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## Rule of St. Benedict and *Institutiones conversorum* of the Canons Regular of Arrouaise In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment England and France(?), 1150-1175

i + 56 + i parchment folios, modern foliation in pencil in lower outer margin, complete, two booklets bound together (collation: i-iv<sup>10</sup>, v<sup>8</sup> + vi<sup>8</sup>), no catchwords, two sets of quire signatures, first three quires numbered 4-6, present quire 4 is also labeled quire 4, now partly trimmed, pricking, first booklet is single-column, 26 lines ruled in drypoint (justification 130 x 60 mm), second booklet single-column, 25 lines, ruled in lead (justification 110 x 63 mm), each booklet copied in a single *praegothica* hand, 2- to 6-line decorated ink initials in green and metallic red ink and white pigment in the first booklet, and the second decorated with 2- to 8-line initials in red, sketch of a boy holding a pinwheel (visible under UV) and a hound chasing a rabbit on f. 31v, both booklets with blank pages at the end of the texts, now partly filled with a range of pen trials, and show marginal notes in a thirteenth-century script. Early twenty-first century brown calf binding, with two clasps and pins, top portion of f. 1 removed, with no loss of text, remainder in excellent condition. Dimensions 147 x 105 mm.

Composed around 529, the Rule of Saint Benedict is the foundational "how to" text for nearly all later medieval monastic rules down to the present day. While Benedict's Rule offers guidelines to many of the things we might expect, like what and when the monks were to pray, the monk-author was also sensitive to everyday practicalities – where the monks slept, what they ate and drank, and even what they wore, down to when they should and should not wear socks. This volume, which makes for great reading, includes both the original Rule of Saint Benedict and extracts of the later rule of the Abbey of Arrouaise (c. 1140), designed to be stricter than Benedict's.

### PROVENANCE

1. Until the late 1980s, these two booklets were bound with several quires of additional material containing extracts of the works of Robert Pullen, Lanfranc, Augustine, Gregory, and other Church Fathers, see 5 below. Based on the script and decoration, the *Rule of St. Benedict* is certainly English and dates to the mid-twelfth century. The final quire, extracts of the rule of the Abbey of Arrouaise, also seems roughly mid-century, and textually must pre-date 1186 when the rule was revised. However, this quire seems to have been copied in France, or by a French scribe. Yet, there were a number of Arrouaisian houses founded in England in the twelfth century during the Norman period, and French canons were commonly invited to help populate these new houses: Warter Priory, Bourne, Missenden, Dorchester, Harrold Priory, Lilleshall, Nutley, Lesnes, and in the borderlands, Carlisle. Founded earliest, Carlisle (f. 1122) and Warter Priory (f. 1132) were also both in the north, which might explain the bit of a life of St. Cuthbert on the original volume's flyleaves, now in MS Bergendal 2 (see 5 below).
2. Blank leaves are full of many pen trials and partly erased texts. Two on ff. 47v and 55v both spell out variations of "Okebourne," perhaps the location (now spelled 'Ogbourne') where a Benedictine priory existed by the twelfth century as a dependency

of the Abbey of Bec, in Normandy. However, whilst the *Rule of St. Benedict* would have been useful at Ogbourne, the Arrouaisian rule would not have, even in extracted form.

3. C.W.H. Sotheby, and by descent to Col. H.G. Sotheby; his sale at Sotheby's, 24 July 1924, lot 200.
4. Solomon Pottesman (1904-1978); his sale at Sotheby's, 11 December 1979, lot 35, to Alan Thomas.
5. Joseph Pope (1926-2010), Toronto, Canada, investor, banker, and collector of medieval manuscripts, purchased from Alan Thomas in December in 1980 as a single volume and separated by Pope into three volumes (Pope, 1999, Stoneman, 1997). The first three quires became Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, MS Bergendal 2. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* volume became Bergendal MS 102, and the Arrouaisian quire became Bergendal MS 103.
6. Bergendal MSS 102 and 103 were sold at London, Sotheby's, "Western Manuscripts and Miniatures," 5 July 2011, as a single lot, lot 36.
7. Private continental collection. Bergendal MSS 102 and 103 were rebound at some point after 2011 into a single volume.

## TEXT

ff. 1-46v, *Rule of St. Benedict*, incipit "Ausculda o fili praecepta magistri"... "culmina deo protegente pervenies. Amen," ff.47-48v ruled but blank, with many erased inscriptions and penitentials. CPL 1852, edited most recently by Venarde, 2011.

ff. 49-53v, *Institutiones conversorum* of the canons of Arrouaise, incipit "De professione conuersorum"... "Conceditur etiam haberi stabularium et ipsum loqui cum fratribus nostri ordinis ute) cum ceteris hospitibus," ff.54-54v ruled but blank, 55-56v blank with many partly erased inscriptions and penitentials. Edited by Tock, 2017.

The *Institutiones conversorum* excerpts chapters concerning the *conversi*, or lay brothers (chapters 151-163 and 215-226) from the rule of the regular canons of Arrouaise. Recently edited, this is the sole manuscript recording the earliest state of the Arrouaisian rule (Tock, 2017). If this copy was made by a French canon living in England, the distance from the mother house might explain some of the unusual textual features that Tock revealed in his investigation.

The volume comprises two booklets, each featuring a single text. The first was written and decorated by an English scribe and contains the text on which medieval monasticism was founded: the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Formerly a scholar, Benedict of Nursia (480–547) abandoned Rome and withdrew to a solitary, ascetic life. Yet, Benedict became convinced, instead, of the necessity of carefully regulated, communal monasticism. He founded the monastery of Monte Cassino in 529 and wrote his rule to organize the community there. As devoted as he was to prayer, Benedict shows himself to have been profoundly practical: the Rule gives out specific prayers to be said in a cycle year-round, at certain times of day and night, but also provides the details of allowable clothing, including what seasons socks were allowed, what foods the monks

could eat, and what they were prevented from consuming. As Benedictine monasticism developed and spread across medieval Europe over the next millennium, the *Rule* extended its reach, and almost invariably, the subsequent monastic rules that were developed for other orders are based upon Benedict's, including the rule used by the Arrouaisian canons. Indeed, the *Rule of St. Benedict* continues to organize communal Catholic religious life to the present day.

The second booklet in the volume was written and decorated by a French scribe and contains extracts of the rule of the canons regular of Arrouaise, an obscure French order founded in the twelfth century by Augustinian canons seeking stricter practices. While the order did not grow large in France, the Arrouaisians were popular with the Norman conquerors, who founded monasteries of this order across England in the twelfth century. Early foundations housed French immigrant canons, and one of these may well have copied this booklet in the present volume.

Given its importance for the everyday life of clergy all over Europe, the *Rule of St. Benedict* was an extremely common text in the Middle Ages, and hundreds of manuscript copies survive today (Venarde, 2011). Yet in the modern era, while manuscript copies appear for sale on a regular basis, they are rarely as early as the present volume. Further, Milis's edition does not include the present manuscript and lists only six manuscripts of the *Constitutions of Arrouaise*. Including this one, the Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts lists only three copies of the Arrouaisian rule ever listed for sale, and the present manuscript is by far the earliest of these. Further, none of the other copies are English. This volume therefore offers a unique combination of early copies of important monastic rules.

## LITERATURE

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