

**ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES
OF THE
ROMAN PRIVATE LAW**

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W.W. BUCKLAND, M.A.

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ROMAN PRIVATE LAW

BY

W. W. BUCKLAND, M.A.,

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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PREFACE

THE following pages form a running commentary on the Institutes of Gaius and those of Justinian, designed especially for students who have read their Institutes but little more. The aim of the writer has been throughout to discuss institutions rather than to state rules, to suggest and stimulate rather than to inform. Considerations of space have made selection necessary, and a few topics which give students special difficulty (e.g. *Bonorum Possessio*) have been allowed to occupy a disproportionate amount of space. But an attempt has been made to bring home to the student a fact which, at least in his earliest stages, he is apt to forget, the fact that the Roman Law is not merely a set of rules on paper, a literary product, but a group of institutions under which the Romans actually lived. The hope may be permitted that the student will learn more than the book tells him, and more than was present to the mind of the writer. Our knowledge of the Roman Law is but the knowledge of a track in the wilderness. Around every rule that the student sees there lie innumerable questions. Most of these are, in our state of knowledge, unanswerable, but the student who has learnt even to formulate some of them has made a great step towards the understanding of what he has read.

The true spirit of an ancient institution is hard to capture. In studying the Roman Law it is difficult to rid our minds of

experiences and preconceptions acquired in the course of many centuries. It is not rendered less difficult by the fact that the great line of German scholars to whom we owe most of our knowledge have of necessity been concerned till recently not only, indeed not mainly, with the exposition of Roman Law, but with the development of it. It is not without change that a rule laid down by Julian is made to serve modern needs. We look at the Roman Law through a medium of which we know that it distorts, while for the estimation of the nature and degree of distortion we have but a very imperfect apparatus. These pages attempt to look at legal principle, so far as possible, in the Roman way.

The indebtedness of the book to many writers will be obvious, but in a book which does not aim at stating new doctrine it has not seemed needful to attempt to trace the paternity of each idea mentioned: references to modern literature are given not so much to confirm statements in the text as to direct the reader to sources of fuller information. Accordingly the books cited are in the main those to be found in the libraries of most English law schools. Few references are given to the Institutes: the student ought to be able to find these for himself. References to the Digest are more frequent. Few things are more useful to a student than the tracing of doctrines to their source: the citations are therefore so limited in number that reference to the original texts should be no intolerable burden.

I am much indebted to Dr Henry Bond of Trinity Hall, who has been so kind as to read all the sheets, every one of which is the better for his valuable suggestions.

W. W. B.

CAMBRIDGE, *August* 1912.

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ERRATA

- p. 31, l. 13, after *utilis* insert *e lege*.
- p. 181, ll. 4, 17, read *caelebs*, *caelibes*.
- p. 189, l. 4 from end, read *caelebs*.
- p. 273, l. 26, after 'be' insert 'in many cases.'
- p. 312, note 2, read Schulz.

The 5th edition of M. Girard's *Manuel de Droit Romain* having appeared while this book was in the press, the earlier references to it are necessarily to the 4th edition.

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