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JAMES HOGG

Levinus Ammonius¹ was born at Gand on 3 or 13 April 1485. He entered the charterhouse of Bois-Saint-Martin on 18 August 1506, where he was professed in 1507. His brother Jean also joined the Carthusians, - at La Chapelle, the house to which their father Jacques, who became an Augustinian canon after his wife's death, donated a substantial collection of books. Levinus was appointed procurator at Bois-Saint-Martin in 1529. His relations with the prior, Michel Diericx, who was also provincial visitor, were cordial right up to the prior's death in the winter of 1530. Levinus was allowed considerable liberty in his pursuit of humanistic studies, towards which the Flemish prior of the Grande Chartreuse, Guillaume Bibaut of Thielt (1521 - *d.* July 1535), was also sympathetic. Although Levinus was only taught Latin at school and criticized the inadequacy of his teachers in later life, he assiduously learnt Greek in the charterhouse and developed a great enthusiasm for classical literature. His extant letters, of which 86 date from his period at Bois-Saint-Martin in the years 1518-33, reveal his passionate pursuit of classical learning. In a letter dated 1 June 1521 he declares that he intended to transcribe the whole of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odysee*, as copies were too rare and expensive to allow the possibility of purchase. He was greatly aided in his studies by Canon Johannes de Molendino of Doornik, a regular correspondent of Erasmus 1515-34, who procured for him *Libanii sophistae graeci declamatiunculae aliquot eademque latinae* per Des. Erasmus Rot., *cum duabus orationibus Lysiae itidem versis incerto interprete, et aliis nonnullis*. In inclyta Basilea, ex aedibus Jo. Frob. Mense martios anno MDXXII, - a volume that also contained Isocrates on Peace and Lucian's *Abdicatus*. On the margins Levinus wrote his annotations. The volume was unfortunately destroyed by fire at the University of Louvain early in the present century.

In 1520 Levinus copied the four Gospels in Greek for the charterhouse library and one of his four transcripts of the Greek Psalter "cum canticis" is conserved at the library of Dresden under A. 304. By 1522 he seems to have so overstrained his eyesight by his continual studies that he was nearly blind in the left eye.

His correspondence, conserved in MS. 599 of the Bibliothèque publique de Besançon, a volume of 569 pages in quarto, to which were added 6 folios containing an index, presents 167 letters in Greek and Latin, addressed to 90 different persons, - priests, members of religious Orders, civic officials, who were in some way connected with the spread of humanism at the moment when protestantism was making inroads into the Low Countries.

The Collège des Trois Langues had been founded at Louvain in 1518 under the

¹ His name appears in various forms in the records: *Van der Maude*, *Vander Maude*, *Liévin*, *Livin*, *Liéven*, *Laevinus*, *Levinus*, *Livinus Ammonius*, *de Harena*, *de Arena*, *Van den Sande*.

guidance of Erasmus and Guillaume de Busleiden, member of the Great Council of Malines, for instruction in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, but the clash between the supporters of Scholasticism and the New Learning was often acrimonious. Among Levinus's extant letters are 6 to Adrichianus, Dean of St. Pancras in Leyden, 3 to his brother Jean at the charterhouse of La Chapelle, who adopted Lutheran tenets and spent long years in the monastic prison there, as the visitation of 1541 reveals - " ... licet non deesset inter eos D. Joannes de Harena haeresi lutherana infectus et sua obstinata perversitate confratres suos conturbans et plurimum scandalizans ac propterea a V^{li} Patre Priore suo cum victualium restrictione cellae inclusus, quem cum nullis oportunitis mediis a erroribus et falsis opinionibus suis revocare potuissemus ex confratrum suorum informatione cum arctiore restrictione victualium in praescripta reclusionone continuandum iudicavimus. - (Levinus severed all contact with him from January 1531 onwards), 3 to Maximilian of Burgundy, Prince of Vere, 6 to Erasmus, 1 to Florent, prior of the charterhouse of Louvain, 1 to Gerard Kalckbrenner, prior of the charterhouse of Cologne, dated 20 March 1541, thanking him for the merciful gift of a few books, though he was not enthusiastic about the Cologne edition of the complete works of Denys the Carthusian as an answer to the threat of the Reformation, holding that the Fathers of the Church offered a more adequate response, and 1 to Jean Vollon, prior of the Grande Chartreuse, dated 12 March 1547. At Bois-Saint-Martin classical books were bought, borrowed, and copied, but when the new prior was appointed in 1531 he took a very different view, regarding humanists as virtual heretics. Fortunately, in 1533 Levinus was able to transfer to the charterhouse of Gand, where he made a second profession. He seems to have been procurator there for a time. Life at Gand was much more to his taste and in August 1533 he received a visit from the humanist Nicolas Olahus, who had accompanied Queen Mary of Hungary to Gand. The death of the Carthusian general Bibaut was, however, a definite setback for the humanists in the Order, - as early as 1526 the General Chapter had officially sought the opinion of Natalis Beda, professor at the Sorbonne, on the value of Erasmus's work.

In letter 87 of the Besançon MS. (pp. 276-81) he lamented to Erasmus the passing of prior Diericx at Bois-Saint-Martin, claiming that it had had a catastrophic effect on his serenity of mind and put an end to those happy days of study and philological discourse, his composition of Greek epistles to Oridryus and others, his amiable correction of the Latin verses of the children of the counsellor Wouters and the first literary efforts of Erard de la Marck: "Sed heu miser in hasce compedes imprudens inieci pedes prius etiam quam vel mihi notus essem, vel scirem quid esset monachismus." Levinus had long tried to cultivate Erasmus's friendship, having begged him as early as 4 July 1524 to provide a Greek edition of John Chrysostomus, as too few Greek texts of the early Fathers were available. He was enthusiastic about Erasmus's *Enchiridion militis christiani* and defended his views, though Erasmus was a severe critic of contemporary monasticism and wrote mainly for a lay audience. In letter 76 of the Besançon MS., dated 15 July 1529, he urged Erasmus to settle in Gand, where, he claimed,

the civic authorities would warmly welcome him. He asserted that the monks there had abandoned their superstitious practices and lived in true piety, the Gospel being taught in all its purity. Erasmus could reside at the country house of Omer Edingus, counsellor of Flanders. Erasmus declined the offer and it is noteworthy that whilst 6 letters of Levinus to Erasmus are extant, only two replies are known, one dated 2 October 1528 from Basel and the other from Fribourg-in-Brisgau on 13 April 1531. Erasmus was acquainted with a number of charterhouses, including those of Louvain and Scheut in Belgium, and showed a respectful attitude towards the Carthusians, whilst urging generally a return to a more authentic, christocentric piety based on the Scriptures, - religion being a matter of the heart and not of external ceremonies, a point on which Levinus also felt strongly, as the long offices deprived him of much time he might have lavished on his humanistic studies. However, he seems to have been less aware of the real crisis facing the Church than Erasmus and too often regarded his confrères as pious barbarians. He had written to Erasmus concerning the latter's edition of Jerome and attacking the prior of the charterhouse of Paris, Peter Sutor, a fanatical opponent of humanism. He also sent him a copy of two sermons of John Chrysostomus that he had edited, lamenting four printing errors. Erasmus clearly regarded Levinus as intelligent and pious, even urging his collaboration on Chrysostomus. In 1537 and 1538 the Carthusian General Chapter prohibited the reading of Erasmus's works and in 1540 or 1541 Levinus was sent to the charterhouse of Monnikhusen near Arnhem. He found, he claimed, no books there for his studies and rated the monks as uncouth. Furthermore, the area was subject to constant warfare. In a letter dated 19 March 1542, addressed to Canon Cornelius Trajectinus he reminisces on the copies he made of Suidas and Hesychius, whilst the Aldine editions from Venice, the commentaries of William of Budé, the complete works of Basil the Great, 16 discourses of Gregory Nazianze, several homilies, minor works and epistles of John Chrysostomus, the paraphrase of Nonnus, etc. had formerly stood at his disposition. He declared that he had studied Theocritus and Pindar closely. Hesiod had been his constant companion, but he had also read Isocrates, Demosthenes, Eschine, Lysias and other great orators, along with a number of treatises by Plato and Xenophon. He could not even list in a single day all that he had copied and read, not to mention the many poems and epistles he had himself written in Latin: "Atque haec quidem fuerunt! Fuerunt, inquam, fuerunt!" All he had now were three books and a few volumes in small format. Even the copies he had made were no longer in his possession, and if he had received 20 visits practically every day (!) from savants in his own country, here in Monnikhusen he had no contacts at all. This did not, however, prevent him from compiling his little treatise *De filio minore natu* there, which is marked by a personal tone throughout. In the preface he admits, however, that even in Monnikhusen he was visited by Dr. Johannes Reidanus. To judge by letter 89 in the Besançon MS.,

dated 20 March 1542 (pp. 305-09), he was contemplating producing a treatise *de praestanda in rebus adversis fortitudine*, but must have been transferred to the charterhouse of Scheut soon afterwards, where he was resident on 13 April 1542. Maybe his continual complaints had their effect, for he claimed that at Monnikhusen he was afflicted by the most varied ailments: "podagra, chyragra, holagra, atropia et pyretum, hoc est inedia ac febris." The General Chapter of 1542 had forbidden the study of Greek and Hebrew, to which Levinus reacted with a 40 page epistle in defence of these languages to the prior of Louvain, dated 21 December 1542. At Scheut he compiled his brief biographical notice of Guillaume Bibaut and commenced *De Institutione Novitiorum*, a work that may never have been completed, as C.I. Morotius declares " ... de qua nonnisi fragmenta Ms. vidi."² He also published *De filio minore natu* during his stay there. On 20 February 1544 he requested permission to return to the charterhouse of Gand, which was granted. There he resumed his humanistic studies, even if his letters show that he still had his apprehensions. Writing to Jean Vlesius on 20 July 1544 he nevertheless clearly rejected Lutheranism:

Existimabant enim nonnulli fore (audio) ut vistus ea calamitate fugam ad Lutheranos adornarem ... Mox, leves illi animi, nulloque divinarum praecceptionum pondere subnixi saburratique, velut ad asylum malae libertatis, ad Lutheranos procurunt. Idque dum faciunt imprudentes, non intelligunt sese ab universitate ad partem: ab unitate ad sectam: ab Ecclesia ad haeresim: imo a navigio Petri, cui praesidet Christus, ad male sartam tectamque schismaticorum navem, cui Satanas autor est, et director in exitium perpetuae damnationis, deficere. Nemini salus esse potest, nisi intra unam sese donum, in qua verum Pascha comeditur, contineat ... Nec enim de ea causa ante annos plus minus octo et treginta me curis omnibus exolveri mundanis, ut nunc tandem ingravescente senectute prope sexagenarius ad illas rursus involvendus aspirarem: et expertus a bunde solitudinis et requietis delicias, ad turbas hominum negotiorumque secularium revocarer.

In 1554 he became vicar of the charterhouse of Gand, dying there on 19 March 1556.

The list of his works appears to be more impressive than it proves to be on closer scrutiny:

1. Divi Joannis Chrysostomi *sermo de providentia Dei et fato*, Antwerp, M. Hillenius, no date, but ca. 1527, small octavo, - Levinus's dedication to Francis Massemius is dated 1527. (Cf. Albert E. Pil, "Humanistica cartusiana")
2. "Nicolai Utenhovii epitaphium", - 6 lines of Greek verse printed at the conclusion of Arnold Oridryus's *Summa linguae graecae*, Paris, Wechel, 1531, in 8^o.
3. *Tractatus in Parabolam Servatoris nostri de Filio minore natu, apud Lucam XV. capite, ad Resipiscentiam omnes invitans*, Louvain, Rutgerus Rescius, 1542, in 12^o, - a volume which also contains an "Elegia" urging youth to cultivate piety whilst there is still time and an epitaph in Greek verse for Arnold Oridryus (d. 1533). The exposition of the parable of the prodigal son is the most spiritual and touching of Levinus's writings.

² *Theatrum Chronologicam Sacri Ordinis Cartusiensis Ordinis*, Turin 1681, 123.

4. *Vita Bibautii*, long thought to be lost, but discovered in Brussels Bibliothèque Royale MS. 5136-5137 (Text edited by Alphonse Roersch, "La Vita Bibautii' ...", - brief but highly appreciative of the Carthusian humanist General).
5. Latin letter from the charterhouse of Gand, dated 1551, addressed to Adrien du Hecquet and printed in the latter's *Scaena rerum multarum inversa*, Antwerp, J. Bel-lère, in 8^o, ff. 88V-89V. The letter is preceded by two from Hecquet, one in verse, the other in prose, begging Levinus for one of the letters he had received from Erasmus. Levinus pleaded for time to take a decision: "nox diesque consilium dabit".
6. 14 letters to Olahus (cf. A. Ipolyi, "N. Olah Codex Epistolaris"). A further six items are reported as being in manuscript, but only two can be currently traced:
7. Besançon, Bibliothèque publique MS. 599, - Levinus's correspondence.
8. *De Institutione Novitiorum* (untraced).
9. "Elegia de pie viuendi ratione" (reported by Sanderus - untraced).
10. "Consolatio Laevini Ammonii" - written for Ghisbert Rutenbuch, a Carthusian of Utrecht, on the occasion of the death of Pierre Zas, prior of Utrecht, in Brussels Bibliothèque Royale MS. 7046, II, ff. 53v-54v.
11. Letter addressed to Arnold Oridryus, dated 21 February 1529, from the charterhouse of Bois-Saint-Martin, sold in London early in the nineteenth century (untraced).
12. *De praestanda in rebus adversis fortitudine* (hypothetical work, - untraced).

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A. Ipolyi (ed.), "N. Olah Codex Epistolaris", in *Monumenta Hungariae historica, diplomataria* XXV, Budapest 1875, 395, 396, 398, 408, 414, 427, 455, 477, 491, 511, 512. (14 letters from Levinus, 3 from Olahus to Levinus)

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Th. Petreius, *Bibliotheca Cartusiana*, Cologne 1609, 232-33.

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" , "Vijf brieven van Levinus Ammonius, Kartuizer, aan Johannes de Molendino, Kanunnikte Doornik (1522-1529)", *Horae Tornacenses*, Tournai 1971, 151-76.

L. Reypens SJ, "De feesten te Gent in 1498 en 1500. Verhaal van een ooggetuige", *Volkskunde* 24 (1913), 87-91, 135-41, 185-92 (description of a popular festival by Levinus in Latin, presented with a Flemish translation).

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NELLE SERRE CALABRESI DA NOVE SECOLI UN'OASI DI CONTEMPLAZIONE

Pietro DE LEO

Chi dallo Jonio o dal Tirreno, lasciata la costa a Soverato o a Pizzo in provincia di Catanzaro, si inerpicca per le Serre calabresi, ha immediatamente la sensazione di inoltrarsi in un'area molto particolare, dove i segni del sacro si infittiscono tra ripidi pendii, fitti boschi e brevi ripiani erbosi, solcati dai bacini del Mesima e dell'Ancinale.

Quella delle Serre è davvero una zona particolarissima della regione, dove sin da tempi remoti lungo mulattiere e sentieri si insediarono in grotte o *sub diwo* monaci ed eremiti, desiderosi di appartarsi dal mondo e di sfuggire, quasi in una nuova Tebaide, alle sue seduzioni.

Oui in un'ampia conca lacustre, tra orti e foreste, a poco meno di 800 metri sul livello del mare, venne a impiantare, or sono nove secoli, tra il 1091 e il 1092, la sua esperienza ascetica un personaggio assai noto: Bruno di Colonia, maestro nella cattedrale di Reims e lì precettore del futuro papa Urbano II.

Si trattò, senza dubbio, di una scelta occasionale, determinata nel corso di un viaggio al seguito del pontefice, che aveva intimato all'antico maestro di coadiuvarlo nella opera riformatrice, in un momento assai difficile per la Sede Apostolica. A tale scopo gli aveva ingiunto di abbandonare il primo cenobio che aveva fondato in Francia, nel Delfinato, sul versante occidentale delle Alpi, non lontano dall'odierna Grenoble e di raggiungere Roma. Città che aveva presto dovuto lasciare in fretta insieme con il papa, quando, decisi a tutto, l'imperatore Enrico IV e l'antipapa Clemente III avevano invaso i territori pontifici tentando di realizzare un disegno in precedenza fallito.

Come già il predecessore Gregorio VII, Urbano II cercò aiuto ai Normanni, che avevano ormai consolidato il loro dominio nell'Italia Meridionale e a tale scopo raggiunse in Calabria Ruggero di Altavilla, fratello del defunto Roberto il Guiscardo, al quale era stato affidato il compito di riportare all'obbedienza del papa le diocesi già soggette al patriarca di Costantinopoli.

In tale prospettiva acquista rilievo l'elezione a metropolita di Reggio Calabria di Bruno di Colonia, patrocinata da Urbano II. Ma la scelta contemplativa del *magister* di Colonia era ormai irreversibile, maturata com'era durante i forti contrasti che l'avevano opposto al suo arcivescovo, Manasse di Gournay, prelato avido e dissoluto. Bruno rifiutò l'elezione ma scelse di rimanere in Calabria, assecondato in ciò dal conte normanno, che gli mise a disposizione un cospicuo territorio, in località Torre, nelle Serre, così come