

**David M. Freidenreich**  
*Jewish Muslims:*  
*How Christians Imagined*  
*Islam as the Enemy*

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Scholars have prepared numerous studies on Western Christian perceptions of Muslims in the Middle Ages. Similarly, many scholars have examined Christian anti-Jewish polemic in this period. While texts are the dominant primary sources, scholars have also considered pre-modern artistic representations of Muslims and Jews. However, until now, no monograph has been devoted to the ways in which Christian authors, typically engaged in a process of self-definition against religious “others,” developed analogies between Muslims and Jews and did so with these diverse sources. David Freidenreich fills this gap with his book, shedding light on a topic that had been neglected by historians.

Freidenreich’s main focus is on the representations of Muslims in the Christian imagination, but he also addresses a long tradition of Christian representations of Jews and Judaism. These hostile representations were grounded in biblical concepts. Most significantly, he shows how they prompted an equation of Jews and Muslims as enemies of Christianity. This provided theological legitimacy to military initiatives against Islam.

The book addresses a written tradition very extended in space and time, including polemicists coming from the Middle East between the seventh and ninth centuries and those living in Western Europe between the eighth and early seventeenth centuries. It brings together very diverse writings from theologians, civil and religious authorities, patriarchs, royal propagandists, chroniclers, biblical commentators, and canon lawyers. This wealth of sources makes it possible to present a broad spectrum of Christian thought, showing the existence of a tradition based on the same earlier sources and rhetoric, and which served, to a certain extent, to achieve the same objectives over time in cultivating hostility toward a religious enemy.

Through these sources, the author explores the long history of relations between Judaism and Islam in the Christian imagination. He demonstrates how this

association is an intentional distortion that increases the value of Christian rhetoric by applying familiar negative ideas about Jews to Muslims. Thus, Freidenreich clarifies that his study is not about actual Jews or Muslims: "Christian allegations regarding Jewish Muslims have very little to do with the beliefs and practices of actual Jews or Muslims" (8).

After an introduction, the book is organized around a lucid three-part structure. The sections are entitled *Biblical Muslims*, *Judaizing Muslims*, and *Anti-Christian Muslims*. In chapter one of part one, Freidenreich analyzes how Paul's thought served as the foundation of all later anti-Judaizing doctrines. These then were adapted for use in anti-Muslim polemic, showing that this narrative is grounded in sources that predate the emergence of Islam. In chapter two Freidenreich explores the first polemical sources against Islam in medieval Western Europe. These were written in the face of growing Islamic political power in an attempt to promote Christian conquest of Islamic-dominated lands and the expulsion of Muslims from conquered territories. In chapter three he notes that the Pauline discourse was adopted in describing both Jews and Muslims as descendants of Hagar and in affirming that Christians are descended from Isaac (64), a notion that will also be present among later Western European polemicists and artistic productions. Freidenreich in chapter four introduces other polemicists, among them authors of apocalyptic literature and diverse visual artists. He focuses on Christian perceptions of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, believing it to be site of the temple of Solomon, during the Crusades.

Chapter five begins part two, on *Judaizing Muslims*. In this chapter, Freidenreich turns to the earliest polemics of the seventh to early ninth centuries written in Greek by Eastern Christians. He analyzes the allegations of Muslim carnality and irrationality in chapter six. These were based on tales about Muhammad and the fake biography of the Prophet drawn upon by Christian polemicists. The idea that Muhammad was influenced by the Jews to elaborate his false doctrines and to indulge in corporeal pleasures is present in this written tradition and is developed throughout the Middle Ages. Freidenreich in chapter seven next analyzes an idea that was present in Western Christian writings from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries, that Muhammad actually wanted to restore Judaism and the Old Testament. The historical consequences of the definition of Muslims as Judaizers are analyzed in chapter eight, where the author discusses how the Inquisition and the Spanish monarchies promoted the persecution and expulsion of Jewish and *Moriscos* communities.

Part three, on *Anti-Christian Muslims*, delves into an innovation to a commonplace of Christian thought: the idea that Muslims killed Christ as a result of their identification with Jews (chapter nine). It is what the author calls a preposterous charge (147), since European polemicists had to invert chronological events to allege Muslim complicity in the crucifixion. This notion is reflected in Christian art, which portrays Christ's executioners as Muslims from the thirteenth century onwards, and was a powerful mean of encouraging and justifying violence against the "Saracens" during the Crusades.

Freidenreich discusses claims of a supposed conspiracy of Jews and Muslims against Christians (chapter ten) and accusations that both peoples worshiped Muhammad (chapter eleven). Both slanders served the same end and attest to a strong distortion of reality. The association of Muslims with Jews in Christian thought also operated in the reverse direction, as many pogroms against Jews in Central Europe seem to reflect a channeling of anger against Muslims. Finally, in chapter twelve he shows how all these notions are transmitted to the early modern period and take shape in the thought of Martin Luther.

In sum, we can say that this is a necessary work for understanding the common roots of anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish ideologies, showing how they had a parallel and intertwined development during the Middle Ages. The author analyzes the mechanisms and procedures for the construction of religious alterity; the Manichean and simplifying discourse that was used to establish religious orthodoxy based on differentiation from Jews and Muslims; and the promotion of hatred towards them among an illiterate population. A strength of the work is the connection between texts and images, since they are complementary and essential elements for understanding Christian representation of Jews and Muslims as others.

Dealing with such a vast topic, the author's extensive documentation is noticeable, although some important works not written in English are missing, such as those of Fernando Bravo (*En casa ajena: Bases intelectuales del antisemitismo y la islamofobia*, Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2012) and Alain Ducellier (*Le Miroir de l'Islam: Musulmans et Chrétiens d'Orient au Moyen Age. VII-XI siècle*, Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée: Julliard, 1971). Also, his analysis of the identification of Muslims and Jews in Christian thought overshadows other aspects of medieval anti-Muslim polemic where the Muslims are not equated with Jews, such as the frequent identification of Muslims with biblical enemies such as the Chaldeans and Babylonians. However, this issue has already been dealt with in other studies, so the approach of this book is highly valuable for all those interested in medieval inter-religious relations.

The text is written in a very clear and precise language. The author is careful with complex terms and topics, such as the difference between anti-Judaism and antisemitism (4), the origins of the terms Saracen and Hagaren (32-33), or the impact of the apologetic written tradition (87). A useful chronology of events and index of modern authors is added at the end.

*Jewish Muslims: How Christians Imagined Islam as the Enemy* seems to acquire, moreover, an additional value in the light of the conflicts of the present, reminding us at least that Jews and Muslims were linked together in Christian eyes for many centuries. Freidenreich concludes with some inspiring final reflections in an afterword on rhetoric about Muslims and Jews today. He considers aspects of medieval ideas that persist, and also notes that, unlike in the past, anti-Judaism and Islamophobia are no longer concomitant prejudices. The progressive decline of antisemitism after World War II offers a horizon of hope that Islamophobia may also fade, especially if people increasingly reject defining their identity by opposing the identity of others.