



Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c.600-900

Sarah Foot

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This major 2006 history of monasticism in early Anglo-Saxon England explores the history of the Church between the conversion to Christianity in the sixth century and a monastic revival in the tenth. It represents the first comprehensive revision of accepted views about monastic life in England before the Benedictine reform. Sarah Foot shows how early Anglo-Saxon religious houses were simultaneously active and contemplative, their members withdrawing from the preoccupations of contemporary aristocratic society, while still remaining part of that world. Focusing on the institution of the 'minster' (the communal religious community) and rejecting a simplistic binary division between active 'minsters' and enclosed 'monasteries', Foot argues that historians have been wrong to see minsters in the light of ideals of Benedictine monasticism. Instead, she demonstrates that Anglo-Saxon minsters reflected more of contemporary social attitudes; despite their aim for solitude, they retained close links to aristocratic German society.

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