

P R E F A C E

In this book I wish to examine the impact of wealth on the Christian churches of the Latin West in the last centuries of the Roman empire and in the first century of the post-imperial age, roughly from the middle of the fourth century AD to the consolidation of the post-Roman, barbarian kingdoms in the period conventionally associated with the “Fall of Rome.”

I will begin with four opening chapters that set the scene. The first will describe Roman society in the fourth century AD. The second will examine the social standing of the Christian churches in the transitional period between the conversion of Constantine in 312 and the entry of the rich in ever greater numbers into the churches in the course of the 370s. The next two chapters will juxtapose the traditional ideal of giving to the city with the novel Christian ideal of placing treasure in heaven through gifts to the church and to the poor. The issues raised by the contrast between these two ideals will remain with us for the rest of the book.

The next thirteen chapters will introduce the reader to well-known figures, each one of them in a particular landscape. Each represents a different option for the use of wealth and for the formation of attitudes to it. We will meet the great pagan, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, in the Rome and southern Italy of his time. Then we will go north, to the Milan and northern Italy of his Christian contemporary, Ambrose of Milan. For three chapters we will follow the young Augustine, a very different person from a more modest background, from Africa to Italy and back again, as he lived and thought his way through a series of religious communities, each of which was characterized by distinctive attitudes toward the use of wealth among its members. We will leave Augustine in 397 as the newly installed bishop of Hippo and as the head of a monastery so as to go far to the north—to the Gaul of Ausonius of Bordeaux. In Gaul, and in the adjoining provinces, we will savor the wealth of the rich landowners and courtiers, the

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remains of whose villas still amaze us. We will do this in order to appreciate the mystique of wealth and the attitudes toward the natural world that circulated among such people. For this was the wealth Paulinus of Nola formally renounced in 394. We will see how Paulinus came to make this renunciation; how he viewed his own self-chosen poverty; and how he came to devote his wealth to a building project around the shrine of Saint Felix in Nola in southern Italy, which he described in such a way as to make him the poet of wealth renounced and found again as treasure in heaven. Then we will turn back to Rome—but to the Rome of the Christian churches. We will examine the circumstances in which the churches gained wealth and standing in Rome from the time of Constantine onward. The situation created by this slow buildup explains the tensions that accompanied the arrival in Rome in 382 of Jerome, his abrupt departure in 385, and the controversies about wealth, poverty, and patronage that he helped provoke and that we know of largely through his vehement writings in the 390s and early 400s.

After Jerome, the pace of the book changes. We have entered an age of mounting crisis. The spectacular renunciation of their property by a young noble couple (Pinianus and Melania the Younger) coincided with the onset of the Visigothic advance on Rome. The sack of Rome in 410 brought another radical Christian, Pelagius, along with his Roman patrons, as refugees to the shores of Africa. When in Italy, Pelagius's followers had circulated vehement criticisms of wealth. They had insisted on its total renunciation. The consequent battle of ideas between Augustine and Pelagius amounted to a Punic War of the mind between Italy and Africa. But it was not simply a war of ideas. As far as Augustine was concerned, the pious habits of an entire Christian landscape were at stake. Hence we shall go back a century so as to appreciate the fierce sense of agency that had enabled the African churches to build up a position for themselves in African society through drawing on the gifts of the faithful. We will then follow the attitudes toward wealth and religious giving that emerged from the preaching of Augustine in the cities of Africa in the 400s. It was these attitudes that Augustine placed in the path of the radical call to renunciation associated with the views of the supporters of Pelagius. The message from Africa was firm. Wealth was not to be thrown away in headlong renunciation; it was to be used in the churches. Above all, it was to be used to expiate sin. In all subsequent centuries, Augustine's notion of the intimate relation between sin and religious giving infused the giving practices of the Latin churches with a somber dye. Already in Augustine's old age, his views made themselves felt throughout the Latin West. This was in the last days of the united empire. By 430 (as chapter 24 will show), all these concerns came to be engulfed in the general crisis of the western empire. This crisis brought to an abrupt end the affluence of the previous century and placed the wealth of those who had survived the storm on a very different footing.

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We are dealing now with an impoverished society in the aftermath of violent dislocation. The regions of the Roman world had drifted apart. Each region fared differently; some did a lot better than others. Hence the surprising vividness of the intellectual life associated with the still-prosperous enclave of Provence, which produced, at this time, the programmatic statements on monastic poverty of John Cassian, a succession of startling charismatic leaders associated with the island of Lérins, and the memorable diagnosis of the ills of the western empire in its last days written by Salvian of Marseilles. In Italy also much of the old world appeared to have continued. But this continuity masked deep changes. By the end of the fifth century, the popes of Rome had ousted the Senate as the patrons of the lower classes of the city. The estates of the Roman church had come to rival, for the very first time, the wealth of the lay nobility.

In the last two chapters we will look at western Europe as a whole. We will follow the manner in which the Christian churches came to administer and deploy their wealth. Last of all, we will see how the discreet pressure of wealth used for religious ends (by bishops and by lay donors) altered the texture of Christianity itself. With this, we have come to stand on the threshold of another world, one very different from the ancient world with which we began our story. By 600 AD, the structures of the church and the expectations of the laity had brought about a slow turning of the age. At last—after three long centuries, and only then—the Christians of Europe began to face toward the Catholicism of the western middle ages.

It might be helpful to readers if I made plain why my book has taken this particular shape.

First: the geographical shape. This is not a book about the Roman world as a whole. It is about the western, Latin world (from the western Balkans to Britain and from Trier to the edge of the Sahara). I have made this choice in large part because of the richness of the material provided by well-known Latin authors and because of the intrinsic interest of the social structures and of the historical developments that were distinctive to the Roman West. But I have also done so because the healthy state of late Roman studies as a whole has left me free to concentrate on that one region with the confidence that there are and will be many other scholars capable of doing justice to the equally fascinating theme of the relation between church, wealth, and society in the eastern provinces of the empire.

Second: the chronological shape. As my title makes plain, I have chosen to concentrate on the period between 350 and 550. This is, in many ways, an arbitrary choice, which I myself have not observed strictly. But I made it as much to remind myself as to remind my readers of a crucial fact: many of the basic dates of the late Roman period are less important than we think. To begin our account

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with the conversion of Constantine in 312 and to end it with the formal cessation of the western Roman empire in 476 or with the death of Pope Gregory the Great in 603 might seem a straightforward way to bracket a conventional narrative of the period. But to use these dates would be to smuggle in a deceptive teleology. It would encourage us to press the fast forward button—to assume that the conversion of Constantine looked forward, almost as a foregone conclusion, to the passing of the Roman empire and to the triumph of the church in western society summed up in the papacy of Gregory the Great.

The temptation to foreshorten history in this way is to be avoided at all costs. The growth of wealth in the churches did not proceed at the brisk pace implied by conventional narratives. The conversion of Constantine in 312 did not automatically lead to the enrichment of the Christian church. This came later, in the last quarter of the fourth century. The papacy of Gregory I did not mark the apogee of a triumphant church, ready to take over the governance of the post-Roman West. It was a good half century earlier that the churches of Europe began to feel, somewhat to their surprise, the weight of their own wealth. And they felt this weight in a world where bishops had become partners of the great but had by no means become their lords.

Hence the third aspect of the shape of this book. My concern throughout has been to do justice to the pace and to the diversity of developments that do not fit easily into conventional narratives of political and ecclesiastical history. To a large extent, I have attempted to do this by concentrating on a series of distinctive figures, each of whom was placed in a distinctive landscape. In each such landscape history moved at a different pace.

We meet these figures in roughly chronological order as our story unfolds. (Only in Christian Rome and in Christian Africa do we need a flashback across an entire century to set the scene for figures such as Jerome and Augustine.)

I have done this because the more I have studied the theme of wealth in the churches the more I am convinced that the Roman empire was made up of distinctive regions. The Christian churches in each region (despite their frequent interchanges and despite the theoretical claim to forming part of a universal institution—the Church, with a capital “c”) were as much the product of local conditions as was any other feature of the Roman world. A true history of Latin Christianity requires an unremitting sense of place. Each Christian region had a landscape of its own. In delineating its distinctive features, one can never be circumstantial enough: the archaeology of sites, the evidence for the circulation of coins and ceramics, styles of inscriptions on dedications and on tombstones, works of local authors—indeed, anything that the historian can find—must be brought to play in building up our picture of a particular landscape. Rather than advancing triumphantly toward a clear goal along a single high road, the regional churches of the West proceeded each at its own pace. They were frequently igno-

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rant of the affairs of their neighbors, and all were equally ignorant of the future that lay in store for them. To view them separately, generation by generation, struck me as the best way to convey the diversity of the Christian churches of the late Roman West and the unforeseen nature of their rise in Roman society.

By contrast, the fact that, in my narrative, each of these landscapes should be related to a single figure or group of figures comes from a choice of my own. The reader should know that, in concentrating on individual authors (Symmachus, Ambrose, Augustine, Paulinus, and so on), I am making a virtue out of a necessity. I am doing the best I can with the bad hand the past has dealt us. So much evidence has not survived, and what has is distributed in ways that reflect the accidents of survival quite as much as the intrinsic importance of the regions to which the evidence refers. The later prominence as Fathers of the Church of authors such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome has ensured that their abundant and circumstantial writings have survived to illuminate the Christian worlds of Milan, Africa, and Rome. We can never be sufficiently grateful for this fact, and not least because, in the case of these authors, their writings illuminate key regions of the late Roman world. But this was a wide world. We must remain aware that there were many other authors—pagan quite as much as Christian—in other regions (or in the same region as our main authors) who have been lost to us, as well as the fact that there are many regions that have remained strangely silent.

It is poignantly easy to imagine an alternative history of the churches in the Roman West. I frequently ask myself what this history would have looked like if, for example, a writer of the ability and manifold activities of Augustine of Hippo had emerged in southern Spain or beside the Danube; if the bishops of Trier had been the subject of a collective biography like the *Liber Pontificalis*—*Book of the Pontiffs*—of Rome; or if the shrine of Saint Alban (at Verulamium, Saint Albans) in southern Britain had produced a hagiographer whose chronicle of miracles—replete with vivid local data—had survived from post-Roman Britain to act as a companion to the works of Gregory of Tours.

This is neither an idle nor necessarily a gloomy speculation. Even with figures apparently as well-known to us as Augustine, the recent discovery of hitherto unknown sermons and letters—not to mention documents that throw a new light on the Manichaean movement to which he belonged for a time—shows us how much there is left to be discovered. Entire landscapes of the Christian West may yet come to be better known to us through further discoveries of texts and through the mobilization of other forms of evidence.¹

But the issue remains. How representative were the authors on which I have concentrated? It can be argued that they were not: that their writings reflect the high-strung preoccupations of an intellectual elite far removed from the earthy certainties associated with issues of wealth and poverty. I am unconvinced by this argument. In matters of religion—and especially in the study of major religious

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movements such as the formation of the Christian churches—the word “elite” can be misleading. It invites us to assume an absence of contact between leading minds and the wider body of opinion and practice that surrounds them. This is a false assumption. I prefer the judgment of Louis Gernet, writing on Greek religion in the classical period: “An elite does not invent. It renders explicit what many others think.”²

It is because of this that I have chosen to concentrate on the theme of wealth in the Christian churches. Wealth was a theme that lay heavy on everybody’s mind. The issue of wealth flowed like a great braided river through the churches and through Roman society as a whole. Wealth was not only about budgets and rent books; the streams of that great and diverse river touched many banks. We do not immediately think of all of these banks when we think of the economy of the Roman empire. To take a few examples: The yearly miracle of the harvest touched on the issue of the relation between man and the physical universe, and between God or the gods and the abundance of nature. The less welcome prodigy of administrative effort that brought the imperial tax collectors and the collectors of rents to shops and villages all over the Roman world raised the issue of the legitimacy of wealth itself and of the empire that extracted it. By the time the year was out, there would have been very few issues—social and personal, secular and religious—on which the great and manifold stream of preoccupation with wealth had not touched.

Hence it was natural to focus on the issue of wealth in the Christian churches. Some of the reasons for this choice were obvious. The New Testament had passed on to the Christian communities of the later empire the challenge of Jesus to the Rich Young Man, along with his equally disturbing comment on the young man’s failure to meet this challenge: that it was *easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God* (Matt. 19:24). Once the truly rich had entered the churches, at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries, these words took on a new immediacy. I am tempted to call this period the Age of the Camel. Christians of ascetic temperament watched expectantly to see which—if any—of the very large camels of their age were prepared to pass through the eye of the needle through renouncing their wealth. Those who did so received instant acclaim and have been studied with alacrity ever since. Compared with the heroes and heroines of renunciation, the silent majority of Christians who retained their wealth have been allowed to sink back into obscurity. We have tended to assume that they remained content with their failure to *sell all and give to the poor* (Matt. 19:21). But failures they remain for us. We then go on to describe (in a somewhat ironic tone) how worldly-wise bishops offered the average rich Christian a series of compromises—almsgiving, church building, testamentary bequests—as so many consolation prizes for having failed the primal test of passing through the eye of a needle. We point out that it was from

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these shamefaced compromises with the “world” (that is, with the norms of Roman society) that the wealth of the churches grew—and grew only too successfully.

I have written this book in part because I am dissatisfied with this way of seeing things. To treat the renouncers of wealth as the heroes and heroines of a “true” Christianity and to view all other forms of religious giving as somehow a betrayal of the essential radicalism of the Christian movement is to merely echo the high-minded language of the ascetic movement. It is remarkable how many sober scholars in our own days write about the growing wealth of the church as if it were no more than a regrettable result of the failure of late Roman Christians to live up to the ideals of their faith. Many write about the growing wealth of the church in a tone worthy of Jerome. For Jerome, the persistent advocate of ascetic renunciation, the history of the Church was a history of decline from the first, heroic days of the Apostles to “the dregs of our own times,” where the Church “has grown great in power and riches and has shrunk in spiritual energy.”³

To adopt this disapproving attitude is to overlook a crucial fact. We are in a society where—for pagans, Jews, and Christians alike—religious giving was thought of as a religious transaction. Renunciation of wealth was not the only act on which the hand of God rested. Gifts to the poor, donations to the church, weekly offerings, offerings for the payment of vows: each and all joined heaven and earth in ways that were all the more deeply installed in the consciousness of believers for not being exhaustively analyzed. The imagined course of wealth from earth to heaven through humdrum acts of pious giving was just as important to Christian believers as was the occasional act of renunciation among the few. Those who shied away from or who toned down the command of Jesus to the Rich Young Man were not mere shirkers. Rather, they had surrounded their use of wealth with a different imaginative charge from that of the advocates of radical renunciation. This charge empowered their daily acts of kindness and generosity. It was from this rich imaginative humus, common both to the wealthy and to distinctly ordinary persons, that the wealth of the church sprang.

Hence the task of reconstructing the imaginative content of religious giving (the flow of wealth from earth to heaven) has proved quite as important to me as has been the business of following that flow on earth—through establishing the relative value of sums raised through great acts of renunciation, through donations, and through daily offerings in the churches. Here I would appeal to my friends in Jewish studies to come to my aid. For they also study, throughout the Roman period, the considerable imaginative shift that accompanied the change from a religion whose giving practices had once been focused on the economy of a vast Hellenistic temple—the Temple of Jerusalem—to the low-profile but tenacious giving habits of synagogues and of Jewish communities scattered throughout the Roman world. It seems as if this imaginative shift in Judaism

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echoes, in reverse, the history of the growth of Christian wealth. In Christianity, we begin with religious giving on a modest scale (such as we will meet in early fourth-century Aquileia and in the church pavements of northern Italy in subsequent generations) and we end with the great temple-like enterprises of the shrines of sixth-century Gaul and Italy. In both cases—Jewish and Christian—a history of the imaginative background to religious giving remains to be written. This book can offer only a portion of this imaginative history, limited to a particular time and region in the great, extended nebula of Christianities, which reached from Britain to Central Asia and which, at this time, was flanked in almost every region by Jewish communities where religious giving was motivated by cognate and comparable imaginative patterns.⁴

But there is more to it than that. The issue of wealth in general touched on all aspects of the life of the Roman empire and of the societies that succeeded it. For this reason, the issue of wealth can be used as a diagnostic tool. To see wealth in this way enables us to enter into the very heart of Roman society. To study the creation and distribution of wealth in the fourth century; to follow (both in pagan and in Christian sources) the disquiets and the controversies sparked by the accumulation of wealth in the late Roman society of the fourth and fifth centuries; to sense the mystique of wealth that, at that time, drew together a governing class staffed equally by pagans and Christians; to trace, in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, the evaporation and the restructuring of wealth in times of barbarian invasion, civil war, and regional state building: to do this is not merely to write yet another social and economic history of the later empire. It is to use the theme of wealth itself as a doctor uses a stethoscope. Through paying attention to the issue of wealth, we can listen in to the Roman empire of the West in its last centuries and to western Europe as a whole in its first century without empire. To do so is like overhearing the creaking of a great ship caught in a storm on the high seas.

This has meant that this book has been the most difficult book to write that I have ever undertaken. For it was only by keeping together the abundant discourse on wealth generated in the pagan and Christian literature of the period with a sense of the realities of wealth in Roman and post-Roman society that I could use the issue of wealth as a diagnostic tool in order to listen in to the process I have called “the Making of Christianity in the West.” I was determined not to keep separate the history of the religion and culture of the later empire from the history of its society. Brave words, but hard to live up to in modern conditions. For we live in the middle of a dam burst in the study of the society and economy of the period. A dramatic turn in the study of the concrete circumstances of the Roman world has come to alter our image of late Roman society as a whole and, consequently, of the role of Christianity in this society.

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Nothing is quite as it used to be. Let me sum up a few of these breakthroughs, as they directly affect the history of Latin Christianity, in the form of a list of *ifs* and *thens*. If the conversion of Constantine did not decisively place the Christian churches on the high ground of Roman society, then we must look elsewhere (to the very end of the fourth century) to see this process happen. Then, and then only, did Christianity dare to think of itself as potentially a majority religion, because sure of the support of the wealthy. If it is shown that we have seriously underestimated the vigor and diversity of the middling classes in the cities of the late Roman West, then we must rewrite large tracts of the history of the Christian communities in these cities, including the history of the recruitment and the social horizons of their bishops and clergy. If Roman society in the West was not characterized by the unchallenged dominance of a few great landowners, then we must revise much of what has been written about the role of Christianity in Latin society both before and after the fall of the empire. To begin with, we must question the reality content of the fiery sermons of Saint Ambrose against the landowners of northern Italy. They may not have been as ruthless and as all-powerful as he implied. Rather than concentrate on the role of a few exorbitantly rich senators, we must seek out the role of lesser figures, such as the minor nobility of Rome and the provinces, who played a crucial role in the endowment and building of churches and in patronizing Christian clergymen and teachers. Furthermore, if the senatorial aristocracy did not colonize the upper ranks of the churches of Italy and Gaul as thoroughly and as rapidly as many scholars have asserted, then the entire issue of the buildup of the wealth of the church and of the rise of the status of the bishop in fifth- and sixth-century society becomes that much more complex, more conflicted, and (thank God!) more interesting.

Having spelled out these few but crucial themes on which I have been led to change my mind in the past decade, I trust that my readers will follow me attentively through my notes. I hope that they will catch, behind the cramped list of titles, something of the excitement these titles inspired in me, as each of them opened a window through which I saw what I never thought I would see—a vista of late Roman society from which many of the accustomed landmarks that had once dominated the landscape of late Roman studies have vanished or have come to seem less prominent than they had once been. Given the explosion of late antique studies, it has been no easy task to keep up-to-date with current literature and with new discoveries. I have attempted to do this up to around the end of 2010. To take a notable example, Brent Shaw's masterly study of fourth- and early fifth-century Africa, the draft of which he kindly shared with me, has only now appeared in print—Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

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Press, 2011). I commend it to the reader as a uniquely rich, vivid, and original portrayal of the Africa of Augustine. I should also mention a yet more recent book: Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011), which adds nothing less than an entire new dimension to our view of Roman society in the fourth century. I am well aware (indeed, I look forward with relish to the prospect) that new work, some of which I have overlooked—scattered as it now is through so many publications in Europe and in the English-speaking world—will challenge readers to revise yet further our views on the relation between Christianity and society in this hotly debated period.

This scene changing has been a hard-won achievement. Much of it has taken place through the reinterpretation of well-known texts. But there is one direction from which a new wind has arisen: the field of late Roman archaeology. I trust that I have made clear the extent of my debt to this field in the notes. As far as my book is concerned, what is new about the field is less the material that it addresses than the novel way in which this material has come to be interpreted. Rather than remain content to use archaeological material merely to add further documentation of known events, many young archaeologists have set out to discover landscapes no one had known before. The landscapes they have discovered are often as thrillingly different from our conventional ideas of what late Roman society and late Roman Christianity were like as are the first images of the surface of a distant planet beamed back to earth by a space probe. For a historian of the Christian churches, the thrill is precisely that it is well-known landscapes (the Roman catacombs being the most notable among them) that have been rendered disturbingly unfamiliar. The reinterpretation of basic Christian practices through the skilled reinterpretation of archaeological material (such as the Christian care of the dead, the nature of Christian votive piety, Christian memorial inscriptions, and the Christian construction of places of worship) has lifted the veil of clerical words on which so much of our text-based knowledge of the daily life of Christians had depended up until now. In entering a world rendered strange again by the interpretative skill of archaeologists, we have been brought that much closer to the unsung heroes and heroines of this book. We meet the lay men and women on whose habits of giving the Christian churches depended. Their pious practices and their expectations speak to us more clearly from their graves, from the pavements of their churches, and from their graffiti at the tombs of saints than they do from the pages of the Fathers of the Church.

In this book I intend throughout to keep together the study of religion and the study of what is now often called (in tones that invite unquestioning approval) “material culture.” To maintain the joining of these disciplines has become more difficult every year. The astonishing expansion of late Roman studies has brought with it a danger of over-specialization. In many ways, specialization

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is welcome, but over-specialization poses a danger to synthetic ventures and to attempts to see societies in the round—to take their religion and culture quite as seriously as their material bases.

Yet we must struggle to maintain this unitary vision. Rigid distinctions between disciplines are not helpful. They bear little relation to the actual experience of research in the field. We soon learn that all aspects of the history of the later empire are difficult of access. From the most seemingly ethereal theological texts to the most seemingly concrete archaeological surveys, each body of evidence, each in its different way, is a frail bridge to the past. None offers unambiguous results. In all our efforts, we are left peering over the edge of an abyss that drops into an unimaginably distant world. We should be aware of the intellectual vertigo that is inherent in our profession. I am told that, when they reach a certain high altitude, French mountaineers change from formal terms of address—the *vous*—to the more intimate *tu*. It is an admirable practice. It breeds the right spirit of solidarity in a group which, like ourselves, lives by dangling at great heights. For the thrill is always there. No matter by which route we may approach the late Roman period—through Patristic texts, through historical works, through legislative documents, through inscriptions, through excavations, or through mapping patterns of trade revealed by the distribution of ceramics—we are up against the fact that the rise of Christianity in the West is a daunting theme.

But it is just in this that the fascination of history lies; the student feels himself confronted by forces too mighty to be measured by any instruments at his disposal.⁵

If I have communicated to readers of this book a little of this fascination, I will only be passing on to them the joy of learning that so many of my friends and colleagues in the field have, over my years of writing it, passed on to me.

It is for this reason that I feel particularly indebted to my friends and colleagues. I have been more than fortunate. I can look back on the writing of this book as marked by a succession of acts of rare intellectual generosity on the part of many readers to whom I showed it in its many drafts. An *annus mirabilis* brought as visitors to the Institute of Advanced Studies two of the luminaries in my own heaven—Rita Lizzi and Jairus Banaji. They followed my earliest draft with unstinting care and critical discussion. Soon afterward, Johannes Hahn came to the Princeton campus as a visitor. I could not have wished for a more alert reader. His regular comments, perceptive and precise, gave a new dimension to the notion of academic friendship. Julia Smith and Hamish Scott further strengthened my resolve by readings that were as tenacious as they were frank. Throughout, I have been enlivened and guided by the comments of Kimberly Bowes and Ed Watts. Their warm and searching readings kept me in mind of the sheer joy of scholarship, as we entered together (in constant lively conversation) into land-

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scapes as yet barely opened up for the study of late antiquity. Helmut Reimitz and Jamie Kreiner have shepherded this manuscript (both intellectually and cybernetically, as we now say) as it reached the early medieval period and as it emerged, in innumerable ill-edited files, to its full length. One cannot be grateful enough for such care, offered with such infectious zest. Many others at different times have seen chapters or parts of this manuscript. It has been an encouragement and a discipline for me to have their comments. Let me mention, if only to express a debt that goes far beyond the writing of this book, Glen Bowersock, whose presence and example have been an encouragement to me for many years. Last but not least, I have been more than fortunate in the academic environment in which I found myself in the years when I wrote this book. In the Program in Hellenic Studies I found a warm hearth around which so many scholars of the history and of the regions that I have long loved have been brought together, year after year and event after event, by the skill and energy of Dimitri Gondicas.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to acknowledge the work of those connected with Princeton University Press—Jennifer Backer, Julia Livingston, and Debbie Tegarden. With the greatest skill and good nature they have enabled a manuscript which was (I must confess) something of a camel to pass through the needle's eye, and to achieve that standard of craftsmanship and beauty that has been a hallmark of Princeton books.

Throughout all this, my wife, Betsy, stands out. She has supported me unsparingly from beginning to end. She has set aside time at all times to read each draft with an unswerving eye for obscurities and for infelicities of expression and organization. She has constantly contributed her own rich store of historical knowledge and her own distinctive sense (at once humane and wry) of the workings of human nature in the past.

We have traveled together to the many regions in which this history took place. I offer her this book in the old and heavy sense of a vow completed, which I have read on so many Jewish and Christian inscriptions of the later empire: I give to her only a little of what she has given to me.

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