

illustration that helps to flesh out the intricate relationship between people, places, organizations, finances, rituals, families, charity, art and architecture. Dow's study is significant because it redefines the patronage of art in Renaissance Florence as an instrument through which confraternity members fashioned themselves as benefactors. Ultimately, Dow's study reinforces the enduring entanglement between people, places, and things.

Another particularly remarkable article is Barbara Wisch's study of the Arciconfraternita della SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini e Convalescenti and its relationship with the Cappella della Separazione in Rome. It centres on a little-known chapel that commemorates the martyrdoms of Saints Peter and Paul. Built on via Ostiense, the chapel was the first independent religious edifice commissioned by the SS. Trinità confraternity and marked a critical point in both the history of the confraternity and in Rome. Wisch examines how, by re-glorifying a site that they believed to verify Peter and Paul's missions and martyrdoms, the *confratelli* responded persuasively to Protestant denials of fundamental tenets of the Catholic Church. Subsequent renovations to the church fostered Catholic reformers' desire for both physical and spiritual renewal of Rome's Paleo-Christian past. Wisch's article thus provides fresh insights into the exponential growth of confraternities in early modern society and the intersection of faith, audience, and urban space in the eternal city.

By examining the malleability of urban space and its relationship to distinct confraternity activities and practices, Presciutti's collection is sure to enrich the dialogue on art and material culture. The breadth of this thoughtfully-compiled volume offers a much-appreciated geographical and cultural diversity that will interest a wide range of scholars and students of medieval and early modern society.

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Sennis, Antonio, ed. *Cathars in Question*. York: York Medieval Press / The Boydell Press, 2016. Pp. vii, 332. ISBN 978-1-903153-68-0 (hard-cover) \$99 USA.

This collection of articles, originally from papers presented at a 2013 conference held jointly at University College London and the Warburg Institute, addresses the question of Catharism as a construct: did a distinct heretical movement, historically connected to other dualistic heresies such as Bogomilism and recognizable to contemporaries as Catharism, truly exist or are historians actually seeing a series of localized, unconnected unorthodoxies distorted by the medieval record and modern historiography? This question stems from scholarship following on R. I. Moore's

volumes *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (1987) and *The War on Heresy* (2012) and is in line with similar, though perhaps less heated, debates regarding the Waldensians. While no consensus can be expected on the topic, this volume showcases strong scholarship that bears on methodological and theoretical questions pertinent to many areas of research into the Middle Ages.

Antonio Sennis, as editor, characterizes the two dissenting camps as “traditionalists” and “skeptics.” The “traditionalists” are those who accept the reality of a Cathar heresy as a coherent movement with distinct and clearly defined beliefs and hierarchies. One such is John Arnold, who here provides a historiographical overview that situates the debate in the context of scholarly cycles in which received ideas about heresy are first dismantled and then, some years later, rebuilt with more nuance and subtlety. Other “traditionalists” include Jörg Feuchter and Peter Biller. Biller supplies the final article of the volume, “Goodbye to Catharism?,” an energetic critique of R. I. Moore’s work and that of his followers. The “skeptics” are those who reject the early existence of the Cathars as a fully-fledged movement and argue instead that these groups were more complex, dynamic, and unstructured, lacking common texts and doctrines. Mark Gregory Pegg provides a counterpart to Arnold’s article from the opposing viewpoint, claiming that “Catharism [...] never existed, except as an enduring invention of late-nineteenth century scholars of religion and history” (p. 21). Julien Théry-Astruc and R. I. Moore round out the “skeptics,” with Moore’s “Principles at Stake” providing the penultimate contribution and a companion to Biller’s summation. In Moore’s analysis, the debate has revealed certain areas of common ground despite the overall lack of consensus and the questions that remain concern how uniform dualism was over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the extent to which Catharism should be considered a coherent movement across Europe and back into the early twelfth century, and the processes by which it first emerged. In addition to the “traditionalists” and “skeptics” whose articles and arguments frame the volume both structurally and intellectually, articles by Bernard Hamilton, Yuri Stoyanov, and David d’Avray explore Catharism as part of a larger network, in particular the possibility of connections between the Balkans and southern France, the plausibility of which has been dismissed by the “skeptics.” Caterina Bruschi, Lucy Sackville, and Rebecca Rist all consider the role played by specific texts in defining Catharism, both in its medieval context and in modern scholarship. The range of contributions, all rigorously engaged with primary sources and secondary scholarship, provides multiple perspectives on and approaches to the field.

For students of heresy, this volume is undoubtedly a valuable resource. For those outside the field, it relates to methodological and theoretical issues relevant in many areas of scholarship. Certain themes are dominant. The role of gesture and ritual emerges as key; exactly what particular actions mean in terms of ritual meaning and community identification in

their local context is not always clear, even to contemporaries. The use of such symbolic means to demarcate social and religious groups, and the challenges in studying depictions of ritual action, also pertain to students of confraternities. When filtered through layers of primary sources and documentation, the significance of gesture and ritual is even more debatable, a fact that points to a second major theme in the volume—interpretation. Here, uncertainty is introduced at many points, from the “good man” of the thirteenth century attempting to explain, or to obscure, his beliefs in the face of religious orthodoxy, to the scribe who transformed oral testimony into a written record, to the later readings of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and finally to the historical scholarship of our own time. At each stage, the interpretive act profoundly shapes how we understand the picture before us. Key to this particular debate is the problem of textual sources and how they record heretical voices; for example, Sennis points out the dissonance, and multiple perspectives, embedded in the phrase “*beatus Sylvester papa [...] unus diabolus dampnatus in inferno*” (p. 9). The contributions to this volume address the issue of interpretation—perennial to the work of medieval historians—directly and with nuance.

A final theme appearing in these pages is that of the relationship between the orthodox and the heretical or local. The papacy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was certainly concerned with adherence to orthodoxy and the “skeptics” contend that such attempts to enforce orthodoxy resulted in the creation of, or at least an undue emphasis on, heresy. The power relationships at work in medieval society are not so simple, however. As Arnold writes, from the “traditionalist” viewpoint, “To make ‘heresy’ only a product of itself—to blame the victim—is undoubtedly wrong [...] but to make ‘heresy’ only the product of orthodox power is to impute to that power an overwhelming hegemony that is in danger of making the people subjected to it disappear” (76). This issue of the relationship between orthodoxy and religious belief is one that arises in many areas of scholarship, including the study of confraternities, whose relationships with both orthodox and heretical communities have been studied elsewhere.

Thus, despite the volume’s focus on Catharism, and the very close readings of primary and secondary sources of that field provided, underlying concerns with broader issues pertinent across many fields of historical inquiry make this collection of essays a valuable to anyone who asks, in Sennis’ words, “what we can infer from the available evidence and, in particular, how far back we can extend the information we find in a document” (p. 19).

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