

Prudentius' "Psychomachia": A Reexamination (Princeton Legacy Library)

By Macklin Smith

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Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, written about A.D. 405, has been studied by classicists, medievalists, and general literary historians. Nevertheless, scholars have barely explored the allegory's inner workings or related it to its historical context. The present study remedies this critical neglect and its attendant misreadings.

The author arrives at a coherent, unified interpretation by examining the work's major features in relation to the poet's life and times. He contends that the poet balanced an affirmation of Christian allegory with an ironic negation of pagan literary tradition. For this remarkable achievement his audience was the aristocracy, still largely pagan at a time of intense antagonism between the Church and old Roman religious institutions.

Originally published in 1976.

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