CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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TAKEN together, the eleventh and twelfth centuries are a unique fulcrum in the development of the medieval world. The relations between Latin Christendom, the Scandinavian world, the Byzantine empire and the world of Islam underwent immense and sometimes conclusive changes in this period, and the development of Europe, let alone of western Europe, cannot be studied in isolation from that of her neighbours with whom there was increasing interaction. Throughout this volume we have tried to take a broad view of what mattered in the relationships not only between western and eastern Europe, but also between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

In order to attempt to account for the comprehensive changes and growth that took place over this long period, differing kinds of discussions and numerous chapters are required. This fourth volume of the the *New Cambridge Medieval History* has two parts which are each of a length comparable with the other volumes in this series. They are complementary to each other rather than sequential: Part 1 focuses mainly on themes – themes in economic, social, governmental, ecclesiastical and cultural history – while Part 2 gives more attention to government on a territorial or institutional basis.

In 1025, the year of the death of the emperor Basil II, Byzantium was at the height of its power and had achieved its greatest territorial extent. Its empire stretched from the Adriatic to the Caucasus, from the south of the Peloponnese to the Gulf of Finland. Eastern Europe was linked to northern Europe by a network of links in which the Vikings played a great part. The career of Harald Hardrada of Norway illustrates the situation vividly: he and his warriors fought for St Olaf, king of Norway, fought in the army of Jaroslav, ruler of Kiev, served three Byzantine emperors in the Varangian guard and campaigned in Asia Minor and Sicily. Harald married Jaroslav's daughter, became king of Norway, and died in the battle of Stamford Bridge near York in 1066, having attempted to conquer England. But before the end of the century Byzantium was faced by immense dangers, including disasters in the Balkans, defeats at the hands

of the Turks in Asia Minor and the loss of lands in the south of Italy; and in the north of Europe Scandinavia's ascendancy over her neighbours in war and trade had come to an end.

Most of western Europe in the earlier part of this period was distinctly backward in comparison with parts of North Africa and the Middle East. There was far less commercial activity and far less urban life in the west, whereas there was vigorous trade in the eleventh century between the Arabs who lived in Spain, Tunisia, Sicily and Egypt. Cairo and Constantinople had far larger populations than any city in the west. In eleventh-century Italy there was repeated and widespread disintegration and dissolution of dynastic powers, of counties and marches. In their place local protection was provided by the military forces of bishops, monasteries, communities of canons or owners of lands. But in many ways this was to cease to be the position by the twelfth century. The growth of towns and city-states was conspicuous in northern Italy. In Flanders and the Rhineland also, urban growth was strong. It was stimulated by a dramatic growth of population, increased agricultural productivity, the cultivation of new land, the formation of new villages, the development of manufacture, and the growth of trade both within and beyond Europe. Of course, the pace and scale of these developments varied considerably in time and place, and peripheral regions such as Scotland and Ireland, Hungary and Lithuania, were not urbanised so much. To explain the different speeds of economic advance is an elusive task since it touches upon the shared but hidden aspirations of families and the workings of slow climatic amelioration as well as upon the fixed facts of geography. The consequences of economic growth, however, extended beyond western Europe and had an immeasurable impact upon relationships with neighbouring civilisations.

In the Baltic area, Scandinavian trade with Russia came to be eclipsed by the rise of trade organised from Germany and Flanders. With the Norman conquest of England came the perception of a new military and commercial superiority enjoyed in a new and highly entrepreneurial Anglo-Norman 'empire' which gained domination in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Such an aggressive and developmental mentality was commonly to be found in north-west Europe, where lands were reclaimed from the sea or from forests, settlers were invited to work on them, and new towns were founded, castles built and trade promoted. Similarly, in the Mediterranean world Italian coastal cities such as Pisa, Genoa and Venice fought for commercial markets both in Byzantium and in Muslim countries. Muslim rulers were forced out of Sardinia and the Balearic islands and suffered setbacks in North Africa. Normans were prominent in ending Muslim and Greek rule in Sicily and south Italy. The great expansion of León-Castile after the fall of Toledo in 1085 facilitated further military conquests in Muslim Spain as well as migration, colonisation and settlement. Italian traders

benefited greatly from the achievements of the crusaders in gaining control of the coastal towns in the Holy Land from the end of the eleventh century. Trade between the north and the south of Europe also developed on a considerable scale, especially in the exchange of woollen and linen goods. Maritime traffic in the Bay of Biscay also developed. Fairs grew up at which long-distance merchants gathered. Within towns, traders came to dominate government; communes and guilds were formed.

Governmentally, the period is broadly one of progress within western Europe in the sense that many lordships and kingdoms, despite setbacks and shifts, grew together in solidarity and developed a stronger sense of community. There is abundant evidence of conflicts and of abuses of power by despotic lords, but even strife and despotism were set within a framework in which there was also understanding of customs, linguistic identities and liberties. In rural societies peasants and serfs, although subordinate, did not lack rights. Castles ensured military domination by lords but also provided civil administration. Urban communes also promoted such solidarity with the creation of guilds and fraternities. Royal government in France and England was immeasurably stronger at the end of the period than it had been at the beginning of the eleventh century, but in Germany the position of the monarchy was more ambiguous and complex.

Legal developments mirror the changes that took place in every sphere of government. Historians have traced these developments in the light of a growing trend to supplement oral traditions and unwritten customs with written, and with new, legislation. An example is the phasing out in northern Europe, slowly and only by the end of the period, of trials by ordeal in favour of rational procedures for evaluating evidence. Written laws were no novelty, but the making, the imposition and the interpretation of new, written laws – in the form of statutes, assizes and constitutions – increasingly required trained officials. Stimulating these changes were many factors ranging from the development of trade, which required regulatory procedures, to the growth of national monarchies and to the success of schools in inculcating professional attitudes in administration and government. Legal thinking and procedures were increasingly applied to thought and debate about basic human activities such as marriage, contracts and the holding of property. Law schools, particularly in southern Europe, developed the systematic teaching of both Roman law and canon law. In the modern English-speaking world, the 'common law', which is such a pronounced feature of modern English law, descends from the law which applied throughout the kingdom of England from the time of King Henry II (1154–89) and which was the king's law. In Italian cities the courts of law also promoted common law through the sharing of practice on the basis of the written *libri feudorum*. The development of law contributed to social

cohesion and to community life within cities and kingdoms; the growth of the canon law contributed to the unification of the Latin church and to those parts of Europe where it was dominant.

Consolidation and expansion require war as well as peace. At the beginning of the eleventh century, Adalbero, bishop of Laon in northern France, expressed his vision of the three orders in the house of God on earth: those who work, those who fight and those who pray. The second of these orders included lords and kings, soldiers and knights. The latter in particular were coming to form an order, the military order within which a specific status and specific ways of fighting were associated with knighthood and chivalry. The development of the use of heavy cavalry in military operations promoted the formation of an elite of well-armed and aristocratic knights; in turn this elite was promoted by its possession of castles and of local power. We generalise – but to reinforce a point: the growth of knightly power spread violence and horrifying brutality, but also provoked measures to disperse and to control it. In place of the experience of invasions and raids from Magyars, Vikings and Muslims, knightly violence was increasingly exported into Spain, Sicily, north-east Europe and the Holy Land, and from France into England in 1066. Moreover, the church sought to direct its use.

For centuries warfare had played a role in the maintenance of Christian peace. It was the duty of kings to preserve justice and to protect the church as well as others from a sinful world. However, in the eleventh century, churchmen developed ideas about ways in which the church itself could fulfil these tasks. Fighting Muslims in Spain and in south Italy in the eleventh century was set into a context which included a sense of reform and of legitimate defence of Christian peoples and places, especially in the Holy Land. The papacy in the eleventh century recruited 'knights of St Peter' and associated them in the protection of pilgrimages and of Christian communities. Already in 1074 Pope Gregory VII prepared for an expedition to help to relieve Christians in the east from Muslim rule. The justification of fighting non-Christians in defence of Christian belief and believers came to incorporate the conviction that such activity was a means to salvation for the warrior, indeed a duty that fell upon the church because of the harm being caused to Christ himself. In this way just Christian warfare was seen as a part of the religious life, not a duty that fell upon all who were professed in religion, but a duty which came to be attached to those who took the cross and who formed the new militarised religious orders.

Between the early eleventh century and the late twelfth, the shape and strength of the Latin church was fundamentally transformed. The functions of kings and bishops were and always remained complementary and interpenetrating, but the limits to what kings might do in ecclesiastical matters were vigorously asserted by ecclesiastical reformers who sought a clear-cut separation

of spiritual authority from lay power. A decline in the power of the German emperors and a remarkable growth of papal government occurred between 1024, when Conrad II became the first Salian king of Germany, and 1099, when Pope Urban II died. Moreover, the federation of bishoprics and provinces was restructured and more sharply defined as an integrated network developed of jurisdictions descending from the Roman papacy through archbishops and bishops down to territorial parishes. Towards the end of the period this jurisdiction was beginning to be exercised through church courts; the canon law had developed hugely.

Reform of the church is one of the central facts of the history of the eleventh century because of its many wide and deep ramifications. It should not be seen only, or even primarily, in the light of conflict between papacy and empire or of an investiture contest. This is not to deny that the distinction between spiritual authority and lay power mattered enormously and that what this distinction meant to different people lay at the heart of many polemics and quarrels and of much thought and scholarship. Royal investiture of a prelate with his staff and ring as well as the performance of homage by the prelate to the king were firmly established practices that displayed the king's pious care for the church and the prelate's considerable responsibilities for the welfare of the kingdom. The reformers were right to question the grip that lay rulers had on the church and its property and to seek liberty. They were right to level the charge of simony against many who had been consecrated. Lay rulers, on the other hand, sought and needed the cooperation of prelates and clergy rather than an upheaval into which were injected the claims of Rome to a primacy which was supported by the activities of papal legates and their holding of councils.

In reality, the contest between papacy and empire – a contest which is reflected and extended in other more localised disputes such as those between the English crown and the archbishops Anselm and Thomas Becket of Canterbury – is a symptom and a manifestation of deeper urges and anxieties about decline and reform. It is not the root cause of reform or of opposition to it. There was, for example, a deepening divergence of outlook towards the past, in particular towards the Christian empire in antiquity. To supporters of Pope Gregory VII the Emperor Constantine I was a figure who exemplified the surrender of imperial sway over the clergy and of control over the endowments of the church; as the Donation which bears his name claims, Constantine endowed the church generously with lands in central and southern Italy, and it flourished. Rome, in particular, was adorned with splendid church buildings. For reformers in the eleventh century, inspired by this idealised version of Constantine's patronage as well as by surviving examples of early Christian buildings, the spectacle of Henry III deposing three popes in a row, of southern and central Italy now torn apart by German, Norman and Muslim

militias, of the limited jurisdiction able to be exercised in the lands of St Peter, all this roused a strong ambition to halt a decline and to restore a golden age. Reform was renewal, and this included economic revival and a spate of building and repair. To contemporary imperialists, on the other hand, the history of Christian empire looked quite different: the Franks had saved the papacy from the Lombards, Charlemagne had revived the empire in the west, and his successors had created, endowed and – crucially – protected churches which would not have survived but for them. The German emperor was the *patricius Romanorum*, the Romans' protector.

The quest into history involved the scrutiny of the texts bequeathed by the authorities, these being the Bible, the Church Fathers, the decisions of popes, emperors and councils. These were collected and arranged by many but from differing starting points, with differing aims and with differing interpretations. Establishing – or destroying – the authenticity of texts or their relative importance or their permanent value or the universality of their relevance proved to be a challenge and certainly provided work for many scholars. Since the western church had in past centuries been more loosely united and governed than it was to be in the centuries to come, there were many local varieties of discipline and practice which competed for recognition now as a universal and durable norm.

The desire for religious reform and the renewal of ecclesiastical structures and practice welled up from many different springs, so widely spread throughout the west that it is an impossible task for any historian at present to provide an overall explanation of how it occurred or why. Organised communities of monks, nuns and canons fulfilled many functions. They existed for prayer and catered for others – for guests, for pilgrims, for pupils in schools and for the aged. No one in the year 1000, even in the year 1100, would have expected the changes and upheavals that were to come within the monastic world. Important and secure institutions survived; others were newly created. But none was untouched by competition. There was a phenomenal growth in their number, in the numbers of men and women living the religious life, and in the diversity of ways in which they did so. Religious communities dedicated to works of active charity gained more prominence alongside contemplatives. As with so many of the changes in differing walks of life during the eleventh century, the upshot was a growing range of choice for those with the freedom to choose. There was some argument about which changes were for the good and which for the worse, but flexibility was shown in the face of diversity. Religious communities, however humble and however isolated, need some patronage, and patrons themselves are one of the factors which explain variations and developments. Monastic expansion was also a key feature in the general expansion of western church and society into and beyond the peripheral parts of Europe.

From Lund to Palermo and from Iona to Kiev, Europe was unquestionably Christianised in the sense that very many human lives were touched by Christian practices, although there were also many communities of Muslims and Jews as well as significant pagan communities (e.g. in the Baltic region and Hungary). The history of popular Christianity in the period is both richly documented and tantalisingly obscure. The building and rebuilding of churches took place with a frequency and on a scale that proves the need to provide for widespread use. On the other hand, the general level of understanding of basic Christian doctrine by the laity as well as the clergy is virtually impossible to assess. It may be assumed, however, that the main elements of Christian faith, such as the life and death of Christ, the notion of sin and penance, and the prospect of heaven or hell were widely familiar among the former and that liturgical and sacramental actions were also familiar to the latter.

There were, however, to be new stresses and excesses. One was the straining of relationships in the Mediterranean world between Latin and Greek Christians that was seen to have grown into a schism by the third quarter of the twelfth century and that was then compounded by the establishment of Latin bishops, churches and monasteries in the Byzantine empire following the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204. Another was the hostility between Christians and their Jewish neighbours which became evident in the Rhineland during the early crusades. A third was the mounting recurrence of challenges to one or other aspect of the authorised teaching and practices of Catholic Christianity. Such challenges were directed against important particulars, but they led to the formation of groups such as the Waldensians, who still exist today as a church, and the Albigensian Cathars who turned back to the Manichean heresy.

The preaching of the First Crusade at Clermont by Pope Urban II on 27 November 1095 and the capture of Jerusalem by Latin forces on 15 July 1099 are among the clearest indications that both a strengthened papacy and an expansionist Christendom were eager and able to tilt the scales against Islam in a new theatre of war, the Holy Land itself. The resurgence of western European influence in the Mediterranean world towards the end of the eleventh century took many forms besides that of crusade, and included commercial, military, colonial and monastic activity. These all form the background to the age of the crusades which was now to begin. The liberation of the Christians living in the holy places under Muslim domination in formerly Byzantine lands was an extension of the ambition to subjugate the Muslim enemies of the church who had ruled over Christians living in Spain and Sicily and elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. With the ushering in of crusades to the Holy Land there was a considerable increase in the efforts made in every western country to raise money and to encourage the recruitment of men who would take the cross as well as to realise the potential for colonisation and commerce. Early losses in

the east – Edessa in 1144, Jerusalem in 1187 – meant that such efforts became permanent. The crusades also opened a new chapter in the history of the relationships between Byzantium and the west. On the one hand, Byzantium looked for help from the west against Turkish advances in Asia Minor that were facilitated by the capture of Manzikert in 1071 and that culminated in the taking of Nicaea in 1078. On the other hand, the Latin capture and sack of Constantinople in 1204, and the attendant creation of a Latin empire of Constantinople – the ground for both events had been long prepared – has been described as the last of the barbarian invasions of the Roman empire.

This period is a turning point in the relationships between Islam, Byzantium and the Latin west. We have in this volume laid emphasis on the fact that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries Christendom and Europe are not coterminous; nor is Latin Catholicism coterminous with western Europe, nor Islam with North Africa and the Middle East. There were large numbers of Christians who lived under Muslim rule in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Iran, Egypt and Africa. Normally they were not persecuted. For many of them the crusades from the west – unlike the Turkish advances – were not a turning point. Those who lived in the Holy Land came under crusader rule during the twelfth century, but for Christians living both beyond the rule of Byzantium and beyond the reach of the crusades – among them the members of the Armenian and the Nestorian churches – their relationships with Islam and with Byzantium pursued different lines of development from those found in Europe and the Holy Land.

Many Muslims lived in Europe then as today. Large parts of Spain and Portugal, the Balearics, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily and the south of Italy had Muslim populations. As Professor Kennedy writes (below, p. 599): 'In the year 1000 the caliphate of Córdoba was almost certainly the richest and most powerful polity in western Europe . . . Only in Constantinople could a comparable state be found.' The eleventh century witnessed radical changes, not only through the advances made by Christian states in the north of Spain and through the fall of Toledo to Christians in 1085, but also through the disintegration of the Umayyad caliphate in Córdoba in the first quarter of the century. Yet Andalusia remained under Muslim control. That it did so serves as a reminder of the influence of developments in North Africa upon the history of southern Europe, and of limits to the steady growth of Latin domination of the Mediterranean world. The rise of the Almoravids in Morocco – they founded the city of Marrakesh in 1070 – enabled them to control the whole of Andalusia by 1104. The Muslims in al-Andalus remained dependent upon the Almoravids and then upon their successors in North Africa, the Almohads. Ibn Rushd or Averroes (1126–98), one of the very greatest scholars of the twelfth century, lived in Córdoba. His commentaries on Aristotle were soon to be widely known in the Latin universities. Only in 1182, in his later years, did he leave Spain for

Marrakesh. The Straits of Gibraltar, like the English Channel at this time, were not a frontier but a connecting sea-way within an 'empire'. Sicily and south Italy, on the other hand, came under Norman domination and became an intersection for Arab, Greek, Latin and Frankish cultures. Even in the late twelfth century many Muslims and ex-Muslims supported the Norman administration in Sicily by providing it with the sophisticated skills that Norman barons lacked. There were common links and traditions that united Jews and Muslims, whether they lived in Europe or elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. We have therefore included accounts of Muslims and Jews both in western Europe and in western Islam.

The Jews in Europe, like the Muslims, are a key element in the civilisation of medieval Europe. In the Muslim world Jews spoke and wrote Arabic, although Hebrew was the language of the Bible and of their liturgy; in Christian Europe Jews did not adopt the languages of their non-Jewish neighbours to the same extent. That they formed a distinct element, and lived within semi-autonomous enclaves, does not diminish their importance. Jews suffered persecution in the twelfth century at the hands of Christians as well as – although to a lesser extent – of Almohads. Polemical writing by both Christians and Jews appears from the late eleventh century and no doubt signifies a background of running disputes. However, in southern France and in Italy Jewish communities were long established and their security was rarely threatened by tensions with non-Jews. In the Iberian peninsula, Jewish communities survived the transition from Muslim to Christian rule wherever this occurred. Very rarely did any Jew possess political power in Europe or present any political challenge. Throughout Europe, and especially in southern Europe, Jews were able to achieve prominence in commerce, banking and medicine. Indeed, it is probable that Christian restrictions on money lending gave Jewish financiers an advantage that was not usually outweighed by the financial burdens that they were at times made to bear. This period is particularly significant in the history of Jewry in western Europe for two reasons. First, Jewry became established in north-west Europe, although more weakly than in the south. Second, the decline of the 'Abbasid caliphate in the eleventh century, which led to a loosening of ties between western and eastern Islam, had a similar effect upon Jewish communities. Nevertheless, there was an efflorescence of Jewish cultural activity in western Europe and it was not concentrated only in the south. The greatest of the medieval Jewish expositors of the Bible was Rashi of Troyes (1040–1105). Rashi's esteem for the literal sense of Scripture was influential among contemporary and later Christian exegetes such as Andrew, a canon of the abbey of St Victor at Paris (d. 1175), who consulted Jewish rabbis and used Rashi's commentaries. Arab scholarly works also came to be consulted and translated into Latin on a growing scale. Western translators in the eleventh

and twelfth centuries tended to take from Islamic and Jewish culture elements that were related to their own. What prompted them to do so may be parallel tendencies appearing at roughly similar moments in their cognate cultures as well as a common classical and biblical heritage.

In language and literature, outside of Muslim and Jewish circles, there is, apparently, a paradox. On the one hand, local dialects and vernaculars were becoming strong enough to support creative writing. On the other hand, the Latin language enjoyed a golden age. Underlying this is the great use of both Latin and the vernacular for many practical as well as imaginative purposes. Latin, the common language of educated clergy, reinforced the cultural and ecclesiastical unity of Europe. But, as in so many fields of life during the period, the opportunity to make a choice was arriving, and literate people could also opt to write in the vernacular. It is from the twelfth century that we have the French romances written by Chrétien de Troyes and from the early thirteenth-century *Parzival* written by Wolfram von Eschenbach. The writing of romances and the cult of chivalry develop together; earlier sagas and epics or *chansons de geste* – such as the *Chanson de Roland* – were also written down but came to typify a world that was being lost.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries are the time when Romanesque art and architecture reached their zenith in all parts of western Europe; the twelfth is the century when the Gothic style began to flourish in the north. In the Mediterranean world the traditions which flourished in Byzantium were powerful also in Spain and especially in Sicily and Venice. To some extent the Romanesque style is the artistic counterpart of the renaissance in other fields of the legacy of classical antiquity. The transition from rounded to pointed forms is the most noticeable feature of the turn from Romanesque to Gothic; the change is noticeable in calligraphy as well as in arcades and vaults. What determined this change – aesthetic considerations were certainly important – is debatable. The planning of castles also evolved dramatically. Buildings and their decoration provide some of the most powerful statements of principle made in the period. All castles and all churches proclaim respectively lordship and faith, but often a particular interpretation was put on the basic message. The stark unadorned simplicity of early Cistercian monastic buildings was in keeping with the reforming strictness of the new movement; the sumptuous mosaics found in Sicily proclaim the ambitions of the Norman rulers to emulate the empire of Byzantium.