

Christian Latin in the context of St John's

Christian Latin has exercised a great influence on the texts found at St John's, which is to be expected from members of a religious Order. A few examples will suffice: the Classical meaning of *caritas* at its warmest is "love", "dearness", "affection", while in Christian-coloured Latin it would mean "Christian love", "charity".¹⁸ A similar word is *dilectus*; both developed into Christian epithets, mostly expressed in the superlative or with the prefix *prae-* or *super-*. In the context of St John's we find e.g. *AMICO CARISSISSIMO* in l.214.14, *PRÆDILECTVS* in l.148.8, *DILECTISSIMO* in no.200.14. The word *pietas* also acquired an extended meaning from just the notion of "piety". In the Christian context it would express "Christian love" and "benevolence", not only in human relations but also



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in the benevolence of God to mankind. This is also expressed in the Greek notion of *agape*, the love of God for man and of man for God, but also brotherly love (Cf. *Cor.*5.14 and 13.1). Furthermore, *pietas* is frequently used in the *corpus* to express the benevolent character of the deceased. *Meritus* appears often with the prefix *bene-*, and mostly in the superlative, e.g. *BENEMERENTISSIMO* in l.214.14, indicating that the deceased is "most meritorious", i.e. very likely to receive future reward from God. The emotional charge of *desiderium* is also very high, when the author of the inscribed text (often the deceased himself) writes e.g. no.218.13 *SVI DESIDERIO RELICTO*, "regret for

his absence left behind", rather than just a desire or longing. The emphatic compound *per-* is often found in verbs, giving them an extended meaning, e.g. *perfungor* is not just simply to perform but indicates the performance of people with zeal who perform meticulously and punctiliously.

Words of Greek origin

The Vulgate, as discussed above, had brought a great deal of Greek influence into Latin. In the Renaissance the renewed interest in the Greek language and culture increased Greek derivatives and coined words, sometimes half Latin, half Greek. An example of this is found in no. 41.4 where the hybrid word *HEMIOPARONIS* is used. The *corpus* contains a relatively large number of key words from Greek, for example *archetypon*, *borrea*, *chiliarcæ*, *cænobiarcha*, *eucharist*, *nosochomium*, *Pallas*, *palæstra*, *Phoebus*, *polemarchus*, *prothonotarius*, *protrierarchus*, *ptochotropheum*, *tartareon*, *trierarchus*, *proturcopulerius* and *xenodochium*.

Medievalisms and Neologisms

While Neo-Latin monitored its position with Classical Latin, it remained closely drawn to the recent past. Many reprints of medieval handbooks remained in popular use, but a unity in the teaching of Latin was never reached. By now the average user of Latin had at his disposition a great number of new words to express the functioning of the church and government, and the art of war. The medieval vocabulary had become so natural, and covered so many notions which did not exist in Classical Latin, that it had become extremely difficult to find the right equivalent in Classical Latin. After all, writing remains a matter of taste and choice. Authors of eulogies continued employing medieval words and newly formed words, neologisms, as a natural matter of fact, and these are found frequently on St John's tombstones, such as *bajulivus capitaneus*, *barbapotens*, *camerarius*, *decanatu*, *liber baro*, *marchio*, *marescallus*, *(p)receptor*, *scutifer*, *senescallus*, *tormentarius*, and *turcicus*. The latter is an example in question. Olivier Starky used the Classical Latin word *GETIS* (no.353.3 and 359.19) to indicate the Turks, simply because it fitted the metrical requirements

Quotations and stylistic devices

Authors of Latin panegyrics had a large number of ideas and themes at their disposal from the realm of *inventio*, i.e. ideas, motifs, and remarkable sayings. Some came from the Classical heritage, others from the intellectual repertoire of the Renaissance and the contemporary Baroque period including the intermediate period of Mannerism (no. 129 contains a Mannerist approach). Certain stock phrases found popular use at St John's, part of the repertoire in writing eulogies, such as *MORTIS HAUD IMMÉMOR* by no means forgetful of death, *ANIMAS DOTES* gifts of the mind, *MEMORIÆ ÆTERNÆ* to the eternal memory of..., *HOC LACRYMANS POSUIT MONUMENTUM* placed, while lamenting, this tombstone just to name a few. The reader will soon get acquainted with them.

¹⁸ Blaise, p.20.