

The Cross and the Crescent - Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation

Richard Fletcher

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#5235707 in Books 2003 #File Name: B000VZOECC | File size: 39.Mb

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cross and the Crescent - Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. a wise commentary on medieval Muslim - Christian relationsBy doc petersonRichard Fletcher is an emeritus professor from York University, whose *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* is a classic in the field of theological history. His short account of Christian / Islamic relations is similarly fascinating. Fletcher begins with a broad commentary on the dogmatic differences in religious texts: the Qu'ran, like the Bible is "revealed" knowledge - an understanding of man's role in the world through divine revelation. However, Fletcher points out, the nature of these revelations are telling: whereas the liturgical texts of Christianity are a "mass of myth, history, law, poetry, counsel ... no less than four versions of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, each one slightly different from the other three, ... and a work of apocalyptic prophesy unveiling the imminent end of the world ..." Islam is much more doctrinally strict, without many of the ambiguities, contradictions and obscurities that Christianity has. The nature of Christian thought, then, is rooted in disagreement, debate and argument while the controversies of Islam primarily focus on the source of authority over the Islamic community (both politically and doctrinally.) These fundamental differences have shaped with ways in which followers of these brethren religions shape their view of the world.From here, the interactions between Islam and Christianity are explored in greater detail, Fletcher explaining how these religious perceptions shaped the ways in which these two

communities saw each other. What I found particularly interesting was the co-existence of Christian and Muslim on the "frontiers" - in Iberia, Anatolia and (later) the Balkans, and how these groups interacted and responded to one another. For example, while Christians are "People of the Book" (and thereby tolerated under Islamic law), there were varying degrees of tolerance over time - from Christians and Jews acting as bureaucrats in the Ummayyad dynasty (early in Islam's history) to their place as very much second-class citizens after the Mongol conquest. Of course, such toleration was hardly the norm within Christendom, although I was surprised to learn of how much coexistence was the norm in Iberia before the Reconquista. Much of the book details the cultural, economic and especially intellectual interchange between communities in the middle ages. One point Fletcher makes almost in passing (and this is unfortunate), is that for much of Islam's early history, it was aloof of Christendom, instead looking East. The result was that the Muslim world was largely unaware of the developments being made in Europe (economically and politically) that eventually caused the Christian West to economically (and to a large extent in the 19th century, politically) eclipse the Muslim East. This, in part, lies at the root of Islamic disaffection with the West and its modern secularism. That it "could not be any other way than" what is was is moot - but a point that I wish he had addressed in greater detail. This reservation aside, it's a very interesting short read. For those interested in comparative religions, it won't answer many questions; rather, its strength is in showing the myriad similarities and sharings between faiths, even as each regarded the other with suspicion and (at times) hostility.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great Overview
By a reader
Concise and insightful. An excellent overview of the interaction between Christianity and Islam between the 7th and 15th centuries. The relevance of modern day issues is made clear, but modern day developments are not discussed and do not color the analysis. Helpful suggestions for further reading, which this book will tempt you to do.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Dennis Carr
Interesting!