

Dom Maurice Laporte (+)

James Hogg

In the autumn of 1990 news reached me of the death of Dom Maurice Laporte, who, together with the regretted Professor Bernard Bligny of the University of Grenoble, was largely responsible for the renaissance of historical studies on the Carthusian Order in recent years. Born at Montfort-l'Amaury (Yvelines) on 3 August 1907, he studied at the polytechnic before entering the charterhouse of Sélignac, where he was professed on 1 November 1931. He was appointed sacristan in 1938, then novice-master and vicar in 1943. He took over the charge of procurator in 1947, but soon afterwards was called to the Grande Chartreuse, where at the request of the Prior-General, Dom Ferdinand Vidal, he engaged in the researches that led up to his compilation of extracts from the Cartae of the Carthusian General Chapter, *Ex chartis capitulorum generalium ab initio usque ad annum 1951*, which was duplicated for the use of the Order at the Grande Chartreuse in 1953. In 1951 he had been appointed novice-master of the Grande Chartreuse, - a charge which he held for many years. During the next two decades he worked steadily on his eight volume study *Aux Sources de la vie cartusienne*, issued to the houses of the Order 1960-71, containing, after a historical study, a critical edition of the *Consuetudines Cartusiae* with exhaustive indications of source materials. As a by-product he published *Lettres des premiers Chartreux I: S. Bruno - Guigues - S. Anthelme*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 88, Paris 1962, *Lettres des premiers Chartreux II: Les Moines de Portes: Bernard - Jean - Etienne*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 274, Paris 1980, *Guigues Ier, Prieur de Chartreuse*, *Les Méditations*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 308, Paris 1983, and *Guigues Ier, Coutumes de Chartreuse*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 313, Paris 1984. He also furnished the French translation for the critical edition of Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *Guigues II le Chartreux: Lettre sur la vie contemplative (ou Echelle des Moines)*, *Douze Méditations*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 163, Paris 1970. The recent editions of *La Grande Chartreuse par un Chartreux* were also embellished with his latest findings. To the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 6 (1967) he contributed the articles on *Guigues I* (cols. 1169-75) and *Guigues II* (cols. 1175-76) and for the *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques* 21 (1986) the entry for *La Grande Chartreuse* (cols. 1088-1107). Meanwhile he contributed to the *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* 2 (1975) "*Fisionomia storica e spirituale dell'Ordine*" under the heading *Certosini* (cols. 782-802), to which Dom Jacques Dubois OSB added "*Osservazioni critiche nel quadro della storia monastica generale*" (cols. 802-821), attacking some of the positions taken up by Dom Laporte. To *Le Message des Moines à Notre Temps*, a volume of essays in honour of the legendary Dom Alexis Presse, Abbot of Boquen, he contributed "*La vocation du désert*" (pp. 105-116), Paris 1958.

Though his findings were not always accepted by the self-appointed experts, par-

ticularly by the erudite Benedictine Dom Jacques Dubois, as I demonstrated in my essay "The Carthusians and the "Rule of St. Benedict"", (*Itinera Domini: Gesammelte Aufsätze aus Liturgie und Mönchtum: Emmanuel v. Severus OSB zur Vollendung des 80. Lebensjahres am 24. August 1988 dargeboten, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinertums, Supplementband 5 (1988), pp. 281-318*), his conclusions were generally sounder than his critics often wished to concede.

Though my personal relations with Dom Laporte were non-existent, - I received two letters from him over the years and I have every reason to believe that he held no particularly positive opinion either of my own work or person or that of the *Analecta Cartusiana*, - I recognise that with his passing the study of Carthusian history and spirituality has lost a major figure, who enjoyed the enormous advantage of an insider's knowledge of the topics he treated. Through his researches, the origins of the Carthusian Order were placed on a firmer historical basis than ever before, - surely no mean achievement. R.I.P.