its focus is certainly skewed towards early modern England, and the noticeable absence of Wales and Ireland does prevent a clear picture of the relationship between a monarch and their subjects emerging: as much as I enjoyed Haskell's chapter, it could have been replaced with one on Wales or Ireland. Nevertheless, this is a superbly-edited collection that makes an excellent addition to the scholarship on counsel in medieval and early modern England and Scotland.

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Tieszen, Charles, *Cross Veneration in the Medieval Islamic World: Christian Identity and Practice under Muslim Rule* (The Early and Medieval Islamic World), London, I. B. Tauris, 2017; hardback; pp. x, 229; R.R.P. US\$95.00, £59.00; ISBN 9781784536626.

Any satisfactory account of inter-religious dialogue and debate should illuminate the perspective of more than just one party to the discussion. Charles Tieszen's new book does this admirably. Drawing on a wide range of argumentative texts composed by both Christian and Muslim authors between the eighth century and the fourteenth, Tieszen provides a detailed and thoughtful analysis of how the idea and practice of cross veneration served as a kind of rhetorical whetstone against which writers on both sides of this medieval religious divide attempted to sharpen the truth claims of their respective faiths. Among the many insights of this valuable study is the conclusion that 'disputational literature' (p. 6) dealing with cross veneration was not penned simply to score points in esoteric theological debates. Rather, one of the key concerns of authors writing in this genre was to delineate the boundaries of their faith more clearly, and thereby reinforce the religious identity of their readers, in a milieu in which they believed it was in urgent need of strengthening. Such texts could therefore fulfil a hortatory and self-reflexive purpose just as readily as they could function as polemical weapons or apologetic instruments.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for the analysis with a lucid overview of defences of cross veneration against late antique pagan critics and in texts of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, which Tieszen argues left an enduring imprint on the arguments exploited by the Christian authors he goes on to discuss. One of these authors, John of Damascus, features prominently from the outset. Tieszen situates his work against the broader intellectual backdrop of debates regarding the worship of icons and symbols in the eighth-century Byzantine and Islamic worlds. Chapter 2 offers a particularly nuanced reading of John of Damascus's justification of cross veneration in his *De haeresibus*. In it, indirect 'counterattacks' in the works of Islamic authors such as 'Abd al-Jabbār (in 995) and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī

(in 1321), and further rebuttals by the ninth-century East Syrian Christian writer ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, allow Tieszen to demonstrate how both Christians and Muslims manipulated the issue ‘as a means for [religious] navigation [...] and identification’ (p. 45).

Developing this theme, Chapter 3 elucidates in detail the ways in which various Christian authors moved beyond simply ‘comparing Christian and Muslim piety [...] [to] concentrate on offering explanations for their veneration of the cross’ (p. 61). Tieszen suggests that many of these explanations, which foreground the symbolic nature of the cross and its inherent power, were designed to give Christians living in Islamic contexts ‘a response to offer those Muslims with whom they were having [theological] discussions’ (p. 90) and a way of buttressing ‘the stability of their faith against the mounting pressures of Islam’ (p. 91). Chapter 4 carries this argument even further with an analysis of some of the more innovative ideas in works by authors such as the ninth-century West Syrian theologian Abū Rā’iṭah al-Takrītī, who stressed the need to venerate unembellished (e.g. wooden) crosses, explained the cross as a Christian *qiblah* orienting worship towards God through Christ, and interpreted it as ‘Christ’s proxy on earth until he returns’ (p. 104). Ideas such as these reinforced the notion of the cross as an essential distinguishing mark for Christians in the multireligious context of the medieval East.

Choosing how to arrange the material in a study that focuses on ‘texts spanning seven centuries’ (p. 93) is far from straightforward. Though understandable, Tieszen’s decision to structure his analysis thematically rather than chronologically does not always ‘[ease] the work readers must do in navigating through a large corpus of literature’ (p. 15). Despite points of conceptual commonality, non-specialist readers may be somewhat disoriented by his leaps from authors writing in the eighth century to those working in the thirteenth and back again. The relegation of much enlightening discussion of individual authors’ contexts to the notes and appendices only accentuates this problem. That being said, the main analysis is so thorough and the central arguments so convincing that the structure of the book does not reduce the overall value of Tieszen’s contribution.

Displaying a deep knowledge of the scholarship and sources, and a subtle interpretation of the key concerns surrounding cross veneration, Tieszen opens a window onto a fascinating issue that lay at the heart of debates between medieval Christians and Muslims. The substantial appendices that follow his insightful analysis should serve as an indispensable research aid to those who are eager to explore this topic further. It is clear that this book will appeal not just to readers interested in the cross itself, but to scholars from various disciplines who concern themselves with any aspect of Christian–Muslim relations in the Middle Ages.

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