

**Selected Statutes of the Carthusian Order on Visitation and Reprimand  
In Latin and Occitan, manuscript on parchment  
Southern France (Villeneuve-lès-Avignon), c. 1475-1500**

*iv paper + 60 parchment + iv paper, modern pencil foliation at top recto corners, complete (i-vii<sup>8</sup> viii<sup>4</sup>), occasional contemporary Roman numeral leaf signatures in light brown ink at bottom recto corners, contemporary catchwords on all but final two quires, ruling in red ink in very fine lines (justification 132 x 88 mm.), written by two hands in brown ink, ff. 1-53v in an angular Gothic bookhand in 14 long lines, ff. 54-59v in a restrained and formal Bastarda in 13 long lines, red rubrics with occasional red or blue decorative line fillers, yellow infilling on majuscules, red and blue paraps, alternating simple one- and two-line red and blue initials, one two-line puzzle initial on f. 1, minor staining at corners from use, light ink chipping and ink burn-through but still fully legible, ff. 26 and 30 opening edges extended with glued strips of parchment to full size, remnants of a tab on f. 39, last quire slightly smaller than others, very minor worming (approx. one tiny hole per folio throughout latter half of volume). Twentieth-century Italian binding by Silvio Zimi of Florence, pasteboard covered in high-shine brown morocco leather with layered multi-filet frames, one with floral pattern with tulip at outer corners, four supports outlined in gilt lines on spine with tulip stamps, title stamped in gold "ORDINIS CARTUSIENSIS STATUTA" and "SÆC. XV." on spine, black handwritten label at spine bottom "MS.VI.", red and white endbands, marbled paper in burgundy, white, blue, orange, and teal on pastedowns and outer flyleaves, overall excellent condition. Dimensions 185 x 130 mm.*

Containing excerpts of Carthusian statutes related to the Order's practices of visitation and reprimand for transgressions, this compact, neatly manuscript stands out for its inclusion of two copies of an otherwise-unknown Occitan translation of a chapter on the way of life for Carthusian monks. Copied in c. 1475-1500, the volume comes from the Charterhouse of Val-de-Bénédiction Charterhouse in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, one of the largest and most successful Carthusian houses in the late Middle Ages, which once held an extensive library of Latin and vernacular books.

**PROVENANCE**

1. Copied in two hands c. 1475-1500, probably at Notre-Dame-du-Val-de-Bénédiction Charterhouse in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon: a contemporary cursive hand has written "Cartusie vallisbenedictionis" in the bottom margin of f. 2. The scripts – a Gothic bookhand on ff. 1-53v and a Bastarda on ff. 54-59 – are consistent with examples from southern France, and thus it is likely that this volume was copied at Val-de-Bénédiction for the monks's own use. Both sections were likely to have been booklets, circulated separately and either unbound or held in a limp binding or folder as was common throughout the Middle Ages for such short works.

Val-de-Bénédiction was founded by Pope Innocent VI on 2 June 1356 and built next to his papal palace in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. In the beginning, it housed twelve monks, a prior, fourteen lay brothers, and nine servants. Although each Carthusian monk lives in his own separate cell, the complex was quite small, with the cells, chapter house, cloister, and church built around a small cemetery. The number of cells doubled in the late fourteenth century, and the church was enlarged. Over subsequent centuries, local nobility donated parcels of land to be farmed by the monks; Val-de-Bénédiction was wealthy and successful until its suppression in the French Revolution. It was also remarkably rich in books, with 9,200 volumes included in the inventory drawn up in

1791, which remained largely *in situ* until sold by the municipality in 1852. The charterhouse was restored over the course of the twentieth century and is today a cultural center and artists's residence, with about a third of the complex open to tourists (Online Resources).

2. It is unclear when this volume left the charterhouse: it was probably part of the library's sale in and held in unknown European private collections since. It is also not clear whether its contents were previously bound, nor when the two sections – the one in Gothic and the other in Bastarda – were first combined. At one point in the first half of the twentieth century it passed through the shop of Silvio Zini, a bookbinder and seller in Florence, according to a small printed stamp pasted at the corner of the inside back cover. His shop was located at Via Bufalini No. 32. An identical stamp can be found on the inner back cover of an early Italian print of *Le pompe sansei* digitized by the National Central Library of Florence (Online Resources).

## TEXT

ff. 1-3v, *Ex secunda parte statutorum novorum. De visitationibus generalibus et privatis ... capitulum, incipit, "In nomine sanctae et individue trinitatis ... nec aliquem ex sola suspitione condempnent";*

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienensis, Statuta antiqua*, Part 2, Ch. 30 (modern foliation 180rv), §1-9. Although the rubric identifies this as "De visitationibus generalibus et privatis" of the *Statuta nova* (explained below) of the Carthusian Order, it in fact belongs to the earlier *Statuta antiqua*. It is intentionally partial, cutting off less than a quarter of the way through the detailed discussion of the visitation process, instead only describing the purpose and aims of visitation.

ff. 3v-5, *Sequitur additio facta ad statuta. Anno domini millesimo . CCC<sup>o</sup>. octuagesio nono sub dis verbis, incipit, "Cum propter priorum ordinis nostri ... inter nova statuta conscribatur";*

Printed in Le Masson, 1687, Book II, Part 2, pp. 181-82, §19. An addendum to the chapter "De reprehensione" about punishing transgressions with the charterhouse, this statute issued in 1389 (as noted in the rubric, but correctly in 1388) censures priors of the Order for not correctly carrying out the rules laid out in that chapter. It demands that at visitation, the chapter be read aloud to all living there – monks, lay brothers, clerics, and lay people (presumably servants, who were usually found at Carthusian charterhouses) – in both Latin and the vernacular to ensure complete understanding by all.

ff. 5-11, *Deinde sequendo tenorem supra recitate addiciones nunc legi debet capitulum quartum secunde partis antiquor statutorum intitulum de reprehensione quod est tale, incipit, "Cum dominus preceperit non transferendos ... et si necesse foret accusare";*

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienensis, Statuta antiqua*, Part 2, Ch. 4 (modern foliation 154rv), §1-15. The abovementioned "De reprehensione," from the *Statuta antiqua* which outlines possible transgressions and means of reconciliation (ex. through penance, study, work, and in extreme cases, even imprisonment) within the charterhouse.

ff. 11-14v, *Sequentur etiam de reprehensione . capitulum primum secunde partis novorum statutorum huius tenoris., incipit, "Quicumque incisos sotulares ... non est alicui facultas denegata";*

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienſis, Statuta nova*, Part 2, Ch. 1 (modern foliation 213-14), §1-19. About two-thirds of the "De reprehensione" as found in the *Statuta nova*.

ff. 15-18v, *Alterius legi debet capitulum octavium ſecunde partis novorum ſtatuorum incipiendo in parasso ſequenti.*, incipit, "Celantes viſitatoribus revelanda ...

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienſis, Statuta nova*, Part 2, Ch. 8 (modern foliation 222rv), §3-15. All but the intentionally excluded opening of the "De viſitatoribus et viſitationibus" as found in the *Statuta nova*. It expands on the earlier version of this chapter in the *Statuta antiqua*, called "De viſitationibus generalibus et privatis," and found, in part, at the opening of this manuſcript (ff. 1-3v). As the earlier version was here miſunderſtood to be part of the *Statuta nova* inſtead of the *Statuta antiqua*, this ſection is miſlabeled as an alternative version.

ff. 19-29, *Sequitur tenor carte patrum viſitatorum que haec domum ultimo viſitaverit*, In nomine domini et cetera. *Nunc redeamus ad capitulum tricessimum ſecunde partis antiquorum ſtatuorum ...*, incipit, "Facto praecepto et allata ... [f. 22], *Et hic ſunt lectura ſtatuorum quantum ad hora praesente* [f. 22v], *Inquitione facta ſi quid de priore ... conventum et teneant ordinem*";

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienſis, Statuta antiqua*, Part 2, Ch. 30 (modern foliation 180-183), §10-41. Continuation of the firſt ſection of this text, the "De viſitationibus" of the *Statuta antiqua* (here correctly identified by the rubric). It continues to deſcribe the viſitation proceſs, diſcuſſing the queſtioning viſitors are to carry out among community members with regards tranſgreſſions or abuſes at the charterhouſe.

ff. 29v-38v, *Nota que ſecundum cartam capituli generalibus. Anni 1454 In viſitationibus monialium debent legi capitulum 34 tercie partis antiquorum ſtatuorum et capitulum quartum tercie partis antiquorum ſtatuorum ...*, incipit, "Omnes priorisſe monialium ... [f. 31v], domino ieſu chriſto. *Deinde ſequentur capitulum quartum ...* [f. 32], *Nulla perſona ordinis ... nobis ſufficiat ſuſceptarum*"; f. 39 blank;

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienſis, Statuta antiqua*, Part 3, Ch. 34 (modern foliation 202-203), §1-10; idem, *Statuta nova*, Part 3, Ch. 4 (modern foliation 227v-229), §1-29. Preſented together, the chapter of the *Statuta antiqua* on the Order's nuns and their reſponſibilities and recouſes with regards viſitation (Ch. 34) is followed by the chapter on the reſponſibilities of nuns and abbeſſes with regards entering the life and their adherence to the Carthuſian ſtatutes (Ch. 4). Theſe ſelections ſuggeſt that the charterhouſe was reſponſible for the overſight of a convent, although which one is preſently unclear.

ff. 40-47v, *In die ramis palmarum ...*, incipit, "Dominica in palmis preſentibus ...; *In quoquidem capitulo hec ſcribuntur*, *Singulis annis a circumciſione uſque ad quinquageſimam ...* [f. 41v] *Item capitulo xxxiii eiusdem ... Novicius facta profeſſione ...* [f. 42] *In capitulo xxxi ... De furibus tamen qui ...* [f. 42v] *Deinde in ſecunda parte novorum ſtatuorum capitulo ſexto ... Quicquid datur profeſſo ...* [f. 43] *Item in capitulo quinto ... Nulla perſona ordinis ...* [f. 43v] *In ſuper in eodem capitulo ... Cum deteſtandum ſit ... nec reſtringitur nec laxatur*";

Printed in *Statuta et privilegia ordinis Cartusienſis, Statuta antiqua*, Part 2, Ch. 22 (modern foliation 170v-171), §19-25; *Statuta antiqua*, Part 2, Ch. 24 (modern foliation 174), §7; *Statuta antiqua*, Part

2, Ch. 31 (modern foliation 183v), §7-9; *Statuta nova*, Part 2, Ch. 6 (modern foliation 220v), §18-19; *Statuta nova*, Part 2, Ch. 5 (modern foliation 220), §17; *Statuta nova*, Part 2, Ch. 5 (modern foliation 219-220), §9-16. Collected excerpts from the *Statuta antiqua* and *Statuta nova* chosen as readings for Palm Sunday. These are worthy of further study to determine any common themes, and whether these precise extracts were used for Palm Sunday readings at other charterhouses.

ff. 47v-59v; *Infra scripta vulgarisata post praemissa leguntur conversis et laicis consecutive*, incipit, "Aussi a vous confreres converse qui nentendes pas bien le latin ... [f. 53v] seront retournes en ceste maison et cetera"; [ff. 54-59v], repetition of the previous Occitan/Provençal folios in a contemporary Bastarda hand; [f. 60, blank].

Apparently unedited, an Occitan translation of the *Statuta antiqua*, Part 2, Ch. 22 (as indicated on ff. 48 and 54, "qui en la seconde partie des vieux statute est continu ou xxii<sup>e</sup> chapitre"). This chapter, "De consuetudinibus monachorum generaliter" is a general overview of the customs of the Order: monks are to spend most of their time alone in their cells (stated to be one of fourteen, as was originally planned for the Order's charterhouses) observing the Hours, working on prescribed tasks (such as copying books), and following the statutes as laid out by the General Chapter. As this chapter encompasses the spirit of life in the Order, it was required knowledge for all who shared the charterhouse complex, including lay brothers (*conversi*) and lay people (*laici*). It repeats twice, the first copy (ff. 47v-53v) in the same Gothic hand as the rest of the volume, and the second (ff. 54-59v) in a skilled and restrained Bastarda. The second copy lacks initials and is written on thinner parchment with slightly smaller dimensions, so while it appears to be contemporary, it was probably not meant to circulate with the rest of the volume.

The Carthusian Order, founded by St. Bruno c. 1084, and celebrated for the purity and austerity of its practices, is characterized by a unique combination of eremitical and cenobitic life. Each Carthusian monk spends most of his life living as a hermit in his own cell, while also benefitting from the rule and discipline of a community, and participation in the charterhouse's communal liturgy. The success of the Carthusians at creating a balanced life and maintaining this life allows the Order to make the famous claim, "numquam reformata, quia numquam deformata" (never reformed, because never deformed). The practice of visitations, whereby exemplary monks appointed by the General Chapter visited each charterhouse every two years, was key to the Order's success.

Adaption to the changing needs of the Order's members is reflected in the incremental modifications of the Carthusian Statutes over the course of the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. The *Statuta antiqua* (issued in 1258 and approved in 1271) and *Statuta nova* (1368) were revisions of, and additions to, the Order's initial *Consuetudines*, or customs, written in 1127 by Guigo I, fifth prior of the Grand Chartreuse (the Order's motherhouse). Another update, the *Tertia compilation* of 1509, was first printed in the Basel, 1510 edition which contains all four approved sets of statutes; this manuscript's excerpts follow this edition closely. Other updated versions, called the *Nova Collectio Statutorum* were published in 1581 and 1588 (Webster, 1908). The late James Hogg published a reproduction of the Basel edition in 1989.

The Carthusians are known for their prolific book production: Chapter 28 of Guigo's *Consuetudines* states, "Because we are not able to preach with our mouth the word of God, at least let us preach it with our hands, namely, in the copying of books for edification, exhortation, and

devotion" (Martin, 1992, p. 232). Manuscript copies of the different revisions of the statutes are numerous, but exhibit an exceptional variety in their contents. There are other manuscripts catalogued as Carthusian statutes from Val-de-Bénédiction: Marseille, BM, MSS 701 and 722, and Avignon, BM, MS 723 (de Forbin, 1988, pp. 52-52), but their exact contents are unspecified. This small volume, containing statutes mostly on the themes of visitation and reprimand (two related topics in Carthusian life), seems to have been a handbook for consulting at, or around, the time of visitation, and apparently also Palm Sunday.

The Occitan translation of a chapter of the Statutes included here is of special interest (we have identified the language as Occitan; Provençal is a dialect of Occitan; study by specialists may refine our general classification). The Order included numerous lay brothers and catered to their practical (as in this manuscript) and spiritual reading needs (Martin, 1992, esp. pp. 231-233). Catalogues of some 140 surviving manuscripts known to be from the charterhouse's former library (Vieliard, 1964, Maier, 1973 [on de Suarez], and de Forbin, 1988) attest to the presence of multiple vernacular manuscripts (this volume is unidentified among them). Together with TM 333, a somewhat similar and near-contemporary Italian manuscript also available at Les Enluminures, this small volume offers several potentially fruitful avenues for further study including where similar books (or booklets) were created and in what numbers, the specific contexts of their use, and the roles they played in communicating the tenets of Carthusian life to lay brothers of various literacy levels at medieval charterhouses.

## LITERATURE

de Forbin, François. "Les manuscrits de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon," *Les chartreux et l'art, XIVe-XVIIIe siècles, Actes du Colloque de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon*, eds. D. le Blevé and A. Girard, Paris, 1988, pp. 39-63.

Hogg, James. *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio*, Salzburg, 1989.

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Available at [https://books.google.nl/books?id=eI59KgyuS9IC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.nl/books?id=eI59KgyuS9IC&source=gbs_navlinks_s).

Maier, Anneliese. "Ein Handschriftenkatalog der Kartause Vallis Benedictionis bei Avignon," in *Studi offerti a R. Ridolfi*, Florence, 1973, pp. 347-67.

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[https://books.google.nl/books?id=7IEF5IcLiBEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0 - v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.nl/books?id=7IEF5IcLiBEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0 - v=onepage&q&f=false).

de Suarez, Joseph-Marie. "Manuscripti libri cartusianorum Villenove Secus Avenionem" [before 1627]. Handwritten catalogue preserved in the Vatican Library.

Vieliard, Jeanne. "Manuscrits de la Chartreuse de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon conservés à la bibliothèque Vaticane," *Mélanges Eugene Tisserant VII*, Vatican City, 1964, pp. 441-50.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Chartreuse Notre-Dame-du-Val-de-Bénédiction

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartreuse\\_Notre-Dame-du-Val-de-Bénédiction](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartreuse_Notre-Dame-du-Val-de-Bénédiction)

Official Website of the Carthusian Order

<http://www.chartreux.org/>

Official Website of the Val-de-Bénédiction Charterhouse in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon

<https://chartreuse.org/site/>

Stamp of Bookbinder and Seller Silvio Zini in *Le pompe sanesi*, at top corner of inside back cover

<https://books.google.nl/books?id=yIxBCZC7oiwC&pg=PT5 - v=onepage&q&f=false>

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<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03388a.htm>

TM 988