

be granted respite from torment. Like the legend of the soul of the Emperor Trajan, which is enshrined in the early lives of St. Gregory, and has passed into the pages of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, this recognition of the power of holy intercessions found wide acceptance. The Christian poet Prudentius, the contemporary of St. Ambrose, pays tribute to it in one of the most beautiful passages of his poem, *Ad incensum lucernæ*:

Even beneath the realms of Styx  
The guilty spirits holy days enjoy,  
Respite from penal fire on that blest night  
Whereon our holy God returned  
From lake of Acheron to heavenly light.

Nor doth the day-star rising from the sea  
Lighten the darkness with his brilliant torch,  
As doth our Lord, for those who grieve His Cross,  
Rising again more potent than the sun,  
Restore to this sad world new light of day.

Milder burn the penal fires,  
Less fiercely rage the sulphurous streams  
Of Tartarus        prisoners there  
Confined, if        earth discharged, enjoy  
Some respite from their pain.

The terms of this allusion strongly suggest that Prudentius had the text of the *Apocalypse of Paul* fresh in his mind when he wrote. But even more extravagant than the *Apocalypse of Paul* was a later fabrication, inspired by pre-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. G. Morison's translation.