This volume has as its focus Porphyry’s “Against the Christians.” It opens with a series of studies that situate this text in its religious, philosophical, and cultural contexts. This is followed by a translation of the fragments and testimonia that refer to Porphyry’s lost work. These materials are arranged chronologically according to author.

The starting point of this attempt to reconstruct Porphyry’s Against the Christians are the fragments collected by Adolf von Harnack in his Against the Christians.1 However, this work goes beyond this collection. Additional fragments and testimonia are derived from sources ignored by Harnack, whose goal was to reconstruct the original edition of Porphyry’s “Against the Christians.” Since in my view this is impossible, a more modest goal was set—to collect all data that directly or indirectly refers to Porphyry’s lost work. These additional fragments and testimonia are culled from writings by Porphyry and the Church Fathers.2

There are better philologists than myself who could produce a “fresher” translation of “Against the Christians.” Such a project is left to them. What I have done is examine prior translations of these fragments and followed them when appropriate. The result is a straightforward and literal translation which at times sounds idiomatically rough to modern ears. Here I thought it better to keep the

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1 A. von Harnack, Porphyrius Gegen die Christen, 15 Bucher, Zeugnisse und Referate, Abhandlungen der. koen. preuss. Akademie d. Wissenschaft, phil-hist. Klasse 1 (Berlin 1916). It has been the policy of this edition, whenever possible, not to introduce text restorations different from those offered in this initial collection. When departure from this principle occurs it reflects either differences of interpretation in terms of text variance or differences in grammatical understanding.

original grammatical and syntactical constructions than possibly alter the meanings of the fragments and testimonia. Moreover, I have not attempted to write a commentary on Against the Christians; that would require a second book. Instead I have added brief notes and textual remarks, which I hope will contribute to an understanding of the fragments.

Two recent works on Porphyry’s Against the Christians merit mentioning. R. J. Hoffmann’s Porphyry’s Against the Christians stands as an important contribution to the study of this text. However, since Hoffmann’s work focuses primarily on Macarius Magnes’ Monogenes, I have left it to stand on its own. Richard Goulet’s Macarios de Magnese: Le Monogenes appeared as this text went to press. Thus unfortunately, I was unable to incorporate the useful discussion Goulet brings to Against the Christians—especially his claim that a fons of Macarius Magnes’ Monogenes is Porphyry’s work “Against the Christians.” My work is meant to complement Hoffmann’s and Goulet’s volumes. It does not—indeed cannot—duplicate them.

This work is intended for use by undergraduate and graduate students. This explains the lengthy historical, religious, philosophical, and cultural introduction to “Against the Christians.” This section can be skipped by those who are well-versed in these matters and wish to read Against the Christians alone.

Over the years I have built up a great many debts. Mine are too extensive to mention, except for the most immediate. I owe a special thanks to Eugen Kullmann for his generous attention to my research as it developed over the years. His assistance as a friend and critic is most appreciated. I extend special notice of lasting gratitude to the late Horst R. Moehring, who introduced me to the study of Ancient Mediterranean religions and philosophy. A specific debt is owed to Sara Denning-Bolle, who urged me to complete this project and pursue its publication. I also wish to express my thanks to the Mellon Foundation and to Dowling College for the research stipends that made this work possible.

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3 R. J. Hoffmann, Porphyry’s Against the Christians (Amherst, NY 1994).