

**AN INTRODUCTION  
TO ECCLESIASTICAL  
LATIN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649031276

An Introduction to Ecclesiastical Latin by H. P. V. Nunn

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Sola Scripturarum ars est, quam sibi passim vindicant:

Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.

Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi praesumunt, lacerant, docent, antequam discant. Alii, adducto supercilio, grandia verba trutinantes, inter mulierculas de sacris literis philosophantur. . . . Taceo de mei similibus, qui, si forte ad Scripturas sanctas post saeculares literas venerint, et sermone composito aurem populi mulserint, quidquid dixerint hoc legem Dei putant, nec scire dignantur quid prophetae, quid apostoli senserint: sed ad sensum suum incongrua aptant testimonia. . . .

Puerilia sunt haec et circulatorum ludō similia, docere quod ignores, imo, ut cum stomacho loquar, ne hoc quidem scire quod nescias.

Noli offendaris in Scripturis sanctis simplicitate et quasi vilitate verborum, quae vel vitio interpretum, vel de industria sic prolata sunt, ut rusticam concionem facilius instruerent, et in una eademque sententia aliter doctus, aliter audiret indoctus.

Jerome, Ep. 53.

\* \* \* \* \*

Saepe et verba non latina dico ut intelligatis.

Augustine in Ps. 123.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melius est reprehendant nos grammatici, quam non intelligant populi.

Augustine in Ps. 138.

AN INTRODUCTION  
TO  
ECCLESIASTICAL LATIN

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Disce quod doceas. JEROME, *Ep. ad Nepotianum*

CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1922

04-16-262013

MEMORIAE  
MATRIS DILECTISSIMAE  
IN CHRISTO DORMIENTIS  
DEDICATUM





Hist. Medieval

S. th.

4-14-26

13058

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS book is written to meet the needs of a special class of students, namely of those that desire to study Ecclesiastical Latin.

Ecclesiastical Latin may be defined as the form which the Latin language assumed in the hands of the Fathers of the Western Church and of their successors up to the time of the revival of learning.

The book is divided into two parts: first, a summary of such syntactical rules as are necessary for the understanding of the works of these writers, with an explanation of the points in which Ecclesiastical Latin differs from Classical Latin; secondly, a selection of passages taken from the works of some of the principal authors of the period with notes drawing the attention of the student to the appropriate sections of the syntax.

The syntax has been treated on broad lines, and no attempt has been made to trace all the peculiarities of the countless writers of Ecclesiastical Latin who represent so many different countries and degrees of culture.

The examples are taken as far as possible from the Vulgate New Testament, because this is the most readily accessible book belonging to the period.

It must not be assumed from the fact that the examples are taken from this source that the Vulgate is to be regarded as typical of Ecclesiastical Latin.

It is a translation, and often a very literal translation, of a Hebrew or Greek original. The Vulgate is not a Latin Classic in the sense that the Authorised Version of the Bible is an English Classic.

It will however be found that most of the constructions that commonly occur in Ecclesiastical Latin are to be found in the Vulgate, and, generally speaking, examples have been given of these constructions only. A very slight attempt has been made to deal with the great variety of curious distortions of Latin which the translators made use of in the attempt to represent literally obscure passages in the Hebrew.