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JEAN DE CIREY, *Privilegia ordinis Cisterciensis* (Privileges of the Cistercian Order)

In Latin, manuscript on paper and parchment

France, (Dijon?) and Luxembourg(?), c. 1480-1501 and late 16<sup>th</sup> century

i + 140 (paper) + 96 (parchment) + i folios on paper and parchment, modern continuous foliation in top recto outer margin, incomplete, watermark, eagle similar to Briquet no. 125 (Luxembourg, 1587), (collation, paper section too tightly bound for collation; parchment section i-xii<sup>8</sup>), paper section frequent catchwords at the bottom of each folio, parchment section, catchwords at the end of gatherings verso inside margin, trimmed during binding, paper section frame ruled in lead, 15-19 lines, written in a late Gothic cursive similar in style to caractères de civilité, chapter headings written in brown ink, main text written in black ink (justification 100 x 70 mm.), parchment section ruled in lead with bounding lines across top, bottom, inner, and outer margins and through the center at line 12, 24 lines, writing begins below top line, written in a very neat and exact Gothic Hybrida similar to Lieftinck's lettre bourguignonne in dark brown ink, 3- to 4-line decorated initials written in blue and red ink, with paraph marks alternating blue and red ink, heading written in red ink (justification 98 x 67 mm.), small section once containing a previous owner's name at the top of f. 1 cut out, f. 13 contains a scrap pasted over two expunctuated lines as a correction, triangular hole at the top of f. 71 (no loss of text), small hole in outer margin of f. 151 (no loss of text), ff. 235 and 236 stained and worn, otherwise good condition. Late sixteenth-century French calf binding, probably contemporaneous with the paper portion, with lined tooling in three lines, stamped and gilt with floral patterns, rubbed and scuffed, rebaked in the nineteenth century with tooling and stamping to match the sixteenth-century binding, good condition. Dimensions 146 x 98 mm.

This small deluxe volume, copied in a beautiful script, is the only known manuscript witness to the *Privilegia ordinis Cisterciensis* compiled by this great reform-minded abbot of Cîteaux. Its date, roughly contemporaneous with the printing of the text in 1491, and quality suggest it may have been a presentation copy for a high-ranking Cistercian or a secular ruler. Given the care taken to control the distribution and authorization of the printed edition of the *Privilegia*, this manuscript could represent early transmission of the text following de Cirey's archival work to compile the text and its printing in 1491. The manuscript now survives with a sixteenth-century paper supplement, replacing a lost or damaged section of the original manuscript.

## PROVENANCE

1. The oldest, parchment portion of the manuscript, ff. 141-236, was copied at the end of the fifteenth century, c. 1480-1501, likely close in date to the incunable edition of 1491; it may have been produced at Cîteaux, where Jean de Cirey, abbot of Cîteaux (1476-1501) and Cistercian reformer, undertook archival work to edit and organize Cistercian privileges for this text. De Cirey became abbot of Cîteaux in 1476 and by the end of his tenure had brought to completion a new library for the monastery as well as a catalogue of its manuscripts and a newly edited cartulary for the Cistercians.
2. The paper portion of the manuscript, ff. 1-140, probably comes from the Low Countries, near Luxembourg. The watermark suggests a date after 1587 and the hand of

the scribe is similar to *caractères de civilité*, used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as both a manuscript hand and type.

3. In the possession of Bull and Auvache, London booksellers, in 1888.
4. Acquired by John Hirst in January 1888 according to a note appended to the front pastedown. John James Hirst (1848-1915) was from a landed and wealthy family from Dobcross in Saddleworth. The Hirst family grew in wealth and stature thanks to investments in the woolen manufacturing in Dobcross. Hirst was a modest collector and another manuscript he owned can now be found in the British Library (Egerton MS 2676).

## TEXT

ff. 1-4, *Brevis praefatio super sequenti Collecta privilegiorum ordinis Cisterciensis* [Short preface for the following collection of privileges of the Cistercian order], incipit, "In nomine sanctae trinitatis nos frater Iohannes abbas Cistercii...aut per alium a nobis instituendum signatis";

ff. 4-140v, [Collection of privileges of the Cistercian order], incipit, "Privilegium domini Pascalis Pape II...ac sinceris affectibus excitamur ad uestra et illorum//";

The first, later, paper portion of the manuscript transmits the preface to the *Privilegia ordinis Cisterciensis* and the text of the papal bulls from Paschal II in 1100 to Boniface VIII in 1302. The watermark and script help date this portion to the later sixteenth century. The scribe follows the text of the incunable edition of 1491 accurately throughout. There is no loss of text between this portion and the following parchment portion. The continuity of the text suggests that a complete parchment copy once existed and that this section was copied to replace damaged or missing leaves.

ff. 141-236v, [Collection of privileges of the Cistercian order], incipit, "///illorum commoda in quibus honeste possumus...illosque corrigendi penis debitis percellendi//."

The second, parchment portion of the manuscript is the earlier part of the manuscript and dates to the end of the fifteenth century. It is likely contemporaneous with the incunable edition. This portion ends incompletely in the middle of a bull issued by Calixtus III in 1458, found at f. 88v in the incunable edition. It lacks one privilege found at ff. 43v-44 in the printed edition ("Privilegium domini Iohannis pape xxii...Datum Auinioni viii. kl. Decembris. Pontificatus nostri Anno quarto.")

The *Collecta privilegiorum ordinis Cisterciensis*, or *Privilegia ordinis Cisterciensis*, was conceived and compiled by Jean de Cirey, Abbot General of the Cistercian Order from 1476-1501, and printed in 1491 by Peter Metlinger (d. 1491) in Dijon (see BMC VIII.409; ISTC ip00976000; GW M35439). It was the first book printed there. The parchment portion of this manuscript, ff. 141-236, could slightly predate or be roughly contemporaneous with the printing of the *Privilegia*, a highly controlled and restricted press run meant to ensure textual fidelity and to eradicate fraudulent privileges. This section of the manuscript follows the text of the incunable nearly verbatim. The paper portion of this manuscript, ff. 1-140, dateable to the late sixteenth century, also follows the text of the printed edition very closely. There are no other known manuscript copies of the *Collecta* and the textual fidelity to the printed version suggests that this manuscript was intended as a deluxe copy. Two omissions have been corrected by the same scribe in the parchment portion at ff. 157v and 185v.

Jean de Cirey was born in Dijon in 1434 and became a Cistercian monk early in life at the Abbaye de la Charité. In 1468 he was elected the abbot of Theuley and after the death of Humbert Martin of Losne in 1476, he became abbot of Cîteaux. As the head of the Cistercian order, de Cirey "was a man of good intentions, ambition, and energy" (Lekai, 1977, p. 105) who tried to extricate the Cistercians from their financial woes at the end of the fifteenth century. De Cirey blamed the order's misfortunes on the rise in the system of commendatory abbacies. The commendatory system allowed the papacy "to get better control of, and more profit from, ecclesiastical offices. It deprived monastic communities of the right to elect their own abbots, who were instead appointed directly by the pope or even secular rulers." (Jamroziak, 2013, p. 244) The result was that the incomes from many Cistercian monasteries were diverted to the Roman Curia or secular rulers, who profited while the monasteries languished (Telesca, 1971). De Cirey attempted to reassert the rights of Cistercians to govern their own monasteries and thereby regain their incomes so desperately needed by the Order. His plan involved combing through the archives at Cîteaux to find authentic privileges granted by popes throughout the history of the Order, petitioning the contemporary popes Sixtus IV (1471-1484) and Innocent VIII (1484-92) as well as French and German rulers for a reaffirmation of the existing privileges (at immense cost), and, finally, editing all of these privileges into the collection *Privilegia ordinis Cisterciensis*. De Cirey's working methods within the Cistercian archives are only just beginning to be understood, but he seems to have revised the old system of indexing Cistercian cartularies with one of his own devising (Rey, 2010).

De Cirey's preface laments the low state to which the Cistercian order has been brought at the end of the fifteenth century. The text of the papal bulls and privileges stretches from a bull of Paschal II in 1100, which grants the Cistercians land in Cîteaux exempt from taxation and secular interference under special protection from the pope in perpetuity up to contemporary privileges recently purchased by de Cirey from pope Innocent VIII in 1489. There are privileges from secular rulers appended after the papal bulls as well as a conclusion and two poems composed by Conrad Leontorius.

The text in our manuscript consists of the preface and nearly half of the papal privileges in the authorized printed edition, stopping at a privilege of Calixtus III granted in 1458. Thus, it contains two of the most important bulls for the reformation of the Cistercians in the later Middle Ages: the *Clementina*, promulgated by Clement IV in 1265, also known as *Parvus fons*; and the *Benedictina* (or *Fulgens sicut stella*) promulgated in 1335 by Benedict XII. A reformist ideology pervades most of the bulls and Jean de Cirey even states that the intended goal of the *Privilegia* is to allow Cistercians to return to the "purity of the original life" of the Order (*primeue conuersationis puritas*). De Cirey went a step further in 1493 and issued the *Articuli Parisienses*, which "stressed the obligations of proper monastic observance and the centrality of the rule" (Jamroziak, 2013, p. 244) and were accepted by the General Chapter in 1494. In the end, de Cirey's reforms did little to help the economic fortunes of the Cistercians, who faced further challenges among the greater influence of state power in the sixteenth century and the Reformation.

This unique manuscript of the *Privilegia ordinis Cisterciensis* is likely an early deluxe copy of the text, given the high quality of the parchment and masterful scribal execution of *lettre bourguignonne*. The paper supplement from the late sixteenth century at the beginning of the manuscript indicates that the manuscript was probably a complete parchment manuscript, which lost significant portions during the sixteenth century. The small dimensions, but sumptuous design of the manuscript, along with its corrections could suggest that the manuscript was intended for a high-ranking member of the Cistercian order or a secular ruler.

This manuscript potentially provides a unique witness to the textual transmission of the *Privilegia* between de Cirey's initial archival work at Cîteaux and the printing of the text at Dijon in 1491.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

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<https://data.cerl.org/istc/ip00976000>

"John James Hirst," *werelate.org*  
[https://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:John\\_Hirst\\_\(17\)](https://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:John_Hirst_(17))

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