Combining faithfulness to the Latin with sensitivity to Prudentius’ poetic qualities, Nicholas Richardson offers a precise yet creative verse translation of a major work by one of the most important Christian Latin poets of late antiquity. *Prudentius’ Hymns for Hours and Seasons* also provides readers with a wealth of supporting material, which sets the life and output of this poet in its historical, religious and literary context, outlines manuscript and editorial details, discusses metrics and Latinity, and also gives a sense of the individual hymns of the *Cathemerinon*.

Richardson’s fresh translation allows readers unfamiliar with Latin to understand and interpret the poems, as well as offering those who know Latin a translation that keeps very close to the original text. Detailed notes at the end of the book illuminate both the literary and the religious aspects of each hymn. This commentary, along with the introduction and translated text, provides students and scholars alike with a comprehensive volume on one of the key works of later Latin poetry.

Nicholas Richardson is an Emeritus Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, where he was Tutor in Classics between 1968 and 2004. From 2004 to 2007 he was Warden of Greyfriars Hall, Oxford. His published work includes editions and commentaries on the four major *Homeric Hymns* and the last four books of Homer’s *Iliad*, and articles on ancient literary criticism, Greek religion and the relationship of classical with modern Greek and English literature.
The Routledge Later Latin Poetry series (RLLP) provides English translations of the works of those poets writing in Latin between the fourth and the eighth centuries inclusive. It responds to the increasing interest in later Latin authors and especially the growth in courses devoted to late antiquity. Books in the series are designed to provide comprehensive coverage to support students studying later Latin poetry and to introduce the material to those wishing to read these important and often under-translated works in English.

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By offering English translations of later Latin poetry with comprehensive supporting material, the series enables a greater understanding of late antiquity through one of its most important literary outputs. The poems are significant sources for the culture, religion and daily life of the period and clear and imaginative translations also offer readers the chance to appreciate their quality.
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PRUDENTIUS’ HYMNS
FOR HOURS AND
SEASONS

LIBER CATHEMERINON

Nicholas Richardson
A.M.D.G.

For Gerard O’Daly
and Father John Osman
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It has been a great pleasure to work on a verse translation of Prudentius’ hymns. I have written about the character of these versions in the Introduction (at section XI). But something should also be said about the reason for publishing this book, so soon after the appearance in 2012 of the excellent study of these poems by Gerard O’Daly, *Days Linked by Song*. I had completed a draft of the translation in 2011, before I was aware that his work was about to appear. He very generously encouraged me to continue, and also put me in touch with Joe Pucci, the Editor of this new series. Both of these scholars have been unfailingly helpful throughout the ensuing process, and I thank them wholeheartedly for their support. Gerard’s book has been a constant *Vademecum* and it will be obvious how much I am in his debt, especially in my introduction and notes.

I have also learnt a great deal from the commentaries on some of the hymns by Marian van Assendelft (1, 2, 5 and 6), Maria Becker (3) and Francesco Lardelli (9 and 10). It has not been possible to cover the full range of secondary literature on this subject, but I hope that the bibliography will prove a useful starting point for further study. It can be supplemented by the one in Gerard’s book, and also by his more comprehensive *Oxford Bibliography for Prudentius*. Of the works listed in mine, the only one that I have not been able to see is the 1982 article by Costanza.

A number of other scholars have helped in various ways. Andrew Faulkner and Andreas Schwab organised an excellent one-day conference in Heidelberg, in June 2012, on ‘Poetry and Theology in Late Antiquity’. Among other participants, I am most grateful to Cillian O’Hogan for the paper he gave there on ‘The Performance of Prudentius’ *Peristephanon*’, and to Helmut Seng for giving me a copy of his article on the *Cathemerinon* (2000).
At another conference in London, in June 2014, on ‘Early Christian Hymns’, Sam Barrett’s paper ‘Singing Prudentian Verses in the Early Middle Ages’ was extremely useful, together with the revised version of this given in March 2015 to the Medieval Academy of America. I have much enjoyed discussions in Oxford with Ian Fielding, whose enthusiasm and knowledge have been most helpful. Armand D’Angour also kindly suggested some improvements to the section of the Introduction on metre (VIII.1).

Others who have helped in various ways are Pat Easterling, Jasper Gaunt, Andrew Hegarty, Chris Hodkinson, Luke Houghton, Kenneth Painter and Monsignor Andrew Wadsworth. My long-standing friend Bishop Richard Williamson suggested using rhyme, which I have done for one of the hymns (no. 8). I should also like to thank my daughter Catherine and Conor Delahunty for their useful advice about formatting the text.

Andy Platts has been an invaluable copy-editor and has done much to improve my text. It has been a pleasure to work with her. My thanks are also due to the other members of the staff both at Routledge and also at Book Now Publishing Services, who have seen the book through to publication.

Fr John Osman encouraged me to embark on this work, and he has been a constant support throughout. The book is dedicated to him and to Gerard O’Daly, with my warmest gratitude.

N.J.R.

Saltem voce Deum concelebret, si meritis nequit
(Praefatio 36)
ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW  Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.) (1972—)
Arevalo F. Arevalus, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis V.C. Opera Omnia, 2 vols. (Parma, 1788–9; reprinted in PL 59 and 60)
Assendelft M.M. van Assendelft, Sol Ecce Surgit Igneus. A Commentary on the Morning and Evening Hymns of Prudentius: Cathemerinon 1, 2, 5 and 6 (Groningen, 1976)
Ausonius Decimi Magni Ausonii Opera, R.P.H. Green (ed.) (Oxford, 1999)
Becker M. Becker, Kommentar zum Tischgebet des Prudentius (Cath. 3) (Heidelberg, 2006)
Bulst W. Bulst, Hymni Latini Antiquissimi LXXV, Psalmi III (Heidelberg, 1956)
CCSL Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (Turnhout, 1953—)
CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1866—)
H. Hymn
NT The New Testament
O’Daly G. O’Daly, Days Linked by Song. Prudentius’ Cathemerinon (Oxford, 2012)
OT The Old Testament
ABBREVIATIONS


RAC  *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, T. Klauser et al. (eds.) (Stuttgart, 1941–)

RE  *Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1894–)

RSV  *The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition)* (Sunbury-on-Thames, 1966)


Walsh  P.G. Walsh, with C. Husch, *One Hundred Latin Hymns. Ambrose to Aquinas* (Cambridge, MA, 2012)

Prudentius

_Apoth._  *Apotheosis*

_Cath.* (or _C._ for citation of individual poems or passages)  *Liber Cathemerinon*

_Ditt._  *Dittochaeon (Tituli Historiarum)*

_Epil._  *Epilogus*

_Ham._  *Hamartigenia*

_Perist._  *Liber Peristephanon*

_Praef._  *Praefatio*

_Psych._  *Psychomachia*

_Symm._  *Contra orationem Symmachii libri duo*

Virgil

_Aen._  *Aeneid*

_Ecl._  *Eclogues*

_Georg._  *Georgics*

Bible

Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition).
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<td>Mal Malachi</td>
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ABBREVIATIONS

1 Pet.    1 Peter
1 Jn      1 John
2 Jn      2 John
Rev.      Revelation

All dates are AD, unless otherwise indicated.
INTRODUCTION

I. Life of Prudentius

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens tells us about his life in the Praefatio, which was evidently intended as a preface to his collected works of poetry, or at least to most of these. He says there that he was born in the consulship of Salia, i.e. 348, and gives his age as fifty-six. So, he is writing this in 404–5. He looks back over his early life, in which the sins of boyhood, and the self-indulgence and rashness of youth, were followed by a period as an ambitious lawyer. This led to his being put in control of a city (i.e. as a local governor) for two separate periods. The climax of his secular career came when the emperor promoted him in his service, ‘attaching me closer to him, and asking me to stand in the nearest rank (i.e. to himself)’. But, he continues, such worldly honours will not be any good to him after death, because they are not ‘the concerns of God’. Before it is too late, his soul must make amends by casting off her folly, and celebrating God at least in words, if she cannot do so in good works.

He then lists the subjects of his poetry (37–42):

Let my soul link the days with hymns, and let no night pass empty, without singing of her Lord; let her fight against heresies, expound the Catholic faith; let her trample down the rites of the heathen, and bring destruction, Rome, upon your idols; devote song to the martyrs, and praise the apostles.

He ends by saying:

As I write or speak of these things, it is my wish to flash forth from the chains of the body, free, to the place where my lively tongue leads me, with its final utterance.

In other words, he seems to express the hope that he will continue composing until the end of his life, and that his poetry will help him to reach heaven.

From the *Peristephanon*, his collection of poems in praise of the martyrs, we learn that he comes from a place in Spain, which is cut off from Rome by the river Ebro, as well as by the Cottian Alps and Pyrenees (2.537–40). He calls three cities in northern Spain ‘our own’, Calagurris (modern Calahorra: 1.116 and 4.31–2), Caesaraugusta (Saragossa: 4.1–4) and Tarraco (Tarragona: 6.143). As Calagurris is just south of the Ebro, and as it is prominent in several of these poems, including the first (cf. *Perist.* 1, 8 and 11), this is probably his home. From his *cognomen* Clemens it has been inferred that he was from Christian parents, and he does not speak of having been a later convert from paganism. Gennadius (*De viris illustribus* 13) calls him *vir saecularis* (‘a layman’), from which it has been assumed that he did not take religious orders after his retirement, but this could be simply an inference from the account in his preface.

It is also clear that he travelled in Italy, visiting the shrines of the martyrs in Imola and in Rome (*Perist.* 2, 9, 11 and 12). References to returning home from these visits suggest that they may have been separate pilgrimages (9.106, 11.179, 12.65).

In addition, his period of service as a close associate of the emperor probably required him to spend some time in Milan, as this was the western capital at this period under Theodosius (who died in 395) and his successor, Honorius. His reference to being invited by the emperor ‘to stand in the nearest rank’ (*stare ... ordine proximo*) suggests a position in the imperial entourage, possibly as a ‘Count of the first grade’ (*Comes primi ordinis*). Theodosius was a Spaniard, and this could well have helped Prudentius’ advancement, but the last part of his civil career (i.e. his governorships and subsequent promotion) was probably under Honorius, who took over at the age of eleven in 395, during the regency of the general Stilicho.

By comparison with some of his contemporary poets, such as Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola, Prudentius is remarkably modest and reticent about himself. There is a note of justified pride in what he says of his successful civil career, but the main message of his preface is the relative insignificance of such achievements in the eyes of God. This sets it apart from the autobiographical poems of his classical predecessors, such as Horace and Ovid, and aligns it more closely with the tone of St Augustine’s *Confessions*. In what he says of his misspent youth and secular career, he may well be echoing Augustine, who
probably wrote the early books of his *Confessions* around 398–400.\(^2\) Equally, in the epilogue to his poetry (cf. section II.7 below) the leitmotif is his humility. He compares himself to a 'poor, outworn vessel' (*obsoletum vasculum*) in a corner of God’s house, performing ‘an earthenware office in the palace of salvation’, adding ‘yet it is good to have rendered even the lowest service to God’ (25–32).\(^3\)

II. Poetic works\(^4\)

1. *Praefatio* (see above): 45 lines in three-line stanzas (Glyconic, Asclepiad and Greater Asclepiad).
2. *Liber Cathemerinon*: see section III below.
3. *Apotheosis* or *On the Divinity of Christ*: a hexameter poem of 1,084 lines, preceded by a *Hymn on the Trinity* (12 hexameters) and preface (56 lines, in couplets of iambic trimeters and dimeters). In this work Prudentius defends the orthodox view of Christ’s divinity against various heresies.
4. *Hamartigenia* or *The Origin of Sin*: 966 hexameters, with a 63-line preface in iambic trimeters.
5. *Psychomachia* or *The Battle of the Soul*: 915 hexameters, with a 68-line preface in iambic trimeters. This allegorical epic describes the battle between the Virtues and the Vices, and the building of the temple of the New Jerusalem.
6. *Contra orationem Symmachi libri duo* or *Two Books against the Speech of Symmachus*: two books in hexameters, of 657 and 1,132 lines, preceded by prefaces of 89 Asclepiads and 66 Glyconics. Prudentius is answering the plea of Symmachus, prefect of Rome, for the restoration of the altar of Victory to the Senate House, a speech that was delivered in 384. Symmachus was arguing for toleration of pagan cults, and Prudentius’ poem is a general refutation of paganism. Book 2 refers to the battle of Pollentia in 402, in which Alaric and the Goths were defeated by Stilicho.
7. *Peristephanon Liber* or *Book about the Crowns*: fourteen hymns (3,762 verses in all) in praise of various martyrs, mostly from Spain and Italy, in a variety of lyric metres.
8. *Dittochaeon* or *Tituli Historiarum* (*Inscriptions about Narratives*): 48 hexameter epigrams of four lines each, summarising scenes from

\(^3\) Cf. Costanza (1976).