

early Islamic period with scant modification. Early Christianity, however, developed alongside Judaism gradually and intimately, while most Christians met early Islam as the creed of foreign conquerors. Should the model be tweaked accordingly?

The author's opposition to contemporary anti-Muslim discourses in the conclusion, however, is reinforced by the chapter's contention "that religious elites did not have a monopoly on defining one's identity and that lived religious experience was often much messier than what surviving texts advocated" (167). For this and other insights, as for its careful analysis of a great many Syriac sources for the early Islamic period, *Envisioning Islam* is recommended to all readers interested in that period, and particularly in the roles that Syriac Christians played in its construction.

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***Medieval Christianity: A New History.*** By **Kevin Madigan.** New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015. xxiv + 487 pp. \$40.00 cloth; \$27.50 paper.

I begin this review with a wish that Kevin Madigan's *Medieval Christianity: A New History* had a different title. It is in fact a book about medieval Christianity in western Europe. There were other medieval Christianities, which figure here only very slightly or not at all. A qualifier in the title and a bit more acknowledgment of the global Christian context of his European subject matter would have been in order—especially in a work presented as a "textbook" (xix), given the current trend in the field of Christian history to recover a view of the whole geographical scope of the religion, not least in its pre-modern phases.

That being said, Madigan's book is a substantial and important contribution to the venerable tradition of historical writing on medieval Christian Europe. It stands indeed as a textbook, in the sense of being a comprehensive treatment of that subject, for students to work their way through. But unlike, for instance, Bernard Hamilton, in his *Religion in the Medieval West* (London: Arnold, 1986) or John Lynch, in *The Medieval Church: A Brief History* (London: Longman, 1992), both of whom frame their work pedagogically—specifically to make the strangeness of medieval Europe accessible to their present-day students—Madigan does his framing in terms of a specific historical project. That project is to examine the relation of western medieval

Christianity to its society, tracing the “establishment and evolution of a religious culture” (xix) within a social setting in which Christianity was “*the* distinguishing and unitive religious and cultural mortar” (xvii). In this project, Madigan acknowledges his indebtedness to R. W. Southern’s *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1970), a work that indeed, though begun as a textbook, became something more like a specialized monograph, as Southern sacrificed comprehensiveness to focus resolutely on the topic implied by the title. Madigan does not go so far. Still his debt to Southern’s sensibility and vision remains evident at every turn, and—though hoping that beginning students will profit from it (xi)—he avowedly wishes to provide a “narrative” that is “deeper and more complex than is traditional in a textbook” (xxi).

For Madigan, as for Southern, the theme of the intimate connection of religion and society ties the narrative together. After an introductory chapter on ancient Christianity, as background, the three sections of the body of the work cover the early (circa 600–1050), high (circa 1050–1300) and late (circa 1300–1500) Middle Ages, respectively in chronological sequence; within each, however, the chapters focus on distinct elements in the culture that illuminate Madigan’s larger picture and are mostly defined by topic rather than chronology. The first consists of chapters on the Christianization of Celtic and Germanic peoples, the formation and evolution of the two central institutions of papacy and monasticism, the Carolingian consolidation of both royal and papal power, the proprietary church (ownership of church institutions by laypersons) as it emerged after Carolingian rule, relations between Christians and Jews (as, in Salo Baron’s phrase, not all “lachrymose”), and the generally hostile Christian relations with Islam. Then the section on the “high” or central period begins with a chapter on the momentous reforms of the eleventh century, both monastic and papal, in which the New Testament idea of *vita apostolica* began to displace that of sacral kingship, and a neo-Donatism inspired the ideal of a “purified” clergy at a high place in the hierarchy of society. There follow chapters on the sequels of that reform in the new monastic, mendicant, and heretical movements, the claims of the monarchical papacy and its opponents, the emergence of the universities, and the many new efforts to “deepen” the Christian faith among the populace (for example, through preaching and pastoral care), all conditioned by, and responding to, an expanding and urbanized society. Then after another chapter on Christian-Jewish relations, which by this period *were* thoroughly lachrymose, the section on the late period highlights elements of decline amid the very successes of Christian society: the fortunes of the papacy in the age of Conciliarism and the increasing powers of nation states, the heresies of Wyclif and Hus, the “partial” and local ideas of reform—as expressed in a variety of contexts,

from Savonarolan Florence to the communities of the Modern Devotion—that contrast with the headier earlier reform, and the more individualistic piety that gave expression both to a further “deepening” of the faith and to a slow demise of the erstwhile supports of a unified Christian society.

Within this larger narrative, Madigan is also at pains to “synthesize the important new scholarly developments in the field of medieval Christianity in the four decades since the publication of Southern’s book” (xix)—an important aspect of the book’s value as a textbook. I note here Madigan’s take on two of those developments. One concerns the place of women: he draws on the extensive feminist-inspired work by scholars both to recover women as historical subjects, and to recognize their place throughout the narrative of medieval history (rather than only in a special chapter or addendum), devoting considerable space to women’s involvement in monastic and other religious movements and including several women (Perpetua of Carthage, Hildegard of Bingen, Clare of Assisi, and so on) among the illustrative biographical sketches that punctuate the book. The other development concerns so-called “popular religion”: Madigan acquaints the reader with the important scholarly discussion sparked by some French historians (for example, Jean Delumeau) who see western medieval Christianity as a religion of the elites in contrast to the “folkloristic,” essentially non-Christian, religion of the common people. Although Madigan clearly stands against such views, he takes popular religion seriously, emphasizing the importance of Christian symbol and ritual “professed assent” at all levels of medieval society (citing in particular the work of John van Engen) and takes care not to restrict his attention to elites.

All in all, Madigan presents a solid, nuanced, and enlightening narrative of medieval western European Christianity, which will well repay a serious reader’s diligence in encountering it.

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***The Formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, Baptism and the Imperium Christianum.*** By Owen M. Phelan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. viii + 312 pp. \$105.00 cloth.

In the present study under review, Owen M. Phelan argues that Charlemagne’s Christian empire (the *imperium christianum*), constituted a society “whose most basic organizing principle was the *sacramentum* of baptism” (10),