Contents

List of figures   page ix
List of tables   xv
Preface and acknowledgements xviii
Abbreviations xxv

1 Interactions between nature and society in the late-medieval world 1
1.01 The Great Transition: an outline chronology 3
1.02 The Great Transition and the Great Divergence 19
1.03 Critical transitions in nature and society 20
1.04 Tracking the Great Transition: issues of scale, focus and evidence 24

2 Efflorescence: the enabling environment and the rise of Latin Christendom 30
2.01 Latin Christendom’s take-off to sustained growth 34
2.02 The Medieval Climate Anomaly (MCA) 36
2.03 The growth of Old World populations 58
2.04 The institutional underpinnings of Latin Christendom’s commercial expansion 65
2.05 Latin Christendom’s commercial revolution 85
2.06 The enabling environment and Latin Christendom’s high-medieval efflorescence 130

3 A precarious balance: mounting economic vulnerability in an era of increasing climatic instability and re-emergent pathogens 134
3.01 From efflorescence to recession 135
3.02 Increasing climatic instability 198
3.03 Re-emergent pathogens 209
3.04 A precarious balance 253
Appendix 3.1 The landed incomes of English households in 1290 261
## Contents

### 4 Tipping point: war, climate change and plague shift the balance

4.01 Escalating warfare and deepening commercial recession 267
4.02 Old World climates on the cusp of change 277
4.03 Eruption of the Black Death in Europe 289
4.04 The Black Death’s lasting epidemiological legacy 313
4.05 The Black Death: an enigma resolved? 319
4.06 Three in one: the perfect storm 328
Appendix 4.1 Outbreak of the Justinianic Plague and the weather 329

### 5 Recession: the inhibiting environment and Latin Christendom’s late-medieval demographic and economic contraction

5.01 From a tipping point to a turning point 332
5.02 Advance of the Little Ice Age (LIA) 335
5.03 A golden age of bacteria? 349
5.04 Economic and commercial contraction 355
5.05 Prosperity amidst adversity? 373
5.06 The end of the Great Transition: from an eastward to a westward enterprise 386

Epilogue: theory, contingency, conjuncture and the Great Transition 395

References 402
Index 448