THE PORTRAYAL OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM IN THE PSYCHOMACHIA OF PRUDENTIUS

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2017

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This study addresses a neglected area in Late Ancient literary scholarship, namely, the portrayal of Christian heroism in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. The research question advanced in this study investigates whether Prudentius' didactic, literary portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* strengthened Christians' requirement for a socially appropriate modality of heroic identity pertaining to the circumstances of their post-martyrdom context, in the early fifth century. This research has prioritised close reading of the text of the *Psychomachia* alongside consideration of relevant primary texts and the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach involving the disciplines of theology, classics and anthropology. The most significant conclusion of this study is that Prudentius' portrayal of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* specifically responded to the socio-religious needs of early fifth-century Christian society regarding heroic identity, because this poet's portrayal of Christian heroism in this epic poem negated the lingering social power existing in early fifth-century Roman Christianity regarding the heroic function of the body and the soul in a post-martyrdom context. More explicitly, this study finds that through the interiorization of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius sought to counteract enduring social perceptions that the epitome of Christian heroism and the locus of sanctity was embodied in the tortured body of the Christian martyr. This study has demonstrated how Prudentius' literary expression of the interiorization of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* was influenced by Platonic philosophies as well as prevailing early fifth-century ascetic Christian ideologies regarding the dichotomy between the soul and the body. It is the argument of this dissertation that Prudentius reconceptualised Christian society's perceptions of the nature of Christian heroism in a post-martyrdom context through his literary communication that early fifth-century Christian heroism was realised through heroically ridding the soul of pagan vice and transforming the Christian's soul into an interiorized locus of Christian sanctity. Prudentius' literary vision of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was orientated towards the future of Christianity, not the past. This dissertation has endeavoured to contribute to contemporary Prudentian scholarship by moving some ways towards explicating Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is hoped that this study will encourage emerging Prudentian scholars to seek and explore under-researched areas of this complex and multidimensional Christian epic poem of Late Antiquity.

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Angela Joan Flint, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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Signature of student

Date: 25 September 2017

Signature of supervisor

Date: 25 September 2017

Signature of second supervisor

Date: 25 September 2017

Exact word count of thesis: 100697 words

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

My mother, Joan Ruth Doyle (1933-1993). I miss you every day.

My daughter, Dr Margot Flint (1985-). You are an inspiration and you are awesome.

My husband, Keith Flint (1954-). You are beloved.

Three people who faced hardship heroically and with the utmost grace and dignity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the research question

Prudentius' *Psychomachia*[1] is a complex, intellectually challenging and essentially esoteric poem. In the past, Late Ancient literary scholars[2] have been critical of the way in which Prudentius portrayed the figurative battles between the allegorically personified Christian virtues and pagan vices in the metaphorical space of the soul in such an excessively violent manner. However, this poem has been widely acclaimed and given in-depth analysis, since the Middle Ages, largely because of Prudentius' remarkable and innovative deployment of the literary device of allegorical personification.

The influential development in late twentieth and twenty-first century Late Ancient literary scholarship[3] that encourages texts[4] from Antiquity to be considered within the cultural contexts in which these were written has opened up to contemporary scholars exciting and ever expanding avenues of investigation into the literary works from this era, including Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.[5] At the core of this study lies the conviction that when Prudentius' *Psychomachia* is considered within the matrix of the predominant and influential

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[1] In the research phase of this study it was noted that in Late Ancient literary scholarship the title of Prudentius' poem the *Psychomachia* is generally translated as the 'Fight for the Soul of Man' or as Isbell (1971:27) translates this 'The Battle for the Soul of Man' and alternatively in accordance with the translation of Thompson (1949), the 'Fight for Mansoul'. While this may appear to gender specific language, it has been taken into consideration by the candidate of this study that early fifth century Late Ancient Roman society was patriarchal and therefore, while it is understood that in all likelihood Prudentius did not specifically direct his poem to men, but rather to all Christians, male and female and in accordance with the emic approach (see 1.10.1) adopted in this study, the *Psychomachia* is translated here as the Fight for the Soul of Man. In addition to this, it is the practice of the candidate of this dissertation to retain the implication of the prioritisation of the masculine gender in texts from Antiquity and Late Antiquity. This is done to comply with the emic approach adopted throughout the discussions of this study and also to preserve the authenticity of the original text. In all other instances and wherever possible, with attention paid to context and meaning, the use of gendered language is avoided in this study.

[2] Lavarenne (1955-1963:12-13) Vol 1.

[3] See Brown (1983:1-25).

[4] Palmer (1989:30) suggests that verses on monuments commemorating martyrdoms may have influenced Prudentius' description of martyrdoms in his work, the *Peristephanon liber*. In particular, the martyrs Eulalia (Book 3) and Agnes (Book 14) are referred to in this work.

[5] Lewis (2000) gives an enlightening review of the violent nature of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, which demonstrates that when this depiction is considered within the socio-cultural context of Roman society in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, it can be considered as appropriate for that era.

socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts that prevailed in the personal contexts of Prudentius and in the lives of Roman Christian society in the late fourth and, in particular, the early fifth centuries, a plethora of previously under-researched aspects of this epic are revealed.

This dissertation, which is interdisciplinary in nature and prioritises the judicious and chronologically appropriate socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of the *Psychomachia*, addresses what appears to be a particularly under-researched area of contemporary Prudentian scholarship, namely, Prudentius' portrayal of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia.* It is a central argument of this dissertation that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was a timely literary response to Roman Christians' anxiety regarding the nature, identity and form of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism, in an era in which the heroic acts of the Early Christian martyrs were venerated, but no longer socially practised.

This study aims to demonstrate that Prudentius' socially relevant portrayal of a prototype of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* reconciled particular problematic social and psychological tensions experienced in Roman Christian society at the time regarding the perception that the epitome of Christian heroism and the locus of Christian sanctity was embodied in the torn and battered physical body of the Christian martyr. This study argues that this specific socio-cultural notion in Roman Christianity formed an obstacle to the formation and maintenance of a socially appropriate Roman Christian heroic identity in this era, which was not far removed chronologically from the Age of Martyrdom (64-313).[6]

More explicitly, the investigations of this study focus on explicating that Prudentius' 'interiorization' of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* effectively counteracted the above-mentioned lingering social perceptions in Roman Christian society in the early fifth

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[6] de Ste. Croix (1963:6-7) divides the era of Early Christian Martyrdom into distinct chronological and culturally distinctive eras, specifically the years 64 BCE-250 CE and 250/251-313 CE. de Ste. Croix (1963) gives convincing arguments to support this division of eras. It appears that there is consensus in Late Ancient scholarship that Early Christian martyrdom was no longer practiced by the year 313, due to the implementation by Christian Emperors of the Edict of Galerius in 311 (see Appendix A).

century regarding the heroic function of the Christian soul and body. Specifically, it is the argument of this study that Prudentius' interiorized literary portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* communicated to early fifth-century Roman Christians that the chaste and pure body of the heroic Christian had become but a physical or corporeal vessel in which to house the pure internalized soul of Christians. In Prudentius' literary expression of heroism in this epic masterpiece, the interior soul of the heroic Christian thus became the locus of sanctity. This is exemplified in the concluding episode of the *Psychomachia* (823-874), which describes the victorious army of Christian virtues building the Temple of the Soul, which houses the spirit of God, in the purified souls of Christians, which the virtues have purged of pagan vice.

Prudentius' interiorized conceptualization of Christian heroism, embodied in the heroic nature of the allegorically personified Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia*, offered early fifth-century Roman Christians didactic guidelines of socially appropriate Christian heroic responses to the challenges of pagan vice prevailing in their post-martyrdom context. Through his remarkable portrayal of interiorized Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius not only strengthened the heroic identity of early fifth-century Christians, but also offered his readers a prototype of Christian heroism that equated to that shown by the Christian martyrs. Prudentius' internalized, didactic portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* provided a socially relevant heroic model that realised eternal salvation for the souls of the early fifth-century heroic Christians in the Kingdom of God, which was equivalent to the heroic heavenly reward of the souls of martyrs.

It is recognised throughout this study that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was not created in a socio-cultural or socio-historical vacuum and that this depiction requires appropriate contextualisation to render deeper levels of understanding. In order to initiate this dissertation's ongoing prioritisation of the importance of contextualising Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, this section offers an introduction to the life of the poet Prudentius (1.1.1), a description of his literary opus (1.1.2) and a synopsis

of some of the more significant socio-cultural and socio-historical circumstances in Roman society, especially Roman Christian society, in Late Antiquity (1.1.3).[7]

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[7] It is outside the scope of the current study to provide more extensive detail. The information presented in these discussions (1.1.1-1.1.3) covers a vast area of Prudentian and Late Ancient scholarship. Since these discussions have an introductory purpose in the current chapter, it is deemed that the most appropriate approach with which to summarise this information is in bullet format. See Appendix A, which provides a chronological table of some of the more significant socio-cultural circumstances, socio-political events and significant literary works of Roman Late Antiquity, from the first century to the end of the fifth century.

1.1.1 Introduction to the life of Prudentius

It is unfortunate that in contemporary scholarship, there are very few textual testimonies of the personal life of the fourth and early fifth century poet, Aurelius Prudentius Clemens. It is only through extensive research into Prudentius' own literary opus, other literary works circulating in the fifth and sixth centuries that mention Prudentius and judicious consideration of the socio-cultural circumstances of the period that contemporary Prudentian scholars have compiled what are generally conceded to be the facts of the life of this remarkable poet. A recent work by Hershkowitz (2017)[8] investigates the Spanish origins of this Christian poet. Prudentius' own literary work, the *Praefatio* [Preface],[9] provides most of his personal biographical details. However, the *Praefatio* is a rather problematic work, the nature of which is elaborated on later (1.1.2). In the context of this discussion, though, it is pertinent to review this work for the following information it provides on Prudentius' life:

(i) Prudentius begins the *Praefatio* (1-5) by stating that he was 57 years old and nearing the end of his life, although he does not mention any specific dates.

(ii) The *Praefatio* continues (5-10) with Prudentius' lament that he was educated in the Classical tradition, which he believes taught him lies and mistruths and he now regrets being educated in this tradition.

(iii) Prudentius' *Praefatio* (10-11) then expresses remorse over his misspent youth.

(iv) Following this, in lines 11-21, Prudentius provides scanty details of his adult life and career. From this extract (11-21), it may be ascertained that Prudentius had some form of legal training and that he governed two Roman Spanish provinces, not specifying

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[8] Hershkowitz (2017) recently published a valuable work entitled *Prudentius, Spain and Late Antique: Poetry, Visual Culture, and the Cult of Martyrs* that situates Prudentius in his correct socio-cultural context as a Hispano-Roman Christian.

[9] The author of this dissertation belongs to the History of Christianity programme in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg Campus. It is unfortunate that in South Africa, there is limited opportunity to study foreign languages, in particular Latin, at school level. See List of References, Web Address 1 for official guidelines for the Department of Higher Education policies regarding the teaching of foreign languages in South Africa. Furthermore, there is no facility available at South African universities for students to study Latin online, through correspondence tuition. The author resides approximately 75 kilometres away from the Pietermaritzburg Campus of UKZN, so attending daily, undergraduate Latin lectures at UKZN has not been logistically feasible. However, in an effort to overcome this, the author of this study completed one year of private Latin tuition (Oxford Latin Course Books One and Two), under Professor David Pike, formerly of the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at UKZN. Upon completion of this, the author of this dissertation passed the first year Latin exam (74%) for non-degree purposes at the University of Stellenbosch, under the direction of Professor Annemaré Kotzé. The translation of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* that is used in this study is that by Thompson (1949) Vol 1, belonging to the Loeb Library. See the List of References for additional Latin translations used in this dissertation.

which, before being promoted to a higher position in the Roman government. This passage offers no specific timeline for these events.

(v) In lines 22-35, Prudentius returns to his present context. The predominant theme of this section of the *Praefatio* is Prudentius' realisation and despair at the thought that he wasted his life in pursuits that he now acknowledges to have been foolish. In lines 22-26, Prudentius informs his readers that he was born in the reign of the Roman Spanish consular Flavius Salia,[10] which confirms that he was born in the year 348.

(vi) In the last section (36-45) of the *Praefatio*, Prudentius states that the rest of his life on earth will be devoted to glorifying God through his literary works.

Further biographical details of Prudentius' life are conjectural.[11] Before continuing this discussion, it is thus pertinent to take a moment to heed the warning of O'Hogan (2016). In this recent work, O'Hogan (2016)[12] reminds Prudentian scholars that much of the content in Prudentius' literary works is abstract in nature and was, by and large, not based in reality. With an awareness of this cautionary note, this discussion now reviews what are generally assumed in contemporary scholarship to represent the fuller details of Prudentius' life:

Prudentius' actual birthplace is unknown.[13] However, Peebles (1951)[14] argues convincingly that Prudentius' affinity for mentioning the Spanish cities of Tarragona' Calahorra and Saragossa in his literary works suggests that he was born and raised in the area of Spain known in Late Antiquity as Hither Spain.[15]

(i) There is consensus in scholarship that there is no identifiable date of Prudentius' death or details of where he was buried. It is generally assumed that Prudentius probably died in the years 405-410. This notion is supported by two particular postulations that predominate in contemporary Prudentian scholarship. Firstly, there is

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[10] For an elaboration on the role of consulars in the Roman government and in Roman provinces such as Spain in the middle of the fourth century, see Jones (1964:1.142-143). For a discussion on Spain under Roman rule, see Keay (1988).

[11] There is awareness throughout this dissertation that the assumption of authenticity through conjecture, in contemporary Late Ancient research, is a highly problematic research approach, which may result in unreliable findings.

[12] The relevant quotation from the work of O'Hogan (2016:2) reads as follows: '[Prudentius] consistently shies away from engagement with reality, and retreats into descriptions of the world that owe more to biblical and classical precedents than they do to lived experience'.

[13] Peebles (1951:15).

[14] Evidence of Prudentius' affinity for the city of Tarragona occurs in his work *Peristephanon liber* 6.143 (Peebles, 1951:115).

[15] Peebles (1951:20-21).

no evidence that Prudentius wrote or published any literary works after 405, so it is assumed that he had reached the end of his life around this time. Secondly, it is assumed that Prudentius probably died before he could witness the sacking of Rome by Alaric the Visigoth in early 410. This supposition is grounded in the notion that if Prudentius had been alive and witness to this momentous historical event, it is likely to have been given literary expression in his works.

(ii) Unlike many of his contemporary Christian writers, Prudentius' literary works do not divulge details regarding why in his later life he appears to be so devoutly Christian, as opposed to his earlier life. However, it is generally assumed that Prudentius was born into a nominally Christian family and raised as a Christian.

(iii) It is assumed that Prudentius lived the life of a Roman Christian aristocrat. There is no evidence that Prudentius ever served in the Roman army; however, it appears that he achieved a high social standing in the court of the Roman Christian Emperor Theodosius, largely through his devotion to public service and patriotism.[16]

(iv) For contextualisation of the further arguments of this study, it is of particular relevance to draw attention to the general consensus in Prudentian scholarship that Prudentius appears to have strongly supported ascetic Christian ideology. Some scholars are of the opinion that Prudentius may have even been part of an ascetic community at some stage in his later life or, at the very least, that he copied their lifestyle and followed their teachings.

This chapter's introductory discussions now turn to providing a review of Prudentius' literary opus. This follows below in section 1.1.2.

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[16] Some of the more significant research works relating to the influential reign of the Roman Emperor Theodosius include those by Williams and Friell (1998), Errington (1996, 1997), Harris and Wood (ed.) (1993) and Cameron (1968).

1.1.2   Introduction to the literary works of Prudentius

The accuracy and authentic interpretation and transmission of literary works from Greco-Roman Antiquity and Late Antiquity has always been problematic in scholarship. In Prudentian scholarship, these problems are compounded by the scarcity of reliable commentaries on Prudentius' literary works. Bastiaensen (1993) provides one of the most coherent analyses of the scholarship into the commentaries on Prudentius' literary opus.[17]

In contemporary scholarship, it is generally agreed that Prudentius produced eight literary works. However, due to the negative impact of centuries of transcription of these ancient texts,[18] problems have arisen over the authorship of two other works, in particular, that may or may not have been written by Prudentius.[19] These are the *Hexaemeron* [Six Days of Creation] and another lengthy work that came to be transmitted alongside Prudentius' literary opus in the fifth or sixth centuries, entitled *Contra paganos* [Against the Pagans].[20] After preliminary research into authoritative scholarly opinions on these works, it has been deemed inappropriate in the current study to consider these works, *Hexaemeron* and *Contra paganos*, as part of Prudentius' literary opus.

Prudentius' literary oeuvre is unified by this poet's devoutly Christian mind-set. In his body of Christian works, Prudentius communicates the essence of Early Christian dogma through a variety of literary channels including apologetic, heroic epic, anti-heretical, hymnal, didactic, expository and martyrial hagiographical works. Prudentius' works are characterised further

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[17] Bastiaensen (1993:101-103) gives a review of the controversy in contemporary scholarship regarding the most authentic interpretation and transmission of Prudentian manuscripts through the centuries. Since the publication of Bastiaensen's (1993) work, a brief but useful commentary on Prudentius' *Psychomachia* was published by Burton in 2004. In 2016, Frisch completed his PhD, *Kommentar Zu Aurelius Clemens, Psychomachia*, a long-awaited and valuable addition to contemporary Prudentian scholarship.

[18] See Reynolds and Wilson (1991), 3rd ed, for an elaboration on the transmission of texts in Antiquity.

[19] According to Bastiaensen (1993:103), the earliest transcribed and edited manuscripts of Prudentius' work are those in the sixth-century manuscript, *Puteanus*, in Paris, and the sixth- or seventh-century work, the *Ambrosianus*, in Milan. See Cunningham (1958:32-37) for an elaboration on the *Puteanus*. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to elaborate on the transmission of Prudentius' literary opus through the ages.

[20] See Shanzer (1989:347-363) for an elaboration on scholarly opinions regarding the *Hexaemeron*. Peebles (1951:23) is of the opinion that this work was not composed by Prudentius and argues his finding convincingly. In addition to this, see Cameron (2011:273-319) for an excellent review of the nature and possible dating of the literary work *Contra paganos*, which appears to have been transmitted alongside Prudentius' literary opus in Late Antiquity and the unlikelihood that this work was written by Prudentius. It is outside the scope of this study to discuss this topic.

by the staunchly anti-pagan rhetoric that underpins all of his literature. Attention must be drawn here to the fact that Prudentius' literary opus also contains a sub-textual communication of his fervent patriotism towards Rome and the notion of a Christianised Roman Empire.

The most significant problems that have arisen in scholarship regarding Prudentius' literary opus centre on, firstly, whether Prudentius' literary opus was intended to be read as a sequential body of works beginning with the *Praefatio* and ending with the *Epilogus* [Epilogue] and, if so, the order in which the works are meant to be read and, secondly, the accurate dating of not only each of these works, but his whole literary opus. The dating of Prudentius' literary works is highly controversial in Prudentian scholarship and, again, it would be wise to heed the above-mentioned warning of O'Hogan (2016)[21] and approach dogmatic scholarly opinions on this issue circumspectly.

It is generally conceded that Prudentius began to write his literary opus in the late fourth century, probably in the early to middle 390s, and continued to compose literary works until what is presumed to be the date of his death, between the years 405-410. When analysing Prudentius' literary opus, it must be kept in mind that all of his literary works appear to have, to a certain degree, been influenced by existing literary works, not only from Early Christian literature, but also from the literature of Greco-Roman Antiquity.[22] This is explored further in Chapter Four of this study, which examines Prudentius' social and literary contexts.

The following works are generally believed to have been composed by Prudentius:[23]

   (i) *Praefatio* [Preface]: Prudentius' *Praefatio* is a 45-line work that is presumed to have been written as a preface to many of his literary works when the poet was 57 years of age, in the year 405. As mentioned in 1.1.1, the predominant tone of this work is that

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[21] O'Hogan (2016: 10).

[22] Peebles (1951:7-106) gives a persuasive account of possible former literary works that appear to have influenced each of Prudentius' literary works.

[23] There is ongoing debate in Prudentian scholarship regarding the ordering and dating of Prudentius' literary oeuvre. See O'Hogan (2016:10-14) for his valuable perspectives and also a review of how Prudentius' works were transmitted in the oldest manuscript that is available to contemporary Prudentian scholars, namely the *Puteanus*, which is believed to date from around the sixth century. In addition, for a review of Prudentius works, see Deferrari and Campbell (1966).

of a devoutly Christian nearing the end of his life and acknowledging that he feels he wasted his life in unimportant worldly pursuits, without fully recognising or paying tribute to the glory of God. It is generally agreed in scholarship that this work was written after the composition of the bulk of his literary works, but intended to preface them. However, Prudentius' *Praefatio* is beset with particular problems that plague Prudentian scholars and continue to remain unresolved and contentious. In the context of this dissertation, the most relevant problem regarding Prudentius' *Praefatio* is that scholars cannot definitely establish whether the focal poem of the current study, namely Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, is referred to in this preface. This consequently exacerbates the uncertainty regarding the accurate dating of the composition and publishing of the *Psychomachia*.[24] The other work by Prudentius that appears not to have been referred to in the *Praefatio* is his very specific work, the *Dittochaeon / Tituli Historiarum* [Scenes from History]. The most significant aspects of Prudentius' *Praefatio* are that it firmly establishes that Prudentius' literary aim is to glorify God through his literary works and, as shown above (1.1.1), it provides some biographical details of Prudentius' life.

(ii) *Apotheosis* [The Divinity of Christ]: Prudentius' work, the *Apotheosis*, is an anti-heretical work that focuses on Prudentius' explication of the nature of the Holy Trinity and criticises Monarchian religious ideology.[25] This work of Prudentius' gives lengthy explanation of the nature of the Holy Trinity and incorporates critical mention of other heretical movements of the era, such as the Gnostics.

(iii) *Hamartigenia* [Origin of Sin]: This was another overtly anti-heretical work.[26] In this work, Prudentius criticises the heretical religious ideologies of Marcionism.[27] Prudentius' *Hamartigenia* incorporates his criticism of Marcionism in his explication of the significance and consequences of the original sin of humankind. In the *Hamartigenia*, Prudentius rationalises why God permits the presence of evil in the

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[24] Attention must be drawn to the work of Shanzer (1989:347-363), who provides a persuasive argument for dating Prudentius' *Psychomachia* after the year 405.

[25] See Williams (2006:187-206) for a review of the problems in fourth- and fifth-century Christianity regarding the heretical movements of Monarchianism and, in particular, the Monarchianist Photinus of Sirmium. Williams (2006:187) highlights the fact that in the *Psychomachia* (791-795), Prudentius again warns against heretics and makes reference to Photinus of Sirmium. See Williams (2011:217-232) for additional elaboration on other Christian movements that were considered heretical in Early Christianity.

[26] Attention must be drawn here to the valuable work of Dykes (2011) on Prudentius' *Hamartigenia*. In addition to this, see Malamud (2011) for her translation of Prudentius' *Hamartigenia*.

[27] See Gager (1972:53-59) for a review of the religious and philosophical beliefs of Marcionism.

world.[28] This poem also addresses the notion of the God-given gift of free-will in humankind.

(iv) *Cathemerinon liber* [The Daily Round]: Prudentius' hymnal work, the *Cathemerinon liber*, has many antecedents in the genre of Latin hymnody,[29] such as those from the works of Ambrose. The *Cathemerinon liber* is a beautifully written work that guides Christians through their days, year and Christian holy days with a compilation of 12 hymns, each suited to a specific purpose. The tenth hymn of the *Cathemerinon*, *Hymnus circa exequias defuncti* [Hymn on the Burial of the Dead], is particularly well written.[30] The hymns of the *Cathemerinon* are full of symbolism, allegorical references and exemplifications. For the purposes of further discussions in Chapter Five and Six of this study regarding asceticism, it is significant to note that Prudentius' hymn on fasting, *Hymnus ieiunantium* [A Hymn of Fasting], the seventh hymn of the *Cathemerinon*, has a distinct ascetic tone, further supporting the notion that Prudentius supported the teachings of ascetic Christianity.[31]

(v) *Contra Symmachum* [Against Symmachus]: This two-volume work of Prudentius is the only work in his opus to have a Latin title, all other works that Prudentius composed had Greek titles.[32] Prudentius was educated in the Classical tradition so we can assume that he had a knowledge of Greek and ancient Greek texts. It is generally conceded in scholarship that his work Against Symmachus was composed in the year 403, because of specific socio-political and socio-historical references made in this work. The theme of *Contra Symmachum* revolves around the controversy in Roman pagan and Roman Christian society regarding pagan worship of the Altar of Victory. The Altar of Victory created particular socio-political problems for Christian Roman Emperors throughout the fourth century.[33] In the specific context of this dissertation, Prudentius' work, the *Contra Symmachum*, is significant because it reveals insights

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[28] Peebles (1951:50).

[29] When considering the genre of Latin hymnody, one cannot ignore the contribution made by Blume (1886-1922) in identifying, categorising and explicating over 10 000 hymns. Peebles (1951:77), in particular, makes reference to the work of Blume (1886-1922).

[30] Peebles (1951:83).

[31] See O'Daly (2012) for an illuminating investigation of Prudentius' *Cathermerion liber.*

[32] White (2000:76) highlights the fact that Prudentius, like the Roman writer Ovid before him (who gave a significant work of his *Metamorphoses* a Greek title), Prudentius gave all of his works, except *Contra Symmachum*, Greek titles. This could arguably be a reflection on educated Roman's long-held admiration for Greek culture. O'Donnell (2004:203-213) gives further elaboration of the use of Greek language in Late Ancient Roman literature.

[33] See Sheridan (1996:186-206) for an elaboration of the controversy surrounding the Altar of Victory in Late Ancient Roman society.

into Prudentius' social and political[34] contexts as a Roman Christian aristocrat in the fourth and early fifth centuries. It also highlights Prudentius' fierce patriotism to the Roman Empire.[35]

(vi) *Peristephanon liber* [Crowns of Martyrdom]: This work consists of 14 poems of mixed meter and length, devoted to praising the heroic acts of the Christian martyrs and apostles. It may be argued that in Prudentius' literary and religious contexts, his body of Christian literature may appear to be lacking without a work that praised the heroic sacrifices of the martyrs, as fourth- and fifth-century Christian literature abounded with works recalling the heroism of the martyrs. Prudentius' *Peristephanon liber* is his longest literary composition, with each poem being dedicated to a different martyr. Prudentius pays especial attention to the Spanish martyrs in this work. Six of the poems in this work are considered convincingly hymnal in nature, and although these poems were probably not intended for liturgical use, it is again believed that some were used in Spanish Christian Churches.[36] The highly impassioned accounts of martyrdom in Prudentius' *Peristephanon liber* are not intended as accurate historical accounts of the martyrs' deaths, transcribed into a poetic form. Rather, Prudentius embellishes and manipulates these martyrial narratives to communicate his message of unification for all Christians in Christianity. This is particularly evident in the content of the speeches that Prudentius composes and then attributes to each martyr. The closest that Prudentius may get to an historically accurate account of martyrdom is perhaps in the second poem in this work, *Hymnus in Honorem Passionis Laurentii Beatissimi Martyris* [A Hymn in Honour of the Passion of the Most Blessed Martyr Laurence][37] and certainly the most poignant poem is the martyrial narrative of the child martyr Eulalia, the third poem of the *Peristephanon liber*. The significance of the *Peristephanon liber* in this dissertation centres on the argument that this work was in all likelihood composed before the year 405, because it can be identified in Prudentius' *Praefatio*.[38]

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[34] Mastrangelo (2008) advocates throughout his work that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* has strong political undertones.
[35] A recent work of interest on Prudentius' work *Contra Symmachum* is that by Krollpfeifer (2017).
[36] Peebles (1951:94-95).
[37] Peebles (1951:87).
[38] Peebles (1951:20-22).

(vii) *Psychomachia* [Fight for Mansoul]:[39] This epic begins with a Preface (*Praefatio*) of 68 lines. The main body of the poem is 915 lines. The *Psychomachia* is considered by many to be Prudentius' greatest literary work. Scholarship is divided regarding whether this poem has an identifiable episodic structure. This dissertation agrees with the authoritative and convincing arguments of Pollmann (2017)[40] and Nugent (1985)[41] that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* follows an episodic structure. Furthermore, after lengthy preliminary research; in-depth review of Prudentius' literary opus, especially the *Psychomachia*, and with due consideration of the opinions of a number of authoritative, but opposing scholars, this study argues that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* was in all likelihood composed between the years 405-410.[42] Furthermore, this study agrees with scholarly opinions that argue that this work was probably intended to be read as a stand-alone work. As the *Psychomachia* is the focal poem of this dissertation and will be given in-depth investigation throughout this study, to avoid unnecessary repetition, this discussion limits itself to providing only the episodic structure of the poem below:

a) Preface: (1-68).

The main body of this poem consists of 915 lines, which describe the battles between particular Christian virtues and pagan vices and the celebrations of the victorious army of virtues who erect a temple to God in the purified soul of man. The episodic pattern of the *Psychomachia* is as follows:[43]

b) Prudentius' invocation to God (1-20).

c) Battle between the virtue Faith (*Fides*) and the vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods (*Veterum Cultura Deorum*) (21-39)[44].

d) Battle between the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) and the vice Lust (*Libido*) (40-108).

e) Battle between the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) and the vice Wrath (*Ira*) (109-177).

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[39] The correct translation of the Greek term *Psychomachia* is a contested area of Prudentian scholarship. This study adopts the translation of Thompson (1949), who translates this as 'The Fight for Mansoul'.

[40] Pollmann (2017:53-54) also identifies the episodes of the *Psychomachia*, but in a slightly different pattern to Nugent (1985:70).

[41] Nugent (1985:70).

[42] Nugent (1985:21).

[43] There is general consensus in scholarship that the theme of Prudentius' poem the *Psychomachia* revolves around the battle of the personified Christian virtues against the personified pagan vices in the metaphorical space of the soul of man. To the best of my knowledge, this accepted understanding of the central theme of this poem is not, nor has it ever been misunderstood or debatable in scholarship.

[44] The translation of the titles of the virtues and the vices are according to Thompson's (1949) translation of the *Psychomachia* which is the choice of translation of this poem in this study.

f) Battle between the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*), with the aid of the virtue Hope (*Spes*), and the vice Pride (*Superbia*) (178-309).

g) Battle between the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) and the vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) (310-453).

h) Battle between the virtue Reason/Good Works (*Ratio/Operatio*)[45] and the vice Greed/ Thrifty (*Avaritia /Frugi*) (454-628).

This is the end of the battle of the army of Christian virtues against the pagan vices in the *Psychomachia.* The poem concludes with following episodes:

i) The building of the Temple of the Soul (629--887); and

j) Prudentius' closing invocation to God (888-915).

k) *Epilogus* [Epilogue]: Prudentius' work the *Epilogus* is 34 lines long. This tone of this work resembles that adopted by Prudentius in his *Praefatio* in that, again, Prudentius reflects upon his life. In his *Epilogus*, Prudentius humbly offers his literary works as a tribute to God. The date of composition and publishing of the *Epilogus* is not definite, and it is not known where it is positioned in the order of his literary works.

A plethora of additional significant aspects of the *Psychomachia* are given in-depth investigation throughout the discussions of the study. The final discussion of this section (1.1.3) continues below with an introduction to the socio-historical and socio-cultural context of Roman Christianity in Late Antiquity.

1.1.3   Introduction to the socio-cultural and socio-historical circumstances of Roman Late Antiquity

This dissertation enters into the academic discourse on Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* in the delimited and unique context of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century. However, it is acknowledged throughout this study that social constructs, in this instance early fifth-century Roman Christian heroization, are shaped by not only prevailing socio-cultural circumstances, but also by centuries worth of socio-historical

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[45] The translation of the virtue Reason's (*Ratio*) alter-ego to Good Works as *(Operatio)* is according to Thompson (1949) translation of the *Psychomachia*, the translated text of this poem used in this study.

influences. It is thus important to provide an overview of some of the most significant socio-historical and socio-cultural aspects of Late Ancient Roman society below:

(i) The Roman Empire in the first three centuries of Roman Late Antiquity was dominated by the following: (a) people divided by religion; (b) complex political and regional cultural disparities; (c) taxation and economic hardship, which resulted in mass migrations of people; and (d) the constant threat throughout the empire of invasion from non-Roman tribes. The magnitude of these socio-cultural circumstances contributed to ongoing erosion of culturally embedded, traditionally hegemonic religious and social structures in the Roman Empire in this era.[46]

(ii) The spread of Christianity had been given incalculable socio-cultural momentum by the conversion of Emperor Constantine I in 312.[47]

(iii) In 313, the persecution of Christians was officially banned. This is recognised as the official date of the end of Christian martyrdom, although there is evidence that it may have continued until the middle of the fourth century, in a sporadic manner in geographically isolated locations in the Roman Empire.[48]

(iv) Apart from the reign of the pagan Emperor Julian,[49] who ruled the Roman Empire for 18 months between the years 331-363 and endeavoured to restore the domination of paganism as the religion of the Roman Empire, Roman Christian Emperors ruled the Roman Empire from the reign of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century.

(v) The reign of the Roman Christian Emperor Theodosius I (379-395) was momentous and influential for a number of reasons, the most significant of which are the following: (a) Theodosius I reunited the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire and returned the seat of Imperial power to Rome; (b) This Roman Emperor's reign was distinguished by the banning of a variety of traditional pagan social institutions, which consequently contributed to the erosion of many foundations of the pagan religion in late fourth, fifth and sixth century Roman society; (c) Roman society in the late fourth century, under the leadership of Theodosius I, experienced a period of relative domestic peace and prosperity; (e) Theodosius I was a great military strategist and this slowed down the rate of the collapse of the Roman Empire's military power and invasion by the Barbarian tribes during his reign.[50]

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[46] Von Albrecht (1997:1281-1285).

[47] Van Dam (2007:6). There is a vast amount of scholarship available on the reign of the Emperor Constantine I and the socio-cultural consequences in Late Ancient Roman society of his conversion to Christianity in 312. A number of works have informed the preliminary research phase of this study. Amongst these is the valuable contribution made by Van Dam (2007). Other works on the Emperor Constantine include those by Odahl (2004), Polsander (1996), Jones (1962) and Alfōldi (1948).

[48] See Moss (2012b:531-551) for an elaboration on diverse practices of martyrdom in Early Christianity.

[49] For an elaboration on the life and reign of the pagan Emperor Julian, see Athanassiadi (1992).

[50] Athanassiadi (1992:15).

(vi) The wealth of the Roman Christian Church increased rapidly in the fourth and fifth centuries as Christian bishops gained increasing control of the finances of the wide-spread regional areas of the Roman Empire where Christianity dominated, thereby negatively impacting the imperial control of Roman wealth.[51]

Thus far, this chapter has provided a brief introductory contextualisation of the life and works of the Christian poet Prudentius and the socio-cultural circumstances of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century. However, as this chapter is introductory in nature, it specifically highlights the manner in which scholarship has approached investigation into Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in his epic, the *Psychomachia.* This discussion demonstrates that this study addresses what appears to be an under-researched area of Prudentian scholarship, namely the portrayal of Christian heroism in this epic. The socio-cultural circumstances of Roman Christian society are elaborated upon further in Chapter Three of this study.

1.2   Introduction to Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

Prudentius' epic masterpiece, the *Psychomachia*, has proven its ability to sustain interest in scholarship across the centuries, into the 21st century.[52] Recent developments in Late Ancient literary scholarship that prioritise appropriate socio-cultural contextualisation when researching texts from Antiquity, which is facilitated by adopting an interdisciplinary approach when necessary, has resulted in contemporary scholars paying attention to areas of this poem that appear to have been overlooked or under-researched thus far in Prudentian scholarship.[53] The preliminary research phase of this study has revealed that in contemporary Prudentian scholarship, there appears to be a need for an in-depth investigation into and clarification of the nature of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is argued here that research approaches in contemporary scholarship into Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this epic fall into four distinct groupings, as discussed below.

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[51] See Brown (2012) for an informative review of the economic dynamics of the Later Roman Empire.
[52] Trout (2009:555).
[53] Examples of works that demonstrate this are Pelttari's (2014) *The Space that Remains*, which examines reader reception of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* alongside the works of Claudian and Ausonius, and Lewis's (2000) research, *Gender and Violence in Prudentius' Psychomachia.*

Firstly, it appears that many scholars make a perfunctory mention of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, while concentrating instead on more popular research areas of Prudentian scholarship. For the most part, Prudentian scholarship is dominated by focusing on investigating Prudentius' deployment of allegorical personification in this poem.[54]

Secondly, there appears to be confusion in contemporary scholarship regarding the nature of Prudentius' representation of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. This is highlighted in the quotation below, by the Prudentian scholar Smith (1976). In addition to this, as also demonstrated in the quote below, Smith (1976) specifically calls for an in-depth investigation into Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.* Smith (1976)[55] states:

> 'Given the vital scriptural presence in the *Psychomachia,* to what degree is depiction of heroic conventions contingent upon scriptural themes? Does Prudentius intend to ennoble his scriptural allegory by means of the epic mode as he borrows it from the Roman literary tradition? Or rather, does he intend the scriptural allegory to generate a revised conception of the heroic in the minds of the readers? Such questions have never been seriously addressed.'

Thirdly, Prudentius' intertextual relationship with pagan literary works, most commonly Virgil's *Aeneid*, is a well-trodden route in Prudentian scholarship. This appears to influence the perspective adopted by particular scholars when reviewing Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.* Consequently, in specific works, for example by Mastrangelo (2008),[56] Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* is compared directly to the Virgilian heroic archetypes, most often the Virgilian heroic character Aeneas.

Finally, there appears to be a prioritisation in Prudentian scholarship in examining Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in his work the *Peristephanon liber*, which details the heroic acts of the Early Christian martyrs,[57] rather than exploring what is deemed here to be his

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[54] Witke (1971:119) explains that scholars tend to overlook or give passing mention to Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* and rather focus on investigating Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in this poem. See, also, Witke (1968:509-529).
[55] Smith (1976:26-27).
[56] Mastrangelo (2008:36-40).
[57] See footnote 5.

socially relevant portrayal of Roman Christian heroism for the post-martyrdom context of early fifth-century Roman Christianity in his work the *Psychomachia*.

To respond to the gaps in scholarship regarding an in-depth evaluation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* described above, this dissertation adopts pertinent and academically relevant research approaches. This discussion now turns to elaborating on the research approaches used in this study that provide a rounded investigation of Prudentius' literary depiction of didactic, interiorized early fifth-century Roman Christianity in this poem.

1.3   Research approaches

Contemporary Late Ancient literary scholars have been encouraged to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to enhance the socio-cultural contextualisation of their research.[58] In consideration of this trend and to enable a fuller contextualisation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, an interdisciplinary approach is adopted when necessary in the current study, primarily from the academic domains of theology and anthropology.

The literary approach of New Historicism[59] is the theoretical framework of the current study. In this dissertation that prioritises the appropriate socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, the principles of the approach of New Historicism are deemed the most applicable because this approach prioritises the consideration of the social context in which a text is produced. Furthermore, New Historicism endorses and adopts many viewpoints of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz.[60] Schmitz (2007) explains that Geertz's works from the late 20th century drew heavily on literary theory and the appropriate socio-cultural contextualisation of texts in his anthropological findings.

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[58] See Barchiesi (2005:135-162) for a valid criticism of scholars who do not adopt an interdisciplinary approach in the academic discipline of classics and other disciplines in the humanities.

[59] See Gallagher and Greenblatt (2000) for an elaboration on the practice on New Historicism.

[60] See Geertz (1993).

1.4   Research question

This thesis is guided by the following overarching research question:

"Does Prudentius' didactic and interiorized portrayal of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* fulfil the need in early fifth-century Roman Christianity for a socially relevant modality of heroism that strengthened Christian heroic identity at this particular time?"

1.5   Problem statement

This study is a response to what appears to be an under-researched area of Prudentian scholarship regarding an in-depth investigation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The central argument of this dissertation is that through his internalized conceptualisation of the notion of Roman Christian heroism in this poem, Prudentius provided early fifth-century Roman Christian society with a prototype of Christian heroism that strengthened their heroic identity in their post-martyrdom context.

1.6   Research aims

The aims of this study are as follows:
  (i) To demonstrate that Prudentius' didactical, interiorized literary conceptualisation of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* was determined by his own socio-cultural contexts and was a unique literary response to the prevailing socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances and social challenges existing in the post-martyrdom context of early fifth-century Roman Christian society; and
  (ii) To determine that in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius achieved a full literary expression of his vision of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism, through his realignment of Roman Christian society's notions of the heroic function of the body and the soul in the prevailing social circumstances of Roman Christianity in the early fifth century.

1.7   Research objectives

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims of this dissertation and address the research question, it will be necessary to fulfil the following research objectives:

(i) To contribute towards addressing an apparent gap in Prudentian scholarship by providing an in-depth examination of the nature and form of Prudentius' didactic, interiorized portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in his epic, the *Psychomachia*;

(ii) To demonstrate that Prudentius' didactic, interiorized portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in his epic the *Psychomachia* fully responded, in a specifically socially appropriate manner, to the need in early fifth-century Roman Christian society for a socially relevant modality of Christian heroism that strengthened Christian heroic identity at this specific time;

(iii) To establish that Prudentius achieved a fully responsive literary expression of a socially relevant prototype of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* through his deployment of specific literary devices in this epic;

(iv) To determine that by using an interdisciplinary approach, original insights into the neglected areas of Prudentian scholarship, such as the portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, are made possible; and

(v) To demonstrate the value in Prudentian scholarship of considering challenging, compositional aspects of the *Psychomachia*, such as heroic portrayal, within the appropriate social context.

1.8   Limitations

Research projects of this academic nature, focus and length create unique limitations generated through particular external circumstances or advanced by the project itself. In this PhD dissertation, there are specific limitations that require elaboration below.

It is unfortunate that in the academic discipline of Classics in South Africa, Prudentius' literary opus is not easily recognised or studied.[61] One has to often turn to North American and European, especially German, academics for the most recent Prudentian research. It is suggested here that this may result in a Eurocentric perspective of this important poet's epic masterpiece, the *Psychomachia*, and that this may be regarded as a limitation in this study. In addition to this, there is a paucity of primary and secondary works readily available for consultation at South African universities regarding Late Ancient Roman literature and, more specifically, Prudentius' literary opus and especially the *Psychomachia.* It has been an ongoing and concentrated task of this thesis to source valuable and relevant primary and secondary literary works locally and internationally.[62]

At the most basic and, indeed, at the highest levels of education in South Africa, the opportunity to study ancient languages and modern European languages is limited.[63] As mentioned above, many of the literary works deemed significant in this study originate in Europe. The absence of a workable knowledge of the German and French languages by the researcher is a limitation of this study. However, many significant works used in this study, which originated in Europe, for example that of Conte (1994) and even older works such as that by Harnack (tr. 1908), are now becoming available in English. In addition to this, because of the international status that European scholars of Classics, such as Pollmann, now have, many important works from Europe are being written in English. In the current study, if important works in German and French were not available in English, reliable translations of specific German and French works into English, by a German PhD graduate (2014) of the University of Stellenbosch, Dr Florian Böhlandt, were used.[64]

Some of the books referenced in this dissertation are in the electronic book format and were all downloaded from Amazon.com onto a Samsung GT 5200 Tablet. This book format unfortunately does not always provide page numbers; on occasion, it only provides a location

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[61] This is a generalised statement and does not exclude this study's awareness of the valuable work done by the few notable Prudentian scholars in South Africa academia.

[62] Professor Hilton has kindly sourced many international works that are unavailable in South Africa from libraries in London.

[63] The economic considerations of the Department of Higher Education do not allow the prioritisation of teaching of foreign languages in the context of academia in South Africa. See List of References Website address 1, which gives a full account of the language policies of the Department of Higher Education.

[64] See Acknowledgements.

number, at the foot of the page. All these books were downloaded without a specific website address and therefore all electronic books in this study are referenced as having been accessed from Amazon.com. It also appears that location numbers for pages vary from device to device. As far as possible in this dissertation, page numbers are provided from electronically sourced books. However, when page numbers are not provided, the location reference is provided in the format of the year of publication followed by the abbreviation 'Loc' and the location number given at the bottom of the page. This practice has been kept to a minimum in this study and hard copies of books have been used as much as possible.

The discussion thus far has pointed out the external factors that may be seen as limitations of this study. However, it may be argued that the focus of this study has also created its own limitations. For example, the highly specific reading of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* that has been adopted in this study demonstrates one perspective amongst a plethora of potential alternative approaches that could be deployed in contemporary Prudentian scholarship. It is the reading of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was a socially appropriate literary response to Roman Christians' anxiety regarding the nature, form and identity of Roman Christian heroism in the highly specific social context of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century.

This raises the question of whether it is academically sound to isolate a particular socio-historical period for examination in a dissertation of this type, and this may be regarded as a limitation. However, in this study, due consideration has been taken of the opinion of scholars such as Miles (1999)[65] regarding the dangers of selecting particular years for examination. To address this limitation, there has been a thorough examination of influential socio-historical circumstances and the social authority of culturally-embedded Roman social norms and values in the context of early fifth-century Roman Christians, and there is careful consideration of this throughout the study. Appendix A has been added in an effort to overcome this limitation and provide further information on some of the more significant socio-cultural events, socio-political developments and literary works written in Roman society from the first to the fifth century.

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[65] Miles (1999:4) warns against what he calls 'ring-fencing' a particular era or time period in Late Ancient scholarship for investigation.

This being said, it should be noted that it is one of the cornerstones of this dissertation that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* is a relevant literary response to the specific, prevailing socio-cultural circumstances of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century. It is argued in this study that the rapidity and magnitude of socio-cultural change in the late fourth and early fifth centuries in Roman society created unique socio-cultural circumstances and challenges for Roman Christians. It is suggested here that this gives us a measure of freedom to isolate this particular period for examination.

The opinion of the Prudentian scholar Curtius (1953)[66] that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* should be considered to be especially relevant to the unique social circumstances of the late fourth and early fifth centuries in Roman cultural history also supports the delimiting of a time-frame in this study. This further substantiates the stance taken in this research that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was appropriate to social circumstances in Roman Christian society in a particular time-period, namely the early fifth century.

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach to strengthen the contextualisation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.* This can create specific problems. The ongoing debate in the academic discipline of anthropology regarding the degree to which society or culture determines contexts in societies[67] has been given due consideration in this study. To negate inflating the effects and social consequences of cultural forces, such as social determinism, agency and social power, this study adopts an emic[68] perspective as far as possible.

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[66] Curtius (1953:458-459).
[67] For further information on this debate, see Kuper (1999) and Geertz (1993).
[68] See section 1.10 for an elaboration on an emic approach in anthropology.

Including the academic discipline of theology[69] in the interdisciplinary approach in this study addresses the possible limitation of not giving sufficient emphasis to the socio-religious basis of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. A plethora of early Christian writings has been consulted to investigate how early Christians struggled to reach consensus on the interpretation of the scriptures in Late Antiquity. Extensive research into the socio-religious context of Roman Christian society in Late Antiquity up to the fifth century has been an ongoing consideration and is elaborated upon throughout the discussions of this study.

In regard to the authorship of any other scriptures of the New Testament that are referred to in this study the same criteria explained in regard to the authorship of the new Testament *Letter to the Ephesians* apply, namely, the most general consensus on who wrote particular scriptures will be used. However, the candidate of this study is aware of the fact that in contemporary theology there is general consensus that the last book of the New Testament the *Book of Revelation* can no longer be definitely attributed to the writing of Saint John the Divine. Therefore, as this particular theological controversy regarding who composed the *Book of Revelation* is not crucial to the focus of the discussion of Chapter 7 section 7.7, the *Book of Revelation* will not be attributed to any particular Early Christian writer.

In addition to this attention must be drawn to the fact that the candidate of this study is aware that some contemporary schools of theology do not consider the *Book of Revelation* to be part of Biblical canon. It is outside the scope of this study to debate or elaborate upon the debate whether or not this particular scripture was inspired by the Holy Ghost. However, it is generally conceded by most Christian religions that this book is the last book of the New Testament and should be considered as part of the Bible.

The influence of the primary texts of writers of Greco-Roman Antiquity and Roman Late Antiquity cannot be ignored in a dissertation of this nature for the value that these texts add to understanding the socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances during these eras.

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[69] See footnote 7.

Analysing the multi-faceted socio-religious milieu of Roman society in Late Antiquity is a vast area of scholarship. In this dissertation's evaluation of this in Chapters Three and Four, the primary works of both Christian and pagan writers of Roman Late Antiquity are considered particularly useful. Furthermore, this study has judiciously considered the more significant and authoritative secondary research works for the contributions that these make in contemporary Late Ancient and Prudentian scholarship. Chapter Two of this study provides a fuller literary review of research works that have informed this study.

As mentioned above (see 1.1.2), there is debate in contemporary Prudentian scholarship regarding whether or not the known works in Prudentius' literary opus are meant to be read sequentially, the order in which the works are meant to be read and the correct dates on which these works were written and published. This study focuses primarily on Prudentius' epic, the *Psychomachia*, and this may be seen as a limitation. It is the argument of this researcher that the *Psychomachia* is such a unique and specific literary work that it can be studied as a stand-alone literary work.[70] However, reference is made in this dissertation to passages from other works in Prudentius' literary oeuvre when germane to the discussions presented in this study.

1.9   Significance of the study

It is suggested that this study is a response to the need in contemporary Prudentian scholarship for an in-depth examination of Prudentius' didactic, interiorized portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.[71] This study seeks to prioritise reading Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this epic from the perspective of the prevailing socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances facing Prudentius and his readers in the early fifth century.

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[70] This notion is attested to by Peebles (1951:22), who argues that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* differs so vastly in structure and nature from his other works that it can arguably be considered as not belonging to his body of literary works referenced in his *Praefatio.*

[71] This is a personal predilection of the writer of this dissertation. It is hoped that more South African scholars of Late Antiquity adopt this particular habit to enhance the global academic reputation of valuable Late Ancient and other social sciences scholarship from South Africa. South African Classicists rank as some of the top international scholars and their academic reputations should be recognised globally as well as locally.

This dissertation's perspective of investigating Prudentius' interiorized conceptualisation of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* provides a novel evaluation of the portrayal of heroism in this epic. It is anticipated that this research perspective moves towards deeper levels of understanding of the importance Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* contributed towards realigning early fifth-century Roman Christian society's perceptions of the heroic functions of the body and the soul in order to strengthen heroic identity in a post-martyrdom context.

In contemporary Late Ancient literary scholarship, Prudentius' *Psychomachia* is considered by many as not only his finest literary work, but also an important contribution in the history of Roman literature. However, as mentioned earlier, in South Africa, this poet is largely unknown. This study hopes to encourage investigation into this important Christian writer to emerging students of Late Ancient Roman Christian literature in South Africa. Attention must be drawn to the fact that as this dissertation originates in South Africa, it will be noted throughout this study when South African works of scholarship are used.[72]

Finally, it is proposed here that Prudentius' perceptive interpretation and literary representations and responses to the social challenges facing Christians in early fifth-century Roman society can potentially be related to some of the social challenges faced by South Africans in the present time, as we currently undergo social transformations in our own national context. This study hopes to contribute to and encourage such debate in South African scholarship by presenting a study of Christian heroism in a didactic literary work from the early fifth century. It is hoped that contemporary Prudentian scholars may explore alternative perspectives that examine why Prudentius used only female Christian Virtues and pagan Vices in his composition of the *Psychomachia*, or alternatively on the political nature of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this epic. Both of these are valuable research areas.

1.10   Key terminology

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[72] See Acknowledgments for South African scholars who have given their valuable input to this study.

In this dissertation, particular terms are used that require elaboration. The list below provides definitions of the more significant terms that are used in this study:

(i) Pagan: As is well-known by scholars in the academic discipline of classics, the term 'pagan' was not used before Christians called non-Christians pagans.[73] Alan Cameron (2011)[74] explains the origins of the term 'pagan' in Antiquity. He explains that the term originated from the Latin word *paganus*, which meant a farmer or a civilian not involved in the military. He goes on to explain that the Greco-Roman world of Late Antiquity Christians adopted this term to denote non-Christian members of a society. In the current study, the word 'pagan' has no derogatory meaning that modern societies have imposed. In this study, which focuses on Roman Late Antiquity, the word pagan refers to non-Christians who worshiped the traditional pantheon of pagan gods.

(ii) Socio-cultural, socio-historical, socio-political and socio-religious: These terms belong in the academic discipline of cultural or socio-cultural anthropology,[75] which investigates the culture of societies.

(iii) Social constructs or systems: Social constructs or systems are described by the anthropologist, Kottak (2014),[76] as related patterns and systems devised by a society to continually adapt to its environment. He explains that change in one social construct affects change in all other social constructs in the society, to a lesser or greater degree.

(iv) Didactic epic: Baldick (2008)[77] defines didactic literature as '[i]nstructive: designed to impart information, advice, or some doctrine of morality or philosophy'. Prudentian scholars, such as Trout (2009),[78] Pollmann (2001)[79] and Nugent (1985)[80] all refer to Prudentius' *Psychomachia* as a didactic epic.

(v) Late Antiquity: Mathisen (2003)[81] defines the period of Late Antiquity as being generally accepted as falling between the years 260, the beginning of the Roman

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[73] See Jones (2012:249-254) for a discussion on the problems related to the term 'pagan'.
[74] Cameron (2011:14-15).
[75] Kottak (2014:4).
[76] Kottak (2014:20-21).
[77] Baldick (2008:89).
[78] Trout (2009:522-523).
[79] Pollmann (2001:65-69).
[80] Nugent (1985:7).
[81] Mathisen (2003:1). It must be noted here that as this dissertation focuses on Late Antiquity in the Common Era, the abbreviation 'CE. (Common Era)' will not follow each reference made to years. However, if the years referred to fall outside of the Common Era, then it will be noted by adding the abbreviation BCE, (Before Common Era) for the sake of clarity.

Emperor Gallienus' reign, until 641 and the death of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. He, however, concedes that this period may vary up to a century either way.

(vi) Interiority, interiorize, interiorization, interiorly and interiorness: In this study, these terms are interpreted as pertaining to the intellectualised, metaphysical realm of the soul of man, in the context of early fifth-century Roman Christianity;[82]

(vii) Corporeal, corporealism, corporealist, corporealization, corporealize, corporeally, corporealness and corporeity: In this study, these terms are interpreted as pertaining to the physical body of man in the context of early fifth-century Roman Christianity.[83]

(viii) Emic approach: According to Kottak (2014),[84] the emic approach in anthropology is when culture is studied from the perspective of the society, without imposition or judgement of the anthropologist's perspective. This approach requires further elaboration, which follows below.

1.10.1 The emic approach

In 1983, the social anthropologist Jorion provided one of the most succinct explications of the why the emic approach is favoured over the etic approach for anthropologists who are studying cultures that are not their own. He states:

> 'Emic as preferable to Etic refers to a capacity for distancing oneself sufficiently from one's own habitual reference framework to slip into the other's skin, heart, brain and see the world through their eyes'. [85]

Jorion explains that the emic approach in anthropology is underpinned by the notion that the social systems of a society are interrelated and that change in one system affects change in all other systems of a society, to a lesser or greater extent. He labels this 'emic systematics'[86]. In this dissertation, which relies heavily on demonstrating that Prudentius' portrayal of Christian

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[82] *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed January 2017. Web Address Number 2 in List of References.
[83] "Corporeal, adj." "Interiority, n; interiorize, v;" *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed January 2017. Web Address Number 3 in List of References.
[84] Kottak (2014:46).
[85] Jorion (1983:44).
[86] Jorion (1983:41).

heroism in the *Psychomachia* was specifically relevant to the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances of early fifth-century Christianity, it is necessary to 'see the world through their eyes', as Jorion explains, as far as possible. This is achieved in this study through comprehensive research into the socio-cultural circumstances of Roman society in Late Antiquity, as is demonstrated in Chapter Two, which reviews significant works of contemporary research that have contributed towards the findings of this study. However, more importantly, it is an underlying principle of this study to give careful consideration to primary texts of Roman Late Antiquity, especially those that are deemed to be most reflective of the socio-cultural circumstances of early fifth-century Christian society.

While it is acknowledged here that the etic approach, in cultural anthropology has equal value depending on the manner in which it is applied to the study of societies, Jorion[87] explains that the etic approach involves a rather more analytical and scientific evaluation of cultures against parameters established by the anthropologist, not the society. It has been decided that in a dissertation of this nature, compiled in the 21st century, which is so chronologically removed from the era in which Prudentius composed the *Psychomachia*, the etic approach to analysing Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* would have little value. Therefore, in this study, the emic approach has been deemed to be the most suitable approach

To demonstrate the difficulties of choosing either an emic or an etic approach to study the culture of a society, it is relevant to take into consideration the findings of the contemporary anthropologist Csordas (2013).[88] In his study, which considers morality in a society, which was an essential component of early fifth-century Christian heroism, Csordas (2013) argues that any way in which the anthropologist studies morality in a society is problematic. Those that study the morality of a society from the scientific perspective may be seen to be endorsing amoral behaviours of the society, while those that try to engage with the norms and values regarding morality in a society can be accused of 'subjectivism'.[89] Upon consideration of the finding of Csordas (2013), it is reiterated here that for contemporary scholars whose research is textually based, which is the case in this study, one cannot underestimate the value

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[87] Jorion (1983:44).
[88] Csordas (2013:523-546).
[89] Csordas (2013:524).

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of firstly considering the importance of primary texts and, secondly, applying the emic approach to the analyses of all ancient texts most judiciously.

The next point that needs some greater elaboration in this section (1.10) is clarification of the way in which this study interprets the interrelationship between the terms 'saints', 'heroes' and 'martyrs' in the interpretation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. This discussion continues below in section 1.10.2.

1.10.2 Saints, heroes and martyrs

In the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius rarely uses the term 'saints' or 'martyrs'. In line with the reasoning used in this study, it can be argued that all Christians were indeed blessed in God's Kingdom and holy in their own right. This augments the prevailing attitude of universalism in Prudentius' *Psychomachia.*

For clarification, this section now addresses the implications of the words 'saint', 'hero' and 'martyr' in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. This study argues that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was a message to all early fifth-century Roman Christians that divine salvation for their souls was within their spiritual capacity. Those Christians heroic enough to rid their souls and lives of pagan vice and let God fill their virtuous soul were rewarded, just as the Early Christian martyrs were. As Chapter Four (4.3) argues, it is the thesis of this study that Prudentius encouraged the notion of universality in Early Christianity and that he establishes this in the first sentence of the preface of the *Psychomachia* through his exemplification of Abraham/Abram. Furthermore, in an effort to strengthen the heroic identity of early fifth-century Roman Christians, Prudentius purposefully does not repeatedly refer to saints, martyrs or indeed heroes in the *Psychomachia*. This is evidenced in the examples highlighted below:

(i) Prudentius uses the word *sanctis* (saints) only once in the *Psychomachia* in line 608, and in this context it refers to those who are pure of soul; and

(ii) Prudentius refers to martyrdom only twice in the *Psychomachia*. In line 37, he uses this in a somewhat confused manner. He abruptly introduces the notion of the martyrs at the beginning of the *Psychomachia* and then abandons this reference until line 775, where he contextualises them as belonging to the past.

In her recent work, Pollmann (2017)[90] gives a detailed and persuasive explication of the socio-cultural perceptions of saints and martyrs in fourth- and fifth-century Christianity. As she explains, saints were associated with miracles, much like those apparently witnessed in martyrdom. Pollmann explains that in the post-martyrdom era, saints were seen as otherworldly and the link between humans and God. Saints and martyrs held an ambiguous and spiritual holiness that arguably confused their relationship to the ordinary Christian in this era. This quotation below from the work of Pollmann (2017)[91] explains this adroitly:

> 'Dispute arose among Christians at an early age over the status and the function of the martyrs, the first saints of the Church. Cyprian of Carthage warned his fellow Christians that, despite their exemplary lives, the martyrs did not have the power to forgive sins, for this was the sole prerogative of Christ at the Last Judgement'.

It is argued here that the notion of sainthood further complicated the augmentation of a socially acceptable Christian heroic identity for early fifth-century Roman Christians who could not relate to heroic expectations of martyrdom and sainthood. Moreover, it is the thesis of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* purposefully avoided deploying the terms 'saint', 'martyr' or 'hero' because of the social implications of this title and its association with the ability to perform miracles and that the saint was not 'ordinary'. Furthermore, Prudentius explicitly dedicates his work to God in the opening lines of the *Psychomachia* (1-6) and again at the end (888-890). This study argues that Prudentius intended his portrayal of heroism in this epic to actuate the potential for heroism in ordinary Christians living in the social circumstances of a post-martyrdom context.

It is a central thesis of this study that this strategic move by Prudentius was not to impose upon early fifth-century Christians the idea that salvation for their souls was unattainable, especially in view of their veneration of the extreme heroic acts of the Christian martyrs. Rather, he exploited the heroic tales of ordinary people (40-108) who, through their devotion to God, were able to activate their heroic potential. Furthermore, he encouraged the spirit of unity amongst Christians so that they knew they did not face the daunting task of ridding

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[90] See, in particular, Pollmann (2017:191-234) for an elaboration of the ambiguous nature of sainthood in Early Christianity.
[91] Pollmann (2017:207).

pagan vice from their souls alone (109-177). Prudentius also awakened the socio-cultural memory of Roman heroic traditions (310-453), by recalling the innate ideology that Romans were heroic by nature in his portrayal of the heroism of the virtues in the *Psychomachia.*

1.11   Brief chapter overview

This dissertation contains seven chapters and a conclusion. Chapter Two follows this introductory chapter. It provides a literature review of significant primary and secondary works that have contributed to the arguments of this thesis. Chapter Three contextualises the concept of heroization and provides relevant socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of the circumstances in early fifth-century Roman Christian society that necessitated its need for a prototype of Christian heroism applicable to the prevailing post-martyrdom context. Chapter Four of this dissertation focuses on Prudentius' social and literary contexts and the manner in which these appear to have influenced his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Chapter Five gives an in-depth analysis of Prudentius' literary conceptualisation of a didactic, interiorized modality of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia.* This chapter also investigates Prudentius' literary negotiation of the martyrial narrative and notions of corporeity as these existed in early fifth-century Christianity. Chapter Six explores the concept of the soul as the locus of sanctity in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Chapter Seven focuses on providing this study's literary analysis of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and also reviews the links between the *Book of Revelation* verses 21.10-21.21 and Prudentius' portrayal of the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* (832-887). The conclusion of this study, Chapter Eight, summarises the findings of this dissertation. This is followed by the List of References and Appendix A which provides a table of the most important political events, socio-cultural developments and literary works in Roman society from the first to the fifth centuries.

1.12   Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the life and works of the poet Prudentius and an outline of significant socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances in Roman Late Antiquity for the express purpose of enhancing the further socio-historical and socio-cultural

contextualisation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The research question, problem statement, aims and objectives were then outlined, as well as the limitations and significance of the current study. Key terminology was also defined. This study offers one perspective among a potential plethora of many others regarding the depiction of heroism in this epic, and hopes to move some way towards advancing academic dialogue in 21st century Prudentian scholarship regarding the portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Chapter Two follows with a literature review of the more significant secondary works that have informed this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter One (1.1), this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach and prioritisation of the socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Moreover, it is the central thesis of this study that Prudentius' literary communication in the *Psychomachia* purposefully conceptualised the portrayal of Christian heroism as an interiorized notion, realised in the soul of the devout Christian which has been purified of pagan vice. It is argued here that, through the interiorization of Christian heroism in this poem, Prudentius made the portrayal of Christian heroism particularly relevant to the social challenges faced by Roman Christians regarding the strengthening of their Christian heroic identity in a post-martyrdom context.

The current chapter provides an introductory review of some of the more significant and authoritative works of scholarship that have contributed to this dissertation's presentation of Prudentius' portrayal of an interiorized conceptualisation of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*.[92] The number of secondary research works available on Late Ancient Roman society and its literature is vast, so this chapter will highlight the works deemed most relevant to this research. Where applicable, reference will be made in footnotes to works that give further elaboration on particular topics. In addition, because of the adoption of an interdisciplinary research approach in this study, research works across a range of academic disciplines have been analysed.

The format of the discussions in this chapter assumes a thematic structure. This approach is deemed most applicable to this chapter's focus because it demonstrates an overview of the more significant works of scholarship that have informed the perspectives and premises that underpin the arguments of this dissertation.[93] Moreover, a thematic approach draws attention to the *status quo* of Prudentian scholarship and demonstrates what appear to be gaps in

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[92] As far as possible, other significant scholarly works that provide fuller detailed investigations of particular issues and are not referred to in this literary review are given reference in footnotes throughout this study.

[93] The South African scholar, Mouton (2005:93), provides an explanation of the nature of the thematic approach in a PhD literature review, and this has informed the choice of this approach here.

research regarding Prudentius' portrayal of didactic, interiorized early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

It is an underlying thesis of this study that consideration of the primary texts of Greco-Roman Antiquity and Late Ancient Roman Antiquity provide the most authentic information on the socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances of ancient societies (1.1). It is thus pertinent to open the discussions of this chapter with a review of the works of scholarship that highlight the problems that contemporary scholars face regarding the transmission of primary texts.

2.2   Transmission of primary texts in scholarship

In this study, due consideration has been given to the influence of the transmission of poetry in Late Antiquity, the role that the emergence of codex literature played in the circulation of literature and the influence of scribes on the transmission of literary works in Late Antiquity. Notable works on this subject that have informed this study include Haines-Eitzen's (2000) work, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature.* This work gives an erudite explanation of the manner in which literature circulated in ancient and Late Ancient societies, as well as the role played by the scribes of literary works in transmitting Early Christian texts. The power of the educated, often enslaved, scribes to influence literary content, as described by Haines-Eitzen (2000),[94] is discussed in detail in Chapter Five of her study. In this chapter, Haines-Eitzen (2000)[95] informs us that scribes often corrected and modified the literary works they worked on. Another example of a valuable source of information about this topic that has informed this study is the earlier work by Reynolds and Wilson (1994), *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek & Latin Literature.* In an ever-expanding field, this work provides a worthy overview of the manner in which Latin and Greek texts were transmitted in the changing socio-cultural circumstances of Antiquity. Chapter 1.ix *Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth century in the Western Empire*[96] is of particular relevance to this study as it demonstrates the point made in Chapter Three section 3.7 of this dissertation that highlights

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[94] Haines-Eitzen (2000:105-127).
[95] Haines-Eitzen (2000:107-110).
[96] Reynolds & Wilson (1991:36-39)

the fact that aristocratic fourth century Roman Christians, such as Prudentius were educated in the pagan Classical tradition.

When considering the transmission of Prudentius' literary opus, in particular his epic the *Psychomachia*, the work of Bastiaensen (1993)[97] has proved valuable to this study. In his work, Bastiaensen (1993) gives a comprehensive review of commentaries on the texts of Prudentius' literary works. Bastiaensen (1993)[98] draws attention to the fact that in the early 20th century, the most reliable commentary available was Bergman's (1926) work, *Aurelii Prudentii Clamentis Carmina* [The Poetry of Aurelius Prudentius Clemens].[99] Bastiaensen (1993)[100] then continues to discuss the controversial debate in later Prudentian scholarship regarding the authority of commentaries published after Bergman's.

Bastiaensen's (1993)[101] opinion that commentaries of Prudentius' literary opus are greatly enhanced when scholars consider the influence of the social circumstances in which these works were written is particularly significant to this dissertation. Bastiaensen (1993) raises the valuable point that contemporary Prudentian scholars do not have a coherent, contextualised commentary on Prudentius' works. In 1971 Isbell wrote translated some Late Ancient Roman poets works which include Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.[102] Since the publication of Bastiaensen's (1993) work, Burton (2004) has produced a useful but basic commentary on Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and, more recently, Frisch (2016) completed his PhD dissertation on the *Psychomachia* in German.

The next discussion (2.3) reviews works of scholarship that have informed this dissertation's discussions of the way in which Prudentius skilfully used various literary devices to express his vision of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. In Chapter Three of this study, Prudentius' use of literary devices in the *Psychomachia* is elaborated upon and given relevant contextualisation.

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[97] Bastiaensen (1993:101-134).
[98] Bastiaensen (1993:103).
[99] Bergman (1926).
[100] Bastiaensen (1993:101-113).
[101] Bastiaensen (1993:103-105).
[102] Isbell's (1971) work should be read alongside that by Cameron (2011) *The Last Pagans of Rome* as both books consider the socio-cultural factors that helped shape the composition of poetry in the Late Ancient Roman Empire.

2.3 Prudentius' use of literary devices to communicate his vision of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*

A key focus of this dissertation's discussions is the manner in which Prudentius deployed particular literary devices to communicate his interiorized vision of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is the thesis of this study that Prudentius deployed specific literary devices, namely allegorical personification, literary exemplification and heroic speech in the genre of the Late Ancient Christian epic, to strengthen his portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The discussions below (2.3.1-2.3.3) review the more significant secondary literary works that have contributed to this study's interpretation of Prudentius' use of each of these literary devices in his portrayal of heroism in this epic poem.

2.3.1 Allegorical personification in Prudentius' Psychomachia

To contextualise the socio-historical and socio-cultural background of Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in his portrayal of his interiorized notion of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia,* it must be taken into account that in Early Christianity literature, particularly in the scriptures of the Bible,[103] complex religious concepts were communicated through the medium of allegorization. Wilken (2005)[104] gives a convincing overview of the importance of the communicative function of allegorizing in texts and oral sermons in Early Christianity and provides a review of scholarly works that have investigated this.

By the early fifth century, Christian writers had reached sophisticated levels of allegorizing their Christian message in their literature, none more thoroughly or innovatively than Prudentius in the *Psychomachia*.[105] The *Psychomachia* is generally conceded in scholarship to be the most outstanding exemplification of allegorical personification in the context of

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[103] For an elaboration on the socio-cultural development of the interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity and the use of allegory in the Bible, see Young (1997).
[104] Wilken (2005:742-753).
[105] Hanna (1977:108-109) states that at the heart of Prudentius' use of allegory in the *Psychomachia* is his poetic ambition to reinvent older literary models of Christian allegory, such as those found in the writings of St Paul.

Early Christian literature. Mastrangelo (2008)[106] states that Prudentius deployed the literary device of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* as a way of communicating what he terms 'incommunicable' aspects of the Christian scriptures to the readers of this poem, such as the all-knowing wisdom of God.

In the Middle Ages, Prudentius' *Psychomachia* caught the imagination of literary *cognoscenti*.[107] O'Sullivan (2004) provides a useful source book of the numerous medieval manuscripts of the *Psychomachia* that enhance the contextualisation of the popularity of the *Psychomachia* in the Middle Ages. Von Albrecht (1997)[108] states, 'Prudentius was the most extensively read and imitated poet of the Middle Ages'. In the middle of the 20th century, Raby (1953), in his work *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages*, gave valuable descriptions of the manner in which medievalists admired the use of allegory in the *Psychomachia*. The early 20th century Prudentian scholar Mahoney (1934)[109] went as far as to say, 'The enthusiasm for allegory so prevalent in the medieval West is due in part to Prudentius' *Psychomachia,* which became the model for many medieval writers upon the same theme, and stimulated the general tendency of the period to allegorize'.

An example of a medieval scholar who emulated Prudentius' deployment of allegorization in the *Psychomachia* to strengthen his literary works in the context of 12th century Christianity is Alan of Lille (± 1160), who wrote *Anticlaudianus*, *de planctu naturae* (The Plaint of Nature) and *Summa de arte praedicatoria*.[110] Alan of Lille's works, particularly *Anticlaudianus* and *De plaintu naturae*, are abstract and conceptual in nature and rely on allegorization to communicate his literary message of vices and virtues to 12th century Christians. Alan of Lille's use of allegory is imitative of Prudentius' use of the literary device of allegorization in his characterisations of the virtues and vices in the *Psychomachia*.[111] For a further contextualisation of medieval scholars' examination and interpretation of the use of allegory by Late Ancient writers, such as Prudentius, see the recent work of Bardzell (2009),

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[106] Mastrangelo (2008:83).
[107] Smith (1976:16).
[108] Von Albrecht (tr. Newman and Newman 1997:1366).
[109] Mahoney (1934:47).
[110] For a further elaboration of the 12th-century works by Alan of Lille entitled *Anticlaudianus* and *De plaintu naturae* and their relationship to Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, see Simpson (1995:1-125).
[111] Alan of Lille's Christian philosophy was also influenced by the works of the sixth-century Christian philosopher Boethius. For further details, see Sweeny (2006).

Speculative Grammar and Stoic Language Theory in Medieval Allegorical Narrative from Prudentius to Alan of Lille.

An alternative perspective of Prudentius' use of allegory in the *Psychomachia* is presented in the work of Roberts (1989), entitled *The Jewelled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*. In this work, Roberts (1989) looks beyond the obvious admiration of medievalists towards Prudentius' use of allegory in the *Psychomachia* and considers the influence of Prudentius' intellectual motivations to use allegory throughout the *Psychomachia*. Roberts (1989)[112] argues that the fundamentality of the 'Romano-Christian cultural synthesis' in Roman Late Antiquity was a significant contributory factor in the resultant popularity of using allegory to communicate a literary message in Latin poetry in Late Antiquity. This work by Roberts (1989) was of particular benefit in shaping the findings of Chapter Seven section 7.7 in research phase of this project. Roberts (1989) highlights the fact that the fusion of Roman and Christian cultures in Roman Late Antiquity not only characterised the nature of intellectual life in Roman Late Antiquity, but also that investigating the unique synthesis of pagan and Christian cultures in Roman Late Antiquity became the basis of intellectual life in the Middle Ages. Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* remained a popular and dynamic route of literary scholarship from the Middle Ages[113] to the 21st century.[114] It has also inspired artists to represent this allegorization in various art works through the ages.[115]

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[112] Roberts (1989:148-149) explains that due to foreign invasions of the Roman Empire by barbarians, the scholarly and educational traditions of Late Antiquity and intellectualism were 'fast disappearing' in the early medieval culture in the sixth to the eighth centuries. Unfortunately, it is outside the scope of this study to elaborate further on this interesting avenue of research. For further information on education and cultural traditions in the early Middle Ages, see Riché (1976).

[113] For a comprehensive and informative review of Latin poetry in the Middle Ages, see Curtius (tr. Trask) (1953).

[114] Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* continued to be influential in Prudentian scholarship throughout the ages and influenced notable literary works. For some examples of 21st-century works that review Prudentius' use of allegory in the *Psychomachia*, see Machosky (2013:64-94), Barzdell (2009:32-52), Nugent (2000:13-28) and Nugent (1985).

[115] For an elaboration on artistic representations of the allegorical personifications of the *Psychomachia*, see Tucker (2015).

However, not all avenues of scholarship and investigations into Prudentius' use of allegory in the *Psychomachia* have contributed to enriching Prudentian scholarship. Attention needs to be drawn to the uncommon but noticeable practice among particular contemporary scholars of re-working already established findings regarding allegorical personification in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. It is argued here that this does little to further the aims of contemporary Prudentian scholarship. This study agrees with the findings of Henke (1982),[116] who criticises Haworth's (1979) work *Deified Virtues, Demonic Vices and Descriptive Allegory in Prudentius' Psychomachia* for doing just this. Henke (1982) found that Haworth (1979) could offer no original perspectives on the *Psychomachia* that had not already been discussed by Prudentian scholars such as Gnilka, Herzog and Smith. Henke also found that many of Haworth's constructs were considered to be artificial in nature.[117]

In addition to the above, this current study argues furthermore that it appears that Haworth (1979) [118] does not agree with the term 'personification allegory' in relation to the use of allegory in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. However, this study has noted that the terms 'personification allegory' and, likewise, 'allegorical personification', are widely used by contemporary Late Ancient literary and Prudentian scholars. For example, scholars such as Smith (1976) and Herzog (1966) and Auerbach (1993) all use this term liberally and meaningfully. Although Haworth (1979) disagrees with this terminology, he fails to offer an alternative of what he considers to be an appropriate terminology, further devaluing the academic significance of his research.

A valuable review of Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* is found in the work of Nugent (1985). Nugent (1985) methodically examines each battle in the *Psychomachia* and situates the allegorical personifications of each virtue and vice within the appropriate socio-cultural and socio-historical context. Hexter (1988)[119] praises Nugent's (1985) work and states that this work is 'revisionary' and that she makes 'truly arresting' observations about Prudentius' use of allegory in the *Psychomachia*.

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[116] Henke (1982:623-626).
[117] Henke (1982:623).
[118] Haworth (1979:52).
[119] Hexter (1988:448-449).

Due to the importance of Nugent's (1985) work, it is germane here to elaborate on the manner in which Nugent (1985) considers the influence of the socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances of Roman Christianity on the composition of Prudentius' allegorical personifications in the *Psychomachia*. It is argued here that Nugent achieves a thorough contextualisation of Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* by presenting antecedent literary precedents that rationalise her findings.[120] Furthermore, Nugent's ongoing and methodical interpretation of the underlying meaning of Prudentius' specific use of Latin words and terminology in this epic raises her research to new heights.[121] For example, Nugent (1985)[122] describes how Prudentius, in particular, uses words that invoke in the readers' imagination violent imagery of grievous bodily harm inflicted upon the pagan vices by the Christian virtues. This is arguably analogous to the inevitable breakdown of the pagan culture in the new world order of early fifth-century Roman Christianity. Nugent (1985)[123] concludes her research by providing a persuasive and logical explanation of how allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* allows comprehension of problematic social realities prevailing in Roman Christian society, through a process of intellectual identification and contextual reconciliation by the reader of the poem.

In addition to the above, it is especially important to the focus of this dissertation that from the outset, Nugent (1985) establishes that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* indeed belongs in the tradition and genre of the heroic epic, although in a much-transformed manner.[124] While she does not elaborate on this at length, she does give this authority by describing how Prudentius appropriates, manipulates, allegorises and thereby transforms the traditional heroic archetypes from Virgilian and other Classical Age epics into a Christianised heroic model in the *Psychomachia*.[125]

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[120] Nugent (2000:13-28).
[121] When Nugent's work is evaluated against earlier works that investigate the *Psychomachia*, such as that by Witke (1971), it becomes apparent that her attention to detail enhances the quality of her research.
[122] Nugent (1985:23) justifies this notion by drawing attention to the words Prudentius uses in lines 34-35 of the *Psychomachia*, in particular the line '*frango intercepti commercial gutturis [artant]* [The throat is choked and scant breath confined by the stopping of its passage]' (*Psychomachia* 34) Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).
[123] Nugent (1985:95-100).
[124] Attention must be drawn here to the work of Pollmann (2001:61-75), which gives a thorough examination of the transformations made in the genre of the Latin epic in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. This work by Pollmann has contributed significantly to the further discussions of this study.
[125] Nugent (1985:9-10).

Nugent's (2000)[126] work revisits allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia*. In this particular work, Nugent (2000) focuses on Prudentius' adroit use of the literary device of allegorical personification to manipulate poetic representations of gender, procreation and virginity in the *Psychomachia*. Nugent (2000) skilfully demonstrates that through the use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius simultaneously represents the pagan vices as being culturally offensive in the characterisation of their feminine traits, while simultaneously boosting the heroic identity of the Christian virtues by portraying them as ambiguously genderless. Nugent's (2000) descriptions of the impenetrability of the bodies of the Christian virtues[127] have informed the preliminary research phase of this study. Furthermore, Nugent's (2000) findings strengthen the argument of this dissertation that the heroic function of the Christian body was to act as a corporeal vessel to house the purified soul of the Christian, and thus it must be intact and impenetrable to pagan vice.

2.3.2 Literary exemplification in Prudentius' Psychomachia

The many works of the Late Ancient scholar Peter Brown (1971-2015) have influenced 20th and 21st century scholars to consider the socio-historical and socio-cultural contexts of their research. The work of Brown (1983)[128] contributes significantly to strengthening the particular perspective of this dissertation, namely that Prudentius' manipulation and appropriation of socio-historically and socio-culturally identifiable archetypal heroic exemplifications enhanced his portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. In Brown's (1983) work, he explains that the interpretation of literary exemplification had changed in the social construct of early fifth-century Christian literature, from previously being viewed as a descriptive literary device to being acknowledged in the late fourth and fifth centuries as authentic social tools of lifestyle exemplifications of socially relevant heroic behaviours in Roman society.

The subject of the exemplification of heroism is given fuller treatment in Jones's (2010) work, *New Heroes in Antiquity: From Achilles to Antinoos*. In this work, Jones (2010)

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[126] Nugent (2000:13-28).
[127] See Nugent (2000:18-19).
[128] Brown (1983:1-25).

elaborates on the social evolution of the literary exemplification of the heroic behaviours of particular individuals from Greco-Roman Antiquity to Roman Christianity in Late Antiquity. Jones's (2010) work is particularly valuable because of his clear and convincing demonstration of the divergent evolutionary paths that heroic exemplification took in paganism and Christianity during this wide chronological era. Specifically, Jones (2010) explicates that in the domain of personalised heroism, whether in literary works, acknowledged in warfare, or granted through civil beneficiations, pagans persistently perceived this as being derived, attributed to and bestowed by some form of pagan divinity. Moreover, the individual pagan hero on earth fully acknowledged that heroism must be fulfilled during his life on earth, as mortals only received heroic rewards in the terrestrial domain, unlike the heroic pagan gods, who received their eternal heroic rewards in their spiritual domain.[129]

Paradoxically, as Jones (2010)[130] so aptly demonstrates, Christian heroes were inspired by their devotion to God to act heroically on earth and, most importantly, the heroic reward of the devout Christian was realised not on earth, but rather in the Christian belief of eternal salvation for heroic souls in the heavenly Kingdom of God, in the afterlife. However, as Jones (2010)[131] explains, this socio-cultural realignment of traditional pagan and Christian notions of heroism in Late Ancient Roman society was intellectually rationalised because Christians were able to conceptualise and identify that exemplifications of individual heroism belonged in two separate realms. The traditional exemplifications of Roman pagan heroes were perceived of as both traditional but imaginary, while Christians believed that only God was the embodiment of divine and human heroization and that their heroic reward was attained in the afterlife as eternal salvation for their souls in heaven in the Kingdom of God.

Prudentius' appropriation and Christianisation of traditional heroic exemplifications of the past to strengthen the heroic profiles of the Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia* is most

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[129] Jones (2010:74-83) gives an excellent example of how pagans required their individual heroes to be divine, through his explanation of how the pagan Emperor Hadrian endeavoured to augment the divine heroic identity of the youth Antinoos by disseminating the notion in Late Roman Ancient pagan society that Antinoos acquired his divine status through his imagined links to the pagan god Hermes.

[130] See Jones (2010:84-92) for the way in which Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries manipulated, appropriated and Christianised pagan heroic modalities into Christian prototypes of heroism. This is elaborated upon in Chapter Four (4.6) of this study, which examines Prudentius' literary context.

[131] Jones (2010:92).

clearly demonstrated in the typological links he creates between the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*), the Judaic heroine Judith and the mother of Jesus, the virgin Mary, in lines 40-108 in the *Psychomachia* (see Chapter Five, 5.8). The informative work of Brine *et al* (2010) provides a rounded perspective of the enduring influence of the story of Judith and is considered valuable in this study.[132]

2.3.3 Heroic speech in Prudentius' Psychomachia

Epicists' composition of heroic speech was a significant tool of the genre of the Late Ancient epic, as attested to by Pollmann (2001)[133] when she elaborates on the transformed nature of the Roman Christian epic in the late fourth century. Pollmann (2001) draws attention to the manner in which heroic speech and retelling the heroic deeds of the Christian is still considered an important part of the genre of the epic in Diomedes's work, *Ars Grammatica* 3 [Art of Grammer 3]. Smith (1976),[134] meanwhile, finds that one of the most prolific components of Prudentius' epic composition is his use of 'heroic discourse'.

To contextualise the significance of Prudentius' communication of early fifth-century Christianity's rhetoric of heroism in his composition of the heroic speeches of the Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia*, it is valuable to consider Averil Cameron's (1991)[135] work, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, which explicates the authority of Christian rhetoric in early fifth-century Roman Christian society and literature. In addition to this, Roberts's (1985) work, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*, is valuable because it focuses on examining the nature of biblical rhetoric in Late Antiquity.

Averil Cameron's informative (1991) work analyses the way in which Christian rhetoric, in oral and literary dimensions, played a significant role in the spread of Christianity in Late

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[132] See the Chapter Five (5.8) for additional works that have informed this particular discussion on exemplification in the portrayal of the heroism of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) in the *Psychomachia*.

[133] Pollmann (2001:61-69). In addition, Pollmann (2001:65) gives enlightening perspectives into the role of the Christian reader when she investigates the *Psychomachia*, in particular.

[134] Smith (1976:164).

[135] Contemporary Late Ancient scholarship has two prominent scholars with the surname Cameron, namely, Alan Cameron and Averil Cameron. In this study, if the work referred to is by Averil Cameron, her first name will be used. For works by Alan Cameron, only the surname Cameron will be used. See the List of References for works by both of these scholars that have contributed to the finding of this study.

Antiquity. Averil Cameron (1991) contributes to this study's understanding of how Christians created their unique Christian rhetoric through the appropriation, manipulation and Christianisation of the important pagan social traditions of rhetoric. Averil Cameron's (1991) work explains how the persuasive nature of pagan rhetoric was refashioned and Christianised to enhance the social power of Late Ancient Christianity in Roman society by Christian church authorities, Christian writers and Roman Christian politicians.

Conte (1994) examines Prudentius' adroit use of the literary device of heroic speech to communicate his vision of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* from the perspective of this poet's social and literary contexts. Conte (1994)[136] draws attention to the notion that Prudentius, as an educated and well-connected Roman Christian aristocrat of the fourth and early fifth centuries, was well versed in the art of Roman rhetoric. This dissertation argues that Prudentius' knowledge of the social power of rhetoric enhanced his composition of heroic speech in the *Psychomachia*.

The virtues of the *Psychomachia* are overwhelmingly verbal. In fact, one could go as far as to say that their speeches are verbose. When contextualised from the perspective of the early fifth-century reader of this epic, and considering the social power of literary rhetoric in this period, the ability of these speeches to influence the delivery of Prudentius' heroic message cannot be denied. The pagan vices of the *Psychomachia* also make speeches. Lewis (2000)[137] states, 'Significantly, one way the Vices merit the violence against them is through their speech acts'.

In this study, it is important to consider the socio-historical and socio-literary context of Late Ancient Christian society in the early fifth century, and how Prudentius' depiction of heroic speech in the *Psychomachia* was interpreted and received by Roman Christian society in this era. Pelttari's (2014) work, *The Space That Remains*, focuses specifically on the late fourth- and early fifth-century poets Claudian, Ausonius and Prudentius, and Late Ancient readers' reception of their literature. Pelttari (2014) stresses that Latin poetry written in this era was

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[136] Conte (1994:669).
[137] Lewis (2000:129). Lewis (2000) provides valuable perspectives into the under-researched area of gender and violence in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.

not a continuum of Classical-age poetry and neither was reader interaction with poetry in this period the same as it had been with Classical-era poetry.[138] Pelttari (2014)[139] convincingly argues that the poetry and readers' involvement with the poetry in the late fourth and early fifth centuries was determined by social circumstances and was a reflection of the interpretation of literature in the fourth century.

This concludes the review of the more significant research works in contemporary scholarship that have contributed towards how this study examines Prudentius' use of particular literary devices to specifically enhance his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The focus of this discussion now turns towards a review of contemporary scholarship that specifically examines Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* (see also 1.1.2).

2.4 Review of secondary literature in the examination of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

In his 1976 work, Smith calls for an in-depth examination of the nature of the portrayal of heroism in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.[140] As highlighted in Chapter One of this study (1.1.2), Smith (1976) requests clarification of whether Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* is determined by religious motivations or traditional conventions in the genre of the epic in Roman literary history. Smith (1976) gives an interesting perspective on heroism in the *Psychomachia* in his book, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination*.[141] In this work, Smith (1976) systematically reviews the battles between the virtues and the vices and discusses the nature of heroism shown by the Christian virtues.[142] What is most valuable

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[138] Pelttari (2014:Loc 871).
[139] Pelttari (2014:Loc 1111-1287).
[140] Smith (1976:26-27).
[141] Smith (1976:159-167).
[142] It is regrettable that the focus of this dissertation denies a fuller elaboration of this subject, which appears to have not received in-depth examination in Prudentian scholarship. However, it is noteworthy to highlight that Smith (1976:162) hints at the liminal quality of the heroism of the virtue Faith (*Fides*) when he describes her as a neophyte. The liminal nature of the virtues and the vices and Prudentius' use of imagery such as labyrinths, doors and gateways to mark symbolic thresholds is noted in the work of Malamud (1989:48-64). Joseph Campbell's *Hero of a Thousand Faces* (1949) describes the archetypal components of the 'heroic journey' in the mythology and culture of world societies that have had an enduring and often controversial influence on contemporary scholarship into heroism in Antiquity. This relates strongly to the 1967 work by the anthropologist Victor Turner, entitled *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. It is suggested here that a

in the descriptions of heroism in the *Psychomachia* in the above-mentioned work is that Smith (1976) skilfully and clearly explains the metaphysical nature of these battles situated in the soul of the Christian. Smith's (1976) work emphasises that the religious aspect of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this epic is the most determining factor of its depiction. He goes as far as to state that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* is somewhat overshadowed by the epicist's intent to demonstrate that the genre of the Roman epic was now firmly in the grip of the Christian church of this period.[143]

Smith's (1976) work provides a valuable perspective from which to view Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* and has contributed to this study's understanding of the spiritual and Christian scriptural dimension of this depiction. However, it is argued here that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this complex epic is rather more multidimensional in nature. When a multitude of alternative socio-historical and socio-cultural influences on Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this poem are appropriately contextualised, the multidimensional nature of this depiction becomes more apparent, as will be demonstrated throughout this study.

A more rounded perspective of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* is offered by Malamud (1989),[144] who compares Prudentius' portrayal of the heroic virtue Peace (*Concordia*) with the poet Claudian's portrayal of Rufinus in his work *In Rufinum*.[145] Malamud (1989) does not define Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* as one-dimensionally as Smith (1976) does. Malamud (1989)[146] views Prudentius' portrayal of the heroism of the virtues in the *Psychomachia* as being reflective of Prudentius' idea of the ambiguity and emotional fragility in humans. In addition to this, Malamud (1990)[147] provides a valuable research work on Prudentius' literary negotiation of Christians' concept of sexuality. In this work, she goes into detail about the Christian virtues and Christian sexuality in the *Psychomachia* and examines his other works, thus providing a worthy contribution to

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worthwhile research perspective on Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* may be explored in scholarship by further comparing the work of Campbell and Turner regarding the ritual and liminal aspects of heroic journeys to Prudentius' description of the manner in which the heroic virtues consolidate their heroic profile in the *Psychomachia*.

[143] Smith (1976:165).
[144] Malamud (1989:51).
[145] Barnes (2009:540) dates this work to 397.
[146] Malamud (1989:57).
[147] Malamud (1990:274-298).

contemporary Prudentian scholarship. James (1999),[148] on the other hand, regards Prudentius' portrayal of the heroism in the virtues as allegorical literary embodiments of the heroic triumph of Christianity over paganism in Roman society in the early fifth century and that the Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia* are victorious persecutors of the pagan vices and not the victimised martyrs of the past.

When analysing Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, one cannot ignore the recent and valuable contribution that O'Hogan (2016) has made in Prudentian scholarship. The potential for O'Hogan's (2016) timely and worthy work to open new avenues of research in contemporary scholarship cannot be underestimated. Most significantly, and of great relevance in this study, is the fact that O'Hogan (2016) includes the evaluation of the influence of the socio-cultural context on the composition of Prudentius' literary opus.

According to Mastrangelo (2008), Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* is multi-dimensional and influenced by the socio-cultural, literary and ideological circumstances of early fifth-century Roman Christian society. In his 2008 work entitled *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and Poetics of the Soul*, Mastrangelo focuses on how Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* strengthens Roman Christian collective national imperial identity for the reader of this poem.[149] The work of Mastrangelo (2008) on Prudentius' *Psychomachia* should be recognised as one of the most valuable works on this poet to emerge in recent times. His analysis of the *Psychomachia* is valuable because he is vigilant about contextualising his findings in the socio-cultural milieu of early fifth century Roman society.

Another, more recent, work that examines heroic identity formation in Prudentius' literary opus is that by Fruchtman (2014), entitled *Modeling a Martyrial Worldview: Prudentius' Pedagogical Ekphrasis and Christianization.*[150] In this analysis, Fruchtman (2014)[151] refers to

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[148] James (ed. Miles) (1999:78).
[149] Throughout his work, Mastrangelo (2008) argues strongly for an underlying political message in the *Psychomachia*.
[150] Fruchtman (2014:131-158).
[151] Fruchtman (2014:134).

the above-mentioned opinions of Mastrangelo (2008) regarding investigating identity formation in the *Psychomachia*. However, she differs from Mastrangelo's perspective somewhat in that she interprets this on the level of individual as opposed to collective national Christian identity, meaning that each Roman Christian reader of the *Psychomachia* must create and strengthen a Christian heroic profile for him or herself on a personal and intellectualised level to rid the soul of pagan vices.

This study agrees with the approach adopted by Fruchtman (2014) that identity formation and, specifically, heroic identity formation, was an individualistic and personally intellectualised pursuit of Roman Christian readers of the *Psychomachia.* It is argued in this dissertation that each Christian had his or her own personal interpretation of Prudentius' didactic, interiorized heroic message in the *Psychomachia* and applied this to suit his or her personal context and social circumstances in early fifth-century Roman society.

2.5   Review of scholarship into the poet Prudentius and the martyrial narrative in Roman Christianity

A fundamental argument of this study is that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* purposefully did not engage with the martyrial narrative of early fifth-century Roman Christianity. When discussing scholarship into Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it appears that many Prudentian scholars prioritise researching heroic portrayal in the *Peristephanon liber* over the *Psychomachia*. For example, in 1989, both Malamud and Palmer published works on Prudentius' *Peristephanon liber.* Bilby (2012)[152] provides a valuable review of the way in which Prudentius modified the *Acta Martyrum* (Acts of Martyrdom) in the *Peristephanon liber.*

An example of the manner in which the portrayal of the martyrs' heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* is given more detailed examination than the heroism of the virtues in the *Psychomachia* is evidenced in the work of Lewis (2000), in her research entitled *Gender and Violence in the Psychomachia*. In this work, Lewis (2000) touches upon Christian heroism in

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[152] Bilby (2012:219-335).

the *Psychomachia*, but does not fully develop the notion of heroic portrayal in this epic, as she rather examines it in the *Peristephanon liber*.[153]

What is most significant about the research of Lewis (2000) and of particular relevance to the argument of this dissertation that Prudentius achieved his finest literary expression of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* is the implication by Lewis (2000) that Prudentius did not fully define Christian heroism in the *Peristephanon liber*. This is made clear in the following quotation from Lewis,[154] 'Prudentius' way *of defining and not defining* Christian female heroism in the *Peristephanon* [emphasis added]'.

When the quotation above is analysed carefully, it is understood here that Lewis (2000) is suggesting that due to Roman society norms around gender in the Age of Martyrdom (64-313),[155] Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* is not fully defined or developed. It is argued in this study that the above-mentioned findings of Lewis (2000) may serve as a basis for addressing the question in Prudentian scholarship of where and, indeed, if, Prudentius achieved a fully rounded depiction of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that such a rounded depiction of Christian heroism is offered in the *Psychomachia*.

The notion that the martyrs' model of Christian heroism may be seen as socially irrelevant for Roman Christian society in the late fourth and early fifth centuries is supported by the findings of various scholars. Malamud, for example, in her 1989 work, *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology*, demonstrates how Prudentius' portrayal of the heroic acts of the martyrs[156] in the *Peristephanon liber* is somewhat confusing,[157] due to his complex play on words or, as she terms it, 'etymological

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[153] In Chapter Three of her work, Lewis (2000:85-126) gives a lengthy examination of the heroic acts of the martyrs, although her work is primarily focused on examining the *Psychomachia*, as the title of this work implies.

[154] Lewis (2000:108).

[155] For further information on the role of gender in martyrdom, see Malamud (1989:149-180), who describes Prudentius' portrayal of the chaste and virginal martyr Saint Agnes in the *Peristephanon liber*.

[156] In addition, see Chapter Four in A *Mythical Martyr* (Malamud, 1989:79-113), in which Malamud elaborates upon Prudentius' confusing portrayal of the martyr Hippolytus. This is an excellent example of the obscurity and complexity of Prudentius' portrayal of martyrs in the *Peristephanon liber*.

[157] Malamud (1989:43).

wordplay'.[158] However, when discussing the *Psychomachia*, Malamud (1989)[159] makes the insightful statement that this epic's characterisations are not confusing, but that here he 'creates iconographically clear allegorical figures with all the inconsistencies and ambiguities of human characters'. This opinion strengthens the argument of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was intended as a universal communication for all Roman Christians.

In more general terms, there are numerous works in secondary Late Ancient scholarship that contribute to this study's understanding of Early Christian martyrdom. de Ste. Croix's influential 1963 work, *Why Were Early Christians Persecuted*, remains a valuable aid to contemporary researchers of Early Christian martyrdom.[160] Price (2010)[161] draws particular attention to the fact that de Ste Croix's (1963) research is still relevant in 21st century Late Ancient scholarship. Corke-Webster (2017)[162] gives a valuable assessment of existing scholarly opinions regarding second century martyrdom and offers enlightening perspectives on the way in which governors such as Pliny the Younger dealt with martyrdom in the second century. Another valuable work that socially contextualises the behaviours of Early Christian martyrs is presented by Castelli (2004), *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. In this work, Castelli (2004) provides illuminating insights into how Roman society's collective memory perpetuated the veneration of Christian martyrs long after the practice of martyrdom was abolished. Furthermore, Castelli (2004) explains how martyrdom enhanced social power for Late Ancient Roman Christians even after it was no longer practiced.

Kuefler (2001), in his work, *The Manly Eunuch*, primarily focuses on gender and notions of masculinity in Late Ancient society. However, in this work, Kuefler (2001) gives valuable insight into identity construction in Christian society in an era in which martyrdom and militarism were no longer viable social outlets to manifestly augment a Roman Christian

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[158] Malamud (1989:27).
[159] Malamud (1989:57).
[160] This study acknowledges the debate between the scholars Sherwin-White and de Ste Croix regarding Early Christian martyrdom. In the most basic terms, these two eminent scholars disagreed about the authenticity of martyrdom and whether some martyrdoms were incorrectly attributed to religious factors when in fact they were legal punishments for criminal acts. For further details see de Ste Croix (1963:6-38) and Sherwin-White (1964:23-27).
[161] Price (2010:809).
[162] Corke-Webster (2107:2-4).

identity. Kuefler (2001) gives enlightening perspectives regarding notions of masculinity and the expression of militaristic Roman Christianity in the early fifth century.

In addition to this, Kuefler's (2001) work further strengthens Castelli's (2004) argument that martyrdom carried social power beyond when it was practiced, when he explains that through the endorsement of Roman Christian church authorities and the writings of fourth-century Christian authors, the social status of the Early Christian martyrs served to remind fourth-century 'Christian audiences of the military flavor of their lives'. Kuefler (2001) explains that in the era after martyrdom, social circumstances determined that Roman Christians envisioned war as individualistic and psychological, as Christians fought internalised, individual battles in their own souls to rid their daily lives of evil. [163] This, Kuefler (2001)[164] proposes, made the Roman Christians of this period feel 'the equivalent of martyrs', arguably making the Early Christian martyrs and martyrdom a socially defunct construct in this period, as suggested in the present study.

Taking the findings of Castelli (2004) and Kuefler (2001) into consideration, this dissertation argues that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was specifically socially relevant for early fifth-century Christians living in a post-martyrdom context. In this study, it is suggested that the legacy of the Christian martyrs (64-313) negatively affected late fourth- and early fifth-century Roman Christians' heroic identity as the latter struggled to find a more current model of Christian heroism that could compare to this.

In this dissertation, it is suggested that Prudentius' prototype of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* provided the Roman Christian readers of this epic with a model of heroism that was specifically applicable to their current socio-cultural circumstances and that was orientated towards the future. Furthermore, the battle that the heroic Roman Christian readers of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* were encouraged to follow was interiorized within their souls and did not necessitate them replicating the radical heroic acts of the Christian martyrs of the past.

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[163] Kuefler (2001:117-120).
[164] Kuefler (2001:120).

The decline of the political and military power of the Roman Empire[165] impeded traditional avenues of expressing one's heroic nature in the Roman military in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. It is suggested in this study that Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* permitted Roman Christian readers of this epic to visualise themselves as 'soldiers of Christ' fighting heroically against the threat of pagan vice and heresy. Kuefler (2001)[166] presents informative research that explicates the contradictory notion of Roman Christians' struggle with traditional notions of Roman militarism and Christian ideals of 'antimilitarism' in this era. It is suggested here that Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism as an interiorized battle in the soul to conquer pagan vice conciliated the traditional Roman norms of militaristic heroic expression by providing an alternative avenue for his Roman Christian readers.

2.6 A literary review of research into the relationship between pagan literary heroic archetypes and Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

Research into ancient texts and their intertextual relationship to later literary works has always been a rich field of Ancient and Late Ancient literary scholarship.[167] In Late Ancient literary research, it is difficult to surpass the reputation of Virgil's *Aeneid* in Roman epic scholarship, and the influence of the *Aeneid* on Early Christian literature. Furthermore, in the context of Late Ancient Roman society, the enduring predominance of the *Aeneid* in pagan and Christian intellectual circles in the fourth and fifth centuries cannot be denied.[168] An excellent example of Virgilian intertextual use in Late Ancient Christian writing is evidenced in Proba's fourth century work, the *Cento*. This unusual literary work of Roman Christianity in the fourth century is given worthy coverage in Schottenius Cullhed's (2012) research, *Proba the Prophet: Studies in the Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba.* Schottenius Cullhed's work gives illuminating insights into the manner in which a female

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[165] Some of the more significant research works that have informed this study's findings on the Roman Empire and its influence and military domination in Antiquity and Late Antiquity include those by Bury (1958), Jones (1964), Brown (1978 and 2012), Burns (1995), Mitchell (2007), Goldsworthy (2010) and Averil Cameron (2012).
[166] Kuefler (2001:108).
[167] For example, see Hardie (1993) for an investigation of the influence of the works of the epicist Virgil on later Roman literature.
[168] See, for example, Cameron (2011:567) and Green (2006: xi).

Roman Christian author, Faltonia Betitia Proba, appropriated and reworked text from Virgil's *Aeneid* to convey her Christian message in the fourth century.

In contemporary scholarship, Prudentius' intertextual relationship with pagan poets, especially Virgil and his *Aeneid*,[169] has the potential to offer exciting research opportunities, particularly once Prudentius' work is appropriately contextualised. Mastrangelo (2008) interprets Prudentius' *Psychomachia* as a reflection of Aeneas' journey to the underworld or *katabasis* in Book Six of Virgil's *Aeneid.* Mastrangelo (2008) argues that Prudentius uses the literary device of intertextuality to appropriate and manipulate Virgil's well-known description of Aeneas' *katabasis* to communicate his message of the metaphorical journey the heroic Christian virtues undertake in the imagined space of the Christian soul.

While Mastrangelo (2008) presents a persuasive and valuable reading of the intertextual relationship between Virgil's *Aeneid* and Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, it is suggested here that Smith's (1976) approach evaluating Prudentius' analogous links to the *Aeneid* is somewhat less convincing. In this work, Smith (1976)[170] argues that Prudentius' use of the literary device of intertextuality with Virgil's *Aeneid* is based on irony. This is not a popular argument in contemporary scholarship, according to Mastrangelo (2008).[171] However, Smith (1976) has made valuable contributions in other areas of research into Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and his work remains important in this study and in contemporary Prudentian scholarship.

The focus of this dissertation necessitates a rather more generalised approach to examining the ways in which these older works of literature have influenced Prudentius' portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism. This study concentrates on examining the portrayal, nature and influence of a range of literary heroic archetypes that shaped the cultural

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[169] It is outside the scope of this dissertation to elaborate further on the apparent intertextual relationship between Virgil's *Aeneid* and Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. Nugent (1985:9-10) draws attention to the fact that scholars from the 19th and 20th centuries have identified Prudentius' intertextual relationship with Classical-era poets other than Virgil. Some works that Nugent (1985:9-10) notes are: Sixt (1892) *Des Prudentius Abhängigkeit von Seneca und Lucan*; Witke (1968) *Prudentius and the Tradition of Latin Poets*; *Beziehungen*; Charlet (1972) *L'influence d'Ausone sur la poésie de Prudence;* and Cameron (1970) *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*.

[170] Smith (1976:4).

[171] Mastrangelo (2008:182).

perceptions of traditional Roman heroism and that may be seen to have influenced Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. These include the epic heroic archetypes portrayed in Homer's *Iliad*, Apollonius of Rhodes's *Argonautika* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.[172]

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[172] It is unfortunate that in a study of this length and focus fuller elaboration on the analogous links between these works and the *Psychomachia* cannot be given fuller elaboration except when relevant to the particular discussions of this dissertation.

2.7   Conclusion

Prudentius' epic poem, the *Psychomachia*, is a remarkable poetic exemplification of the use of allegorical personification in early fifth-century Roman literature and, as the discussions of this chapter have demonstrated, this is a popular route of Late Ancient and Prudentian scholarship. However, with the priority afforded to considering the appropriate contextualisation of texts in contemporary Late Ancient literary scholarship, it is becoming apparent that the *Psychomachia* has alternative unexplored avenues of research that require in-depth investigation, such as Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism.

Through investigation of relevant literary works of Greco-Roman Antiquity and Roman Late Antiquity, alongside due consideration of the findings of the more authoritative works of contemporary Ancient and Late Ancient scholarship highlighted in this chapter, this study endeavours to make some contribution to contemporary scholarship by considering Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* from a contextualised perspective. This chapter has endeavoured to provide a generalised review of some of the major works in Prudentian scholarship. This dissertation continues with Chapter Three, which provides an examination of the socio-cultural circumstances prevailing in Roman Christian society in the early fifth century. The topics of discussion in Chapter Three are those deemed here to have contributed towards Roman Christians' anxiety about the nature, form and identity of Roman Christian heroism in the early fifth century.

CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXTUALISATION OF HEROIZATION

3.1   Introduction

There is a plethora of ways in which heroization in human culture is identified and investigated in scholarship,[173] and research into Greco-Roman[174] heroism is a particularly vast field in the academic discipline of classics. It is commonly accepted that socio-cultural constructs, such as heroization in human cultures, do not occur in contextual vacuums; these constructs are embedded in and shaped by centuries' worth of social history.

This chapter provides the necessary socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of the notion of heroization in the Greco-Roman world of Antiquity and then in Roman pagan and Christian society in the fourth and early fifth centuries. The content of the discussions of this chapter provide background contextualisation that is relevant to the further arguments presented throughout this study, which focus on Prudentius' portrayal of didactic, interiorized early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

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[173] The preliminary stages of research in this study included an investigation of a variety of perspectives on the function and characteristics of heroization in human society. However, it is outside the scope of the current study to provide fuller elaboration on all scholarly opinions regarding heroization. Without diminishing the value of the contribution that contemporary scholars, for example Foucault (1988), have made to our understanding of heroization, in the final analysis, the works that are expanded upon in this dissertation are those that agree with the general consensus in contemporary scholarship regarding the social construct of heroism. Examples of some of the diversity of works consulted in this study include those by [Darwin] ([187]1), in his book *Descent of Man* (1871: Loc: 2498-2051). For an anthropological perspective on heroism in culture, see and Spencer (1996), who explicate some of the more authoritative anthropological opinions of scholars such as Levi Strauss, Malinowski and Radcliffe. For a mythological or psychological perspective on heroism, see the well-known work of Campbell (1949) and, for a philosophical review of heroism, see Hook (1943). The contemporary theologian Flescher (2003) and the social scientists Hook and Reno (2000) provide valuable reviews of heroism in religion, both ancient and modern.

[174] Attention must be drawn here to the understanding in this study that Greco-Roman societies of the ancient world were pre-Christian communities and worshipped pagan gods. See Chapter One (1.10) for an elaboration of the manner in which the term 'pagan' is used in this dissertation. It is outside the scope of this study to provide a fuller examination of the assimilation of ancient Greek culture into Roman culture. For a comprehensive review on this topic, see Freeman (1996).

3.2   The social construct of heroization

Over the centuries, a number of renowned scholars have investigated the social construct of heroization in human culture. The 19th century social scientist Charles Darwin (ca. 1809-1882), in his book *Descent of Man* (1871), provides scholarship with a valuable perspective on the fundamentals of why human groups heroize particular members of the group. His work is still relevant in contemporary scholarship.[175] He states that in primeval societies, the human attributes of 'patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage and sympathy', as well as the readiness of members of a group 'to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good', greatly enhanced the survival rate of the group.[176] Consequently, individuals exhibiting these attributes were held in greater esteem than others, in other words, heroized. However, what is of particular relevance is that Darwin (1871) goes on to explain that a high standard of morality was recognised as the most important element of the success of these highly esteemed, or heroized, members of the group. In human societies, morality is a complex socio-cultural concept that has received much attention over the years in a variety of academic disciplines.

In the late 20th and into the 21st centuries, scholars of the social sciences, for example the South African scholars Louw and Edwards (1997) have focused considerably on defining the fundamental characteristics of the identity of an individual. The findings of social scientists such as these have shaped how contemporary scholars of Late Antiquity now view Christian identity in Roman Late Antiquity.[177] Opening dialogue and co-operation between the different academic disciplines in the Humanities can ultimately enhance the research results of Late Ancient scholarship in the 21st century.

The fundamental characteristics of social identity in contemporary scholarship are described by Louw and Edwards (1997)[178] as being differentiated between how an individual perceives his or her own self in a society and how the society identifies the individual. In early fifth-

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[175]   Darwin's (1871) findings on human heroization are shown to be relevant to the recent research on heroization by Flescher (2003).
[176] Darwin (1871:Loc 2501).
[177] Miles (1999:1-2).
[178] Louw & Edwards (1997:734).

century Christianity, this differentiation and the individual's notion of self-understanding and his or her concept of what was secular and what was sacred as well as the notion of religious pluralism in Roman society created social tension regarding identity formation.[179] Miles (1999) explains that Christian identity formation in this era was 'increasingly problematic and complex'.[180]

In the context of the focus of this dissertation, it is of little use to give in-depth analyses of the plethora of perspectives in contemporary social sciences on the characteristics of human identity. After lengthy research, it has been deemed that for purposes of this discussion, the research of Woodward (1997)[181] gives a valuable assessment of the general consensus about what constitutes the foundational aspects of human identity. These are summarised as follows:

(i) The identity of an individual is, by and large shaped by the individual through his or her personal interaction with the environment and others in this environment;

(ii) The personal identity of an individual marks him or her as the same as some members of a society and different from other members of society; and

(iii) Members of a society demonstrate their chosen identity socially through the use of a common language, recognition of their common ethnicity, through exhibiting particular common behaviours in a social setting and by interacting socially with other members of the group with the same identity.

The above criteria form the basic building blocks of the identity of an individual. Namely, identity is chosen; it marks the individual as the same or different from other members of a society and it is socially displayed. There are, however, a range of more complex aspects of identity that require specific categorisation for the purposes of contextualisation for the further discussions of this chapter. Woodward (1997)[182] goes on further to explain that the identity of an individual has the following characteristics:

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[179] For an elaboration on how Augustine negotiated this problem in North African Christian societies, see Rebillard (2012:Loc 2005-2061).
[180] Miles (1999:10).
[181] Woodward (1997:6-11).
[182] Woodward (1997 6-11).

(i)   It is subjected to external social forces, which are not in the control of the individual;

(ii)   An individual maintains multiple identities at once;

(iii)   Controlling multiple identities in a social context may create tension and conflict, and undermine a sense of autonomy in the individual; and

(iv)   Social institutions in the society of an individual are significant in constructing the nature of the identity of the individual, but cannot influence all aspects of the multiple identities held by an individual.

In this study, Woodward's above-mentioned criteria for the definition of social identity will be considered in the analyses of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* to enhance understanding of the socio-cultural contextualisation of the nature of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century. The next question that arises is whether the label 'heroic identity' is academically sound. Attention will now be turned to examining this concept further.

To explicate the relationship between human identity, morality and heroism in the early fifth century Roman Christianity, it is valuable to the socio-historical the connections between these three concepts. According to Harris and Platzner (2004)[183] unlike the Greek ideal of heroism that was egocentrically driven, the Roman ideal of heroism prioritised particular facets of an individual's national identity and their obligation and dedication to the Roman state. Over and above this, the Roman hero of the Classical age should recognise that their lives occupy 'one brief instant in the long span of history' and that their ultimate personal identity and heroic goals should contribute to the concept of 'Eternal Rome'.[184]

With the advent of Christianity in Late Antiquity the foundations of Roman Christian heroic identity were assimilated and Christianised. The ultimate reward for Christian heroes was no longer found in the domain of the terrestrial but rather in salvation for their souls in the eternal heavenly Kingdom of God. For Christians who devoted their lives to Christianity and who lived their lives according to their Christian identity, acts of heroism were directly related to the triumphant glory of a universal God.

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[183] Harris & Platzner (2004:871-873).
[184] Harris & Platzner (2004:873).

Defining an individual as having a heroic identity is problematic when not contextualised within a specific framework of reference. In this study, the fundamental perspective from which heroic identity is examined is the social context of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century. However, to give authority to the notion of heroic identity of Roman Christians in the early fifth century, this study turns to the valuable work of contemporary theologians, ethicists, philosophers and other social scientists for insights into the characteristics of heroic identity.

The findings of the contemporary theologian, Flescher (2003),[185] are deemed the most relevant to the focus of this dissertation. In consideration of the opinions of identity theorists from the late 20th century such as Urmson, Flescher (2003)[186] concludes that heroic identity is defined by the following five criteria: [187]

(i)   Heroes are identified by being 'noteworthily virtuous';

(ii) Heroes respond to what is 'morally required of them';

(iii) Heroes behave altruistically;

(iv) Heroes preform heroic acts at great cost to themselves; and

(v)   Heroes, although ordinary people, 'transcend their humanity' in an effort to act in the most virtuous way possible.

Flescher's (2003) characteristics of heroic identity are particularly relevant to the further arguments of this dissertation that advance the notion that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was directly addressed to ordinary Christians of the early fifth century to enable them to activate their potential for heroism. In particular, Flescher (2003)[188] argues that 'Reading about heroes and saints is important for alerting us to the proactive nature of

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[185] Flescher (2003:154). Flescher's (2003:154) above-mentioned criteria (i-v) are deemed here to be the most representative of the general consensus in scholarship of the elemental aspects of Christian heroic identity. Haddorff (2006:186), in his review of Fleischer's (2003) work, states that 'Andrew Flescher's book provides a helpful theoretical framework, grounded in the language of supererogation and moral development, that seeks to "forge a symbiosis" between deontological and virtue ethics as well as between secular and religious methods in ethics'.

[186] Flescher (2003:154).

[187] In social sciences scholarship, there is debate regarding what the appropriate degree of self-sacrifice is in the expectation of human morality in heroism. It is beyond the scope of this study to elaborate on the debates in philosophical scholarship regarding morality in contemporary notions of heroism. However, this study agrees with the findings of Flescher (2003:75-105).

[188] Flescher (2003:9).

morality'. This concludes the contextualisation of the notion of Christian heroic identity. The following discussion investigates the significance of morality in the concept of Christian heroism.

3.3 Morality in the social construct of heroization

The attribute of moral virtue has been recognised as a key component of heroization in human culture throughout the millennia.[189] The concept of moral virtue was the cornerstone upon which the ethos of Early Christianity was built. The obligation to live a Christian life of moral virtue is reiterated throughout the Bible[190] and in the writings of Early Christians and has endured to present day Christianity. For example, the teachings of Matt 6.9-6.13,[191] embodied in the Lord's Prayer, have reiterated the essence of moral virtue through centuries of Christianity. Christian moral virtue underpins all facets of Christianity. In the construct of Christian heroism, the significance of living a life of moral virtue cannot be underestimated, primarily because the heroic Christians who dedicate their lives to moral virtue are granted the ultimate reward of heroism, namely eternal salvation for their souls in the Kingdom of God. As the further chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate, Prudentius' portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* is underpinned by his prioritization of the moral virtue of the heroic Christian virtues in this poem.

To further explicate the social dynamics behind the prioritisation of morality in the construct of Roman Christian heroism in the early fifth century, it is valuable to consider the findings of the contemporary anthropologist Kottak (2014) regarding the manner in which particular

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[189] The importance of morality to humans is a vast area of academic scholarship that extends across centuries worth of academic deliberation and is researched in a multitude of academic disciplines, such as theology, politics, psychology and philosophy. For example, 21st-century neuroscientists such as Young *et al.* (2010:845-851) explain that the human trait of morality originates in the area of the brain known as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, and studies have shown that individuals with any impairment to this area exhibit poor moral judgements. To make this neuroscientific finding relevant in the context of this discussion, one must consider the findings of Coplan (2010:132-151), who provides an enlightening account of how ancient societies and, most significantly, ancient Greek philosophers, saw an analogous link between an individual's intellectual ability and his or her capacity for virtuous moral behaviour. Such research deepens our understanding of the multi-faceted notion of morality in this dissertation.

[190] In this study, the New King James Bible, digitalised by Kent 2014 (E Book Amazon.com) is used throughout. All future references to the King James Bible in this study will be stated as KJV.

[191] KJV (2014:Loc 1375).

aspects of social behaviour become more significant than others in a society. Kottak (2014)[192] explains that all individuals belong to the social system of their society, which comprises 'various concepts, including culture, society, social relations, or social structure' and are bound by the '[c]ultural rules of the society in which they live'. He goes on further to explain that in a society, important aspects of an individual's social context are manifested in his or her personal and individual domains at the same time. In other words, the early fifth-century Roman Christian would act morally in his or her personal and public capacities, as morality was prioritised as a significant and admirable social behaviour.[193]

Kottak (2014) adds that not only are cultures constantly changing, but that individuals and groups of individuals in a society are continuously contesting the culture of the group. He notes, 'Different groups in society struggle with one another over whose ideas, values, goals, and beliefs will prevail' and that 'day-to-day action, practice, or resistance can make and remake culture'.[194]

To contextualise the importance of moral virtue in heroism and highlight its relevance to the focus of this dissertation, this discussion elaborates below on the fluctuating perceptions of positive and negative manifestations of moral virtue in heroism. To do so, it is germane to analyse the findings of Flescher (2003), who distinguishes between two distinctive categorisations of heroic morality, namely the ordinarily moralistic hero and the morally dangerous hero.

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[192] Kottak (2014:28-29).

[193] Kottak's (2014:29) explication of an individual possessing a public and an individual culture can be further understood if one consults the work of Giddens and his Theory of Structuration and, in particular, his work *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the theory of Structuration* (1984), wherein he fully explains the notion of a private and public culture and the role of individuals to transform the culture of their society. For an enlightening review of the influences of an individual's personal and public culture, see Miller (2004a:469-488), *The Ideographic Individual*. In this work, Miller gives the philosophical perspective in contemporary scholarship on the idea that individuals hold an individual and public culture and the influence of an individual in creating change in his or her society. There is an awareness in this study that the notion of an individual possessing what Kottak (2014:29) calls an individual and a public culture factors into the hotly debated field of social determinism *versus* free will in the discipline of anthropology. This controversial subject in anthropology has been influenced and shaped by various schools of thought, such as Marxist theory, biological determinism and, in particular, the existentialist school, of which the contemporary philosopher Nietzsche was an influential adherent. For further information on Nietzsche's perspectives on free will and social determinism, see Solomon (2002:63-87), *Nietzsche on Fatalism and "Free Will"*.

[194] Kottak (2014:29).

Firstly, Flescher (2003) describes what he terms the 'morally dangerous' hero.[195] These individuals appear to know no limitation to their expression of what they consider moral in their personal perception of heroism. It may be argued that this specific lack of perception by these individuals, who engage in bizarre and life-endangering behaviours and cross the bounds of socially acceptable norms of morality, is actually a psychological and pathological hazard to the survival of a group.

Attention must be drawn to the fact that the concept of humans acting 'morally dangerously' was recognised in Greek philosophy and that it is not an exclusively modern notion. In the following quotation from Aristotle's work the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he advises that the most excellent form of moral virtue is attained through moderation:

> 'Virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency constitute misses of the mark, while the mean is praised and on target, both of which are characteristics of virtue. Virtue, then, is a kind of mean, at least in the sense that it is the sort of thing that is able to hit a mean' (*Nicomachean Ethics* Book 2 Chapter 6 verse 1106b-1107a).[196]

As evidenced in the quotation above by the philosopher Aristotle, moral virtue in Antiquity was most appropriately manifested within social norms of the average moral behaviour. However, it must be taken into account that all social constructs, for example heroization, are in a constant state of adaptation, determined by the challenges of the prevailing social circumstances. What may be regarded as acceptable manifestations of moral virtue in the construct of heroism in a particular time in a society may thus not necessarily be considered appropriate when social circumstances change.

For example, the extreme heroic sacrifice of the martyrs was recognised as the ultimate expression of moral virtue and Christian heroism and therefore not considered outside the

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[195] Flescher (2003:174-175) explains the negative role that personal ego plays in the actions of the pathologically moral heroic individual. Attention must be drawn here to the philosophies of the modern political theologian Johann Baptist Metz, who examines the social dangers of irrationally interpreting and endeavouring to psychologically replicate the moral suffering of Christ in modern society. For a succinct review of Metz's opinions, see Morrill (2000:19-61).

[196] Crisp (tr. and ed. 2000:Loc 1241-1252).

bounds of social normality in the context of the Age of Martyrdom (64-313). However, in the early fifth century, nearly a century after the practices of normative and voluntary martyrdom[197] were abandoned in Roman society, the extreme and excessive manifestations of heroic moral virtue of the martyrs was now regarded as socially inappropriate.[198] In other words, the perceptions of what was considered 'morally dangerous' in the Age of Martyrdom and in Roman Christian society in the early fifth century, were not the same, due to changing socio-cultural circumstances. This further supports the central thesis of this study that Prudentius' interiorization of heroism in the *Psychomachia* provided a socially appropriate representation of early fifth-century Roman Christianity's notion of moral virtue that could be used to strengthen Christian heroic identity in a post-martyrdom context.

Secondly, Flescher (2003) identifies the category of what is recognised as 'ordinarily moralistic' behaviour in the manifestation of heroism by members of a society. These individuals live a life devoted to a high standard of moral behaviour and that virtue distinguishes their moral obligations towards their fellow humans. These individuals are not, as Flescher (2003) describes, as consumed or urgent in their manifestations of heroism as the pathologically moral individuals described in the first category.[199]

Furthermore, Flescher (2003) explains that the ordinarily moral heroes are virtuous moral agents, worthy of imitation because they are living the most exemplary moral life. This view is reiterated in the work of Hook and Reno (2000),[200] who advocate that Christian heroism is an activity that requires participation, recognition and imitation by the individual. The most significant finding by Flescher (2003) is that everyone can be an ordinarily heroic individual who lives within the bounds of social normality. He states that heroes 'distinguish themselves by excelling, but we *can* excel. In this sense, heroes represent the best of humanity within the domain of mortal limitation [emphasis in the original]'.[201]

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[197] For an elaboration on the practice of voluntary martyrdom in Late Antiquity, see Moss (2012b:531-551).
[198] See Chapter Five (5.2) for an elaboration on Early Christian martyrdom.
[199] Flescher (2003:109-111).
[200] Hook and Reno (2000:7-8). Chapters One to Six of Hook and Reno's (2000) work provide valuable perspectives on Christian heroism in Antiquity.
[201] Flescher (2003:172).

This dissertation understands that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was intended for the ordinarily moral Christian and, as specified in Chapter One (1.1), was not intended to encourage readers of this epic to replicate the socially inappropriate and 'morally urgent' heroic acts of the Christian martyrs. The following quotation from the speech of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) in the *Psychomachia* reassures the Christian readers of this poem that when they live an ordinarily morally heroic Christian life, pagan vices will flee from their pure souls and that their lives will be forever peaceful under the protection of God. The virtue Peace (*Concordia*) implores all ordinarily moral Christians not to be afraid but to put their faith in God, who will protect them when they assume the mantle of Christian heroism and rid their souls of pagan vice, as illustrated in this quotation:

'*ne trepidate, homines; vitae dator et dator escae est.*
quaerite luciferum caelesti dogmate pastum,   625
qui spem multiplicans alat invitiabilis aevi,
corporis inmemores: memor est qui condidit illud
subpeditare cibos atque indiga membra fovere."
his dictis curae emotae, Metus et Labor et Vis
et Scelus et placitae fidei Fraus infitiatrix   630
depulsae uertere solum. Pax inde fugatis
hostibus alma abigit bellum, …

["Be not anxious, O people! He who gives life gives food also. Seek ye in heavenly teaching the food that brings light and that shall nourish and enlarge the hope of a life incorruptible, forgetting the body. He who made it is mindful to furnish it with food and to care for the needs of its members." At these words their troubles departed. Fear and Suffering and Violence, Crime and Fraud that denies accepted faith, were driven away and fled from the land. Then kindly Peace, her enemies now routed, banishes war…]' (*Psychomachia* 624-632).[202]

A central feature of heroization in early fifth-century Roman Christian society was the notion of sexual morality and sexual continence.[203] It is valuable to consider a passage from the

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[202] Thompson (tr. 1949:322-333).
[203] It is acknowledged in this study that morality is a multi-dimensional concept and sexual morality is but one aspect of this heroic attribute. Chapter Five of this study (5.7) gives an in-depth review and contextualisation of the social importance of sexual morality and the Christian body in early fifth-century Roman Christian society, and the manner in which Prudentius portrays this in the *Psychomachia* (5.8).

speech of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*), which exemplifies how the notion of sexual morality in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* raises humanity to a higher state of being and strengthens the latter's moral heroic profile. In the quotation on the next page, the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) explains that the virgin birth of Christ has bestowed on men the greatest gift of all, an opportunity to elevate their lives to a nobler state of being where immoral vices, such as Lust (*Libido*), are eradicated from their souls and lives. The virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) pronounces the following words over the dying body of the vice Lust (*Libido*)

'*numquid et intactae post partum virginis ullum*	70
fas tibi iam superest? post partum virginis, ex quo	
corporis humani naturam pristina origo	
deseruit carnemque novam uis ardua seuit,	
atque innupta deum concepit femina Christum,	
mortali de matre hominem, sed cum patre numen.	75
inde omnis iam diva caro est quae concipit illum	
naturamque Dei consortis foedere sumit.	
Verbum quippe caro factum non destitit esse	
quod fuerat, Verbum, dum carnis glutinat usum,	
maiestate quidem non degenerante per usum	80
carnis, sed miseros ad nobiliora trahente.	
ille manet quod semper erat, quod non erat esse	
incipiens: nos quod fuimus iam non sumus, aucti	
nascendo in melius: mihi contulit et sibi mansit.	
nec Deus ex nostris minuit sua, sed sua nostris	85
dum tribuit nosmet dona ad caelestia vexit.	
dona haec sunt, quod victa iaces, lutulenta Libido,	
nec mea post Mariam potis es perfringere iura.	

[Well, since a virgin immaculate has borne a child, hast thou any claim remaining – since a virgin bore a child, since the day when man's body lost its primeval nature, and power from on high created a new flesh, and a woman unwedded conceived the God Christ, who is man in virtue of his mortal mother but God along with the Father? From that day all flesh is divine, since it conceives Him and takes on the nature of God by a covenant of partnership. For the Word made flesh has not ceased to be what

it was before, that is, the Word, by attaching to itself the experience of the flesh; its majesty is not lowered by the experience of the flesh, but raises wretched men to nobler things. He remains what He ever was, though beginning to be what He was not; but we are no longer what we were, now that we are raised at our birth into a better condition. He has given to me, yet still remained for Himself; neither has God lessened what is his by taking on what is ours, but by giving his nature to ours He has lifted us to the height of his heavenly gifts. It is his gift that thou hast conquered, filthy Lust, and canst not, since Mary, violate my authority]' (*Psychomachia* 70-88).[204]

The speech of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) is laden with meaning; it implies that through striving to live the most sexually moral life possible, the life of the individual is uplifted and, more explicitly, wretched man is raised to a nobler state (81). This nobler state of being communicates the very essence of Christian heroism, namely that the moral Christian is recognised as exemplary and worthy of imitation in society. In addition, the moral Christian has shed his primeval nature (73) due to the heroic actions of the virgin Mary, thus enhancing the survival of the group.[205] Prudentius' literary prototype of moral Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* embodies the fullest evolutionary development of human heroism appropriate to the socio-cultural context of Roman society in the early fifth century.

The focus of the discussions of this chapter now turns to highlighting the most significant socio-historical and socio-cultural developments in the construct of heroization from Greco-Roman Antiquity to Roman Late Antiquity. This is a vast area of scholarship and the approach adopted here is based on the work of Jones (2010),[206] who provides a useful categorisation of the developments in heroization from the Homeric age to early fifth-century

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[204] Thompson (tr.) (1949:282-285).

[205] See the findings of Darwin (1871) in this discussion (3.2).

[206] There is a plethora of ways in which to categorise Greco-Roman heroization in scholarship. For example, Frye gives five categorisations of heroism according to their representations in different literary genres. According to Frye (1957:33-34), these are: (i) the mythological, divine hero; (ii) the human hero who has superior powers; (iii) the hero who is a leader; (iv) the hero who is an ordinary person; and (v) the ironical or absurd hero.

Roman Christianity by considering developments in the categories of literary, divine and mortal heroization.[207]

3.4   Socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of Greco-Roman heroization

In Jones's (2010)[208] categorisation of literary, divine and personalised heroization, all the categories are considered to be interrelated. Change in one category thus creates changes in the other categories. Jones (2010) gives a valuable analysis of the interaction between the domains of literary, divine and mortal heroization from Greco-Roman Antiquity until Roman Late Antiquity and demonstrates throughout his research that all three spheres of heroization in this vast time span were given equal social status.

Jones's (2010) work focuses on the manner in which the changing socio-cultural circumstances in Greco-Roman culture over many centuries affected changes in the nature of heroization and precipitated the development of new heroic modalities in society. Jones's (2010) research details how the honour of heroization evolved through time in Greco-Roman society to include human heroes as well as literary-based and divine heroes. The honour of personalised heroization in Greco-Roman society was bestowed on the dead and the living, men and women, outstanding warriors who had fallen in battle, philosophers and poets, those who were civic benefactors and even members of one's own family.

In any evaluation of heroization in Antiquity through to Roman Late Antiquity, one cannot ignore the ubiquitous influence and cultural domination of the eighth century BCE. heroic

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[207] In this study, it is understood that the divine categorisation of heroization includes mythological heroization, as both of these modalities belong in the domain of the non-material environment of Greco-Roman culture. Unfortunately, the scope of this dissertation denies fuller examination of this topic. Furthermore, it is understood that Greco-Roman literary heroes of epic belonged in both the material and non-material domains. For an elaboration of Prudentius' literary interaction with Greco-Roman mythology in his works, see Malamud (1989). The concept of personalised heroization, meanwhile, is debatable in scholarship because some scholars, for example Urmson, cited in Flescher (2003:75-105), are of the opinion that when heroization is personalised, its social status is devalued. However, when the findings of Jones's (2010) work are considered in their totality, it is convincingly established through appropriate socio-cultural contextualisation that all the categories of heroization in Greco-Roman culture, namely the literary, divine and personalised, were given equal social status in Greco-Roman society.

[208] Jones (2010:48-65).

archetype of Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, across all domains of heroization in this era. The Greco-Roman hero is most aptly described by Bowra (1952) in this quotation:

> 'A hero differs from other men by his peculiar force and energy [...;] he has an abundant, overflowing assertive force, which expresses itself in action, especially in violent action, and enables him to do what is beyond ordinary humans'.[209]

In the Greco-Roman concept of literary heroization, Homer's literary heroes, Odysseus and Achilles, are persistently recognised and epitomised as the beginning of the archetypal Greek heroes of the epic literary tradition in contemporary Western culture. The Homeric epic modality of heroism was transmitted through centuries of Greco-Roman civilization. The 1952 work of Bowra, although dated, still provides 21st century scholarship with valuable insights into the dynamics of the transmission of particular themes in the social construct of literary heroization through successive epochs, not only in the context of Greco-Roman Antiquity. His explanation of how various cultures transmit particular 'constant themes' of literary heroization is both logical and persuasive, specifically because Bowra (1952)[210] gives such extensive corroboration for his findings. He states that '[a] tradition of heroic poetry may pass through many phases and stages and places, but it somehow succeeds in keeping its main possessions intact'. This goes far to advancing our understanding of how specific Homeric literary characteristics were still relevant in early fifth-century Late Ancient Roman heroization.

After lengthy deliberation in the preliminary research phase of this study, the most important characteristics of Greco-Roman epic heroism are summarised below:[211]

    (i) The epic hero is not depicted as existing in the era in which the epic was written;

    (ii) The epic hero's behaviour is extreme. These extreme behaviours allow him or her to accomplish superhuman heroic deeds, but also to violate current moral codes of behaviour;

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[209] Bowra (1952:97).
[210] Bowra (1952:403).
[211] These characteristics of epic heroization are compiled from those provided by Nagy (2009:87-88), Louden (2009:98) and Harris & Platzner (2004:305-308).

(iii) The epic hero has both an antagonistic and a symbiotic relationship with the pantheon of immortal gods who control the achievement of his or her heroic status on earth;

(iv) The hero is an isolated mythical figure who has links to divinity, as generally the hero is the offspring of one mortal and one immortal parent. The hero therefore exists in the ambiguous realm of neither the gods nor humans;

(v) The epic hero's liminal status as neither god nor human implied no ethical or moral boundaries to his or her heroic impulses and excesses; and

(vi) The epic hero can access three realms of existence, namely the mortal world of the earth, the heavenly world of the immortal gods and, thirdly, in the underworld, the world of the dead. However, in each domain of existence, he or she is controlled by the predilections of the gods.

Although each successive epoch in Greco-Roman culture contributed factors of socio-cultural significance to the complexity of literary heroization, Homer's depictions of literary heroes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are so significant that his works arguably set up the fundamental elements of the social system of Greco-Roman heroization. It is argued here although the Homeric heroes of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are mythical characters they are at their core, literary representations of men experiencing human problems. This is arguably reflected in and analogous to Prudentius' didactic portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, which offered Roman Christians of the early fifth century lifestyle guidelines to overcome the socio-cultural problems presented by pagan vices in their social context.

All Greco-Roman culture systems were closely integrated with the social construct of religion and the lives of ancient Greeks were shaped by their relationships their pagan gods.[212] The domains of mortal and literary heroization were therefore interwoven closely with divine heroization and heroism was believed to have divine origins. In Greco-Roman culture, heroes of all categories had to be consistently worshiped in complex ritualised and cultic behaviours to ensure their continued support of the society and to prevent divine acts of vengeance that would undermine the survival and prosperity of the society. The cultic worship of the entire hierarchical corpus of divinities, from the Olympian gods to local deities, defined the world-view and religious behaviours of Greco-Roman societies and their relationship to the heroes

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[212] For an elaboration on the gods of paganism, see Bremmer & Erskine (2010).

of their culture.[213] This is demonstrated in the manner in which Greco-Roman philosophers embraced the interactive dynamics of the afore-mentioned three heroic groups. The quotations below from the works of the Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato exemplify how the categories of literary, divine and personalised heroization co-existed, were interrelated and, furthermore, harmonised in the ideology of Greco-Roman culture. Both of these philosophers reiterated the importance of the Homeric heroic modality in all categories of heroization and the power of the divine in heroism.

The following quotation from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (± 350 BCE.) not only highlights that moral virtue is the cornerstone of heroic excellence in life, but also exemplifies the interrelationship between the constructs of literary, divine and personal heroization in Greco-Roman culture and the importance of the Homeric modality of heroism:

> 'Next we must make a fresh start, stating that there are three types of character to be avoided, namely, vice, incontinence, and brutishness. The contraries of two of these are clear; we call one virtue and the other self-control. What is contrary to brutishness might most appropriately be described as superhuman virtue, a virtue heroic and godlike; thus Homer depicts Priam saying of Hector that he was good in the extreme; "For he seemed not to be a child of a mortal man but of a god"' (*Eth. Nic.* 1145a-1145b). .[214]

The above quotation by Aristotle begins his lengthy deliberation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* on the trait of moral virtue, the foundational aspect of heroization in humankind (see 3.3). He advises that to overcome the social vice of brutishness in society, ordinary humans must follow the example of the Homeric literary hero Hector, who embodied the essence of godlike heroic excellence, although he was born mortal. This is demonstrated Greco-Roman cultural synchronism of the literary, divine and personal domains of heroization.

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[213] It is outside the scope of this dissertation to give an examination of the cult of heroes in Greco-Roman Antiquity except for when it is relevant to arguments of this study. The cult of heroes in Greco-Roman Antiquity is given full elaboration in the work of Currie (2005), which investigates Pindar and the cult of heroes of the fifth century BCE.

[214] Crisp (tr. and ed. 2000:Loc 2837).

The second work to be analysed is the work attributed to, but not necessarily composed by, the Ancient Greek philosopher Plato,[215] entitled *On Virtue*.[216] At the end of this work, Socrates concludes the discussion on virtue, the cornerstone of heroization, with the following statement:

'And often Homer, uses this same complaint, as do other poets. Indeed, whenever the gods wish a city to become successful, he (*sic*) places good men in it, and whenever a city is slated to fail, the god takes the good men away from the city. So it seems that virtue is neither teachable nor natural, but comes by divine allotment to those who possess it' (*On Virtue* 379d).[217]

Focusing now on the development of heroization in the domain of mortals, one of the most significant records that we have that demonstrates personalised heroization in Greco-Roman culture is found in the funeral oration of Pericles, on the occasion of the commemoration of heroic warriors who died in battle saving Athens during the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE):

'When you realize her [i.e. Athens's] greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard. If they ever failed in an enterprise, they made up their minds that at any rate the city should not find their courage lacking to her, and they gave to her the best contribution that they could. For famous men have the whole earth as their memorial. It is not only the inscriptions on their graves in their own country that mark them out; no, in foreign lands also, not in any visible form but in people's hearts, their memory abides and grows'.[218]

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[215] The philosophies of Plato are revisited in Chapter Six (6.5 and 6.6) of this study.

[216] There is ongoing debate in contemporary scholarship regarding whether or not his work was composed by Plato, as many of his works are representations of his philosophies written by anonymous writers of this period. In addition to this, there is controversy in modern scholarship about the accurate chronological date of the writing of Plato's works (Cooper, 1997: xi-xii). It is generally accepted that Plato's *On Virtue* was composed in the early to middle of the second century BCE.

[217] Reuter (tr. 1997:1698).

[218] Warner (tr. 1954:76-77). The quotation above is taken from Pericles's lengthy speech and is the reconstructed version by the historian and writer Thucydides. The authenticity of this speech and whether this is a correct reproduction of Pericles' words is questionable. However, this speech is significant in the context of this discussion as it emphasises the notion that the fallen heroes of war will be eternally remembered, should be emulated and will be given honour for their heroic acts.

The importance of the social construct of heroization as an identifier of excellence in the culture of Greco-Roman societies in antiquity cannot be underestimated. This is demonstrated by the manner in which heroization was incorporated and prioritised in numerous socio-cultural systems in Greco-Roman culture in Antiquity, and it is embodied in the untranslatable ancient Greek term *arête.* [219] It is outside of the scope of this study to elaborate on the notion of *arête* in Greco-Roman heroization. It is, however, necessary to note that this term emphasised the notion of living the most excellent life possible, a notion that carried through to Christian heroization in Roman Late Antiquity and will be elaborated upon in further chapters of this study. Furthermore, the meaning of this word for Greeks and Romans of Late Antiquity did not essentially change until the era of Christianity.

This concludes this chapter's discussion of the contextualisation of and interrelationships between the categories of literary, divine and individualised heroization in Greco-Roman society. The next section investigates the social state of Greco-Roman pagan and Roman Christian heroization in the fourth and early fifth centuries CE.

3.5   Pagan and Christian heroization in Late Ancient Roman society

The discussions of this chapter highlight that pagan heroization in the ancient Greco-Roman world of Antiquity was founded on the Greco-Roman world-view of paganism. To reiterate, the most significant aspect of the Greco-Roman construct of heroization lay in the dominant and uncontested cultural belief that mortal heroes had to prove their heroic nature on earth, principally through combat, and were rewarded in the domain of the terrestrial during and after death. This is demonstrated in the manner in which powerful dead heroes of Greco-Roman Antiquity were placated by offerings and or sacrifices at their burial place and

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[219] For an elaboration on the fuller meaning of the notion of *arête* in Greco-Roman culture of Antiquity, see Finkelberg (2002:35-49). In the context of this dissertation, the term *arête* is understood within the paradigms of the Platonic and Aristotelian explanations, specifically that the main qualities of *arête* are embedded in the Greco-Roman notions of virtue, excellence and *paideia.* See Chapter 4 (4.4) of this study for an elaboration on the concept of *arête* and *paideia* in Prudentius' literary context.

shrines.[220] It must be noted that in particular instances Greco-Roman paganism women were also heroized, an exemplification of this was the female hero Iphigeneia who according to Burkert (1985) was worshiped in the cult of Artemis and Iphigeneia.[221]Conversely, all classes of immortal heroes were granted eternal heroic reward through their immortalisation by the Olympian pantheon of pagan gods.

The introduction of the religious movement of Christianity into the culture of Greco-Roman societies in Late Antiquity propounded a diversely alternative world-view of man's relationship with the non-material world. The Christian world-view was the most significant socio-religious challenge to the prevailing, embedded and, until this time, culturally dominant perspective of humankind's notion of the non-material world. The world-view of Christianity proposed that God was not only benevolent towards humankind, but that the devout Christian who banished pagan vice from his or her life and devoted his or her terrestrial existence to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and unconditional belief in God, would find eternal salvation for his or her mortal soul in the Kingdom of God.

This Christian world-view in the Roman world of Late Antiquity and, in particular, the notion that the soul of the devout and heroic Christian was purified of pagan vices and was guaranteed salvation and immortalisation in the Kingdom of God, slowly reshaped and replaced the fundamental Greco-Roman construct of heroization across the Mediterranean world.[222] In the Roman world of Late Antiquity, especially after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity in the year 312, more and more pagans of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, often reluctantly, gradually accepted the social dominance of the new world-order of Christianity and converted.[223] Consequently, the fundamentals of the social construct of heroization in this culture were reshaped towards purifying the soul of vice, which resulted in salvation for the soul and the heroic reward of an afterlife in the Kingdom of God for eternity.

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[220] See Burkert (1985:203-208) for an elaboration on the practice of honouring dead heroes in in Greco-Roman Antiquity.

[221] Burkert (1985:202-203). It is beyond the scope and focus of this study to give an in-depth examination on the topic of Greco-Roman heroization in Antiquity.

[222] For an elaboration regarding the spread of Christianity in from the first to the fourth centuries in the Roman Late Ancient world, see Harris (2005).

[223] For an elaboration on the spread of Christianity after the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity see Jones (1962).

The discussion above gives a generalised outline of the basics of Christian heroization. However, the uniqueness of the rapidly changing socio-cultural circumstances of Roman society in the fourth and fifth centuries and, more significantly, the efforts of Christian leaders and writers to adapt to these changes, advance the Christian religious movement and unify a single and dominating Christian orthodoxy from the many prevailing interpretations of Holy Scriptures in this era, significantly impacted on the nature of Christian heroization during this time. This study argues that Christian heroization in the fourth and early fifth centuries was a particularly unstable social construct. It is proposed here that this was because Christians of this era turned to their leaders and to interpretations of Christian texts to create their own modality of heroism that surpassed the limitations of Greco-Roman heroization and was accessible to all who devoted their lives to ridding their souls of pagan vices. This notion is given in-depth examination throughout the discussions of the following chapters of this dissertation and therefore will not be elaborated upon here.

It is argued here that the key to understanding the social constructs of Roman pagan and Roman Christian heroization in the early fifth century lies in the consideration of the fact that although these constructs were, in essence, founded in the Greco-Roman notion of heroism, these groups each perceived heroization within the framework of diametrically opposing world-views. Most significantly, Roman pagans of this era still believed that heroic individuals received heroic rewards in the context of their life on earth, while Roman Christians believed that all Christians who actuated their heroic potential to rid their lives of vice and were willing to devote their lives to God were guaranteed immortality for their souls in the Kingdom of God.

When evaluating the constructs of pagan and Christian heroization in the early fifth century, it is short-sighted to assume that the rapid spread of Christianity during the fourth and early fifth centuries swept away the social construct of pagan heroization in this era completely. This chapter's discussions continue below with a contextualisation of the socio-cultural dynamics of pagan and Christian heroization in Roman society in the fourth and early fifth

centuries. This discussion also provides an example of the way in which Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* responded to the notion of pagan heroization in this era.

In Roman Antiquity, the traditional avenue to express one's heroic nature was through fighting in battle. As the Roman Empire spread through the Ancient world, the heroes of war became the most renowned figures of society. Their deeds were immortalised in the genre of historical literature as explicated above (3.4). However, the emergence of Christianity in the Late Ancient Roman world created unique socio-cultural tensions regarding the nature of Christian warfare. This chapter's discussions continue below (3.6) with an investigation into the manner in which Early Christians conceptualised warfare.

3.6   Early Christian militarism

According to Kuefler (2001),[224] despite the culturally embedded militaristic pride of Romans, there was a noticeable decline in enthusiasm in the third and fourth centuries, especially amongst upper class Romans, to join the army. With the rapid deterioration in the military power of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity, most notably after the sudden death of Theodosius I in 395 and due to Barbarian invasions across the Roman Empire, Romans, both pagan and Christian, experienced social tension regarding the concept of the Roman military and their militaristic identity in the fourth and, more significantly, fifth centuries.[225]

It is significant that Roman Christians could express their militaristic nature through avenues other than the Roman army arose out of Early Christian teachings that appropriated and Christianised the Roman social metaphor of militarisation. Early Christian writers, such as Tertullian,[226] disseminated the notion that Christian pacifism, especially that shown by the martyrs, made one a soldier of Christ and, furthermore, that pacifism exhibited in the face of

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[224] Kuefler (2001:39).

[225] For a detailed elaboration on the socio-political events and historical circumstances that led to the process of the demilitarisation of the Roman Imperial army in Late Antiquity, one cannot ignore the work of Gibbon (1776-1778, ed. Radice 1986). For a discussion of the socio-cultural ramifications for Roman Christians of this demilitarisation and the notion of militarisation in Early Christianity, see Kuefler (2001:106-124) who examines Early Christian attitudes towards participating in the Roman Imperial army.

[226] See Barnes (1971) for an elaboration on the literary works of Tertullian.

persecution was the greatest manifestation of Christian heroism. As Kuefler (2001)[227] explains, the military-like discipline of the martyrs' pacifism fighting pagan persecutors as soldiers of Christ became the military rhetoric of Early Christianity.

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[227] Kuefler (2001:1116-117).

This ideology of the nature of Roman Christian militarism extended into the post-martyrdom context of early fifth-century Roman Christianity. However, in the absence of martyrdom, it again required social realignment. Christian leaders of this period chose to vigorously endorse the notion that one could still be a soldier of Christ, just as the martyrs were, but now in an interiorized fight against paganism and the influence of pagan vice in Roman Christian society. However, one cannot ignore that the notion that Christians in a post-martyrdom context could interiorly replicate the suffering of the martyrs as soldiers of Christ was becoming difficult to sustain in a post-martyrdom context, as corporeal suffering became a remote concept.

It is the argument of this study that, by invoking and amplifying the victorious trope of Roman militarism in a Christianised context, Prudentius legitimised the notion that early fifth-century Roman Christians could psychologically relinquish lingering vestiges of their identity as victims, in the wider context of early fifth-century Roman society. This approach by Prudentius may be understood as a particularly appropriate conceptual contrivance for readers of the *Psychomachia* to deploy to overcome the notion of victimhood lingering from the era of Christian martyrdom. Moreover, it is argued here that the notion of victimhood left over from the era of martyrdom further obstructed Christian heroic identity formation in early fifth-century Roman Christian society.

It is also argued here that Prudentius' skilful development and unique negotiation of the interiorization of the militaristic metaphor in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* gave additional support to the Christian ideology that each Christian was a soldier of Christ. More explicitly, in Prudentius' representation of this notion, the soldier of Christ was a victorious Roman Christian warrior whose battle against the weakening social structure of paganism was orientated towards the future of Roman Christian heroes and conquerors, not victims.

3.7   Contextualisation of heroization in Roman society in the fourth and early fifth centuries

To contextualise this discussion on the notion of Roman heroization in the fourth and early fifth centuries, it is necessary to bear in mind the findings of Kottak (2014) in Chapter One (1.10), where the interrelationship between the social systems of a society was explained. This discussion highlights the way in which the great Roman Emperors and socio-political authorities of Roman society influenced the social construct of Roman heroism, both pagan and Christian, in the fourth and fifth centuries. The aim of this discussion is to draw attention to the complexity of the social construct of heroization within the socio-cultural circumstances that prevailed in Roman society and in Prudentius' lifetime (348-±405). This, it is argued throughout this study, contributed towards his literary expression of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia.*

As explained in Chapter One section 1.10 note (iii) change in one social construct of a society creates change in all other social constructs of the society. This is of particularly noticeable when a significant social construct, the political governance of a society, is changed. How a people are ruled and the laws applied to that society by the governing body can, over time, affect the norms and values of the society. The relationship between religion and politics in Ancient and Late Ancient societies of the Greco-Roman world were especially interrelated as the political rulers of these societies were also the religious heads of state. For example, the conversion of the political leader of the Roman Emperor Constantine I to Christianity in the middle fourth century may be viewed as the most significant factor in the advancement of Roman Christianity in Late Antiquity. However, before his conversion, which forever impacted both the political and religious constructs of the Late Ancient world, the relationship between social constructs of religion and politics in the societies of the Roman Empire was unstable

After the political turmoil that plagued the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries,[228] it significant in this study to draw attention to the influential reign of the pagan

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[228] For an elaboration on the political landscape of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity, see Jones (1962 and 1964), and Freeman (1996), amongst many others in this vast field of Late Ancient scholarship. See Appendix A

Emperor Diocletian (284-303). In the late third and early fourth centuries, the Roman emperor Diocletian restored a measure of stability to the Roman Empire through his strategic partnerships with three carefully chosen allies, namely Maximian, Galerius and Constantius I, who formed an allegiance of four imperial powers that governed the Roman Empire.[229] However, the reign of Diocletian and his co-emperors was also significant for the severe persecution of Christians, most rigorously enforced after the Edict of Nicomedia in 303 and which lasted at least until 313.[230] This persecution, also referred to as the Great Persecution, was one of the most severe persecutions of Christians in Early Christianity.[231] Many of the tales of martyrdom from the Great Persecution of 303-313 were influential in Christian hagiographical literature of the fourth and fifth centuries. The fourth-century Christian writer Lactantius provides a vivid account of the evils of Diocletian and the Great Persecution in his work *On The Deaths of the Persecutors*. For example, Lactantius begins Chapter Seven of this work with the statement, 'Diocletian, who was an inventor of crimes and a manufacturer of evils, although he destroyed everything else, could not refrain from laying hands even on God'.[232]

Following the voluntary abdication of Diocletian in Nicomedia in 305, which according to Lactantius was due to dementia,[233] and the retirement of his co-emperor Maximian in the West, Galerius and Constantius governed all regions of the Roman Empire. In 306, Maximian came out of retirement to aid his son. All three emperors, Galerius, Maximian and Constantius, groomed their sons to take over the rule of the Roman Empire upon their deaths. However, it was the son of Constantius, Constantine, who exhibited his leadership abilities at an early age by outwitting and manipulating the emperors Galerius and Maximian and their heirs.[234] Most significantly, the young Constantine continued his father's tolerance of Christians, while simultaneously serving the pagan gods.[235]

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for further information that is deemed relevant to the focus of this dissertation but which has been denied fuller elaboration due to length constraints.

[229] See Harris (2016:188-199) for a review of the stability that the reign of the Emperor Diocletian bought to the Roman Empire.

[230] See Rebillard (2012:57-59) for a review of the Emperor Diocletian's legislations against Christians in North Africa.

[231] For an elaboration on the Great Persecution, see Ricciotti (1959).

[232] Ehrman & Jacobs (tr.) (2004:12).

[233] Lactantius *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* Chapter 17 in Ehrman & Jacobs (2004:18).

[234] Jones (1962:56).

[235] Jones (1962:57-64).

By the early fourth century, it was Maximian's son, Maxentius, who proved the greatest threat to the authority of Constantine. Maxentius began his rebellion against Constantine in 310. On 28 October 312, Constantine achieved his most decisive victory against Maxentius and his army at the famous Battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which Maxentius was killed. Constantine attributed this significant victory to the power of God[236] and this, it is generally agreed, began his conversion to Christianity.

On 29 October 312, Constantine marched his army into Rome and was elected senior emperor of the Roman Empire.[237] Eusebius, the fourth-century Christian writer, describes Constantine's victorious entry into Rome after the defeat of Maxentius in the following way:

> '(2) Immediately all the members of the Senate and others persons there of fame and distinction, as if released from a cage, and all the people of Rome, gave him a bright-eyed welcome with spontaneous acclamations and unbounded joy. Men with their wives and children and countless numbers of slaves with unrestrained cheers pronounced him their redeemer, saviour and benefactor. (3) He, however, being possessed of inward fear of God, was not inflated by their cries nor overexuberant at their praises, but was conscious of the help of God; so immediately offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to the Giver of his victory" (Eusebius *The Life of Constantine* Book 1.39:2-3).[238]

The influential rule of the Emperor Constantine (312-337) cannot be underestimated for the momentum it gave to the advancement of Christianity in the fourth century. From his inauguration as Emperor on 29 October 312 in Rome, Constantine continued his zealous political ambitions to be the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Partnerships that he formerly relied upon, such as with Licinius, who acted as his co-emperor in the Eastern Roman Empire from 308-324, were later dissolved in conflict. By 321, Constantine had dissolved the strong alliance he had held with Licinius and banished him to Nicomedia.[239]

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[236] For an elaboration of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge and the legend of Constantine's witnessing of the holy cross, which he believed led him to victory over the army of Maxitus, see Jones (1962:70-72).
[237] Jones (1962:72).
[238] Ehrman & Jacobs (tr.) (2004:34).
[239] For an elaboration on the disputes between Constantine and Licinius, see Jones (1962:108-115).

Alongside his political ambitions, Constantine continued to fortify his conversion to Christianity and strengthen the social status of Roman Christians by supporting particular Christian bishops and Christian church structures in the Roman Empire. Most significantly, in the year 325, Constantine participated in the crucial Council of Nicaea, which clearly demonstrated the manner in which Constantine envisaged the harmonious relationship between the Roman Empire and a unified form of Roman Christianity.

Constantine's rule ended when he fell ill and died in 337. On his deathbed, Constantine was baptised into the Christian faith by Eusebius, the Bishop of Nicomedia. This completed his total conversion to Christianity. Constantine's legacy is distinguished by his promotion of and conversion to Christianity, as well as his political leadership and consolidation of the Roman Empire. He was succeeded by his sons Constantine II, eventually Constantius II and Constans, who were devoutly Christian.[240]

In this study, the most relevant consequence of Constantine's 25-year reign is his conversion to Christianity, which began with his victory at the Milvian Bridge and his belief that this victory was attained through divine intervention of the Christian God and which finally reached conclusion on his deathbed. Most significant is the fact that by the year 313, Constantine, with the aid of his then ally Licinius,[241] legalised the abolishment of the persecution of Christians in the Edict of Milan. It is argued here that the end of Christian martyrdom not only changed the religious landscape of the Roman Empire, but also radically altered the nature of Christian heroism in Early Christianity.

It is argued throughout this dissertation that in the absence of martyrdom, the social construct of Christian heroism required socio-cultural realignment in Christian society. Following the Edict of Milan in 313, Christians of the fourth and early fifth centuries, who lived in a post-martyrdom context, could no longer manifest their expression of Christian heroism in the corporeal domain. As the further discussions of this dissertation will reveal, Christian leaders

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[240] The succession of Constantine's sons was achieved through dispute and bloodshed. See Burgess (2008: 5-51) for a fuller discussion.
[241] For an elaboration of the relationship between Constantine and Licinius, see Jones (1962:76-81).

and writers of the fourth and fifth centuries turned to conceptualising Christian heroism as an interiorized notion, manifested in the purified soul of the Christian that was cleansed of pagan vice. It is argued here that Prudentius' literary vision of an interiorized conceptualisation of heroism, through his portrayal of the allegorically personified Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia,* is arguably one of the most innovative poems of this era. The *Psychomachia* provided early fifth-century Christians didactic lifestyle guidelines with which to rid their lives and souls of pagan vice. In addition to this, the *Psychomachia* offered early fifth-century Christians salvation for their mortal souls. The *Psychomachia* showed that they too could act as heroically as the Christian martyrs and, like the heroic martyrs, they would be rewarded with immortality for their souls, cleansed of pagan vices, in the eternal heavenly Kingdom of God.

Focusing now on the social construct of pagan heroism in the fourth and early fifth centuries, it must be noted that recent scholarship, for example Cameron (2011),[242] has provided illuminating insights into the manner in which pagans of this period persisted with pagan rituals and cultic practices around heroization, even to the extent that they still recognised the Homeric heroes as the epitome of pagan heroism.[243] The continuing authority of pagans in Roman society in the fourth and early fifth centuries was largely due to the wealth held by aristocratic pagan Romans. This wealth ensured that prominent pagan aristocrats of the fourth and early fifth centuries held positions of governmental as well as social power in Roman society. There was a notable hiatus in the increasing social domination of Christianity in Roman society in the fourth and fifth centuries, specifically, the brief but influential reign of the pagan Emperor Julian (361-363). It is argued here that the influence of the pagan Emperor Julian and his vigorous encouragement of the pagan cultic worship of heroes was a perspicuous demonstration of the vitality, social dynamics and nature of heroization in fourth-century pagan society. Cameron (2011)[244] suggests that it is plausible that some pagan Romans, especially aristocratic pagans, privately continued to practice pagan rituals well into

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[242] Cameron's (2011) work gives a systematic evaluation of the social context of pagans in the fourth and fifth centuries. Cameron's (2011) work complements more focussed works, such as that by Salzman (2004).

[243] There is debate in Early Christian scholarship over the question of whether or not pagan rituals of the cult of heroes formed the foundations of Early Christian cultic practices in the cult of saints, which worshipped the Early Christian martyrs. The preliminary research phase of this dissertation considered the cult of heroes of Greco-Roman Antiquity and its supposed influence on the cult of saints of Early Christianity only for its relevance to Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. There is a large body of scholarship devoted to examining the Early Christian cult of saints, for example, the works of Brown (2015) and Mayer (2006).

[244] Cameron (2011:166).

the fifth century. Bearing the findings of Cameron (2011) in mind, one can argue that the influence of Julian in reviving pagan cultic worship was successful, to some degree at least, because it appears to have encouraged the cultic worship of heroes in some pagan families in Roman society well into the fifth century, despite the legalisation of Christianity.

At this point in this discussion, it is germane to give a brief socio-historical review of the life and philosophies of the Emperor Julian.[245] The purpose of this outline is to contextualise the Emperor Julian's influence on the social construct of pagan heroization in fourth-century Roman pagan society. Furthermore, it becomes relevant in the further chapters of this study to have an outline of this important and intellectual man's life and philosophies. The Emperor Julian was raised as a Christian in the imperial House of Constantine. He was well versed in the scriptures of early Christianity. However, Julian's Classical education and the influence of the Neoplatonic philosopher Maximus of Ephesus, in approximately 348,[246] resulted in his deep appreciation for pagan Hellenism. Through circumstance, explicitly, the unexpected death of Emperor Constantius II, the heir of the Emperor Constantine, from illness during a military campaign in November 361, Julian, who converted to paganism, became the last pagan Roman Emperor for a brief 18 months from 361-363. His reign was cut short by his premature death from a wound sustained in battle on 26 June 363 at the age of 33.[247]

As a converted pagan, Julian aimed to revive the social dominance of paganism in Roman society, while simultaneously encouraging pagan Hellenism.[248] Julian endorsed all things Hellenistic, particularly Neoplatonism,[249] Hellenistic perceptions of *paideia*, cultic worship, Eastern and Asian mysticism as well as forms of magic, especially the oracular.[250] In addition to this, the brief reign of the Emperor Julian was characterised by his robust efforts to

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[245] Wright (1913) provides a three-volume work of the translations of Julian the Apostate's texts and letters.

[246] Simmons (2000:1252).

[247] Simmons (2000:1260).

[248] Simmons (2000:1251-1267) gives an enlightening review of the life and reign of Julian the Apostate. Many scholars besides Simmons (2000) have investigated the life and opinions of this interesting Roman Emperor from Roman Late Antiquity, such as Tougher (2007) and Bowersock (1978).

[249] The popularity of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy in Roman society in the fourth and early fifth centuries and the manner in which this influenced notions of the soul in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* is elaborated upon in Chapter Six (6.5 and 6.6).

[250] For further details on the role of oracles in Late Antiquity from the pagan perspective, see Athanassiadi (1991:271-278), and from the Christian perspective, see Athanassiadi (1993:115-130). Simmons (2000:1257) states that '[e]ven by pagan accounts Julian was very superstitious and possessed a fanatical interest in oracles'.

dismantle Roman Christian social institutions in fourth-century Roman society and restore pagan traditions. These efforts may be reflected in the fourth-century novel, *The Ethiopian Story*, by Heliodorus.[251] While this novel contains obvious links to Philostratos's literary description of the cult of Protesilaos in his work *Heroikos*,[252] its reflection of the pagan beliefs of Julian cannot be ignored.

Heliodorus' portrayal of pagan heroism in *The Ethiopian Story* can arguably be seen as socio-culturally appropriate to fourth-century notions of pagan heroism and, in particular, Julian's specific idealisation of Roman paganism. In addition to this, Heliodorus' *The Ethiopian Story* relies on the Homeric modality of heroism in the characterisation of heroes.[253] To rationalise the reverence of the Homeric heroic modality in pagan society in the fourth century, one must consider two important factors. Firstly, education in this period was still based on the Classical tradition, which emphasised the finer appreciation of the ancient epics of both Virgil and Homer in Roman Christian society and, in particular, in Roman pagan society. Secondly, Julian was educated in the Classical tradition and had a particular reverence for the Homeric modality of heroism, which he encouraged in the education of Romans during his reign. The Emperor Julian went as far as banning Christian teachers during his brief reign and encouraging all Romans to look to ancient texts for lifestyle guidelines. The Emperor Julian's endorsement of pagan literature in fourth-century Roman society's education is evidenced in the following extract from his *Epistle 36* [Letter 36]:

> 'I hold that a proper education results, not in laboriously acquired symmetry of phrases and language, but in a healthy condition of mind, I mean a mind that has understanding and true opinions about things good and evil, honourable and base. Therefore, when a man thinks one thing and teaches his pupils another, in my opinion he fails to educate exactly in proportion as he fails to be an honest man. And if the divergence between a man's convictions and his utterances is merely in trivial matters, that can be tolerated somehow, though it is wrong. But if in matters of the greatest importance a man has certain opinions and teaches the contrary, what is that but the conduct of hucksters, and not honest but thoroughly dissolute men in that they praise

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[251] Hilton (2012: 57-68) describes *The Ethiopian Story* as 'an ideological resonance best suited to the reign of Julian in the 4th century'.
[252] Hilton (2012:62).
[253] For an elaboration on the influence of Homer in Heliodorus' *The Ethiopian Story*, see Hilton (1998:297-308).

most highly the things that they believe to be most worthless, thus cheating and enticing by their praises those to whom they desire to transfer their worthless wares. Now all who profess to teach anything whatever ought to be men of upright character, and ought not to harbour in their souls opinions irreconcilable with what they publicly profess; and, above all, I believe it is necessary that those who associate with the young and teach them rhetoric should be of that upright character; for they expound the writings of the ancients, whether they be rhetoricians or grammarians, and still more if they are sophists. For these claim to teach, in addition to other things, not only the use of words, but morals also, and they assert that political philosophy is their peculiar field. Let us leave aside, for the moment, the question whether this is true or not. But while I applaud them for aspiring to such high pretensions, I should applaud them still more if they did not utter falsehoods and convict themselves of thinking one thing and teaching their pupils another. What! Was it not the gods who revealed all their learning to Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates and Lysias?' (Epistle 36: *Rescript on Christian Teachers*)[254]

Interwoven in the imperial endorsement of the Homeric modality of heroism, and its deployment as a heroic stereotype in *The Ethiopian Story*, Heliodorus also prioritises the traditional practices of the cultic worship of heroes and, especially, the consultation of the oracles, such as the oracle at Delphi. In Book Two of this novel, Heliodorus describes the rituals of the cultic worship of the heroic character Neoptolemus and the Pythian Games at Delphi. The quotation below from Book 2 of *The Ethiopian Story* demonstrates not only that Neoptolemus was considered to be a Homeric hero, as he was the son of the hero of Homer's *Iliad* Achilles, but also that there was regular cultic worship of the hero Neoptolemus at the Pythian games at Delphi:[255]

'As for the sacrifice and the scared embassy, the Aenianians despatch one every four years in honour of Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, at the time of the celebration of the Pythian games, which, as you know are going on now. For it was here at the foot of

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[254] Wright (tr.) (1913:116).
[255] Hilton (2012:57).

the altar of Apollo, that Neoptolemus was treacherously slain by Orestes, son of Agamemnon' (*The Ethiopian Story* 2:34 tr. Morgan 1989?).[256]

It is significant to note the findings of Hilton (2012),[257] Simmons (2000)[258] and Gregory (1983)[259] regarding the Emperor Julian's reverence for oracular divination, particularly the oracle of Daphne at Antioch and the oracle of Delphi.[260] This reverence for oracular prophecy is reflected in the narrative of Helidorus's *The Ethiopian Story*, as demonstrated in the quotation above. It can be argued that *The Ethiopian Story* and Helidorus' emphasis on oracular prophecy and the ritualised practices of the cult of Neoptolemos at Delphi are a legitimate and authoritative reflection of Julian's vision of the nature of paganism and heroic worship in the fourth century.

The question arises as to the manner in which Prudentius negotiates the important influence of the Emperor Julian's fourth-century pagan beliefs in his portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is argued here that Prudentius adds extra weight to his criticism of the cultic worship of heroes and the pagan worship of oracles by addressing this in the concluding episodes of the *Psychomachia*. Prudentius waits until the Christian virtues have defeated the pagan vices, specifically when the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) addresses the assembled victorious army of heroic Christian virtues, to ridicule the practices of pagan cultic worship and the offerings of sacrifice to the pagan gods. This quotation from the speech of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) illustrates the manner in which Christian notions of heroism prioritise peace amongst men and nations and not burnt offerings:

> '*quisque litare Deo mactatis vult holocaustis,*
> *offerat in primis pacem: nulla hostia Christo*　　　　785
> *dulcior: hoc solo sancta ad donaria vultum*
> *munere conuertens liquido oblectatur odore.*
> [Whosoever would worship God acceptably with whole burnt offerings, let him above all offer peace. No sacrifice is sweeter to Christ; it is this gift alone that pleases Him

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[256] Athenian Society (tr.) (1897:137).
[257] Hilton (2012:65).
[258] Simmons (2000:1255).
[259] Gregory (1983:290-291).
[260] Gregory (1983:291) makes reference to the popular belief that Julian the Apostate's physician Oribasius was the receiver of the last oracular prophecy at Delphi.

with a pure aroma when He turns his face towards the holy altar]' (*Psychomachia* 784-787).[261]

The importance of the quotation above lies in it not only disempowering the practice of cultic worship, but also in it demonstrating the social inappropriateness of the pagan practice of sacrifice. In addition to this, the quotation holds extra layers of meaning because it is included in the speech of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) in an atmosphere of peace and goodwill among the army of virtues and is not given in the context of anger over the dying or dead body of a pagan vice, as were other speeches by the virtues in the *Psychomachia*. The speech of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) endeavours to neutralise the lingering influence of the Emperor Julian and his efforts to revitalise paganism in Roman society, as this virtue's speech is orientated towards the future and does not rely on evoking old ritualistic practices that were encouraged by the Emperor Julian during his brief but influential reign.

That being said, it cannot be denied that Prudentius, who was a boy during the rule of the Emperor Julian, admired particular aspects of this pagan emperor's leadership. This is highlighted in the following quotation from Prudentius' work *Apotheosis*, which is generally agreed in scholarship to refer to the Emperor Julian:

> '*pincipibus tamen e cunctis non defuit unus*
> *me puero, ut memini, doctor fortissimus armis,*   450
> *conditor et legume, celeberrimus ore manuque,*
> *consultor patriae, sed non consultor habendae*
> *relligionis, amans ter centum milia divum.*
>
> [Yet of all the emperors one there was in my boyhood, I remember, a brave leader in arms, a lawgiver, famous for speech and action, one who cared for his country's weal, but not for maintaining true religion, for he loved a myriad of gods]' (*Apotheosis* 449-453).[262]

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[261] Thompson (tr.) (1949:334-335). Attention must be drawn to Prudentius' mention of 'sacrifice' in line 785 of the above quotation. The ideological concept of blood sacrifice in Early Christianity is a vast area of Late Ancient scholarship, which has been given due consideration in the research phase of this study. Unfortunately, the focus of this study denies fuller elaboration of this interesting topic. For a review of works on sacrifice in Late Antiquity, see Elsner (2012), Salzman (2011), Stroumsa (2009) and Bradbury (1995). For a work that reviews the topic of sacrifice in gladiatorial battles in the arenas of the Ancient world, which includes an investigation on human sacrifice, see Futrell (1997) and for a review of sacrifice in the context of violence in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, see Lewis (2000:127-149).

[262] Thompson (tr.) (1949:154-155).

The death of the Emperor Julian in 363 was the end of pagan imperialism in the Roman Empire.[263] However, as mentioned above, Roman pagans still held political and social power in fourth- and early fifth-century Roman society despite the sustained rule of Roman Christian emperors from the year 336 onwards. Following the death of Julian, particular aristocratic pagan Romans tenaciously endeavoured to hold onto their pagan traditions.[264] The Roman senate of the middle of the fourth century was largely dominated by the wealth of pagan aristocrats while Christian aristocrats, such as Prudentius, were in the minority.[265] However, while negotiating the considerations of wealth and politics, Christian Roman Emperors from 363 onwards resumed what Constantine had started in 312 and slowly abolished the cornerstones of paganism over the next three centuries.

One of the most proactive Roman Christian Emperors who effectively eroded the foundations of Roman paganism and advanced the Christian religion in the fourth century was the Emperor Theodosius I (379-395). Prudentius appeared to have great admiration for the leadership and Nicene Catholic beliefs of the Christian Emperor Theodosius and his sons Arcadia, Honorius and Theodosius II.[266] The circumstantial timing of the reign of Theodosius I, at the end of the fourth century, witnessed a sudden and powerful advancement of the Christian religion in the Roman Empire. This timely and fortuitous culmination of the efforts of preceding Christian Emperors, such as Constantine (306-337) and Gratian (367-383) of the fourth century, may arguably be seen to have come to fruition in the late fourth century and enhanced the reputation and authority of Theodosius I.[267] This, combined with the latter's temporary and short defence of the Roman Empire from advancing Vandal, Barbarian, Gaul and Visigoth invaders and the brief consolidation of the Roman Empire, may have disproportionally enhanced the political and religious prestige of this Emperor in the eyes of patriotic Roman Christians, such as Prudentius.

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[263] For a worthy review of the influence of the Emperor Julian and long-term Christian reactions to his rule, see Drake (2011:193-235).

[264] Jones (2014:Loc 2405) notes that the Emperor Gratian withdrew state funding of pagan cults in 382.

[265] See Chapter Four (4.4) of this study for an elaboration of the relationship between pagan and Christian aristocrats in Prudentius' social and literary contexts.

[266] Malamud (1989:13) notes that Prudentius and Theodosius I were both of Spanish origin. It was a notable habit in the Constantinople court of the Theodosius I to promote and surround himself with his Spanish contemporaries.

[267] For an elaboration on the reign of Theodosius I, see Williams & Friell (1998).

There is a plethora of significant contemporary research works that detail the life and reign of the Emperor Theodosius.[268] Furthermore, most accounts of the socio-cultural circumstances of Roman society in the late fourth century contain some reference to this influential Emperor and his sons. In a period of rapid cultural transformation, the Emperor Theodosius I stands out as a decisive and progressive leader who strategically negotiated the socio-political tensions between senatorial pagans and Christians during his reign, while simultaneously always prioritising the advancement of Christianity. However, by the late fourth century, when the Emperor Theodosius I assumed the leadership of the Roman Empire, he inherited long-term and ongoing disputes between pagans and Christians that had reached critical junctures. Pagan aristocrats, such as the eloquent and intellectual Roman Prefect, Symmachus, challenged the leadership of Theodosius I.

One of the most infamous events in the reign of the Emperor Theodosius I was when his army invaded Thessalonica in 390 and killed many innocent people in a rampage that turned into a bloodbath.[269] The public outrage at the horrific event caught Theodosius by surprise and it was only due to the intervention of the Bishop Ambrose that this issue was resolved.[270] Ambrose demanded that Theodosius seek a very public repentance and divine judgement from God for the slaughter of innocent people, and this went far to restore Roman Christians' confidence in Theodosius I.

Two of the most dominant points of contention between Roman pagans and Christians of the fourth and early fifth centuries were the religious disputes regarding the pagan rituals of sacrifice and the placing of the pagan Altar of Victory in the Roman House of Senate by the Emperor Augustus.[271] Both of these problems had been ongoing hotbeds of dispute in the fourth century since the rule of Constantine and it fell upon Theodosius I to resolve these issues.

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[268] Unfortunately, the focus of this dissertation denies a fuller elaboration of all aspects of the influential reign of Theodosius I. See Williams & Friell (1998) for one of the most enlightening accounts of the Emperor Theodosius I. See Harris (1984:69-84) for a review of the relationship between Prudentius and Theodosius I.

[269] For an elaboration on the massacre of Thessalonica and the manner in which the influential Bishop Ambrose admonished the Emperor Theodosius I over this, see McLynn (1994:291-341).

[270] See McLynn (1994:323-328).

[271] Jones (2014:Loc 1661). For a fuller elaboration of the history of the Altar of Victory in Roman society in the fourth century, see Sheridan (1966:186-206).

Prudentius' socio-political life as a Roman aristocrat in the service of the Roman Christian Emperors in the second half of the fourth century, was dominated by the issue of the placement of the Altar of Victory. This controversial socio-political tool became a symbol of lingering pagan political and economic dominance in the fourth century Roman government. It was of such importance to Prudentius that he devoted much of his work *Against Symmachus* debating the issue of the Altar of Victory.[272]

Theodosius I took the monumental step of banning pagan rituals and practices through legal means; these legal mechanisms were eventually compiled in 430 into one document by Theodosius II and known as the Code of Theodosius.[273] This extensive legal document of 16 books of laws marked the beginning of the rapid domination of Christianity in the Late Ancient Roman Empire and the slow demise of paganism. The Code of Theodosius most meaningfully outlaws the practice of paganism in the Roman Empire, as illustrated in this quotation:

'It is Our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans, as the religion which he introduced makes clear even unto this day. It is evident that this is the religion that is followed by the Pontiff Damacus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity; that is according to the apostolic discipline and the evangelic doctrine, we shall believe in the single Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, under the concept of equal majesty and of the Holy Trinity.

We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom We adjudge demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of Our own initiative, which We shall assume in accordance with divine the judgement' (Book 16.1 The Catholic Faith (*De Fide Catholica*) Emperors

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[272] It is unfortunate that in a study of this length and scope a fuller elaboration of this interesting topic is denied. The issue of the Altar of Victory and its significance in the fourth century Roman society is a well-trodden area of Late Ancient Roman scholarship. Some of the more authoritative scholarly works on this this are those by Cameron (2011:33-55), Cameron (1999:109-121), O'Donnell (1979:45-88) and Matthews (1975:203-211)

[273] The Code of Theodosius is investigated in the work of Williams & Friell (1998). Pharr (1952:xvii) describes the Code of Theodosius as 'a compilation of the laws, or decrees, of Rome issued by the Emperors from 313, when Constantine consolidated his power in the Western Empire, until 438, in the reign of Theodosius II'.

Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius Augustus: *An Edict to the People of the City of Constantinople*).[274]

Apart from the unambiguous banning of paganism, as illustrated in the above quotation from the Code of Theodosius, this comprehensive set of laws endeavoured to cover almost every possible socio-cultural difficulty that could arise between pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire and that could impede the advancement of Christianity. Theodosius also vehemently addressed the lingering issue of blood sacrifice and the worship of idols in the Code of Theodosius in Book 16.10.[275] While this banning of sacrifice and the worship of idols effectively solved the problem of pagan worship of the Altar of Victory as well as the issue of what Christians interpreted as sacrifice as opposed to pagan traditions of sacrifice, this law was met with a great deal of controversy in Roman pagan society in the late fourth and fifth centuries.

The socio-cultural and socio-religious importance of the problems in Roman society regarding pagan sacrifice and also the pagan appeals to have the Altar of Victory restored to the Roman House of Senate cannot be underestimated in the context of the everyday interactions between pagans and Christians. The pagans of Rome in this period attributed the failure of crops and the resulting famine to the fact that the Altar of Victory was not in the Roman Senate House.[276] This was in direct contrast to the Holy Scriptures of the Christians, which advocated that any form of idolatry was a sin.[277] However, as Jones (2014)[278] so succinctly states, the banning of pagan idolatry and sacrifice was Christianity's most complete break away from paganism in Late Antiquity.

The pagan Prefect of Rome and later Roman consul, Symmachus, was a notable and vocal pagan activist in Roman pagan society in the late fourth century.[279] In the face of growing

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[274] Pharr (1952:440).

[275] Pharr (1952:472). The scholar Pharr complied a useful translation and compilation of the social and religious reforms, and laws instituted by the Emperor Theodosius, known as the Code of Theodosius. This work's full title is *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*. See List of References at the end of this study.

[276] See Jones (2014:Loc 1724-1765) for a fuller review of the way in which ordinary Romans were affected by the banning of sacrifice.

[277] See Jones (2014:Loc 1217-1406) for a thorough review of idolatry in Early Christianity.

[278] Jones (2014:Loc 1738).

[279] In the current study, Chapter Ten of Cameron's (2011) work is especially relevant, because in this chapter Cameron (2011:353-398) describes the social influence of aristocratic Romans in what he terms '[t]he real circle of Symmachus'. Cameron (2011:360) refers to Symmachus as 'the Pliny of his age'.

numbers of pagan aristocrats converting to Christianity, Symmachus endeavoured to hold on to the last vestiges of Roman paganism in the fourth century. His love of Classical-age literature and traditional Roman aristocratic pursuits made Symmachus a popular figure in Roman pagan society. However, his ideologies regarding the sustaining of pagan traditions did not go unanswered by Christian aristocrats. Of relevance to the focus of this study is that the poet Prudentius composed a two-volume work entitled *Against Symmachus* that gave a lengthy, but respectful rebuttal to Symmachus' desire to restore the Altar of Victory to the Roman House of Senate and also to this pagan's active support of pagan rituals such as sacrifice.[280]

Focusing on the manner in which the socio-political and socio-religious events of the late fourth century appear to have shaped Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it is the argument of this study that the consequences of the reign of mighty Emperors, such as Constantine and Theodosius I, in the fourth century positively influenced Prudentius. These developments gave this devout Christian poet hope for the future of Roman Christianity and this is most passionately expressed in his work, the *Psychomachia*, which looks to the future of Roman Christianity and offers a modality of Christian heroism that is appropriate for the context of early fifth-century Christians.

In addition to this, it is argued here that in conjunction with the didactical Christian message of the *Psychomachia*, one can discern an implicit political textual communication to the readers of this epic that relays Prudentius' notion of a Christianised Roman Empire,[281] in which Rome serves as the terrestrial representative of the Kingdom of God and where Christian Romans devote their lives to God and this Christianised Roman Empire. The notion of Rome as the rejuvenated golden city under the leadership of Theodosius I is exemplified in Prudentius' work *Against Symmachus* (655-768). In this passage, Prudentius provides a summary of the deeds of Roman Emperors.

In the *Psychomachia,* Prudentius' communication of Christian heroism is underpinned with implicit connotations of his belief in the future of Christianised Rome. This is most

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[280] See Brown (2003) for a review of Prudentius' work *Against Symmachus*.
[281] For further details on the changing socio-historical and socio-cultural notions of Rome being *Roma aeterna* [Eternal city], see Pollmann (2013:11-36).

demonstrably seen when the Christian virtues are returning from their battles over the pagan vices and the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) exclaims the following:

> ' … *cumulata quidem iam gloria vobis,*   750
> *o Patris, o Domini fidissima pignera Christi,*
> *contigit: extincta est multo certamine saeva*
> *barbaries, sanctae quae circumsaepserat urbis*
> *indigenas, ferroque viros flammaque premebat.*
> [Abundant glory has come to you, ye faithful children of the Father and of Christ our Lord. With a great struggle have you wiped out the cruel savages that had beset the dwellers in the holy city round about with hard pressure of fire and sword]' (*Psychomachia* 750-754).[282]

In the quotation above, Prudentius' vision of Rome as the holy city is implicitly stated in line 773, where he calls the soul the 'holy city', just as he envisages Rome as the 'holy city' of the Roman Late Ancient world. Prudentius' *Psychomachia* determinedly looks to the future of a peaceful, Christianised Rome.

3.8   Conclusion

The primary purpose of this chapter was to provide a basic socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of heroization from Greco-Roman Antiquity to Roman Late Antiquity in an endeavour to provide relevant background for the further discussions of this study. The chapter opened with an explication of the notion of heroization in the social sciences. This chapter's focus then moved onto using Jones's (2010) categorisation of heroization to contextualise the social dynamics of Late Ancient Roman pagan heroization and Christian heroization in the fourth and early fifth centuries, which encompasses Prudentius' lifetime.

In the discussions of this chapter, Prudentius' literary expression of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* has been contextualised within the social milieu of Roman society in the early fifth century. The subsequent chapters of this study

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[282] Thompson (tr.) (1949:330-331).

continue to investigate the notion of Christian heroism in early fifth-century Roman Christian society, while focusing specifically on Prudentius' innovative and socially appropriate portrayal of interiorized heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The next chapter, Chapter Four, focuses on providing a framework to contextualise Prudentius' social and literary circumstances. Chapter Four advances the argument in this study that Prudentius presented a socially appropriate expression of interiorized Christian heroism for early fifth-century Roman Christian society in the *Psychomachia*.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRUDENTIUS' LITERARY AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

4.1   Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter Three, Prudentius (348-±410) lived during some of the most extraordinary socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances in the history of the Roman world of Late Antiquity. The impetus given to the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman world in the fourth and early fifth centuries created a cultural realignment of Late Ancient Romans' understanding of their non-material environment, as Roman societies grappled with the inevitability of the transformation of their pagan world-view to a Christian world-view. This cultural transformation pervaded every facet of Roman society's embedded social structures in Late Antiquity, including the construct of literature.

Mastrangelo (2008)[283] calls for a 'more muscular, literary-historical profile' of the poet Prudentius and his work in contemporary Prudentian scholarship. This chapter endeavours to go some way towards addressing this gap in scholarship by providing a socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of Prudentius' literary context and how this appears to have influenced his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

The discussions of this chapter move towards developing an understanding of the predominant influences in Prudentius' literary world and in his social context in Roman society in the early fifth century, which appear to have shaped his literary expression of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The first discussion of this chapter (4.2) provides a socio-historical account of literature in Roman society in Late Antiquity, focusing on literature as a social construct in the fourth and early fifth centuries. This discussion also considers Prudentius' social context as a Roman Christian aristocrat, his relationship with the Theodosian Emperors and how the composition of the *Psychomachia* appears to be underpinned by his futuristic vision of a Roman Christian Empire. A significant factor of consideration in Prudentius' religious context in the early fifth century was the notion of

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[283] Mastrangelo (2008:3).

universality in Christianity, which was especially relevant during this period, in which conversion to Christianity was rapidly increasing. Section 4.3 investigates the notion of universality in Roman Christianity and the manner in which this was reflected in Prudentius' religious, political and literary contexts; this section also examines the way in which Prudentius communicated the notion of universality and a Christianised Roman world in the *Psychomachia*. The focus of this chapter's discussions (see 4.4) then moves onto examining Prudentius' literary and social contexts and the manner in which his status as an educated Roman enhanced his writing skills and influenced his deployment of the genre of the epic in the early fifth century to communicate his message of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia.*

When discussing Prudentius' literary and social contexts, one cannot ignore the relationship between the writer, the reader and the text. The next discussion of this chapter (4.5) gives a review of the influence of this significant social and literary interaction and the way in which Prudentius negotiated this relationship in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Prudentius' use of literary devices in the *Psychomachia* makes this one of the most remarkable epics of Early Christianity. Section 4.6 gives an account of how Prudentius' skilful use of allegorical personification, exemplification and heroic speech enhanced his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.* A conclusion (4.7) is provided at the end of the chapter.

4.2 Contextualisation of Late Ancient Roman literature

When evaluating the socio-historical status of Roman literature in Late Antiquity, it is important to note that all social systems in the Roman Empire were affected by the unstable social circumstances of this era,[284] especially in the second and third centuries.[285] However, it

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[284] Von Albrecht (tr. Newman & Newman 1997: 1282-1285) explains that between the years 235-284, one of the most influential factors that exacerbated social instability in the Roman Empire was the high turnover and short ineffectual reigns of pagan Roman Emperors in this period. He goes on to explain that this adversely affected the production of pagan literature in this particular era.

[285] Jones (1964), Volumes 1-3 provides a detailed and informative account of the socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances of the Late Ancient Roman Empire from 284-602. This enlightening work by Jones cannot be ignored in Late Ancient scholarship for its explication of the historical, social and political circumstances of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity. Jones's work proved valuable in the preliminary research

appears that the social construct of pagan literature was affected more than Christian literature during the significant socio-cultural transformations that occurred during this time in Roman Late Antiquity.[286]

Roman pagan literature in the second and third centuries was characterised by pagan writers and intellectuals studying and editing prominent works of literature from their Greco-Roman past.[287] In addition to this, pagan intellectuals and writers prioritised the close study of the styles and themes of well-known works of their literary past and, because of this, the Archaizers literary movement, which recalled the golden ages of Roman history, grew in popularity amongst Roman pagans and continued to be popular well into the fourth century.[288] The endurance of the Archaizers movement through the centuries in pagan literary circles was arguably driven by a need for stalwarts of this slowly dying religion to augment pagan identity and reassert Roman pagan traditions and socio-cultural authority through literature.[289] Roman pagans' literary context in the second and third centuries was also characterised by the close study of grammar in older literary works. A work that exemplifies the correct use of grammar in literature is that of the pagan grammarian Charisius, entitled *Ars grammatica* [The Art of Grammar].[290]

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phase of this dissertation. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to elaborate on the socio-cultural and socio-political circumstances of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity, except when relevant to Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. See Appendix A for reference to significant cultural aspects not elaborated upon here.

[286] Cameron (2011:401).

[287] See Reynolds & Wilson (1991:29-34) for a review of the trend in pagan intellectual circles of the second and third centuries to actively source the authentic manuscripts of earlier Roman works. This was done to enhance the quality of their own reworking of these literary works in this period. See this same work (Reynolds & Wilson, 1991:34-36) for an account of the positive contribution that the creation of codex manuscripts in this period made to the transmission of texts through the centuries.

[288] Cameron (2011:399) explains that there had always been a 'strain of Archaism in Latin literature'. He goes on to explain that the popularity of the Archaizers movement continued in the context of Roman pagan literature from the second to the fourth centuries. Cameron (2011:399-401) describes how the Archaizing movement of the second and third centuries replaced the popularity of studying the Silver Age of Latin literature. Silver Age Latin poetry was characterised by poets believing that Virgil's *Aeneid* could not be possibly surpassed by their work. According to Jenkyns (2001:268), this is exemplified by Statius, a Silver Age epicist who ended his epic the *Thebaid* by stating it could never be equal to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Interpreting older works became the cornerstone of the Archaizer movement as intellectuals studied and deliberated over the linguistics and use of vocabulary in the works of established and influential writers in Rome's literary past, such as Ovid, Virgil and Cicero, who recorded the 'golden ages' of Roman's past.

[289] For an elaboration on pagan scholarship in Roman Late Antiquity, see Cameron (2011:421-426).

[290] For a discussion of the importance of grammar in ancient texts, see Swiggers and Wouters (edd.) (1996). For an analysis of Charisius's work, *Ars grammatica*, see Schenkeveld (1998:443-459). Other less well-known pagan writers also composed works on the study of grammar in this period.

Christian literature in the second and third centuries was characterised by literary works that aimed to reconcile and standardise the diversity of scriptural interpretations circulating in the various Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire, especially regarding notions of the holy trinity.[291] The unification of Holy Scriptures aimed to promote and advance Christian church authority and augment a universal Christian identity, despite ongoing persecution by Roman pagans. In addition to this, Christian writers of the second, third and fourth centuries produced a number of Christian apologetic works that responded to Christianity's pagan critics. The third century, in particular, witnessed the production of a number of significant literary works by prominent Christians whose works formed the foundations and shaped the nature of fourth-century Christianity. The works of Origen, especially his works *On First Principles* (220-230), *On Prayer* (233-234) and *Exhortation to Martyrdom* (235) are examples of Christian literary works that endeavoured to unify interpretations of the Holy Scriptures in the third century and recall accounts of martyrdom.[292]

One of the more prolific, influential and radical Christian writers of the late second and early third centuries was Tertullian,[293] who lived in Carthage. Tertullian was the son of a Roman centurion and is believed to have converted to Montanist Christianity after witnessing the Christian martyrs' religious fortitude and moral integrity.[294] Tertullian published a number of influential Christian works that, in the opinion of Barnes (1971),[295] were typical of the intellectual and socio-religious milieu of Christian society in Carthage during this period.

The relative peace and social stability that was restored to the Roman Empire in the fourth century[296] enhanced the intellectual milieu of Roman society for both pagans and Christians and lifted the social construct of literature from the socio-cultural delimitations of the second

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[291] Young (2008:243).

[292] For an elaboration on the works of Origen, see Heine (2008:211-214).

[293] Barnes (1971:58) estimates that Tertullian wrote his opus of Christian literature between the years 196-212. Barnes (1971:3) explains that the few details we have of the life of Tertullian are mainly garnered from Jerome's work, *De Viris Illustribus* [On Illustrious Men] See Halton (1999) for a translation into English of these letters

[294] Barnes (1971:2).

[295] Barnes (1971:86-114) gives an illuminating review on the relationship between the Christians and pagans in Carthage in the late second and early third centuries.

[296] Jones (1964:138-169) gives an enlightening review of this period in the Roman Empire.

and third centuries.[297] This created a positive transformation in the cultural importance of literature in the fourth century and was largely due to the restoration of social stability by the rule of the Roman Emperors, especially the reigns of the Emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Constantine (306-337),[298] (see 3.7). However, in the context of Christianity, the Emperor Theodosius I,[299] who once again consolidated the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire and relocated the administrative capital of the Roman Empire to the city of Rome, where all Romans flourished, was arguably one of the most influential protagonists in the unification of Roman Christian culture and consequently the writing of Christian literature in late fourth and early fifth centuries in Roman Late Antiquity.

When Roman literature again became an important social construct in the fourth century, the genre of prose appeared to be more popular than the genre of poetry.[300] An example of an influential fourth-century Christian prose work is Eusebius's *Ecclesiasticae Historiae* [History of the Church] (312-325), which endeavoured to strengthen the socio-historical context of Early Christianity, thereby further augmenting Christian identity. However, when investigating Christian literature in the early fourth century, the influential epic by Juvencus, *Evangelorum Libri Qattuor* [Four Books of the Gospels], cannot be ignored as one of the most elegant transformations of the Classical traditions of the epic into a Christianised form. However, in the opinion of Mastrangelo (2008),[301] Prudentius' epic, the *Psychomachia*, renewed and integrated 'the new intellectual, theological and political realities of the post-Constantinian world' for Roman Christian society.[302] This discussion continues with an investigation into the importance of universality in Roman Christianity and the way in which this was incorporated into Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

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[297] The socio-cultural circumstances of Roman societies in the second and third centuries is elaborated upon in Jones (1964), Vol 1, Chapters One to Three, which gives a comprehensive account of the difficulties faced by Romans, both pagan and Christian, in the second and third centuries of Roman Late Antiquity.
[298] Markus (2008:399).
[299] See Williams & Friell (1998) for a detailed review of the measures undertaken by Theodosius I against paganism.
[300] Mastrangelo (2009:312). Mastrangelo (2009:311-329) gives valuable insights into why the genre of poetry was considered not as popular as the genre of prose in Roman society in the fourth century. Mastrangelo (2008:8) also addresses the popularity of prose in Prudentius' literary context.
[301] Mastrangelo (2008:2).
[302] When evaluating Prudentius' social status, it must be kept in mind that the apparent affluence of Roman aristocratic society in this period bore little resemblance to the conditions of poverty that existed in the lower classes of Roman society.

4.3 The concept of a Christian Roman Empire and Christian universalism in Prudentius' religious, literary and political contexts

To open this discussion on the notion of a Christianized Roman Empire and universalisation in Christianity[303] and how this influenced Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it is germane to consider the research of the late 20th century social scientist, Stark (1996), which provides valuable sociological contextualisation of the notion of universalisation in early fifth-century Christianity. Stark (1996)[304] provides an informative review of 19th and 20th century scholarship that has shaped the consensus in 21st century Late Ancient scholarship that membership of the Early Christian church included all classes of Roman society, and both men and women. Stark (1996)[305] explains, through analysing the works of significant Late Ancient scholars,[306] that it has come to be realised that although many Christian converts came from the lower strata of Roman society, the Early Christian church relied on wealthy benefactors to flourish, and therefore the church's membership must have included Roman nobles.

To further socially contextualise the notion that Roman Christians perceived Christianity as the universal religion of all Romans in the future, one must consider the significance of the fact that Theodosius I went so far as to legally stipulate that Christianity was the religion of the Roman Empire (see 3.7). To understand the notion that a Christianised Roman Empire was a realistic and imminent possibility in the minds of Late Ancient Roman Christians, one must acknowledge the idiosyncratic relationship between a society's collective memory and Christianity's paradoxical perception of time in Roman Late Antiquity as being simultaneously historical and perpetual.[307] Furthermore, it was popular for early Christian writers to manufacture 'a teleological trajectory'[308] that endorsed the notion that Roman history was, in fact, part of Roman Christianity's cultural heritage. It is argued here that the

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[303] For an elaboration on the notion of universality in Early Christianity, see Simmons (2015).
[304] Stark (1996:29-34).
[305] Stark (1996:31).
[306] Stark's (1996:31) makes the observation that the Christian writers of Early Christianity wrote for a 'literate and educated audience' is particularly relevant to Prudentius' literary and social circumstances.
[307] Castelli (2004:13-15). Castelli (2004:13) states that according to Halbwachs, while most religions are 'orientated towards the past, Christianity's relationship to time is different because it claims to be simultaneously *both* historical at its root *and* outside of time, eternal' [emphasis in the original].
[308] Castelli (2004:28).

concept of a Christianised Roman Empire as well as late fourth-century Christian aristocrats, for instance Bishop Ambrose, who so judiciously combined his political and Christian life, gave impetus to the politicising of Christianity in Late Ancient Roman society.

Virgil was the first major Latin poet to suggest the notion of 'Roman nationhood' in his epic, the *Aeneid*.[309] It is argued here that Virgil was a strongly patriotic poet, much like Prudentius, and this was demonstrated in Virgil's *Aeneid* and his vision of a glorious future for the Roman Empire where all Roman flourished. This analogises with Prudentius vision in the *Psychomachia* of a future Christianised Roman Empire. In the early fifth century, Christians gradually began to witness the beginnings of socio-cultural and socio-political dominance and visualised the concept of a universalised Christian Roman Empire.

A significant factor in Prudentius' social and literary contexts was the prevailing idea in Early Christianity that historically it was older than it actually was. Literary and intellectual precedents were set in Roman Early Christianity that syncretised specific, antecedent, Roman historical events with prevailing Christian social circumstances, thereby socially incorporating Roman imperial history into the precursory history of contemporary Roman Christianity. This strengthened the notion of a Roman Christian Empire in Late Ancient Christian Roman society.

To legitimise this ideology, Christians turned to the Holy Scriptures for indications of Christ's teachings on the notion of a universalised Christian world,[310] where all men would worship God and be equal in the eyes of the Lord. One of the most demonstrable illustrations of the idea that all are nations and all peoples are one under God is found in *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians* from the New Testament, illustrated in the quotation below:

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[309] For an elaboration of the development of Christian poetry see Pollmann (2013: 309-330). Pollmann (2011:178) states, 'The *Aeneid* is the first poem in European history to make such an imperial claim on the behalf of a *nation'* [emphasis in the original].
[310] This notion can be traced back to the teachings of Matt 28.19.

'2.9 God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 2.10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 2.11 And every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (*The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians* 2.9-2.11).[311]

The growing wealth of the Roman Christian church in the fourth and fifth centuries can arguably be seen to have also intensified the socio-cultural vision of a Roman Christian Empire for Roman Christian society. As the fiscal wealth of the Christian church increased and an ecclesiastical administrative structure was cultivated across the Roman Empire,[312] Christian political doctrine and ideology became linked in one cohesive idea of universalism.[313] The notion that God ordained the Roman Christian Emperor further boosted the social notion of a Christian Roman Empire in fourth-century Christian Roman society. Furthermore, Christian Romans of this period believed that a Christianised Roman Empire was also divinely inspired and foresaw a 'Heavenly-ordained Christian Roman Empire'.[314] As a consequence of the abovementioned ideological and social constructs prevailing in Christian Roman society, a new structure of 'symbolic politics'[315] was created in the minds of Roman Christians of the late fourth century. This notion was endorsed in the writings of prominent Early Christian leaders.

The universalisation of Christianity and, moreover, the ideology that every person of the Late Ancient world could potentially belong to a universalised and cohesive Christian religion, became part of Early Christian discourse that Christian writers continually endorsed. For example, when referring to Christ's crucifixion, Origen (ca. 185-253), in his work *Origen Against Celsus* (246), Book 4, frames this ideology in terms of a universalised Christian world in Late Antiquity:

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[311] KJV (2014:Loc 1689).
[312] See Brown (2012) for a review of economic structures of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.
[313] Brown (1992:118-158).
[314] Kelly (2001:187).
[315] Hopkins (1999:334).

'For He Himself is said to be the saviour of all men, especially of them that believe; and His Christ to be the 'propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'' (*Origen Against Celsus* Book 4.23).[316]

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[316] Coxe (1885:508).

In this excerpt, Origen demonstrates that all peoples of the Late Ancient world were conceived of as a unified and single race of humankind in Christian philosophy. Another particularly vocal advocate of this notion of universality in Christianity was Paul (ca. 5-67).[317] In his *Epistle to the Galatians* (3.28), Paul the Apostle specifically subjugates traditional Late Ancient cultural notions regarding gender, nationhood and class when he advocates the notion of Christian universalisation. This is evidenced in the following quotation:

> 'All these differences of nationality, condition, and sex, are merged in the Christian character. *You are all one in Jesus Christ*' (Galatians 3.28) [emphasis in the original].[318]

Although the notion that Christianity was the universal religion in a new world order was continually reiterated in Early Christian discourse and expressed in various writings and sermons, this idea held problematic connotations in the Late Ancient world. The social ramifications of Christians identifying themselves as 'other' than pagan and, furthermore, believing in the notion that Christianity was a universalised concept, resulted in a variety of negative social outcomes. For example, some non-Christians began to perceive of Christians as a *genus tertium* [third race] of people in Late Ancient societies.[319]

Tertullian (ca. 160-220), in his work *Ad Nationes* [About Nations], gives expression to this in a descriptive manner when he states:

> '*Plane, tertium genus dicimur. An Cyropennae aliqui vel Sciapodes vel aliqui de subterraneo Antipodes? Si qua istic apud vos saltem ratio est, edatis velim primum et secundum genus, ut ita de tertio constet. Psammetichus quidem putavit sibi se de ingenio exploravisse prima generis.* [We are indeed called the *third race* of men! Are we monsters, Cyropennae, or Sciopades, or some Antipodeans from the underworld? If these have any meaning for you, pray explain the first and second of the races, that

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[317] See Hansen (2009:111-129) for an elaboration of notions of universality, race, gender and ethnicity in Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* 3.28.
[318] Rickaby (1898:260).
[319] Kimber Buell (2005) gives a valuable review of the socio-cultural implications of ethnicity in the concept of Christian universalisation. Also see Kimber Buell (2001:449-76).

we may thus learn the 'third'. Psammetichus thought he had ingeniously hit upon primeval man]' [emphasis in the original] (*Ad Nationes*.1.8).[320]

The quotation above demonstrates that there was social resistance from pagans to the notion of Christian universality in Late Ancient societies. One of the main objectors was the Neoplatonist philosophiser Porphyry. Porphyry's arguments centred on the question that if God was saving the souls of all peoples, then why was Christ sent to save the world so late? This dilemma posed by Porphyry, is acknowledged by Saint Augustine in *Epistle* 102.8, as demonstrated in this quotation:

> ' "If Christ" they say "declares Himself to be the Way of salvation, the Grace and the Truth, and affirms that in Him alone, and only to souls believing in Him, is the way of return to God , what has become of men who lived in the many centuries before Christ came? To pass the time" ' (Augustine *Epistle* 102.8).[321]

Despite pagan opposition to notions of Christian universality, the concept of social equality continued to dominate in Early Christian ideology. Most importantly, by the early fifth century, the notion of universality in Christianity was laden with extra socio-cultural and socio-religious connotations that threatened the traditional notions of class structure in Roman society. In an effort to make this notion socially appropriate, the communications of universality in Roman Christianity included negotiations of martyrdom in the post-martyrdom context. Most significantly, Christian leaders of the late fourth and early fifth centuries communicated the idea that the ordinary Christian, living in the context of post-martyrdom, had the same access to eternal salvation for his or her soul as the martyrs did.

For instance, the Bishop of Cyrrhus, Theodoret (ca 393-466), in his work *History of the Monks of Egypt* does not exemplify the martyrs' tales as the idealised and universalised early fifth-century model of Christianity. Rather, Theodoret draws on recounting the lives of the ascetic men and women of Egypt as the philosophical foundation of Christianity in the early fifth century in the quotation given below:

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[320] Von Harnack (tr. & ed. Moffett) (1908:271-272).
[321] Saint Augustine *Epistle* 102.8. Cunningham (tr.) (1892:Loc 48191-48203).

'We have recalled different lives and added accounts of women to those of men, for this reason: that men old and young and, women too, may have models of philosophy and that each person, as he receives the impress of his favourite life, may have as a rule and regulator of his own life the one presented in our account [.…] [O]ne who wishes to emulate a particular life must apply it to himself in place of a rule and cut off the excesses of vice, while supplying what is lacking in virtue. It is for this reason that we have undertaken the labour of composition, offering to those who wish it a means of benefit' (*Domnina* 30.7).[322]

Most importantly for the arguments of this discussion, in this particular passage quoted above, Theodoret implies that emulating the philosophical principles of one's favourite ascetic Egyptian offered 'a means of benefit'.[323] In other words, any Christian, regardless of status, had access to divine salvation if his or her life was filled with virtue, as exemplified by the Egyptian ascetics. By the fourth century, the principles of asceticism were becoming popular in Roman Christian society.[324]

To contextualise the importance that early fifth-century Christians placed on pursuing a socially appropriate way to enhance their opportunities for the rewards of salvation, and the notion that this heavenly salvation was accessible to all those who rid their lives of pagan vices, it is useful to consider the findings of Stark (1996). Stark (1996)[325] explains, 'Regardless of power, persons and groups will tend to accept religious compensators for rewards that do not exist in this world'. It can be argued that for Christians living in a post-martyrdom context, the notion that Christianity was a universal religion in which they had access to rewards previously reserved for Christian martyrs[326] must have greatly strengthened the social acceptance of the notion of universality in Christianity across all strata of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century.

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[322] Ehrman & Jacobs (tr.) (2004:389).
[323] Ehrman & Jacobs (tr.) (2004:389).
[324] See Chapter 6 (6.7) for an elaboration of the influence of Asceticism on Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.*
[325] Stark (1996:36).
[326] See Chapter Five (5.6) for an elaboration of Prudentius' negotiation of the martyrial narrative in early fifth-century Christian society in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.*

Another example of the way in which early fifth-century Christian leaders negotiated the notion of universality in Christianity, specifically in a post-martyrdom context, is demonstrated in the following quotation by Augustine (Sermon 13.2).[327] This sermon by Augustine is an example of a Christian text that highlights the message of Christian universality delivered to ordinary Christians existing in a post-martyrdom era. In this sermon, given on the feast day of St Lawrence in the Basilica of Carthage,[328] Augustine reiterated that ordinary people could access the spiritual rewards of Early Christian martyrs by emphasising that the martyrs were ordinary people like themselves:

> '(2) The martyr was human; we, also, are human. By whom he was made, by the same being we are also made. We have been redeemed by the same price by with which he was also redeemed. So, it behoves no Christian to say: "Why should I follow his example?' And of course no Christian ought to say: 'I will not follow his example". You have heard the words of the blessed Cyprian, the trumpet and exemplar of martyrs: "In persecution, warfare receives the crown; in peace constancy is rewarded". Then let no man think he lacks opportunity. The occasion for suffering is sometimes absent, but the opportunity for devotion is always present. And let no man think himself weak when God affords him strength, lest he not only fear for his own weakness but even lose trust in Him who works in him. In fact, God has willed that both sexes and all ages be included as examples of martyrs' [extract from St Augustine's Sermon 13 *Christ: The Glory of the Martyrs*: 13.2].[329]

The above-quoted passage from the writings of Augustine serves to not only explicate and emphasise the egalitarianism of gender, class, nationhood and ethnicity in the ideology of universality in Christianity, but it contextualises the notion of universality in early fifth-century Christianity. This sermon also draws attention to one of the main arguments of this chapter. Specifically, in Augustine's Sermon 13.2 he explicitly engages with the martyrial narrative in a very particular way. For example, it is the reading of this study that in this particular passage from Sermon 13, Augustine is at pains to emphasise the fact that martyrs were 'human; we, also, are human'.[330] Kaufman (1994)[331] explains that Augustine's

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[327] For further contextualisation of this particular sermon, see De Wet (2012b:197-215).
[328] As far as this study is aware, there is no record of the actual date when Augustine delivered this sermon.
[329] Kavanagh (1951:340-341).
[330] Kavanagh (1951:340-341). St Augustine's Sermon 13 *Christ: The Glory of the Martyrs*: 13.2.
[331] Kaufman (1994:13).

interaction with the martyrial narrative in the early fifth century was underpinned by his conviction that Christianity was not defined by the perfection of the martyrs and that the Christian Church 'would always encompass capricious and wayward Christians'. Kaufman (1994)[332] goes on further to explain that Augustine was pragmatic in his vision of universality in Christianity and that he sensed that membership of Christian churches would 'forever be mixed congregations of the reprobate, the rogues, and the righteous'.[333]

By the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the literary works of Early Christian writers, for example Augustine, actively encouraged and disseminated the notion that God was the creator of all mankind in all nations. This is demonstrated in the following quotation from Augustine's work, *De Civitate Dei* [City of God], in which he instructs his readers that God founded the whole human race and populated all the nations of the world:

> 'For from one man, whom God created as the first, the whole human race descended, according to the faith of the Holy Scripture, which deservedly is of wonderful authority among all nations throughout the world; since, among its other true statements, it predicted, by its divine foresight, that all nations would give credit to it' (Augustine *City of God* 12.9).[334]

Attention must be drawn to the findings of Pollmann (2011),[335] which are valuable to this discussion. Although he endorsed Christian universalism, as seen in the quotation above, Pollmann (2011) points out that Augustine remained sceptical of the success of 'empires of earthly peace',[336] in which peoples of all nations lived in harmony. According to Pollmann (2011), Augustine rather encouraged the idea that the heavenly Kingdom of God was where the immortal soul of the devout Christian would experience authentic spiritual equality and where the souls of all men would be one, in harmony with each other for eternity. In other words, Augustine's conceptualisation of universalism in Christianity was underpinned by the notion that the 'imperfect' terrestrial life of humans was a stepping-stone to eternal immortality in the Kingdom of God for all peoples of all nations willing to let God rule their

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[332] Kaufman (1994:13).
[333] Kaufman (1994:13).
[334] Dods (tr.) (1887:Loc 11661).
[335] Pollmann (2011:176-199).
[336] Pollmann (2011:188).

souls. The findings of Pollmann (2011) that highlight the prevailing perspectives on the notion of universalism make it clear that Augustine had a more spiritual perspective of this concept than perhaps other Christian writers of this era, in particular Prudentius.

Mastrangelo (2008) argues strongly throughout his work that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* contains political undertones. While this study agrees that Mastrangelo (2008) provides a convincing and thoughtful argument, in the context of this study, which focuses on the portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it is argued here that the very nature of the *Psychomachia*, in which all didactic guidelines of Christian heroism are couched in allegory, the political message of a Christian Roman Empire is not as overtly communicated as it is in Prudentius' other works.

To explicate how this study reads Prudentius' notion of universalisation in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, this discussion now focuses on this epicist's adroit and evocative exemplification of the heroic figure Abram/Abraham in the Preface to the *Psychomachia*. This discussion demonstrates that Prudentius' exploitation of the heroic figure Abram/Abraham fulfils the following criterion of the notion of universality in Early Christianity proposed by Kimber Buell (2005):

> 'In analysis of early Christianity, "universalism" usually includes three main ideas: the ability for anyone to become a Christian (regardless of background), the aspiration to win over all humans as members, and the ideal that Christianity consists of a unified set of beliefs and practices. Early Christians make such claims'.[337]

The Biblical figure Abram/Abraham from the Old Testament is one of the best exemplifications of an ordinary Christian who devoted his life to God. Prudentius skilfully exploits this well-known Biblical story in the Preface of the *Psychomachia* to demonstrate the rewards of actuating Christian heroism. Abram/Abraham's heroism is rewarded not only with the guarantee of immortality for his soul in the Kingdom of God, but his life on earth is also enriched by God, who blesses him with another child. This reiterates the findings of Kimber

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[337] Kimber Buell (2005:140).

Buell (2005) above that the notion of universality in Christianity was central to its doctrines, specifically that all peoples were eligible for salvation, 'regardless of background'.

In addition to this, it is argued here that by deliberately opening his epic with the heroic figure of Abram/Abraham, Prudentius goes against prevailing literary conventions, as seen, for example, in the above-quoted literary extracts from the works of Augustine, which deploy the example of martyrs, albeit in a refashioned form. Prudentius' exemplification of Abram/Abraham as the first representation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* clearly demonstrates that the heroic acts of the Early Christian martyrs are not the focus in a post-martyrdom context. To affirm the above-mentioned findings of Kimber Buell (2005), it is the argument of this study that Prudentius' exemplification of Abram/Abraham, and his specific reference to the name change of this Judaic hero, introduces the prioritisation of socially recognisable heroic figures in this epic. Abram/Abraham is an exemplification of a Judaic hero figure who has been appropriated and Christianised and was firmly embedded in the cultural traditions of Christianity in the early fifth century. Prudentius' appropriation and Christianisation of Abram/Abraham is illustrated in the following lines from the Preface of the *Psychomachia*:

> '*adiecta cuius nomen auxit syllaba,*
> *Abram parenti dictus,Abraham Deo*
> [whose name was lengthened by a syllable (for he was called Abram by his father, but Abraham by God)]' (*Psychomachia* 3-4).[338]

This can arguably be interpreted as Prudentius' endorsement of Christian proprietorship of the social power associated with Abram/Abraham in an era in which Christianity was beginning to acknowledge the idea of its social dominance due to not only sustained Roman Christian imperial power, but also a surge in the conversion rate.[339] This further augments the notion that all peoples of the Late Ancient world were perceived as potential Christians.

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[338] Thompson (tr.) (1949:274-275).

[339] Stark (1996:4-13) provides a statistical analysis of the estimated number of Christians in the Roman Empire in the first four centuries. Stark (1996:13) explains that after the conversion of Constantine in 312, it is difficult to estimate the conversion to Christianity by Romans due to the sudden surge in the rate of conversion. However, to give some guidelines, it is useful to refer to Stark (1996:7), who estimates that in the year 300, 10.5% of the population of the Roman Empire were Christian and that by the year 350, 56.5% of the population of the Roman Empire were Christian. Stark (1996:4-13) bases these calculations on an estimated total population of 60 million.

Kimber Buell (2005)[340] states that notions of universality in Christianity aspired to eventually convert and win over all peoples of the world to Christianity. In this study, and in reply to this criterion of Kimber Buell's, the fact that Abram/Abraham is cited in the Bible as the 'father of many nations' in the *Book of Genesis* 17.5,[341] endorses the idea in Christian universality that all nations of the Late Ancient world could potentially be populated by Christians. It may thus be argued that Prudentius' use of this universal patriarch in his epic can be seen as fulfilling this aspiration in early Christian notions of universality.

Finally, Kimber Buell (2005)[342] suggests that Christian universality was underpinned by the notion that Christianity was defined by a unified set of beliefs. It should be noted that, in reality, Christianity had Judaic origins and, furthermore, that Christian ideology was grounded in the conceptualised belief that it had an authentically traceable historical base. By exemplifying the originally Judaic hero Abram/Abraham at the outset of the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius endorses the notion that universalised Christianity had embedded genealogical roots.

In conclusion, this discussion demonstrates that Prudentius specifically highlighted the notion of a universal Christian identity in his portrayal of heroism to emphasise his perception that the goal of forming a socially relevant Christian heroic identity in the socio-religious and socio-cultural circumstances of early fifth-century Roman Christian society was achievable for ordinary Christians.

Chapter One (1.1.1) presented an outline of Prudentius' biographical profile. To provide deeper insights into Prudentius' literary context in Roman society in the era in which he composed the *Psychomachia*, it is germane to elaborate further on the influence that his status as a Roman Christian aristocrat appears to have had upon the composition of Roman Christian heroism in this poem. The social complexities that were associated with Prudentius'

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[340] Kimber Buell (2005:140).
[341] KJV (2014:Loc 26)
[342] Kimber Buell (2005:140).

social status cannot be ignored for the influence that these appear to have had on his composition of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

4.4   Prudentius' social status and Roman literature

Prudentius' social status as a Roman Christian aristocrat and his education in the Classical tradition arguably defined the nature of his social, intellectual and literary contexts in Roman society in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, where he would have been recognised as an elitist, educated man of the upper class. The notion of a Roman Christian aristocrat mingling and interacting with Roman pagan aristocrats during the fourth and early fifth centuries has recently been investigated in the works of Cameron (2011) and Salzman (2004), who make it apparent that aristocratic Roman Christians were more deeply embedded in Roman aristocracy than previously thought.

The social interaction between Roman pagan aristocrats and Roman Christian aristocrats can arguably be seen to be reflected in the context of the literature being produced and read in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. An exemplification of the tolerance shown in the literary context of these two religious groups is illustrated in the social acceptability of the work of a near contemporary of Prudentius, the epicist Claudian.

Claudian, who is referred to as both a nominal Christian and a 'defiant pagan',[343] belonged to a group of pagan Egyptian epicists that included the likes of Olympiodorus, Nonnus, Cyrus of Panopolis and Pamprepius, all of whom had ties to Rome and whose literary works were popular in Roman society in the fourth and fifth centuries.[344] Claudian's epics, which were panegyric and mostly reflected the pagan classical tradition in nature and content, were popular amongst both Roman pagans and Christians. However, it is notable that one of Claudian's most significant works was his Christian panegyric epic, *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto sextum consuli* [Panegyric on the Sixth Consulship of the Emperor Honorius], composed for the Christian Theodosian Emperor Honorius in the early fifth century. There is further evidence of the religious forbearance in Prudentius' literary context

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[343] Barnes (2009:539).
[344] See Barnes (2009:538-549) for a rounded summary of the works of Claudian.

when one considers the enduring influence of the third-century pagan philosopher and writer Porphyry. Porphyry had a thorough knowledge of Christian scriptures and the Bible, which he exhibited in his work *Adversus Christianos* [Against the Christians]. This work still influenced Christian intellectual circles in Roman society in the fourth and fifth centuries.[345]

For an aristocrat, pagan or Christian, in Roman society in Late Antiquity, there was one model of education, namely, a traditional Classical education, based on Classical-age literary works that educated and encultured young students in the social traditions of pagan rhetoric and *paideia*,[346] which is described in more detail below. In Roman Christian society, there were underlying social tensions regarding aristocratic Roman Christians receiving such a model of education. However, Roberts (1985)[347] states that 'no attempt [in Roman Christian society in Late Antiquity] was made to provide a specifically Christian alternative'. Furthermore, it must be considered that in the fourth and fifth centuries, Roman pagan aristocrats still retained most of the Empire's wealth and higher government offices and many Roman Christian aristocrats of this era were still clinging to the social status granted by an education in *paideia.* In the context of Roman Christian literature, it came to be accepted, but perhaps not always socially endorsed or personally appreciated by Christian writers, that the principles of *paideia* enhanced the stylistic quality of Christian literary works.

The ancient Greek term *paideia* is laden with social meaning and is not easily translated into Western, 21st century language without considering its social, philosophical and cultural history. As we understand it, *paideia* was originally linked to notions of social enculturation through a traditional Classical education.[348] However, this term soon gained additional social significance for a member of aristocracy in the ancient world. Plato's work, *The Republic* (± 380 B.C.E.), was an important contributor adding social meaning to and elevating the social status of the notion of *paideia*. In this philosophical work, Plato expands the meaning of

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[345] Cameron (2011:207) states that in the fourth and fifth centuries, '[t]here is simply no evidence that Christians in authority actually punished the expression of pagan sentiments'.
[346] Brown (1983:1-25) gives an excellent explication of the notion of *paideia* in Late Ancient Roman society. In addition to this, see Young (2008:474-478).
[347] Roberts (1985:63).
[348] The practice of one society adopting or borrowing a cultural element, such as the adoption of the notion of *paideia* from the Greeks by Roman society is known as cultural hybridisation or indigenisation. Lavenda and Schultz (2013:31) describe cultural hybridisation as 'the mixing and reconfiguration of elements from different cultural traditions [...] adopted by local people for local purposes'.

paideia beyond the notion of education. He deliberates on the multifarious nature of the concept of *paideia* and links it to notions of *arête* or cultural excellence, in the context of metaphorical society.[349]

As with much of ancient Greek culture, the term *paideia* found its way into Roman culture by way of cultural hybridisation and became socially linked with aristocratic Romans who were educated in the Classical tradition. By Late Antiquity, Roman aristocrats, educated in the Classical tradition, or 'groomed by *paideia*' and known as 'men of *paideia*'[350] socially recognised each other by more than just knowledge of Classical literature. A Roman person of *paideia* became identified by personal deportment and decorum, adroit and eloquent rhetorical speech and consistent self-control in social contexts. Strategic social friendships and political alliances were based on being acknowledged amongst one's peers as a person of *paideia*.[351]

By Late Antiquity, there is evidence of distinguishable and significant social transformations in the Roman meaning of *paideia*. The social construct of *paideia* became associated in Late Ancient Roman aristocratic society with not only literary examples of behaviours considered to be exemplary, such as the bravery of Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, but also with behaviours evidenced in members of one's own social group.[352] Identifying socially ideal behaviours became an important part of Christian heroism, especially in the context of the heroic behaviours of the Early Christian martyrs, who came to epitomise Christian heroism in the Age of Martyrdom.

A notable characteristic of Prudentius' Christian social context, which was, in fact, experienced by Prudentius' himself (1.1.1), was that Roman Christian writers who had been educated in the Classical tradition were conflicted about their pagan educational background. Roman Christians wrote accounts of their constant psychological battle in reconciling their knowledge and sometimes admiration of pagan literary works with their ideologies of

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[349] Jaeger (1986:286) associates the notion of *paideia* with *arête* and he states that, combined, these terms denote 'the sum-total of all ideal perfections of mind and body'.
[350] Brown (1992:46).
[351] Brown (1992:44-45).
[352] Brown (1983:2).

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Christianity. An excellent example of this is illustrated in Jerome's well-known *Epistle 22:30 to Eustochium*. In the quotation below, Jerome describes his dilemma over his love of reading the works of Cicero and his staunch Christian beliefs.

> 'It was many years ago when, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, I had cut myself off from my home, my parents, my sister, my kinsmen, and—what was even more difficult—from an accustomed habit of good living. I was going to Jerusalem to be a soldier of Christ. But I could not do without my library which I had collected for myself at Rome by great effort and care. And so, poor wretch that I was, I used to fast and then read Cicero' (Jerome *Epistle* 22:30).[353]

While one cannot ignore the influence of important Roman pagan literary works in Prudentius' literary context, such as those written by intellectual pagans, such as Symmachus,[354] this era was distinguished by the abundance of Christian patristic literary works circulating in Roman intellectual circles.[355] Roman Christian literature in the late fourth and early fifth centuries was predominantly patristic.[356] Contemporary scholars often refer to Roman patristic literature in this era as being 'the Golden Age of Patristic Literature'.[357] However, it must be noted that Christian literature in this era was also influenced by particular literary works of significant Early Christian leaders from the past. A body of Christian literature that was highly influential in Prudentius' literary context was the epistles written by Paul the Apostle (5-67).[358] In addition to this, Roman Christian literature was characterised by the literary works of Early Christian writers who gave detailed accounts

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[353] Mierow (tr.) (1963:165).

[354] For elaboration on the pagan aristocrat Symmachus and his influence on pagan literature and Roman paganism, see Cameron (2011:353-398). It must be noted here that Prudentius' work, *Contra orationem Symmachum* [Against Symmachus], was a direct literary reply to Symmachus' anti-Christian rhetoric. For a discussion of *Contra orationem Symmachum*, see Pollmann (2017:164-174). See Appendix A for further significant pagan literary works produced between the first and end of the fifth centuries in Roman society.

[355] Haines-Eitzen (2000:13-14) explains that the papyrus that Late Ancient texts were written on was not a durable material. Research into the material on which texts were written on in Antiquity is a detailed and significant field of Classical research. Contemporary scholars of Antiquity often have no alternative but to work with fragmentary textual evidence.

[356] Young (2008:254) is of the opinion that Christian literature in this era should be more clearly classified into the categories of 'patristic literature, dogmatic, apologetic, moral, ascetical, [and] exegetical'.

[357] Young (2008:251).

[358] Paul's *Epistle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 becomes relevant to the discussions in Chapter Six of this study. Pollmann (2017:27) states that the epistles of Paul the Apostle were representative of the 'epistolary tradition' of Early Christianity and served to give advice to communities of Christians 'from a distance'.

of their conversion to Christianity.[359] Arguably, the most important of these works is Augustine's work *Confessiones* [Confessions], written in 398. In the eighth book of this work, Augustine provides a lengthy description of his personal experience of conversion to Christianity. The pivotal moment of his conversion experience, when he is influenced by readings of the Bible to convert to Christianity, is described in his own words in this quotation:

> 'As I was saying this weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from a nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl (I do not know which), saying and repeating over and over again 'Pick up and read, pick up and read'. At once my countenance changed, and I began to think intently whether there might be some sort of children's game in which such a chant may be used. But I could not remember having heard of one. I checked the flood of tears and stood up. I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter I might find I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All shadows of doubt were dispelled' (Augustine *Confessiones* 8:29).[360]

Christian writers and leaders in the early fifth century shared their conversion experiences with others to encourage Romans to see that they too were men with faults who were seeking the right path in life. This promoted the notion that all individuals could seek the righteous path and convert to Christianity and that the Christian religion was open to all people. Although, as explained in the discussions of this chapter, Prudentius was an aristocratic Roman Christian, an important part of his socio-religious context was the notion of universality in early fifth-century Roman Christian society.

An investigation into Prudentius' literary context would be incomplete without some discussion of the role of the reader in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Recent scholarship, such as that by Pelttari (2014), demonstrates that when the social construct of literature regained its cultural importance in the era in which Prudentius wrote his literary

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[359] It must be reiterated here that, as mentioned in Chapter One (1.1.1), there is no reliable evidence that Prudentius underwent a conversion experience and, if he did, it appears that he did not write about it.

[360] Ehrman & Jacobs (tr.) (2004:91).

opus, the dynamics of the relationship between the writer, the reader and the text had undergone transformation.

4.5   The reader in Prudentius' literary context

In the context of Late Antiquity, in which Christian writers themselves were struggling to form a united interpretation of Holy Scriptures, the role of the reader to contribute towards giving texts meaning became socially acceptable. Christian writers adopted varying degrees of tolerance towards fourth- and fifth-century readers' authority in activating alternative meanings of literary works.[361] For example, Augustine appeared to invite the readers of his literary works on the Holy Scriptures to form their own meanings, as demonstrated in the following quotation from his work *Confessiones*:

> 'What, I say, is the problem if I understand it differently than someone else understands him who wrote it to have understood it? All of us who read aim to discover and comprehend that which he whom we are reading wanted to be understood. And when we believe that he was truthful, we dare not think him to have said anything which we know or suspect to be false. Provided, therefore, that each of us attempt to understand, in the holy scriptures, that which he who wrote them understood in them, what's the harm if he should understand that which you, o light of true minds, show him to be true? What's the problem, even if that person whom he is reading did not understand this, since he understood some other truth?' (Augustine *Confessiones* 12.27)[362]

The above-quoted passage from the work of Augustine (*Confessiones* 12.27) is a valuable indication of the transformed relationship between the writer, the reader and the text in Prudentius' literary context, as the writer no longer assumed total authority over the text. From the quotation above, it appears that Augustine had confidence in his readers' interpretive abilities and was receptive to the idea that there would be multiple interpretations of his literary works amongst readers. Another prominent work of Augustine's that was devoted to interpretation of the Holy Scriptures was his four-book work, *De doctrina Christiana* [The Doctrine of Christianity] (396-±427). In this work, Augustine endeavours to

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[361] Pelttari (2014:Loc 316).
[362] Pelttari (tr.) (2014:Loc 442).

present a body of work that presented a unified understanding of Christian doctrines and Holy Scriptures.[363]

To further explicate the notion that Christian writers in Prudentius' literary context were now willing to relinquish the culturally-entrenched notion belonging to Roman literary history that the writer held total command over the interpretation of literary works, it must be taken into consideration that Roman Christianity believed that there was no higher power than God, who held all knowledge and wisdom of the universe. The Christian writer in no way intended to ever supersede the wisdom of God by implying that he or she, or the readers, had knowledge equal to the ultimate truths of the universe known only by God. The word of God was thus the primary authority over all terrestrial social constructs in Christian society, including literature.

To contextualise the importance of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* in relaying God's vision to his readers, it is significant to draw attention to the findings of Pollmann (2017). Pollmann (2017) notes that when considering the role of the reader in Prudentius' literary context, innovative works such as Prudentius' *Psychomachia* created new pathways of interpretations for Christian readers, in which they could look beyond their terrestrial limitations and envisage eternal salvation for their soul in the Kingdom of God. Christian readers could thus get closer to accessing the knowledge and truths of God.

It is the observation of this study that by invoking Christ at the beginning of the *Psychomachia,* Prudentius immediately establishes that the word of God is the authoritative voice of his epic. This is demonstrated in the opening lines of the *Psychomachia* in the quotation below:

> '*Christe, graves hominum semper miserate labores,*
> *qui patria virtute cluis propriaque, sed una,*
> *(unum namque deum colimus de nomine utroque,*
> *non tamen et solum, quia tu Deus ex Patre, Christe,)*
> *dissere, rex noster, quo milite pellere culpas*   5

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[363] For an elaboration on this, see Ayers (2008:414-463).

mens armata queat nostri de pectoris antro,

[Christ, who hast ever had compassion on the heavy distresses of men, who art glorious in renown for thy Father's power and thine own — but one power, for it is one God that we worship under the two names; yet not merely one, since Thou, O Christ, art God born of the Father — say, our King, with what fighting force the soul is furnished and enabled to expel the sins from within our breast' (*Psychomachia* 1-6).[364]

Where once epicists invoked the pagan muse,[365] Christian epicists dedicated their literary endeavours to the truth and authority of God. For example, the quotation below demonstrates how Prudentius' contemporary, the epicist Claudian, invokes the pagan muse at the beginning of his Christian epic, *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto sextum consuli* [Panegyric on the Sixth Consulship of the Emperor Honorius]:

'*me quoque Musarum studium sub nocte silenti*
artibus adsuetis sollicitare solet.
namque poli media stellantis in arce uidebar
ante pedes summi carmina ferre Iouis;
utque fauet somnus, plaudebant numina dictis
et circumfuse sacra corona chori.

[Me too in the silence of the night devotion to the Muses commonly troubles with my accustomed craft. For I seemed to find myself in the very heart of the citadel of the starry heavens, bringing my songs before the feet of Jupiter the Most High. And, such is the flattery of dreams, the gods applauded what I sang, and so also all the sacred throng that stood around]' (Claudian, *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto sextum consuli* 11-16).[366]

However, it appears that there were degrees of acceptance of the role of the reader in giving his or her own meaning to Christian literary texts. It is the argument of this study that Prudentius strategically composed his interiorized conceptualisation of early fifth-century

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[364] Thompson (tr.) (1949:278-279).
[365] Invocation to the Muses as a tradition of Roman epic is especially evident in the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid* (13-14).
[366] Dewar (tr.) (1996:2-3).

Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* to determinedly channel his readers to realise highly specific outcomes. More explicitly, it is argued here that, apart from glorifying God, Prudentius' literary ambition in his portrayal of heroism in this epic was to purposefully direct his readers towards actuating their potential for Christian heroism by ridding their lives and souls of the evil of pagan vices. Through every exemplification of the heroism portrayed in the allegorically personified virtues in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius determinedly and repeatedly provided his readers with instructional, didactic, life-style guidelines of Christian heroic behaviours that were specifically constructed to strengthen their heroic identity in their post-martyrdom context and address the socio-cultural challenges they faced in their daily battles against the temptations of pagan vice. One of the most demonstrable exemplifications of this is found in the victorious speech of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) (750-797). This speech is of particular practical value to the readers of the *Psychomachia* because although it is triumphant in nature it also provides warnings to Christians to be consistently vigilant against the dangers and temptations of pagan vice in their own contexts.

It appears that the transformed nature of the genre of the epic in the era in which Prudentius wrote the *Psychomachia* facilitated a larger measure of literary innovation in Christian epics. Barnes (2009)[367] draws attention to the fact that the genre of the ancient epic was constantly adapting to cultural circumstances; he notes that the epic 'incorporates into itself the voices, tropes and themes of other genres as it evolves (as it must) over the centuries'. Pollmann (2017)[368] demonstrates the ways in which the epic was transformed in Late Antiquity by highlighting that the genre of the epic in this period was characterised by the following: (i) increased use of personifications; (ii) the relating of Biblical narratives in poetic form in Christian epics; (iii) a significant decrease in the use of mythological elements to communicate meaning in epics; and (iv) a notable increase of panegyric epic in the context of pagan epic.

In this study, it is argued that Prudentius' adroit and ground-breaking use of literary devices in the *Psychomachia* greatly increased the social acceptability of his conceptualisation of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism for the readers of this epic. The discussion

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[367] Barnes (2009:545).
[368] Pollmann (2017:38-40).

below (4.6) reviews Prudentius' deployment of literary devices to communicate his literary expression of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia.*

4.6 Prudentius' use of literary devices in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

Chapter Two (2.3) of this study introduced Prudentius' use of literary devices in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The current section elaborates on those findings and exemplifies the ways in which these literary devices enhanced Prudentius' communication of his vision of Christian heroism in this epic.[369] In the fourth and fifth centuries, the preferred literary tools used to rework Classical-era literature into a Christianised version were personification and allegory. The preferred literary tool used to include Classical-era literary themes in Christian literature was typology.[370] Prudentius extended the use of allegorical personification further than other writers of his era by producing a Christian epic entirely made up of allegorically personified characters and themes. He thereby exhibited his literary creativity and forged an important link between the use of allegory in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.[371]

One of the more authoritative research works on Prudentius' use of the literary device of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* is that by Nugent (1985). In her 1985 work, Nugent deconstructs the structure of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* for the purposes of uncovering its socio-cultural meaning.[372] She suggests that the primary function of Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* was to allow readers to distinguish good from evil.[373] This study fully agrees with this observation by Nugent (1985).

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[369] Malamud (1990:276) states that 'Prudentius wrote at a time when the overt and radical manipulation of language was common place (*sic*)'.

[370] Nugent (1985:9).

[371] The area of scholarship into Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in the *Psychomachia* is vast and ongoing. Prudentius' use of allegorical personification is so significant that it is reviewed in all major research works into the *Psychomachia*, including works by Prudentian scholars such as Mastrangelo (2008), Nugent (1985) and Smith (1976).

[372] Allegory in the *Psychomachia* shows a discernible pattern of varying intensification that determines mood and conveys meaning in this poem. From the battle of Faith (*Fides*) *vs* Worshiper-of-the-Old-Gods (*Veterum Cultura Deorum*) to the battle of Reason/Good Works (*Ratio/Operatio*) *vs* Greed, the length of the battles in this poem increase. As the pace of action increases, so does the intensity and complexity of the allegory in the poem. The reader of this poem requires a sophisticated intellect to decipher allegorical references along the way.

[373] Nugent (1985:92).

The way in which Prudentius appears to show his political aspirations that Christians would rule the Late Ancient Roman Empire is distinguishable in the very first allegorical personification of a Christian virtue in the *Psychomachia*, the virtue Faith (*Fides*) which is presented in the following quotation:

> '*exultat victrix legio, quam mille coactam*
>
> *martyribus regina Fides animarat in hostem.*
>
> *nunc fortes socios parta pro laude coronat*
>
> *floribus ardentique iubet uestirier ostro.*
>
> [Leaps for joy the conquering host which Faith, their queen, had assembled from a thousand martyrs and emboldened to face the foe; and now she crowns her brave comrades with flowers proportioned to the glory they have won, and bids them clothe themselves in flaming purple]' (*Psychomachia* 36-39).[374]

The most significant socio-cultural identifier that the allegorically personified army of Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia* was a political threat to Roman pagan aristocratic politicians is demonstrated by the victorious virtue Faith (*Fides*) instructing the Christian virtues to clothe themselves in *ardenti . . . ostro* (39) [flaming purple]. The wearing of purple robes was a traditional socio-cultural signifier of Roman Emperors who, at that time, were predominantly Roman pagan aristocrats.[375] The political gauntlet has thus been thrown down by Prudentius in this reference to the diminishing political authority of pagans in the Roman government and, by doing so at the beginning of the *Psychomachia*, he quickly introduces the underlying political message of this epic.[376]

Like all the social constructs depicted in the *Psychomachia* and as elaborated above in section 4.3 of this chapter, Prudentius communicated his political message in the *Psychomachia* in allegorical terms. The pressure on Roman pagan aristocrats to hold onto the dying traditions and political power of paganism was present throughout all facets of the faltering Roman

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[374] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).

[375] See Salzman (2004:Loc 3086-3176) for tabulated accounts of Roman pagan and Roman Christian social statuses, population numbers and the percentages of pagans and Christians who held official political positions in Roman government in Late Antiquity.

[376] Throughout his work, Mastrangelo (2008) argues strongly that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* contains an underlying political message. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to provide in-depth analyses of the political undertones of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.

Empire. Scholars of Roman Late Antiquity have, for the last fifty years, looked to the actions of the ruling Emperors to explain the political pressure that Roman nobles experienced from the fourth century onwards. It is agreed that the decrees that the Roman Christian Emperors passed to limit the political powers of Romans in the fourth and fifth centuries are certainly a valuable indication of the growing political power of Roman Christians in the late fourth and fifth centuries. However, it may be argued that there are alternative socio-cultural indications that appear to have destabilised pagan political aspirations. For example, the projects of Roman Christian Emperors to build large Christian churches and monuments, especially in the fifth century, must have conveyed to pagan aristocrats the inevitability of Roman Christian political dominance.[377]

Returning to the focus of this discussion, Prudentius' use of allegorical personification in his portrayal of the virtues and vices in the *Psychomachia* becomes more complex in nature as the battles between these two opposing forces intensifies. To strengthen the heroic profiles of the Christian virtues, Prudentius begins to combine the literary devices of typology and exemplification with allegorical personification in his characterisations of the heroic Christian virtues. This is most distinguishable in the episode of the battle between the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) and the vice Lust (*Libido*) in lines 40-108 of the *Psychomachia*.

This particular passage of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (40-108) explicitly demonstrates the complexity of this epicist's use of a combination of literary devices in his exemplification of the hero Judith, who is also typologically linked to the figure of Jesus's mother Mary and the allegorically personified Christian virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*). This complex, constructed portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* is laden with meaning and socio-cultural connotations that defy traditional notions of gender, sexuality and political power in Roman society.[378]

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[377] For an elaboration of the dominance of Roman Christianity in the spheres of economics and politics, see Brown (2012) and Mitchell (2007:256-328).

[378] The socio-cultural connotations of gender and sexuality in the episode of the battle between the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) and the vice Lust (*Libido*) in the *Psychomachia* is elaborated upon in Chapter Five (5.8).

More explicitly, it is argued here that Prudentius' use of this combination of literary devices, as described above, in the episode of the battle between the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) and the vice, endeavours to destabilise pagan authority throughout a range of socio-cultural constructs. Most significantly, through collapsing time-frames, Prudentius appropriates, Christianises and exaggerates the concept of rampant female heroism through his exploitation of the social power of the well-known hero Judith (see 5.8). This implies that Christianity and the notion of Christian heroism had a much longer history than it actually did have. Furthermore, Prudentius creates typological links between the characterisations of Mary and Judith to strengthen the notions of sexual morality in Christian heroism.[379] Finally, Prudentius further destabilises the social authority of paganism through his use of combined literary devices in this specific episode of the *Psychomachia* by his implication that Christian heroes, albeit female heroes, were so courageous because of their devotion to God, that they had the power to overcome traditionally dominant nations in the name of the new world-order of Christianity.

In a discussion of Prudentius' use of literary devices in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, one cannot ignore the use of intertextuality in this poem. Moreover, the influence of Virgil's *Aeneid* is a pervasive presence in the portrayal of heroism in this epic. Virgil's *Aeneid* was a popular source of appropriation by Late Ancient authors and intertextuality between Christian works and this popular Pagan epic became a feature of Late Ancient Roman literature. Schottenius Cullhed (2012) gives valuable insights into the manner in which a female Roman Christian author, Faltonia Betitia Proba, appropriated the text of Virgil's *Aeneid* to convey her Christian message (see 2.6).

Proba's *Cento* was much maligned and undervalued area of research in the past; however, as Schottenius Cullhed (2012) has demonstrated, this work is now proving to be a useful source for not only the status of female writers in the fourth century, but also the nature of Christian scholarship in Roman society during this time. A valuable contribution made by Schottenius Cullhed's (2012) work is that it highlights the way in which Christian writers appropriated, modified and Christianised pagan literary heroic archetypes to communicate their literary

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[379] For an elaboration on the notion of sexual morality in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, see Chapter Five (5.8) of this study.

notions of Christian heroism. Schottenius Cullhed (2012)[380] suggests that Proba's *Cento* may be typical of Christian writers' habit of 'using pagan poetry, yet at the same time refuting it'. This describes the type of subtextual tension that may be seen to run through the majority of Late Antiquity poetry in this period. Proba's *Cento* opens with direct condemnation of the Classical-era heroic model, as illustrated in this quotation:

> 'I now confess that I once wrote of leaders who transgressed
>
> Sacred unions or peace, condemned men caught by lust for power,
>
> About various murders, the cruel wars of kings
>
> Battle lines bound by family ties and gleaming shields
>
> Stained with blood from patricide, about trophies taken from countrymen,
>
> About the bloody triumphs that rumour spoke of,
>
> About cities that so often have been deprived of countless citizens
>
> It is enough to have recalled of these evils!' (*Cento* 1-8).[381]

Proba's intertextual relationship with Virgil's *Aeneid* in the *Cento* adds yet another dimension to our understanding of early Christian writers' involvement with their Pagan heritage. It is a consensus in contemporary research, in the face of overwhelming evidence, that Christian authors of this period 'cherry-picked' the best parts of their Classical literary heritage and, through ingenious manipulation, conferred upon it a Christian origin.[382] Trout (2009)[383] confirms this most clearly when he states:

> 'Fourth-century poets did not shy away from Virgil and his successors even if they might seek to sanitize them. The grandeur of epic poetry might be retained and its cultural capital usurped while its assumptions about Roman destiny, history, and the gods were interrogated and sublimated'.

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[380] Schottenius Cullhed (tr.) (2012:120).
[381] Schottenius Cullhed (tr.) (2012:185).
[382] The interesting research field of examining intertextuality has been lively in philological academics for some time now. One of the most illuminating works on this is by Hinds (1998), *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry.* Hinds makes particular mention of the primacy of the 'Virgilocentric' over the 'Ovidocentric' influence in the Flavian era upon epics. This appears to have remained a trend in the evolution of Late Antiquity literature, especially the epic, if one considers Prudentius' allusions to Virgilian themes in the *Psychomachia,* notably from the *Aeneid.* Smith (1976) finds this to be an ironic ploy by Prudentius while, more recently, Mastrangelo (2008) finds evidence of analogies between Book 6 of the *Aeneid* and the *Psychomachia.*
[383] Trout (2009:554).

According to Ciletti and Lähnemann (2010),[384] one of the most influential figures to impact on the Christian interpretation of the Judaic Judith story was Jerome (340/342-420 C.E.). Pope Damasus I tasked Jerome in 382 C.E. with translating and correlating assorted scriptural texts into one Latin text, the Vulgate Latin Bible, in which the story of Judith was included. Jerome was influential in, amongst other things, promoting the notion of Judith's chasteness in his Biblical account of the Judith story. This is exhibited in the following quotation from Jerome's preface to the Book of Judith:

> *'Accipite Judith viduam*
> *castitatis exemplum,et triumphali*
> *laude, perpetuis eam praeconis*
> *declarate.*
> *[Receive the widow Judith, a paradigm of chastity, and with triumphant laud make*
> *her known in perpetual praises]'.*[385]

Jerome was not alone amongst the patristic writers of the fourth century in exploiting the story of Judith to further Christian evangelism through literature. It appears that Christian writers in the early fifth century had few qualms about appropriating and manipulating pagan and Jewish cultural traditions, including literary material, to further their aims. Together with Jerome, the Christian writers Ambrose, a contemporary and sometime friend of Jerome,[386] and Paulinus of Nola, both appear to have had a lesser or greater degree of influence on Prudentius' choice of Judith as a chaste exemplar in Chastity's (Pudicitia) speech to Lust (Libido).[387]

The literary typological associations Prudentius makes between Mary, Judith and the chaste heroic virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) are described by Mastrangelo (2008)[388] as an 'apophatic

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[384] Ciletti & Lähnemann (tr.) (2010:42).
[385] Ciletti & Lähnemann (tr.) (2010:43).
[386] Adkin (1993:364-376) gives an interesting perspective on the possible reasons behind the problematic relationship between Ambrose and Jerome. According to Adkin (1993:364-376), this relationship had always been strained, even before Ambrose did not support Jerome when the latter was forced to leave Rome in 385. These two prominent Christian leaders were continually rather critical of each other's writings and Christian theological opinions.
[387] Mastrangelo (2010:155-158) gives clear and compelling evidence for this argument.
[388] Mastrangelo (2008:98).

conundrum that attempts to explicate the ontological nature of Christ' in a few short lines, 78-84, of the Psychomachia. It is argued here that the reader of the Psychomachia required both intellectual and literary sophistication to understand these convoluted literary associations. Moreover, the reader of this epic must have had a thorough knowledge of Classical-era and Christian literature to fully comprehend these characterisations in the Psychomachia,[389] which is predicated on an understanding of incarnation and virgin birth from the New Testament as well as knowledge of the Judaic hero Judith's story. Brown (1988)[390] states that in Christianity in the late fourth century, 'Mary had come to be treated as the privileged exemplar of the virgin state' and would have lost much of her 'power' had she not experienced a virgin birth. In the context of delineating what made Mary heroic, it may be concluded that she alone held the power, namely virgin birth, and that this defined her heroic power and heroic nature. However, one could imagine that the notion of virgin birth (epitomised by Mary) and chasteness (epitomised by Judith) may have given the spiritually ambivalent ancient Roman reader the impression that a heroic, chaste life is out of his or her reach, thus resurrecting memories of the supernatural actions of the superhuman heroes of the Classical-era epic and, of more relevance, the extreme heroic actions of the Christian martyrs.

When investigating Prudentius' appropriation of traditional epic archetypes and heroic behaviours, one could argue that his portrayal of the extreme violence of the Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia* could be seen as reflective of the violent behaviours of the heroes of pagan epics. The most demonstrable example that comes to mind is Prudentius' replication of one of the few personifications of female heroism from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the heroic and violent actions of the female warrior Camilla in Book 11. This is especially evident in Virgil's portrayal of Camilla's extreme violence in lines 881-948, which Prudentius appears to replicate in the heroic behaviours of many of the Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia*.[391] This quotation from the *Aeneid* demonstrates the violent nature of Camilla:

> 'Savage girl, whom did your lance unhorse,
>
> What victims, first and last,
>
> How many thrown down on the battlefield,

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[389] As Lewis (2000:18) notes, female characterisations in the *Psychomachia* did not 'emerge *ex nihilo* [emerge out of nowhere]'. In other words, their characterisations were based on previous female epic characterisations.
[390] Brown (1988:355).
[391] For an elaboration on Prudentius' portrayal of violence in the *Psychomachia,* see Lewis (2000).

Torn bodies dying? Eunaeus, Clytius' son,

Came first: he faced her with unadorned breast,

And with her shaft of pine she ran him through.

He tumbled, coughing streams of blood, took bites

Of bloody earth, and dying writhed on his wound' (*Aeneid* Book 11: 903-910).[392]

This can be compared to the manner in which Prudentius characterises the violence of the virtues in the *Psychomachia*. Attention must be drawn to the fact that the first virtue to enter into battle against the pagan vices, the virtue Faith (*Fides*) also wears no armour. Her amour is her faith and she enters battle like Eunaeus from the *Aeneid*, with 'unadorned breast' (line 907). However, the virtue Faith (*Fides*) is victorious and just as violent as the pagan female warrior Camilla, as seen in this quotation from the first battle of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*:

'*prima petit campum dubia sub sorte duelli*

pugnatura Fides, agresti turbida cultu,

nuda umeros, intonsa comas, exerta lacertos;

namque repentinus laudis calor ad nova feruens

proelia nec telis meminit nec tegmine cingi,   25

pectore sed fidens valido membrisque retectis

provocat insani frangenda pericula belli.

ecce lacessentem conlatis viribus audet

prima ferire Fidem Veterum Cultura Deorum.

illa hostile caput phalerataque tempora vittis   30

altior insurgens labefactat, et ora cruore

de pecudum satiata solo adplicat et pede calcat

elisos in morte oculos, animamque malignam

fracta intercepti commercia gutturis artant,

difficilemque obitum suspiria longa fatigant.   35

[Faith first takes the field to face the doubtful chances of battle, her rough dress disordered, her shoulders bare, her hair untrimmed, her arms exposed; for the sudden glow of ambition, burning to enter fresh contests, takes no thought to gird on arms or armour, but trusting in a stout heart and unprotected limbs challenges the hazards of

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furious warfare, meaning to break them down. Lo, first Worship-of-the-Old-Gods ventures to match her strength against Faith's (*Fides*) challenge and strike at her. But she, rising higher, smites her foe's head down, with its fillet-decked brows, lays in the dust that mouth that was sated with the blood of beasts, and tramples the eyes under foot, squeezing them out in death]' (*Psychomachia* 21-33).[393]

Lewis (2000) gives a valuable review of the portrayal of violence in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, and it is not the intention of this dissertation to diminish the contribution that this research has made to 21st century Prudentian scholarship. However, in light of the focus of this chapter's discussions on Prudentius' literary context, it is worthwhile to draw attention to some alternative perspectives that further contextualise why Prudentius portrayed the heroic behaviours of the Christian virtues in such an extremely violent manner. Firstly, it must be kept in mind that Roman society in Late Antiquity was steeped in a history of violence. Civil and international wars defined Roman existence and seldom were there extended periods of lasting peace in Rome's socio-historical context. Moreover, as is explicated in the work of Lewis (2000)[394] and James (1999),[395] some Romans, both pagan and Christian, still identified and socially endorsed the exhibitions of violence associated with the gladiatorial fights of the Roman arena.[396]

However, this dissertation offers an additional rationalisation of Prudentius' appropriation of violent pagan heroic archetypes in his portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism that takes into consideration the interactions between Roman pagan and Christian aristocrats in Prudentius' social context. Alongside the many scholarly justifications for the inclusion of pagan heroic literary archetypes in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it may be argued that Prudentius may have been endeavouring to render his portrayal of heroism acceptable to Roman pagan readers of this poem. This notion in no way intends to take away from the fundamental argument of this study that the portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was aimed primarily at strengthening the heroic identity of early fifth-century Roman Christians in their post-martyrdom context. However, it is feasible, given recent

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[393] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).
[394] Lewis (2000:127-153).
[395] James (ed. Miles) (1999:70-94).
[396] Futrell (1997) provides an elaboration and history of gladiators, sacrifice and games in the arenas of the ancient world.

scholarship regarding the degree of interaction between Roman Christian and Roman pagan aristocrats in Prudentius' social context, that this epicist's appropriation of the archetypical violent behaviours of pagan heroes was also aimed towards presenting an epic with which Roman pagans could identify. Furthermore, it may have been Prudentius' literary aim in his use of pagan heroic motifs in his portrayal of Christian heroism to entice those Christian readers of this epic that were wavering in their total commitment to a Christian way of life.

It may also be argued that Prudentius' use of pagan literary heroic motifs in the *Psychomachia* may be interpreted as a mechanism that exploited aspects of Rome's socio-cultural history that echoed the greatness of the Roman Empire's military history. What greater vehicle of exploitation in this case than the genre of the Roman heroic epic, which had a history of glorifying the supremacy of the Roman Empire? This is the genre that held the voice of authority in the greatest of Roman times, the Augustan Age, which was epitomised in Virgil's master epic, the *Aeneid*. For a society undergoing such tumultuous socio-cultural upheaval as Rome in the fourth and early fifth centuries, Prudentius' exploitation of the traditions of the genre of the Roman heroic epic as a vehicle of Christian propaganda can be justified.[397]

4.7   Conclusion

Prudentius' task as a Christian epicist was to persuade readers of the *Psychomachia* to realise the aims of his epic composition in the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances of their lives in early fifth-century Roman Christian society. Prudentius' epic ambitions provided, with exemplars, a guide to living in the instability of the Roman social context in the early fifth century. This chapter demonstrates that Prudentius relied more heavily on writer-determined guidance for his readers and their interpretation of his work than other writers of the period. This, it can be argued, was because of his complex use of literary devices. Prudentius' *Psychomachia* is layered with allegorical personification, typology and exemplification in such a complex manner that the notion of reader participation in the text is one of the fundamental prerequisites to Prudentius' epic ambition, which, it is suggested throughout this

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[397] Mastrangelo (2008:4) explains that the function of the Roman epic was to 'restate national identity through a master narrative' and declares that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* created a 'master narrative' for its readers. This goes far in validating the conclusions drawn here.

study, was to activate Christian Romans' potential for heroism. The following chapter provides an in-depth investigation of Prudentius' notion of the role of the Christian body in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Prudentius' sensitive literary negotiation of the martyrial narrative, as it existed in Roman Christian society in the early fifth century, is also explicated in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRUDENTIUS, MARTYRDOM AND CHRISTIAN HEROISM

IN THE *PSYCHOMACHIA*

5.1   Introduction

In research into fourth- to fifth-century Christianity in the Late Roman Empire, one cannot underestimate the lingering social and psychological ramifications of the heroic acts of the Early Christian martyrs. As stated before, it is a central thesis of this dissertation that Prudentius' didactic literary expression of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* determinedly avoided invoking the modality of heroism exhibited by the martyrs. It is argued in this dissertation that this strategic literary tactic by Prudentius elevated the social acceptability of his vision of interiorized Christian heroism for Christians struggling to strengthen their Christian heroic identity in the post-martyrdom context of Roman Christian society in the early fifth century.

The discussions of this chapter begin by providing a concise historical contextualisation of Early Christian martyrdom in section 5.2. The next section then demonstrates how Prudentius' portrayal of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia,* which specifically did not rely on evoking the modality of Christian heroism exhibited by the martyrs, compared to his portrayal of heroism in his work the *Peristephanon liber*. Section 5.4 then evaluates and compares the manner in which Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* compared to other significant Christian literary works in Prudentius' literary context[398] that purposefully perpetuated the notion that the heroism exhibited by the martyrs was the ultimate expression of Christian heroism.

This chapter's discussions (5.5-5.7) then focus on explicating Prudentius' reconceptualization of the Christian body in his portrayal of an interiorized notion of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The chapter also investigates Prudentius' socially appropriate negotiation

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[398] See Louth (2008:358-361) for a review of the significant Christians who wrote hagiographical works during the Age of Martyrdom and into the Middle Ages.

of the martyrial narrative in his portrayal of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism in this epic. The next discussion in this chapter (5.8) elaborates on the manner in which Prudentius' portrayal of the heroic Christians virtues in the *Psychomachia* upheld early fifth-century ideologies in Roman Christianity regarding the chasteness and impenetrability of the Christian body and that the body of the Christian acted as the vessel of the pure soul.

The discussions in this chapter demonstrate the thesis of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* eroded the social power of the corporeal[399] body in the martyrial narrative, as it existed in early fifth-century Roman Christian society. More explicitly, this chapter argues that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* purposefully negated the prevailing socio-cultural notion that the Christian 'locus of sanctity'[400] was epitomised in the realm of the martyrs' bodies and in the corporealization of Christian heroism. The significance of the memory of the martyrs' heroism cannot be underestimated in early fifth-century Christian society and the religious veneration of the tortured body of the heroic martyr was central to Roman Christianity's martyrial narrative. Arguably, this can be seen as one of the greatest obstacles to the formation of a socially relevant Christian heroic identity in this post-martyrdom era.

Since the focus of this chapter is the heroic function of the body in Prudentius' interiorized literary representation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* and, furthermore, because this dissertation has stressed the significance of moral virtue, especially sexual moral virtue in Christian heroism in this era, Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) is revisited in greater depth. The discussions of this chapter are underpinned by the emphasis that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* realigned the notion of Christian heroism from the corporeal realm to the domain of the soul.

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[399] See Chapter One (1.10) for interpretations of 'corporeal' and the derivatives of this word.
[400] In this dissertation, the phrase 'locus of sanctity' is borrowed from Miller (2004b:391-411), as it aptly conveys the significance of early Christian perceptions that the Christian body was a metaphorical vessel and central location of spiritual power. In this study, it is held that the notion of the locus of sanctity incorporates and means the same as the notion of the locus of Christian heroism, as an ideological concept.

5.2 Martyrdom in Early Christianity

There is an overwhelming amount of research on Early Christian martyrdom available in Late Ancient scholarship.[401] It appears that in Late Ancient scholarship, there are two predominant approaches to researching Early Christian martyrdom. Firstly, there is the approach of endeavouring to bring some order into the chronology and authenticity of Christian martyrdom. One of the most significant works that provides what is generally agreed to be the most thorough review of the unadulterated accounts of martyrdom is the work of Musurillo (1972), *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. This work followed his earlier research of 1954, which provides evidence of pagan and Jewish martyrdom,[402] entitled *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, which Musurillo painstakingly assembled from papyrus fragments. In 21st century scholarship, Musurillo's works (1954 and 1972) are distinguished by his devotion to producing accurate accounts of martyrdom.[403]

The other prominent approach to researching Early Christian martyrdom focuses on explicating the experience of martyrdom. This is evidenced in the works of Lincoln (2013), Moss (2013 and 2012), Castelli (2004) and Frend (1965), amongst many others,[404] which offer valuable perspectives on the persecution of Christians and martyrdom in the ancient world. These works typify the approach used in contemporary Late Ancient scholarship that focuses on the socio-cultural nuances in the way in which Christians conceptualised the acts of martyrdom in the Age of Martyrdom. These works demonstrate how Christian leaders and writers shaped, disseminated and perpetuated particular narratives regarding martyrdom to suit the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances in Christian society in different eras of this period, including the post-martyrdom era.

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[401] See the introduction to the work of Musurillo *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (1972:xi-lxxiii) for a comprehensive account of works, ancient and modern, that describe the acts of the martyrs.

[402] For an elaboration of the connection between Jewish and Christian martyrdom, see Frend (1965:31-78).

[403] The works of Musurillo (1954 and 1972) contributed to the preliminary research phase of this study. Although dated the works of Musurillo (1954 and 1972) have proved valuable in this study.

[404] For example, a comprehensive account of religious persecution in the ancient world to modern times is given in Engh (2007). This valuable work provides a detailed review of religious persecution across all religions. In particular, Chapters 3 to 10 of this work have informed the preliminary research phase of this dissertation.

In consideration of the focal time-frame of this study, namely the post-martyrdom era of the early fifth century, and the argument that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* specifically did not evoke the heroic modality of martyrdom, this discussion adopts a more generalised contextualisation of martyrdom in the years 64-313. In particular, to enhance the socio-historical contextualisation of the lingering effects of the martyrial narrative as it prevailed in early fifth-century Christianity, this discussion highlights the manner in which Christian leaders perpetuated, disseminated and shaped the social construct of martyrdom from the second to the early fifth centuries.

To appropriately contextualise the experience of Early Christian martyrdom, it is valuable to note that Christians were not the first religious group to claim that they were executed for their religious affiliations. Moss (2013) explains that the notion of dying for one's religion was a socio-cultural concept that Early Christians adopted from the Judaic religion and from paganism.[405] As Moss (2013)[406] points out, before Early Christians adopted the notion that being executed was directly related to their religious beliefs, common criminals were tried and executed without any religious motivation. However, when the courts started to ask witnesses and criminals about their religious affiliations, and consequently executed individuals for being Christian, the word 'martyr' in Early Christianity became laden with meaning, because now Christians, albeit often Christian criminals, perceived their deaths as being motivated by religion. The formalising of edicts against Christians and their punishments began in a localised sporadic fashion in the Roman Empire, as particular communities feared that the Christians' resistance to pagan worship would result in disaster for their overall community.[407] It appears that there was a certain amount of confusion amongst pagan leaders, especially when Christianity first began to gain popularity in the Roman Empire, regarding the most appropriate punishment for Christians. The following quotation, from the tenth book of Pliny.[408] in the early second century, demonstrates the former's concern over how to punish Christians under his governorship:

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[405] For an elaboration on the manner in which early Christians adopted the concept of dying for a religious cause from the Judaic and pagan notions of martyrdom, see Moss (2013:Loc 838-1268). It is unfortunate that the focus of the current study denies further elaboration of this interesting topic of research.

[406] Moss (2103: Loc 360-376).

[407] See Jones (2014) for an examination of the social relationship between pagans and Christians in Roman Late Antiquity.

[408] For a recent elaboration and convincing account of the correspondence between Emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger regarding martyrdom in second century see Corke-Webster (2017).

'I have never been present at an examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature of the extent of the punishments usually metered out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. Nor am I at all sure whether any distinction should be made between them on the grounds of age, or if young people and adults should be treated alike; whether a pardon ought to be granted to anyone retracting his beliefs, or if he has once professed Christianity, he shall gain nothing by renouncing it; and whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name' (Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, *Letter 96*).[409]

However, recent scholarship, such as that by Moss (2012), highlights that the actual threat of persecution and the reality of martyrdom was far removed from the day-to-day lives of many Christian communities, who existed peacefully with their pagan neighbours throughout much of Late Antiquity. According to Moss (2012a),[410] one of the most problematic issues between Roman pagans and Roman Christians in Late Antiquity revolved around the fact that Roman Christians refused to follow pagan traditions, such as worshipping the cult of the Emperor, and that ordinary citizens were fearful of the repercussions that this would bring to their society as a whole. In addition to this, the Roman government considered Christian refusal to worship the Emperor as a divinity to be a factor that could potentially lead to social and political instability rather than being a religious issue. In many cases, Moss (2012)[411] finds that this led to the prosecution of Christian individuals by the courts, rather than the ongoing persecution of all Christians.

The account of the Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, by Marcion is generally agreed to be one of the earliest accounts of martyrdom in Christianity.[412] This work is significant because it demonstrates that Early Christian martyrs believed that martyrdom imitated the death of Jesus, whom they saw as the first martyr of Christianity. This is illustrated in this quotation from Book 17 of the *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna*, which states '3. For we worship this one who is the Son of God, but we love the

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[409] Radice (tr.) 1963:293).
[410] Moss (2012a:Loc 2743) explains that Christians objected to participating in the imperial cult because in their minds, it was associated with the worship of idols.
[411] Moss (2012a:Loc: 2743).
[412] Ehrman (2003:357).

martyrs as disciples and imitators of the Lord' (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* Book 17.3).[413] This notion of imitating the death of Christ in martyrdom remained a central ideology of this practice in Early Christianity.

Christian leaders in the second and third centuries also encouraged acts of martyrdom in their literary works and described them as a glorious experience filled with religious honour, as heroic martyrs fought for Christianity. This is exemplified in the following quotation from the Christian leader and writer Origen in 235, in his work *Exhortation to Martyrdom*:

> '18. A great multitude is assembled to watch you when you combat and are called to martyrdom. It is as if we said thousands upon thousands gather to watch a contest in which contestants of outstanding reputation are engaged. When you will be engaged in the conflict, you can say with Paul: We are made spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. The whole world, therefore, all the angels on the right and on the left, all men, both on the side of God and others—all will hear us fighting the fight for Christianity' (Origen, *Prayer: Exhortation to Martyrdom*: *A Spectacle Before All*).[414]

When one considers the impassioned accounts of martyrdom written by Christian leaders of the second to early fourth centuries, it can be argued that Early Christianity was deeply invested in encouraging the heroic acts of the martyrs. As Kelley (2006)[415] explains, the accounts of martyrdom in Early Christianity were more often retold to Christian audiences rather than read about or witnessed. This led to a great deal of embellishment of the heroism that was supposedly experienced by the dying martyr that remained a feature of the martyrial narrative, even in the post-martyrdom context. Prudentius' own work, the *Peristephanon liber*,[416] in the quotation below relating to the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, is an excellent example of this:

> '*postquam vapor diutinus*
> *decoxit exustum latus,*

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[413] Ehrman (2003:393). See Moss (2012a:Loc 2942-3334) for an enlightening review of how the encouragement of martyrdom created religious and social problems in Early Christianity.
[414] O' Meara (tr.) (1954:158).
[415] Kelley (2006:724-726).
[416] Prudentius' work the *Peristephanon liber* is revisited in greater detail in section 5.3 of this chapter.

> *ultro e catasta iudicem*
>
> *conpellat adfatu brevi:*   400
>
> *"converte partem corporis*
>
> *satis crematam iugiter*
>
> *et fac periclum quid tuus*
>
> *Vulcanus ardens egerit."*
>
> [After the long-continued heat has burned his side away. Lawrence on his own part hails the judge and addresses him briefly from the gridiron: "This part of my body has been burned long enough; turn it round and try what your hot god of fire has done"]'
> (*Peristephanon liber* 396-404)[417]

When discussing Early Christian martyrdom, one cannot ignore the social practice of Early Christians, especially those living in a post-martyrdom context, worshipping at the gravesites or through the mortal remains and relics of the martyrs, which manifested in the cult of martyrs, also known as the cult of saints.[418] Again, there is an abundance of research into this topic in the scholarship of Late Antiquity. Amongst the more authoritative works is that by Brown, revised in 2015. Brown (2015) makes the point that the practices of the cult of saints had the social advantage of strengthening Christian identity in Roman Late Antiquity. Jones (2014)[419] provides a vivid description of the notion that the blood spilt in martyrdom 'recalled the blood of Christ' and that this led to the idea that the mortal remains of the martyrs were endowed with spiritual powers.

The popularity of the cult of martyrs, which began in the middle of the second century and lasted into the sixth century, cannot be underestimated for the effect that it had on exacerbating the social power of the martyrial narrative in Roman Christian society. However, to correctly contextualise the social power of the cult of martyrs and the circulating narrative of martyrdom, it is pertinent to draw attention to the perceptive observation of Price (2010)[420] that it is generally agreed that for the ordinary follower of the cult of martyrs, it 'was easier to venerate than imitate'. For Roman Christians not under direct threat of

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[417] Thompson (tr.) (1953:132-133).
[418] Price (2010:808).
[419] Jones (2014:Loc 1615).
[420] Price (2010:816).

persecution, gathering to hear the embellished, hyperbolic accounts of martyrdom preached by enthusiastic Christian evangelists and being in physical contact or close proximity to martyrs' shrines and remains strengthened their beliefs that this experience drew them nearer to God.[421]

In the context of this dissertation, the significance of the cult of martyrs is that it heightened the importance of the corporeal body as the locus of sanctity in Roman Christianity. This dissertation focuses on Prudentius' portrayal of Roman Christian heroism for Christians living in a post-martyrdom era. It is argued in this study that Prudentius, when developing his interiorized conceptualisation of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, must have become acutely aware of the lingering legacy of the corporeity inherent in the martyrial narrative of early fifth-century Christian society. Moreover, it is argued here that through his realisation of the ways in which early fifth-century Roman Christians struggled to strengthen a socially acceptable Christian heroic identity under social circumstances in which the martyred body still retained psychological and social notions of being the embodiment of Christian heroic sacrifice, Prudentius purposefully interiorized his literary representation of heroism in the *Psychomachia* in an endeavour to offer an alternative avenue of heroic manifestation in this post-martyrdom context.

Prudentius' work the *Peristephanon liber* pays homage to the sacrifice of the Early Christian martyrs. This chapter's discussions continue below with this study's interpretation of the rationale behind Prudentius' exaggerated portrayal of the heroism of martyrs in the *Peristephanon liber* compared to his portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, which purposefully did not evoke the heroic modality exhibited by the Christian martyrs.

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[421] For a discussion on the social power of the cult of martyrs, see Brown (2015), Grig (2004) and Frend (1965).

5.3   Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* compared to in the *Psychomachia*

It is necessary here to explicate the manner in which this study interprets the differences between Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* and the *Psychomachia*, both of which portray Christian heroism, albeit in different ways. The purpose of highlighting Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in these two works at this particular point is to establish from the outset that it is the argument of this study that: (i) these works were not intended to be read sequentially; (ii) Prudentius' literary aim was completely different in the composition of these works; and (iii) Prudentius' portrayal of the nature of heroism in each of these works was intended by him to be interpreted as specifically pertinent to different socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances in Christianity in Roman Late Antiquity.

Firstly, this discussion considers the portrayal of heroism in Prudentius' *Peristephanon liber*. This work was among a multitude of hagiographical[422] Christian literary works that abounded in fourth- and fifth-century Roman Christian society that praised the heroic acts of the Christian martyrs. To contextualise hagiographical literature from the year 312 well into the Middle Ages, Bilby (2012)[423] draws attention to the insightful words of Raby (1953),[424] '[t]he new conception of the martyr was to dominate the whole middle ages, was the creation of the post-Constantinian Church'. In the absence of witnessing martyrdoms, Christian writers of the post-martyrdom era liberally embellished the tales of martyrs' heroic deaths. In the *Peristephanon liber* Prudentius, who was born in the year 348, let his literary imagination take over as he wrote his 14 accounts of particular Christian martyrs.[425]

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[422] The genre of hagiographical Christian literature from Late Antiquity was intended to be defined as literary works that honoured significant Christians of this era.

[423] Bilby (2012:219-220).

[424] Raby (1953:51).

[425] Palmer (1989:88) suggests that the accounts of martyrdom in the *Peristephanon liber* were probably written at different times for a variety of audiences. She draws attention to the influence of Ambrose on Prudentius to compose this literary work (Palmer, 1989:67). In addition to this, Palmer (1989:234) argues that Prudentius' composition of the *Peristephanon liber* is a hagiographical and not an historical work and therefore 'the poet feels free to rise above the limited demands of source material'. Bilby (2012:221) argues that Book 6 of the *Peristephanon liber* reflects this well.

There are many differences between Prudentius' portrayal of the heroism of the Christian martyrs in the *Peristephanon liber* and his portrayal of the heroism of the allegorically personified Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia*. However, before exemplifying the nature of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* below, it is worth pointing out that it is the finding of this study that although Prudentius may have exaggerated the portrayal of heroism in the *Peristephanon liber*, it is here that the beginning of his idea of the internalization of the notion of heroism can be discerned. It is argued here that even when composing his accounts of the heroism of martyrdom in the *Peristephanon liber*, Prudentius appears to have already conceptualised heroism as internalized, which became the foundational element of his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. This is explicated further in section 5.5.

One of the most graphic and hyperbolic portrayals of a martyrdom in the *Peristephanon liber* is found in Book 6, entitled *Hymn in Honour of the Most Blessed Martyrs Fructuosus, Bishop of the Church of Tarraco, and Augurius and Eulogius, Deacons.*[426] An account of this martyrdom is given in the work of Musurillo (1972), who cites the act of the Bishop Fructuous removing his sandals before being executed as follows:

> '4. *Cumque ad amphitheatrum peruenisset, statim ad eum*
>
> *accessit Augustalis nomine lector eiusdem cum fletibus deprecans*   5
>
> *ut eum excalciaret*
>
> 5. *Cui ita beatus martyr respondit: missum fac, filli; ego me*
>
> *excalcio, fortis et gaudens et certus dominicae promissionis'*
>
> [When he arrived at the amphitheatre, he was approached by one of his readers named Augustalis, who begged him with tears to remove his shoes for him. The blessed martyr replied "No let it go, my son. I shall remove my own sandals in courage and joy, certain of the Lord's promises"]' (*The Martyrdom of Bishop Fructuosus and his Deacons Augurius and Eulogius*).[427]

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[426] Bilby (2012:220) remarks that Prudentius' embellishment of this particular martyrdom in the *Peristephanon liber* may have been motivated by his pride of native Spanish martyrs that came from the same province in Spain that he did.

[427] Musurillo (tr.) (1972:177-185).

However, in Prudentius' retelling of the removal of the sandals of Bishop Fructuosus in the *Peristephanon liber*, this event is laden with embellishment. For example, Prudentius begins by describing how the bishop's followers were struggling for an opportunity to serve the bishop before his execution, as illustrated in this quotation:

> *certant officiis pii sodales*
>
> [devoted friends vied with each other in services]'(*Peristephanon liber* 6: 73).[428]

In the quotation above, there is no mention of the Bishop Fructuosus' reader Augustalis, as there was in the quotation from the *The Martyrdom of Bishop Fructuosus and his Deacons Augurius and Eulogius*[429] above. Rather, Prudentius writes an exaggerated and lengthy reply by the bishop to the offer of his followers, who remain unnamed, to remove his shoes, in lines 77-84. It is particularly noticeable that in Prudentius' account of this event, the Bishop Fructuosus assumes a harsh tone with his devoted followers who want to remove his shoes:

> ' 'nec nostrum gravit obsequella mortem.
> atquin ipse meos pedes resolvam,
> ne vestgia praepedita vinclis   80
> tardis gressibus inruant ignem.
>
> ["do not make our death heavier to bear with your attentions. Nay, I shall myself unloose my feet so that my steps may be hampered with ties and slow my pace in pressing into the fire"]' (*Peristephanon liber* 6: 78-81).[430]

It is the interpretation of this study that the way in which Prudentius depicts this particular incident heightens the drama surrounding the martyrdom of the Bishop Fructuosus (77-81) in the *Peristephanon liber*. Furthermore, it strengthens the heroic profile of this amicable bishop, as he appears to yearn for the fires of martyrdom in lines 80-81 of the above quotation. In the words of Bilby (2012),[431] 'Prudentius also transforms the martyred bishop from a loving pastor into a heroic leader of heroes'.

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[428] Thompson (tr.) (1953:208-209).
[429] Musurillo (tr.) (1972:177-185).
[430] Thompson (tr.) (1953:208-209).
[431] Bilby (2012:226).

When comparing the voluntary manner in which the martyrs went willingly to their death and Prudentius' portrayal of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, which is given in-depth analysis in this study, it is useful to bear in mind the opinion of Malamud (1989)[432] that 'the Virtues in this poem [the *Psychomachia*] are by no means martyrs'. The current study supports this argument by Malamud (1989), which advances the notion that the heroic virtues of the *Psychomachia* did not duplicate the extraordinary heroism of the Christian martyrs seen in the *Peristephanon liber*. It is suggested in this dissertation that martyrdom was socially redundant in the context of the late fourth and early fifth centuries in Roman Christian society. It is argued here that unlike Prudentius' composition of the *Psychomachia*, where the Christian virtues were not portrayed as victims, but rather as the aggressors, in the *Peristephanon liber* he emphasised the 'victimhood' of persecuted Christians in the Age of Martyrdom.

The *Peristephanon liber* served to record and pay tribute to the heroic sacrifices of the martyrs well into the era in which martyrdom was no longer practised in Roman Christian society. Attention must be drawn here to the understanding of this study that Prudentius, as a devout Christian, venerated the heroism of the Christian martyrs. Moreover, it is acknowledged in this study that although Prudentius did not reiterate exemplifying the heroism exhibited by the martyrs in the Age of Martyrdom in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, this was in no way intended to diminish the socio-religious status of the heroic sacrifices of the martyrs in Roman Christianity.

It is the argument of this study that Prudentius wrote his 'obligatory' tribute to the heroism of the Christian martyrs because Christian literary tradition in the late fourth century demanded it. How could the opus of literature of a Christian writer in the late fourth and early fifth century be accepted and, moreover, sanctioned by the Christian Church authorities, without such a work? However, it must be reiterated here that Lewis (2000)[433] draws attention to the notion that Prudentius did not fully express his vision of Christian heroism in this work.[434]

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[432] Malamud (1989:57).
[433] Lewis (2000:108).
[434] See Chapter Two (2.4.1) for the quote by Lewis (2000:108) regarding this.

When closely analysed, it must be pointed out that nowhere in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* did he endeavour to encourage or reiterate the notion that the heroism displayed by the martyrs was an appropriate modality of heroism for Christians living in a post-martyrdom era, namely the late fourth and early fifth centuries. This study interprets Prudentius' portrayal of the heroic acts of the martyrs in the *Peristephanon liber* as a socio-historical, literary tribute that celebrated the martyrs and pertained to the Age of Martyrdom (64-313), a bygone age in early fifth century Roman Christianity. In other words, this poem considered the heroism of the martyrs from the perspective of hindsight, as the poem was orientated in Christianity's recent past; the *Peristephanon liber* was thus arguably meant to be contextualised and interpreted as an historical work.

The question that now arises is why, after composing a work devoted to the heroism of Christian martyrs,[435] Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* purposefully did not reiterate the heroic modality of martyrdom. In this dissertation, it is argued that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was particularly relevant socially in addressing the prevailing challenges and struggles in strengthening a socially appropriate Christian heroic identity in the post-martyrdom context of early fifth-century Roman Christianity.

It can be argued that Prudentius' work the *Peristephanon liber* is overloaded with ambiguity and too esoteric in nature for even the sophisticated, late fourth-century Christian to decipher. Malamud (1989)[436] states that in this work, Prudentius reflects a 'preoccupation with transformations and thresholds on all levels'. This is illustrated in Prudentius' description of the martyrdom of Hippolytus in Book 11 of the *Peristephanon liber*. The quotation below, which describes how wild horses dragged the body of the martyr, demonstrates the imaginative nature of Prudentius' description of this martyrdom the death of Hippolytus:

> *'per silvas, per saxa runt, non ripa retardant*   115
> *fluminis aut torrens oppositus cohibet.*
> *prosternunt saepes et cunta obstacula rumpunt*

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[435] See Chapter One (1.1.2) of this study for the assumed dating and ordering of Prudentius' literary opus.
[436] Malamud (1989:43).

prona, fragosa petunt ardua transiliunt.

[Through woods and over rocks they rush, no river-bank keeps them back, no torrent in their way checks them. They lay fences low and break through every obstacle; down slopes and over broken ground they go, and bound over steep places]' (*Peristephanon liber* Book 11: 115-118).

In the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius portrays the death of the unheroic pagan vices in graphic detail, and they suffer a cruel death like the Christian martyrs. It is the reading of this study that his emphasis on vivid but imaginative descriptions of martyrdom, for example in the quotation above, does little to augment the concept of Christian heroism in a post-martyrdom context. In fact, it is argued here that passages such as the above may appear to erode the notion that Christianity could ever overcome the evils of paganism and cross the threshold to a future in which Christianity dominated in the Late Ancient world. Conversely, the imagery of the wild horses overcoming every obstacle to tear the body of Hippolytus apart may give the impression that paganism is unstoppable in Roman society in the late fourth century.

In the *Psychomachia,* it is the Christian virtues that are victorious in every encounter against the pagan vices. It is argued here that compared to Prudentius' terrifying accounts of the torturous deaths of the martyrs in the *Peristephanon liber,* his descriptions of the deaths of the pagan vices in the *Psychomachia* served to rather bolster the formation of heroic identity for Christians living in a post-martyrdom context. This was particularly relevant to those Christians who were struggling to create a Christian heroic identity that could match the heroism of the Christian martyrs.

Popularity of the genre of hagiographical literature in Christianity continued in the Middle Ages. The following discussion (5.4) compares Prudentius' portrayal of a socially appropriate modality of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* to other significant Christian leaders and writers. This discussion focuses specifically on Christian writers in Prudentius' literary context who still evoked the memory of the heroism of the Christian martyrs in their works.

5.4 Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* compared to other Christian works in his literary context

One of the most significant fourth-century Christian writers to compose a Christian Biblical epic that formed a bridge between Classical epic traditions and the emerging Christian epic was Juvencus, with his well-known epic work *Evangeliorum libri quattuor* [The Four Gospels].[437] The Biblical epic tradition was continued in the fifth century onwards by Christian epicists such as Sedulius and Arator. In the fourth century, the genre of the Christian epic began to include the hagiographical epic, in which epic heroes were the martyrs of Early Christianity.[438]

The hagiographical epicist of the fourth century, Paulinus of Nola (ca. 354/5-431), was a popular and well-known figure in Prudentius' social and literary context. Paulinus of Nola was educated in the skills of rhetoric by Ausonius, who remained his mentor for many years. In his adult life, Paulinus of Nola, as a Roman Spanish aristocrat, held high office in the Roman Imperial government. He was well-known to Augustine and other significant Christian leaders and also had amicable relationships with pagan aristocrats. Frend (1969)[439] states that Paulinus of Nola 'acted as a sort of clearing house for the religious ideas of the time' and he became closely associated with the cult of the martyr Saint Felix while he was governor of Campania. It was here that Paulinus became more devout and was named the Bishop of Nola. His later years were devoted to Christianity and he adopted an Ascetic life style.

Paulinus of Nola's literary works are composed of various letters and poems, but are distinguished by his poems devoted to Saint Felix to commemorate his feast days, entitled *Natalicia* [Birthday poems], which, according to Trout (2009)[440] 'blended panegyric, hagiography, and epic undertones'. The *Natalicia* of Paulinus of Nola, like so many other

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[437] For a comprehensive review of the writer Juvencus and his work *Evangeliorum libri quattuor*, see Green (2006). This valuable work also evaluates the works of the Christian epicists Sedulius and Arator. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of the current study to elaborate on these epicists' works.

[438] Trout (2009:560).

[439] Frend (1969:6).

[440] Trout (2009:560).

hagiographical works, attributed miraculous events to the powers of the saints, both when they were alive and when they were worshipped after death.

The practice of worshipping the heroism of the Christian martyrs in the post-martyrdom era of Christianity lingered into the Middle Ages. In addition to this, in the absence of actual martyrs after the banning of the persecution of martyrs by Constantine in 313, Christian writers of hagiographical literature relied heavily on endowing the martyred saints and their relics with miraculous powers. For example, in poem 20 of Paulinus of Nola's *Natalicia* he attributes three miracles posthumously to Saint Felix.

Poem 23 of Paulinus of Nola's *Natalicia*, written in 401, also contains this passage provided in the quotation below, which strongly advocates that the sustained worship of Saint Felix is the pathway to salvation for the Christians of Nola:

'Each year the songs with different utterances
Though from a single mouth, for grace in its abundance always provides
Different subjects through the marvellous powers of the Lord
Which Christ our God supplies in large measure in our beloved Felix,
Preforming clear marvels by means of miracles which bring salvation' (*Natalicia* 23:1-44).[441]

It is the argument of this study that the communication of Paulinus of Nola, exemplified in the quotation above, relies heavily on guiding Christians of the early fifth century towards the notion that their salvation was deeply connected to their worship of martyrs, such as Saint Felix. Furthermore, upon close reading of lines 43- 44 of this poem, it appears that Paulinus of Nola is stating that God endowed Saint Felix with extraordinary powers to perform miracles. However, what is most significant in the context of this discussion is that Paulinus of Nola appears to be affirming that Saint Felix's performance of miraculous events was the only pathway for his Christian worshippers to have any prospect for the salvation of their souls in the Kingdom of God. This, it is argued here, must have done little to reassure

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[441] White (tr.) (2000:62).

ordinary early fifth-century Christians that they had any control or degree of personal participation over the opportunity for their own salvation. Moreover, this is in direct contrast to the way in which this study interprets Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.*

Rather than imply that the immortal Christian martyrs sat in heavenly judgement of the heroic nature of early fifth century Christians, Prudentius' deliberate negotiation of the mnemonic legacy of the heroic acts in the *Psychomachia* provided early fifth-century Christians with didactic guidelines to actuate their own potential for heroism on a personalised level and rid their souls of pagan vices so that they could have the same access to eternal salvation for their souls in the Kingdom of God as the Early Christian martyrs did.

Another Christian leader of the late fourth and early fifth centuries that should be noted for his continued perpetuation of the superiority of the martyrs' heroism was the Bishop of Rouen, Victricius (ca. 303-407). The one known work of this bishop, entitled *De laude sanctorum* [Praising the Saints], is an excellent example of the way in which Christian leaders in Prudentius' literary context encouraged the notion that the Christian martyrs still held the highest socio-cultural authority in Christian society in a post-martyrdom context. Victricius of Rouen's *Praising the Saints*[442]is therefore an interesting work that is worthwhile evaluating alongside Prudentius' conceptualisation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, both for the similarities and differences between these two works, which will be outlined below.

To begin with, the similarities, it is the reading of this study that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and Victricius of Rouen's *Praising the Saints*[443] both reflected the notion that the purified soul of the heroic Christian ascends to heaven. In *Praising the Saints*, Victricius of Rouen states:

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[442] Victricius of Rouen lived from 330-407 so was therefore a contemporary of Prudentius.
[443] See Hunter (1999:426) for an elaboration on this in Victricius of Rouen's work *Praising the Saints.*

'(7) And the apostles and saints ascended to the throne of the Redeemer, both by the ordinance of the spiritual mystery and by the sacrifice of the body as victim and by the payment of the blood and sacrifice of the passion, […]' (*Praising the Saints* Verse 7).[444]

However, in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius does not rely on evoking the notion that it is only the souls of the heroic martyrs that will ascend to heaven. As argued throughout this study, Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was specifically aimed at the ordinary Christian and the notion that the pure souls of ordinary Christians can also achieve the ultimate reward of salvation for their souls, immortalised in the heavenly Kingdom of God, just like the souls of the martyrs. The notion that the pure of heart will enter the Kingdom of God is unambiguously stated in the Preface of the *Psychomachia* in the exemplification of the heroic Biblical figure Abram/Abraham, which has no connection to martyrdom. This is illustrated in the quotation below:

'*mox ipse Christus, qui sacerdos verus est,*
parente inenarrabili atque uno satus,   60
cibum beatis offerens victoribus
parvam pudici cordis intrabit casam,
monstrans honorem trinitatis hospitae.
[Then Christ himself, who is the true priest, born of a Father unutterable and one,
bringing food for the blessed victors, will enter the humble abode of the pure heart
and give it the privilege of entertaining the Trinity;]' (*Psychomachia* 59-63).

It is argued here that Victricius of Rouen's *Praising the Saints* and his reliance on reiterating the sacrifice of the martyrs and dissemination of the notion that the relics of the martyrs held miraculous powers did little to strengthen a socially appropriate modality of heroism for Christian society in the early fifth century. This is most demonstrably seen when Victricius of Rouen communicates to his followers that the martyrs, in their heavenly reign, will actually sit in judgement of Christians. The quotation below from the beginning of verse 12 of *Praising the Saints* illustrates this:

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[444] See Clark (tr.) (1999:386) and Hunter (1999:427).

'(12) So, most loving ones, while the crowd of saints is newly arrived, let us bow down and bring forth from the innermost veins of our bodies. Our advocates are here: let us set out in story the prayer of our faults' (*Praising the Saints* Verse 12).[445]

This can be compared to the quotation below from the *Psychomachia*, which is full of assurance and gentleness towards ordinary Christians who are struggling to augment their Christian heroic identity in the early fifth century. The difference in tone and attitude to the above quotation from verse 12 of Victricius of Rouen's *Praising the Saints* is evident. While Prudentius' words are full of encouragement, Victricius of Rouen's are somewhat threatening.

> '*tu, cura Dei, facies quoque Christi,*
> *addubitas ne te tuus umquam deserat auctor?*
> *ne trepidate, homines;*
> [And thou, who art God's care and the image of Christ, dost thou fear thy creator will ever desert thee? Be not anxious, O men!]'* (*Psychomachia* 622-624).[446]

Castelli (2004)[447] finds that in a post-martyrdom context, the memory of the violence inflicted upon the martyrs was interpreted in two ways. First, she explicates that some Christian leaders communicated martyrdom as an edifying experience. More specifically, early fifth century Christians living in a post-martyrdom context remembered the sacrifice of the Christian martyrs and the suffering that previous generations of Christians had undergone in the history of Early Christianity to further the their religion. It is argued here that this is the approach taken in the above explication of the work of Victricius of Rouen, *Praising the Saints*. It is the interpretation of this study that Victricius of Rouen used the mnemonic legacy and lingering social power of the heroism of the martyrs in the post-martyrdom era to communicate his notion that the epitome of Christian heroism was realised through martyrdom.

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[445] Clark (tr.) (1999:395).
[446] Thompson (tr.) (1949:322-323).
[447] Castelli (2004:121).

The second way in which Christian leaders interpreted martyrdom in the context of post-martyrdom Christianity was to remember it as a 'spiritually uplifting narrative', in the words of Castelli (2004).[448] In other words, early fifth century Christians, according to Castelli (2004) the 'readers/hearers of the [martyrs'] narrative'[449] interpreted the martyr's suffering in terms of their own contextual framework and thereby satisfy their spiritual needs vicariously. It is argued here that perceiving martyrdom and the heroism of martyrdom as a spiritual experience immediately places it within an individual's context and endows this notion with their personal context. This is what Prudentius did in the *Psychomachia*, especially in lines 36-39[450] of this poem.

A Christian leader who arguably placed martyrdom in the context of the past was the writer Augustine. The manner in which Augustine reiterates that the modality of heroism of the Christian martyrs was worth venerating, but should be seen in an historical context, is illustrated in his *Sermon 280.2*. The quotation below from this sermon demonstrates the manner in which Augustine emphatically and firmly places the martyrs in an historical context, with this quotation:

> 'They, lacking the light of faith, thought the martyrs liquidated; we, with the clear sight of faith, perceive them crowned. Finally, their shouts of abuse and mockery have been turned into our shouts of admiration and joy. And these indeed are religious and everlasting;' (Augustine *Sermon* 208.2). [451]

This concludes this chapter's discussion on Prudentius' portrayal of heroism, both in his work the *Peristephanon liber* and in other Christian literary works that relied on reiterating the martyrial narrative to portray Christian heroism in a post-martyrdom context. The discussions that follow in this chapter (5.5-5.7) demonstrate that once Prudentius had removed the significance of corporeality from the ideology of Christian heroism, he achieved his finest and most socially appropriate literary expression of this heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

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[448] Castelli (2004:121).
[449] Castelli (2004:121)
[450] See Chapter Four (4.6) of this study for an elaboration on these lines of the *Psychomachia*.
[451] Castelli (2004:125).

5.5 Contextualisation of the corporeal body as the locus of sanctity in early fifth-century Roman Christian society

It is argued throughout this study that in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius reduced the social power of the mnemonic legacy of the tortured heroic body in early fifth-century Roman Christian society by intellectualising the notion of Christian heroism. This was achieved by shifting the locus of sanctity from the domain of the martyred corporeal body to the incorporeal intellect of the reader of this epic. This intellectualisation and shifting of the locus of Christian sanctity enhanced the social applicability of Prudentius' modality of Christian heroism for Christians living in a post-martyrdom context.

In contemporary Late Ancient scholarship, the concept of corporeity in the martyrial narrative of Early Christianity is given valuable and in-depth analysis by various scholars whose works are referred to in the discussions of this chapter. To explain the complexities regarding how early Christians envisaged the sacredness of the physical body and, later, the physical remains and relics of Christian martyrs, it is important to first explore the significance of the concept of corporeity in Early Christian society and Early Christian martyrdom (64-313).

As Kelley (2006)[452] explains, the rhetoric of Early Christian martyrdom was laden with socio-cultural implications that the martyred Christian in the first to the fourth centuries was imitating and embodying the suffering of the 'first' Christian martyr, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the ideology of martyrdom in this period fortified the social notion that the Christian martyr, through enduring unimaginable physical suffering, was not only guaranteed heavenly salvation, but also gained a deeper spiritual knowledge of the Godhead, which was unknown and inaccessible to ordinary Christians. The bodies of the Christian martyrs thus became tangible avatars of religious sanctity in Roman Christian society.

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[452] Kelley (2006:743).

However, by the early fifth century, an intellectual divide began to develop between how educated Christian leaders perceived the notion that the remains of the martyrs were endowed with miraculous spiritual power and how ordinary Romans, who followed the cult of martyrs, believed that the physical remains of the martyrs were a tangible resource of the power of God. It was recognised that early fifth-century Christian society required an alternative mechanism to interpret the meaning of the martyrs that suited the post-martyrdom context.

Realigning perceptions of the social power of the martyrs required delicate and judicious negotiation by Christian leaders in the early fifth century. Christian communities gained additional wealth and political status if they could claim that martyrs were buried in their towns. For example, in the *Peristephanon liber* Book 2, Prudentius wrote:

> '*O ter quaterque et septies*
> *beatus urbis incola.*   530
> *qui te ac tuorum comminus*
> *sedem celebrat ossuum,*
> *cui propter advolvi licet,*
> *qui pectus in terram permit,*   535
> *qui vota fundit murmure.*
>
> [O thrice and four times, yea seven times blessed the dweller in Rome, who pays honour to thee and the abode of thy bones in presence, who can kneel by them, who sprinkles the spot with his tears, bowing his breast to the ground and in a low voice pouring out his prayers!]' (*Peristephanon liber* 2.529-535)[453]

While Christian leaders of the early fifth century recognised the socio-political and socio-cultural advantages of their communities' association with martyrs, they were also dismayed at the manner in which festivals at the gravesites of martyrs became not only unruly and sacrilegious, but also did not serve to fulfil the spiritual expectations of the Christians gathered at these occasions. By the early fifth century, Christian leaders such as Augustine were beginning to realise the social ramifications of their encouragement of the notion that the mortal remains of the martyrs were endowed with miraculous capabilities. The practices

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[453] Thompson (tr.) (1953:138-141) in Kaufman (1994:2).

of the cult of martyrs and the common belief that the remains of martyrs could give ordinary Christians access to miraculous life-changing opportunities resulted in a skewed religious perception of martyrdom, heroic corporeality and the extent of the spiritual powers of the incorporeal remains of the heroic martyrs. Augustine, in particular, expressed his dismay at the contorted values and expectations of Christians who envisaged that the spiritual power of the martyrs was their only salvation. Augustine endeavoured to instil in his followers the message that God's salvation lay in their devotion to God and was not attained through the exaggerated spiritual power of martyrs.[454]

The work of Miller (2004)[455] shows that by the early fifth century, the notion of corporeity and the martyred Christian body began to lack a sense of materiality in the post-martyrdom context. In an effort to compensate for the absence of a tangible dead body of a martyr to worship, Christian leaders of the post-martyrdom era began to find alternative mechanisms to recreate the emotive responses of Christians in the Age of Martyrdom, which could psychologically connect Christians to the dead martyrs. Miller (2004)[456] explains that one of the ways in which this was done was through what she terms 'visceral seeing', evoked through, for example, a vivid pictorial or literary representation of a martyr's death. She goes on to explain how this notion of visceral seeing extended into textual accounts of martyrdom in hagiographical works, and even crossed conceptual barriers of gender in Roman Christian imagination.[457]

Fruchtman (2014)[458] provides another perspective of the notion of corporeity in the martyrial narrative of Christian society in the post-martyrdom context. In her work, Fruchtman (2014) explores how Prudentius' *Peristephanon liber* Book 10 provided a social mechanism for Christians existing in this post-martyrdom era to realign their connections with the martyrs. Fruchtman (2014) argues that Prudentius' account of the martyrdom of children, as retold through the experience of a mother in Book 10 of the *Peristephanon liber* (751-845), engages all the biological senses of the reader, making the text an agent of corporeal experience, so

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[454] See Kaufman (1994:1-14) for a review of the martyrial narrative in early fifth-century Roman Christianity and Augustine's attitude to this.
[455] Miller (2004b:391-411).
[456] Miller (2004b:396-397).
[457] Miller (2004b:398-403).
[458] Fruchtman (2014:131-158).

that readers of this particular account of martyrdom imagined that they were also experiencing the physical pain that the mother was witnessing.

The manner in which Prudentius simultaneously invokes the reader's senses of sight, hearing and, most probably, smell is demonstrated in the following description of the experience of the mother as she watches the martyrdom of her sons:

> '*videbat ipos apparatus funerum*
>
> *praesens suorum nec movebatur parens*
>
> *laetata quotiens aut olivo stridula*
>
> *sartago frixum torruisset puberum*
>
> *dira aut cremasset lamminarum inpressio.*   760
>
> [Their mother saw unmoved before her eyes the very instruments ready for the death of her sons, and was glad when the pan with its hissing oil fried and scorched one of her lads, or the dreadful pressing on of the metal plates that burned them]'
> (*Peristephanon liber*: 756-760).[459]

Prudentius' detailed portrayal in the *Peristephanon liber* (751-790) of the suffering of the Christian martyr-sons extended to vividly describe the religious ecstasy experienced by the mother in an excessively physical manner. This merging of the realms of the sons' physical suffering and the psychologically ecstatic experience of the mother epitomised Prudentius' portrayal of the martyrs' religious heroism in the *Peristephanon liber* to the point that the reader of this text experienced the martyrs' portrayal as a corporeal experience.

It is suggested in this study that Prudentius' didactic intention in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was not to ignore or diminish the legacy of the heroic martyrs. Rather, as this study intends to demonstrate, he purposefully distanced his depiction of interiorized Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* from the centrality of corporeality as the locus of sanctity as it existed in the context of the martyrial narrative in early fifth-century Roman Christian society. The social circumstances, particularly in the early fifth century, were so uniquely challenging on many fronts for all Romans that Prudentius' presentation of a fully

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[459] Thompson (tr.) (1953:278-279).

developed, socially relevant prototype of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* was uniquely perceptive and socially sensitive. Unlike many of his contemporaries, as Chapter Four (4.6) has demonstrated, Prudentius' adroit and innovative use of literary devices, in particular allegorical personification, greatly enhanced his notion of the interiorization of Christian heroism.

The above discussions of this chapter demonstrate how Prudentius negotiated the Christian martyrial narrative in early fifth-century Roman society and merged the experience of the corporeal with the incorporeal. For example, this is evidenced in Prudentius' account of the mother's internalised experience of the martyrdom of her sons in Book 10 of the *Peristephanon liber*. However, it is argued here that Prudentius went even further in his depiction of interiorized heroism in the *Psychomachia* to make clearer distinctions between the realms of the corporeal and the incorporeal.

For example, in the *Peristephanon liber* Book 14, *The Passion of Agnes*,[460] Prudentius begins by fully endorsing the notion of corporeity that held that the physical remains of the martyrs carried spiritual power. This is reflected in his description of the martyr Agnes in the following quotation:

> '*Agnes sepulcrum est Romulea in domo*
> *fortis puellae, martyris inclytae.*
> *conspectus in ipso condita turrium*
> *servat salutem virgo Quiritium,*
> *nec non et ipsos protegit advenas*   5
> *puro ac fideli pectore supplices.*
> [The grave of Agnes is in the home of Romulus; A brave lass she, and a glorious martyr. Laid within sight of their palaces, this maiden watches over the well-being of Rome's citizens, and she protects strangers too when they pray with pure and faithful heart]' (*Peristephanon liber* Book 14:1-6).[461]

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[460] Kaufman (1994:3) states that Prudentius had glorified the notion that the martyrs' remains carried spiritual power in his work *Peristephanon liber* with the intention 'to appease martyrs and keep trouble at bay'.
[461] Thompson (tr.) (1953:338-339).

Conversely, in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius' portrayal of the allegorically personified virtues has no connection to corporeal powers. In fact, their physicality is specifically understated in places, as demonstrated in the vice Pride's (*Superbia*) description of the army of virtues:

> '*quam pudet, o Mavors et virtus conscia, talem*   240
> *contra stare aciem ferroque lacessere nugas,*
> *et cum virgineis dextram conferre choreis,*
> *Iustitia est ubi semper egens et pauper Honestas,*
> *arida Sobrietas, albo Ieiunia vultu,*
> *sanguine vix tenui Pudor interfusus, aperta*   245
> *Simplicitas et ad omne patens sine tegmine vulnus,*
> *et prostrata in humum nec libera iudice sese*
> *Mens Humilis, quam degenerem trepidatio prodit!*

[What shame it is, O god of war, O valorous heart of mine, to face such an army as this, to take the sword against such trumpery, and engage with troupes of young women, among them beggarly Righteousness and poverty-stricken Honesty, dried-up Soberness and white-faced Fasting, Purity with scarce a tinge of blood to colour her cheeks, unarmed Simplicity exposed with no protection to every wound, and Lowliness humbling herself to the ground, with no freedom even in her own eyes, and whose agitation betrays her ignoble spirit!]' (*Psychomachia* 240-248)[462]

It can be seen from the quotation above that Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* de-emphasised the notion of physicality and corporeity. His depiction of heroism instead relied on heroism being realised on the intellectual, incorporeal level and did not replicate the notions of corporeity that existed in the martyrial narrative or in the beliefs of the cult of martyrs, which he had reiterated in the previous description of the martyr Agnes in the *Peristephanon liber*.

5.6   Prudentius' negotiation of the martyrial narrative in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

The focus of this discussion is an investigation into the unique way in which Prudentius negotiated and realigned the lingering social power of corporeity, embodied in the psychogenic images of the martyred body, in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

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[462] Thompson (tr.) (1949:294-297).

For the purposes of contextualising this concept, attention needs to be turned to the way in which Christian leaders of the late fourth and early fifth centuries endeavoured to adapt the socio-religious concept that the martyred Christian body was the definitive locus of sanctity.

During this time period, the obsession of the cult of martyrs with the mortal remains of martyred Christians was becoming socially unacceptable, even amongst some Christians. The Emperor Julian had a particular abhorrence of the practice of digging up the remains of buried martyrs and transporting their remains from place to place for veneration. This is evidenced in the following quotation from his work *Against the Galilaeans*:

> 'However this evil doctrine did originate with John; but who could detest as they deserve all those doctrines that you have invented as a sequel, while you keep adding many corpses newly dead to the corpse of long ago? You have filled the whole world with tombs and sepulchres, and yet in your scriptures it is nowhere said that you must grovel among tombs and pay them honour. But you have gone so far in iniquity that you think you need not listen even to the words of Jesus of Nazareth on this matter. Listen then to what he says about sepulchres: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres; outward the tomb appears beautiful, but within it is full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness". If, then, Jesus said that sepulchres are full of uncleanness, how can you invoke God at them?' (Julian, *Against the Galilaeans* 335b)[463]

It is argued here that rather than relying on the martyrial narrative to communicate his intellectualised notion of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius inverted the notion of the corporeal suffering of martyrdom. He did this by portraying the defeated pagan vices as the persecuted victims of physical suffering and the heroic and victorious Christian martyrs as the enforcers of physical suffering. Malamud (1989)[464] provides the most succinct description of this when she states,

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[463] Wright (tr.) (1913:414-417).
[464] Malamud (1989:57).

'Virtues in this poem are by no means martyrs. They do not submit to death and claim it as a victory, but rather they participate in combat ferociously and inflict gruesome wounds and hideous deaths upon their enemies'.[465]

In this study, it is argued that Prudentius rendered this inversion of the socially sacrosanct concept of the martyred Christian body both socially acceptable and appropriate for early fifth-century Christians by extending the notion of the intellectualisation of physical suffering further than any of his contemporary Christian writers and leaders. It is the reading of this study that, besides not depending on basing his literary representation of early fifth-century Christian heroism on the martyrial narrative, Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* emphasised that the intellect, and not the body, was the locus of sanctity and, indeed, Christian heroism for early fifth-century Roman Christian readers of this epic. Prudentius explicitly situated the battles between the heroic Christian virtues and the pagan vices in the metaphorical space of the Christian soul. More significantly, he composed this entire poem in an allegorised personified format (4.6).

By extending the notion of intellectualised Christian heroism and, furthermore, specifically by not relying on the martyrial narrative as a basis for his vision of Christian heroism, unlike many of his contemporaries even into the sixth century,[466] it is argued here that Prudentius negated rather than enhanced the social power of the martyrial narrative in early fifth-century Christianity. This study suggests that Prudentius' unique psychologisation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* was made acutely socially relevant, primarily because it did not rely on refashioning the martyrial narrative, which was socially redundant at this time. Prudentius' intellectualised portrayal of Christian heroism presented a prototype of Christian heroism that was oriented towards the future, where Christians dominated spiritually, culturally and heroically because their souls were rid of pagan vice.

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[465] Malamud (1989:57).
[466] See Van Dam (tr.) (1988) for an account of the manner in which the sixth-century Christian Gregory of Tours endorsed the notion of the spiritual power of the martyrs and preached that Christians would suffer consequences if patron martyrs were not venerated appropriately.

Pagan dominance, the scourge of Christianity in the Age of Martyrdom (64-313), was no longer socially relevant in an era in which the notion of interiorized spirituality was emphasised in Christianity and Christian writings.[467] Furthermore, the problems experienced in Early Christianity in explaining to ordinary Christians the spiritual nature of the Holy Trinity, which conceptualised the notion of three spiritual entities in one, were being addressed in early fifth-century Roman Christianity, for example in the works of Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, who held strong Neoplatonic philosophies and made the concept of spirituality understandable.[468]

It is the understanding of this study that Prudentius' intellectualised perception of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* directed the reader towards specific outcomes. The reader was directed towards interpreting the portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* on a personal and spiritual level, which could be adapted according to the individual's social circumstances and challenges, so that he or she was able to rid his or her soul and life of pagan vices heroically. It is proposed that the personalised and intellectualised interpretation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* acted as a catalyst for the readers of this text to recognise and actuate their own potential for heroism. Prudentius' intended outcomes, as outlined above, did not rely on the reader of the *Psychomachia* attempting to find the meaning of Christian heroism and the form of Christian heroic identity in the embodiment of martyrdom, a socially irrelevant practice at the time.[469]

To support the arguments made thus far in this discussion, it is germane to consider here the works of another rather unique Christian of this era, John Chrysostom[470] and, in particular, his *Homilies to the Martyrs*. John Chrysostom's works, although embedded in veneration of the heroic acts of the martyrs, are arguably the most comparable to the way in which Prudentius emphasised in the *Psychomachia* that the locus of sanctity was in the realm of the

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[467] An example of a Christian work of the early fifth century that epitomised the notion of interiorized spirituality was Augustine's *City of God*.
[468] For a discussion on the works of Gregory of Nyssa and his philosophy, see Young (2008:478-484). For more details on the life and philosophy of Gregory of Nazianzus, see McGucken (2001).
[469] See Coxe Miller (2009) for an elaboration on the notion of corporeality in Early Christianity.
[470] For an elaboration on the life of John Chrysostom (ca. 349-407), see Martin (2006:3-9). The Christian writer John Chrysostom referred to in this study must not be confused with the Greek sophist Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40-115).

intellect. The Neoplatonic works[471] of John Chrysostom[472] can be regarded as forming a psychogenic[473] stepping stone between the lingering social power of the notion of corporeity as the locus of sanctity in early fifth-century Roman Christianity and Prudentius' fully intellectualised representation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia,* which situated the locus of sanctity and the concept of early fifth-century Christian heroism firmly in the realm of the intellect.[474]

The intellectualization of the notion of corporeality is demonstrated most clearly in John Chrysostom's *Panegyric on all the saints in the whole world who have been martyred*[475] and the manner in which this Christian writer exploited, manipulated and interiorized the theme of violence. It is appreciated that in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius used the theme of violence to devalue and not enhance the social power of the martyrial narrative. However, it may be argued that the abovementioned work of John Chrysostom used violence to boost the social power of the martyrial narrative. The significance of the exploitation of violence by these writers is not analysed in this way, in the context of this discussion. Rather, it is argued that the deployment of violence by both these writers is skilful manipulation to strengthen the notion that the locus of sanctity lay in the intellectualised soul of the Christian, albeit for different outcomes. This is the focal link between these two writers.

John Chrysostom's De *sanctis martyribus* [Panegyric on all the saints in the whole world who have been martyred] is also considered to be of comparable relevance here because, like Prudentius in the latter's portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, he did not underemphasise or render the notion of physical suffering more socially acceptable, as

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[471] For further details on the significance of Neoplatonic philosophy in Early Christianity, see Edwards (2006).

[472] See Chapter Five (6.5 and 6.6) for an elaboration of the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy in Early Christianity.

[473] *OED Online* describes the term 'psychogenic' as 'shaped or dominated by the deliberate activity of the human mind or psyche'. See Web Address 4 in List of References.

[474] Although we have no evidence of any contact between John Chrysostom and Prudentius in the early fifth century, one can assume that since both men were educated and well-read Christian Romans. It is interesting here to note that the Irish poet W. B. Yeats was a strong believer in the Neoplatonic philosophies of Roman Christian Late Antiquity and the later interpretation of Late Ancient Neoplatonism called theosophistry. For an elaboration, see Allen (1973:53-64).

[475] All quotations from John Chrysostom's 'Homilies on the Martyrs' are sourced from Mayer (2006). See De Wet (2012a: 3-21) for an elaboration on the notion of corporeity in martyrdom.

observed, for example in the examinations of the psalms of Augustine.[476] It can be argued here that both of these writers similarly enhanced the social appropriateness of their works with vivid descriptions of violence, as an acknowledgement that physical violence, in the form of common criminality and civil disorder, was still rampant in the socio-cultural circumstances of Roman society in the late fourth and early fifth centuries.[477]

The quotations below contextualise John Chrysostom's exploitation of the notion of violence to communicate his vision of intellectualised corporeity. In *Panegyric on all the saints in the whole world who have been martyred* Verse Seven, he subtly suggests that there may be an alternative to the somatic locus of sanctity represented in the martyred body for Christians in a post-martyrdom context. John Chrysostom states:

> 'Don't you tremble in front of this martyrium? [act of martyrdom] Don't you now yearn for martyrdom? Aren't you now sad that no opportunity for martyrdom is presently available? On the contrary, let us, too, train ourselves for an opportunity for martyrdom' (*Panegyric on all the saints in the whole world who have been martyred*: 7).[478]

As demonstrated in the above quotation, the psychological effect of the memory of the martyrs' suffering is kept very much alive and current in John Chrysostom's work.[479] This is particularly noticeable when he asks, 'Don't you now yearn for martyrdom? Aren't you now sad that no opportunity for martyrdom is presently available?' However, in the context of this discussion, what is of more significance is that when carefully analysed, it can be argued that in the line 'On the contrary, let us, too, train ourselves for an opportunity for martyrdom', John Chrysostom is subtly hinting that there is an alternative to the physical suffering of martyrdom for Christians living in a post-martyrdom era. This understated, but vital, message

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[476] See De Wet (2012b:197-215) for the motivations behind Augustine's sanitisation of the notion of suffering in martyrdom in his examinations of the Psalms preached to early fifth-century Christians in North Africa.

[477] Brown (2012) explains that Ambrose (ca. 337-397), Bishop of Milan, was a strong advocate of the view that Roman society had been eroded by the wealth and greed of the Roman upper classes. Ambrose perceived Roman society as deeply divided into those Romans who lived in poverty, and the wealthy and avaricious upper-class Romans, who continued to enjoy a life of abundance. The socio-cultural manifestations of this were evidenced in a 'society characterised by estate walls, locked storehouses, land grabbing, violence, and war'. (2012:311-312).

[478] Mayer (2006:Loc 4078-4093).

[479] The work of Martin (2006:3-21) gives this concept thorough and informative analysis.

that the locus of sanctity is not located in the somatic realm but rather in the incorporeal realm of the intellect, is demonstrated vividly in the following extract from the concluding verse of this homily that describes the beauty of the soul purified of pagan vice:

'And just like people who make their houses brilliant by decorating them all over with colourful fresco, so too let us paint the martyrs' tortures on the walls of our mind. Let us, then, paint on our soul those martyrs lying on roasting pans, those stretched beneath live coals, the ones plunged into cauldrons, those drowned at sea, others scraped raw, others bent on a wheel, others hurled over a cliff; and some fighting with wild beasts, others led to the pit, yet others losing their life, each in their individual way. [Let's do this] so that, by making our house brilliant with this painting's rich colors, we may make it a fitting inn for the king of heaven' (*Panegyric on all the saints in the whole world who have been martyred*: 8).[480]

When the quotation above is analysed, it can be seen that John Chrysostom was emphasising that the ultimate goal of all Christians' heroism, whether the Christians were martyrs or not, is to clear their lives, minds and, most importantly, their souls of pagan vice and, moreover, to purify their souls so that they are befitting palaces of beauty for God's spirit to inhabit. He describes how the martyrs heroically endured physical torture to purify their souls. Certainly, it was typical of the works of John Chrysostom to encourage his followers to remember the heroic sacrifice of the martyrs. In this passage, he says 'so too let us paint the martyrs' tortures on the walls of our mind' to remind his followers of the martyrs' sacrifices. However, he is using this imagery as an intellectual tool. He is moving the corporeal suffering of the martyrs into the realm of the mind, into the incorporeal realm.

As the passage continues, it is significant to note that John Chrysostom begins to suggest that there is more than one avenue of access to Christian heroism and that heroism can be achieved in a personalised manner when he adds the significant phrase, 'each in their individual way'. This important inclusion suggests to his Christian followers in their post-martyrdom context that Christian heroism can be achieved in other ways than through martyrdom. By using these words after telling his followers to 'paint the martyrs' tortures on

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[480] Mayer (tr.) (2006:Loc 4107).

the walls of our mind', it can be seen that John Chrysostom is explaining that Christians can psychologically and intellectually become as heroic as the martyrs by achieving the ultimate goal of Christian heroism, a pure soul reigned over by God. This passage by John Chrysostom echoes compositional elements of Prudentius' notion of intellectualised Christian heroism and the beauty of the pure soul of the Christian that is filled with the spirit of God.

Prudentius similarly gives a lengthy description of the building of the Temple of the Soul (see 7.6) which is analogous to the beauty of the Christian soul, in the concluding lines of the *Psychomachia*. Prudentius' description of the Temple of the Soul that the army of victorious virtues erect in the purified soul of the Christian is filled with imagery of jewels and gold. Descriptions of the magnificent gems in the building of the Temple of the Soul, such as sapphire and beryl (855) and amethyst, jasper and topaz (860-861) provoke imagery of sparkle, light and beauty. Prudentius' also purposefully establishes an aura of peace and serenity in his descriptions of the building of the Temple of the Soul.

Firstly, Prudentius establishes that peace in the soul of the Christian is the ultimate goal of Christianity, as seen in this quotation:

> '*pax plenum Virtutis opus, pax summa laborum,*
> *pax belli exacti pretium est pretiumque pericli.*   770
> *sidera pace vigent, consistunt terrea pace.*
> *nil placitum sine pace Deo: non munus ad aram*
> [Peace is the fulfilment of a Virtue's work, peace the sum and substance of her toils, peace the reward for war now ended and for peril faced. It is by peace that the stars live and move, by peace that earthly things stand firm. Without peace nothing is pleasing to God]' (*Psychomachia* 769-772).[481]

Then Prudentius establishes that lasting peace for the heroic Christian is realised in the innermost sanctum of the soul when it is being presided over by the wisdom of God. The notion that peace for the Christian who has rid his or her soul of pagan vice can be accessed

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[481] Thompson (tr.) (1949:322-333).

through the presence of the spirit of the universal truths and wisdom of God is unambiguously established by Prudentius in the next quotation from the end of the *Psychomachia*:

'*hoc residet solio pollens Sapientia et omne*   875

consilium regni celsa disponit ab aula,

tutandique hominis leges sub corde retractat.

[Here mighty Wisdom sits enthroned and from her high court sets in order all the government of her realm, meditating in her heart laws to safeguard mankind' (*Psychomachia* 875-877).[482]

The final lines of the *Psychomachia* describe the atmosphere of peace and serenity and the presence of God's eternal wisdom in the innermost sanctum of the soul. This quotation clarifies that the locus of sanctity is found in the purified soul of the heroic Christian:

'*spiritibus pugnant variis lux atque tenebrae,*

distantesque animat duplex substantia vires,

donec praesidio Christus deus adsit et omnes   910

virtutum gemmas conponat sede piata,

atque, ubi peccatum regnaverat, aurea templi

atria constituens texat spectamine morum

ornamenta animae, quibus oblectata decoro

aeternum solio dives Sapientia regnet.   915

[Light and darkness with their opposing spirits are at war, and our two-fold being inspires powers at variance with each other, until Christ our God comes to our aid, orders all the jewels of the virtues in a pure setting, and where sin formerly reigned builds the golden courts of his temple, creating for the soul, out of the trial of its conduct, ornaments for rich Wisdom to find delight in as she reigns for ever on her beauteous throne]' (*Psychomachia* 908-915).[483]

Furthermore, the passage quoted above does not look backwards to the violence of the battle for the soul that formed the main theme of the *Psychomachia*. This epic poem concludes on a positive note that resonates with hope for the future of Christianity and the heroic Christian who is free of sin and whose soul is filled with light, as opposed to the darkness of pagan

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[482] Thompson (tr.) (1949:340-341).
[483] Thompson (tr.) (1949:342-343).

vice. This passage evokes notions of a peaceful, Christianised Roman Empire of the future, as described in Chapter 4 (4.2), a socio-cultural vision of early fifth-century Roman Christians.

The martyrial narrative in Roman Christian society of Late Antiquity revolves around intellectualising the notion of the corporeal body in Early Christianity. It is important to note that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* revolves around Christian ideologies of sexual continence and chastity in this society. The discussion below contextualises the notion of Early Christianity's intellectualisation of sexuality and the corporeal body of the devout Christian in the early fifth century.

5.7   Contextualising the chaste Christian body in early fifth-century Roman Christian society

Late Ancient scholarship abounds with valuable works that explicate the role of sexuality in Early Christianity, and this topic has received recent attention in the late 20th and 21st centuries.[484] In this dissertation, it is of more relevance to investigate the manner in which early fifth-century Roman Christians intellectualised Christian sexuality.[485] This topic cannot be ignored for the manner in which it contributed to Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. While focusing specifically on the intellectualisation of early fifth-century Roman Christian notions of sexuality and the body, this discussion continues with a summation of the importance of chastity and sexual continence during this period.[486]

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[484] Brown (1988) provides one of the most illuminating accounts of sexual renunciation in Early Christianity. For a thorough examination of the development of Early Christian ethics regarding sexuality, see Foucault (1988) Vol 3. The Late Ancient scholars Clark (2015) and Castelli (2004), whose research often concentrates on issues of gender in Roman Late Antiquity, have produced some valuable research in recent years that provides 21st-century scholars with illuminating insights into the socio-cultural circumstances of Roman Late Ancient society. Clark's latest publication (2015) investigates the life of the mother of Saint Augustine, Monica. Castelli's most authoritative publication was her 2004 work, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. Kuefler (2001) also gives a valuable account of notions of masculinity in Late Antiquity. Malamud (1990:274-298) pays particular attention to Prudentius' negotiation of sexuality and gender in the *Peristephanon liber* and the *Psychomachia*.

[485] See Glancy (2010) for an enlightening review of the notion of the body in Early Christianity.

[486] It is acknowledged in this study that the sexual behaviours of the Early Christian martyrs, especially the female martyrs, contributed significantly to determining the notion of sexuality in Roman Christian society. However, it is outside the scope of this study to elaborate on this at length. See Lewis (2000), in particular Chapter Two, entitled 'Ascetic Contexts' (Lewis, 2000:49-75) for a thorough review of the influence of particular Christian martyrs' sexual behaviours on Prudentius' composition of the *Peristephanon liber* and the *Psychomachia*.

In Roman Christian society in the early fifth century, Christian sexual behaviours were epitomised in the life and sexual behaviours of the Ascetic and monastic Christians.[487] The notion of celibacy and virginity, both male and female, was strongly reiterated in the Christian literature of the post-martyrdom era, and the sexual abstinence of devout Christians was endorsed and encouraged in Christian teachings. Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-395) stresses the notion that the concept of sexual renunciation requires intellectualisation.

A significant factor in the intellectualisation of sexuality prevailing in early fifth-century Roman Christianity is the idea of the virgin body being an intact vessel to house the Christian soul. The importance of the virginal body being the most perfect state of Christian purity is seen in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa. He opens *De Virginitate* Chapter I by stressing the purity of the sexually uncorrupted body with the words:

> 'The holy look of virginity is precious indeed in the judgment of all who make purity the test of beauty; but it belongs to those alone whose struggles to gain this object of a noble love are favoured and helped by the grace of God. Its praise is heard at once in the very name which goes with it; "Uncorrupted" is the word commonly said of it, and this shows the kind of purity that is in it' (Gregory of Nyssa *De Viginitate*: Chapter I).[488]

In Chapter Two of this work, Gregory of Nyssa stresses the significance of virginity:

> 'Deep indeed will be the thought necessary to understand the surpassing excellence of this grace. It is comprehended in the idea of the Father incorrupt; and here at the outset is a paradox, viz. that virginity is found in Him, Who has a Son and yet without passion has begotten Him. It is included too in the nature of this Only-begotten God, Who struck the first note of all this moral innocence; it shines forth equally in His pure and passionless generation. Again a paradox; that the Son should be known to us by virginity. It is seen, too, in the inherent and incorruptible purity of the Holy Spirit;

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[487] Chapter Six (section 6.7) of this study elaborates on asceticism in Early Christianity and how this influenced Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

[488] Moore & Wilson (1893) (tr.) *De Virginitate* Chapter 1:538.

for when you have named the pure and incorruptible you have named virginity' (Gregory of Nyssa *De Virginitate*: Chapter II).[489]

The intellectual concept that devout celibate Christian women were wedded to Christ and that Christ was a bridegroom was most developed by Gregory of Nyssa,[490] in his earliest work, *De Virginitate*. The quotation below from Chapter 14 of *De Virginitate* illustrates this concept and demonstrates how it should be intellectualised and rationalised:

'That soul indeed which in virginity cleaves to the true Bridegroom will not remove herself merely from all bodily defilement; she will make that abstension[491] only the beginning of her purity, and will carry this security from failure equally into everything else upon her path. Fearing lest, from a too partial heart, she should by contact with evil in any one direction give occasion for the least weakness of unfaithfulness (to suppose such a case: but I will begin again what I was going to say), that soul which cleaves to her Master so as to become with Him one spirit, and by the compact of a wedded life has staked the love of all her heart and all her strength on Him alone—that soul will no more commit any other of the offences contrary to salvation, than imperil her union with Him by cleaving to fornication; she knows that between all sins there is a single kinship of impurity, and that if she were to defile herself with but one she could no longer retain her spotlessness' (Gregory of Nyssa *De Viginitate*: Chapter XIV).[492]

Kuefler (2001)[493] explains that this notion of being wedded to Christ also extended to celibate Christian males. He goes on to explain that this notion negated the suggested eroticism in Biblical scriptures, which dated back to the Judaic interpretations of eroticism in the *Song of Songs*, which described the sexual relationship between a bride and bridegroom. The notion of being wedded to Christ, while remaining celibate in one's own life, became the epitome of sexual morality in Christian literature of the late fourth and early fifth centuries.[494]

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[489] Moore & Wilson (1893) (tr.) *De Virginitate* Chapter 2:539.
[490] Castelli (1986:71).
[491] Spelling in *situ*.
[492] Moore & Wilson (1893) (tr.) *De Virginitate* Chapter 14:569.
[493] Kuefler (2001:137).
[494] Kuefler (2001:141) explains that writers such as Ambrose and Augustine extended this metaphor to its fullest extent in their writings.

Another fervent Christian advocate of sexual renunciation and the monastic life for both men and women was the writer Saint Jerome. In his famous *Epistle 22 To Eustochium*, Jerome stresses the importance of virginity. The complexities of the intellectual notion of virginity in this era is illustrated in the following quotation from this letter:

> '2. I write to you thus, my lady Eustochium (I am bound to call my Lord's bride "my lady") to show you by my opening words that my object is not to praise virginity that you follow and of which you have proved the value or yet to recount the drawbacks of marriage… '.[495]

It is at this juncture that this discussion moves towards focusing on the manner in which the poet Prudentius' portrayal of the sexual moral virtue of the Christian virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) in the *Psychomachia* embodied the very essence of the intellectualised notion of an intact virginal body. It is argued in the next section that Prudentius' characterisation of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) is a skilful literary representation of the core ideals of the intellectualisation of sexuality for early fifth-century Roman Christian society. Although the moral virtue of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) was discussed in Chapter Three of this study (3.3), her characterisation in this discussion focuses on providing further contextualisation of the notion of the body in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

5.8 Prudentius' intellectualised literary expression of Christian chastity in his portrayal of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*)

There are complex layers of meaning in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia). Pudicitia allegorically personifies the virtue of chastity in the Psychomachia and is the second Christian virtue to enter the battlefield against the pagan vices. The episode of the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) battle against the vice Lust (Libido) is composed over 68 lines (40-108), which are laden with the skilful use of the literary devices of typology and exemplification, as well as a powerful representation of Roman Christian notions of chasteness and sexual continence. In this portrayal, it is argued here that

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[495] Ehrman & Jacobs (tr.) (2004:271)

Prudentius melds three cornerstones in his intellectualised notion of Christian heroism. Firstly, there are no elements of victimhood, such as that displayed by the heroic Christian martyrs. Secondly, the heroic Christian virtues of the Psychomachia epitomise Christian chasteness; and, thirdly, Christian heroism is grounded in a long history of chaste heroic females.

When describing the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) opponent, the personified vice Lust (Libido), Prudentius uses the rhetoric of the unclean elements of Roman culture, namely 'sulpure' (43) [sulphur] and 'piceam' (43) [pitchy], emphasising this vice's dirt-ridden context. He also uses words of sexual incontinence and pollution when he classifies her as 'lupae' (47) [prostitute or whore]. The quotation below sets the context of the battle between the vice Lust (Libido) and the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia). The former thrusts a burning branch of pine-wood soaked in pith and sulphur into the face of the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) and the battle begins:

> *'quam patrias succincta faces Sodomita Libido*
> *adgreditur piceamque ardenti sulpure pinum*
> *ingerit in faciem pudibundaque lumina flammis*
> *adpetit, et taetro temptat subfundere fumo.*   45
> *sed dextram furiae flagrantis et ignea dirae*
> *tela lupae saxo ferit inperterrita virgo,*
> *excussasque sacro taedas depellit ab ore.*
> [On her falls Lust the Sodomite, girt with the fire-brands of her country, and thrusts into her face a torch of pinewood blazing murkily with pitch and burning sulphur, attacking her modest eyes with the flames and seeking to cover them with the foul smoke. But the maiden undismayed smites with a stone the inflamed fiend's hand and the cursed whore's burning weapon, striking the brand away from her holy face]' (*Psychomachia* 42-48).[496]

It is significant that in this battle, as in the case of the vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods in the battle before this, Prudentius does not give the vice Lust (Libido) an opportunity to speak

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[496] Thompson (tr.) (1949:282-283).

before being struck down by a virtue. It is argued here that Prudentius may have done this to establish, metaphorically, that paganism no longer had a 'voice' when confronted by Christianity, again reinforcing that readers are entering a new religious world-order. It appears at the beginning of this war between the vices and the virtues that Prudentius is composing episodes of warfare that deliberately destroy any apparatus or vehicle of vocal expression for the vices, battle by battle. In the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) battle against the vice Lust (Libido), the heroic Christian virtue destroys the vice Lust's (Libido) ability to speak, as evidenced in this quotation:

> *'tunc exarmatae iugulum meretricis adacto*
> *transfigit gladio; calidos vomit illa vapores*　　　　50
> *sanguine concretos caenoso; spiritus inde*
> *sordidus exhalans vicinas polluit auras.*
> [Then with a sword-thrust she pierces the disarmed harlot's throat, and she spews out hot fumes with clots of foul blood, and the unclean breath defiles the air near by]'
> (*Psychomachia* 49-52).[497]

Now that the mood of this battle has been established through the quotations above, it is germane to examine the deeper levels of meaning in the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) heroic profile that substantiate the notion that Prudentius intellectualised his portrayal of heroism in the Psychomachia. The discussion continues below with an examination of the exemplification and typological pairing of the Old Testament story of the Jewish heroine Judith[498] with the New Testament's virtuous Mary, mother of Jesus. Both of these exemplifications embody and personify the attributes of purity, virginity and chastity in the portrayal of the heroic virtue Chastity (Pudicitia).

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[497] Thompson (tr.) (1949:282-283).

[498] Judith was a beautiful, chaste Jewish aristocratic widow of the wealthy Manasses, who lived in Bethulia during the period of the Second Temple. The Assyrian army had waged war and defeated many nations in the Near East in this period. However, when they tried, under the leadership of Holofernes, to defeat the Jewish community in Bethulia, they met strong resistance. They laid siege upon the city and the Jewish community that lived there were in dire straits. With only five days of water left, Judith, with her maid, gained access to the Assyrian camp under the pretext of sexually seducing Holofernes. Before submitting sexually to Holofernes's advances, and after Judith had subdued him with copious amounts of wine, she beheaded the unconscious Holofernes with the help of her maid. They wrapped Holofernes's head in a bed cover, hid it under food provisions and left the camp, subsequently presenting the elders of Bethulia with the head of Holofernes and causing the leaderless Assyrians to flee the area. Judith lived out the rest of her life quietly in Bethulia as a chaste widow and hero of the Jewish community. This is a brief synopsis of what is popularly known, and will be referred to in this study as, the 'Judith story'.

It is argued here that Prudentius shrewdly exploits these particular examples of socially recognisable, heroic and sexually chaste females in a purposeful manner. Prudentius does this to allow the reader to recognise particular fundamental concepts of his vision of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism. Firstly, the chaste body of the virtuous Christian opens the road to salvation. Secondly, this portrayal prompts the reader to intellectually rationalise Christ's virgin birth, incarnation and resurrection. Thirdly, the Christianisation and exemplification of Old and New Testament heroic figures in the Psychomachia provide the reader of this epic with didactic lifestyle guidelines of heroic Christian behaviour.

The story of the Jewish widow, Judith, as the paragon of all that is chaste and heroic in womanhood gained status with ancient writers when it was included in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Bible in the second century BCE. Judith's heroic acts are affiliated representationally with historical events from the Hasmonean dynastic period between 140 BCE. and 116 BCE.[499] The account of Judith's story contained in the Septuagint 'played a definitive mediating role for early Christians linking Jewish scriptures to Christian theology'.[500] Judith's story, through the ages, been has subjected to considerable artistic interpretation. It appears to have the enduring ability to be expressed in various contextual circumstances for a multitude of purposes.[501] Judith has been represented, over time, as a hero, a virgin, a widow, a cunning manipulator and a murderer.[502] Brine (2010)[503] suggests that perhaps due to the eclectic interpretations of this story by writers, artists, playwrights and musicians, especially in medieval times, it has become problematic for contemporary scholars to classify it into a specific genre. He also notes that the latest research on Judith's story has diversified across multiple disciplines, apart from the literary, and that it is now studied in anthropology, sociology, varied religious studies and even the academic disciplines of drama and music.

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[499] Gera (2010:26).

[500] Brine (2010:13). According to Brine (2010:13-14), an account of Judith's story fails to appear in canonical Jewish scriptures and was not influential in any secreted Jewish texts until the 10th century. The Catholic religion considers Judith's story to be 'of divine inspiration' (Brine 2010:14) and it is contained in Catholic deuterocanonical works.

[501] The story of Judith still invokes lively debate and attention across many academic disciplines. It was particularly influential in the medieval period, giving rise to a multitude of artistic and literary interpretations. Brine, Ciletti and Lähnemann (2010) provide a comprehensive overview of multiple interpretations of the narrative of the sword of Judith in ancient and modern cultures and across various academic disciplines.

[502] De Silva (2006:55-57) gives an interesting synopsis of diverse viewpoints on the Judith story.

[503] Brine (2010:5) mentions that, for the first time, an all-inclusive bibliography of research into the Judith story, compiled by the Dorot Jewish Division, is available at the New York Public Library.

It is argued here that Prudentius' intellectualised notion of Christian heroism is exemplified by his inclusion of the Judith story in the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) heroic depiction, which holds extra layers of meaning that require unravelling by the reader. The readers of this portrayal are confronted directly with Prudentius' characterisation of the chaste widow Judith and her paradoxical capacity for savage violence when Prudentius specifically makes reference to the story of the beheading of Holofernes in the speech of the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) (58-65). This strategic depiction by Prudentius firmly negates the notion of the victimhood of Christian martyrs in the Psychomachia. Prudentius' convergence of the three notions of femininity, heroism and violence in this one characterisation demonstrates for Roman Christian readers of this epic the depth of Christian heroic capacity in the face of evil pagan vices.

It is, however, in his typological pairing of the character of Mary with Judith in the heroic profile of the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) that Prudentius achieves his highest expression of intellectualised Christian heroism in the Psychomachia. Prudentius' coupling of Mary's socio-cultural identity specifically with Judith's creates a mind-set that Christian heroism is both temporal, physical and on an intellectualized level. Mary represents the heroic temporal and mystical concept of virgin birth and Judith approximates the act of the Classical-era heroic figure who physically attacks the enemy leader in his own camp.

The virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) speech gives Prudentius the outlet to endorse the message of intellectualised celibacy by implying that the virgin Mary is the definitive protagonist of virginity. While the vice Lust (Libido) and her sexual powers are made entirely superfluous, as seen in the following quotation:

> '*numquid et intactae post partum virginis ullum*   70
> *fas tibi iam superest? post partum virginis, ex quo*
> *corporis humani naturam pristina origo*
> *deseruit carnemque novam vis ardua seuit,*
> *atque innupta Deum concepit femina Christum,*
> *mortali de matre hominem, sed cum Patre numen.*   75

[Well, since a virgin immaculate has borne a child, hast thou any claim remaining — since a virgin bore a child, since the day when man's body lost its primeval nature, and power from on high created a new flesh, and a woman unwedded conceived the God Christ, who is man in virtue of his mortal mother but God along with the Father?]' (*Psychomachia* 70-75)[504]

It is arguably necessary for the reader of the Psychomachia to have an intellectual comprehension of incarnation and Virgin birth in the New Testament in order to understand the above extract from the Psychomachia, as it is so laden with meaning. Brown (1988)[505] states that by the 390s, 'Mary had come to be treated as the privileged exemplar of the virgin state'. This was arguably strengthened by the context of her virgin birth. Exemplifying Mary's virgin state and heroism in the Psychomachia simultaneously strengthened the heroic profile of the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia), with whom she is typologically linked.

To appreciate the above, one has to assume that the reader has sufficient spiritual sophistication and intellectual athleticism to appreciate the mysteries of incarnation in the birth of Christ. The more realistic and obvious aspects of Mary's heroic nature are demonstrated in Schottenius Cullhed's (2012) research on the Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba (± 350 C.E.).[506] Schottenius Cullhed's (2012) research brings to light additional heroic facets to Mary's profile, specifically her maternal instincts (4.6).

It is argued here that the following quotation from the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) speech releases the ordinary Christian from the bounds of inaccessible heroism and makes heroism attainable for the believer, with the promise that the unclean carnal influences of the vice Lust (Libido) are eradicated by the divinity of the flesh of the believer after the Incarnation:

'*Verbum quippe caro factum non destitit esse*
quod fuerat, Verbum, dum carnis glutinat usum,

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[504] Thompson (tr.) (1949:282-285).
[505] Brown (1988:355).
[506] Schottenius Cullhed (tr.) (2012:156-159).

maiestate quidem non degenerante per usum   80

carnis, sed miseros ad nobiliora trahente.

[For the Word made flesh has not ceased to be what it was before, that is, the Word, by attaching to itself the experience of the flesh; its majesty is not lowered by the experience of the flesh, but raises wretched men to nobler things]' (*Psychomachia* 78-81).[507]

The interpretation of the quotation above is highly intellectualised. It is argued here that Prudentius' intent in pairing Judith with Mary, or violence with virginity and celibacy, is only understood by the reader when the typologies of Judith and Mary are viewed simultaneously and perceived of intellectually as one entity, combining to form the true nature of the personified virtue Chastity (Pudicitia).[508]

In addition to the Judith and Mary typological associations in the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) heroic speech, there are other important heroic revelations that echo Virgil's representation of the underworld in Book 6 of the Aeneid. For example, Aeneas looks down into Tartarus, with its swirling fiery sulphurous river and Sybil's description of its horrors (see Book 6:737-838). In the Psychomachia, Prudentius also exploits the horrors of sinners in the Underworld, as evidenced in the following quotation from the virtue Chastity's (Pudicitia) speech. In this quotation, the dreadfulness of hell is described vividly to the vice Lust (Libido):

'dona haec sunt, quod victa iaces, lutulenta Libido,

nec mea post Mariam potis es perfringere iura.

tu princeps ad mortis iter, tu ianua leti,

corpora conmaculans animas in Tartara mergis.   90

abde caput tristi, iam frigida pestis, abysso;

occide, prostibulum; manes pete, claudere Averno,

inque tenebrosum noctis detrudere fundum.

te voluant subter vada flammea, te vada nigra

sulpureusque rotet per stagna sonantia vertex,   95

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[507] Thompson (tr.) (1949:284-285).
[508] Smith (1976:188) is of the opinion that ancient readers of the Psychomachia would not have had difficulty with the complex typological associations presented by Prudentius.

[It is his gift that thou hast conquered, filthy Lust, and canst not, since Mary, violate my authority. It is thou that leadest to the way of death, that art the gate of destruction, that dost stain our bodies and plunge our souls in hell. Bury thy head in the grim pit, thou bane now powerless. Death to thee, harlot, down with thee to the dead; be thou shut up in hell and thrust into the dark depths of night! May the rivers below roll thee on their waves of fire, the black rivers and the eddying sulphur whirl thee along their roaring streams]' *(Psychomachia* 87-95).[509]

In the Aeneid, Aeneas, as the hero, is led away from Tartarus by the Sybil (6:841-842). Prudentius lets his readers intellectualise their choice to be the heroes of their own lives and be rescued from that fate by allowing the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) to enter their souls and guide their sexually moral lives, banishing the influence of the vice Lust (Libido). Symbolically, and on an intellectualised level, this reprieve is ritualised in Christian baptism, which represents rebirth. In the Psychomachia, Prudentius represents the ritual of baptism when the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia) baths and sheathes the sword that killed the vice Lust (Libido) after cleansing it in the Jordan river.

This concludes this chapter's discussions on the notion of the Christian body in early fifth-century Roman Christianity. Prudentius' skilful negotiation and realignment of the social power of the corporeal body of the martyr into the domain of the intellect can be seen to be one his most advantageous responses to early fifth-century Roman Christian society's struggle to strengthen their heroic identity in this post-martyrdom era.

5.9   Conclusion

In early fifth-century Roman Christian society, dealing with the social power of the corporeality of the tortured martyred body as the embodiment of Christian heroism was a challenging task. Early fifth-century Christians experienced difficulties in strengthening a socially relevant Christian heroic identity in a post-martyrdom context in which the

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[509] Thompson (tr.) (1949:284-285).

phenomenon of the cult of martyrs still prevailed. However, as the discussions of this chapter have demonstrated, the practices of the cult of saints were beginning to be seen as socially problematic in fourth- and early fifth-century Roman Christianity. This was not only from the intellectualised and philosophical perspectives of the Emperor Julian, but also for some Christian leaders, who began to view the practices of the cult of martyrs as extreme.

The discussions of this chapter demonstrate that Prudentius' heroic model of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism was not embroiled in retelling the heroic acts of the early Christian martyrs. Instead, Prudentius required the reader of this epic to use his or her intellectual powers to decipher his intellectualised portrayal of a socially appropriate literary prototype of early fifth-century Roman Christian heroism. The discussions of this chapter establish that Prudentius' portrayal of the interiorized battle between the virtues and the vices in the soul of the Christian was the most demonstrable exemplification of the notion that the corporeal body of the martyr could no longer be recognised as the embodiment of Christian heroism or the locus of Christian sanctity. His didactic, interiorized portrayal of Christian heroism situated in the sphere of the intellect and not in the physical body of the martyr offered early fifth-century Roman Christians the most socially appropriate modality of Christian heroism for their post-martyrdom context. Chapter Six, the last chapter of this dissertation's investigation into Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the Psychomachia, follows. This chapter gives an in-depth investigation of the notion of the soul in the Psychomachia.

CHAPTER SIX: THE INTERIORIZATION OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM IN THE SOUL OF MAN IN PRUDENTIUS' *PSYCHOMACHIA*

6.1   Introduction

This dissertation is grounded on the thesis that Prudentius' conceptualisation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* as an interiorized notion responded to the challenges faced by early fifth-century Roman Christians to form a socially relevant heroic identity in a post-martyrdom context. Thus far, the investigations of this study have provided a contextualised foundation that demonstrates that Prudentius' portrayal of an interiorized notion of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* was determined through his innovative deployment of particular literary devices and through his reconceptualization of the lingering notion that Christian heroism was embodied in the corporeal, tortured body of the martyr.

The discussions of this chapter focus on providing an in-depth socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of early fifth-century Roman Christianity's notions of the soul. The investigations of this chapter demonstrate that Prudentius' interiorization of Christian heroism in the domain of the Christian soul provided early fifth-century Roman Christians with the most socially relevant and socially acceptable manifestation of their Christian heroic identity.[510] The discussions of this chapter are underpinned by the concept that this epicist's literary expression of interiorized Christian heroism was predicated on the notion that Christians should strive to live virtuous lives and that their souls were the repositories of interiorized sanctity.[511]

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[510] Nugent (1985:12) points out that modern readership does not always appreciate allegorization; however, medieval readers of poems such as the *Psychomachia* 'craved allegory'. Mastrangelo (2009:311-329) gives an excellent account of the status of Latin epic poetry in the fourth century. Further works that discuss the readership of literature in the fifth century include those by Pollmann (2017) and Pelttari (2014). See Chapter Four (4.5) of this study for an elaboration on readership in Prudentius' literary context.

[511] The notion that early fifth-century Christian heroism was conceptualised as an interiorized notion by particular Christian leaders of this era is elaborated upon in this chapter's discussions on the role of the religion of Mithra (6.2) and also in the discussion on Christian asceticism (6.7).

Early Christianity was not the only religious movement to believe that the pure soul ascended to the heavens in the afterlife, after conquering the evil forces on earth.[512] This notion was a foundational belief of the Mithras religion in Roman Late Antiquity. The first discussion of this chapter (6.2) provides a socio-cultural contextualisation of notions of the soul in Roman Late Antiquity and compares the Mithraic religious beliefs of the ascension of the heroic soul to the heavens with Prudentius' portrayal of the ascension to heaven of the heroic Christian virtue Hope (*Spes*) in the *Psychomachia.*

To explicate the philosophical foundations of Roman Christianity's beliefs regarding the soul, the next discussion of this chapter (6.3) provides an outline of how the soul was conceptualised in early fifth-century Roman Christian society by examining the philosophical basis of ideologies of the internal soul of the Christian in Early Christianity.[513] This discussion is followed by an examination of how the notions surrounding the heroic interiorized soul of Christians were manifested publically by Ascetic Christians, in a post-martyrdom context.

6.2   Heroization in the non-Christian religion of the Mithra and Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

In this dissertation, it is argued that the ancient Eastern religion of Mithras appears to have influenced specific aspects of Prudentius' portrayal of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Martin finds that Mithraism was active until the last decade of the fourth century in Roman society,[514] so chronologically it is plausible that Mithraism was socially relevant in Prudentius' lifetime. From the works of various contemporary scholars of

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[512] The notion that the heroic soul ascends to heaven is part of numerous religious ideologies, according to the South African theologian Schmidt (1988: 276-295).

[513] The primary focus of this dissertation centres on socio-cultural contextualisation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* and is not predominantly philosophical in nature. For a fuller elaboration on the development of Early Christian philosophy, see the recent work of Karamanolis (2013). Although Karamanolis's (2013) work focuses on Christian philosophy from the second to the fourth centuries, it provides a sound introduction to the complexities of Early Christian philosophy and the influence of Greco-Roman philosophy on Christian philosophy in this era.

[514] Martin (1989:12).

Mithras,[515] this study identifies the following four specific connections between Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* and particular aspects of heroization in Mithraism:

(i) The Mithraic theological creed was built on the notion of monotheistic salvation of the soul through heroic religious acts and the ascension of the soul to heaven after death. This is a central message of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

(ii) The initiation rituals of the Mithras religion, *Tauroctony*, which involved blood-letting but are regarded as heroic actions, can arguably be seen to have influenced Prudentius' excessive referrals to blood and blood-letting to rid the soul of pagan vice by the heroic Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia*, who embody the notion of Christian heroic behaviours.

(iii) The founding narrative of the Mithras religion was underpinned by the notion that the founding god of Mithraism, the *Vita*, 'represented vigorous heroic achievement'.[516] One of the central arguments of the current study is that the *Psychomachia* is specifically aimed at actuating the heroic potential of the early fifth-century readers of this poem.

(iv) Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* can be associated with heroization in Mithraism, because in both these instances heroization is realised through abstract combat. It is argued here that the army of allegorically personified Christian virtues in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* were characterised as being robustly combative to communicate to the early fifth-century readers of this poem that Christian heroism is attained through actively fighting the temptations and evils of pagan vice in their souls and social context.

In the scanty details we have of Prudentius' personal life[517] (1.1.2), there is no textual evidence of any involvement between him and Mithraism. However, in a study of this nature,

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[515] For an elaboration on the Mithras religion/Mithraism, the work of Beck a (2006) is an authoritative source in contemporary scholarship. In addition, see Gordon (2011:392-405). For a review of the relationship between Christianity and Mithraism, see Martin (1989:2-15). For a review of the cosmological beliefs of the Mithras religion, see Ulansey (1989). For an account of the links between Mithras theology and Julian the Apostate's work *Hymn to King Helios*, see Athanassiadi (1977). For a dated, but brief and informative account of the fundamental principles of Mithraism, see Nock (1937:108-113).

[516] Nock (1937:111-112).

[517] Chapters One and Four of this study elaborate on what we know of Prudentius' social context.

one cannot ignore exploring the above-mentioned associations for what these reveal of the socio-cultural influences in the contract of heroization in Roman society in the fourth and early fifth centuries. It is argued here that this investigation provides an alternative perspective in contextualising some of the more ambiguous textual depictions of heroization in the *Psychomachia*, such as Prudentius' depiction of excessive violence and textual referrals to blood-letting and blood in his portrayal of heroism in this poem.

It is important to note that the non-Christian Mithraic religion was monotheistic[518] in that only one god was worshipped at any one time. In its Roman form, which was the last stage of the evolution of the ancient Near Middle Eastern Mithras religion, it was remarkably similar to Roman Christianity.[519] Most significantly, the followers of Mithras believed in the ascension of the soul to the heavens through a series of ladders that allowed the soul to travel through the planets to the most supreme planet, the sun.[520] The quotation below, taken from Book six of the work of Origen, entitled *Contra Celsum* [Against Celsus], illustrates that Early Christian writers were knowledgeable of the mysterious and ancient Mithraic theological and cosmological beliefs, most significantly that the soul ascended to heaven by traveling through the planets.

> 'After this, Celsus, desiring to exhibit his learning in his treatise against us, quotes also certain Persian mysteries, where he says 'These things are obscurely hinted at in the accounts of the Persians, and especially in the mysteries of Mithras, which are celebrated amongst them. For in the latter there is a representation of the two heavenly revolutions, — of the movement, viz., of the fixed stars, and of that which

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[518] We have no evidence that the Mithras religion had any texts. Its rituals, beliefs, notions of cosmology and religious practices were apparently transmitted orally through the generations. There is a strong connection between the worship of the son god in Mithraism and the religious beliefs of Julian the Apostate. For an enlightening elaboration on this, see Athanassiadi (1977) and, for a more generalised view of the worship of the sun god in fourth century paganism, see Liebeschuetz (1999:185-205). There is also strong evidence in scholarship (most notably, Beck, 2006a) of the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy, especially the philosophies of Porphyry of Tyre, in Roman fourth-century Mithraism.

[519] Beck (2006:54) states, 'Mithraism in its Roman form was an almost exact contemporary of Christianity. Both originated in the first century CE (Mithraism a decade or so later than its peer), and both grew and flourished within the same cultural milieu'.

[520] An analogy can be made here between this Mithraic notion of a ladder to ascend to the seven heavens and the beliefs of the ascetic fathers of Early Christianity, whose collective sayings are transcribed in an ancient Christian text entitled *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. In Mithraism and Christian asceticism, it appears that the notion of the soul ascending to heaven was reliant on the heroic efforts of humans to purify his soul in the terrestrial domain.

takes place among the Planets, and of the passage of the soul through these' (Origen *Contra Celsum* Book 6: Chapter 22).[521]

The notion that the soul of the devout Christian ascends to heaven was, and has remained, a central doctrine of Christianity. However, in the Bible, this notion is not given a great deal of elaboration and all references are rather oblique in nature. The most demonstrable reading from the Bible regarding the ascension of the soul into heaven is found in *Ecclesiastes* verse 12.7, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it'.[522] Another Biblical reference to the soul ascending into heaven is found again in *Ecclesiastes*, and demonstrates how the son of David addresses his followers, albeit in the form of a query, about their beliefs that the soul ascends to heaven:

'3.21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? 3.22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?' (*Ecclesiastes* 3.21-3.22)[523]

A final exemplification of the notion that the Christian soul ascends into heaven is found in the following Biblical quotation from the *Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians*;

2.4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his graet love wherewith he loved us,

2.5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

2.6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (*Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* verses 2.4-2.6).[524]

In Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, the ascension of the heroic Christian soul is not so indirectly portrayed. It is argued here that the most illustrative example of how the ascension of the soul of the devout Christian is allegorically portrayed and given heroic context is found in Prudentius' portrayal of the speech of the Christian virtue Hope (*Spes*) (284-308). In this speech, quoted on the next page, given over the dead pagan vice Pride (*Superbia*), the virtue

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[521] Coxe (tr.) (1885:583).
[522] KJV (2014:Loc 1011).
[523] KJV (2014:Loc 1004).
[524] KJV (2014:Loc 1681).

Hope (*Spes*) exemplifies the Biblical narrative of the heroic Christian, the child David, who slayed the pagan warrior Goliath.[525] The heroic actions of David resulted in immortality and ascension of his soul for eternity into the Kingdom of God. The virtue Hope's (*Spes*) speech reiterates the greatness of God:

'*extinctum Vitium sancto Spes increpat ore:*

"*Desine grande loqui; frangit Deus omne superbum,*   285

magna cadunt, inflata crepant, tumefacta premuntur.

disce supercilium deponere, disce cauere

ante pedes foueam, quisquis sublime minaris.

peruulgata uiget nostri sententia Christi

scandere celsa humiles et ad ima redire feroces.   290

[Hope with her pure lips upbraids the dead Vice: "An end to thy big talk! God breaks down all arrogance. Greatness falls; the bubble bursts; swollen pride is flattened. Learn to put away disdain, learn to beware of the pit before your feet, all ye that are overweening. Well known and true is the saying of our Christ that the lowly ascend to high places and the proud are reduced to low degree"]' (*Psychomachia* 284-290).[526]

After this, the virtue Hope (*Spes*) recounts the Biblical tale of how the youthful David overcame the mighty enemy Goliath, with just a stone. (291-299). The narration of this well-known tale amplifies the notion that all Christians have the capacity for heroism. This is reiterated by the virtue Hope (*Spes*) in these lines:

'*me tunc ille puer virtutis pube secutus*   300

florentes animos sursum in mea regna tetendit,

servatur quia certa mihi domus omnipotentis

sub pedibus domini, meque ad sublime vocantem

victores caesa culparum labe capessunt.

[That day the lad, in the ripening of his valour, followed me; as his spirit came to its bloom he lifted it up towards my kingdom; because for me is kept a sure home at the

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feet of the all-powerful Lord, and when I call men on high the victors who have cut down the sins that stain them reach after me]' (*Psychomachia* 300-304).[527]

The next part of this portrayal of the virtue Hope (*Spes*) describes how, now that her heroic task is accomplished, she ascends to her rightful place in the heavenly Kingdom of God. This is illustrated in this quotation:

'*dixit, et auratis praestringens aëra pinnis*   305
in caelum se virgo rapit. mirantur euntem
Virtutes tolluntque animos in vota volentes
ire simul, ni bella duces terrena retardent.
[With these words, striking the air with her gilded wings, the maid flies off to heaven. The Virtues marvel at her as she goes and lift up their hearts in longing, desiring to go with her, did not earthly warfare detain them in command]' (*Psychomachia* 305-308).[528]

In this discussion, it is pertinent to give deeper examination to lines 305-308 of the above quotation, which describe the poignant attitude of the virtues remaining behind to continue their heroic battle against the pagan vices. It can be argued that these remaining virtues had not completely fulfilled their heroic mission to rid the soul of pagan vice and therefore could not ascend to heaven quite yet, especially while the soul of the Christian was still defiled by vice. This not only reiterates Prudentius' message in the *Psychomachia* of the significance of Roman Christians completely ridding their souls of Pagan vice, but also the importance of actuating their heroic potential to do so, so that their souls can also finally ascend to heaven, just as the allegorically personified virtue Hope (*Spes*) does.

When perceived within the context of the accession of the pure and heroic soul of the devout Christian to heaven, an additional analogous link can be made between this depiction in the above quotation (284-308) and the notion of heroism and the ascension of the soul to heaven in Mithraism. More explicitly, scholars have interpreted the implicit message of heroism in the religion of Mithras and the ascension of the soul to heaven in the Mithraic iconography of

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[527] Thompson (tr.) (1949:298-301).
[528] Thompson (tr.) (1949:292-293).

the practice of *Tauroctony* (see point (ii) on page 175). To support this argument, consideration must be made of consensus amongst scholars of Mithraism, such as Gordon (2011)[529] and Beck b. (2006)[530] that the iconographic images of Mithras displaying the practice of *Tauroctony* have multiple layers of meaning involving Mithraic ideals of cosmology[531] and heroism. This is explicated in the following pages.

6.3   Mithraic *Tauroctony* and Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*

In this discussion, the most relevant findings relating to the interpretation of the practice of *Tauroctony* depicted in the iconography of Mithraism are those made by Gordon (2011), in which he argues that this imagery contains the following three levels of meaning:

> 'It is divided into three main phases: (1) the birth of Mithras from the bare rock, and its antecedents; (2) the heroic performance: the 'water miracle', the manifestation of the bull from the Moon, and its pursuit by Mithras, a hunt that turns into a sacrifice; (3) the sequel: the enlistment of the Sun (Sol), the shared feast, Mithras ascending to heaven over the Ocean in Sol's chariot'.[532]

It is argued here that the above trilogy of meanings given by Gordon (2011) are reflected strongly in Prudentius' heroic portrayal of the virtues Hope (*Spes*) and Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and the death of the pagan vice Pride (*Superbia*) in the *Psychomachia*. Firstly, it is argued here that a link can be drawn around the act of hunting and the heroism required to overcome the hunted entity, in both the iconographic imagery of the *Tauroctony* and Prudentius' portrayal of the heroism of the virtues.[533] More explicitly, the above-mentioned findings of Gordon (2011) establish that the task of Mithraic initiand in the iconographic imagery of the *Tauroctony* is to a hunt a bull. This is analogous to the manner in which the

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[529] Gordon (2011:393-394).
[530] Beck (2006b:109-227).
[531] It is outside the scope of this study to give in-depth analysis of Mithra cosmology. Beck (2006b) examines this topic in extensive detail.
[532] Gordon (2011:398-399).
[533] To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the analogy made in this discussion above has not been made in contemporary Prudentian scholarship and is original in this dissertation.

virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) seeks out, or hunts, the vice Pride (*Superbia*), as demonstrated in the following quotation from the *Psychomachia*:

> '*at Virtus placidi moderaminis, ut levitatem*
> *prospicit obtritam monstri sub morte iacentis,*   275
> *intendit gressum mediocriter, os quoque parce*
> *erigit et comi moderatur gaudia vultu.*
> *cunctanti Spes fida comes succurrit et offert*
> *ultorem gladium laudisque inspirat amorem.*
> *illa cruentatam correptis crinibus hostem*   280
> *protrahit et faciem laeva revocante supinat,*
> *tunc caput orantis flexa cervice resectum*
> *eripit ac madido suspendit colla capillo.*
>
> [But the quiet, self-controlled Virtue, seeing the vain monster crushed and lying at the point of death, bends her steps calmly towards her, raising her face a little and tempering her joy with a look of kindness. As she hesitates, her faithful comrade Hope comes to her side, holds out to her the sword of vengeance, and breathes into her the love of glory. Grasping her blood-stained enemy by the hair, she drags her out and with her left hand turns her face upwards; then, though she begs for mercy, bends the neck, severs the head, lifts it and holds it up by the dripping locks]' (*Psychomachia* 274-283).[534]

Secondly, Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (274-283) has added layers of meaning that link it to the Mithraic practice of *Tauroctony*. Specifically, the excessively violent imagery in the literary medium of the *Psychomachia* (274-283) and the violence depicted in the *Tauroctony* both depict the death of the forces of evil. In the case of the Mithraic *Tauroctony* imagery, the evil Moon, who was represented by the bull, according to Gordon's (2011) interpretation, is killed violently. Likewise, in the passage from Prudentius' *Psychomachia* quoted above, the evil vice Pride (*Superbia*) is slain violently.

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[534] Thompson (tr.) (1949:298-299).

Thirdly, it is striking that in Gordon's (2011) evaluation of the imagery of *Tauroctony* and in Prudentius' portrayal of the heroic actions of the virtue Hope (*Spes*), both of these religious heroic acts end with the hero's triumphant ascension into heaven. The Mithraic initiand, according to Gordon (2011), is seen to feast and then ride off to heaven in the chariot of the god of the sun. The triumphant and heroic virtue Hope (*Spes*) in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* flies up to heaven on wings of gold, as seen in this quotation: '*dixit, et auratis praestringens aëra pinnis / in caelum se virgo rapit* [With these words, striking the air with her gilded wings, the maid flies off to heaven]' (*Psychomachia*: 305-306).[535]

Fourthly, it is argued here that the imagery of excessive blood-letting in both scenarios elaborated upon here is rendered intellectually appropriate. Due to both their heroic actions and the necessary blood-letting, the Mithraic initiand and the heroic Christian virtue Hope (*Spes*) fulfil their heroic quests and then ascend to the supernatural realm of their respective gods. The explicit message in both of these depictions is that the enactment of heroism is a fundamental element of the soul's salvation and immortality in Mithraism and Christianity.

Finally, it is argued here that in both Mithraism and Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, heroism is realised through combat. It is common knowledge in Late Ancient scholarship that the Roman army in the fourth century was made up of largely foreign troops from conquered nations.[536] However, what is of more importance is that these foreign troops introduced the Mithraic religion into the fourth-century Roman army. In this particular period in the history of the Roman army, a context in which heroism was traditionally exhibited and acknowledged through combat, the Mithraic religion of was the most popular religious affiliation among troops.

The ambiguous combative action of the Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia* must be analysed from a variety of perspectives for full meaning. In this discussion, it is argued that Prudentius' depiction of warfare was a socially acceptable allegorical and intellectualised location of heroism for Christian readers of this poem, whose access or desire to participate in the Roman army was ambiguous. Much like the Mithraic troops of the Roman army of the

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[535] Thompson (tr.) (1949:300-301).
[536] See Kuefler (2001:37-44) for an elaboration on the realignment of Roman ideals of militarism in Late Antiquity.

fourth century, who realised heroism in combat, the Christian readers of the *Psychomachia* internalised and intellectualised their own notions of heroism by ridding their souls of pagan vices in an interiorized war.[537]

6.4   Prudentius' interiorization of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*

It is the argument of this study that Prudentius' notion of the soul, as depicted in the *Psychomachia*, was underpinned by his requirement that the inner and outer lives of humans must be in harmony for the soul to be the seat of spiritual power and wisdom. More importantly, it is argued in this study that Prudentius' didactic lifestyle guidelines for the readers of the *Psychomachia* to actuate their potential for heroism and form a socially appropriate Christian heroic identity were predicated on the notion that they lived virtuous lives rid of pagan vice and that their soul was the repository of interiorized Christian sanctity. The requirement for the body and soul of the Christian to be united is most clearly demonstrated in this quotation from the concluding lines of the *Psychomachia*:

> '*quod sapimus coniungat amor; quod viuimus uno*
> *conspiret studio: nil dissociabile firmum est.*
> *utque homini atque Deo medius interuenit Iesus,*
> *qui sociat mortale Patri, ne carnea distent*   765
> *Spiritui aeterno sitque ut Deus unus utrumque,*
> *sic, quidquid gerimus mentisque et corporis actu,*
> *spiritus unimodis texat conpagibus unus.*
> [Let our understanding be united by love, our life be in accord in a single aim; where there is separation there is no strength. And just as Jesus mediates between man and God, uniting mortality with the Father so that the fleshly shall not be separated from the eternal Spirit and that one God shall be both, so let one spirit shape in single structure all that we do by action of soul and body]' (*Psychomachia* 762-768).[538]

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[537] The notion that heroism in the *Psychomachia* was an interiorized concept was established in Chapter Five of this study.

[538] Thompson (tr.) (1949:332-333).

To appreciate how the early fifth-century Roman reader of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* would have recognised the significance of the interiorized souls of Christians as the repositories of divine sanctity, contextualisation of this notion is required.[539] Although the focus of this study is socio-cultural and not philosophical, to augment this study's understanding of the way in which Late Ancient Roman Christians understood the nature of the soul, the subsequent discussion provides a review of how Platonist and Neoplatonist ideologies influenced this notion in early fifth-century Christianity.[540]

6.5   Contextualisation of Platonic philosophy in Early Christian philosophy

To boost its intellectual robustness, Early Christianity required its own cultural and philosophical foundations that represented its unique vision of the metaphysical world. Like so many of the other foundations in Christianity, Early Christian philosophical teaching stemmed from the appropriation and Christianisation of pagan and Judaic philosophy. According to Drobner (2010),[541] Platonism was the philosophy that influenced Early Christianity the most. Karamanolis (2013)[542] explains that the teachings of Platonism provided many Christians with an understandable explanation of the more complex and spiritual ideologies of Early Christianity, for example ideologies regarding the nature of the Christian soul. Augustine, in particular, objected to esoterically complex philosophical teachings that were unintelligible to ordinary Christians and his various works demonstrate his opinion that Platonic philosophy was the closest to Christian philosophy for the ordinary Christian to understand.[543]

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[539] Although outside the scope of this discussion, one cannot ignore the influence of the Nicene orthodoxies that predominated in Roman Christianity in the early fifth century and the manner in which these reflected Platonist ideologies of the tripartite nature of the soul in the Christian ideologies of the Holy Trinity. For an elaboration on how Nicene orthodoxies influenced Christian identity formation in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Ayers (2008:436-447.)

[540] In this study, it is understood that Early Christian philosophy was influenced by alternative philosophical teachings, such as Stoicism and Epicureanism. While this was given due consideration in the preliminary research phase of this study, it is outside the scope of this dissertation to give this in-depth examination.

[541] Drobner (2010:680).

[542] Karamanolis (2013:16-17).

[543] For an elaboration on the philosophical thoughts of Augustine and the beginnings of the ideologies of Platonism in Antiquity, see Byers (2012:175-187).

At the heart of all developments in Platonic philosophy was the requirement to rationalise the material and non-material environments of human life within the scope of human reason and intellect. For the purposes of this study, Gerson (1999)[544] provides a valuable précis of the most important aspects of Platonic philosophy and Middle Platonism that influenced the Neoplatonic foundations of Early Christian philosophy. According to Gerson (1999), Plato (ca.± 427-347 BCE.) taught his philosophical teachings in his school of philosophy in Athens, the Academy. Gerson (1999)[545] has identified the seven most fundamental principles of Plato's philosophical teachings as follows:

(i)   The universe is one entity connected by universal laws;

(ii)   The universe is hierarchal in order, from the most intellectual down to the most physical;

(iii)   The Supreme Divinity is at the top of the universe's hierarchy and knows all things;

(iv)   The tripartite soul of the Christian is a principal entity in the universe and the link between the Divine and the material world;

(v)   The Christian's happiness is contingent on restoring his soul to its correct hierarchical position in the universe;

(vi)   Morality is the next most significant element of the universe, following the hierarchy, and good and beauty are created from the close interaction between morality and the Divine; and

(vii)   The soul has its own unique knowledge of the Divine that represents the universal hierarchy.

These seven basic principles of Platonism remained constant in all future adaptations of this philosophy.

The above-mentioned philosophical tenets of Platonism formed the foundations of its adaptation into Middle Platonism[546] in the second and third centuries.[547] According to

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[544] Gerson (1999:32-34).
[545] Gerson (1999:32-34).
[546] An authoritative work on Middle Platonism is that by Boys-Stones (2016:317-388).
[547] Plutarch (ca.± 46-125) is perhaps the most famous Middle Platonist of Late Antiquity. For an elaboration on the philosophical outlook of Plutarch, see his work *Moral Essays*, published in the early second century. For Plutarch as a Middle Platonist, see Dillon (1977: 184-230).

Drobner (2010),[548] it was in this period that Early Christian apologists, such as Justin Martyr, Clement and Origen, recognised the philosophical associations between their emerging Christian philosophies and Platonic philosophical teachings regarding the soul of mankind and knowledge of the universe. Early Christian philosophical ideas and the philosophies of Middle Platonism were compatible in their vision of one Divine supreme being, the *Logos*. The Middle Platonic dogmas taught that the *Logos* governed the universe (see point (iii) above), was the ultimate source of knowledge, good and truth in the universe and that the Son of *Logos* would ultimately lead mankind towards a state of perfection. This related closely to Early Christian philosophical dogmas of the nature of Christian divinity.

A later stage in the evolution of Platonic philosophy was the development of the popular Platonic movement of Neoplatonism.[549] This Platonic movement is the most relevant to shaping Early Christian philosophy. Again, with its foundational doctrines in Plato's original philosophical teachings (see points (i-vii) above), Neoplatonism, under the Late Ancient philosophers Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, made further adaptations to specific understandings of Platonism and Middle Platonism. These main areas of adaptations revolved around the nature of the tripartite soul. The Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus perceived the nature of the soul as having three specific divisions or 'hypostases', namely: (i) the One, which embodies the Divine, who is the supreme entity and highest state; (ii) the *nous,* which is generated by the One and, in turn, endeavours to imitate the perfection of the One; and (iii) the lowest order of the soul, the world-soul, which interacts in the physical and non-physical realms of the universe.[550]

6.6   Platonic philosophy and Prudentius' portrayal of interiorized heroism in the *Psychomachia*

It is the argument of this study that in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius' allegorised representation of the interiorized soul as the seat of spiritual power in mankind mirrored Platonist ideologies about the supremacy of the interiorized life of mankind over the

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[548] Drobner (2010:680-681).
[549] For an elaboration on Neoplatonic philosophy, see Dillon & Gerson (2004).
[550] Drobner (2010:682).

imperfect outer, or corporeal, existence.[551] In addition to this, Platonic philosophy highlights that in order to achieve a state of perfection in the interiorized soul, there needs to be harmony between the outer and the inner lives of humans. It appears that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* was influenced by the teachings of all stages of Platonism to a lesser or greater degree. For example, as is argued in this study, elements of Plato's *Republic*, written in approximately 380 BCE., are strongly echoed in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, written in the early fifth century.

For example, in Book 4 (4:403c-d) of Plato's *Republic*, the conversation between Glaucon and Socrates turns to considering how individuals need to remember the importance of pursuing excellence in both the body and the intellect. However, as is demonstrated in the quotation below from this work, the excellence of the inner self, the mind or the intellect, is prioritised over physical excellence:

> 'I am not of the opinion that if the body is in a good condition, then this state of physical excellence makes the mind good too. I think it's the other way round: a good mind, by being in a state of excellence, allows a body to maximise its potential for physical goodness. What about you? What do you think?' (*The Republic* Book 4:403c-d)[552]

The quotation below from the *Psychomachia* demonstrates that Prudentius, like Plato, advocated that mankind must overcome the imperfections of the body and pursue a life of spiritual and corporal synchronisation as far as possible. In other words, for the soul of the human [*anima*][553] to reach its most pure state, the actions of the imperfect body must strive to conform to the perfection of the inner life. It is significant to draw attention here to the fact that Prudentius ends the *Psychomachia* with a warning that the outer life of humans is weak and always subject to imperfections, but that the perfection of the soul will prevail:

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[551] Mastrangelo (2008:121-159) discusses the influence of pagan philosophies, including Platonism, on Prudentius' literary works. See pages 132-145 of this work for Mastrangelo's perspective of the influence of Platonism on Prudentius' *Psychomachia.*

[552] Waterfield (tr.) (1993:102).

[553] It is notable that the word *anima* [soul] occurs twice in this quotation from the end of the *Psychomachia*, which emphasises the differences between the pure soul of the Christian and the corruptible body.

> '*o quotiens animam, vitiorum peste repulsa,*
> *sensimus incaluisse Deo! quotiens tepefactum*   900
> *caeleste ingenium post gaudia candida taetro*
> *cessisse stomacho! fervent bella horrida, fervent*
> *ossibus inclusa, fremit et discordibus armis*
> *non simplex natura hominis; nam viscera limo*
> *effigiata premunt animam, contra ille sereno*   905
> *editus adflatu nigrantis carcere cordis*
> *aestuat, et sordes arta inter vincla recusat.*

[How often, when the plaguing sins have been driven away, have we felt our soul aglow with the presence of God, how often, after these pure joys, felt our heavenly nature grow cool and yield to foul desire! Savage war rages hotly, rages within our bones, and man's two-sided nature is in an uproar of rebellion; for the flesh that was formed of clay bears down upon the spirit, but again the spirit that issued from the pure breath of God is hot within the dark prison-house of the heart, and even in its close bondage rejects the body's filth]' (*Psychomachia* 899-907). [554]

This quotation above reiterates the argument of this discussion that Prudentius, in line with prevailing Platonist ideologies, prioritised the notion that the body was imperfect and predisposed to weakness and that the interiorized soul was where excellence could be achieved in the human's life. As the focus of this dissertation is socio-cultural and contextual, the discussion now continues with an examination of how Platonic notions of the soul were given appropriate social contextualisation in Prudentius' internalisation of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

It is argued that Prudentius strengthened the social applicability of the Platonically-derived notion that the interiorized soul of the Christian was the locus of sanctity in body by perceptively, constantly and subtly articulating his portrayal of the heroic nature of the Christian virtues within the matrix of the behaviours and ideologies of early fifth-century Christian asceticism. The premise of this discussion suggests that Prudentius deployed the practices and beliefs of Roman asceticism to uphold and convey his Platonist-inspired vision of the interiorized heroic soul in the *Psychomachia*.

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[554] Thompson (tr.) (1949:342-343).

Specifically, it is proposed in this study that by portraying the heroic behaviours of the Christian virtues battling pagan vices in the interior realm of the soul of the Christian as prototypical of the practices and beliefs of ascetic Roman Christianity, Prudentius strengthened the social applicability of his notion of the interiorization of heroism for early fifth-century Roman Christians. Furthermore, by underpinning his notion that the interiorized soul of the Christian was the locus of sanctity in the body of the human and presenting this concept within the framework of asceticism, Prudentius provided early fifth-century Christian readers of the *Psychomachia* with necessary pragmatic, socially acceptable and relevant lifestyle guidelines to augment their Christian heroic identity.

The deployment of the principles of asceticism by Prudentius in his interiorized notion of heroism in the *Psychomachia* allowed Christian readers of this epic to use recognisable and, moreover, socially relevant manifestations of Christian heroic nature. Christians of the early fifth century could physically manifest their interiorized rejection of the influence of pagan vice in their lives through ascetic behaviours.[555] Prudentius' literary endorsement of Christian ascetic values in his portrayal of the heroism of the Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia* gave his readers practical examples of heroic behaviour to replicate in public so that their interiorized souls were a locus of sanctity in the body of the Christian, in which Christian virtue ruled.[556]

6.7   Asceticism and Prudentius' portrayal of interiorized heroism in the *Psychomachia*

This discussion now turns towards elaborating on the ascetic ideologies of early fifth-century Christianity. This discussion is underpinned by the notion that Platonic ideologies of the supremacy of the soul over the outer body, mirrored in Roman Christian asceticism, appear to

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[555] Ayers (2008:446) draws an important link between Ascetic behaviours in Roman Christianity in the late fourth and fifth centuries and Nicene orthodoxies. He explains that Nicene orthodoxies of this period were 'developed psychologies and anthropologies […] key parts of good trinitarian theology. In a more extended investigation it might also be possible to show how pro-Nicenes link these presumptions to accounts of bodily ascetic practice'.

[556] The centrality of asceticism in Roman Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries is elaborated upon by Krawiec (ed. Ashbrook Harvey & Hunter) (2010:768-770). Krawiec (ed. Ashbrook Harvey & Hunter) (2010:769-770) explains that the rise in popularity of Asceticism in this period in Early Christianity may be explained by it being a substitute for martyrdom in a post-martyrdom context; it was anti-establishment and institutionalisation; and it was apolitical and appealing to female Christians in this era.

have shaped the internalisation of the notion of heroism in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. Ascetic ideologies regarding the complex perceptions of the nature of the physical exterior body as opposed to the nature of the noetic interior soul in Early Christianity is a vast and complex field of contemporary scholarship. Valantasis (2008) gives a worthy treatment of the dichotomous relationship between the exterior body and the internal soul in Early Christian asceticism by choosing to cite this passage from John Climacus's work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*:[557]

> 'At the gate of your heart place strict and unsleeping guards. Restrain your unrestrainable mind within your active body. Amidst the actions and movements of your limbs, practice noetic stillness (*hesychia*). And most paradoxical of all, in the midst of commotion, be unmoved in soul. Curb your tongue which rages to leap into arguments. Seventy times seven in the day wrestle with this tyrant. Fix your mind to your soul as the wood to the cross, to be struck like an anvil with blow upon blow of the hammers, to be mocked, abused, ridiculed, and wronged, without being in the least crushed or broken, but continuing to be quite calm and immovable' (Climacus, *Ladder* Step 8).[558]

If one considers this quotation alongside further readings of Climacus's work, the *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, it is evident that in Ascetic ideology, the soul was envisaged as the spiritual centre of the physical body and not biologically controlled but divinely inspired. This is demonstrated again in the following quotation from this same work:

> '142. Just as eyes have different coloured lights in them, so in the soul many different overshadowings of the spiritual Sun occur. One kind comes through bodily tears, another through the tears of the soul; one kind through what is contemplated by the bodily eyes, another through the spiritual. One kind comes from hearing words, another is the joy that spontaneously springs up in the soul; also there is one kind that

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[557] John Climacus (ca. 597-649) was an ascetic monk who published his famous work on the ascetic ideologies of Early Christianity, entitled *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, in 600. Although his work was composed over a hundred years after Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, Zecher (2015:26) attests that it is 'universally acknowledged' that Climacus's *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* relied on ascetic literature and the teachings of the Desert Fathers from the fourth and fifth centuries. These included, most notably, Evagrius Ponticus (346-399), Ps-Macarius (fourth to fifth century), Mark the Monk (fifth century), Diadochus of Photice (fifth century) and, more significantly, Anthanasius's *Vita Antonii* [Life of Antony], which was translated into Latin no later than 374, according to Zecher (2015:27). Zecher (2015:26) explains that Climacus's *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* is representative of the 'wider tradition' of ascetic literature in Late Antiquity into the Byzantine era.
[558] Valantasis (2008:147).

comes from silence, and another which by rapture ineffably and unexpectedly transports the mind in spiritual light to Christ' (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent* The Step 26:142).[559]

The particular passages quoted above from *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* give further insights into the fundamental notions of how the nature of the soul was perceived in Early Christian asceticism. When this passage is considered alongside Prudentius' determined portrayal of the interior soul of humans as the locus of sanctity and, indeed, the metaphorical site of quintessential Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it can be concluded that this epicist's vision of the soul was underpinned by ascetic notions of the nature of the soul and the corporal body in Roman Christianity.

In early fifth-century Christian society, it was not only the ascetic religious movement that intellectualised the notion that the purified soul of the Christian was the interior centre of their existence. This notion was popular amongst Christian leaders, such as Augustine, who highlighted the analogy between the physical concept of vision and the spiritual notion of inner vision in his works, mainly *De trinitate* [On Christian Doctrine] and *Confessiones* [Confessions]. Augustine explains in these works that inner spiritual vision, in which the inner pure soul of the Christian can envision the light of God, is accessible to those whose souls are pure. The quotation below from *De trinitate* 10, descriptively entitled 'To see God, the Soul Must be Purified', explains this concept:

> 'Wherefore, since it is our duty fully to enjoy the truth which lives unchangeably, and since the trinity God takes counsel in this truth for the things which He has made, the soul must be purified that it may have power to perceive that light, and to rest in it when it is perceived' (Augustine *De trinitate* 10).[560]

In Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*, before the first Christian virtue Faith (*Fides*) enters into battle against the pagan vices, he assures the Christian reader who is heroic enough to rid his or her soul of pagan vice that the soul will be strengthened because it is filled with 'pre-eminent kinds of skill' (16). He advises the heroic Christian that the way to

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[559] Moore (tr.) (1959:103).
[560] Shaw (tr.) (1887:Loc 24523-24536).

victory and a pure soul is exemplified in his depiction of the Christian virtues, as illustrated in this quotation:

> '*artibus ingenium, quibus ad ludibria cordis*
>
> *oppugnanda potens tibi dimicet et tibi vincat.*
>
> *vincendi praesens ratio est, si comminus ipsas*
>
> *Virtutum facies et conluctantia contra*
>
> *viribus infestis liceat portenta notare.*   20
>
> [Thou thyself dost arm the spirit with pre-eminent kinds of skill whereby it can be strong to attack the wantonness in the heart and fight for Thee, conquer for Thee. The way of victory is before our eyes if we mark at close quarters the very features of the Virtues and the monsters that close with them in deadly struggle]' (*Psychomachia* 16-20).[561]

The above quotation from Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (16-20) allays the fears of the readers by telling them that victory is within their sights. Moreover, Prudentius emphasises at the beginning of the quotation above, in line 16, '*artibus ingenium, quibus ad ludibria cordis* [Thou thyself dost arm the spirit with pre-eminent kinds of skill …]'.[562] It is the interpretation of this study that with these particular words in line 16, Prudentius is communicating to early fifth-century Christians that when the spirit of God inhabits their souls, it bestows upon the soul a spiritual power that is so much stronger than the fallible flesh of man. This is analogous to the central teaching of Christian asceticism that the corporeal body of the human is imperfect and functioned as a vessel that housed the interiorized locus of divine sanctity, the pure soul of the devout Christian. It is argued here that this rationalises why predominant ascetics taught followers to practice extreme control over the corporal weakness of their bodies.[563]

Ascetic ideologies regarding martyrdom in a post-martyrdom context add further weight to the argument of this study that Prudentius deployed ascetic ideologies in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is argued here that by situating his conceptualised notion that the soul was the interiorized locality of Christian heroism within the matrix of the prevailing ascetic ideologies of early fifth-century Roman Christianity, Prudentius augmented

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[561] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).
[562] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).
[563] For an elaboration on the unique behaviours and practices of asceticism in Greco-Roman world, see Finn (2009).

the social relevance of this depiction, especially since Christian asceticism in the post-martyrdom era did not advocate the continuation of martyrdom. This attitude is demonstrated in the compilation of the proclamations of the ascetic desert fathers by Wallis Budge (1907).[564] In the following passage from this compilation, Palladius recounts the teachings of the ascetic monk Saint Pachomius (ca. 292-348), when he dissuades a fellow ascetic monk from martyring himself in the post-martyrdom era:

> '19. [there] among those who were very famous a certain brother who cultivated the ascetic life by himself, and when he heard of the divine rule of our holy Father Pachomius he entreated him to receive him in the monastery; and when Rabba had received him, and he had passed a little [time] with the brethren, he desired greatly to bear witness (i.e., to become a martyr), although the world was in a state of peace, and the Church was flourishing and was, by the grace of God, at peace, and the blessed Constantine, who had put on Christ, was at that time reigning. And this brother was continually entreating the blessed man Pachomius, and saying, "Pray for me, O father, that I may become a martyr"; but Rabba admonished him that he should not permit this thought to enter his mind again, and said unto him, "Brother, endure the strife of the monks mightily and blamelessly, and make straight thy life in the "way which will please Christ, and thou shalt have companionship with the martyrs in heaven"'.[565]

The quotation above demonstrates the inappropriateness of martyrdom in a post-martyrdom era, as well as in the context of the ascetic ideologies of Christianity in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. This is further evidence that martyrdom was a problematic concept in a post-martyrdom context. Furthermore, this strengthens the argument of this study that Prudentius' recognition of the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances regarding the concept of martyrdom, not only in asceticism, but also in the wider context of early fifth-century Roman Christian society, shaped his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The discussion below continues with an investigation of other relevant ideologies of asceticism that this study deems representative of Prudentius' interiorized notion of the soul in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

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[564] Wallis Budge (1907:V-XXIV) explains that this compilation of the sayings of the ascetic dessert monks, entitled *Paradise Of The Holy Fathers*, is the translation of the 13th- or 14th-century Syriac manuscript of the work of Palladius (ca. 364-431), published in 420.
[565] Wallis Budge (tr.) (1907:301).

To further contextualise the characteristics of asceticism in Early Christianity, it is valuable to highlight the research findings of contemporary scholars that can illuminate the core principles of asceticism in Christianity in this era. According to Krawiec (2010),[566] Christian asceticism did not have written or doctrinal creeds and the term 'asceticism' is a modern construct. She further states that asceticism in the 'post-Constantine period' in Christian society was 'a created set' of discourses that moved towards a social definition of self and body in fourth- and fifth-century Roman Christian society.[567]

Harmless (2010)[568] notes that 'Christianity had ascetic commitments from its very foundation. When Christianity surfaced into legitimacy in the 310s, its deep-seated ascetic impulses surfaced as well'. Harmless (2010)[569] crucially draws attention to the interrelationship and differences between the conceptual notion of asceticism and the social institution of monasticism in Early Christian culture, which further enhances contemporary understanding of the temporal nature of asceticism. He explains that monasticism represented the institutionalisation of notions of correct ascetic behaviours and exhibited the embedded, archetypal and more extreme physical manifestations of asceticism, specifically 'fasting, vigils, poverty and lifelong celibacy — with a life of manual labour'.[570] Valantasis (2008)[571] offers additional enlightening insights into the interrelationship between monasticism and asceticism in Early Christianity when he explains that particularly devout followers of ascetic principles withdrew from society to live in monastic religious orders. He explains that by doing so, these individuals were displaying absolute dissatisfaction with the dominant social hegemonic structures.

Before concluding this review of secondary sources and findings on asceticism, it is specifically relevant to the further arguments of this discussion to draw attention to the manner in which Valantasis (2008)[572] further categorises the different physical expressions of

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[566] Krawiec (ed. Ashbrook Harvey & Hunter) (2010:764).
[567] Krawiec (ed. Ashbrook Harvey & Hunter) (2010:764).
[568] Harmess (2010:493).
[569] Harmless (2010:493).
[570] Harmless (2010:493).
[571] Valantasis (2008:105-106).
[572] Valantasis (2008:43-47).

the conceptual notion of asceticism in Early Christianity. According to Valantasis (2008),[573] there were five dominant models of ascetic typologies circulating in fourth- and fifth-century Christian society,[574] namely: (i) the combative subject;[575] (ii) the integrative model;[576] (iii) the educative model;[577] (iv) the pilgrim model;[578] and (v) the revelatory model.[579]

In this study, the above-mentioned model (i), which Valantasis (2008)[580] terms the combative subject of asceticism, is the most applicable to describing the modality of asceticism Prudentius uses in his portrayal of asceticism in his characterisations of the heroic virtues in the *Psychomachia*. The focus of this discussion is now directed towards explicating the particular argument of this study that Valantasis' so-called 'combative ascetic model' is deemed the most demonstrative of this study's reading of Prudentius' expression of the prevailing ideologies of asceticism in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. Valantasis (2008)[581] defines the so-called combative model of asceticism as an individual enhancing the power of his or her virtue by continually waging an internal war against the forces of evil in his or her spiritual life and soul.

To support the argument in this discussion that the combative model of asceticism strengthened the internalisation of Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia,*

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[573] Valantasis (2008:43-44).

[574] It must be noted here that Valantasis (2008:47) explains that these groupings of ascetic practices are not exhaustive and are meant only as a suggestive model.

[575] Valantasis (2008:43). This model of Asceticism is elaborated on further in the next paragraph of this discussion.

[576] According to Valantasis (2008:44), this model of ascetic practice is manifested by the individual remaining embedded in the dominant culture of the society while practicing ascetic ideals privately. This model of asceticism does not create anxiety regarding social identity maintenance in the community, but still allows the achievement of personal spiritual goals on an individual level.

[577] What Valantasis (2008:44-45) refers to as the educative model of asceticism describes the ascetic devotee that believes that knowledge of God is obtained through submitting oneself to the teachings of the master and that through educating oneself, the individual eventually becomes the teacher. Valantasis (2008:46) explains that 'Gregory Thaumaturgos's description of his teacher, Origen of Alexandria, exemplifies this type of asceticism'. For an elaboration on the life and works of Gregory Thaumaturgos (ca. 213-270), see Slusser (1998).

[578] Valantasis (2008:46) states that this model of asceticism was manifested by the individual ascetic follower who constantly moved from community to community to experience holy places and meet other Christians. This model of ascetic practice allowed the individual to lead a life free of the imposition upon one's spiritual life of the mundanity of socialisation, leaving 'the pilgrim' free to strive for the highest degree of spiritual experience.

[579] The revelatory model of asceticism, as described by Valantasis (2008:46-47), is characterised by the individual leaving the community, disempowering him- or herself of social power and devoting him- or herself wholly to waiting to achieve spiritual power and knowledge through revelation.

[580] Valantasis (2008:43).

[581] Valantasis (2008:43-44).

reference is made specifically to the analogous links that are made here between this portrayal and *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 quoted below:

'6.10 Finally, my brothers and sisters, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

6.11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

6.12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

6.13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

6.14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

6.15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

6.16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

6.17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:' (*The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* Verses 6.10-6.17).[582]

In the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius reinforces the message of *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 by emphasising the impenetrability of the armour of the virtue Patience in the quotation below:

'*provida nam Virtus conserto adamante trilicem*   125
induerat thoraca umeris squamosaque ferri
texta per intortos conmiserat undique nervos.
inde quieta manet Patientia, fortis ad omnes
telorum nimbos et non penetrabile durans.
[for the Virtue had prudently put on her shoulders a three-ply corselet of mail impenetrable, the fabric of iron scales joined every way with leathers interlaced. So

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[582] KJV (2014:1686). For a further contextualisation of the life of Saint Paul, see Meeks (1983) and Wendland (1999:199-223). In this South African publication, Wendland (1999) gives an interesting perspective of the manner in which Early Christians perceived the notion of the metaphysical power of supernatural evil forces.

Long-Suffering abides undisturbed, bravely facing all the hail of weapons and keeping a front that none can pierce]' (*Psychomachia* 125-129).[583]

As demonstrated in Chapter Three (3.6) of this study, Roman society in Late Antiquity had become somewhat reluctant to participate in the Roman military. This was in large due to rapid change in many structures in Roman society and in the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity. It is argued here that Prudentius' interiorized portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was influenced by *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17. This is elaborated upon below.

At the core of the argument lies the notion that *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 can be analogised to the fight of the Christian virtues in the soul of the devout Christian in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, because both of these Christian writers realign the notion of warfare for Christians from the concept of traditional Roman war to an interiorized battle in the soul against the evils of pagan immorality. In Roman paganism, the traditions of Roman Imperial war were focused on dominating the Ancient world through military force and the rewards of battles won were reaped by increasing the size of the Roman Empire. The status of heroism was realised in the terrestrial domain for mortal warriors. However, for Late Ancient Christians of the post-martyrdom era, Christian leaders and writers, such as Prudentius in the *Psychomachia*, conceptualised the idea of warfare against pagan vice as an interior battle fought in the soul and that the rewards of battle were realised through salvation of their purified souls in the eternal heavenly Kingdom of God.

At the heart of the transformation of the notion of war illustrated in the work of Saint Paul, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 and Prudentius in the *Psychomachia*, is that Roman Christians' greatest battle was to guard their pure souls against the threat and invasion of the immoral pagan vices. Through daily battles against pagan immorality, Christian warfare was interiorized in the soul by both of these Christian writers. Both Saint Paul in *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 and Prudentius in the *Psychomachia* used the metaphor of war raging in the interior soul of the Christian to

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[583] Thompson (tr.) (1949:286-289).

communicate to Christians that their battles were spiritually orientated and focused on protecting their pure souls ruled by God. Interiorizing the site of warfare in the soul reflects the above-mentioned model of 'combative Asceticism' and also responds to another significant socio-cultural and socio-religious concept of Christianity in a post-martyrdom context, namely the notion that waging war in the interior soul against the evils of paganism made one a *miles Christi* [soldier of Christ].[584]

6.8   Conclusion

From the discussions in this chapter, it can be concluded that Prudentius' interiorization of the notion of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* encompasses multiple but interrelated layers of meaning. This chapter has demonstrated Prudentius' unique negotiation of the different socio-cultural and socio-religious connotations contained within early fifth-century Roman society by analogising the notion of the ascension of the heroic soul to heaven in the Mithraic religion of Roman Late Antiquity and Prudentius' description of the ascension of the virtue Hope (*Spes*) to heaven in the *Psychomachia*. In addition, this chapter has also elaborated on the philosophical foundations of early fifth-century Roman Christianity's conceptualisation that the soul was the locus of sanctity in the body of the Christian. This chapter has also demonstrated that Christian asceticism, in the early fifth century, furthered the conceptualisation that the interior soul, purified of pagan vice, was the spiritual domain of God.

Prudentius' *Psychomachia* is often thought of as an excessively violent poem and it cannot be denied that it is highly militaristic in nature. The final discussion of this chapter highlighted how the military tone of *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians* 6.10-6.17 can arguably be seen to have influenced Prudentius' portrayal of war-like battles between the heroic Christian virtues and the immoral pagan vices in the soul in the *Psychomachia*. Chapter Seven follows and provides a literary analysis of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. This is the last investigative chapter of this dissertation.

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[584] For an elaboration on the socio-cultural circumstances of the Roman army in Late Antiquity see Chapter 3 (3.6), where the notion of *miles Christi* [soldier of Christ] is contextualised.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LITERARY ANALYSIS OF PRUDENTIUS' PORTRAYAL OF HEROISM IN THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES OF THE *PSYCHOMACHIA*

7.1   Introduction

The analysis of any literary text is highly subjective. This notion applies even more so when applied to a complex and multi-dimensional text of the Late Ancient World that many scholars before this have analysed through the centuries, such as Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. Therefore, before embarking upon an analysis of the text of the *Psychomachia*, it must be made clear that the findings of this chapter specifically relate to the focus of this dissertation and are the evaluations of the author of this study.[585] Moreover, this chapter does not enter into lengthy comparisons of the manner in which other Prudentian scholars have analysed the text of the *Psychomachia*. This is because, firstly, this study offers an original interpretation of the portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* and, secondly, because, as mentioned in Chapter Two (2.4), there appears to be limited research into the portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is thus outside the scope of this study to compare analyses of the depiction of heroism in this poem.

To contextualise the penultimate chapter of this dissertation, which focuses on an in-depth literary analysis of Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, it is necessary to revisit the research question posed in Chapter One (1.4), namely:

> "Does Prudentius' didactic and interiorized portrayal of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* fulfil the need in early fifth-century Roman Christianity for a socially relevant modality of heroism that strengthened Christian heroic identity at this particular time?"

Through close examination of the textual inclusions and elements of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, this chapter seeks to evaluate if, in his unique characterisation of interiorized heroism in each Christian virtue, Prudentius provided an adequate and edifying literary

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[585] See Chapter Two, which gives a literary review of the more significant research works in contemporary scholarship that investigate Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and have informed particular findings of this study.

response to the challenges facing early fifth-century Roman Christian society in strengthening a socially relevant modality of Christian heroism. The discussions below highlight what are deemed in this study to be the most relevant literary intimations in the text of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. The discussions of this chapter closely analyse the text of the *Psychomachia* to identify the essential elements of a socially relevant modality of Christian heroism for the early fifth-century reader of this poem.

This chapter provides a systematic review of the text of the *Psychomachia* that examines the entire poem. However, in keeping in line with the focus of this study, the discussions of this chapter prioritise in-depth analysis of the heroic Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia*. The next section (7.2) provides a literary analysis of the Preface of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* and Prudentius' invocation to God in lines 1-20 of the main body of this poem. Section 7.3 discusses the queen of the army of Christian virtues, Faith (*Fides*). Section 7.4 focuses on the army of Christian virtues. Section 7.5 provides an analysis of Prudentius' portrayal of each of the pagan vices that battle the heroic Christian virtues. The literary review of the pagan vices in the *Psychomachia* concentrates on the manner in which Prudentius communicates that paganism and the way in which the pagan vices behave was socially redundant in the early fifth century. The next section (7.6) investigates the significance of the Temple of the Soul in the portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. The final section (7.7) reviews the last lines of the *Psychomachia*.

7.2   The Preface of the *Psychomachia* and Prudentius' invocation to God

In this study, Prudentius' characterisation of the Biblical figure Abram/Abraham exemplified in the Preface of the *Psychomachia* has been discussed in the context of Prudentius' specific intention not to reiterate the heroic modality of the martyrs[586] and, again later,[587] in a discussion regarding Prudentius' conceptualisation of universalisation in this poem. In this final literary analysis of Prudentius' Preface to the *Psychomachia*, it is germane to address this study's interpretation of the rationale behind Prudentius' exemplification of Abram/Abraham in the Preface of his poem and the purpose of this exemplification.

It is the view of this study that Prudentius chose to exemplify the Biblical figure of Abram/Abraham in the Preface of his poem to establish, at the outset, that the *Psychomachia*

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[586] See Chapter One (1.10.2) of this study.
[587] See Chapter Four (4.3) of this study.

was not only a Christian heroic epic, but also that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in this poem was inspired by the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. It appears that Prudentius added layers of meaning to the exemplification of Abram/Abraham in his Preface. Not only was Abram/Abraham contextualised in a Biblical sense, but it also appears that Prudentius exploited the social knowledge of Abram/Abraham to amplify the Christian foundation of his poem. This is most demonstrably illustrated through Prudentius' use of the number 318, as seen in this quotation from the Preface of the *Psychomachia*:

> '*armat trecentos terque senos vernulas,*
>
> *pergant ut hostis terga euntis caedere.*
>
> [He arms three hundred and eighteen servants born in his house, to pursue the enemy and slay them on their march]' (*Psychomachia* 22-23).[588]

In the Bible, the number 318 is mentioned in much the same context, as illustrated in the following quotation:

> '14.14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan' (*The First Book of Moses: Called Genesis* Verse 14.14).[589]

However, the number 318 holds many additional meanings in Early Christianity. For example, there were 318 attendees at the important Council of Nicaea in 325 and the number 318 is made reference to in Hebrew Scriptures, further strengthening the historical links between Christianity and Judaism in the portrayal of Abram/Abraham.

Another significant aspect of Prudentius' explicit selection of exemplification of Abram/Abraham in his Preface is that it is understood in this study that the retelling of the miraculous story of Abram/Abraham as a prequel to the *Psychomachia* communicated an essential message for the early fifth-century readers of this poem. This message was that when they devote their lives to God, their lives on earth would be infinitely richer and, more importantly, that their souls will be immortalised in the Kingdom of God.

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[588] Thompson (tr.) (1949:274-277).
[589] KJV (2104:Loc 23).

Focusing on the opening lines of the *Psychomachia*, namely lines 1-20, it is the judgement of this study that Prudentius' intention was to unambiguously introduce this poem as belonging to the genre of the epic. Just as the epicists of the Homeric and Classical ages invoked the pagan muses to accept their poetry as a tribute, Prudentius Christianizes this notion by invoking Christ to receive his literary work, the *Psychomachia*. In addition to this, these opening lines set out the core theme of this poem. These lines emphasise that this poem is going to be about a militaristic battle in the interiorized domain of the soul and it is going to be allegorized. These lines thus serve the important purpose of contextualising the poem.

7.3   The queen of the Christian virtues, Faith (*Fides*)

Upon close analysis of the portrayal of the heroic virtue Faith (*Fides*), primarily in the opening lines of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (21-39) and again at the end of this poem (716-874), it is the evaluation of this study that Prudentius' depiction of this important virtue centres on conveying to early fifth-century readers of this poem that the path to Christian heroism is underpinned by absolute belief in the power of God. Furthermore, through in-depth evaluation of the manner in which Prudentius represents the multi-dimensional characterisation of the virtue Faith (*Fides*), it is argued that Faith (*Fides*) is portrayed as the foundational and most significant component of early fifth-century Christian heroism. The virtue Faith (*Fides*) embodies the heroic quality of Christian faith in the power of God.

More explicitly, when given close examination, the text of the *Psychomachia* reveals a particular textual inclusion that indicates that the virtue Faith (*Fides*) is the bedrock of early fifth-century Christian heroism. This, it is argued here, is most obviously identified in the manner in which this virtue is named as the queen of the virtues at the beginning and end of this poem. In the opening lines of the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius states, '*exultat victrix legio, quam mille coactam / martyribus regina Fides animarat in hostem* [Leaps for joy the conquering host which Faith, their queen, had assembled from a thousand martyrs and emboldened to face the foe]' (*Psychomachia* 36-37).[590] In the concluding episodes of this poem, the notion that this virtue is the queen of the army of virtues is reiterated. This is demonstrated in the following quotation, which indicates that the victorious army of virtues looks to the virtue Faith (*Fides*) to guide Christianity into the future:

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[590] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).

'auribus intentis expectant contio, quidnam

victores post bella vocet Concordia princeps,

quam velit atque Fides Virtutibus addere legem.

[With ears alert the assemblage waits to hear for what cause its leader Concord summons the victors now that war is over, or what new rule Faith will lay on the Virtues]' (*Psychomachia* 746-748).[591]

Earlier, this virtue is referred to as the queen of all the virtues '*Virtutum regina Fides* [Faith, the Virtues' queen]' (*Psychomachia* 716).[592] However, arguably the most significant instance is when Prudentius bestows upon this most important of virtues the honour of topping the Temple of the Soul with the magnificent pearl that she purchased with all her worldly possessions:[593]

'at domus interior septem subnixa columnis

crystalli algentis vitrea de rupe recisis

construitur, quarum tegit edita calculus albens   870

in conum caesus capita et sinuamine subter

subductus conchae in speciem, quod mille talentis

margaritum ingens, opibusque et censibus hastae

addictis, animosa Fides mercata pararat.

[An inner chamber, too, is constructed, which rests on seven pillars cut from a glassy rock of ice-like crystal and topped with a white stone cut cone-wise and curved on the lower part into the likeness of a shell, a great pearl to buy which Faith had boldly sold

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[591] Thompson (tr.) (1949:330-331).

[592] Thompson (tr.) (1949:328-329). It must be noted here that Nugent (1985:24) refers to the virtue Faith (*Fides*) as the leader of an army of Christian martyrs. This is not the interpretation of this study. As demonstrated throughout this study and in the discussion above, it the argument of this study that the virtue Faith *(Fides)* is queen of the Christian virtues and that Prudentius' mention of the Christian martyrs in lines 36-37 of her portrayal in the *Psychomachia* is by nature a tribute to the heroism of the martyrs who attend her battle against the vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods, but just as bystanders not warriors. After the virtue Faith (*Fides*) pays tribute to them, the martyrs are not mentioned as partaking or being present at any other battles of the Christian virtues against the pagan vices in the *Psychomachia*.

[593] It is noteworthy to mention here that the virtue Faith's (*Fides*) apparent disinterest in worldly possessions echoes the ideologies of ascetic Christianity, as explicated in Chapter Six (6.7) of this study. This further strengthens the social acceptability of this virtue as a true Christian hero for early fifth-century Christian readers of this poem and augments the notion that, in this era, heroism was manifested in the interiorized domain of the souls of Christians.

at auction all her substance and her property, and paid for it a thousand talents]' *(Psychomachia* 868-874).[594]

The characterisation of the virtue Faith (*Fides*) in the opening lines of the *Psychomachia* is highly significant. Prudentius situates this virtue spatially above the vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods in this crucial line, '*illa hostile caput phalerataque tempora vittis* [But she, rising higher, smites her foe's head down]' (*Psychomachia* 30).[595] Prudentius describes how the virtue Faith (*Fides*) 'rises higher' than the pagan vice to deliver the deathblow. In this study, it is argued that this is a significant description by Prudentius that demonstrates that the new world-order of Christianity has metaphorically begun to rise above the notion of pagan domination by the early fifth-century in Roman Christian society. This is deemed here to further strengthen the formation of Christian heroic identity at this time.

An additional literary inclusion in the characterisation of the virtue Faith (*Fides*) that cannot be ignored is illuminated in the following significant characterisation in line 24 of the *Psychomachia*, '*namque repentinus laudis calor ad nova fervens* [for the sudden glow of ambition, burning to enter fresh contests]'.[596] It is the argument of this study that this clearly indicates that Prudentius' vision of early fifth-century Roman heroism is orientated towards the future. This virtue is initiating a new modality of Christian heroism, in which the Christian is no longer the victim, as was the case in the Age of Martyrdom. Prudentius further strengthens this concept in the lines below:

'*exultat uictrix legio, quam mille coactam*
martyribus regina Fides animarat in hostem.
nunc fortes socios parta pro laude coronat
floribus ardentique iubet uestirier ostro.
[Leaps for joy the conquering host which Faith, their queen,
had assembled from a thousand martyrs and emboldened to face the foe;

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[594] Thompson (tr.) (1949:340-341).
[595] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).
[596] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).

and now she crowns her brave comrades with flowers proportioned to the glory they have won, and bids them clothe themselves in flaming purple]' (*Psychomachia* 36-39).[597]

In this revealing passage, which is one of only two instances in which martyrs are mentioned in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius skilfully achieves two purposes simultaneously that serve to communicate to the early fifth-century reader of this poem that Christian heroism does not mean replicating the actions of the Christian martyrs. Firstly, as he is expressing in this poem, Christian heroism is manifested as an interior force, ridding the soul of pagan vice. Secondly, Prudentius deftly acknowledges the heroic sacrifices of the martyrs while firmly situating them in an historical context. This demonstrates for the reader of the *Psychomachia* that, in a post-martyrdom context, the heroic acts of the martyrs are no longer socially relevant, although they should be remembered and honoured in a more socially appropriate manner.

It is the interpretation of this study that the virtue Faith (*Fides*) has an ubiquitous presence throughout this poem, as she underpins the heroic status of all the virtues. This is illustrated in the speech of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) (362-366), where the latter reminds the army of virtues that the virtue Faith (*Fides*) has rendered the soul of the heroic Christian impervious to pagan vice. This is demonstrated in the quotation below:

> ' "quis furor insanas agitat caligine mentes?
> quo ruitis? cui colla datis? quae vincula tandem,
> pro pudor, armigeris amor est perferre lacertis,
> lilia luteolis interlucentia sertis
> et ferrugineo vernantes flore coronas?   355
> his placet adsuetas bello iam tradere palmas
> nexibus, his rigidas nodis innectier ulnas,
> ut mitra caesariem cohibens aurata virilem
> conbibat infusum croceo religamine nardum,
> post inscripta oleo frontis signacula, per quae   360
> unguentum regale datum est et chrisma perenne,
> ut tener incessus vestigia syrmate verrat

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[597] Thompson (tr.) (1949:280-281).

sericaque infractis fluitent ut pallia membris,

post inmortalem tunicam quam pollice docto

texuit alma Fides, dans inpenetrabile tegmen   365

pectoribus lotis, dederat quibus ipsa renasci,

["What blinding madness is vexing your disordered minds? To what fate are you rushing? To whom are you bowing the neck? What bonds are these (for shame!) you long to bear on arms that were meant for weapons, these yellow garlands interspersed with bright lilies, these wreaths blooming with red-hued flowers? Is it to chains like these you will give up hands trained to war, with these bind your stout arms, to have your manly hair confined by a gilded turban with its yellow band to soak up the spikenard you pour on, and this after you have had inscribed with oil on your brows the signs whereby was given to you the king's anointing, his everlasting unction? To walk softly with a train sweeping the path you have trod? To wear flowing robes of silk on your enfeebled frames, after the immortal tunic that bountiful Faith wove with deft fingers, giving an impenetrable covering to cleansed hearts to which she had already given rebirth?] *(Psychomachia* 351-366).[598]

In conclusion, as demonstrated in this section, when the text of the *Psychomachia* is given close analysis, it can be argued that the virtue Faith (*Fides*) is the most important virtue of the *Psychomachia*. Through Prudentius' adroit portrayal of the heroism of the virtue Faith (*Fides*), the early fifth-century reader of this poem is urged to be constantly aware that the foundational component of Christian heroism is absolute faith in the power of God. In addition to this, the way in which Prudentius takes advantage of the portrayal of the virtue Faith (*Fides*) at the beginning of the *Psychomachia* (36-39), to both acknowledge the heroic sacrifice of the Christian martyrs in the past and determinedly situate the latter in an historical context, emphatically establishes that early fifth-century Christian heroism is not modelled on the heroism of martyrdom. The appearance of the queen of the virtues as resembling an Ascetic Christian immediately evokes the notion that Prudentius' literary vision of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* is manifested in the interior domain, in the purified soul.

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[598] Thompson (tr.) (1949:302-305).

7.4 The army of the heroic Christian virtues

This chapter continues below with in-depth analyses of the rest of the heroic Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia,* who are interpreted here to form the 'foot soldiers and generals' of the army of Christian virtues guided by the queen of the virtues, Faith (*Fides*). The approach taken is to explicate the manner in which this study isolates the particular but essential heroic attribute of each of the heroic virtues, which is revealed through close analysis of the text of the *Psychomachia*.[599]

7.4.1 Chastity (*Pudicitia*)

Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) in the *Psychomachia* is filled with layers of complexity.[600] Through careful analysis of the text of the *Psychomachia*, it is the argument of this study that Prudentius uses the characterisation of the heroic virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) (40-108) to primarily demonstrate that the path towards Christian heroism lies in conceptualising Christian sexuality as an interiorized and divine experience and not an experience of the flesh in the corporeal world.

In the portrayal of the virtue Chastity (Pudicitia), in lines 70-71, Prudentius conveys to the readers of the *Psychomachia,* who are striving heroically to rid their souls of the pagan vice of Lust (*Libido*), that the sin of lust has no power since the virgin birth of the Godhead. Prudentius succinctly informs his readers that '*ex quo [die] … corporis humani naturam pristina origo / deseruit* [since the day when man's body lost its primeval nature]' (*Psychomachia* 71-73).[601] It is suggested here that these particular lines are one of the more direct and unambiguous statements that Prudentius uses in his portrayal of the Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia*. This poet, who so often wraps his communications of early fifth-century Christian heroism in layers of cryptic meanings in the *Psychomachia*, overtly avoids this possible ambiguity in his response to the socio-cultural and religious challenges

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[599] It is the interpretation of this study that the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) is the commander of the army of Christian virtues and her role is defined in the building of the Temple of the Soul, therefore her depiction in the *Psychomachia* is discussed in section 7.6 of this chapter.

[600] See Chapter Four (4.6) of this study for a review of Prudentius' use of literary devices of typology and heroic exemplification in his portrayal of the heroic virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) in the *Psychomachia*.

[601] Thompson (tr.) (1949:284-285).

relating to Christian sexuality in the early fifth century[602] and the manner in which the experience of the flesh can be conceptualised as divine, in the portrayal of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*). The virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) embodies the notion that the Christian heroism is realised in the control of dangerous sexual urges.

Directly after the significant statement in lines 71-73, Prudentius elaborates on how Christians who have rid their souls of vice should perceive that sexual relations for heroic Christians are transformed into divine experiences through the partnering of the flesh with God, as illustrated in this quotation, '*inde omnis iam diua caro est quae concipit illum / naturamque dei consortis foedere sumit* [From that day all flesh is divine, since it conceives Him and takes on the nature of God by a covenant of partnership]' (*Psychomachia* 76-77).[603] Again, Prudentius is clear about how the early fifth-century Christian should augment his or her Christian heroic identity by forming a metaphorical spiritual partnership with God. It is argued here that the notion of partnering oneself with God purposefully strengthens Prudentius' vision of early fifth-century Christians heroism being manifested in the interior domain of the soul.

In addition to this, in his portrayal of the virtue Chasity, Prudentius conveys the message that Christians who are heroic enough to rid their souls of the pagan vice Lust (*Libido*), and whose sexual relations are experienced as a spiritual event, are raised to a higher state of existence. In lines 78-81, Prudentius continues his description of the advantages of combining the act of sexual relations with the word of God by explicitly explaining that when sexual relations are experienced as a spiritual event, humans are raised to a higher state of existence.

This notion of raising the heroic Christian to a higher state of being is a repeated theme in Prudentius' portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* and is expressed by Prudentius either spatially situating the heroic virtues above the dying or dead pagan vices, or metaphorically, as he suggests in lines 71-78 of the portrayal of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*). In the portrayal of the heroism of the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*), Prudentius again repeats this concept of the heroic Christian virtues occupying a higher spatial sphere of existence than the dying or dead pagan vices, as shown in the following quotation.

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[602] See Chapter Five (5.6-5.7) of this study for an elaboration on Prudentius' conceptualisation of Christian sexuality as demonstrated in the *Psychomachia*.
[603] Thompson (tr.) (1949:284-285).

'*abde caput tristi, iam frigida pestis, abysso;*

occide, prostibulum; manes pete, claudere Auerno,

inque tenebrosum noctis detrudere fundum.

[Bury thy head in the grim pit, thou bane now powerless. Death to thee, harlot, down

with thee to the dead; be thou shut up in hell and thrust into the dark depths of night!]'

(*Psychomachia* 91-93).[604]

This recurrent theme in the text of the *Psychomachia* communicates to the early fifth-century reader of this poem that Prudentius' literary expression of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* demonstrates that the souls of the heroic will be rewarded with eternal salvation not in the terrestrial domain, but in the heavenly domain of the Kingdom of God. Prudentius' subtle and repetitive communication of this message in his portrayal of the heroism of the Christian virtues in the text of this poem reiterates for his readers that they too can be granted the heavenly rewards of heroism, like the Christian martyrs.[605] However, their manifestation of Christian heroism in a post-martyrdom context is realised interiorly, in the purified soul, cleansed of pagan vice.

7.4.2   *Long-Suffering (Patientia)*

In this study, it is argued that Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) has a duality of purposes that are both specifically aimed towards strengthening the heroic identity of early fifth-century readers of the *Psychomachia*. Firstly, it is proposed that in his portrayal of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*), Prudentius is demonstrating that the soul of the Christian that is filled with the spirit of God is essentially fortified against the evils of pagan vice. Secondly, Prudentius' depiction of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) looks both to the future and the past of heroism in Christianity. The virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) communicates to the readers of the *Psychomachia* that Christian heroism requires steadfastness in their devotion to God. It is argued here that both of these characterisations contained in the portrayal of the heroism of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) contribute in their own way towards guiding the early fifth-century Christian to begin to conceptualise

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[604] Thompson (tr.) (1949:284-285).
[605] See Chapter Five (5.6) for an elaboration on the martyrial narrative as it prevailed in early fifth-century Christianity.

Christian heroism as multidimensional, especially as the characterisation of each consecutive virtue in this poem becomes more complex in nature.

In consideration of the first point of the above-mentioned argument and upon close reading of the portrayal of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) (109-177) in the *Psychomachia*, it is the interpretation of this study that, in this depiction, Prudentius specifically draws attention to the notion that the route to Christian heroism in the early fifth century is not always saturated with violence and blood. This is emphatically communicated by Prudentius in the manner in which he introduces the heroic virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) in this quotation:

'*ecce modesta graui stabat Patientia uultu*

per medias inmota acies uariosque tumultus,   110

uulneraque et rigidis uitalia peruia pilis

spectabat defixa oculos et lenta manebat.

[Lo, mild Long-Suffering was standing with staid countenance, unmoved amid the battle and its confused uproar, with fixed gaze watching the wounds inflicted as the stiff javelins pierced the vital parts while she waited inactive]' (*Psychomachia* 109-112).[606]

It is argued in this study that Prudentius' depiction of the apparent passivity and inactivity of this virtue is bound to the concept of strength and not weakness. The most vital message that Prudentius is communicating to early fifth-century Christians in this specific depiction of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) is that the soul of the Christian is not vulnerable when it is filled with the power of God. This is represented in Prudentius' figurative description of the armour that this powerful virtue wears, as illustrated in this quotation:[607]

'*prouida nam Virtus conserto adamante trilicem*   125

induerat thoraca umeris squamosaque ferri

texta per intortos conmiserat undique neruos.

[for the Virtue had prudently put on her shoulders a three-ply corselet of mail impenetrable, the fabric of iron scales joined every way with leathers interlaced]' (*Psychomachia* 125-127).

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[606] Thompson (tr.) (1949:286-287).
[607] See Chapter Six (6.4) for a discussion on the concept of the armour of the soul in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.

The imagery of impenetrability that Prudentius evokes in the quotation above resounds with the idea that no weaponry will pierce this virtue's amour. This, it is argued here, is the crucial literary communication embedded in this virtue's heroic portrayal, namely that the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) wears amour that effectively repels any onslaught of pagan vice. This conveys to the early fifth-century reader that the pure soul of the heroic Christian is not vulnerable to the threat of pagan vice. It is the interpretation of this study that Prudentius' message in the above passage provides the early fifth-century reader of the *Psychomachia* with the means to strengthen his or her heroic identity and simultaneously make the soul impenetrable to the evil forces of paganism.

The significance of rendering the soul of the early fifth-century Christian impervious to the evils of pagan vice through arming it with the spirit of God cannot be overestimated. Prudentius emphasises in the quotation below that every heroic virtue goes into battle protected by the amour of the soul embodied in the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*):

> '*omnibus una comes uirtutibus adsociatur,*
> *auxiliumque suum fortis Patientia miscet.*   175
> *nulla anceps luctamen init Virtute sine ista*
> *uirtus, nam uidua est quam non Patientia firmat.*
> [To all the Virtues Long-Suffering alone joins herself in company and bravely adds her help; no Virtue enters on the hazard of the struggle without this Virtue's aid, for she has nought to lean upon, whose strength Long-Suffering does not uphold]'
> (*Psychomachia* 174-177).[608]

The second part of this study's interpretation of the portrayal of the duality of the heroism of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) is built upon the reading that, similar to Janus, the two-sided pagan god, this virtue's heroic profile is a simultaneous combination of the past and the future of Christianity. Prudentius' depiction of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) embodies the history of suffering that preceded the rise of Christianity in the Late Ancient world in the late fourth and early fifth centuries and the envisaged peaceful and ordered future for the Late Ancient Christian world. Prudentius acknowledges the suffering of the past in his portrayal of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*). This is represented by the

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[608] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).

inclusion of the Biblical figure Job, who accompanies this virtue. It has been argued in this study that Prudentius determinedly does not replicate the modality of heroism displayed by the Christian martyrs in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*. It is thus significant to draw attention to this poet's exemplification of the heroic endurance and stamina of Job in the portrayal of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*), and it is noteworthy that this poet specifically does not reiterate the suffering of the Christian martyrs in the depiction of the virtue.

It is the interpretation of this study that Job is an embodiment and acknowledgement of the past suffering of Christians, as demonstrated in the quotation below:

> '*nam proximus Iob*
> *haeserat invictae dura inter bella magistrae,*
> *fronte severus adhuc et multo funere anhelus,*   165
> *sed iam clausa truci subridens ulcera vultu,*
> *perque cicatricum numerum sudata recensens*
> *millia pugnarum, sua praemia, dedecus hostis.*
> [for Job had clung close to the side of his invincible mistress throughout the hard battle, hitherto grave of look and panting from the slaughter of many a foe, but now with a smile on his stern face as he thought of his healed sores and, by the number of his scars, recounted his thousands of hard-won fights, his own glory and his foes' dishonour]' (*Psychomachia* 163-168).[609]

There are particular features of the quotation above that indicate that Prudentius' literary representation of Job enhances the notion that the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) looks to the past and the future. This is most demonstrable in lines 165-167 of this passage. In line 165, Prudentius portrays Job as being 'fronte *severus* [grave of look]' (*Psychomachia* 165),[610] which told of the effort of battling the onslaught of paganism in the past. However, in the next lines, 166-167, Job is at peace and his multiple wounds have healed. This, it is argued here, is attributed to the fact Job has found peace when associated with the heroic Christian virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*), who also represents the future of Christianity as it begins to dominate in the Late Ancient world in the early fifth century.

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[609] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).
[610] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).

Finally, it is valuable to draw attention here to the significant lines of the speech (156-159) of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*) over the self-wounded body of the vice Wrath (*Ira*). When given close examination, it is argued here that these specific lines synchronise the duality of this virtue's portrayal that has been explicated in the discussion of this virtue thus far:

> *'exultans Vitium solita uirtute, sine ullo*
> *sanguinis ac vitae discrimine; lex habet istud*
> *nostra genus belli, furias omnemque malorum*
> *militiam et rabidas tolerando extinguere vires.*
> [We have overcome a proud Vice with our wonted virtue, with no danger to blood or life. This is the kind of warfare that is our rule, to wipe out the fiends of passion and all their army of evils and their savage strength by bearing their attack]' (*Psychomachia* 156-159).[611]

It is the interpretation of this study that these particular lines embody the notion that the soul of the heroic Christian is no longer vulnerable to pagan vice. This is expressed in the lines *'exultans Vitium solita uirtute, sine ullo / sanguinis ac uitae discrimine; lex habet istud* [We have overcome a proud Vice with our wonted virtue, with no danger to blood or life]' (*Psychomachia* 156-157).[612] In these lines, Prudentius is again reiterating that the soul of the heroic Christian is protected through the power of God.

Following this, in lines 158-159, which read '*nostra genus belli, furias omnemque malorum / militiam et rabidas tolerando extinguere uires* [This is the kind of warfare that is our rule, to wipe out the fiends of passion and all their army of evils and their savage strength by bearing their attack]' (*Psychomachia* 156-159),[613] Prudentius conveys the unequivocal message that Christianity is becoming dominant in the early fifth century. In addition to this, it is argued here that these particular lines reinforce the concept that early fifth-century Christian heroism is attained through an interiorized battle fought in the soul to rid pagan vices from the lives of Christians who have the courage to withstand their onslaught.

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[611] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).
[612] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).
[613] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).

7.4.3   Lowliness (Mens Humilis) and Hope (Spes)

As noted in the discussion above (7.4.2), as the narrative of the battles of the *Psychomachia* continue, not only does each episode become longer, but the portrayal of each heroic Christian virtue becomes progressively more complex. The fifth battle of the *Psychomachia*, between the Christian virtues Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and Hope (*Spes*) against the pagan vice Pride (*Superbia*) (178-308) is one of the most eloquent portrayals of a vice in the *Psychomachia*. The partnership of the virtues Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and Hope (*Spes*) demonstrates not only that Christian heroism is humble in nature, but also that it has communal characteristics.

There can be no doubt that the *Psychomachia* reflects many examples of teachings of the Holy Scriptures from the Bible. It is the argument of this study that when the portrayal of the heroic virtues Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and Hope (*Spes*) of the *Psychomachia* are given in-depth textual analysis, both of their portrayals are interpreted here to be the most directly representative of the tenets of the Bible, specifically the New Testament Gospel of Mathew Verse 5.5, 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'.[614] Although rather obvious, it is argued here that this analogy should not be read too literally. Like most of Prudentius' portrayals of the heroism of the Christian virtues, it is the understanding of this study that this apparent analogy contains deeper layers of meaning, which require explication here.

Prudentius introduces the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and her fellow helper, the virtue Hope (*Spes*), in the following manner:

> '*aduersum spectans cuneum, quem milite raro*
> *et paupertinis ad bella coegerat armis*
> *Mens Humilis, regina quidem, sed egens alieni*
> *auxilii proprio nec sat confisa paratu.*   200
> *Spem sibi collegam coniunxerat, edita cuius*
> *et suspensa ab humo est opulentia divite regno.*

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[614] Gospel of Matthew Verse 5.5 KJV (2014:Loc 1371). It is also acknowledged in this study that the portrayal of the virtues Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and Hope (*Spes*) in the *Psychomachia*, specifically in the speech of the virtue Hope (*Spes*) (291-299), refer to the Biblical account of the battle between David and Goliath from The First Book of Samuel Verses 17.1-17.58. However, it is the argument of this study that Verse 5.5 from the Gospel of Matthew is more relevant to the findings of this discussion.

[a force but small in number and scantily armed, that Lowliness had gathered for the war — a princess she, indeed, but standing in need of others' help and wanting trust in her own provision. She had made Hope her fellow, whose rich estate is on high and lifted up from the earth in a wealthy realm]' (*Psychomachia* 197-202).[615]

This particular passage resounds with contrasting imagery of what is initially perceived of as impoverishment and wealth. However, as with most of Prudentius' portrayals of the Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia*, this depiction is laden with deeper levels of meaning, which, as will be demonstrated below, support the argument of this discussion that the portrayal of these particular virtues strongly echoes the above-quoted passage from the New Testament Gospel of Matthew Verse 5.5. Significantly, Prudentius points out in his introduction to the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*), in lines 198-199, that this virtue is indeed a princess, but requires the help of her comrade, the virtue Hope (*Spes*). Portraying the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) as conversely a princess and a pauper (197-200) and then introducing her helper, the virtue Hope (*Spes*), as a 'wealthy' character (201-202) cannot be taken at face-value without taking into consideration the message Prudentius is cryptically communicating to the early fifth-century Christian regarding his vision of Christian heroism in the combination of these depictions.

Firstly, it is argued here that the particular manner in which Prudentius chooses to introduce the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) as a heroic virtue who requires aid from another virtue effectively negates the daunting prospect that the strengthening of an interiorized heroic identity for the early fifth-century Christian was a solitary endeavour. Secondly, the juxtaposition of the imagery of a pauper being a princess in the depiction of the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) does not reduce her heroic status, but rather enhances the notion of universality conveyed in Prudentius' expression of early fifth-century Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*.[616]

Importantly, this introduction to the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) attributes a completely new meaning to the term 'meek' contained in the Gospel of Matthew Verse 5.5. It is argued here that by combining the notions of heroic virtue with nobility and material poverty in his

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[615] Thompson (tr.) (1949:292-293).
[616] See Chapter Four (4.3) of this study for an elaboration on the notion of universality in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia*.

introduction to the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*), Prudentius removes the connotation that the term 'meek' implies lack of heroic disposition. This is further augmented by the fact that Prudentius portrays the heroic virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) defending the soul against what is arguably the most powerfully described pagan vice of the *Psychomachia*, the vice Pride (*Superbia*). It is argued here that the determinedly vivid portrayal of the vice Pride (*Superbia*) in this episode does not diminish, but rather ultimately enhances, the heroic profile of the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and her aid Hope (*Spes*). For the early fifth-century Christian just beginning to witness the advancement of Christianity in the Late Ancient world and still not far distanced chronologically from the centuries of persecution of Christians, this perspective can arguably be seen to further strengthen not only his or her heroic profile, but also firmly establish the concept of Christian heroism as orientated towards the present context and his or her future life.

In consideration of lines 201-202 of the quotation above, which introduce and describe the virtue Hope (*Spes*) as wealthy, it is the argument of this study that, again, Prudentius provides a literary communication about the meaning of Verse 5.5 of the Gospel of Matthew. Firstly, it is important to point out that it is the understanding of this study that the terminology of wealth used in connection with the virtue Hope (*Spes*), such as '*opulentia* [wealthy]'(*Psychomachia* 202),[617] should be interpreted not as wealth or abundance of material goods that are in the context of the terrestrial. Instead, it is argued that Prudentius' depiction of the 'wealth' of the virtue Hope (*Spes*), both in lines (201-202) and at the conclusion of this episode in the lines '*dixit, et auratis praestringens aëra pinnis / in caelum se virgo rapit* [With these words, striking the air with her gilded wings, the maid flies off to heaven]' (*Psychomachia* 305-306),[618] Prudentius is communicating a particular message to early fifth-century Christians who are striving to augment a socially appropriate Christian heroic identity. This message is that the wealth associated with his portrayal of the virtue Hope (*Spes*) is not bound to notions of abundance in worldly material goods. Rather, Prudentius' literary conceptualisation of wealth is the abundance of God's glory, which abounds in the interiorized soul of the heroic Christian.

Herein lies the heart of this dissertation's argument that the portrayal of the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and her comrade, the virtue Hope (*Spes*), embody the true meaning of Verse 5.5 of the Gospel of Matthew. More explicitly, the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and her

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[617] Thompson (tr.) (1949:292-293).
[618] Thompson (tr.) (1949:300-301).

fellow virtue Hope (*Spes*) in the *Psychomachia* communicate an essential message of the Bible, namely that although Christians may perceive that they do not necessarily have the fiscal means to overcome pagan vice in their lives, this does not prevent them ridding their interior souls of pagan vice and dominating as a new world-order in the Late Ancient World. Christians will thus not only be heroic as represented in the portrayal of the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*), but their immortal souls, purified of pagan vice, will know spiritual abundance beyond their wildest imagination in the Kingdom of God. This, it is argued here, is where Prudentius embodies the heroic portrayal of the virtues Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and Hope (*Spes*) and where he most vividly and metaphorically communicates the notion of the abundance of God's power in early fifth-century Christian heroism, through his interpretation of the words 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'.

7.4.4 Soberness (*Sobrietas*)

It is the aim of this section to investigate the text of Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) in the *Psychomachia*, to unveil the deeper levels of significance contained within this depiction of the most militaristic of the virtues, that move towards strengthening the Christian heroic identity of early fifth-century Christians. The heroic nature of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) is underpinned by the notion that the heroic Christian must be at all times be vigilant against the temptations of pagan vice.

Upon close analysis of the portrayal of this most militaristic virtue of the *Psychomachia,* the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) (344-453), it is the finding of this dissertation that Prudentius' depiction of this virtue's heroism is not one-dimensionally militaristic in nature. It is argued here that Prudentius underpins the portrayal of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) with a strong sense of realism. The virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) is the virtue that most closely embodies a pragmatic understanding of the challenges faced by early fifth-century Christians, who had to consistently resist the temptations of pagan vice to augment their Christian heroic identity. Moreover, Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) communicates the message to early fifth-century Christians that God is benevolent and forgiving and that salvation for the soul is not necessarily blocked for eternity for those Christians who stray from the path of righteousness. However, this message comes with an essential caveat,

namely that the Christian who seeks redemption from God must repent of his or her sins and henceforth be resolute in the quest to rid his or her soul of pagan vice.

The notion that the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) is fully aware of the difficulties that Christians face in battling the evils of pagan vices is noticeable even before this virtue begins her tirade against the failing army of Christian virtues. This is illustrated in the manner in which the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) realises that to restore order and renew the motivation of the weakening army of Christian virtues, her speech must be tempered with hope for the future and strategically worded to boost the troops' courage. Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Soberness' (*Sobrietas*) perceptiveness is demonstrated in this particular line, '*exstimulans animos nunc probris, nunc prece mixta* [mingling appeals with her reproaches to awake their courage]' (*Psychomachia* 350).[619] This particular line (350) deftly illustrates that the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) is aware that her upcoming speech must be strategically worded, in order not to stifle the resolution of the demoralised army of Christian virtues going forward.

The value of repenting is emphasised in the speech of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) in the lines of the quotation below:

> '*paeniteat, per si qua mouet reuerentia summi*
> *numinis, hoc tam dulce malum voluisse nefanda*   395
> *proditione sequi; si paenitet, haud nocet error.*
> [Repent, I beseech you by the fear of the high God, if at all it moves you, that you have desired to follow after this pleasant sin, committing a heinous betrayal. If ye repent, your sin is not deadly]' (*Psychomachia* 394-396).[620]

The significant quotation above (394-396) spoken by the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) explicitly explains the power of repentance in the concept of Christian heroism portrayed in the *Psychomachia.* This is most evident in the promise '*si paenitet, haud nocet error* [If ye repent, your sin is not deadly]' (*Psychomachia* 396).[621] More explicitly, when this line (396) is given deeper analysis, it holds an alternative and unstated message. This is that those who

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[619] Thompson (tr.) (1949:302-303).
[620] Thompson (tr.) (1949:306-307).
[621] Thompson (tr.) (1949:306-307).

do not repent of their sins and instead allow their souls to be overtaken by pagan vice will inevitably be destroyed by the forces of evil, with no hope of eternal salvation for their souls in the Kingdom of God.

The power of God to redeem those who repent of their sins is most demonstrably illustrated by Prudentius in the manner in which he depicts the actions of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) immediately after her speech to the army of virtues. By merely displaying the battle standard of the army of the Christian virtues, the cross of the Lord, to the army of pagan vices, the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) initiates unprecedented chaos within the pagan vices (407-449). It is the interpretation of this study that through the action of presenting the standards of the army of virtues, Prudentius reiterates in the *Psychomachia* that early fifth-century Christianity is beginning to dominate in Roman society. Furthermore, the *Psychomachia* was composed in an era that was beginning to witness the demise of paganism, which is portrayed here as being disordered and lacking boldness in the battle for the soul of the Christian. The reaction of the army of pagan vices to the virtue Soberness'(*Sobrietas*) presentation of her army's battle standard is demonstrated in this quotation below:

> '*sic effata crucem Domini ferventibus offert*
> *obvia quadriiugis, lignum venerabile in ipsos*
> *intentans frenos. quod ut expavere feroces*
> [So speaking, she holds up the cross of the Lord in face of the raging chariot-horses, thrusting the holy wood against their very bridles; and for all their boldness they have taken fright]' (*Psychomachia* 407-409).[622]

Prudentius communicates to the early fifth-century reader of the *Psychomachia* that God is not only willing to not abandon those who are willing to repent but, in addition to this, His almighty power also protects those who have repented against further onslaught by the pagan vices. The disorder amongst the pagan vices of the *Psychomachia* that the above-quoted actions (407-409) of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) create in this battle is given lengthy and vivid description in lines 410-449 of the *Psychomachia*.

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[622] Thompson (tr.) (1949:306-307).

The closing lines of the portrayal of the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) (450-453) provided in the quotation below are similarly laden with meaning.

> '*his se Sobrietas et totus Sobrietatis*   450
> *abstinet exuviis miles damnataque castis*
> *scandala proculcat pedibus, nec fronte severos*
> *conivente oculos praedarum ad gaudia flectit.*
>
> [These spoils Soberness and all the soldiers of Soberness refrain from handling; they trample under their chaste feet the cursed causes of offence, nor let their austere gaze turn a blind eye towards the joys of plunder]' (*Psychomachia* 450-453).[623]

The quotation above (407-409) demonstrates that the rejection of the spoils of war by the virtue Soberness (*Sobrietas*) and her army of virtues is both utter and explicit. These riches strewn across the battle arena represent all the polluting material goods that uphold the pagan religion in Roman society.[624] However, it is argued here that there is another, deeper interpretation of the fact that the pagan riches are rejected as the victorious virtues leave the arena of battle in this episode. This deeper meaning is Prudentius' communication to the early fifth-century readers of the *Psychomachia* that those who have resolved to continue along the path of righteousness and put their trust in the power of God to rid the soul of pagan vice shall no longer be tempted by worldly goods. Furthermore, this depiction is a continuation of the theme that recurs throughout the *Psychomachia* that those Christians whose souls are filled with the spirit of God have no need for material wealth.[625] The 'wealth' of the heroic Christians is manifested in the purity of their interiorized souls, which are filled with the spirit of God.

7.4.5   *Reason/Good Works (Ratio/Operatio)*

As mentioned throughout this chapter, Prudentius' continuing portrayal of Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia* becomes increasingly complex with each episode of this poem. This poet's portrayal of the bipartite virtue Reason (*Ratio*) and her *alter ego* [another version of

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[623] Thompson (tr.) (1949:310-311).
[624] See Chapter Four (4.4) of this study for a discussion that elaborates on the implications of Prudentius' status as a Roman Christian aristocrat in the fourth and early fifth centuries.
[625] Notably, see Prudentius' portrayal of the virtues Faith (*Fides*) (7.3), Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and Hope (*Spes*) (7.4.3). This notion is again emphasised in the complex portrayal of the next virtue, Reason/Good Works (*Ratio/Operatio*) (7.4.5).

oneself],[626] the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*), is arguably the most complex of the entire poem. The metamorphosis of the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) into a more proactive and developed version of herself, the virtue Good Works (*Opeartio*), in line 573 of the *Psychomachia* is the most detailed depiction of a virtue in this poem. The dualistic nature of the heroism of the virtue Reason (*Ratio*)/Good Works (*Operatio*) emphasises to Christian readers of the Psychomachia that an essential quality of Christian heroism is the practical application of rationality in the presence of disorder.

The extreme measures to which the pagan vice Greed (*Avaritia*) goes to confuse and deceive the army of Christian virtues in this episode of the drawn-out battle in the *Psychomachia* (458-682), as well as the transformation of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) into a facsimile of the virtue Thrifty (*Frugi*), motivates Prudentius to expand the moral and heroic profile of the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) into a twofold character, Reason (*Ratio*) and Good Works (*Operatio*). However, it is the interpretation of this study that this depiction of the extension of the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) into the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*) is not entirely without problems. More explicitly, it is the reading of this study that Prudentius' abrupt introduction to the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*), as depicted in the quotation below,

> '*cum subito in medium frendens Operatio campum*
> *prosilit auxilio sociis, pugnamque capessit*
> *militiae postrema gradu, sed sola duello*
> *inpositura manum, ne quid iam triste supersit.*
> [But now of a sudden Good Works dashes in anger on to the midst of the battle-ground to help her comrades, and takes up the fight; posted last on the field is she, but destined singly so to put her hand to the war that nought shall remain to be feared]'
> (*Psychomachia* 573-576)[627]

does not necessarily immediately convey the message that the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) has expanded her heroic profile and suddenly become an active agent of change that defeats the power of the pagan vice Greed (*Avaritia*). It is argued here that Prudentius' depiction of the transformation of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) (551-571) into a spectre of the virtue Thrifty

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[626] 'alter ego, n.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed June 2017. Web Address Number 5 in List of References.
[627] Thompson (tr.) (1949:318-319).

(*Frugi*) is more convincing than his portrayal of the virtue Reason (*Reason*) and her shadow Good Works (*Operatio*) in this particular episode. This is augmented by the fact that the reader of the *Psychomachia* is given ample warning of the upcoming transformation of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) into the virtue Thrifty (*Frugi*), because it is explained in lines 547-550 that this transformation is going to happen. However, the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*) has no such introduction and suddenly appears on the battlefield. This renders her relationship to the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) tenuous at best.

That being said, it cannot be denied that Prudentius' portrayal of the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) and, later on, his depiction of her alter ego, the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*), go a long way in communicating this poet's literary expression of the essential components of his vision of Christian heroism for early fifth-century Christians. It is the interpretation of this study that the essence of the virtue Reason's (*Ratio*) heroism lies in her ability to reassure Christians that virtue can and should rule in the interiorised soul of the Christian and that the weak of spirit will find strength through their devotion to God and their rejection of greed. This virtue is introduced in the following way in the *Psychomachia*:

> '*et fors innocuo tinxisset sanguine ferrum,*
> *ni Ratio armipotens, gentis Levitidis una*
> *semper fida comes, clipeum obiectasset et atrae*
> *hostis ab incursu claros texisset alumnos.*
> [And perchance she would have dipped her steel in their innocent blood, had not the mighty warrior Reason, ever before all the true comrade of Levi's race, put her shield in the way and covered her famed foster-children from their deadly foe's onslaught]'
> (*Psychomachia* 501-504).[628]

It is significant to note that Prudentius depicts the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) as having ancestral roots to the tribe of the Levites (502), who traditionally played a role as the sentinels of Jewish temples.[629] This immediately evokes the notion that the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) acts as the protector of the soul. It is the interpretation of this study that the virtue Reason (*Ratio*) acts as the threshold guardian of the interiorised soul of the Christian against the devious pagan vices.

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[628] Thompson (tr.) (1949:314-315).
[629] Schwartz (1992:96-97).

It is the reading of this study that the depiction of the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*) (573-628), which includes the speech of this virtue in lines 606-628, is one of the most didactic portrayals in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. This depiction provides early fifth-century Christians with specific lifestyle guidelines that strengthen their heroic identity in this era. Specifically, in the portrayal of the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*), Prudentius communicates that even in the overwhelming presence of greed in Roman society in the early fifth century, the path to Christian heroism is found in living life in moderation and service to others. The speech of the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*), most especially the lines 609-618, is arguably one of the most poignant passages of the *Psychomachia*. This passage is provided in the quotation below:

'*summa quies nil velle super quam postulet usus*
debitus, ut simplex alimonia vestis et una   610
infirmos tegat ac recreet mediocriter artus
expletumque modum naturae non trahat extra.
ingressurus iter peram ne tollito, neve
de tunicae alterius gestamine prouidus ito,
nec te sollicitet res crastina, ne cibus alvo   615
defuerit: redeunt escae cum sole diurnae.
nonne vides ut nulla avium cras cogitet ac se
pascendam, praestante Deo, non anxia credat?

[Tis the deepest rest to wish for nought beyond what due need calls for, simple fare and one garment to cover and refresh our weak bodies in moderation, and when nature's measure is satisfied, draw us on no farther. When thou art going on a journey, carry no wallet, nor take thought, when thou goest, for another tunic to wear. And be not anxious about the morrow, lest thy belly lack food; bread for the day comes duly with the sun. Seest thou not how no bird thinks of tomorrow, but rests untroubled in the faith that it will be fed by God's provision?]' (*Psychomachia* 609-618).[630]

Prudentius' portrayal of the heroism of the Christian virtues has, by this point in his poem, become so expansive that this poet can now indulge in poetic imagery of beauty and peace.

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[630] Thompson (tr.) (1949:320-323).

Furthermore, this passage quoted above again evokes the ideologies of the ascetic Christian lifestyle in Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.* This passage quoted above also has strong links to the Biblical passage of the Gospel of Matthew Verses 6.25-6.29,[631] which reiterates Prudentius' reliance on the Holy Scriptures in his portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia.* The next section of this discussion (7.5) investigates Prudentius' portrayal of the unheroic army of pagan vices in the *Psychomachia.*

7.5   The army of pagan vices

It is the thesis of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of the army of pagan vices in the *Psychomachia* are orientated towards highlighting two important factors. Firstly the redundancy of the social construct of paganism in the context of Roman society in the early fifth century and secondly, to draw attention to the bravery and courage of the Christian vitues in this poem.[632]

7.5.1   *Worship-of-the-Old-Gods (Fidem Veterum Cultura Deorum)*

Just as it is argued here that the heroic virtues are represented by the most senior of their number, the virtue Faith (*Fides*), it is held here that the pagan vices are represented by the most senior of their army, the vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods. The virtue Faith's (*Fides*)opponent, the pagan vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods is considered in this study to represent Prudentius' literary embodiment of the notion that paganism is a socially redundant religion in early fifth-century Roman society. This vice enters the battle arena in the regalia of ancient pagan priests, but in one blow from the virtue Faith (*Fides*) is felled (30-33).

This abrupt death of the pagan vice Worship-of-the-Old-Gods establishes at the outset of this poem that paganism is devoid of social relevance in early fifth-century Roman society. The pagan vice does not even get to fight back as she is attacked by the heroic queen of the Christian virtues, Faith (*Fides*). It is interpreted here that this is a significant aspect of this vice's short portrayal in the *Psychomachia.* This senior member of the army of the pagan

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[631] KJV (2014:Loc 1375).

[632]   It is the thesis of this study that the army of pagan vices are essentially unheroic in nature. Therefore, it outside the focus of this dissertation to give in-depth analysis of each pagan vice. In addition to this the vice Heresy is discussed in section 7.6 of this chapter because of order of appearance, not because she has any of the qualities of leadership that the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) displays.

vices demonstrates no heroism at all before she is killed. This sets the tone of this poem and introduces the concept of the authority of Christian heroism for early fifth-century Christians.

7.5.2   Lust (Libido)

The pagan vice that fights against the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*) is the vice Lust (*Libido*). Prudentius' rich description of the sordidness of this vice is encapsulated in this quotation, which describes the aftermath of the slaying of Lust (*Libido*) by the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*):

> *'tunc exarmatae iugulum meretricis adacto*
> *transfigit gladio; calidos vomit illa vapores*   50
> *sanguine concretos caenoso; spiritus inde*
> *sordidus exhalans uicinas polluit auras.*
> [Then with a sword-thrust she pierces the disarmed harlot's throat, and she spews out hot fumes with clots of foul blood, and the unclean breath defiles the air near by]'
> (*Psychomachia* 49-52).[633]

This vice pollutes the atmosphere around her with her dying breath. It is the view of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of the pagan vice Lust (*Libido*) emphasises the notion of sexual pollution in the context of Roman pagan society.[634] This vice represents sexual incontinence in contrast to her opponent, the virtue Chastity (*Pudicitia*), and by doing so enhances Christianity's notion of sexual continence.

7.5.3   Wrath/(Ira)

Prudentius portrayal of the pagan vice Wrath (*Ira*), who battles the Christian virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*), is arguably one of the most pertinent descriptions of the futility of the emotion of anger in poetic form. Through his imaginative abilities, Prudentius demonstrates

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[633] Thompson (tr.) (1949:282-283).
[634] See Chapter Five (5.6-5.7) of this study for an elaboration of the concept of Christian sexuality in the *Psychomachia*.

the essence of the ineffectualness of anger in achieving results. The vice Wrath's (*Ira*) pointless and futile rage against the most steadfast of the Christian virtues, Long-Suffering (*Patientia*), ends almost predictably in this vice's own suicide, as seen in this quotation:

> '*rasile figit humi lignum ac se cuspide versa*
> *perfodit et calido pulmonem vulnere transit.*
> [The smooth shaft she fixes in the ground and with the upturned point stabs herself, piercing her breast with a burning wound]' (*Psychomachia* 153-154).[635]

The suicide of the pagan vice Wrath (*Ira*) serves to enhance the positive qualities of the virtue Long-Suffering (*Patientia*), as it highlights the attribute of patience and rationality. The success of the Christian heroic virtue Long-Suffering's (*Patientia*) forbearance against the frenetic and disordered behaviours of the vice Wrath (*Ira*) reminds readers of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* of the fact that this poem is meant to augment the heroic identity of Christians in a post-martyrdom context. In other words, in the context of the early fifth century and on the brink of the rise of Christianity in Late Ancient Roman society, Prudentius once again demonstrates that paganism is no longer socially relevant. This is evident in his portrayal of the futility of the behaviours of the vice Wrath (*Ira*). It is the interpretation of this study that Prudentius' portrayal of the vice Wrath (*Ira*) strategically demonstrates to early fifth-century Christians that paganism, like the vice Wrath (*Ira*), is railing against the social construct of Christianity that is already beginning to show signs of ever-increasing dominance in Roman Late Ancient society. This, it is argued here, is why Prudentius ends the rampage of the vice Wrath (*Ira*) in suicide.

7.5.4 Pride/(Superbia)

Smith (1976),[636] rather extravagantly, refers to the vice Pride (*Superbia*), the opponent of the virtue Lowliness (*Mens Humilis*) and her comrade Hope (*Spes*), as the most heroic of the pagan vices in the *Psychomachia*. While this is not the interpretation of this study as it the argument of this study that the vice Pride (*Superbia*) is Prudentius' most explicit demonstration of the absence of any form of heroic inclination in the army of pagan vices, it

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[635] Thompson (tr.) (1949:288-291).
[636] Smith (1976:184).

must be said that Prudentius' portrayal of the pagan vice Pride (*Superbia*) is elaborate and deserves a close reading. For example, the vice Pride (*Superbia*) enters the arena of battle seated atop a lion skin, which was dualistically significant to both Roman and Eastern heritages (178-182).[637] Not only does the vice Pride (*Superbia*) confuse Eastern and Western symbology in the wearing of the lion-skin, but she also confuses the origins of the Old Testament figure Adam in line 226 of her speech to the army of Christian virtues. This can be evidenced most emphatically when Pride (*Superbia*) calls Adam '*venerabilis Adam* [venerable Adam]'[638] and refers to him as a fallen Christian and makes the incorrect conclusion that he is thus a pagan hero, not a Christian figure, in lines 223-227.

Prudentius uses the depiction of the vice Pride's (*Superbia*) unruly horse to further emphasise the chaotic disposition of this vice. This is demonstrated in a number of ways in her portrayal, even in the way in which she cannot control her horse, as illustrated in this quotation:

> '*nec minus instabili sonipes feritate superbit,*   190
> *inpatiens madidis frenarier ora lupatis.*
> *huc illuc frendens obuertit terga, negata*
> *libertate fugae, pressisque tumescit habenis.*
> *hoc sese ostentans habitu ventosa virago*
> *inter utramque aciem supereminet et phaleratum*
> *circumflectit equum, vultuque et voce minatur*
> [Her charger also, too spirited to stand still, carries itself proudly, ill brooking to have its mouth curbed with the bit it is champing. This way and that it backs in its rage, since it is denied freedom to run off and is angered at the pressure of the reins. In such style does this boastful she-warrior display herself, towering over both armies as she circles round on her bedecked steed and with menacing look and speech eyes the force that confronts her]' (*Psychomachia* 190-196).[639]

To add irony to the portrayal of the vice Pride (*Superbia*), Prudentius uses the unrestrained steed as a contributory agent to the final demise of this vice, in lines 253-271. It is the

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[637] Lewis (2000:102) points out that the wearing of lion skin by the vice Pride (*Superbia*) could be considered Roman if related to the Roman hero Hercules, who is depicted wearing it in the *Aeneid* in his battle against Cacus (8:188-270). Alternatively, the significance of the lion skin could be Eastern in origin if one considers its relationship to the cult of the Magna Mater (Lewis, 2000:102).
[638] Thompson (tr.) (1949:292-293).
[639] Thompson (tr.) (1949:292-293).

understanding of this study that in his portrayal of the vice Pride (*Superbia*), Prudentius appears to be emphasising the social construct of early fifth-century paganism as a confused, disordered and outdated religious system. To further strengthen this argument, attention must be drawn to two important factors in Prudentius' portrayal of the vice Pride (*Superbia*). Firstly, in the introduction to this vice, Prudentius makes it quite clear that she is alone and not accompanied by any of her comrades, as illustrated in this quotation, '*forte per effusas inflata Superbia turmas / effreni volitabat equo, quem pelle leonis* [It chanced that Pride was galloping about, all puffed up, through the widespread squadrons, on a mettled steed which she had covered with a lion's skin]' (*Psychomachia* 179-180).[640] Secondly, the death of the vice Pride (*Superbia*) is caused by her horse falling into a carefully camouflaged pit dug by the pagan vice Deceit (257-273). These two significant aspects of the vice Pride's (*Superbia*) portrayal imply most unambiguously that paganism in the early fifth century was an uncoordinated social construct and was in disarray in Roman society.

7.5.5 *Indulgence/(Luxuria)*

The vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) is, upon first reading, one of the most appealing of the pagan vices, as she enters the arena of battle against the Christian virtues in a delightfully drunken state in a magnificent chariot, throwing flowers to the army of Christian virtues (310-327). However, this vice is one of the most deceptively dangerous of all the vices in the *Psychomachia* because her malevolent powers lie in her ability to tempt the heroic army of Christian vices away from their heroic mission to rid the soul of pagan vice. The manner in which the Christian virtues begin to fall under the spell of the vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) is described in this quotation, which also describes the underlying dangers of this vice:

> '*inde eblanditis Virtutibus halitus inlex*
> *inspirat tenerum labefacta per ossa uenenum,*
> *et male dulcis odor domat ora et pectora et arma*
> *ferratosque toros obliso robore mulcet.*
> [So the Virtues are won over by her charms; the alluring breath blows a subtle poison
> on them that unmans their frames, the fatally sweet scent subduing their lips and

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[640] Thompson (tr.) (1949:290-291).

hearts and weapons, softening their iron-clad muscles and crushing their strength]'
(Psychomachia 328-331).[641]

[641] Thompson (tr.) (1949:300-303).

This study suggests that Prudentius' main communication in his portrayal of the pagan vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) was a warning to early fifth-century Christians. Due to the rule of fourth-century Emperors such as Theodosius I,[642] early fifth-century Roman society, most especially aristocratic Romans, were enjoying a period of relative prosperity. However, the abundance of wealth in some sections of Roman society did not extend to the poorer classes and, in addition to this, was directly contradictory to the teaching of asceticism, which was based on austerity. Prudentius' portrayal of the vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) demonstrates for early fifth-century readers of the *Psychomachia* that the obsessive pursuit of material wealth creates spiritual deprivation and diverts Christians from their heroic mission to rid their souls of pagan vice. It is argued here that the portrayal of the vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) closely relates to the next pagan vice depicted in the *Psychomachia,* the vice Greed.

7.5.6   Greed (*Avaritia*)

As stated above (7.5.5), Prudentius portrayal of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) relates to the core elements of the nature of the vice Indulgence (*Luxuria*) in the *Psychomachia*, namely that the human weakness to overindulge eventually becomes a manifestation of the vice of greed. The portrayal of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) in the *Psychomachia* is one of the most complex and incorporated into the longest episodic battle of this poem. The discussion above (7.4.5) regarding the Christian virtues Reason/Good Works's (*Ratio/Operatio*) heroic defeat of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) demonstrates that this vice is arguably the most difficult to defeat in the war between the Christian virtues and the pagan vices in the *Psychomachia*. This, it is argued here, is because in the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius portrays the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) as essentially insatiable and willing to resort to the lowest level of human depravity to feed her voracious appetite for abundance.

This is most demonstrably illustrated in the manner in which this vice transforms herself into an avatar of the virtue Thrifty (*Frugi*), as illustrated in this quotation:

> *'fit Virtus specie vultuque et veste severa*
> *quam memorant Frugi, parce cui viuere cordi est*

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[642] See Chapter Four (4.3) of this study for an elaboration on the rule of fourth-century Christian Emperors in the Roman Empire.

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> *et servare suum; tamquam nil raptet avare,*   555
>
> *artis adumbratae meruit ceu sedula laudem.*
>
> [In appearance, with austere mien and dress, she becomes the Virtue men call Thrifty, whose pleasure it is to live sparingly and save what she has; she looks as if she never snatched aught with greedy hands, and with her air of carefulness she has gained repute for the quality she counterfeits]' (*Psychomachia* 553-556).[643]

This passage of the *Psychomachia* communicates to early fifth-century readers of this poem that the vice of greed in mankind knows no boundaries. Although Prudentius presents this message in a highly abstract manner, it contains dire implications. This portrayal of the indomitable strength of the vice of greed, once it gains a foothold in the lives of Christians, is arguably one of Prudentius' sternest and most earnest cautions to early fifth-century Christians about the threat that this vice poses to the augmentation of their Christian heroic identity. Furthermore, the eventual conquering of this vice by the virtue Good Works (*Operatio*) symbolises a definite turn of fortunes for the heroic army of Christian virtues in this poem. With the slaying of the vice Greed (*Avaritia*) (589-595) in the *Psychomachia*, the triumph of the Christian virtues over the pagan vices in the soul of the Christian is virtually assured.

This concludes this discussion that provides this study's interpretation of Prudentius' portrayal of what are deemed here to be the soldiers of the army of Christian virtues and their opponents, the pagan vices. The next section of this chapter, which focuses on a literary analysis of the victorious erection of the Temple of the Soul, also incorporates an analysis of the role of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*), who is interpreted here as acting as a commanding general of the army of Christians warriors described in section 7.4. Section 7.6 also includes an analysis of the last threat to the purification of the Christian soul of pagan vice by the vice Discord/Heresy (*Discordia*).

7.6   The Temple of the Soul

The concluding episodes of the *Psychomachia* (629-887) introduce a new perspective of the portrayal of heroism in the Christian virtues of the *Psychomachia.* The atmosphere that

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[643] Thompson (tr.) (1949:316-319).

Prudentius evokes in these concluding lines (629-887) speak to the notion of the invincibility of Christian heroism. It is in this passage that the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) enters the battle. The heroic profile of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) communicates to the readers of the *Psychomachia* that the perseverance of their devotion to God is rewarded by a harmonious and peaceful life on earth. The ineffectual attack against the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) by the pagan vice Discord/Heresy (*Discordia*) (684-693) does little to subdue the mood of the virtue's victory at the end of this poem. In fact, the speech by the pagan vice Discord/Heresy (*Discordia*) (709-714) before she is set upon by the army of virtues and killed only serves to further strengthen the idea that paganism is an irrelevant social construct in early fifth-century Roman society. This is most noticeable when Prudentius depicts the speech of this doomed pagan vice as a reflection of the most ancient traditions of paganism, for example when this vice states '*praeceptor Belia mihi, domus et plaga mundus* [My teacher is Belial, my home and country the world]' (*Psychomachia* 714).[644] The Roman Late Ancient world in the early fifth century was by no means completely dominated by paganism. This statement by the vice Discord/Heresy (*Discordia*) further diminishes the authority of paganism because it is so inaccurate.

The battle to rid the Christian soul of pagan vices has been hard fought. However, in lines 629-887, Prudentius does not emphasise the hard-won battles of Christian heroism. Rather, these concluding lines, most especially lines 823-887 of this poem, which describe the heroic virtues erecting the magnificent Temple of the Soul, reflect the notion of the indomitability of the purified soul of the heroic Christian. In addition to this, Prudentius' literary communication of Christian heroism in lines 629-887 serves to demonstrate to early fifth-century Christians that purging the soul of pagan vices and allowing the spirit of God to rule their souls is the ultimate reward of striving for Christian heroism. The concluding episodes of the *Psychomachia* (629-887) do not focus on the mighty effort of realising Christian heroism, but rather reflect the glory that comes to those heroic Christians who rid their souls of pagan vices.

The concluding episodes of the *Psychomachia* (629-887), which are firmly orientated towards the future[645] of Christianity and the future of interiorized Christian heroism in the

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[644] Thompson (tr.) (1949:328-329).
[645] In line 775, Prudentius makes his second reference to the Christian martyrs in the *Psychomachia*; however, in this study, it is argued that this is situated in an historical context.

pure soul, are introduced with the entry of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) in the following powerful passage:

> '*his dictis curae emotae, Metus et Labor et Vis*
> *et Scelus et placitae fidei Fraus infitiatrix*   630
> *depulsae vertere solum. Pax inde fugatis*
> *hostibus alma abigit bellum, discingitur omnis*
> *terror et avulsis exfibulat ilia zonis.*
> *vestis ad usque pedes descendens defluit imos,*
> *temperat et rapidum privata modestia gressum.*   635
> *cornicinum curva aera silent, placabilis inplet*
> *vaginam gladius, sedato et pulvere campi*
> *suda redit facies liquidae sine nube diei,*
> *purpuream videas caeli clarescere lucem.*

[At these words their troubles departed. Fear and Suffering and Violence, Crime and Fraud that denies accepted faith, were driven away and fled from the land. Then kindly Peace, her enemies now routed, banishes war. All the dread-inspiring gear is doffed; they unclasp their sides, pulling off their belts; their robes fall flowing down to their feet and a civilian sobriety moderates their quick step. The trumpeters' curved brasses are silent, the sword returns in peace to its scabbard, the dust settles down on the field, the bright face of clear cloudless day comes back, and light from heaven begins to shine resplendent to the view]' (*Psychomachia* 629-639).[646]

The passage above is saturated with literary imagery of the glory of the victory of the heroic Christian virtues. Those who were vicious warriors physically and mentally transform themselves into temperate civilians (632-634); the trumpets of war are silenced and amour is sheathed (636-637) now that the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) officially declares that the war in the soul of the Christian is over (631-632). Apart from the intrusion of the vice Heresy, her slight wounding of the invincible virtue Peace (*Concordia*) and the slaying of this last pagan vice in the concluding episode of this poem (667-725), the *Psychomachia* ends with resounding literary imagery of hope for the peaceful future of Christianity in the Late Ancient world. This is in complete contrast to the violent battles between the Christian virtues and the

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[646] Thompson (tr.) (1949:322-323).

pagan vices that have come before in this poem. The manner in which Prudentius portrays the glory of Christian heroism in the conclusion of the *Psychomachia* is where this poem is at its most convincing.

The conclusion of the *Psychomachia* is so persuasively composed that the early fifth-century reader of this poem cannot but have been encouraged that ridding the soul of pagan vice was, indeed, the most socially appropriate manifestation of Christian heroism in that era. Prudentius' use of phraseology and terminology, such as:

> '*conpositis igitur rerum morumque secundis*
> *in commune bonis, postquam intra tuta morari*
> *contigit ac statione frui ualloque foveri*
> *pacificos Sensus, et in otia solvere curas*
> [So now that a fair and happy state of circumstance and life has been established over all, now that the peaceable Sentiments can dwell in security under the protection of guard-post and rampart, and find relief in relaxation of their cares]' (*Psychomachia* 726-729),[647]

beautifully express the peace of mind that is enjoyed by those heroic enough to rid their souls of pagan vice.

The notion that Christian heroic identity is manifested interiorly in the soul is clearly expressed in the lines '*nulla latet pars Mentis iners, quae corporis ullo / intercepta sinu per conceptacula sese* [No member of Soul lurks in idleness, shut off in a pocket of the body]' (*Psychomachia* 741-742).[648] More significantly, the quotation below explicates Prudentius' literary vision of the union of the pure soul of the Christian with the spirit of God. This firmly establishes the interiorization of Christian heroism in this poem:

> '*utque homini atque Deo medius interuenit Iesus,*
> *qui sociat mortale Patri, ne carnea distent*　　　　765
> *Spiritui aeterno sitque ut Deus unus utrumque,*
> *sic, quidquid gerimus mentisque et corporis actu,*

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[647] Thompson (tr.) (1949:330-331).
[648] Thompson (tr.) (1949:330-331).

spiritus unimodis texat conpagibus unus.

[And just as Jesus mediates between man and God, uniting mortality with the Father so that the fleshly shall not be separated from the eternal Spirit and that one God shall be both, so let one spirit shape in single structure all that we do by action of soul and body]' (*Psychomachia* 764-768).[649]

More explicitly, the quotation above (764-768) adroitly describes the soul as the locus of sanctity in the Christian hero. In this particular passage, Prudentius describes how the spirit of God unites with the soul of the mortal humans into 'a single structure' (767). This significant passage also states that the pure souls of mortal Christians shall 'not be separated from the eternal spirit' (766) and will thereby be granted eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God.

The importance of the virtue Peace (*Concordia*) to the future of Christianity and her centrality to Prudentius' literary expression of interiorized Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* is most clearly expressed in the quotation below from the concluding episode of this poem:

'*pax plenum Virtutis opus, pax summa laborum,*

pax belli exacti pretium est pretiumque pericli.   770

sidera pace vigent, consistunt terrea pace.

nil placitum sine pace Deo:

[Peace is the fulfilment of a Virtue's work, peace the sum and substance of her toils, peace the reward for war now ended and for peril faced. It is by peace that the stars live and move, by peace that earthly things stand firm. Without peace nothing is pleasing to God]' (*Psychomachia* 769-773).[650]

It is with the aid of the queen of the virtues, Faith (*Fides*), that the magnificent Temple of the Soul is built in the purified soul of the heroic Christian who had cleansed this locus of sanctity of the evils of pagan vices. The passage describing the building of the Temple of the Soul (823-887) is an intensely aesthetic passage in the *Psychomachia*. It is here that Prudentius exerts his poetic skill to the fullest degree, conjuring up, through his words, imagery of beauty and splendour that stand in stark contrast to the darkness of the former

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[649] Thompson (tr.) (1949: 332-333).
[650] Thompson (tr.) (1949:332-333).

battles fought in the soul of the Christian. Prudentius describes the building of the Temple of the Soul in such magnificent detail in an endeavour to communicate to the early fifth-century reader of the *Psychomachia*, who is willing to rid his or her soul of pagan vice, that there can be nothing as wondrous as the soul that is inhabited by the spirit of God. The quotation below, which describes how the spirit of God now resides in the soul that is cleansed of pagan vice, demonstrates how pure the soul of the heroic Christian is:

> '*hoc residet solio pollens Sapientia et omne*   875
> *consilium regni celsa disponit ab aula,*
> *tutandique hominis leges sub corde retractat.*
> *in manibus dominae sceptrum non arte politum*
> *sed ligno viuum viridi est, quod stirpe recisum,*
> *quamvis nullus alat terreni caespitis umor,*   880
> *fronde tamen viret incolumi, tum sanguine tinctis*
> *intertexta rosis candentia lilia miscet*
> *nescia marcenti florem submittere collo.*
> *huius forma fuit sceptri gestamen Aaron*
> *floriferum, sicco quod germina cortice trudens*
> *explicuit tenerum spe pubescente decorem*
> *inque novos subito tumuit virga arida fetus.*

[Here mighty Wisdom sits enthroned and from her high court sets in order all the government of her realm, meditating in her heart laws to safeguard mankind. In the sovereign's hands is a sceptre, not finished with craftsman's skill but a living rod of green wood; severed from its stock, it draws no nurture from moist earthly soil, yet puts forth perfect foliage and with blooms of blood-red roses intermingles white lilies that never droop on withering stem. This is the sceptre that was prefigured by the flowering rod that Aaron carried, which, pushing buds out of its dry bark, unfolded a tender grace with burgeoning hope, and the parched twig suddenly swelled into new fruits]' (*Psychomachia* 875-887).[651]

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[651] Thompson (tr.) (1949:340-341).

More specifically, Prudentius' deployment of literary imagery suggests that in the pure soul of the Christian, no flower dies (883) and that parched bark spouts again and produces new fruits (884-887). It is the interpretation of this study that the particular manner in which Prudentius describes the renewal of nature in the above-quoted passage demonstrates that his portrayal of early fifth-century interiorized Christian heroism in this poem is a new and invigorated conceptualisation of Christian heroism. The next discussion of this chapter investigates the analogous links that can be detected between the *Book of Revelation* 21.10-21.21 (KJV) and lines 823-887 of the *Psychomachia.*

7.7. Analogous links between Revelation 21.10 -21.21 and Prudentius' description of the Temple of the Soul

Prudentian scholars agree on and often do not elaborate upon the analogies between the *Book of Revelation* 21.10-21.21 and Prudentius' description of the building and interior of the Temple of the Soul (823-887) in the *Psychomachia.*[652] Investigating analogous links between the *Psychomachia* and the *Book of Revelation* in Prudentian scholarship remains open to a variety of interpretations.[653] However, with contemporary scholarship trends leaning more towards the appropriate socio-historical and socio-cultural contextualisation of texts Antiquity,[654] which includes Biblical scriptures,[655] new and exciting avenues of research into both these works are increasingly emerging.[656]

The question that arises is why Prudentius incorporated the *Book of Revelation* (21.10-21.21) description of the bejewelled splendour of the Temple of the Soul in his own description of the temple erected to the glory of God by the Christian virtues in the soul of the Christian in the *Psychomachia.* In relevance to the perspectives of this study, the most significant

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[652] Some of the more authoritative 21st-century scholars that attest to this include Pollmann (2017:54) and Pelttari (2014:Loc 2221).

[653] See Gnilka (1963:98-107) for his valuable and detailed analysis of Prudentius' Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia*.

[654] See Barchiesi (2005:135-162).

[655] Decock (1999:373) states that when the *Book of Revelation* is given contextualisation, it allows a 'more open and positive approach to apocalyptic literature'.

[656] For example, in 2000 Lewis made a valuable contribution to Prudentian scholarship by investigating the neglected issue of gender and violence in the *Psychomachia*. It is interesting to note the innovative approaches that South African scholars have recently been taking when they analogise the *Book of Revelation* with the socio-political circumstances of South Africa in the 20th century. See, for example, Kok (2017) and Boesak (2015). These works demonstrate the enduring interest in the *Book of Revelation* in South African 21st-century scholarship.

analogous links between these two particular passages are found in the repetition of the literary communications that are embedded in both of these texts, most significaty that the purified soul of the moral and virtuous Christian is the embodiment of God's wisdom and a wondrous temple that houses the spirit of God.

It is the central argument of this study that Prudentius' *Psychomachia* relentlessly advocates for an interiorized conceptualisation of early Christian heroism. However, in the *Book of Revelation* 21.10 the new Jerusalem, the heavenly rewrad for those heroic Christians who have banished pagan vice from their souls, is conceptualised as 'descending out of heaven from God'.[657] This strongly implies a metaphorical terrestrial context for the Temple of God in the *Book of Revelation*. In the *Psychomachia*, Prudentius communicates the notion of the new Jerusalem as wholly interiorized in the souls of those Christians who have banished pagan vice by waging spiritual warfare within their souls. This is a wholly interiorized concept that occurs in the metaphorical space of the purified soul of the Christian.

It is argued here that Prudentius' recontextualisation of the metaphorical terrestial domain of the new Jerusalem from the *Book of Revelation* into the metaphorical domain of the soul in the *Psychomachia* was a determined effort to neutralise the appeal of the notion of the Kingdom of God as a conceptualised earthly construct, as prophesied in the *Book of Revelation*. While the concept of an earthly Kingdom of God in the form of a new Jerusalem may have been socially acceptable in the Age of Martyrdom, in a post-martyrdom context, Prudentius appears to have sought to realign this notion. It is the understanding of this study that in the same manner in which Prudentius negotiated Classical-era traditions in his composition of the *Psychomachia*, he also subtly realigned Biblical traditions, such as the locus of God's sanctity, to suit the post-martyrdom context of early fifth-century Christians.

It can also be argued that both the *Book of Revelations* verses 21.10-21.21 and Prudentius' portrayal of the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* (823-887) reiterate that the Christian whose soul is a temple of God has crossed the most significant threshold of Christianity, from

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[657] KJV (2014:Loc:1778).

a state of impurity to purity. Although both of these passages are contained in the conclusions of their respective literary works, their messages are similarly grounded in the idea of the future of Christianity in Late Antiquity and of new beginnings for the Christian whose soul has been transformed into a magnificent temple and is the repository of God's omniscient wisdom.

Brown (1997)[658] suggests that the *Book of Revelation* is the most 'apocalyptic' book of the New Testament, written in an era that witnessed the beginning of the persecution of Christians and the destruction of Jewish hegemonic and socio-religious institutions. He goes on further to state that in the prevailing circumstances of catastrophe, the prophecies of hope and renewal become ever more important to persecuted minorities. The echoes of prophecies of hope for God's salvation from the traditions of the *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* and the *Book of the Prophet Isaiah* in the *Book of Revelation* thus appear to have served a positive social service to first-century Christians.

In consideration of the *Book of Revelation* 21.10-21.21, one should arguably heed the words of Decock (1999),[659] who notes that these verses were, in reality, the continuation of an 'already existing tradition'. Decock (1999)[660] demonstrates how each particular verse of the passage 21.10-21.21 can be seen to have been sourced from scriptures of the Old Testament, in particular from the *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* and the *Book of the Prophet Isaiah.* This suggests that the writer or writers of the *Book of Revelation* in the first century were perhaps as sensitive to the struggles of Christians in first century as Prudentius was to the plight of Christian society in the early fifth century. It is proposed here that when the socio-cultural circumstances of the eras in which both of these works were composed is given consideration, alongside the tone and attitude of both of these works, this scenario becomes more understandable. Decock[661] gives a clear indication from where each verse of the building of the city of new Jerusalem in the *Book of Revelation* had been sourced from in the Old Testament.

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[658] Brown (1997:777-779).
[659] Decock (1999:382).
[660] Decock (1999:382).
[661] Decock (1999:382).

In consideration of verses 21.10-21.21 of the *Book of Revelation*, one should arguably heed the words of Decock (1999)[662] when he says that these verses were in reality, the continuation of an 'already existing tradition'. Decock (1999)[663] demonstrates how each particular verse of the passage 21.10-21.21 can be seen to have been sourced from scriptures of the Old Testament, in particular from the *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* and the *Book of the Prophet Isaiah.* Does this demonstate the writer or writers of the *Book of Revelation* in the first century were perhaps as sensitive as Prudentius to the plight of Christian society in Late Antiquity? It is suggested here that when the socio-cultural circumstances of the eras in which both of these works were composed is given consideration alongside the tone and attitude of both of these works, this scenario becomes more understandable. In the case of the *Book of Revelation* 21.1 and the focal verses of this discussion, 21.10 -21.21, Decock (1999)[664] gives a clear indication from where each verse of the building of the city of new Jerusalem in the *Book of Revelation* had been sourced from in the Old Testament.

An explicit example of this is found in verse 21.1 of the *Book of Revelation*, which reads, 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea'.[665] This prophetic statement in the *Book of Revelation* emphatically reiterates the notion of new beginnings. It is so powerfully worded that it speaks of the total recreation of the heavens and the earth. Decock (1999)[666] explains that this particular verse echoes the Old Testament *Book of the Prophet Isaiah* verse 65.17, which reads 'For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind'.[667]

When considering why Prudentius so overtly replicated *Book of Revelation* 21.10-21.21 in lines 823-887 of the *Psychomachia*, the notion that Prudentius appeared to be particularly aware of the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances of Christian society in the early fifth century should be factored in. It is a central thesis of this discussion that the primary

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[662] Decock (1999:382).
[663] Decock (1999:382).
[664] Decock (1999:382).
[665] KJV (2014:1777).
[666] Decock (1999:381). Lambrecht (2000:362-385) gives an informative review of the echoes of scriptures of the Old Testament in his composition of the *Book of Revelation* verses 20.11-21.8. Significantly, he priorities the social contextualisation of these verses in his research.
[667] KJV (2014:Loc1095).

motivation for Prudentius to directly adopt the *Book of Revelation* verses 21.10-21.21 to describe the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* is because the most prominent feature of this passage is that it determinedly prophesised a new world-order of social and spiritual morality for the Christians of Late Antiquity.

More explicitly, when lines 823-877 of the *Psychomachia* are considered alongside verses 21.10-21.21 of the *Book of Revelation*, the most apparent commonality between these two passages is that they are orientated towards the future of Christianity in a new world-order of peace and harmony. Underpinning this is a central thesis of this discussion, namely that the central communication embedded in the *Book of Revelation* and Prudentius' *Psychomachia* was that the spirit of God dwelt in those who were pure of soul.

The significance of purity of the soul in Christianity is stated most explicitly in the *Book of Revelation* in this quotation:

> '1.12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. 1.13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (*Book of Revelation* 1.12-1.13).[668]

In addition to this the *Book of Revelation* continually portrays God as an 'animating principle',[669] whose spirit dwelt in every aspect of man's life. God was never a mnemonic entity in the *Book of Revelation*, but always omnipresent in the life of man. This is conveyed through the use of allegory, which is so significant to the *Book of Revelation*.

Although Prudentius, a devout Christian in his later life, lived in the fourth and early fifth centuries, under very different socio-cultural circumstances, the message of the *Book of Revelation* regarding the ubiquitous presence of God in the lives of Christians is strongly

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[668] KJV (2014:Loc1517).
[669] Brown (1988:87).

reiterated throughout the *Psychomachia*. Similar to the communications embedded in the *Book of Revelation*, Prudentius portrays God as an 'animating principle' in the souls of devout Christians. Prudentius specifically adopts this christology in the *Book of Revelation* verses 21.10-21.21 in his description of the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* which requires some elaboration.

One of the most notable indications of the dynamic nature of God in both of these passages is expressed in the architectural structure of the new Jerusalem in the *Book of Revelation* and the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia*. The manner in which this is articulated is most demonstrably illustrated by the way in which both writers place emphasis upon the fact that the structure is a harmonious cube, with no corners of darkness and open gateways that serve as entrance portals for all peoples of the world. The foundational communication of both these passages is that God will dwell within and alongside man in the new wold-order when Christian peace and harmony reign in the absence of pagan evil. Both in the structure of the new Jerusalem in the *Book of Revelation* and Prudentius' Christian virtues, Peace (*Concordia*) and Faith (*Fides*) in the *Psychomachia*, map out into a perfect cube the interiorized locus of sanctity in which the spirit of God reigns over those Christians who are pure of soul. Prudentius describes it thus,

> '*aurea planitiem spatiis percurrit harundo*
> *dimensis, quadrent ut quattuor undique frontes,*
> *ne commissuris distantibus angulus inpar*
> *argutam mutilet per dissona semetra normam.*
> Her golden reed runs over the ground measuring out the distances, so that the four
> sides shall square every way and the junctures be true, leaving no unequal angle
> to mar the neatness of the plan by breaking its harmonious regularity'(*Psychomachia* 826-829).[670]

The *Book of Revelation*, meanwhile, depicts the foundational cubit of the new Jerusalem in these words:

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[670] Thompson (tr.) (1949:336-337)

'And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with a reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal' (*Book of Revelation* verse 21.16).[671]

This emphasis on regularity and harmony reiterates the notion of the perfectness of the all-knowing God. The *Book of Revelation* describes this in the following manner:

'21.12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the twelve gates angles, and the names written thereon, which are the twelve tribes of Israel; 21.13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates'(*Book of Revelation* 1.12-1.13).[672]

This passage reiterates the essence of the *Book of Revelation's* communication stated above, namely that all peoples of the world had the potential to be children of God under the will of God. The road to the future of a world reigned over by the peace and harmony of God was through the gateways of verses 21.12-21.13 of the *Book of Revelation*, as illustrated in the quotation above.

Turning attention now to the way in which Prudentius adopted this principle in his description of the architecture of the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia*, it is notable that Prudentius also endorses the notion of gateways facing to every corner of the world. This is evidenced in the following quotation,

'*Aurorae de parte tribus plaga lucida portis*
inlustrata patet, triplex aperitur ad austrum
portarum numerus, tris occidualibus offert
ianua trina fores, totiens aquilonis ad axem
panditur alta domus.
On the side of the dawn stretches clear a quarter lit up by three gates; three gates open towards the south; three entrances present three doors to the west; and as many

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[671] KJV (2014:Loc1778).
[672] KJV (2014:Loc178).

openings does the lofty house show towards the pole of the north'(*Psychomachia* 830-833)[673]

It is argued here that Prudentius' reiteration of the notion of the Temple of the Soul reigned over by the spirit of God and being open to all peoples of the world is an affirmation that those Christians who devote themselves to the will of God will forever find eternal harmony with all tribes and peoples of the world. The *Book of Revelation's* prophetic concept of a world of peace on earth and eternal salvation in the heavenly Kingdom of God is echoed in lines 830-833 of the *Psychomachia*. This leads to the question of whether Prudentius was merely repeating a well-known scripture at the conclusion of the *Psychomachia* to increase the social acceptability of his poetry for Christians who were intellectually sophisticated enough to discern this or if, in fact, in lines 823-887 of his epic masterpiece, he too was dabbling in the genre of apocalyptic Christian literature, albeit with the assistance of an already existing text.

In this study, it is argued that Prudentius was not dabbling in apocalyptic communications in the *Psychomachia* and his description of the Temple of the Soul. It is argued here that the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* represented the ultimate heroic reward of ridding the soul of pagan vice. Prudentius' description of the Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* is one of the most joyous passages of text in what is otherwise a dark and violent poem. In the apocalyptic *Book of Revelation,* in particular verses 21.10-21.21, there is also a jubilant prophecy. Prudentius never sought personal accolades for his composition of Christian literature, as he believed that his reward was attained through immortality of the soul in the heavenly Kingdom of God.[674] The primary aim of Prudentius' literary opus was to glorify God; this, it can be argued, was also the principal aim of the *Book of Revelation*. If Prudentius felt that the worthiest tribute to God was to include the prophetic descriptions of verses 21.10-21.21 from the *Book of Revelation* in his own work in lines 823-887 of the *Psychomachia*, there is every indication that this humble fifth-century poet did this to pay tribute to God.

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[673] Thompson (tr.) (1949:336-337).
[674] This is highlighted in the Preface of the *Psychomachia*, lines 59-63.

An important part of the notions of gateways in both of these works is that these hold deeper meanings than just uniting all peoples of the world under God. It is argued here that gateways act as symbolic thresholds that are crossed from the evils of paganism into the purity of Christianity in the prophetic visions of the *Book of Revelation* and in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. The popular teachings of anthropologists such as Victor Turner theorise that the crossing of thresholds from evil to good symbolises the passage from darkness into light in society.[675]

The notion of God's inner light illuminating the new Jerusalem in the *Book of Revelation* verses 21.10-21.21 and Prudentius' Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* 823-887 is another crucial factor of consideration in both of these passages. The imagery of inner light is pronounced in both passages as the writers convey the message that the glory of God is the source of all light in the world. The *Book of Revelation* describes how the envisioned world of the 'new Jerusalem' would descend out of the heavens (verse 21.10) and be so wondrous that God's glory would light it up from within (verse 21.11). Prudentius used the same imagery of inner light in the following quotation, which highlights the dynamic energy of this light:

> '*quin etiam totidem gemmarum insignia textis*
> *parietibus distincta micant, animasque colorum*
> *uiuentes liquido lux euomit alta profundo.*
> And more, the same number of gems, set singly in the fabric of the walls, sparkle conspicuously, and out of their clear depths the light from on high pours living, breathing colours.' (*Psychomachia* 851-853).[676]

Through the findings of this discussion, it can be argued that Prudentius' appropriation of the description of the new Jerusalem from the *Book of Revelation* verses 21.10-21.21 was a reaffirmation to early fifth-century Christians that the prophetic visions of this New Testament Scripture could realistically be achieved. In an era in which Christianity was rapidly spreading throughout the Late Ancient world, the notion of God reigning over each Christian's soul in a magnificent Temple of the Soul in the *Psychomachia* can indeed be seen

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[675] See Turner (1967) for an elaboration on the notion of crossing thresholds in society.
[676] Thompson (tr.) (1949:338-339).

as the continuation of an existing tradition, just as the *Book of Revelation* verses 21.10-21.21 was a reiteration of the traditions upon which Early Christianity built their religious ideologies. The last discussion of this chapter deals with the closing lines of the *Psychomachia.* This is Prudentius' final invocation to God in this poem.

7.8   The closing invocation of the *Psychomachia*

Prudentius displays his knowledge of epic tradition by finishing his epic poem, the *Psychomachia*, with an invocation to God in lines 888-915. Prudentius begins by offering thanks and honouring the glory of God. However, it is argument of this study that this short passage is meaningfully built around the appeal to God to accept that humans are imperfect. Prudentius describes this most aptly in the following quotation:

> ' *… fervent bella horrida, fervent*
> *ossibus inclusa, fremit et discordibus armis*
> *non simplex natura hominis; nam viscera limo*
> *effigiata premunt animam, contra ille sereno*   905
> *editus adflatu nigrantis carcere cordis*
> *aestuat, et sordes arta inter vincla recusat.*
> *spiritibus pugnant variis lux atque tenebrae,*
> *distantesque animat duplex substantia vires,*
> *donec praesidio Christus Deus adsit et omnes*
> *virtutum gemmas conponat sede piata,*
>
> [… Savage war rages hotly, rages within our bones, and man's two-sided nature is in an uproar of rebellion; for the flesh that was formed of clay bears down upon the spirit, but again the spirit that issued from the pure breath of God is hot within the dark prison-house of the heart, and even in its close bondage rejects the body's filth. Light and darkness with their opposing spirits are at war, and our two-fold being inspires powers at variance with each other, until Christ our God comes to our aid, orders all the jewels of the virtues in a pure setting, …]'(*Psychomachia* 902-911).[677]

Throughout his portrayal of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia*, this study perceives that Prudentius continually reiterates that forming a Christian heroic identity in early fifth-century Roman society is a challenging and difficult task. It is argued here that Prudentius is aware that the barriers facing early fifth-century Christians in the formation of a Christian heroic identity are indeed as significant as those faced by Early Christians in the Age of Martyrdom.

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[677] Thompson (tr.) (1949:342-343).

This final invocation to God (888-915) can be seen as a petition to God to recognise these difficulties.

7.9   Conclusion

The *Psychomachia* is a complex and, at times, dark poem. However, as demonstrated in the discussions of this chapter, it is also full of contrast. This chapter has shown that Prudentius' portrayal of interiorized Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* provided a valuable and didactic template of Christian heroism that was specifically applicable for early fifth-century Christians to use to strengthen their own heroic identity. The next and final chapter provides the final conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Paganism had dominated in the Greco-Roman world of Antiquity through millennia. Although nations waged lengthy wars against each other, these wars were primarily motivated by the desire to control and have access to other nations' assets. What held the Greco-Roman world together was the commonality of their relationship with the non-material world of the pagan gods. This resulted in nations across the Greco-Roman world of Antiquity sharing the same worldview.

The emergence of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world of Late Antiquity endeavoured to change the long-held worldview of paganism and, in the face of this threat, pagans persecuted Early Christians. However, when Prudentius wrote his epic masterpiece, the *Psychomachia*, Christianity was on the cusp of beginning to become the dominant religion of the Late Ancient Roman world. As demonstrated throughout this dissertation, Prudentius' innovative poem, the *Psychomachia*, which is overtly not orientated towards the age in which Christians were persecuted, offered early fifth-century Christians hope for their spiritual future.

The central thesis of this dissertation is that Prudentius' portrayal of the heroism of the Christian virtues in the *Psychomachia* offered early fifth-century Christians with didactic lifestyle guidelines with which to form a socially-appropriate Christian heroic identity in a post-martyrdom era. After introducing this notion in Chapter One of this study and providing a review of the significant research works that contributed to the discussions of this study in Chapter Two, Chapters Three to Six provided in-depth rationalisations of the manner in which Prudentius interiorized the concept of Christian heroism for Christians living in a post-martyrdom context. Chapter Seven of this study served to strengthen these findings further through a literary analysis of the *Psychomachia*.

The question remains whether this study fully responded to the research question posed in Chapter 1 of this study, namely:

"Does Prudentius' didactic and interiorized portrayal of Roman Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* fulfil the need in early fifth-century Roman Christianity for a socially relevant modality of heroism that strengthened Christian heroic identity at this particular time?"

The concept of heroism in any context is a subjective, somewhat nebulous and highly individualised social construct. For 21st century scholars, there can be no definitive evidence that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* shaped the conceptualisation of Christian heroism for the ordinary Christian in the early fifth century. However, it cannot be denied that his literary expression of interiorized Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* was specifically in line with the ideologies of interiorization prevailing in Christianity at this time. Moreover, it is the conclusion of this study that Prudentius' interiorized notion of heroism must have contributed to and responded to the need in early fifth-century Christianity for a prototype of Christian heroism in a post-martyrdom context. Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* was relentlessly orientated towards the future, as has been reiterated throughout this study. His literary vision of Christian heroism in the *Psychomachia* guided early fifth-century Christians towards the interiorized manifestation of Christian heroism that was appropriate to the prevailing socio-cultural circumstances of the early fifth century in Roman Christian society. Therefore, it can be concluded that Prudentius' portrayal of heroism in the *Psychomachia* provided a socially appropriate response to early fifth-century Christianity's need to strengthen Christian heroic identity.

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APPENDIX A: SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND LITERARY WORKS IN THE LATE ANCIENT ROMAN EMPIRE

The significant political events, socio-cultural developments and literary works contained in this time-line table below are considered relevant to augmenting the contents of Chapter Two, and indeed the entire study. This time-line is in no way intended to be an exhaustive list of the political and cultural events and literary works in the Late Ancient Roman Empire. It is rather to be seen as highlighting political and socio-cultural events and literary works that contribute to socially contextualising Prudentius' composition of heroism in the *Psychomachia.*

The biases of the literary works in this time-line are predominantly Christian in nature. Many Pagan works are, of course, lost to us. The reign of Theodosius I was particularly notorious as a time when pagan literary works were destroyed. This practice continued well into the late Middle Ages in the Western world. The fragmentary nature of the papyrus, on which ancient texts were written, has also contributed to these being forever lost to contemporary Classicists. This table has been sourced from numerous works. The main contributors to the information in this table include Cameron (2011); Gonzalez (2010); Young *et al* (2008); Mitchell (2007); Ehrmann and Jacobs; (2004) and Boardman *et al.* (2001).

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL EVENTS	SIGNIFICANT SOCIO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS	SIGNIFICANT LITERARY WORKS
69-92 The Flavian Dynasty ruled the Roman Empire		50-60 St Paul wrote his influential epistles contained in the New Testament. St Paul's many epistles were influential throughout Early Christianity.
	100-200 In the first and second centuries, Christian works began to circulate throughout the Roman Empire alongside Pagan literary works.	80-98 Silius Italicus wrote the epic work *Punica*.
		90 Statius wrote his important epic *Thebaid*, followed by the uncompleted epic, the *Achilleid*. His works influenced fourth century epicists.
	100-200 Roman Pagans gradually began to convert to Christianity through the evangelism of Christian preachers and the influence of Christian literary works. Under the rule of Emperor Diolcletian, many Christians were persecuted and many Christians martyred themselves. Many of these martyrs were later declared saints by the Christian Church. This gave rise to the Christian cult of saints. The relics of saints were carried around by members of this popular cult from place to place and venerated. This cult was especially popular in the fourth to sixth centuries in Christian Roman society.	In the second to the fourth centuries, due primarily to political instability, literature was read with great interest. There were, however, exceptions and some important literary works from this era re-emerged in the fourth century revival of Roman literature.
		138 Justin Martyr wrote *Dialogue with Trypho*.
		150 Clement of Rome wrote *The*

		Shepherd of Hermes.
		± 150-200 Apuleius wrote *The Golden Ass*.
204-306 Rule of Emperor Diocletian		
		± 208-225 Tertullian wrote a large body of Christian works. His works were polemical, apologetic, dogmatic and moral in nature. The most influential of these are *Apologeticus pro Christianis, De Spectaculis, Adversus Valentinianos, De Carne Christi* and *De Pudictia*.
		± 200-246 Origen wrote many influential Christian works including *Gospel of Peter, Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Peter, Acts of Thomas, On First Principals, On Prayer* and *Against Celus*.
		± 280-310 The Pagan writer Porphyry wrote many works against Christianity that were considered influential in the fourth and fifth centuries in Christian Roman society because Porphyry had a vast knowledge of the Bible. Included in this important writer's extant works are *Isagoge, Philosophy from Oracles, Cave of Nymphs, on Abstinence from Animal Food, Life of Pythagoras, Letter to Marcella* and *Letter to Anebo*. Many of Porphyry's works are

		fragmentary; one of the most important of these is his work *Against the Christians*.
306 Constantine was declared Emperor by his troops in York.	303-311 The Great persecution of Christians by Pagans by Emperor Diocletian	
	309-310 Eusebius of Caesarea was made Bishop of Rome.	312-325 Eusebius of Caesarea wrote his influential work *Church History*. He also wrote *Preparation for the Gospel* and *Proof of the Gospel*.
	311 Publication of the Edict of Toleration by Emperor Galerius, which ended Christian persecution.	
312 Constantine is victorious at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.	312 Before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine believes he sees a sign of the cross in the sky. Thereafter Constantine wins the important Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Constantine attributes this important victory to the power of God.	
312 Constantine marches on Rome.	312 First Christian basilica built in Rome	313-315 Lactantius wrote *On the Deaths of the Persecutors, The Divine Institutes* and *On the Workmanship of God*.
	315 Lactantius' works are a reliable reflection of the socio-cultural circumstances of Roman society at this time.	
312-337 Rule of Emperor Constantine		
	± 300-400 Revival of interest and writing of pagan and Christian literature in Roman Christian and pagan society.	300-400 Emergence of an abundance of Christian literary works in Roman society. Many re-emerging texts were composed

		in the first and second centuries.
314-321 Dispute arises between Emperor Constantine and Emperor Licinius	313 The Edict of Milan was passed by Emperor Constantine and Emperor Licinius. This results in the legal abolishment of the persecution of Christians and marks the end of Christian martyrdom.	
	315 The Arch of Constantine is erected in Rome.	
	Christian religion gains a foothold in Roman society due to the rule of influence of Emperor Constantine.	
326 Emperor Constantine moves the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium and renames this city Constantinople.		
	332 Birth of Julian the Apostate	330 Juvencus wrote *Evangeliorum libri quattuor*. This work may be seen as the epic work that bridged the gap between the second and fourth centuries in the genre of the epic.
	325 First Council of Nicaea makes Christianity the unofficial religion of the Roman Empire.	
	336 The Christian Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built in Jerusalem.	
	337 Death of Constantine I. Constantine was baptised by Eusebius shortly before he died.	
337 On the death of Emperor Constantine, who had ruled the combined Western		

and Eastern Roman Empires, the Roman Empire is divided amongst Constantine's three sons. Constantine II ruled the west, Constans the middle and Constatius the east.		
	339 Death of Eusebius of Caesarea	
	339 Ambrose is born in Trier.	
	347 Birth of Theodosius I in Spain.	
	348 Birth of Prudentius in Caesaraugusta in Spain	
	348 Birth of St Jerome	
	357 Emperor Constantius II orders the removal of the Altar of Victory from the Roman House of Senate.	
	356 Julian the Apostate starts to write many works that defend the position of Paganism and Pagan philosophy but show a measure of tolerance towards Christianity in the Roman Empire. Some works were political in nature.	
360 The Pagan Julian's army declare him Roman Emperor and they march on the eastern part of the Roman Empire.		
361 Death of Constantius II and Julian the Apostate takes over as Emperor	361-363 Emperor Julian advocates Paganism and Neo-Platonic Philosophy in Roman society.	± 362 Faltonia Betitia Proba wrote her *Christian Virgilian Cento*.
361-363 CE Rule of Julian the Apostate	362 Julian bans the teaching of Christianity.	

	363 Julian dies in battle.	
363 Jovian is made Emperor.	363 Emperor Jovian declares Christianity again the religion of the Roman Empire and abolishes Julian's edicts against Christianity.	
364 Emperor Jovian dies and is replaced by his heir Valentinian. Emperor Valentinian rules the western part of the Roman Emperor and gives the eastern part to his brother Valens to rule.		
	372 Martin is made Bishop of Tours.	370-375 Basil wrote *Hexaemeron* (370) and *On the Holy Spirit* (375)
	374 Ambrose is made Bishop of Milan.	
378-395 Rule of Emperor Theodosius I, known as Theodosius the Great	378 Diodore is made Bishop of Tarus.	
	380 Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity to be the state and only religion of the Roman Empire.	±380 Gregory of Nyssa wrote *Life of St Macrina. On the Life of Moses.*
		± 380 Gregory of Nazianus wrote *Five Theological Orations*.
	381 Second Council of Nicaea in Constantinople. Christian church scriptural interpretation and doctrine was decided upon by Christian bishops and organised into the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed.	± 380-400 Nicomachus Flavianus wrote his historical work *Annales* (lost work).
382 Theodosius begins to sign treaties	382 Theodosius I restored the Altar of Victory to the Roman House of Senate	

with the Visigoths, forever changing the political landscape of the Roman Empire.	to appease wealthy Roman Pagans.	
	386 Jerome moves to Bethlehem with Paula and her daughter Eustochium.	
	387 Augustine is baptised as Christian.	
	391 Emperor Theodosius passes Edicts that officially end paganism in the Roman Empire.	391 Ammianus Marcellinus, a Pagan historian writer, wrote his Latin history of the Roman World between the years ± 96 BC-353 CE. It was called *Res gestae*.
394 Western Roman Emperor Theodosius I defeats the Eastern Roman Emperor Eugenius at the Battle of Fridgidus and combines the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire under his rule.	394 The western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire are once more combined under the rule of Theodosius I.	± 392-394 Pagan literature is promoted in the Roman aristocratic class by the Pagans belonging to the 'Circle of Symmachus'. Symmachus corresponded with up to fifty other Pagans of the aristocracy in Rome about Pagan literature, mainly the works of Virgil. Other aristocratic Romans promoting Paganism in Roman society were Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and Nicomachus Flavianus.
395 Theodosius I dies suddenly. Upon the death of Theodosius I, the Roman Empire is divided amongst his sons: Honorius rules the Western Roman Empire and Arcadius rules the Eastern Roman Empire.	395 Paulinus settles in Nola. He then becomes known as Paulinus of Nola and writes his literary works.	395-431 Paulinus of Nola wrote *Laus sancti Iohannis*, an *epyllion* about John the Baptist.

	Theodosius' sons, Honorius and Arcadia continue the rule of the House of Theodosius in the Roman Empire	± 395 Gregory of Nyssa wrote *Homilies on the Song of Songs*.
		395-404 The Pagan epicist Claudian wrote panegyric epics for Christian patrons. His works include his unfinished mythological epic *De raptu Proserpinae* and his completed works, *Panegyricus dictus Olybrio et Probino consulibus, Panegyricus dictus honorio Augusto tertium consuli* and the more well-known *Panyegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto sextum consuli.* In 397, Claudian wrote *In Rufinum*, under the patronage of General Stilicho.
	396 Augustine is made Bishop of Hippo Regius.	396 Servus wrote *Life of Martin of Tours.*
		395-410 Prudentius wrote his literary opus.
		397-426 Augustine was one of the most influential Christian writers of his time. Augustine wrote *On Christian Doctrine, Confessions* and *City of God.*
400 Alaric and the Visigoths invade Italy and capture a large portion of the south of Italy. The Visigoths continue to march towards Rome.		
403 General Stilicho, serving the army of	403 The threat of invasion by the Visigoths was temporarily halted.	

Emperor Honorius, defeats Alaric the Visigoth at the Battle of Verona.		
	The early fifth century saw a significant rise in the conversion of pagans to Christianity in Roman society.	
	408 General Stilicho is murdered by Emperor Honorius.	
	405-410 Estimated date of the death of Prudentius.	
	414-415 Relics of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, are believed by Roman Christians to have been discovered in an undisclosed location.	
	430 Death of Augustine	
	431-787 Further confusion over Christian scriptural interpretation resulted in a meeting of all Christian Church leaders at ecumenical councils. Christian bishops and leaders were called to the following councils: Council of Ephesus in 481; the Council of Chalcedon in 451; the Council of Constantinople II in 553 and the Council of Constantinople III in 680-681. It is supposed that there may have been a further Council of Nicaea in 787.	
476 Roman Empire continues to decline under the pressure of constant invasion.		