

with a particular style. Chapter 3 discusses a strand from the last decade of the tenth century, when the new script first started to replace existing square minuscule. This “Style-I” represents change and is characterized by its “tall and narrow” proportions. By contrast, the other strand in English vernacular script, discussed in chapter 4, represents a continuation of features observed in tenth-century square minuscule. This second strand, “Style-II” or “square-influenced” script, is particularly popular in Canterbury and its orbit, although its appearance is by no means uniform.

The driving force of these two chapters is the morphological analysis introduced in chapter 1. Stokes examines scribal hands with the help of a paleographical checklist of the different visual representations that a specific letter may have. (The same method lies at the heart of Stokes’s influential DigiPal project, the database of which is freely accessible under www.digipal.eu.) The author shows convincingly how individual scribes and sometimes groups of scribes from a single scriptorium favor certain executions of a letter, for example “round a” over “flat-topped a,” “bilinear d” over “concave-down d,” “horned e” over “round e,” and “straight y” over “round y.”

A fifth chapter moves beyond book hands and addresses the script used for glosses and what the author calls “scribbles” (in most cases pen trials), which are encountered in seventy manuscripts in the corpus. While interesting conclusions are drawn (such as the apparent absence of one particular type of glossing script, as opposed to the Caroline-minuscule tradition), this short chapter misses the depth and clarity of the previous two and its purpose within the monograph as a whole could have been made clearer. It is followed by a conclusion, an appendix presenting a list of all scribal hands (almost five hundred), and a very useful glossary.

Stokes is extremely clear in his assessments, which helps the reader understand his nuanced and at times complex discussion of script styles and letter forms. However, in spite of its overall clarity, this book will probably be particularly enjoyed by paleographers. Notably, the study forms a significant step forward in a current paleographical development, which favors studying medieval script in a scientific manner, emphasizing not connoisseurship but quantifiable (and thus verifiable) observation. In this respect, the most important dynamic of Stokes’s book is the morphological method he introduces and his demonstration of how it may be applied to describe individual hands, developments over time, and variation between scriptoria. It is encouraging to see that we can push paleography beyond calling a script “bold,” “dull,” “advanced,” or “prickly.” While many paleographical criteria presented in this work are unique to English vernacular minuscule, an approach whereby paleographical variants are defined, and subsequently processed statistically, will hopefully inspire scholars of other periods and scripts to attempt to do the same.

ERIK KWAKKEL, Leiden University

RYAN SZPIECH, ed., *Medieval Exegesis and Religious Difference: Commentary, Conflict, and Community in the Premodern Mediterranean*. (Bordering Religions: Concepts, Conflicts, and Conversations.) New York: Fordham University Press, 2015. Pp. xiii, 329; 1 black-and-white figure. \$55. ISBN: 978-0-8232-6462-9.

Table of contents available online at <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/medieval-exegesis-and-religious-difference-9780823264629?cc=es&lang=en&#> (accessed 9 October 2015); doi:10.1086/685514

The essays in this volume illustrate the importance of exegesis of or commentary on the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as central to understanding the intellectual history and cultural production of the medieval Islamic and Mediterranean world. In the collection’s introduction, Ryan Szpiech underscores the ways in which medieval

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commentators wrangled with issues of translation, cultural contact, authenticity, notions of (religious) truth, and how our contemporary notion of religious polemic does and does not map onto the medieval exegetical tradition.

Szpiech has organized the thirteen essays into four sections. The first three essays (by Sarah Stroumsa, Sidney Griffith, Walid Saleh) offer examples of scholarship in the medieval Islamic world engaging with the traditions of the other Abrahamic faiths. Stroumsa interrogates the use of the figure of Abraham as the exemplary embodiment of intellectual enlightenment in the work of both the tenth-century scholar Ibn Masarra and the twelfth-century Maimonides. Griffith shows how a thirteenth-century treatise comparing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, written by a Jewish scholar, Ibn Kammunah, in Mongol-ruled Baghdad, was taken up by the fourteenth-century Christian scholar, Ibn al-Mahrumah, to refute, respectfully, the former's proofs for the continued validity of Jewish law and to present his own arguments in favor of its abrogation. Saleh's study focuses on the fifteenth-century Mamluk scholar Baqa'i's detailed study of the Torah. Saleh observes that sometimes minorities benefit in imperial contexts, where they and/or their cultures are ignored by the dominant one, as was the case for the Jews in medieval Egypt.

Thomas Burman's article on the differing ways in which Ramón Martí and Riccolodo da Monte di Croce engaged with Islamic texts in order to craft their own anti-Islamic polemics opens the second section of articles, dealing particularly with Dominican exegetical patterns of inquiry and argumentation. Burman explores the intense intellectual activity among the thirteenth-century Dominican scholars Martí and Monte di Croce, who used their philological skills to make Arabic religious texts (primarily the Quran) available to Christian proselytes. Antoni Biosca i Bas explores the anti-Muslim Latin treatise *Disputatio Abutalib*, penned by the fourteenth-century Dominican Alfonso Buenhombre, a Galician who, after a stint in Paris, served as the bishop of Marrakech before passing through Cyprus and who had a penchant for attributing his several polemical works to fictive Jewish or Muslim sources in North Africa. Ursula Ragacs focuses on how the 1263 Dispute of Barcelona informed Ramón Martí's *Capistrum Judaeorum* (*Muzzle of Jews*) of 1267. Ragacs shows that Martí's arguments are informed by Nahmanides' Hebrew account of the debate.

The next three essays (by Harvey Hames, Yosi Yisraeli, Ángel Sáenz-Badillos) explore various Jewish responses to the types of attacks the Dominicans so carefully crafted. Hames compares accounts of the Dispute of Paris of 1240, concluding that it was not a public dispute like that of Barcelona or Tortosa, but rather an intellectual written debate that was subsequently recast as an actual publicly-performed dispute. The latter recasting of the nature of the debate was the result, in Hames's opinion, of the arrival of Fray Paul in Paris after the real public debate of Barcelona in 1263 and was designed to give threatened French Jews arguments to use when attacked. Yisraeli's essay explores how the Jewish convert to Christianity Pablo de Santa Maria points out in his *Additiones ad postillam* that the Christian scholar Nicholas de Lyra adopted Rashi's interpretation of Genesis 8 without clearly understanding it. Sáenz-Badillos discusses how Moses Arragel judiciously presented the interpretations of both Jewish and Christian scholars in his fifteenth-century translation of the Hebrew Bible made for the master of the order of Calatrava Luis de Guzmán, revealing that, despite the tension in Spanish society at the time, Arragel did not shy away from faithfully and objectively presenting varying Jewish and Christian explanations of the same biblical passage.

Alexandra Cuffel's essay is the first in the final section, on exegesis and gender. Cuffel examines the figure of Jesus in the Jewish anti-Christian *Toledot Yeshu* (*The Life Story of Jesus*), arguing that the way Jesus is presented in the text as "the very epitome of holy masculinity gone wrong" (namely as the son of a menstruating woman and as the object of sexualized violence) was a counternarrative or response to polemical Muslim and

Christian anti-Jewish polemics. Nina Caputo focuses on Nahmanides' rather unorthodox reading of Genesis 6.1–4 and the nature of the sons of the Lord (*bnei ha-elohim*) compared with that of the sons of man (*bnei adam*). For Nahmanides this distinction led to the hypothesis that before the Flood angels, the sons of God mixed with the daughters of men to create the subsequent generation of giants and *nefilim*, or fallen ones. Caputo explores the fact that many commentators refused to go so far as to admit that angels/sons of God could physically have interacted with women, because so admitting would open the door to the possibility that the divine could take human form. Nahmanides' reading of this passage could be doubly threatening: to Jews it could open the door to the possibility of the Christian Messiah, and to Christians it could threaten the uniqueness of Christ. Esperanza Alfonso explores how Judeo-Iberian exegetes interpret the figure of the *ishah zahara*, the strange woman of Proverbs. Alfonso teases out how this figure evolves in the thought of several generations of Judeo-Iberian thinkers, shaped by the sociopolitical realities of the Iberian Jewish communities. Steven Kruger's article explores the ways in which a thirteenth-century French convert from Judaism to Christianity embraced the insults that were aimed at converts (figuring them as dogs, asses, harlots) to create what Kruger identifies as a queer subjective position that underscores the ambiguous nature of the convert.

These studies reveal that in the medieval Islamic lands and in the Mediterranean, when religious scholars took up the sacred texts and narratives of, or about, the religious others with whom they lived, they did so for a variety of reasons. The studies also reveal the similarities in approach that exegetes across the three traditions here analyzed had—from the use of multiple forms of interpretation that went from the surface to the allegorical, to the use and misuse of their scholarly training and knowledge, which could be applied disingenuously in the realization of translations, textual studies, and proof texts (as explored in the essays of Burman, Biosca i Bas). However, one of the great virtues of this collection is that it does not leave the story there, on the dark side of polemic: it also explores the creative and original ways in which many scholars deployed and wielded commentary in order to create positive resources for their own communities (Hames, Stroumsa, Caputo), to produce comparative analyses outside the fraught polemics of debate (Saleh, Sáenz-Badillos) as well as to recast and redefine the narrative of their faith for others (Yisraeli, Kruger).

Most of these studies reflect original archival research and the analysis of manuscripts, recensions, or multiple witnesses of texts across multiple times and places and reveal not only the importance of such textual work for scholars today, but also for scholars of the Middle Ages, for whom such work was central to their larger theoretical projects—projects that continue to shape and inform the ways in which beliefs about and behaviors toward religious others are formulated today.

MICHELLE M. HAMILTON, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

EMILY V. THORNBURY, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 88.) Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xi, 322; 11 black-and-white figures and 15 tables. \$99. ISBN: 978-1-107-05198-0. doi:10.1086/685529

In *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England*, Thornbury examines the self-conscious role of the poet and establishes a framework for judging poetic achievement. This ambitious and innovative study thereby provides both a synthesis of knowledge about the nature of poets and a new way of interpreting their work in relation to the poetic communities of Anglo-Saxon England. Thornbury's simple, but rather brilliant, underlying innovation is to look at what is known about every named poet from the period (duly listed in two

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