

# PRUDENTIUS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

H. J. THOMSON, D.LITT.

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
OF NORTH WALES, BANGOR

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II



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concordique iugo retinacula mollia ferre  
 constituit, quo corda hominum coniuncta teneret 590  
 religionis amor; nec enim fit copula Christo  
 digna, nisi implicitas societ mens unica gentes.  
 sola Deum novit concordia, sola benignum  
 rite colit tranquilla Patrem: placidissimus illum  
 foederis humani consensus prosperat orbi, 595  
 seditione fugat, saevis exasperat armis,  
 munere pacis alit, retinet pietate queta.  
 omnibus in terris quas continet occidialis  
 oceanus roseoque Aurora inluminat ortu,  
 miscebat Bellona furens mortalia cuncta 600  
 armabatque feras in vulnera mutua dextras.  
 hanc frenaturus rabiem Deus undique gentes  
 inclinare caput docuit sub legibus isdem  
 Romanosque omnes fieri, quos Rhenus et Hister,  
 quos Tagus aurifluus, quos magnus inundat Hiberus,  
 corniger Hesperidum quos interlabitur et quos 606  
 Ganges alit tepidique lavant septem ostia Nili.  
 ius fecit commune pares et nomine eodem  
 nexuit et domitos fraterna in vincla redegit.  
 vivitur omnigenis in partibus haud secus ac si 610  
 cives congenitos concludat moenibus unis  
 urbs patria atque omnes lare conciliemur avito.  
 distantes regione plagae divisaque ponto  
 litora conveniunt nunc per vadimonia ad unum  
 et commune forum, nunc per commercia et artes 615  
 ad coetum celebrem, nunc per genialia fulcra  
 externi ad ius conubij; nam sanguine mixto

\* Often mentioned as a source of alluvial gold.

<sup>b</sup> The Tiber. The phrase is taken from the *Aeneid* (VIII, 77). *Hesperia* (the land of the west, from the Greek point of view) is a poets' name for Italy. Rivers are compared to bulls (*cf.* Horace's *tauriformis Aufidus*); hence *corniger*.

ruling power and bear gentle bonds in harmony under the yoke, so that love of their religion should hold men's hearts in union; for no bond is made that is worthy of Christ unless unity of spirit leagues together the nations it associates. Only concord knows God; it alone worships the beneficent Father aright in peace. The untroubled harmony of human union wins his favour for the world; by division it drives Him away, with cruel warfare it makes Him wroth; it satisfies Him with the offering of peace and holds Him fast with quietness and brotherly love. In all lands bounded by the western ocean and lightened by Aurora at her rosy dawning, the raging war-goddess was throwing all humanity into confusion and arming savage hands to wound each other. To curb this frenzy God taught the nations everywhere to bow their heads under the same laws and become Romans—all whom Rhine and Danube flood, or Tagus <sup>a</sup> with its golden stream, or great Ebro, those through whose land glides the horned river of the western world,<sup>b</sup> those who are nurtured by Ganges or washed by the warm Nile's seven mouths. A common law made them equals and bound them by a single name, bringing the conquered into bonds of brotherhood. We live in countries the most diverse like fellow-citizens of the same blood dwelling within the single ramparts of their native city, and all united in an ancestral home. Regions far apart, shores separated by the sea, now meet together in appearing before one common court of law, in the way of trade in the products of their crafts they gather to one thronged market, in the way of wedlock they unite in legal marriage with a spouse of another country; for a single progeny is



textitur alternis ex gentibus una propago.  
 hoc actum est tantis successibus atque triumphis  
 Romani imperii: Christo iam tunc venienti, 620  
 crede, parata via est, quam dudum publica nostrae  
 pacis amicitia struxit moderamine Romae.  
 nam locus esse Deo quis posset in orbe feroci  
 pectoribusque hominum discordibus et sua iura  
 dissimili ratione tuentibus, ut fuit olim? 625  
 sic inconpositos humano in pectore sensus  
 disiunctasque animi turbato foedere partes  
 nec liquida inuisit sapientia nec Deus intrat.  
 at si mentis apex regnandi iure potitus  
 pugnacis stomachi pulsus fibrasque rebelles 630  
 frenet et omne iecur ratione coerceat una,  
 fit stabilis vitae status, et sententia certa  
 haurit corde Deum domino et subiungitur uni.

en ades, Omnipotens, concordibus influe terris: 634  
 iam mundus te, Christe, capit, quem congrege nexu  
 pax et Roma tenent. capita haec et culmina rerum  
 esse iubes, nec Roma tibi sine pace probatur,  
 et pax ut placeat facit excellentia Romae,  
 quae motus varios simul et ditione coercet  
 et terrore premit; nec enim spoliata prioris 640  
 robore virtutis senuit nec saecula sensit,  
 nec tremulis, cum bella vocant, capit arma lacertis,  
 nec tam degeneri venerandis supplicat ore

\* The gradual extension of Roman citizenship culminated in 212, when the edict of Caracalla made it practically universal throughout the empire, so that there were now no *peregrini*, i.e. subjects of Rome without citizen-rights. Under the old system marriage fully recognised by Roman law between a Roman and a *peregrina* or *peregrinus* was not possible unless the privilege had been specifically conferred on the peregrine community concerned. The sentiment of these lines is also

produced from the mixed blood of two different races.<sup>a</sup>  
 Such is the result of the great successes and triumphs of the Roman power. For the time of Christ's coming, be assured, was the way prepared which the general good will of peace among us had just built under the rule of Rome. For what room could there have been for God in a savage world and in human hearts at variance, each according to its different interest maintaining its own claims, as once things were? Where sentiments are thus disordered in man's breast, agreement upset, and faction in the soul, neither pure wisdom visits nor God enters. But if a supremacy in the soul, having gained authority to rule, checks the impulses of refractory appetite and rebellious flesh and controls all its passions under a single order, the constitution of life becomes stable and a settled way of thought draws in God in the heart and subjects itself to one Lord.

Come then, Almighty; here is a world in harmony; do Thou enter it. An earth receives Thee now, O Christ, which peace and Rome hold in a bond of union. These Thou dost command to be the heads and highest powers of the world. Rome without peace finds no favour with Thee; and it is the supremacy of Rome, keeping down disorders here or there by the awe of her sovereignty, that secures the peace, so that Thou hast pleasure in it. She has not been robbed of the might of her former valour and grown feeble with age, she has not felt the force of time, and it is with no shaking arm that she takes up her weapons at the call of war. With no such failing voice does she petition her august emperors as that expressed by Prudentius' contemporary Claudian, *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, III, 150 ff.