

SERGEY VORONTSOV\*

AMICITIA AND CARITAS IN THE 7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY:  
ISIDORE OF SEVILLE AND HIS SOURCES

Testifying to the *Laelius*' influence and importance is the number of interpretations, citations and allusions it has commanded in the history of its reception. The aim of this paper is to analyse Isidore of Seville's (560-636 AD) reading of the *Laelius*. Isidore's engagement with the treatise deserves attention because it is evidence of the continuity of classical Roman culture in the Roman-Barbarian kingdoms of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD against the background of social and political change.

As J. G. F. Powell observes, the number of treatises on friendship in the classical world bears witness to the centrality of this type of relation in society<sup>1</sup>. *Amicitia* encompassed a wide range of interpersonal relations and could refer to the emotional or affective bond between two individuals<sup>2</sup>, as well as being used as one of number of words deployed in the "polite fictions" of political relations<sup>3</sup>. *Amicitia* also cut across class hierarchy: it was not limited to relationships on a horizontal plane, so to speak, since friends could be social equals or unequals<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the status of an *amicus* was somewhat informal, since there were no laws or formalized norms to define the *officia* of friends.

On the one hand, the importance of interpersonal relations increased substantially during the period of the transformation of the Roman provinces into kingdoms. It is a well-attested view, shared by students of the period, that the early medieval idea of dominion (*Herrschaft*) derived from political *amicitia*<sup>5</sup>. J. Hall's monograph on epistolary exchange in late republican and imperial Rome has shown

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<sup>1</sup> Powell 1995, 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. Brunt 1988; Powell 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hall, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. Sen. *ep.* 94, 14 (*alia regum amicitias sequenti, alia pares, alia inferiores amatur*). On *amicitia* and patronage cf. e.g. Saller 1982, 11-15; Deniaux 1993, 83-103.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. Epp 2001.

that letter-writers depended on “polite fictions” to negotiate power struggles and alliances among members of Rome’s political elite in Late Republic and during the Imperial period<sup>6</sup>. The struggle in Roman-Barbarian kingdoms was even more acute. R. Le Jan, for example, has shown that the pair *amicitia/odium* acted as a social and political regulator in 7<sup>th</sup> century Merovingian Gaul<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, aristocratic *amicitia* continued to be practiced in fifth-century Gaul<sup>8</sup>.

On the other hand, although *amicitia* continues to be mentioned in epistolary, political and historical texts of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, its use is substantially less frequent between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, these centuries were marked by the absence of reflections on *amicitia* as a kind of interpersonal relation<sup>10</sup>. *Amicitia* was mostly discussed in terms of devotion to God (*amicitia Dei*), which was opposed to devotion to the world (*amicitia mundi*) – an opposition derived from James. 4, 4<sup>11</sup>. The most extensive treatments of the subject can be found in Leo the Great’s *Treatises* (*tract.* 21) and Caesarius of Arles’s *Sermons* (esp. *serm.* 21), with the latter incorporating classical patterns, such as the contrast between ignoble and noble friendship, into his concept of *amicitia Dei* (*serm.* 21, 3).

Non-Christian authors of the period do not pay much attention to friendship either. Authors like Macrobius and Martianus Capella mention *amicitia* only occasionally. Macrobius refers to *amicitia* in the context of social relations and ethical values that derive from justice<sup>12</sup>. Martianus treats it as one of the names of the Pythagorean unity<sup>13</sup>.

This approach to *amicitia* arose in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the concept was opposed to *caritas* by Christian authors. So, for instance, Paulinus of Nola contrasts *humana amicitia* and *caritas Christi*<sup>14</sup>. Similar-

<sup>6</sup> Hall 2009, 194.

<sup>7</sup> Le Jan 2009, 225-226.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Wood 2002, 9.

<sup>9</sup> For instance: in the 5<sup>th</sup> century in the letters of Ennodius *amicitia* has 37 occurrences; Sidon. *ep.* 40 occurrences; Prosp. *chron.* 12 occurrences. In the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. Cassiod. *var.* has 15.; Cassiod. *hist.* 14; *ep. Austras.* 40; Greg. Tur. *hist.* 40; Iordanes 11; Greg. Magn. *ep.* 7. In the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. *lex. Visig.* has 12.

<sup>10</sup> Though this *amicitia* occurred in the negative sense in texts of that period. Cf. e.g. Greg. Magn. *past.* 22; Mart. Brac. *form. vit.* 2, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Konstan 1997, 167-170.

<sup>12</sup> Macr. *Sat.* 1, 8, 7, *de iustitia veniunt innocentia, amicitia, concordia, pietas, religio, affectus, humanitas.*

<sup>13</sup> Mart. Cap. *de nupt.* 8, 731, *alii Concordiam, hanc Pietatem Amicitiamque dixerunt.*

<sup>14</sup> Paul. Nol. *ep.* 40, 2; cf. Asiedu 2003, 120-130.

ly, Augustine, whose earlier writings show a predilection for friendship, later began to emphasize the role of *caritas*<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, the “pagan” elites in the 4<sup>th</sup> century tried to turn *amicitia* into an alternative basis of political and cultural unity<sup>16</sup>. *Caritas* underwent a shift in the Christian vocabulary that equated it with the *agape* of Scripture. On the one hand, *caritas* was identified by Christian authors with the virtue of *iustitia* (not without Ciceronian influence)<sup>17</sup>. On the other, *caritas* began to be used to describe relationships more widely, especially among Christians. Thus, Christian authors came to substitute *caritas* for *amicitia* in their reflections on interpersonal relations.

Against this background, the appearance of a more or less systematic and comprehensive treatment of *amicitia* in 7<sup>th</sup>-century Visigothic Spain requires explanation. My explanation of why *amicitia* reappears in the discourse of the period starts not from an interpretation of the broader social and political context but from a close reading of an important text of the period, Isidore of Seville’s *Sententiae*. The central aim of the article is to understand the kind of re-reading and re-writing of the *Laelius* Isidore carried out in his *Sententiae*.

By way of preliminaries, it is necessary first to clarify the meaning of *caritas* in Isidore’s works, principally his *Sententiae*, and the features of this definition that allow Isidore to relate it more closely to *amicitia*. I first trace the presence of the *Laelius* in Isidore’s *Sententiae*, offering an interpretation of how Isidore read Ciceronian *amicitia*.

A few introductory remarks on Isidore of Seville and the Visigothic kingdom are also germane. Isidore was the prominent and authoritative bishop of Visigothic Spain at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. He was at the heart of the kingdom’s cultural “renaissance”.<sup>18</sup> Although the aim of the *Sententiae* remains unclear, the prescriptive character of the third book, where the topic of friendship is considered, is evident<sup>19</sup>. The main part of the book (chapters 33 to 64) is dedicated to the “social ethics” of certain social classes and powerful figures in the

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. White 1992, 185-217.

<sup>16</sup> Soler 2008, 125-126.

<sup>17</sup> The division of *ius* at Cic. *part.* 129 into *aequitas* and *religio* was superimposed on the love of God and neighbour by Lactantius (cf. Buchheit 1979, 363-364).

<sup>18</sup> Also called the “Isidorian renaissance”.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. e.g. Cazier 1993.

kingdom, such as bishops, the king, and other elite groups. The chapters on *amicitia* come before this section (*sent.* 3, 28-31; 32 is on “fraternal correction”), indicating that the discussion of this term is important for the material that follows.

The elites of Visigothic Spain shared political power with the king, and this *de facto* arrangement undermined the kingdom’s political stability. The elites looked to ancient Rome as the basis of their cultural identity, over and above the barbarian origins of the Gothic aristocracy. The rhetoric of *amicitia* and that of *caritas* are blended in Visigothic official letters (and not only those between equals)<sup>20</sup>. King Sisebut, Isidore’s correspondent, touches on the topic of friendship in his hagiographical work on the archbishop of Vienna, Desiderius. His *vita Desiderii* identifies *amicitia* as a topic about which the archbishop was right to preach<sup>21</sup>. This, albeit cursory, mention is an indication that the vocabulary of friendship was still used by the elites to describe various personal relations.

At the same time, the importance of amical relations grew. The process of the polarization of society – due to the increasing distance between wealthy actors, ever more independent of the crown, and their social inferiors, evermore dependent on their lords – weakened relations subject to law and strengthened personal ones<sup>22</sup>. This tendency threatened the stability and unity of the kingdom. Gregory of Tours famously mentioned the *detestabilis consuetudo* of murdering kings that was characteristic of the Visigoths<sup>23</sup>. The 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo (633), over which Isidore of Seville presided, regarded the revolt against the king as a crime against both the political and the ecclesiastic orders<sup>24</sup>. In any case, the intellectual elites (mainly the bishops) were concerned with the problem of social and political unity and violence. The rhetoric of *caritas* and *amicitia* was particularly relevant in this context.

1. Most of Isidore’s works mention only *caritas* (118 times). Isidore discusses *caritas* chiefly in the context of the faith-hope-charity triad<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. e.g. *ep. Visig.* 3, 4, written by the king Sisebutus to *patricius* Ceasar.

<sup>21</sup> *Edocuit [...] in amicitiam [esse] fixos* (Sisebut. *vit. Desid.* 4).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. e.g. García Moreno 1989, 244-254.

<sup>23</sup> *Greg. hist.* 3, 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Conc. Tolet.* a. 633, 75.

<sup>25</sup> *Isid. in Gen.* 2, 11; *diff.* 2, 34; *sent.* 2, 2-4; *etym.* 8, 2, 3.

*Caritas* is usually defined in Isidore's works as *dilectio Dei et proximi*: thus, the notions of *dilectio* and *proximus* are relevant for the analysis. Isidore does not mention friendship with God<sup>26</sup>, so an analysis of *dilectio Dei* is of secondary importance to our purpose. Most of the occurrences of *proximus* in Isidore are connected with love of God and neighbour, with the exception of the etymological definition of *proximus* at *etym.* 9, 6, 2, where the term is said to indicate kinship (*proximus, propter proximitatem sanguinis appellatus*) This is contrary to Aug. *ep.* 155, 14 (*proximus [...] non sanguinis propinquitate sed rationis societate*). However, the word *proximus* in connection with *caritas* is neither defined by Isidore nor distinguished from other notions. Thus, it may be said that *proximus* is not regarded as relevant to the social structure.

The term *dilectio* in Isidore's works mostly appears in the context of the love of God and neighbour. At the same time, attempts to differentiate Christian love from natural love is sometimes cast by Isidore in terms of the difference between *dilectio* and *caritas*. In *diff.* 2, 35 *amor* and *dilectio* are opposed to *caritas* because they are not as perfect as the latter; in *etym.* 8, 2, 6-7 a distinction is drawn between *amor* and *dilectio*.

It seems to me that *dilectio* for Isidore was rather a virtue than an affect. Brotherly love (*fraterna dilectio*) is a medicine for some vices (the legacy of Gregory the Great)<sup>27</sup>, for example in *diff.* 2, 41, where it is a remedy for *invidia*, and in *sent.* 2, 37, 2 for *odium*, a passage that partly coincides with the structure of the third book of *sententiae* (*sent.* 3, 26 – *de invidia*; *sent.* 3, 27 – *de simulatione*; *sent.* 3, 28 – *de odio*; *sent.* 3, 29 – *de dilectione*). Thus, *dilectio* can be understood as a virtuous attitude to another person. Moreover, love of neighbour in *diff.* 2, 32 is correlated with the active life – just as the contemplative life is linked to the love of God – and, consequently, with works of justice and the good of one's neighbour<sup>28</sup>.

Thus, *dilectio* is identified with a virtuous attitude towards one's fellow human and is also correlated with justice. *Caritas* is understood in this way at *diff.* 2, 35, where a fourfold scheme of *caritas* in relation to God, neighbour, body and soul is outlined. The scheme is derived from

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<sup>26</sup> The word combination *amicus dei*, which is a quotation from Scripture (James 2, 23), occurs in Isidore's texts only once (*off. eccl.* 2, 5).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Greg. Magn. *moral.* 2, 49, 77.

<sup>28</sup> *Activa vita est quae in operibus iustitiae et proximi utilitate versatur; contemplativa autem quae vacans ab omni negotio, in sola Dei dilectione defigitur [...] Sicut enim per contemplationem amandus est Deus, ita per actualement vitam diligendus est proximus.* Isidore uses various works by Augustine but especially *cons. evang.* 1, 5, 8.

Augustine's *de doctrina christiana* (1, 23)<sup>29</sup>, but while that work addresses love directed to oneself, Isidore says nothing about this aspect and considers only love toward God and neighbour.

In *diff.* 2, 40 Isidore develops a fourfold scheme of virtues, namely *prudentia*, *iustitia*, *fortitudo* and *temperantia*. Although justice is not defined as *caritas*, as is common in patristic literature, Isidore does link the two<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, justice encompasses the love of God and neighbour, and *caritas* is understood by Isidore as the ground of justice. Taking into account the extensive definition of justice (in contrast to *caritas* as love of God and neighbour), it can be said that Isidore perceives *caritas* through the lens of justice rather than vice versa (so that he somewhat inverts the patristic interpretation of justice in terms of *caritas*).

The same emphasis in the definition of justice can be seen in Isidore's interpretation of *caritas* at *etym.* 8, 2, where Isidore correlates *religio* with faith, hope and charity. Isidore defines the human relation to God (*religio*) in *etym.* 8, 2, 2 in terms of service. *Servitus* is usually given religious connotations in Isidore's works<sup>31</sup>. In addition, *caritas* is defined as the love of God and neighbour and as the fulfilment of the law (*Rom.* 13, 10). Patristic literature often refers to Paul's letter to the Romans in this context, but in Isidore it is the absence of the alternative definition of *caritas* that results in the apparent emphasis on the legal sense of *caritas*.

A correlation – though importantly not an equation – between justice and *caritas* is also present in Isidore's consideration of *caritas* at *sent.* 2, 3. The treatment of the concept in this work is especially important because it sheds light on the relation between *caritas* and *amicitia* in Isidore's thought. Indeed, it is precisely in *sententiae* that Isidore writes about *amicitia*.

The second book of Isidore's *sententiae* opens with a chapter on wisdom. From the first sentence, the work equates beatitude with cognition of God<sup>32</sup> that proceeds from good deeds. Thereafter Isidore identifies justice with the will of God, which he believes human beings must take time

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<sup>29</sup> *Cum ergo quattuor sint diligenda, unum quod supra nos est, alterum quod nos sumus, tertium quod iuxta nos est, quartum quod infra nos est, de secundo et quarto nulla praecepta danda erant.*

<sup>30</sup> Bejczy 2011, 57-58.

<sup>31</sup> The exceptions are situated in the second (on the rhetoric) and the fifth (on the law) books of *Etymologiae*: cf. *etym.* 2, 29, 13; 5, 27, 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Isid. sent.* 2, 1, 1, *beata vita cognitio divinitatis est. Cognitio divinitatis virtus boni operis est. Virtus boni operis fructus aeternitatis est.*

to learn<sup>33</sup>. Thus, justice is tied to the process of cognition of God and His will, and has a personal rather than public dimension.

The three chapters that follow are dedicated to faith (*sent.* 2, 2), *caritas* (*sent.* 2, 3) and hope (*sent.* 2, 4). *Caritas*, which is here presented in the context of “theological virtues”, is understood as taking it upon oneself to execute the commandments of God. God is compared with the king whom one ought also to love:

Qui Dei praecepta contemnit, Deum non diligit. Neque enim regem diligimus, si odio leges eius habemus (2, 3, 5).

The source of the quotation is Aug. *in epist. Ioh.* 9<sup>34</sup>. The parallel passage in Ambrose provides further explanation: Ambrose equates *caritas* with the love of a soldier for his emperor and of the slave for his master<sup>35</sup>. In this case the personal dimension of the relation (devotion) serves as the moral basis for the public dimension (servitude). A similar combination of public and private is correlated not only with *caritas* but also with *amicitia*<sup>36</sup>.

Personal loyalty towards God or king (*caritas*) is correlated with the execution of his will (justice). The next sentences (*sent.* 2, 3, 6 – 7a-c) correlate love of neighbour and love of God, building Isidore’s argument on the unity of God and man in Christ (*sent.* 2, 3, 7c)<sup>37</sup>. To love God is to love one’s neighbour<sup>38</sup>.

In this case, the general principle of justice (observance of the law) correlates with personal relations (love of the king). The same superimposition of general and particular aspects takes place in the case of *cari-*

<sup>33</sup> Isid. *sent.* 2, 1, 7, *consilio autem divino servandum est, ut hoc credatur esse iustitia quod divinae placuerit voluntati. Non enim poterit esse iniustum quod iusto conplacet iudici.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ipse dixit: dedit nobis praeceptum ut diligamus invicem. quomodo diligis eum cuius odisti praeceptum? quis est qui dicat: diligo imperatorem sed odi leges eius? in hoc intellegit imperator si diligis eum, si observentur leges eius per provincias.*

<sup>35</sup> Ambr. *in psalm.* 118, 9, *generaliter quidem caritas excludit timorem, ut miles, qui imperatorem diligit, bella pro imperatore suscepta non metuit, ut servus amans dominum, quamvis per devia et praeupta mittatur, tamen omnia pericula domini amore contemnit ac, si quis dominum petat, se ipsum offerre non trepidat; ut, qui trans mare positos filios videre desiderat, non metuit naufragia.*

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Aug. *in psalm.* 138, 27, *qui enim sunt inimici tui, nisi qui vita sua indicant quam oderint legem tuam.* The practice of the emperor’s *amicitiam renuntiare* exemplifies the case as well (cf. Rogers 1959, 237).

<sup>37</sup> *Christus Deus et homo: totum ergo Christum non diligit, qui hominem odit.*

<sup>38</sup> Isid. *sent.* 3, 3, 7a, *servat autem in se delictionem Dei, qui a caritate non dividitur proximi.*

*tas*. In addition to the general attitude to God and neighbour, *caritas* designates a special kind of relation that can also be broken (and that is also related to justice). At *diff.* 2, 40 embracing the bonds of fraternal charity (*fraternae caritatis vincula amplectere*) is understood to be a form of justice. The unity of *caritas* is correlated with the society of the good (*bonorum consortio*, *sent.* 2, 3, 6). Heresies disrupt the bonds of *caritas*<sup>39</sup>, and so heretics and Jews remain outside these bonds<sup>40</sup>. Hate and envy also separate people from *caritas*<sup>41</sup>. As W. Drews argues, *caritas* may represent the foundation of the political and religious community of Visigothic Spain<sup>42</sup>.

These two aspects are combined in Isidore's attitude towards one's enemies. On the one hand, *caritas* can be and is applied to them<sup>43</sup>; on the other hand, enemies remain outside that bond<sup>44</sup>. *Caritas* extends to both enemies and friends, and so serves as a general principle for *amicitia* as a specific kind of relation. Indeed, *caritas* and *amicitia* underlie a form of social and political unity.

Isidore of Seville's *caritas* as the political and "civil" unity of the *gens Gothorum* derives from Gregory the Great's twofold relation of Christians to God and the brethren<sup>45</sup> and Augustine's unity of all in God (clearly neoplatonic in inspiration)<sup>46</sup>.

At the same time the abstract and general identification of *iustitia* and *caritas* by Lactantius and the fathers of the Latin Church acquires a more specific and personal character in Isidore's *sententiae*. Justice and law-abidingness are understood as a matter of personal attitude to the law-giver (God (Christ) or king, respectively). *Caritas*, indeed, becomes loyalty to Christ.

2. Isidore of Seville applies the notion of *amicitia* exclusively to interpersonal relations. No mention of *amicitia Dei* is made in his account.

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<sup>39</sup> *Sent.* 3, 14, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Sent.* 3, 12, 3; 3, 27, 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Sent.* 2, 3, 1; 2, 3, 7b; 3, 27, 1-2 etc.

<sup>42</sup> Drews 2006, 254-255.

<sup>43</sup> *Diff.* 2, 35, *illa vero perfecta est caritas quae inimicos et patienter sustinet et benigne refovet.*

<sup>44</sup> *E.g. sent.* 3, 27, 3, *sicut mater ecclesia prave ab hominibus haereticis premitur, sed tamen eos venientes ad se benigna caritate amplectitur, ita et singuli nostrum, quoscumque inimicos sustinemus, revertentes materna imitatione amplectere statim debemus.*

<sup>45</sup> Straw 1991, 90-95.

<sup>46</sup> Pétré 1948, 92 ss.



The definition of *amicus* we find in Isidore's *Etymologiae* is of interest in this regard. *Amicus* is etymologically defined as *custos animi* (*etym.* 10, 4), a quotation from Gregory the Great. Isidore transforms the sense of the Gregorian passage, which is concerned with the friendship of God<sup>47</sup>, adding a commentary concerning relations that are clearly human (*etym.* 10, 5). In Isidore *amici* are linked by the chain of charity (*catena caritatis*) and held together as if by hooks (*ab hamo [...] unde et hami quod teneant*). The phrase *catena caritatis* – a relatively rare turn of phrase – is used by Paulinus of Nola, when he contrasts human friendship with the charity of Christ respect to their temporal framework.<sup>48</sup> However, Isidore opposes *amicus* to *amator*, a term that in his view encompasses lust (*etym.* 10, 5). Thus, the *caritas* of friendship is separated from *amor* as the nobler feeling<sup>49</sup>.

Classical ideas about *amicitia* can be seen in Isidore's *diff.* 1. *Amicus* differs from *socius*, since the former relation is based on affection (*affectus*) and the latter on property (*res*)<sup>50</sup>. The notion of *affectio* is used to differentiate kinship from friendship (*pietas/affectio*, *diff.* 1, 24). The distinction *fidus/fidelis* explains the relation between friendship and faith (*fides*)<sup>51</sup>. The friend is included in the list of relatives, servants and fellows (in contrast to *proximus*). The basis for friendship is both faith and affection. However, *diff.* 1. offers no explanation for the terms *caritas* (used only once in the entire book, *osculum pacis*) or *proximus*.

The third book of *sententiae*, which contains Isidore's reflections on *amicitia*, offers further commentary on the *amicus*: the whole book rests upon the distinction between *boni* and *mali* or *improbi*. *Boni* in the late Roman republic constituted "pillars of society" that ideally supported the Senate<sup>52</sup>. Property served as the basis of dignity for the *boni*; in turn, *improbi* were people without dignity or status<sup>53</sup>. Cicero drew the ideal picture of *bonus* as opposed to *improbus*.

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<sup>47</sup> Greg. Magn. *hom. in Ev.* 2, 27, *amicus enim quasi animi custos vocatur. Quia igitur psalmista prospexit electos Dei a mundi huius amore separatos custodire in mandatis caelestibus voluntatem Dei, miratus est amicos Dei, dicens: Mihi autem nimis honorificati sunt amici tui, Deus.*

<sup>48</sup> Paul. Nol. *ep.* 40.

<sup>49</sup> Pétré 1948, 33-35.

<sup>50</sup> *Diff.* 1, 47 cf. Codoñer 1992, 218.

<sup>51</sup> *Diff.* 1, 48.

<sup>52</sup> Mouritsen 2001, 134.

<sup>53</sup> Mouritsen 2001, 140.

This distinction influenced patristic thought<sup>54</sup> and was transformed into the contrast between *electi* and *reprobi* by Gregory the Great, who divided these categories on the basis of the salvation<sup>55</sup>. Isidore used Greg. Magn. *moral.* 34, 4 to elaborate the sentence in which the concord of evil people (*malorum concordia*) was opposed to that of the good, which constitutes *amicitia*. In Gregory's text, the society of the *electi* seems to be the Church, rather than a group of friends. Thus, the notion of *amicitia* is associated by Isidore with the *boni* and their coming together as a group (a Ciceronian rather than Gregorian way of thinking). However, Isidore's definition of *boni* differs substantially from Cicero's: the bishop's *boni* aspire to *gloria*, but it is the glory of God and glory in God. At the same time the *mali*, or evil individuals, wish for earthly glory (*vanagloria, mala fama*); they pretend to be good, while they envy the good and despise them.

*Dilectio* is opposed to envy as a principle of unity for the *boni*; therefore, the chapter that opens the theme of friendship is called *De dilectione*. Isidore's *boni* are tied by bonds of *dilectio* and *caritas*, which are clearly distinguished not only from heresy and Judaism but also from hate and envy. If we remember that one's attitude to the king and his law was explained in terms of love vs. hate, the political connotations of hate and envy become clear. The problem of *coups d'état* was very relevant for the Visigothic Kingdom and was regarded by Isidore as a violation of *concordia*<sup>56</sup>. Thus, a friend should be part of the religious-political unity of *boni*<sup>57</sup>.

When writing about friendship, Isidore used a set of Christian sources, but the text that was central for his reflections was Cicero's *Laelius*. The first chapter on the topic *de dilectione* follows the logic of Laelius' speech on friendship. Isidore begins with a definition of friendship as a kind of bond between two or more individuals<sup>58</sup>. Developing this definition, he stresses the unanimity of the friends (*sent.* 3, 28, 3, see below) that was an important component of the famous definition of

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. e.g. Fiske 1965.

<sup>55</sup> Straw 1991 4; 144.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Conc. Tolet.* a. 633 75. Although here the accent is on *fides* not on the *caritas*.

<sup>57</sup> I do not believe that Isidore wrote on monastic friendship (as e.g. John Cassian). *Caritas* is the only basis of relations of fraternity in Isidore's *Regula monachorum*.

<sup>58</sup> *Isid. sent.* 3, 28, 2, *amicitia est animorum societas. Haec quippe a duobus incipit. Nam minus quam inter duos dilectio esse non poterit.* Cf. *Cic. Lael.* 20, *omnis caritas aut inter duos aut inter paucos iungeretur.*

friendship in *Lael.* 20 (though Isidore does not quote it). Then Isidore proceeds to enumerate the advantages of *amicitia*, quoting *Laelius* almost word for word<sup>59</sup>.

It is his understanding of the essence of the bonds of friendship that substantially differentiates Isidore's concept of friendship from that of *Laelius*. Cicero explains the essence of *amicitia* in Stoic terms of nature and virtue. Departing from Cicero and drawing on *Acts* 4, 32, Isidore states:

Antiqui dixerunt de societate duorum unam esse animam in duo corpora, propter vim scilicet amoris, sicut in actibus apostolorum legimus: Erat illis cor unum, et anima una, non quia multa corpora unam habebant animam, sed quia vinculo et igne caritatis coniuncti, unum omnes generaliter sine dissensione sapiebant.

It is important to note that Isidore's sources argue against the concept of a nature-based unity in respect to friendship. Gregory the Great in his *ep.* 54 alludes to certain philosophers that understood the phrase "one soul in two bodies" literally – a position that is quite contrary to Christian anthropology<sup>60</sup>. While in *Lael.* 20 it is nature that generates the narrow bonds of friendship, in *sent.* 3, 28, 2-3 Isidore alludes to the text of Facundus of Hermiane (6<sup>th</sup> century). Facundus, commenting on *Act.* 4, 23, argues that Christ's *caritas* unites men not by nature but by the unity of their souls<sup>61</sup>.

Thus, the basis of unity is not nature (which was an ambiguous idea in Christian thought), but love. At the same time, Isidore does not describe *amicitia* as something supernatural; rather, he draws parallels between *vis amoris* and *vinculum et ignis caritatis*, which unites one with the society of the good (*consortium bonorum*, *sent.* 2, 3, 6). The central point of this unity is the unanimity and consensus of the *boni*, as it was

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<sup>59</sup> Isid. *sent.* 3, 28, 4, *amicitia et prosperas res dulciores facit, et adversas communione temperat levioresque reddit, quia dum in tribulatione amici consolatio adiungitur, nec frangitur animus, nec cadere patitur*. Cf. *Lael.* 22-23, *secundas res splendiores facit amicitia et adversas partiens communicansque leviores [...]. Cumque plurimas et maximas commoditates amicitia contineat, tum illa nimirum praestat omnibus, quod bonam spem praelucet in posterum nec debilitari animos aut cadere patitur*.

<sup>60</sup> *Fuerunt quidam veteres philosophorum qui in duobus corporibus unam esse animam dicerent, non affectu iungentes duos, sed unam in duos animae substantiam partientes. At contra nos esse in multis unam animam dicimus, non dividendo substantiam, sed corda iungendo. Nam de illis primis fidelibus scriptum est: erat in eis cor unum, et anima una.*

<sup>61</sup> Facund. *defens.* 7, 1, *non enim natura nos unianimes, sed animorum societas facit*.

for Cicero in *Lael.* 20 (*omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio*).

The shift from nature to *caritas* has some effects on the concept of *amicitia* in general. Alluding to *Lael.* 20, Isidore alters *caritas* to *dilectio*. Cicero's words about the two participants in *caritas* were re-used by Augustine to interpret the passage from Mark 6, 7 and Luke 10, 1, where the apostles are sent forth in pairs<sup>62</sup>. Gregory followed Augustine, but explained that the subject is not *caritas* towards oneself but *dilectio* to another<sup>63</sup>. Coining his own phrase, Isidore substitutes *dilectio* for *caritas*, probably having in mind Gregory's twofold scheme of *caritas*. Thus, Isidore returns to Ciceronian *amicitia* and changes the word *caritas*, which was charged with complex Christian connotations, to *dilectio*, which is more specific (in *etym.* 8, 2, 6 Isidore plays on the etymology, *dilectio/duos in se liget*).

Isidore's *caritas* is correlated less with affection than with justice. Therefore, when Isidore refers to Augustine's understanding of the love of God as the basis for the love of one's friend, he remodels the concept. The friend should be loved for God (*pro deo*), otherwise the love is unreasonable and immoderate<sup>64</sup>. The source text in this instance may be one of the sermons of Caesarius of Arles, in which he indicates that immoderate love for things, even for relatives, leads to grief<sup>65</sup>.

However, Isidore's aim seems to be different. Friendship, understood as a personal relationship, seems to be subordinated to love for God, which (as I hope to have shown above) is the basis for justice. This as-

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<sup>62</sup> Aug. *quaest. evang.* 2, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Greg. Magn. *in evang.* 1, 17, 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Sent.* 3, 28, 5a, *tunc vere amicus amatur, si non pro se, sed pro Deo ametur. Qui vero pro se amicum diligit, insipienter eum amplectit.* 28, 5b, *multum in terra demersus est qui carnaliter hominem moriturum plus diligit quam oportet. Qui enim intemperanter amicum amat, pro se magis illum, non pro Deo amat. Quantum ergo bonum est qui pro Deo fratrem diligit, tanto perniciosum qui eum pro seipso amplectit.*

<sup>65</sup> Caes. Arel. *serm.* 179, 4, *quod ita fit, si quotiens maritus aut uxor aut filius moritur, vel substantia nobis, quam plus quam oportet amamus, aufertur licet – plus Christum quam ipsam substantiam diligamus, et, si necessitas fuerit, mallimus ipsam substantiam perdere, quam Christum negare –: tamen quia, sicut iam dixi, plus eam quam debemus diligimus, amittere eam, aut dum vivimus, aut dum morimur, sine grandi dolore non possumus.* Cf. Isid. *sent.* 3, 59, 2, *gravius torquetur impius mundi exaggerando commoda, quam iustus tolerando adversa. Qui enim bona mundi diligit, velit non velit, timoris et doloris poenae subcumbit, quique plus quam oportet res transitorias diligunt, maiorem sibi ingerunt dolorem rei ablatae, quam amorem parturiebant possessae. Cum gravi enim dolore amittuntur quae cum magno amore habentur. Minus autem carendo dolemus quae minus possidendo diligimus.*

sumption allows us to explain why, according to Isidore, the love for God primarily love for a friend, which can be unwise (*insipienter*) and immoderate (*intemperanter*). The connection between the love of God and neighbour and justice (and piety) implicit in friendship is also present in the concept of fraudulence<sup>66</sup>. Treason is understood as the violation of divine justice and as the mere simulation of the love of God and neighbour (which is characteristic of *mali*). The problem of friendship in relation to the violation of justice was highly relevant for Isidore and for Visigothic Spain in general<sup>67</sup>.

It is difficult to pass judgment on whether *virtus* and *caritas* are opposites. Certainly, Stoic and Patristic positions on virtue are markedly different. At the same time, Isidore in his *sententiae* designates *caritas* as the highest virtue<sup>68</sup>, but he does not develop this idea in the chapters dedicated to *amicitia* or elsewhere in the book. However, the theme of perfection in friendship appears only indirectly in the last sentence of chapter 28. Here Isidore alludes to Augustine *civ.* 11, 28<sup>69</sup> and *conf.* 4, 14, 4. Perfection of the participants as the aim of love and friendship was an important component of Augustine's theory<sup>70</sup>, but in Isidore's text the quotation implies something else. He is either continuing the discussion of love for a friend *per se* or presenting another type of bad friendship, in which love is mixed with hate<sup>71</sup>.

Chapters 29 and 30 consider different types of deviations from *amicitia*: pretence (*simulatio*) and treachery (*fraudulentus amicus*, 3, 29, 1-3), the disruption of *caritas* (3, 29, 5-6), and friendship based on gifts (*bene-*

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<sup>66</sup> Isid. *sent.* 3, 29, 3, *tunc quisque magis fit pietati iustitiae que divinae contrarius, quando despicit amicum aliqua adversitate percussum [...] Per adversa igitur et prospera conprobatur, si utique vere diligatur Deus et proximus, quia, dum adversa procedunt, amicus fraudulentus detegitur, statim que despicit quem se diligere simulavit.*

<sup>67</sup> Cf. e.g. Isid. *sent.* 3, 45, 3; 3, 53, 1, 3, 54, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Isid. *sent.* 2, 3, 3, *caritas enim virtutum omnium obtinet principatum.* The source is Leander *hom.* 12, *inde omni gaudio praeponitur, quia et charitas facta est, quae omnium virtutum obtinet principatum.*

<sup>69</sup> *Est enim et amor, quo amatur et quod amandum non est et istum amorem odit in se, qui illum diligit, quo id amatur quod amandum est. Possunt enim ambo esse in uno homine, et hoc bonum est homini, ut illo proficiente quo bene vivimus iste deficiat quo male vivimus, donec ad perfectum sanetur et in bonum commutetur omne quod vivimus. Cf. Isid. *sent.* 3, 28, 6, *plerumque diligit in alio homo quod odit in se, utpote in infantibus. Amamus enim quandam eorum ignaviam, et tamen odimus quia ignavi esse nolumus. Sic lapides, equos et cetera, quae licet diligimus, sed tamen nolumus hoc esse, etiam si possimus.**

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Jaeger 2011, 185-200.

<sup>71</sup> Isid. *sent.* 3, 28, 6, *plerumque diligit in alio homo quod odit in se, utpote in infantibus. Amamus enim quandam eorum ignaviam, et tamen odimus quia ignavi esse nolumus. Sic lapides, equos et cetera, quae licet diligimus, sed tamen nolumus hoc esse, etiam si possimus.*

*ficium, munus*) or need (*necessitas, indigentia, inopia*). There are some parallels with the topics and terminology we find in the *Laelius*, which I present in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Parallels with *Laelius* in *Isid. sent. 3, 29-31*.

Isidore	Cicero	Subject
<i>sent. 3, 29, 4</i>	<i>Lael. 32</i>	eternity of real friendship
<i>sent. 3, 29, 4-5</i>	<i>Lael. 33-34</i>	causes of breakup of friendship
<i>sent. 3, 30, 1-3</i>	<i>Lael. 29</i>	benevolence vs. favour in friendship
<i>sent. 3, 31, 1</i>	<i>Lael. 18</i>	friendship is to be found in the good.

Further classical patterns of *amicitia* persist in these chapters. At *sent. 3, 30, 2*, Isidore states that the source of real friendship is goodwill (*benevolentia*), in contrast to relations proceeding from favour<sup>72</sup>: this idea goes back to Aristotle through Cicero<sup>73</sup>. At the same time, Isidore does not define the notion of *benevolentia* (the term is rarely found in his *opus*), and the only function it performs is to guarantee that friendship is free from any material incentive<sup>74</sup>. The idea of *caritas* actually makes the notion of goodwill superfluous, or simply a synonym. The notion of unity (also based on *caritas*) is central to Isidore's considerations concerning the kind of friendship that arises from a gift (*munus* and *beneficium*). Both gift-giving and need cause brief and faithless relations based on favour (*sent. 3, 30, 2a; 3, 30, 3*)<sup>75</sup>.

The idea that real friendship can never be disrupted was grounded by Cicero in the immutability of nature<sup>76</sup>. Isidore repeats that view but without reference to nature, insofar as *amicitia* is no longer connected to it. The same process occurs in the case of consolation as a duty of friendship – indeed, alongside unity, it is the only positive effect of friendship mentioned by Isidore (*sent. 3, 28, 4*, quoting *Lael. 22-23*, see above).

<sup>72</sup> *Illā vera est amicitia quae nihil quaerit ex rebus amici, nisi solam benevolentiam, scilicet ut gratis amet amantem.*

<sup>73</sup> Brewer 2005, 730-731; on the differences between Aristotle and Cicero cf. Konstan, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Possibly, Isidore uses here Caesarius of Arles's text of *serm. 21*.

<sup>75</sup> *Isid. sent. 3, 30, 2a, non sunt fideles in amicitia, quos munus non gratia copulat. Nam cito deserunt, nisi semper acceperint. Dilectio enim quae munere glutinatur, eodem suspensio dissolvitur. Sent. 3, 30, 3, plerumque amicitia ex necessitate vel indigentia nascitur, ut sit per quem quisque quod desiderat consequatur. Ille autem eam veraciter quaerit, qui nihil egendo eam appetit. Nam illa ex inopia brevis est et fugata, ista pura atque perpetua.*

<sup>76</sup> *Lael. 32, sed quia natura mutari non potest, idcirco verae amicitiae sempiternae sunt.*

Friendship makes good circumstances better and makes bad ones easier to bear<sup>77</sup>, precisely because friends console.

Isidore's reading of the *Laelius* suggests that the central problem of friendship was that of unanimity. This significantly differs from the question about the kind of good that friendship can provide for those who enter into it, which is the question that the classical tradition seems to be interested in with regard to *amicitia*<sup>78</sup>. This explains why only the simple, ideal picture of *amicitia* was considered by Isidore in his text, whereas the complex discussions in Cicero's dialogue were set aside. Consequently, Cicero's twofold scheme of *amicitia* is replaced by the comparison between real and false friendship in the *Sententiae*. Many *topoi* of the classical debate on friendship (e.g. constancy and consolation) were somewhat trivialized, summarily treated<sup>79</sup> or totally ignored (e.g. virtue or perfection in the relation of friendship, confidence, *alter ego*, etc.).

Isidore tends to define the basis of unanimity in terms of *caritas* (in accord with the Patristic tradition), rather than in terms of nature and virtue (in accord with Cicero). Thus, Isidore's notion of *amicitia* becomes simpler than the classical one, thanks to the patristic development of the notion of *caritas*. While classical *amicitia* is superimposed on a complex web of social, political and economic ideologies (e.g. *natura*, *benevolentia* etc.), patristic *amicitia* is deduced from the wider notion of *caritas*. While Ciceronian *caritas* could be regarded as one of the many aspects of *amicitia*, in patristic thought *amicitia* was considered to be an aspect of *caritas*.

Isidore shapes the concept of *caritas* more according to classical and political orientations than to mystical or theological ones. *Caritas* is linked to justice, which Isidore spends considerable efforts on defining and does so along classical lines. *Caritas* is also a type of loyalty towards God and his law – a law that prescribes the principles of justice and is practiced in and through love for one's neighbour. This principle unites the *boni*, shaping a kind of political and religious community in Visigoth-

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<sup>77</sup> *Sent.* 3, 28, 4, quoted *supra* n. 59.

<sup>78</sup> Powell 1995, 33-34.

<sup>79</sup> As Curtius noted, the understanding of classical *brevitas* in the Early Middle Ages was somewhat technical or literal (cf. Curtius 1953, 487).

ic Spain. Thus, Isidore's *caritas* began to designate a broad "civic" unity<sup>80</sup>, making room for a more specific and practical *amicitia*. *Amicitia* was subordinated to *caritas* as a general principle correlated with divine justice, and divine justice in itself acquired a more personal character.

Then, why depend on the *Laelius*? Why did Isidore not write his own "original" text? The process of writing in the last centuries of late antiquity was closely connected to the reading. As R. Kaster has noted, one of the main aims of late antique authors was to blend the past with the present and to renew the *auctores*<sup>81</sup>. An author's task was to compile the best texts rather than to make a completely new text<sup>82</sup>. Cicero was indeed an *auctor* during "Isidorean renaissance"<sup>83</sup>. Thus, the authoritative text of Cicero served as a source of reflection on the problem of unity and personal relations that was relevant for Isidore's own society and Visigothic Spain.

The *Sententiae*'s reflections on friendship have an emblematic character. Their correspondence to the social reality of Visigothic Spain was weaker than with the past, as represented in the Latin literary tradition. Isidore provides more than a set of statements on friendship. He develops a system of references to classical and patristic authors on the topic of *amicitia*. Referring to the ideal form of *amicitia* in an authoritative text was a sophisticated literary method to build a cultural reality that was somewhat different from, or even contrary to, the immediate political and social context. S. Averintsev observes that in the period of late antiquity an ideal "semiotic" existence became much more relevant than the real or actual one<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> *Caritas*, for example, presupposes having a just attitude towards one's enemies, with whom, I believe, relations of friendship are impossible.

<sup>81</sup> Kaster 1980, 231.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. e.g. Peltari 2014, 25-30.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Aurov 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Averitsev 2004, 166 ff.



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