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[Augustinian Canons Regular]. *Constitutio in ordine canonicorum regularium ordinis sancti Augustini* [Pontifical Constitution for Augustinian Canons Regular promulgated by Benedict XII in 1339]

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northern France, likely Noyon, second half of 15th c., perhaps c. 1475

48 ff., preceded and followed by 5 paper flyleaves foliated i-v and 49-54, apparently complete, in regular quires of 8 (collation: i-vi<sup>8</sup>), traces of catchwords (e.g. f. 40v) and leaf signatures (e.g. 'c iii', f. 19), written in brown ink in a bâtarde script, on up to 25 long lines (justification: 157 x 100 mm.), ruled in brown ink, rubrics in red, 2-line high painted initials alternately red or blue, guide words for rubricator inscribed in the margins. Bound in 18th-century speckled light brown calf over pasteboards, the flat spine with gilt filets, with green and red leather titlepieces in the third and fourth compartments, lettered in gilt: "STATUTS / DE CH[ANOINES] / REGULIE[RS]" and "1336 [sic] / MSS.", the covers framed by a double blind filet, marbled endpapers. (Upper hinge a bit fragile, some scuffing to boards, else in good condition). Dimensions 215 x 155 mm.

This manuscript survives as a copy of a surprisingly rare text (four recorded manuscripts), elegantly written by a named French notary public. Its text regulated the daily lives and yearly routine of one of the most important medieval religious orders, detailing the profession of new canons, their singing of the Divine Office in choir, clothing, education within the community, studies at the universities, expenses and other details in the clerical life, and the general discipline in the cloister.

## PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript opens with the statement that it was transcribed by the notary public Jean, known as "of Vassens" in the diocese of Noyon (Vassens is about 80 km north-east of Paris and 20 km south-west of Noyon). This suggests that it was commissioned as an authoritative official copy, rather than a personal or study copy: it was therefore probably written for a community of Augustinian Canons in the diocese of Noyon, of which there were two: St-Barthélémy, Noyon, and St-Eloi-Fontaine, Commenchon (about 15 km north-east of Noyon). The customary of the latter abbey, founded in 1139, is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Lat. misc. f. 39), and an eighteenth-century copy of its liturgical and ceremonial ordinances and disciplinary rules, is at Amiens.
2. The only sign of early ownership is that a passage concerning the color of clothing has been highlighted in the margin (f. 32).

3. Inscribed with a price in ink "XLVIII<sup>ff</sup>" by an unidentified eighteenth-century owner, who was perhaps also responsible for the present binding. The "1336" on the spine is doubtless a mistake for the date of the original text, 1339.
4. Inscribed "12" in pencil (f.i<sup>v</sup>) by an unidentified nineteenth- or early twentieth-century owner. The same owner may have written "manque le dernier fe[ui]llet" (f.49, partially erased), but there is in fact no reason to believe that any leaves are lost from the volume, either at the beginning (because the third quire has the leaf signature "c") or at the end (because the end of the text corresponds closely to that in the most recent printed edition: if anything it is missing, it is not likely to be more than a few words of the dating clause).

## TEXT

f. 1, Superscription by the notary public Jean de Vassens: "In nomine domini amen. Hoc est transsumptum [in the margin "vel transcriptum"] cuiusdam libri apostolici super nonnullis ordinationibus seu statutis per sanctissimum patrem et dominum nostrum dominum Benedictum divina providentia papam duodecimum editis et factis signo et superscriptione Johannis dicti de Vassem Novionensis diocesis clerici auctoritate sacri romani imperii notarii publici signatum et subscriptum cuius tenor sequitur in hec verba";

f. 1, *Constitutio in ordine canonicorum regularium ordinis sancti Augustini* [Constitution for Augustinian Canons Regular granted by Pope Benedict XII on 15 May 1339 (Apostolic or Pontifical Constitution *Ad decorem Ecclesiae Sponsae Dei*)], incipit, "In nomine domini amen. Sequitur copia seu transcriptum cuiusdam libri apostolici super nonnullis ordinationibus seu statutis ..."; explicit, "... in ordine seu religione canonicorum regularium ordinis sancti Augustini perpetuis futuris temporibus observari confecti et eiusdem domini pape vera bulla plumbea more curie Romane bullati ut prima facie apparebat...";

ff. 1-1v, Papal Bull, incipit, "Benedictus episcopus servus servorum dei ad perpetuam rei memoriam ad decorem ecclesie sponse dei et sanctarum religionum in ea fundatarum quo licet diversis sint distincte gradibus in unius tamen vere fidei propositum coeuntes...", explicit, "... perpetuis futuris temporibus obervanda" (edited by Salter, pp. 214-67);

ff. 1v-48v, Thirty-nine unnumbered chapters, each with a rubric: *De creatione canonicorum. R[ubrica]* (ff. 1v-3), incipit, "Statuimus igitur ut quando in ecclesia cathedrali monasterii seu loco alio religionis eiusdem canonicorm creatio fuerit..."; *De professione. R[ubrica]* (ff. 3-3v), incipit, "Presenti quoque statuimus sanctione quod singuli canonici religionis eiusdem professionem expressam faciant non clandestine sed patenter..."; *De prohibitis prebendis* (ff. 3v-4); *De priore claustrali* (ff. 4-4v); *De capitulis quotidianis* (ff. 4v-5); *De capitulis annualibus* (ff. 5-7); *De capitulis provincialibus. R[ubrica]* (ff. 7-11v); *De visitatoribus* (ff. 11v-13); *De subventionibus* (ff. 13-15); *De studentis in ecclesiis et monasteriis* (ff. 15-16); *De mictendis ad studia* (ff. 16-18); *De pensionibus studentium* (ff. 18-25v); *De mictendis ad beneficia* (ff. 25v-27v); *De obtinentibus beneficia a sede apostolica* (f. 27v); *De infirmariis* (ff. 27v-28); *Quod antiquus canonicorum monasteriis teneatur* (ff. 28-28v); *De personis secularibus et annualibus tenendis vel non in ecclesiis vel monasteriis* (ff. 28v-29v); *De etate et qualitate ad ordines et beneficia promonendorum* (ff. 29v-30v); *De forma et honestate habitus et vestimentorum* (ff. 30v-33); *De petenda licentia a volentibus extra ecclesiam vel monasteria progredi vel exire. Rubrica* (ff. 33-34); *De prohibita alienatione* (ff. 34-34v); *De fictis et dolosis contractibus. Rubrica* (ff. 34v-36); *De*

*mutuis. Rubrica* (ff. 36-38); *De locis tradendis ad firmam vel non. R[ubrica]* (ff. 38-39); *De regestris et inventariis. R[ubrica]* (ff. 39-40); *De solvendis censibus et redditibus consuetis* [marginal guide to rubricator seems to read "constitutis"]. *R[ubrica]* (ff. 40-41); *De victualibus et aliis ministrandis. R[ubrica]* (ff. 41-42v); *De abstinentia carniū* (f. 42v); *De cellis non tenendis in dormitorio* (ff. 42v-43v); *De privilegiis et rebus aliis non tenendis extra loca ad ministracionum* (ff. 43v-44); *De celebratione missarum confessione et communione. R[ubrica]* (ff. 44-44v); *De reliquiis et custodia ornamentorum et provisione librorum* (ff. 44v-45); *De criminalibus causis canonicorum ubi agitentur* (f. 45); *De venatoribus et armis* (ff. 45-46); *De delatoribus. R[ubrica]* (f. 46); *De collapsis ecclesiis et monasteriis in religione* (ff. 46-46v); *De canonicis et conversis proprietariis et negotiatoribus* (ff. 46v-47v); *De conspiratoribus. R[ubrica]* (ff. 47v-48); *De fugitivis et eiectis. R[ubrica]* (ff. 48-48v), incipit, "[D]e canonici religionis predicte vagandi occasionem habentes statuimus ut presidentes provincialibus capitulis..."; explicit, "[...] Si quis autem hoc atemptare presumpserit indignationem omnipotentis dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum eius se noverit incursum" (edited by Salter, pp. 215-67). The dating clause on the final line on the final page (Dat' Avinioni idus Maii pontificatus nostri anno quinto), and what may have been the notarial sign of Jean de Vassens in the lower margin, are fairly thoroughly erased.

This manuscript contains a copy of the Apostolic or Papal Constitutions known as "Ad decorem Ecclesiae Sponsae Dei" of Pope Benedict XII (Jacques Fournier, 1285-1342; Pope from 1334-1342), that regulated, reformed, and set governance and tradition within the Order of the Augustinian Canons Regular. The third of the Avignon popes, Benedict XII, was a reforming pope, in particular of monastic orders, being himself originally a Cistercian monk. Amongst his reforms, Benedict XII prescribed a general reform of the Canons Regular by his Constitution *Ad decorem Ecclesiae Sponsae Dei* (promulgated at Avignon, 15 May 1339).

Papal Constitutions are ordinations issued by the Roman pontiffs and binding those for whom they are issued, whether they be for all the faithful or for special classes or individuals, as in the present case for the Augustinian Canons Regular. As a code of practice which regulated in precise detail a number of aspects of monastic governance and tradition, these Constitutions contained certain provisions for the acceptance and education of the young novices, for the celebration of the Divine Office, for various duties in the cloister, for food and clothing, for the administration of property, for studies, etc, and enjoined the convocation of Provincial Chapters every fourth year, together with the required canonical visitations of the monasteries. It was thus the whole Order came to be divided into Provinces.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries a great reform and revival took place in the canonical order. A great number of congregations of Canons Regular sprang into existence, each with its own distinctive constitutions, grounded on the Rule of St. Augustine and the statutes that Blessed Peter de Honestis, about the year 1100, gave to his canons at Ravenna. In order to preserve uniformity and regularity among these numerous congregations Pope Benedict XII, in the year 1339, issued his Apostolic Constitution *Ad decorem*, which may be rather called a book of constitutions to be observed by all Canons Regular then existing. By these Constitutions, the Order, then extending through Europe and Asia, was divided into twenty-two provinces (listed here in Chapter VII, on ff. 11-11v). The abbots and visitors were to be convened at a provincial chapter to be held in each province every four years, elected visitors whose duty it was to make a canonical visitation of every house in their respective provinces. Minute regulations were laid down for the daily recitation or

singing of the Divine Office in choir, clothing, professions, studies at the universities, expenses and other details in the clerical life, and the general discipline of the canons in the cloister.

Manuscripts of the text are surprisingly rare, considering that every house of Augustinian Canons should have owned at least one copy. In his 1922 edition, concerned with the Augustinian Canons in England, Salter cited just four manuscripts (and one more that had been destroyed), all in London or Oxford. None are recorded in de Ricci's *Census* or its *Supplement*; nor in the Digital Scriptorium database. There also appears to be no copy recorded in the Schoenberg Database of auctions, dealer catalogues, and institutional catalogues. This is therefore apparently a very rare witness and primary source concerning the daily life and administration of a major religious order.

## LITERATURE

*Magnum Bullarium Romanum a beato Leone Magno usque ad S.D.N. Benedictum XIII. opus absolutissimum Laertii Cherubini ...* Luxumburg, 1727, vol. I, pp. 237ff.

Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, London, 1737, vol. II, pp. 629ff. (A very faulty text, according to Salter).

Mayer, C. P. and Eckermann, W., ed. *Scientia Augustiniana: Studien über Augustinus, den Augustinismus und den Augustineorden*, Würzburg, 1975.

Reinke, D. R. "Austin's Labour: Patterns of Governance in Medieval Augustinian Monasticism," *Church History*, vol. 56, no. 2 (1987), pp. 157-71.

Salter, H. E. *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons*, Oxford Historical Society, 1922 (the text edited at pp. 214-67).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

H. E. Salter, *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons* (Oxford Historical Society, 1922), is available online at <http://www.archive.org/details/chaptersofaugust00augurich>

Canons and Canonesses Regular

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03288a.htm>

On Canons Regular, including Bibliography

<http://canonsregular.org/>

[http://canonsregular.org/canons/files/bibliography\\_canonsregular.pdf](http://canonsregular.org/canons/files/bibliography_canonsregular.pdf)

On St.-Eloi-Fontaine at Commenchon

<http://pagesperso-orange.fr/memoires-du-chaunois/commenchon/commenchon.htm>