Where do we go after we die? This book traces how the European Middle Ages offered distinctive answers to this universal question, evolving from antiquity through to the sixteenth century, and reflecting a variety of problems and developments. Focusing on texts describing visions of the afterlife, alongside art and theology, this volume explores heaven, hell, and purgatory as they were imagined across Europe, as well as by noted authors including Gregory the Great and Dante. A cross-disciplinary team of contributors including historians, literary scholars, classicists, art historians, and theologians offer not only a fascinating sketch of both medieval perceptions and the wide scholarship on this question: they also provide a much-needed new perspective. Where the twelfth century was once the ‘high point’ of the medieval afterlife, the chapters here show that the afterlives of the early and later Middle Ages were far more important and imaginative than we once thought.

Richard Matthew Pollard is Associate Professor in the History Department at the Université du Québec à Montréal. He studied at Toronto and then Cambridge, and his doctoral thesis won the 2010 The Leonard Boyle Dissertation Prize. Aside from numerous articles and chapters, he has completed the first new edition of the Latin version of Josephus’ Antiquities since 1524 and is preparing a new critical edition of the Visio Wettini.
This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars, and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period c.1100–1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose, and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

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7. The Angel shows John the Heavenly Jerusalem. Paris Apocalypse, c. 1250–5; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Français 403, fol. 41v (photo: Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

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Preface and Acknowledgements

As so many others, this book was inspired by the needs of students. In 2013, I led an undergraduate seminar at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, titled ‘Heaven and Hell in the Western Imagination’. We were to explore the history of ancient and especially medieval visits or voyages to the afterlife. Casting around for a suitable textbook, I found none available in English, and we were forced to make do with the English version of Le Goff’s celebrated (if problematic) Birth of Purgatory. Marshalling my contacts, and impetuously making new ones, I slowly drew together a proposal in April 2013. It has been a very long journey since then, one lengthened by an inexperienced editor who worked in fits and starts, and whose own life saw considerable changes over these years. The result seems worthwhile: not merely a comprehensive and coherent textbook (in English), but as my introduction below makes clear, one where each chapter makes a definite contribution to the field.

Patience and persistence were perhaps the fundamental elements in finishing this volume. The editor is extremely grateful to each of the authors, who displayed these qualities time and time again as the proposal was revised, the initial chapters were produced, edited, and then shortened several times. The authors also provided much-needed encouragement in the final months. The volume was also patiently (and kindly) shepherded by various figures at Cambridge University Press over the years, in particular Linda Bree, Tim Mason, Emily Hockley, and Natasha Burton. The completion of the book would have been impossible without the painstaking work of various others: Carle-Gabriel Mérineau and (now Dr) Xavier Biron Ouellet did much of the bibliographical and formatting work, and here even my wife, Lydia Philpott, generously assisted. The support of my colleagues and the Faculté des Sciences Humaines at UQAM was invaluable in the later years of the project. The book would of course be all the poorer were it not for the institutions that provided the illustrations.
Preface and Acknowledgements

I would also like offer profuse thanks to the two indexers for the volume, Ariane Godbout and Anne-Marie Dubreuil, and to the Faculté des Sciences Humaines at UQAM for financial support in producing the index.

Finally, this volume would not and could not have been completed without the support of family: Ida, Lydia, Anne, Jan, Betty, Andrew, and Michael. It is dedicated to Ida, who encouraged me so much, despite the fact that she won’t be able to read it for a few years at least.
Abbreviations

AHMG The Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God Concerning the Chastisements
AP Apocalypse of Paul
BA Biblioteca Ambrosiana
BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BC Biblioteca Capitolare
BNcR Biblioteca Nazionale centrale di Roma
BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France
BSB Bayerische Staatsbibliothek
CC Corpus christianorum
CCCM Corpus christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis
CCH Collectio canonum hibernensis
CCSL Corpus christianorum. Series latina
CD De civitate dei
CFS Cistercian Fathers series
CLA Codices latini antiquiores
CMG De cura pro mortuis gerenda
CSEL Corpus scripotorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
DVP Die visio Pauli
EETS Early English Text Society
FLG Das fließende Licht der Gottheit
GL Jacobus a Voragine (James of Varazze), Golden Legend
HE Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica
HGL The Herald of God’s Loving-Kindness
ILCV Inscriptiones latinae christianaee veteres
Inf. Dante, Inferno (first part of Commedia)
JMF John Mirk’s Festival
JML Journal of Medieval Latin
JTS Journal of Theological Studies
LA Jacobus a Voragine, Legenda aurea

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>LDO</td>
<td>Liber diuinorum operum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHD</td>
<td>Libri historiarum decem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSG</td>
<td>Liber specialis gratiae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVM</td>
<td>Liber vitae meritorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Auctores antiquissimi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capit. Episc.</td>
<td>Capitularia episcoporum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conc.</td>
<td>Concilia Karolini aevi</td>
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<td>Epist.</td>
<td>Epistolae</td>
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<td>Epist. Kar.</td>
<td>Epistolae Karolini aevi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epist. Sel.</td>
<td>Epistolae selectae</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLMA</td>
<td>Poetae latini medii aevi</td>
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<td>SS</td>
<td>Scriptores</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRG</td>
<td>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRM</td>
<td>Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</td>
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<tr>
<td>n.s</td>
<td>new series</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>ÖNB</td>
<td>Österreichische Nationalbibliothek</td>
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<tr>
<td>o.s.</td>
<td>old series</td>
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<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Par.</td>
<td>Dante, Paradiso (third part of Commedia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFS</td>
<td>Prognosticum futuri saeculi</td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologia Latina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purg.</td>
<td>Dante, Purgatorio (second part of Commedia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RME</td>
<td>Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham</td>
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<td>RNL</td>
<td>Russian National Library</td>
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<td>SB</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Sources chrétiennes</td>
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<td>SPP</td>
<td>St Patrick’s Purgatory</td>
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<td>SSLS</td>
<td>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Summa theologiae</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBF</td>
<td>Transitus Beati Fursei, ed. Rackham</td>
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<td>TEAMS</td>
<td>Teaching Association for Medieval Studies</td>
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<td>TêTra</td>
<td>La trasmissione dei testi latini del Medioevo (SISMEL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>Visio Baronti (Vision of Barontus)</td>
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<td>VF</td>
<td>Vita Fursei abbatis Latiniacensis</td>
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<td>VOF</td>
<td>Vision(s) of Fursei</td>
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<td>VME</td>
<td>Visio monachi de Eynsham</td>
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<td>VMW</td>
<td>Vision of the Monk of Wenlock</td>
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<td>VOL</td>
<td>Vision of Laisrén</td>
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<td>VW</td>
<td>Visio Wettini (Vision of Wetti)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZB</td>
<td>Zentralbibliothek, Zürich</td>
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