

During his time as an undergraduate at St John's College Annapolis the present author studied the Great Books, which meant engaging with these primary sources on their own terms uninfluenced by the interpretations of them by later secondary sources. He had loved history for as long as he could remember, but it was only upon engaging with classical works of history at St. John's that he felt a desire to be a historian. Meanwhile, he came across Professor Brian Catlos's book, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain*.

As he read through it, all of his assumptions about the so-called "Reconquest" of Spain and Portugal by Christians were overturned. Dr. Catlos's book showed that this nearly 800-year process often included military and economic cooperation across religious boundaries

The present author began pursuing his master's degree in Religious Studies at CU in the fall of 2021 and has been working with Professor researching the Mudejar (Muslim) population of the Aragonese Kingdom of Valencia. Since beginning his studies, his research interests have expanded to include the role of ethnic Armenians in the political, military and religious landscape of the Byzantine Empire with a particular focus on the eighth through eleventh centuries.