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Livinus [St Livinus]

(*supp. d.* 633?)

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Livinus [St Livinus] (*supp. d.* 633?), missionary, is patron of St Lievens-Esse and St Lievens-Houtem in Belgium and is sometimes known as 'the Apostle of Brabant'. All information about him, which is late and of dubious reliability, derives from the church of St Bavo at Ghent, to where his relics were translated in 1007. These include a verse and epitaph, attributed to 'Livinus archiepiscopus' and allegedly composed for Flobert, abbot of Ghent, which are now recognized to be eleventh-century works. Livinus is named in a letter by Abbot Othelbald to Countess Otgiva (dated to between 1019 and 1024) which lists the saints buried at Ghent. His life is recounted in a *Vita sancti Livini*, composed between 1025 and 1058 (probably *c.* 1050), and there is a *translatio* describing the events of 1007, composed after 1066. Finally, a number of late chronicles, especially the fourteenth-century *Annales sancti Bavonis Gandensis*, refer to Livinus.

The biographical information supplied by these Ghent sources may be summarized as follows. He was regarded as being of Irish (or perhaps Scottish) origin: 'episcopus de Scotia' or 'genere Scotus et Hiberniae archiepiscopus'. He was born during the reign of a Colmán (Cologmagnus or Calomagnus), king of the 'Scoti', to a *dux* of the 'Scoti' called Theagnius and mother Agalmia (Agalinia or Agalunia), daughter of an Irish king Ephigenius. His birth was prophesied by the Irish holy man Menalchius and he was subsequently baptized by Menalchius and by Augustine, apostle of the Anglo-Saxons. Following his education by a priest of the 'Scoti' of noble birth called Benignus (Benén), he spent a period of solitude with three disciples, called Foillanus (Faelan), Helias, and Kilianus, before travelling to the continent as a missionary. Having made a token visit to Ghent during the abbacy of Flobert, the party arrived at Esse. Eventually, Livinus was killed there by two brothers Walbertus and Meinzo (or Menizo), along with a noblewoman Chraphildis (whose blind son Livinus had previously cured) and St Brictius, 'the infant', and all three are said to have been buried at Houtem. The Ghent annals describe the saint's arrival and subsequent martyrdom *sub anno* 633. Furthermore, his relics are said to have been 'elevated' by Theodoric, bishop of Cambrai, in 842, and were formally moved to Ghent in 1007. The annals also record a

translatio prima in 1083 by Radbod, bishop of Noyon, and Wichmann, abbot of Ghent, and a *translatio secunda* in 1171 by Gautier, bishop of Tournai.

All this information can probably be dismissed as eleventh-century Ghent ecclesiastical propaganda and tells little, if anything, about a historical personage called Livinus. Indeed, it has been noted that Livinus (Lieven or Liévin in the vernacular) shares his feast day (12 November) with the Anglo-Saxon missionary saint Lebuin (also known as Leofwine or Livinus) of Deventer in Holland. The evident similarity of their names, plus the fact that in the tenth century Count Wichmann of Hamaland (incorporating Deventer as well as Houtem and Esse) was also the Burggraf of Ghent, may even suggest that Livinus is simply a doublet of Lebuin, attached to Esse and Houtem and subsequently appropriated by Ghent, and that his Irish origin was merely inspired by the tradition of Irish *peregrini* (pilgrim monks) on the continent.

Sources

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