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Servatus³₁₂Lupus, a Humanist of the Ninth Century

By

Samuel Macauley Jackson

21

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SERVATUS LUPUS, A HUMANIST OF THE NINTH CENTURY

By Samuel Macauley Jackson, Late Professor of Church History in New York University

(The Presidential Address, read December 31, 1912)¹

 T^{O} be the President of this Society puts one in a rare succession and is an honor to be coveted. I thank you for the election.

On casting about for a subject worthy of your attention and appropriate for this inaugural address I concluded to call you away from modern books and modern men to a distant past, no less strenuous than this present but after a different pattern. I take you from the twentieth to the ninth century, and from the magnificent buildings of this theological seminary to a lowly monastery on the banks of a little river in France. It is to the leader of the company, the abbot, I would introduce you. Take a good look at him for he is a fine fellow. His bearing is distinguished for gentle blood flows in his veins; those eyes betray his energy of character, his good humor, and kindly nature. His face is that of a scholar, and his conversation in its easy flow and information on a great variety of topics shows that he had intercourse with the choicest spirits of the past and of his

¹On the seventh of November, 1910, Dr. Jackson delivered an address before Phi Beta Kappa at Rutgers College, on *Servatus Lupus*. On the eleventh of June, 1912, he began to rewrite this, to serve as his presidential address; but on the second of August his labors were ended by death. The latter part of the present paper did not receive his final revision. own day. Yes, we are face to face with Servatus Lupus, the famous humanist of the ninth century, not unworthy to be called its Erasmus. By reason of the fact that 130 of his letters have been preserved we know more about many years of his life than about a corresponding stretch in most historical characters prior to modern times, for these letters are mostly autobiographic and admit us into his daily life so that we can share his joys and sorrows to a remarkable degree.

But outside of the years 830 to 862, covered by the Correspondence, Lupus cannot be dated with certainty. Eight hundred and five is commonly given as his birth year, and 864 as that of his death. Perhaps they were, but modesty suggests that we name him one of the Melchizideks. who are without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. vii., 3), for we do not really know who his parents were, when he was born nor where, nor where he died. Conjecture, mainly based upon allusions in his Correspondence, seems, however, to show that Lupus was born not far from, perhaps in, Sens. seventy miles from Paris in a south-easterly direction, and the Correspondence shows plainly that he had many relatives of distinction in Church and State. A near relative, Archbishop Aldric, was his earliest patron. Lupus was the only name he was fairly entitled to; but he added, in view of some deliverance, the epithet Servatus and this came to be part of his name.

His life was that of a scholar, but in the direction of classical culture. His literary remains, aside from his Correspondence, are unimportant—being merely a brief and perfunctory contribution to the Gottschalk controversy, entitled "Three Questions," a collection of views corroborative of his position—which was on the whole on the side of Gottschalk—and a monastic life of St. Wigbert, Abbot of Fritzlar. Attributed to him is another monastic life, that of St. Maximinus, Bishop of Trèves; two homilies upon St. Wigbert and two hymns in his memory.

Servatus Lupus

The Correspondence, however, is really interesting and important. It has often been printed and there are two excellent monographs¹ upon it, but strangely enough it has been neglected by the historical essayist. Thus in Poole's *Index*, which goes back to 1802, there is only one essay² on it; Ernest Cushing Richardson's remarkable and exhaustive collection of references, *Periodical Articles on Religion from* 1890 to 1899 (N. Y., 1907), mentions only one article upon it, and the *Bibliographie der deutschen Zeitschriftenliteratur* for the beginning in 1896 to the end of 1910 none at all.

Let us now take up the Correspondence. The first letter is dated 830 and was written from Germany.³ It is addressed to Einhard, the brilliant biographer of Charlemagne, and shows that Aldric, the archbishop of Sens, was responsible for introducing Lupus while he was still a child into the Benedictine monastery of Saints Mary and Peter at Ferrières-Fortunay, sixty-seven miles south-east of Paris, not to be confounded with Ferrières, seventeen miles south-east of Paris, where Bismarck and Jules Favre attempted to arrange terms of peace after the Franco-German War. In that monastery Lupus took the monastic vows. Aldric

¹ B. Nicolas, Études sur les lettres de Servat-Loup, Clermont-Ferrand, 1861; L. Levillain, Étude sur les lettres de Loup de Ferrières (Bibliothèque de l'école de chartes, tom. 62 et 63; cf. 64, Paris, 1902–1904). Cf. also F. Sprotte, Biographie des Abtes Servatus Lupus, Regensburg, 1880; E. Marckwald, Beiträge zu Servatus Lupus, Strassburg, 1894, and the titles collected by U. Chevalier, Répertoire des sources historiques du moyen âge: Bio-bibliographie, nouvelle éd., tome ii., Paris, 1907, 2901 f.

²Harriet Waters Preston and Louise Dodge, A Torch-Bearer (Atlantic Monthly, December, 1891).

³Letter i.—The letters are quoted as numbered in the Lettres du Servat Loup, Abbé de Ferrières: Texte, notes, et introduction, par. G. Desdevises du Dezert, Paris, 1888. (Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études, fascicule, 77.) This numbering deviated for alleged chronological reasons from the sequence of the unique ancient codex of the Letters; but the latest editor, Ernst Dummler, has printed them in the original order of the manuscript (Monumenta Germania Historica, Epistolarumtomi vi. pars prior, Karolini avi iv, Berolini, 1902, 1–126). On p. 6 Dummler presents both numberings in parallel columns.

noting the lad's wonderful capacity for scholarship sent him to Fulda, sixty miles east by north of Frankfort, because there the Preceptor of Germany, Hrabanus Maurus, the scholastic wonder of his time, was abbot. When Lupus entered there we know not, but he had made diligent use of the library at Fulda and cast his spell over the heart of Hrabanus. He addressed a string of questions to Einhard which shows his curiosity and his scholarship. He also begins in it the efforts of a lifetime to collect a classical library. When he wrote he had no personal acquaintance with Einhard; but the next letter-six years later-viz., 836," presupposes that Lupus had won the favor, indeed the intimate friendship, of Einhard and his wife, who had put their son Vussin in Fulda as a monk. The occasion of the letter was the death of Einhard's wife Imma, the news of which had just reached Fulda. Lupus wrote a short and simple note of sympathy. Einhard replied in a lengthy and mournful epistle;² to which Lupus replied,³ but as he attempted in labored fashion to read Einhard a lecture on bearing grief and at the same time to make a parade of his learning we take little pleasure in his letter. Tt. contains however the information that Einhard had sent him and had dedicated to him his treatise on the "Adoration of the Cross." Curiously enough, this treatise was soon after lost and not found till 1886, when Ernst Dümmler discovered it in a Vienna MS. The fifth letter in this Correspondence is also to Einhard and reveals the intense interest Lupus had in classical matters, and his monastic indifference to the griefs of those who had had the usual experiences of life, for he plies Einhard with questions while he, poor man, was bending in sorrow under his new loss. In the previous letter Lupus had informed Einhard

¹Letter ii.

^aLetter iii., identical with letter 39a, translated in *The Letters of Einhard* (*Papers of the American Society of Church History*, second series vol. i., reprinted and enlarged, 1913, pp. 138-141). ^aLetter iv. that he was about to return to France in the middle of May, the year being 836; but now he says that he had had to postpone his journey till June 5th—which was Monday—and that he should leave the monastery on horseback. It was a long journey, some 350 miles, and not safe. A monk would stop at the monasteries over night, as they were his hotels, and, unlike the kind we know, presented no bills!

Lupus left Fulda to the regret of Hrabanus Maurus. whose favorite pupil he was. Hrabanus tells us that it was Lupus who induced him to write a commentary' upon Paul's Epistles. Lupus had studied hard and won a reputation for scholarship and gualified himself to teach the classics as his profession. He had also taken deacon's orders. Speaking of his life at Fulda he says: "I devoted my chief efforts there to reading and acquired [by copying, probably] a few books with a view both to guard against forgetting and to increase my knowledge." But he adds: "I did not undertake the burden of such great and long continued labor because seized by love of the German language, as some persons have most senselessly spread abroad,"² a passage which seems to show that the dislike of German things because they were German existed in the ninth century. But in another letter he confesses that the acquisition of German was really worth while.

Shortly after his return to Ferrières he was presented at the imperial court, at that time near Frankfort. He speaks himself of making a visit across the Rhine, and this must have been it.³ He made a favorable impression on the imperial pair, Louis the Pious and his consort Judith. In his letter⁴ to his brother, written on September 22, 838, he says: "Last year through the efforts of friends I was brought into the presence of the emperor and received with great kindness by him and the queen, and now I am summoned to the palace again at the urgent insistence of the queen, and many think that soon some dignity will be conferred upon me." But the emperor, Louis the Pious, died in 840, two

¹ See his preface. ² Letter vi (xli). ³ Letter vii (xx). ⁴ Letter vi (xli).

years afterwards, and nothing had been done for him. Then the queen-mother reminded her son Charles the Bald of this promise of his father's and urged the claim of Lupus, who had meanwhile taken priest's orders. But Charles did nothing for him until 842, when it occurred to him that Odo, the Abbot of Ferrières, was an offensive partisan and must be removed, because in the time before Charles had been confirmed in his division of his father's empire he (Odo) had appealed to Lothair, as one of Lothair's subjects, it then being likely that Ferrières would fall into Lothair's division. That appeal is in the Lupus Correspondence¹ and anything more innocent it would be hard to find.

However, the king, bothered may we say by his mother's importunity, determined to remove Odo on this charge, ordered the monks of Ferrières to hold an election for abbot and to elect Lupus. This is what they did, and Lupus was thereupon summoned to court and his election confirmed. He was asked by Charles if Odo had retired and replied that he had, for that had been the agreement; but on Lupus's return from court he discovered to his horror that Odo was still there, and it required the payment of considerable money before he would budge. Lupus was much exercised lest the king should suppose that he had lied and called in the mediation of several persons to lay the exact facts before his majesty.²

The Correspondence shows that both before and after his elevation Lupus had two great ambitions, first to get a library of the classics and the Fathers, principally of the former, of course for his monastery, as he could have no private property; and his next ambition was to master these authors themselves. A German scholar³ has counted quotations in this Correspondence from twenty-three profane and twenty-four patristic authors, so he realized his second ambition fairly well, considering his circumstances. Indeed, his letters before he became abbot deal almost entirely with the problems of classical scholarship.

¹Letter xvi (xi). ²Letter xxii (xxi). ³Sprotte, pp. 147-160.



But the realization of the first ambition, to get a complete classical and patristic library together, was a formidable task. Nowadays it means merely the payment of so much money, but then the knowledge of the whereabouts of the books desired, or even that they existed anywhere, must be obtained, and when they were located, then the loan of these precious and ofttimes costly manuscripts must be arranged for. Copies must then be made. Comparisons of texts must be made, especially with some text of superior accuracy. and so elaborately a new text constructed, which was likely to be better than any previously existing. The Correspondence shows how keenly Lupus followed every hint where copies of the classics might be found, and how laboriously he compared text with text. Another thing to be considered in those troubled times was the safe transportation back and forth of the precious volumes. This comes out strikingly in this letter from Lupus to Hincmar, the archbishop of Reims, and the foremost ecclesiastic in France. It is dated end of 849, and reads thus:

Lupus to the distinguished bishop Hincmar, wishes everlasting welfare. I was afraid to send you Bede's commentary because the book is so large that it cannot be hidden in one's cloak nor comfortably carried in a handbag, and even if one or the other could be done one would have to fear meeting some band of villains whose cupidity would surely be kindled by the beauty of the manuscript and it would perhaps thus be lost to me and to you. Accordingly I can myself lend the volume to you most safely as soon as, if God will, we can come together in safety somewhere, and will do so.

It is pathetic to read that Ferrières had often only a portion of some author and could not get the rest, also how meager and often erroneous was the information as to the classics which Lupus possessed.

After Lupus had so laboriously gathered his treasures and had sat down to read them he was liable to be interrupted in a particularly trying manner. It seems that abbots were in those days obliged to do military service, also that the revenues of their monasteries were, on demand, spent in providing soldiers. Some abbots enjoyed this experience. Lupus tells of one who had to be restrained, for he was so fond of fighting that he rode to the front of the battle line and exposed himself most recklessly. He was as full of ardor as that martial pope of the sixteenth century, Julius II.

Lupus tried to get out of the military obligation and makes his complaints, now jestingly and now in great earnestness, in quarters which he hoped would bring his complaint to the attention of the king. These campaigns frequently turned out disastrously. Once Lupus was taken prisoner and frequently he lost heavily. He says that he knew nothing about fighting and yet he was compelled to close his books, bid his monks a tearful farewell, and betake himself to the place of rally and remain on duty to his king for an indefinite period. But he had another and probably still more trying interruption. He would be summoned to court. He could not refuse to go but he had to spend much time there inwardly chafing. While thus in contact with royalty he acted as adviser to the king and also as amanuensis of the queen, for several such letters have been preserved; and he served in the same capacity for less exalted persons.

Not military service but the very mundane burden of providing food for his monastery constituted his principal ground of complaint for years after becoming abbot. It seems that there was an abbey at St. Josse, which was up in Picardy, not far from the British Channel and twenty miles south of Boulogne, 180 miles north of Ferrières. Alcuin had once been abbot there and Charlemagne and the popes had combined to increase its revenues. When Louis the Pious followed his father Charlemagne he gave this abbey of St. Josse to the monastery of Ferrières. Now the handling of a surplus does not usually trouble a corporation or an individual very

Servatus Lupus

much, and so when the comparatively small-only seventytwo monks-and poor monastery of Ferrières found itself in possession of much more money than it wanted for their support it expanded. The monks set a better table, and got more to drink, for this monastery was by no means run on abstinent, still less on total abstinent principles, any more than are such monastic establishments of the present day, according to Mr. Joseph McCabe, who lived in one for many years. Then too the monastery expanded in its hospitality, so that it fed a greater crowd of needy ones and entertained more of the wayfarers and did it more generously. But, alas, the revenues which had enabled them to do these nice things came from St. Josse, and one day they learned to their consternation that their king had bestowed these revenues upon some favorite. Then came another upheaval in the division of the empire and Charles the Bald became their king. He took the revenues away from the favorite and restored them to Ferrières, and the monks breathed again. Only for awhile, however, for Charles found it convenient to curry favor with some man and so on him he bestowed these coveted revenues. Despair and gloom settled on Ferrières. When the first robbery, as they considered it, had taken place, Odo, the predecessor of Lupus, made a protest to the king, but though Lupus was the amanuensis of this letter, which has been preserved in this Correspondence, it was a mild affair compared to what he wrote on the subject when he became abbot; for the monastery had then begun to feel the loss very much. It is always hard to see your income diminishing and in this particular juncture the diminished income entailed much real suffering. Now Lupus was not the man to stand this state of things without letting every one know what he thought of it. He knew he had a high position which gave him influence. He was famous as a classical scholar, sought after as a teacher, abbot of a prominent monastery, a familiar and liked person at court. He was in correspondence with the principal men in the kingdom,

and even with the emperor and the pope. He determined to make his influence count for all it was worth, in the recovery of that lost revenue. So when he had got a bit settled in his abbatial chair he began what was literally a bombardment of letters, and kept it up for years with unflagging zeal. The first shot was pointed enough but its velocity was not great. It is addressed to a brother abbot, Hugo of Saint Martin of Tours. He writes:

I venture to repose the utmost confidence in you, frequently considering the exceptional nobility in you and the wisdom in harmony with that nobility

-notice the fulsome compliments, quite characteristic, and alas, not yet discarded-

Therefore when there had happened to me what I had not feared nor, as I think, deserved, namely, that my lord the king took away from us and gave to Count Odulf an abbey belonging to our monastery for which we have an edict both of his own and of his father's, his serene majesty my lord Louis, and had afterwards by inspiration of God and cooperation of that distinguished nobleman Adalhard restored it to us, as was becoming to him; I thought, and Adalhard himself especially suggested it. that I ought to appeal to you to restrain in your wisdom the dangerous greed of Odulf, and kindly see that the aforesaid abbey be restored to us. Let, therefore, by the love of God, your goodness celebrated far and wide come to our aid, in these distressing straits according to the royal edict as quickly as possible, that both compassion for our calamity may win you an everlasting reward and the remembrance of your benefits may be faithfully celebrated by us and our successors.¹

But as time went on Lupus found himself no nearer his goal. The favorite was eating up their revenues. I cannot quote the letters he wrote on the subject. They were numerous and moving. They portray the destitution of his

² Letter xxx (lxxviii).

monastery in consequence of this loss. He appeals to his correspondents to exert themselves with the king. But he wrote a number of letters to the king himself. This is a fair specimen:

Most exalted lord, my King! I humbly beseech you to deign wisely to take cognizance of and to treat graciously this reminder of your most devoted retainer. That most religious Emperor Louis, your majesty's father, at the request of your mother, the Empress Judith, of glorious memory, bestowed upon the monastery of Ferrières the abbey of St. Josse, and confirmed his gift by an order, so that the monks might serve God in the monastery without want, and in the aforesaid abbey might extend hospitality in the fear of God to travelers, and might pray to God with rejoicing for the safety and well-being of both their majesties. Their charitable gift you at first kindly allowed, and even confirmed by a new order, but afterwards, yielding to the persuasions of men who fear not to enrich themselves with offense to God, you were compelled to revoke the twofold gift and fulfill a promise to a secular person in regard to the abbey. For this reason the servants of God, who constantly pray for you, have not received for three years their customary clothing and what they are forced to wear is threadbare and badly patched. They live on boughten vegetables

and rarely have the comfort of fish and cheese, while the retainers fail to receive the garments due them. All these things used to be furnished from the aforesaid abbey. Oh, that God may not visit upon you the interruption there [at St. Josse] of the care of travelers from across the sea, and other unfortunates, and the neglect of the worship of Himself! And besides the general need and my special hardships I am weighed down by, the heaviest burden of shame, because what other abbots have obtained from the imperial bounty for the firm maintenance of religion, I as though the meanest and most useless of all have lost. Yet cherishing the hope of recovering by service what, as God is my witness, I have lost through no fault towards you, especially as I hold your promise in the matter which it were impious to break, I implore you not to delay longer to grant our just demand, but immediately to take measures for your own interests and ours that you may win God's favor for yourself and make us, the least of your retainers, more ready to intercede for you at all times.¹

But still the King was unmoved. I will quote from a letter Lupus wrote to get the help of Hincmar, archbishop of Reims and the most powerful ecclesiastic in the kingdom:

The loss of that place of ours is known to you, namely how the king took away for no fault of mine the abbey which his father had bestowed upon us by edict, even, because he [i. e., the emperor Louis the Piousl had found that the religious life of monks could not endure with us unless we received the support of greater resources. In consequence we have been reduced to such a degree of want that this year we have hardly grain enough to support us two months . . . and having expended in these troubled times of the State all that our predecessors had gathered together, we ask mercy from the king and patience from our common Lord. Therefore worn out with weariness by such need, I consider from time to time resigning the office to which I was elected by the brothers; but I am dissuaded from that by the thought of the pernicious greed of this world's people and of the charge of want of endurance if I should leave the brothers in such trouble. For though I have served the king with all my strength and more, and earnestly pray for him, I not only have not accomplished that he should contribute anything to the pittance of our convent but have even incurred the disgrace that he should hand over the best part of it to a secular person, to be not governed but destroyed. . . . What has the excellence of that secular person brought the king? Has he subdued any foreign people for him since? Has he settled the affairs of this kingdom divided against itself? If the king had fulfilled to God faithfully and without any respecting of persons the promise by which he bound himself, at your instance, I think, in the church of Saint

¹Letter xlvi (lxxi).

Denis, nay, if he had at once accepted and acted upon the canons which were debated and promulgated at Verneuil, God would have already caused him to be reigning in peace.¹

This allusion to the canons of Verneuil needs to be explained. They were drawn up by Lupus, and the reason why he liked them so much was that one of them ordered that as far as possible churches and monasteries should be restored to their former owners and governed as a rule by ecclesiastics rather than by the laity, a canon, you see, which was a rebuke to the king's action respecting St. Josse.

But nothing came of all these efforts. The king does not seem to have been offended by his importunity, for he had him at court for months at a time, but he did not withdraw the revenues. At last in 846 it was rumored that the detested Odulf was ill, but Lupus says that he was not "so dangerously ill as to be capable of reform through admonition, as I could wish, nor so seriously that he will die, which because of his certain damnation I should be sorry for." In 849 Odulf died, and the king restored the revenues of St. Josse to Ferrières. There are several letters written from that abbey and they breathe a contentment which is almost beyond belief in those "troubled times."

Private letters reveal a man as nothing else does, and as I have pored over these letters of Lupus I have gotten an impression of what sort of man he was. You would probably get a different and truer conception. To me he stands forth in that stormy period as above all things else a lover of learning and as willing for its sake to make great sacrifices. To know was his absorbing passion. But because the bent of his mind was secular he was attracted by Rome and Greece and it was their literature which he mastered. He was a kindly man with a fund of humor which enabled him to sustain with cheerful courage the infelicities of his lot. He was far from being a genius. His letters show culture

¹ Letter xlvii (xlii).

but they are not profound. He was no philosopher, no poet, not even a theologian. He is identified with no reform, does not seem to have been consulted by the ecclesiastical leaders of his time. So he is not prominent in religious but in secular history. Glancing at his private life I would say that he was very fond of good eating and could not be elected to the meanest office on the Prohibition ticket. In some mysterious way he got the epithet of "Blessed" but I fail to find anything saintly about him, or in his correspondence. To be sure, his letters of that character may have perished, but it is more likely that those which have been preserved are fair specimens.

So he lived his life, and it was a good and useful life. He gathered a noteworthy library when such collections were rare and cost much labor, and so was one of the chief benefactors to scholarship. We owe a great debt to these monastic toilers; they have preserved the classics for us. His fund of knowledge was the wonder and pride of his contemporaries. Master of an admired Latin style, he was frequently called upon to put into correct shape the findings of the various Church councils he attended. Gifted with that rare quality called "common sense" he was the chosen adviser of his King and lived much at court.

Let us thank him for these services and for those 130 letters which tell us of them and let us thank God who has preserved them for us. They make the ninth century much nearer to us. By means of them we hear the hum of markets, the tramp of men. We get a whiff of the corruption of courts, including the pope's. We blink as the fierce light which beats on a throne momentarily falls on us. Across the stage clad in gorgeous apparel flit the weak creatures who were called kings but knew not how to rule. In stately procession still more gorgeously apparelled move the ecclesiastics who are the real rulers of the period. Suddenly while we read the cry is raised, "The Norsemen are come!"—alas! it was often heard—and instantly soldiers fly to arms, abbots attended by companies of retainers flock to the royal standard. Kings take the field. For a while there is hurry and scurry, trembling and fainting. The foe is repelled. The king reassembles his court, the bishops return to their palaces, the abbots to their monasteries. The world breathes again.

You will find in this volume a complete translation of the letters, made by my friend Mr. Henry Preble, so you can read them for yourselves.¹

I am grateful to the man who has given us this information. If I have interested you in him then you will have made a valued acquaintance in the ninth century, Lupus, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Ferrières.

¹At its annual meeting in 1913, the Society voted with regret to postpone the printing of the *Letters of Servatus Lupus*, for financial reasons. They would occupy about 144 pages of this volume. Mr. Preble's translation of the *Life of St. Wigbert, Abbot of Fritslar*, by Servatus Lupus (about 8000 words) also awaits publication. Wigbert was an Anglo-Saxon associate of Bonifatius.