

## SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY IN LATE ANTIQUE CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

The social values of upper-class Christians in Late Antiquity often contrasted with the modest backgrounds of their religion's founders – the apostles – and the virtues they exemplified. Drawing on examples from the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and other late antique authors, this book examines attitudes toward the apostles' status as manual workers and their virtues of simplicity and humility. Due to the strong connection between these traits and low socioeconomic status, late antique bishops often allowed their own high standing to influence how they understood these matters. The virtues of simplicity and humility had been a natural fit for tentmakers and fishermen but posed a significant challenge to Christians born into the elite and trained in prestigious schools. This volume examines the socioeconomic implications of Christianity in the Roman Empire by considering how the first wave of powerful, upper-class church leaders interpreted the socially radical elements of their religion.

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SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY  
IN LATE ANTIQUE  
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

*Elites and the Challenges of Apostolic Life*

JACLYN L. MAXWELL

*Ohio University*



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*To Oscar and Kevin*

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## *Acknowledgments*

This book began with my interest in what I perceived to be instances of class snobbery among Christian writers in Late Antiquity. In previous work, I had noticed references in these texts, sometimes positive but often negative, to manual workers and lower-class people in general and wondered how these views related to the development of Christian doctrines and ideals. Gradually, I began to focus on these authors' discussions of the apostles' lower socioeconomic standing and the closely associated virtues of simplicity and humility. I decided to write about several late antique authors and genres in order to demonstrate patterns and variations in how upper-class Christians wrote about the lower classes, but without attempting an exhaustive analysis of all of the potentially relevant works. As the recent surge in scholarship on wealth and poverty has taught us, Late Antiquity was a pivotal period in the history of ideas about socioeconomic differences. I hope this book will encourage other scholars and students to think more about the history of ideas about and representations of workers, the poor, and the less educated and, especially, how contempt for these groups (and comfort with socioeconomic inequality) could persist within a religious tradition founded by tentmakers and fishermen.

During the long process of research, writing, and revision, I have received a great deal of help from friends, colleagues, and institutions. I am thankful to my colleagues and friends in the departments of history and classics and religious studies at Ohio University and for the Faculty Fellowship Leave that allowed me to focus on research. I would also like to thank Peter Brown, David Hunter, Christopher MacEvitt, Bruce O'Brien, Philip Rousseau, Tina Sessa, Tina Shepardson, Joshua Sosin, Kathleen Sullivan, and Michael Williams for their comments and encouragement over the years. I am especially grateful to Michael Sharp and to the anonymous readers, whose suggestions helped immensely. In addition to the resources of Ohio University's Alden Library and the OhioLink and InterLibrary Loan systems, I was fortunate to be able to visit the library at



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## *Abbreviations*

Adv. opp. vit. mon.	Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae
AP	Apophthegmata patrum
C. Th.	Codex Theodosianus
Carm.	Carmina
Const. Apost.	Constitutiones apostolorum
Contra Eun.	Contra Eunomium
Contra Iud. et gent.	Contra Iudaeos et gentiles quod Christus sit Deus
De incompr.	De incomprehensibili Dei natura
De laud. Paul.	De laudibus sancti Pauli apostoli
De Laz.	De Lazaro
De profect. evang.	De profectu evangelii
De stat.	De statutis
De vir. illust.	De viris illustribus
ep.	epistola
FOTC	Fathers of the Church
GNaz	Gregory of Nazianzus
GNys	Gregory of Nyssa
HE	Historia Ecclesiastica
hom.	homilia
In Matt.	In Matthaëum
In 1 Cor.	In epistolam I ad Corinthios
In Act. apost.	In Acta apostolorum
In Eph.	In epistolam ad Ephesios
In Gen.	In Genesim
In Rom.	In epistolam ad Romanos
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LR	Long Rules; Regulae fusius tractatae
Or.	Oratione

*List of Abbreviations*

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Pan.	Panarion
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca, Migne
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus series Latina, Migne
RM	regulae morales
Ruf.	Rufinus
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
Soc.	Socrates
Soz.	Sozomenus Scholasticus
StP	Studia Patristica
Theod.	Theodoret
Vit. Macr.	Vita Macrinae

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