

ABIDING IN THE FIELDS: PASTORAL CARE AND SOCIETY
IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxon peoples of England in the seventh century began with evangelization by Irish and Roman missionaries and continued through the instruction and correction provided by English clergy. As had their fellows since the first century of Christianity, those clergy in England interacted with lay persons in the context of their society according to established pastoral roles that encompassed community leadership, religious instruction, and divinely ordained power and authority and whose primary mandates were to convert, to instruct, and to correct.

This dissertation uses a broad range of textual and material evidence to trace the development of this Christian pastoral role within the house churches of the first and second centuries, the urban churches of the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries, and the settlements and *monasteria* of Ireland and England in the sixth and seventh centuries. It explores how pastors made a place for themselves in Northern European and Insular societies as Christianity was carried into new areas and to new peoples and how texts produced and used in England in the seventh through the mid-ninth centuries reflect pastoral concerns and interactions. Its conclusions include that, though clerical authority was based on established religious belief and ecclesiastical organization, the expression of that authority nevertheless remained flexible and responsive to social needs and circumstances in large part because it was based on pastoral interaction.