Acknowledgements

This book has taken me a long time to write. I had the original idea towards the end of my PhD in Cambridge. When writing a section on competing notions of 'service' in elite Christian identities in Vandal Africa, I expected to find lots of critical recent work on Christianity and office-holding in the later Roman Empire, whose sophisticated analysis I could simply lift for my own purposes. What I found instead was a surprising gap in the modern scholarly literature on the Christianisation of the Roman world. This problem has now been the focus of my research for over a decade.

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The cover image is taken from the Cathedra of Maximian in the Archiepiscopal Museum in Ravenna. I chose it because it shows Joseph dressed as an imperial official. It thus exemplifies a key argument of the book: that late ancient people could think of those who served the state as Christian authority figures. This scene of Joseph embracing Jacob is also fitting since, while working on this project, I both became a father and lost my own. I dedicate this book to my dad. His pride in me and my work will stay with me always.

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