The key focus of this book is the vitality and dynamism of all aspects of Christian experience from Late Antiquity to the First Crusade. By putting the institutional and doctrinal history firmly in the context of Christianity’s many cultural manifestations and lived experiences everywhere from Afghanistan to Iceland, this volume of The Cambridge History of Christianity emphasizes the ever-changing, varied expressions of Christianity at both local and world level. The insights of many disciplines, including gender studies, codicology, archaeology, and anthropology, are deployed to offer fresh interpretations which challenge the conventional truths concerning this formative period.

Addressing eastern, Byzantine and western Christianity, it explores encounters between Christians and others, notably Jews, Muslims, and pagans; the institutional life of the church including law, reform, and monasticism; the pastoral and sacramental contexts of worship, belief, and morality; and finally its cultural and theological meanings, including heresy, saints’ cults, and the afterlife.

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

CHRISTIANITY

The Cambridge History of Christianity offers a comprehensive chronological account of the development of Christianity in all its aspects—theological, intellectual, social, political, regional, global—from its beginnings to the present day. Each volume makes a substantial contribution in its own right to the scholarship of its period and the complete History constitutes a major work of academic reference. Far from being merely a history of western European Christianity and its offshoots, the History aims to provide a global perspective. Eastern and Coptic Christianity are given full consideration from the early period onwards, and later, African, Far Eastern, New World, South Asian, and other non-European developments in Christianity receive proper coverage. The volumes cover popular piety and non-formal expressions of Christian faith and treat the sociology of Christian formation, worship, and devotion in a broad cultural context. The question of relations between Christianity and other major faiths is also kept in sight throughout. The History will provide an invaluable resource for scholars and students alike.

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Preface

Christianity arose, spread, and strengthened its claims on people’s lives in the ancient world in the period covered by volumes 1 and 2 of the Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 3 treats the history of Christianity during the centuries usually labeled “early medieval” that stretch from about 600 to about 1100. This long, dynamic, and creative era saw both the consolidation of ancient Christianity’s achievements and dramatic new developments.

One way to grasp the changes and continuities that marked the early medieval period is to read the first and last chapters in this volume. The opening one presents a panoramic view of Christianity in about 600 with occasional looks into the past and glimpses of the future. The closing chapter takes a similarly panoramic view in about 1100. In 600 Christianity was still fundamentally a Mediterranean phenomenon. Almost all its creative centers hugged the shores of the inland sea, as did its key administrative sites. The vast majority of all Christians then alive lived within two hundred miles of the sea. Christianity’s most impressive territorial expansion beyond the Mediterranean basin lay in the east and in Africa. Western Europe was just then becoming visible as a potential site of growth and development. By 1100 Christianity’s creative core was located squarely in western Europe. The rapid and continuous expansion of Islam had diminished Christianity’s presence in Mediterranean Europe and Africa, as well as in central and western Asia. Islam also constituted a persistent challenge for Byzantium and thus for Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, Byzantium’s reach shortened not only in the eastern Mediterranean but also in the north where Avar, Bulgar, and Slav peoples and states challenged historic Byzantine claims. Christianity had meanwhile spread to every corner of Europe itself, with the exception of some areas lying along the eastern Baltic. If places such as Antioch and Alexandria had been the intellectual powerhouses of ancient Christianity, sites such as Winchester, Cologne, Paris, and Chartres were the dominant influences in the centuries on either side of the turn of the millennium.
Preface

In the dawning twenty-first century Christianity is very much a world religion, increasingly marginalized in Europe but vigorous on other continents. The early medieval centuries inaugurated a long period when Christianity seemed to be an essentially European phenomenon that in due course was exported, eventually in both Catholic and Protestant versions, to much of the rest of the globe. Today’s congeries of Christianities artfully blend peoples, localities, languages, cultures, and historical experiences. That is what the Christianities of 600 also looked like, and it is still what they looked like in 1100, albeit the center of gravity had shifted to the north and west and the forces of homogeneity were becoming evident.

This volume is entitled *Early Medieval Christianities*. The use of the plural is not meant to deny that all Christians could trace their roots to the Mediterranean world of Antiquity, or that they took inspiration from versions of the same scriptures, or that they worshiped in tolerably similar ways, or that their churches shared many legal and institutional features. Instead, the plural signals the futility of speaking in overly generalized terms about an ever-changing religion that extended from Ireland to Afghanistan, from Norway to Nubia. Christianity transformed every people and culture with which it came into contact but it was itself transformed by peoples, cultures, antecedent histories, and even by landscapes. The plural, in short, denotes not chaos, confusion, or disunity, but richness, creativity, and complexity.

What is more, Christianity must be understood in a variety of complementary ways that, taken together, again urge the descriptive plural. Christianity is an ecclesial phenomenon everywhere, but it evolved very different kinds of churches and of ecclesiological conceptions to sustain and explain those churches. Christianity is also a body of teachings to which people grant varying assents of mind and heart and body. Those positions had to be defined, articulated, and transmitted. In Antiquity they were frequently the occasion of bitter strife. In the early Middle Ages there were fewer doctrinal quarrels, but there were also large bodies of Christians who did not believe all the same things and who had relatively little to do with each other. Christianity also attends the major moments of life from birth to death; it is lived experience as much as or more than a set of doctrinal formulations. Ancient Christianity was a fundamentally urban phenomenon. Cities were not a conspicuous feature of early medieval Europe. Curiously, however, Christianity retained structures, practices, and outlooks that were essentially urban even as it took root in what were essentially rural and agrarian societies. Adaptation and local particularity are equally evident in that respect. No matter what place, time,
Preface

or topic engages our attention, we cannot usefully reduce Christianity to a
singular phenomenon.

An awareness of these basic guiding principles will help the reader to grasp
the arrangement of this volume and to see the connective tissue that holds
the organizational skeleton together. The volume’s first part constitutes a
geographical and historical tour of the major, identifiable regions within which
Christianity either extended its ancient achievements or else began anew. The
first chapter in this part surveys the late Roman scene and the following
ones explore the Byzantine world, the many forms of eastern Christianity,
and then Christianity in Slavic, Germanic, and Celtic lands. The volume’s
next part addresses explicitly encounters between Christianity and Judaism;
Christianity’s confrontation with Islam, both along its expanding frontiers
and within the caliphate; meetings between Greek and Latin Christians; and,
finally, Christianity’s lengthy engagement with Germanic and Slav paganism.
These two sections emphasize the broader political, cultural, and religious
milieux which helped to shape early medieval Christianities.

The next set of chapters deals with what might be broadly characterized
as institutional issues: ecclesiastical organization, monasticism and asceticism,
the making and implementing of law, property and material concerns, ideas of
reform, and locations of cult. Unlike the chapters in the first two parts which
tend to focus on specific regions or incidences of cultural contact, the chapters
in part 3 range widely across all the Christianities included in this volume.
They balance a high level of generalization with enough concrete examples
and case studies to make key issues both clear and vivid.

The volume’s fourth part takes up critical themes in the history and practice
of Christianity as a lived experience with particular attention to the sacramental
life of the church and its Christian communities. Its premise is that modes of
worship, ritual, and prayer tell us a good deal about what people believed, or
about what they were expected to believe. Rites that attended birth and death
open the discussion. Penance, both the practice of penance and ideas of sin
and redemption, follows the discussion of baptism and final anointing. There
follows a treatment of sickness and healing that combines reflections on both
medical and spiritual remedies. The ensuing chapter explores gender, sexuality,
and the body. This chapter permits insights into how writers talked about the
people, both lay and clerical, who actually were the Christians of the early
medieval period. The part concludes with a two-fold discussion of worship:
the theology behind the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, everywhere
the church’s central act of worship, and the performance of the liturgy itself,
including some discussion of the books needed for that performance.
Preface

The fifth and last part in the volume treats intellectual and cultural issues that pertain to both formal learning and to Christianity’s imaginary. The lead chapter discusses some of the myriad ways in which early medieval people thought and wrote about God. The next addresses “God-talk,” theology, directly by inquiring into doctrinal quarrels. These were fewer in number and intensity than those in Antiquity and perhaps less deeply rooted in the ordinary experience of most early medieval Christianities. The Bible, always and everywhere the crucial Christian book, or collection of books, is treated in its textual and interpretive frameworks. Books as objects, with particular attention to the books of the eastern Christian tradition, come in for a thorough discussion. Saints, the holy men and women who were thought to have lived exemplary lives, are analyzed for what they can teach us about the aspirations and expectations of ecclesiastical elites and ordinary believers. Finally, appropriately, the “Last Things” conclude the volume: How did Christians imagine the other world, the world beyond the grave?

Taken overall, this volume presents the reader with the main ways in which twenty-first-century scholars imagine the other world of early medieval Christianities. The interpretations offered here can never be definitive: much in the pages which follow challenges and refreshes debates or assumptions that have long been deeply embedded in the history of Christianity. In reappraising them, the book dislodges some issues from the center of attention and substitutes other, more timely ones for the rapidly changing world of the third Christian millennium. It is hoped that it will challenge and refresh those who read it, as preparing it has its editors and contributors.

Thomas F. X. Noble
Julia M. H. Smith
Acknowledgments

Editing this volume has been much more of a collaborative effort than the presence of the editors’ names on the title page might imply: we acknowledge wholeheartedly the role of all the contributors in helping bring it into being. All have responded graciously to our suggestions about the content and presentation of their chapters, and many have provided us with expert advice and guidance on a wide range of specific details. They have also borne unforeseen and unavoidable delays in the editorial process with good grace and patience, for which both editors are deeply grateful.

This undertaking could not have been realized without the extremely generous financial and practical support of the University of Notre Dame. At Notre Dame, the Medieval Institute and Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts jointly defrayed the costs of bringing contributors together from three continents, whilst the McKenna Center provided an ideal environment in which colleagues exchanged vigorous and stimulating critiques of each other’s draft chapters. This colloquium enabled the volume to acquire a coherence which editorial guidance alone could not have achieved, and the pages which follow are an expression of participants’ appreciation of the intellectual stimulus and geniality of those three days. At all stages of the preparation of the book from conference to impeccable typescript in paper and electronic formats, Roberta Baranowski, the Medieval Institute’s Assistant Director, has provided invaluable administrative support and sub-editorial energy: it is a pleasure to acknowledge publicly our profound debt to her.

Two translators applied their linguistic sensitivity and subject area knowledge to original German and French texts from our chapter authors and produced English versions. Dr. Rona Johnston Gordon, University of St. Andrews, provided the translation, from the German, for Professor Angenendt’s chapter. Andrew Irving, University of Notre Dame, translated the chapters by Professors Boureau, Helvétius and Kaplan, Iogna-Prat, Lobrichon, and Palazzo from the French.

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In the final stages of production, Christopher Riches, of Riches Editorial Services, meticulously coordinated the correction of the proofs and improved the book in many other significant ways. We are immensely grateful for his exceptional professionalism.

TFXN & JMHS
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AASS</td>
<td><em>Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur</em>. Ed. J. Bollandus et al. Antwerp and Brussels, 1634–.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td><em>Corpus christianorum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCM</td>
<td><em>Corpus christianorum continuatio mediaevalis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSG</td>
<td><em>Corpus christianorum series graeca</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSL</td>
<td><em>Corpus christianorum series latina</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCO</td>
<td><em>Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td><em>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>DOP</td>
<td><em>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EME</td>
<td><em>Early Medieval Europe</em></td>
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Abbreviations


MGH MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MGH SRG MGH scriptores rerum germanicarum
MGH SRM MGH scriptores rerum merovingicarum


PO Patrologia orientalis


SC Sources chrétiennes
SCH Studies in Church History

Note regarding footnote citations

In general, the footnote citation system used in this volume punctuates chapter, page, and volume references as follows: author, title of work volume number if any, chapter, section within the work, page number from specific edition. E.g., Anonymous, Historia 2, II.ii.3, 346–47. Thus, chapter 2, section 2, part 3 on pages 346–47 in the edition cited in the bibliography of volume 2 of the work entitled Historia by an anonymous author. Unless necessary for clarity, edition editor/translator names are omitted in the footnotes and provided only in the bibliography. E.g., Anonymous, Historia 2, 25–37 (ed. Smith, 399–401) means sections 25 to 37 (or, if these are numbered individually, documents 25 to 37) in volume 2 of Historia by Anonymous are found on pages 399 to 401 in the edition by Smith.
Map 2. The Christian East (continued)
Map 4. The Slavic World
Map 5. The British Isles