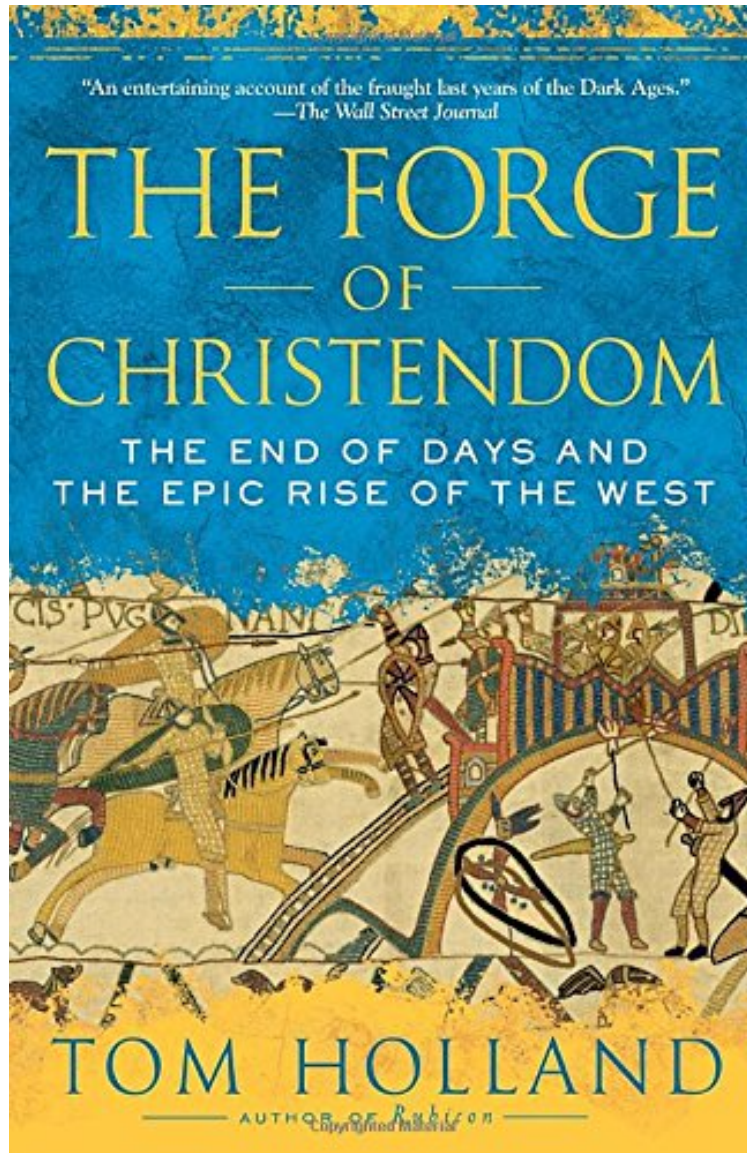


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# The Forge of Christendom: The End of Days and the Epic Rise of the West

Tom Holland

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**Tom Holland : The Forge of Christendom: The End of Days and the Epic Rise of the West** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Forge of Christendom: The End of Days and the Epic Rise of the West:

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A grand narrative history of the re-emergence of Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire. At the approach of the first millennium, the Christians of Europe did not seem likely candidates for future greatness. Weak, fractured, and hemmed in by hostile nations, they saw no future beyond the widely anticipated Second Coming of Christ. But when the world did not end, the peoples of Western Europe suddenly found themselves with no choice but to begin the heroic task of building a Jerusalem on earth.In *The Forge of Christendom*, Tom Holland masterfully describes this remarkable new age, a time of caliphs and Viking sea kings, the spread of castles and the invention of knighthood. It was one of the most significant departure points in history: the emergence of Western Europe as a distinctive and expansionist power.

From Publishers WeeklyIf Y2K proved anticlimactic, the Y1K crisisapocalyptic expectations surrounding the year 1000had a lasting impact, argues this far-ranging, over-reaching history of medieval Europe. Holland (*Persian Fire*) surveys the two and a half centuries between the fragmenting of Charlemagne's empire and the First Crusade, visiting milestones like the Norman conquest of England along with lesser invasions, raids, feudal vendettas, kidnappings and pope vs. antipope squabbles. He discerns movement amid the tumult and slaughter, as Catholic Europe went from anxious beleaguement by the barbarians coming from every direction to confident expansionism. Holland's thesis that it was the disappointment of millennial hopes that gave Christendom its new focus on worldly progress is weakly supported; he has a hard time showing that anyone besides churchmen thought about the approaching millennium. His greater theme is Catholicism's civilizing mission: pagan foes are converted and co-opted, a new class of marauding knights is tamed by Church peace councils, and Pope Gregory VII's defiance of Emperor Henry IV inaugurates church-state separation. Holland's colorful, energetic narrative vividly captures the medieval mindset, while conveying the dynamism that underlay a seemingly static age. Maps. (May 5) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From School Library JournalBritish historian Holland (*Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Empire*) has written a big, old-fashioned study of the reemergence of Europe following the disastrous collapse of the Roman Empire. He argues that expectation of Apocalypse at 1000 C.E. (or thereabouts) shaped the course of the era from Charlemagne to the start of the Crusades, i.e., roughly 8001100 C.E. His vast setting shifts among locations as far-flung as York, Cordoba, Kiev, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. The huge cast includes all the great personalities of the time: popes and emperors, warriors and saints, including Canute, William the Conqueror, Pope Gregory VII, and Emperor Henry IV, along with many lesser prelates and warlords. To hold this diffuse story together, Holland relies with some success on lively, jokey, confident prose. His bloody saga of embryonic European states (and their alliances and conflicts with a power-hungry papacy) rather swamps any Millennial argument: Holland does not persuade the reader that concern about the End of Days played a significant role in the actions of the savage, power-hungry men who began assembling the proto-states of Germany, France, England, and Spain and launched the Crusades, the first pan-European enterprise. This book will appeal to all who enjoy a good history read.Stewart Desmond, Ph.D., New York Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A Best Book of the Year: *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Independent*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Spectator*An entertaining account of the fraught last years of the Dark Ages.*The Wall Street Journal*An enjoyable and exuberantly argued book. . . . Holland combines sound scholarly credentials with a gift for storytelling on a magisterial scale. . . . In a tightly woven and sometimes witty narrative, [Holland demonstrates] the subtle interplay of genuine religious sentiment and cynical power politics.*The Economist*A sweeping and hugely enlightening study of Western history.*Providence Journal*Prodigious. . . . A marvelous, enthralling read, [it] gives a lively sense of these turbulent centuries that were so crucial in the making of Western civilization. . . . Narrative history in the grand manner, written with the panache and confidence we associate with the great historians of the 18th and 19th centuries.*Daily Telegraph (London)*A superb, fascinating and erudite medieval banquet of slaughter, sanctity and sex, filled with emperors, whores and monks.*Simon Sebag-Montefiore, The Evening Standard (London)*Fresh from his triumphs in Rome and Persia, Tom Holland turns his brilliant narrative spotlight on the so-called dark ages that followed the Western Empires decline. Global in reach, this book sweeps thrillingly over the troubled centuries that saw the triumph of Byzantium, the ascent of Islamand the lingering disaster of the Crusades. . . . Unlike other blockbuster histories, this one takes as much care with beliefs as with the battles they provoked. We all live in the feverish aftermath of these events, which makes Hollands galloping guidance all the more timely.*The Independent (London)*A fast and lively lesson in that period which school so often misses out. . . . Another blockbuster.*The Sunday Times (London)*A tremendously good read, which will no doubt gain more accolades and many more readers.*The Sunday Telegraph (London)*As a stirring, vivid and formidably learned analysis of the events surrounding the

Millennium, this will hardly be equalled. Extraordinary insights and lapidary phrases abound. *The Independent on Sunday* (London) It is perfectly right for Holland to claim a great deal for the 11th century, of which his book is a splendid, highly coloured canvas. *The Guardian* (London) Nobody believes in the Dark Ages any more, but Hollands brightness and clarity makes this account of the year 1000 exceptionally pleasing. *The Scotsman* This was the era when dragons were still thought to stalk the Earth; when daredevil noblemen would cover their bodies in honey and allow it to be licked off by ravening bears. . . . Mightily readable far more than the stories of Greeks and Romans, this is your history. *Mail on Sunday* (London) Remarkable. . . . Both a vastly entertaining read, with grandiloquent Gibbon-like sweep, as well as deeply intelligent: it constitutes a major contribution to some of the most crucial issues of our time. John Cornwell, *The Tablet* An exhilarating sweep across European history either side of the year 1000; riveting. *The Spectator* In the year 1000, Western Europe was no more than a primitive and fearful region in the shadow of Byzantium and Islam. Yet as Tom Holland demonstrates in this fascinating history it was also the crucible for the creation of the Europe we know today. From the age of Canute and William the Conqueror, Pope Gregory VII and the Vikings this vivid and bloodthirsty history is a riveting insight into what made us the people we are. *The Daily Mail* (London)