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Texts on Hospitals

Translation of Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Occidentalis* 29, and Edition of Jacques de Vitry's Sermons to Hospitallers¹

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This chapter contains an annotated translation of chapter 29 of Jacques' *Historia occidentalis* and a transcription of his sermons to hospitallers based on two manuscripts.² I have added capitalization and punctuation, although I have not standardized spellings or listed slight variants in wording or case. Jacques' indebtedness to Peter the Chanter's *Verbum Abbreviatum* is indicated in the footnotes.

On the hospitals of the poor and leper houses³

There are, moreover, other congregations without estimate or fixed number throughout all the western regions, (composed) of men and women who renounce the world and live according to a rule in leper houses or hospitals for the poor, ministering to the destitute and infirm devoutly and with humility. They live, however, as a community according to the Rule of St Augustine without any private possessions and in obedience to one superior, and once they have taken the habit of a regular, they vow perpetual continence to the Lord.

In addition, the men and the women sleep and eat separately, with every precaution and (complete) chastity. As much as the pursuit of hospitality and ministry to Christ's poor permit, they do not neglect hearing the canonical hours, day and night. In houses where there is a larger convent and a more numerous congregation of brothers and sisters, they frequently gather in chapter to correct the failings of the delinquent or for necessary and honest

¹ I would like to thank Robert Kraft, Grover Zinn, Philip Rusche, Daron Burrows and Peter Biller for their help in identifying the citations in nn. 107 and 195-6 below.

² Trento, Biblioteca comunale, MS 1670 (F55) and Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 503. Jean Longère and Carolyn Muessig kindly recommended these manuscripts to me.

³ *H.occ.* 29; pp. 146-51.

business. Furthermore, they often have readings from the holy scriptures read out to them in the refectory while they are refreshing their bodies and in other set places and determined hours while they observe silence.⁴ The infirm men and healthy guests whom they admit into their houses are required to eat and sleep separately from the women.

Their chaplains minister to the indigent and invalids in spiritual matters, instruct the ignorant with the word of divine preaching, console the faint-hearted and feeble, and exhort them to long suffering and actions of thanks with every humility and devotion.⁵ By night and day, they continually celebrate the divine offices in a common chapel so that all the infirm can hear them from their beds. They also assiduously and solicitously hear the ailing's confessions, supply them with extreme unction and other sacraments, and give a fitting burial to the dead.

These ministers of Christ are sober, frugal, and extremely rigorous and austere to themselves and their bodies, yet as much as they are able, they supply necessities to the needy and infirm with a ready spirit and hearts overflowing with compassion. The more abject they are in the Lord's house upon the way, the more exalted position they will attain in their (eternal) homeland.⁶ Because they frequently endure so many of the sick's filthinesses and the nearly intolerable assault of (various) stench, inflicting injury upon themselves for Christ's sake, I believe that no other kind of penance is comparable to this holy martyrdom, precious in God's sight.⁷ The Lord will transform the ordures of these squalors, which they use like manure to fertilize their minds for bearing fruit, into precious stones and instead of a stench there will be a sweet fragrance (in heaven).⁸

However, this holy and God-beloved rule of hospitality and religion of hospitals is so corrupted in many places and houses and is, as it were, reduced wretchedly to nothing, that this base and execrable congregation of reprobate men displeases not only those who more fully perceive their wickedness, but also reeks in God's sight. Under the guise of hospitality and the cloak of piety, they have become quæstors, and through lies, deceptions, and every means which they possess they churlishly extort monies. Feeding themselves, they care nothing for the needy, except when they use them as a pretext to wring alms from the faithful, proffering a little to the poor and infirm, so that by this fraudulent kind of hunting, their crafty traffickers and cunning hucksters acquire many things. In fact, those who distribute a pitiful amount to the destitute in order to receive more and seek riches under the pretext of alms ought to be reckoned hunters rather than benefactors. So beasts, birds, and fish are snared; a morsel of food is placed

⁴ *Rule of St Augustine*, in PL 32, 1379.3.

⁵ *Rule of St Augustine*, PL 32, 1384.11.

⁶ Psalm 83. 11. Jacques uses the scriptural *domus domini* (Lord's house) to allude to *domus dei*, a common title for hospitals which received the poor, sick and travellers.

⁷ Psalm 115. 15.

⁸ Isaiah 3. 24.

on the hook to reel in sacks of money. These men so importunately and disrespectfully and anxiously solicit alms that, destroying the reverence due to them as regular religious, they render themselves contemptible. St Jerome says against them: 'It is better to have nothing to give, than impudently to solicit so that you can give.'⁹

Indeed many hospitals shamefully acquire many things through bearded brothers who outwardly feign many things in hypocrisy, or through mercenary and mendacious chaplains unafraid to deceive simple people and put their sickle into another's harvest,¹⁰ or through letters of indulgence which they abuse out of lust for base profit. We will not even speak of those who, unafraid to use false letters and stolen bulls to their perdition, incur the heinous crime of forgery. Those things which they dishonourably collect, they expend even more scandalously 'in orgies and drunkenness'¹¹ and devote themselves secretly in their haunts to other shady practices. Although they are not ashamed to do these things, we nonetheless blush to recite them at present.

Retaining nothing of their instituted regulations or purity of their order except the outward habit, virtually all of them are received (into their houses) through simoniacal intervention. Those who so dishonourably entered, even more shamefully imitate those already dwelling there, in murmuring and dissension, in quarrels and insurrections, in idleness and dissolution, in (locked) coffers and retention of private possessions, in lairs and foul things and every kind of vileness, without affection, without mercy, without trust.¹² While they make up well-accounted beds for men's eyes, they are empty of the poor and ill, arranged sheerly for ostentation and deception. Houses of hospitality and piety are transformed into dens of robbers, prostitutes' brothels, and the synagogues of Jews.¹³

However, this sort of pestilential corruption and abominable hypocrisy does not infect all hospitals. In fact, there are some regular congregations and outstanding religious houses or hospitable chapters which do not lack the zeal of charity, the unction of piety, the ornament of decency, and the rigour of discipline. Some such are the hospitals of the Holy Spirit in the city of Rome,¹⁴

⁹ Jerome, *Epistulae* 52, ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54 (1910), p. 440, lines 3-5.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 23. 25.

¹¹ Romans 13. 13.

¹² Romans 13. 13; 1. 31.

¹³ Luke 19. 46.

¹⁴ After Guy of Montpellier founded a hospital which served pilgrims, the ill and poor, pregnant women, and orphans, his order soon spread widely in the Midi and was approved by Innocent III in 1198. Guy and his brethren were invited to staff the hospital of Santo Spirito in Sassia as part of Innocent's papal charity programme in Rome (*H.occ.*, App. C, p. 282 and n. 25, pp. 149-50; references to key documents in de Angelis, *Innocenzo III*, and Bolton, 'Hearts', and 'Received in His Name': Rome's Busy Baby Box', in *Innocent III: Studies on Papal Authority and Pastoral Care* (Aldershot, 1995), article XIX, 153-67; rule published in PL 217, 1129-58, and more recently by P. de Angelis, *Regula sive statuta hospitalis Sancti Spiritus: La più antica*

and of St Sampson in the city of Constantinople,¹⁵ and the head house of (the order of) St Anthony,¹⁶ and the hospital of St Mary of Roncevaux at the entrance to Spain,¹⁷ and some other hospitals which please God and are very necessary for the poor, pilgrims, or the infirm. Moreover, in Paris¹⁸ and Noyon¹⁹ in France, in Provins in Champagne,²⁰ Tournai in Flanders,²¹ Liège

regola Ospitaliera di Santo Spirito in Saxia (Rome, 1954) and A. Francesco la Cava, *Regulae S. Spiritus: Regola dell'Ordine Ospitaliero di S. Spirito* (Milan, 1947).

¹⁵ An ancient Byzantine *xenodochium* famous for its professional staff of physicians and nurses. Jacques probably learned of it from returning crusaders who had captured Constantinople in 1204. Innocent took the hospital under papal protection in 1208, although it was later absorbed by the Templar order (*H.occ.*, p. 150 n. 1); T. S. Miller, 'The Sampson Hospital of Constantinople', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990), 128–30, and *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore and London, 1985), pp. 141–66, 172–3, 185–9, 192.

¹⁶ Gaston of Dauphiné founded a lay confraternity dedicated to St Anthony in La-Motte-Saint-Didier near Vienna, which staffed a hospice serving travellers and those afflicted with St Anthony's fire, a disfiguring condition which struck those eating ergot-infected grains. Although a local Benedictine priory initially oversaw their work, by the later twelfth century they had become a far-flung independent hospitalier order. A branch was established in Acre during Jacques' episcopate there (*H.occ.*, App. C, pp. 281–2; M.-L. Windemuth, *Das Hospital als Träger der Armenfürsorge im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1995), pp. 53–65; A. Mischlewski, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des Antoniterordens bis zum Ausgang des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne and Vienna, 1976), ch. 1.

¹⁷ Founded in Navarre in 1131 to protect pilgrims to Compostella from the harsh conditions of the mountain passes and brigands, Roncevaux spawned a congregation of dependent hospitals (*H.occ.*, App. C, p. 280; Mollat, *Pauvres*, pp. 116–17).

¹⁸ Jacques probably meant the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, although there were many hospitals and leper houses in the city and diocese of Paris. See *H.occ.*, App. C, p. 279 and p. 150 n. 4; Le Grand, 'Maisons-Dieu et léproseries', especially pp. 51, 54–9. On the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, see E. Coyecque, *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Paris au Moyen Âge: Histoire et documents*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1889–91); A. Chevalier, *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Paris et les sœurs Augustiniennes (650 à 1810)* (Paris, 1901), pp. 40–84; and the bibliography listed by Bonenfant-Feytmans, 'Organisations', 27.

¹⁹ Perhaps the Hôtel-Dieu of St John or the leper house founded in Noyon (*H.occ.*, App. C, p. 278 and p. 150 n. 4).

²⁰ The Hôtel-Dieu in Provins near Jacques' birthplace of Vitry in Champagne was founded to serve those travelling to the region's famous fairs and boasted the famously generous Thibaud VI of Champagne as a patron. The hospital was dependent upon the chapter of Saint-Quiriace, whose canons ministered to the ill. Henry of Champagne soon translated it from its original location to the palace of the countesses of Brié and Champagne. He also founded a hospital dedicated to the Holy Spirit for the indigent, widows and children in the late twelfth century. (*H.occ.*, App. C, p. 280 and p. 150 n. 5; A.-C. Opoix, *Histoire et description de Provins*, 2nd edn [Provins and Paris, 1846], pp. 322–3, 331–2; Bonenfant-Feytmans, 'Organisations', 32–3; Le Grand, *Statuts*, p. xiv and 'Maisons-Dieu et léproseries', p. 120.)

²¹ Tournai boasted three hospitals and two leper-houses by the late twelfth century (*H.occ.*, p. 150 n. 5, and App. C, p. 284). For the episcopal hospital in Tournai and the statutes of Walter, bishop of Tournai (1220–52), see Bonenfant-Feytmans, 'Organisations', 33; Lacroix, *L'hôpital Saint-Nicolas*, I, 113; Le Grand, *Statuts*, pp. xxi, xvii; Bonenfant, 'Hôpitaux', 27–9.

in Lotharinga,²² and Brussels in Brabant,²³ there are hospices of piety and houses of decency, outbuildings of sanctity, convents of virtue and religion, refuges for paupers, aid for the wretched, consolations for the mourning, sustenance for the starving, sweetness and soothing for the ailing.²⁴

Sermo ad hospitalarios et custodes infirmorum thema sumptum ex (p)salmo.²⁵

Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem. In die mala liberabit eum dominus.²⁶ Longos fac funiculos tuos et clauos tuos consolida ad dexteram et leuam penetrabis et semen tuum gentes hereditabit et ciuitates desertas inhabitabit.²⁷ Uerba sunt Ysaías LIIII ad doctores de uirtute uerbi dei. Per funiculum quidem predicatio intelligitur, qua ligari debemus ne ad malum curramus. De hoc funiculo in Eccl. dicitur X [sic]: Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur,²⁸ idest predicatio triplex que prouocat ad amorem, incutit timorem, infert pudorem. Debet ergo predicator huiusmodi funiculos longos facere predicationem propagando. Auditor uero hos funiculos longos facit dum ea que in predicatione dicuntur non detractat sed magis addit, ut si ammoneatur pauperem pascere, ipse insuper uestit; si ammoneatur in cibo quadragesimali ieiunare, ipse in pane et aqua ieiunat. De hoc funiculo dicitur in Iob XL: An extrahere poteris leuiathan hamo et fune ligare linguam eius?²⁹ Hamo enim uerbi d(e)i extrahuntur peccatores de faucibus diaboli cuius lingua, que sibilat et uenenum infundit suggerendo, funiculo predicationis ligatur ut eis non noceat qui sane doctrine acquiescunt. Clauos autem appellat propheta uerbi pungitiua et commotiua, de quibus in Eccl. in fine: Uerba sapientis quasi stimuli et quasi clauis in altum defixi.³⁰ Uerba autem commotiua debemus consolidare idest ne excidant firmiter memorie commendare ad dexteram et leuam penetrando. Acutis enim uerbis timoris debemus penetrare corda peccatorum, qui per leuam, et

²² These included the hospitals of St Christopher (pre-1183), Saint Matthieu (1203), and the *leprosarium* of Mont Cornillon (pre-1176); Spiegel, *Hôpitaux*, p. 99.

²³ For Brussels' boom in hospitals and *leprosaria*, see *H.occ.*, p. 150 n. 6 and App. C, p. 278; P. Bonenfant, 'Hôpitaux et bienfaisance publique dans les anciens Pays-Bas des origines à la fin du XVIII^e siècle', in *Annales de la Société Belge d'Histoire des Hôpitaux* 3 (1965), 3–98; Bonenfant-Feytmans, 'Organisations', 35 nn. 62–3.

²⁴ Psalm 9. 10, Matthew 5. 5, Luke 6. 21.

²⁵ Pitra no. 39, in Trento MS 1670, fols. 79vb–81vb and Douai MS 503, fols. 343r–345v. The title in the Douai manuscript explicitly applies the sermon to hospitaliers (a category which perhaps included lay confraternities staffing hospitals) and the *sorores* and *fratres* who served some institutions: *Sermo ad hospital(ari)os et fratres religiosos et sorores custodes infirmorum thema sumpta ex psalterio*.

²⁶ Psalm 40. 2.

²⁷ Isaiah 54. 2–3.

²⁸ Ecclesiastes 4. 12.

²⁹ Job 40. 20.

³⁰ Ecclesiastes 12. 11.