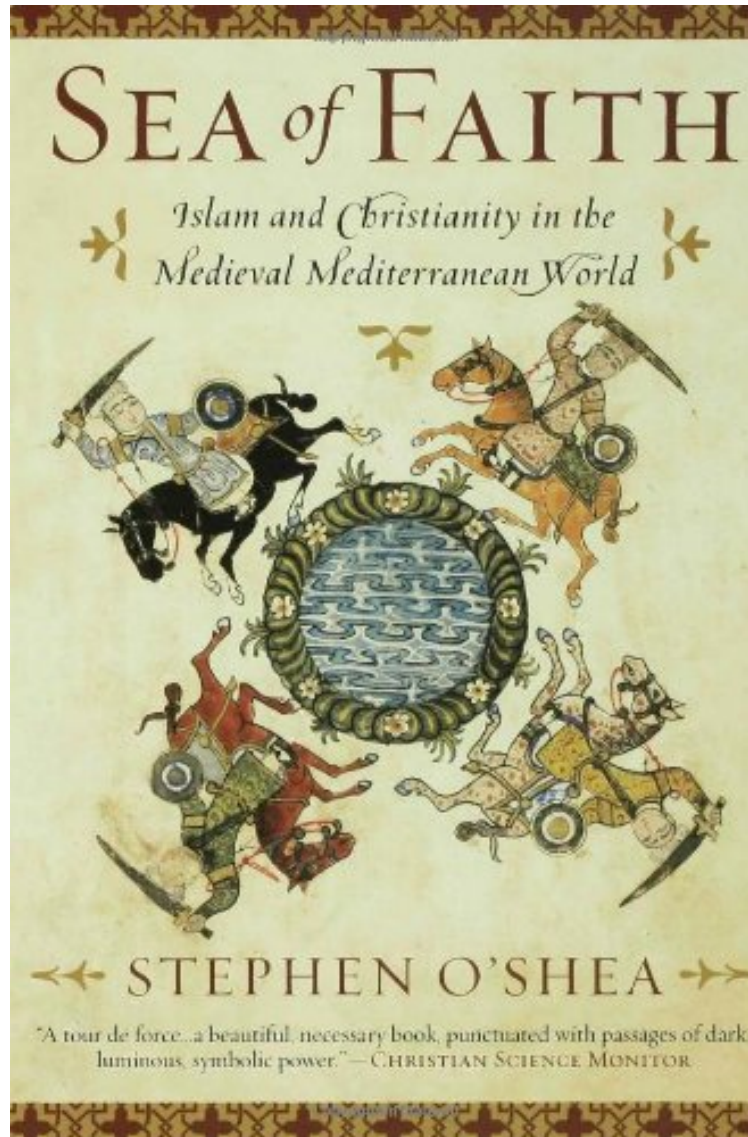


Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World

Stephen O'Shea

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Stephen O'Shea : Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. History as Travel GuideBy bmbowerBy selecting a few key events

to hang his medieval history of Christian-Muslim conflict around the Mediterranean, O'Shea sidesteps the drone of history books that dwell on dates and names. Instead he drops you into the action, weaving a glittering tapestry of religious zeal, Arab conquest, Christian retaliation, Berber invasions, Frankish armies, the politics of the Great Schism, dynastic struggles among the Byzantine power structures of Byzantium, storming Normans, Islam among the Turks, the opportunistic nature of history's big names (like El Cid), crusading popes, Egyptian sultans, future saints, and the extraordinary convivencia, when Christians and Muslims lived in peaceful if tense coexistence and culture flourished like never before. Although an exceptionally well-researched book that draws on recently available Arab and Muslim sources, *Sea of Faith*'s true strength rests in O'Shea's ability to present history as travelogue. Furthermore, while his descriptions of places like Yarmuk, Cordoba, Palermo, and Malta make you want to book a tour to see the history in the streets and remaining buildings, his battle scenes read like high drama. The hour-by-hour (and at times minute-by-minute) recreation of the 12th century battle in the blistering heat of the Bet Netofa valley, where the Muslim Saladin defeated the Christian King Guy, does such a good job of conveying the plight of armored soldiers slowly roasting under a hammering sun while being attacked by mounted bowmen, you'll swear you can smell the blood and sweat. Indeed, O'Shea brings out the high adventure inherent in so much of history but lost in so many history books. Yet he always has his eye on the central theme of his narrative: religion as a framework for understanding conflict on the Medieval Mediterranean, something clearly valuable for also understanding today's conflicts around the sea and the surrounding deserts, mountains, and continents.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book for understanding the beginning of conflict between Islam ...By Robert CortvriendtGreat book for understanding the beginning of conflict between Islam and Christianity. It's a story of tolerance and intolerance, greed and greatness in a world receding from the Roman Empire's iron fist and an evolving world order with faith at its center. O'Shea explores the political landscapes leading to momentous battles and their aftermaths which led to the next in a series that wraps around the Mediterranean and eventually stalls in Malta at the beginning of the Renaissance until now. The siege and collapse of Constantinople is as epically depicted as that of Troy with vivid images of power, heroism and guile.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great read.By G. PooleIn this day of mistrust between these two great world religions, it is important to try to understand each other rather than throw threats and violence at each other. Islam is not the evil faith that many believe it to be. In fact, most Muslims are very peaceful and well educated. I would also argue the same for these people when they consider we Christians. Nevertheless, distrust is not new as this book highlights. In reading this book. I was struck repeatedly with the thought that two faiths which have much in common seem more willing to divide and destroy....why? The first step is to put down the hate and weapons and read books like this. Leading with the heart and mind are what God wants not killing people in his name. both faiths are at fault for this.

From the sixth through the sixteenth centuries, the faiths of Islam and Christianity contended for primacy in the Mediterranean world. At times acrimonious, at other times harmonious, the encounter between the two creeds in the Middle Ages provides a backdrop to much of what informs, and misinforms, public opinion on present-day conflicts. Recounting seven major battles encircling the Mediterranean—Yarmuk, Poitiers, Manzikert, Hattin, Las Navas de Tolosa, Constantinople, and Malta—Stephen O'Shea shines vital new light on the distant past while offering invaluable perspective on the two faiths' ongoing contest for spiritual and political primacy.

From Publishers WeeklyStarred . In this elegant, fast-paced, and judicious cultural and religious history, journalist O'Shea, author of *The Perfect Heresy*, provides a remarkable glimpse into the origins of the conflicts between Christians and Muslims as well as their once peaceful coexistence. He focuses on seven military battles—Yarmuk A.D. 636), Poitiers (732), Manzikert (1071), Hattin (1187), Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), Constantinople (1453) and Malta (1565)—between Christians and Muslims as the high-water marks of their attempts to shape the Mediterranean ("sea of faith") world of the Middle Ages. O'Shea vividly captures and recreates not only the enmity between the two religions but also the sectarian rivalries and political intrigues within each religion. Yet the relationship between Christianity and Islam was marked not only by bloody Crusades and wars of conquest. As O'Shea so eloquently points out, Christians and Muslims also experienced long periods of rapprochement, signaled by the long peace at Cordoba in the early Middle Ages and in the intellectual and social flourishing at Toledo and Palermo in the 11th century. O'Shea's marvelous accomplishment offers an unparalleled glimpse of the struggles of each religion to establish dominance in the medieval world as well as at the strategies for living together that the religions enacted as they shared the same territory. (June) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. An absorbing, crisply written chronicle...If you're expecting an argument on behalf of peaceful coexistence or, alternatively, a call to alarm on the order of Samuel P. Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," the colorful, if often gruesome, story that O'Shea narrates with considerable panache offers no easy answers to our current predicament. Los Angeles TimesAdmirably evenhanded. Dallas Morning NewsA tour de force...a beautiful, necessary book, punctuated with passages of dark, luminous, symbolic power. If, as it appears, we have entered a new dark ages,' only by facing the worst about what seems to offer hope to believers can we forge new

hopes--tolerant places where convivencia, as embodied in this superb book, flourishes once again. Christian Science MonitorA gripping account of Christianity and Islam's first tortured millennium of combat and coexistence. Vivid vocabulary, tasteful touches of humor and a traveler's-eye view of the Mediterranean enrich the history. An engaging glimpse into the events that shaped the Mediterranean basin as we know it today. Kirkus sO'Shea's marvelous accomplishment offers an unparalleled glimpse of the struggles of each religion to establish dominance in the medieval world as well as of the strategies for living together that the religions enacted as they shared the same territory. Publishers Weekly (starred review)About the AuthorA journalist and translator, Stephen O'Shea is the author of *The Perfect Heresy: The Revolutionary Life and Death of the Medieval Cathars* and *Back to the Front: An Accidental Historian Walks the Trenches of World War I*. He lives in Providence, Rhode Island.