

Spirit and Rule of St. Augustine in the Canonical Reform of the 11th – 12th Century

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In April 1059 the Lateran Synod, by its reform decisions, promulgated an Easter message of new awakening life for the Church. This message was also intended for the canons of cathedrals and other chapters, who not only would be called back to conventual life but also encouraged to renounce private ownership and thus live a true “apostolic way of life” (Can. IV). By the slogan “Back to the *Vita apostolica!*” the age-old ideal of community of heart and property, which an all too human practice and convenience had placed in darkness, was once again placed on the lamp stand. Holy Church Fathers and bishops had made this the basis of common life for clerics after the example of the first Christians of Jerusalem.

But the leaders of this church reform were aware that this fine “program” must be backed up by a strong will if the noble canons with their “feudal” outlook were to be won over to “apostolic poverty”. The pope of this Lateran Synod of 1059, Nicholas II, while he was still bishop (Gerhard) of Florence had St John’s monastery built there in the year 1058 for canons, “qui...ad instar primitivae ecclesiae communiter viventes regulam SS. Patrum canonicè observant et observaturi” sunt.¹ [“who...living together according to the model of the early church are and will canonically observe the rule of our holy fathers”] With like resolution Popes Alexander II and especially Gregory VII endeavored to spread the *vita apostolica*. And so in Italy, France and Germany (Altmann v. Passau!) there awoke a new spring of canonical life.

The *vita apostolica* and St. Augustine

Just as in dogmatics, so also in reform of church life, “proof by tradition” played an important role. On their return to the primitive church the Fathers of the Church built as it were the piers of the bridge. None of the holy fathers, however, was so enthusiastic about and enthralled by the community life of the Apostolic Church of Jerusalem (Acts 4: 31-35) as St. Augustine. To live this out in the midst of like-minded confreres was the goal of his monastic foundations in Thagaste, in the “Garden Monastery” at Hippo and at his bishop’s house. Also the “rules” of St. Augustine only intended to help put the *vita apostolica* into effect for the circumstances of his time and the community of his day, as is clearly said there: “apostolicam enim vitam optamus vivere”² – “Primum propter quod in unum estis congregati, ut inanimè habitetis in domo et sit vobis anima una et cor unum in Deo...Sic enim legitis in Actibus Apostolorum, quia erant eis omnia communia et distribuebatur unicuique sicut cuique opus erat.”³ [“We wish to live the apostolic life” – “The first reason for which you have come together is that you might live together in the house and be of one mind and one heart in God...For thus you read in the Acts of the

¹ Ughelli, Italia sacra III, 69.

² Disciplina Monasterii (= Regula II) c. 4. – Critical text in: R. Arbesmann – W. Hümpfner, Jordani de Saxonia Liber Vitasfratrum (New York 1943) pp. 490-93.

³ Regula ad servos Dei (= Regula III) c. 1. – ibid. pp. 494-504.

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Apostles that they had all things in common and it was distributed to each one according to his need.”] Sermons 355 and 356 on the common life of the clerics in the bishop’s house show with what unshakeable fidelity he held to this to the end of his life. After Augustine first had the account from Acts (4: 31-35) read out by his deacon Lazarus, he said: “I want to read it again myself, for I would prefer to read these words than speak to you in my own words.” And then he read this passage again and added: “You have heard what we want; pray that we can do it!”⁴ Why should the so eloquent, so inexhaustible doctor of the Church be satisfied with that? Because from the simple words of the Holy Scripture he heard the very heartbeat of Jesus who lived once more in the early Church’s community of Love!

Cor ad cor loquitur – and therefore St. Augustine’s teaching and example has become the heritage of the Church as it sets about bringing to life again the common life of clerics. Even in the year of the Lateran Synod of 1059 Queen Anne of France founded the community of St. Vincent in Senlis with the express qualification: “quatenus ibi quieti et tranquillī religiosi viri Domino servientes, mundo renunciantes, regularem, id est sanctorum Apostolorum et beati Augustini quae scripta est vitam canonicè amplectentes vivere valeant.”⁵ [“Insofar as they wish to live there canonically embracing a regular life, that is the life of the holy Apostles and the Blessed Augustine, renouncing the world and serving the Lord as peaceful and tranquil religious men.”]

The new “Order” of the Augustinian Canons

Toward the end of the 11th century, the more cathedral and other chapters of canons opted for the *vita apostolica* after the example of St. Augustine, the more urgent became a separation and decision, first vis-à-vis those canons, who held to private ownership, but also vis-à-vis Benedictine monasticism, which till then was the mainstay of the Gregorian Reform. Pope Urban II deserves the credit for having recognized the way of life of the *Canonici regulares* as sharply distinguished from the principles of the *Canonici saeculares*, and at the same time as an equal way of communal perfection apart from monasticism. In numerous privileges for reformed houses of canons he clearly emphasized the nature and goal, the rights and duties of the canons regular.⁶ Thus from the renewal of the *vita canonica* there inevitably arose a new “order” -- which initially had not been the intention. In the privileges of Pope Urban II we find officially for the first time the new name *Canonici secundum regulam sancti Augustini viventes*, which would give the new *ordo* of canonical life a distinctive stamp vis-à-vis the secular canons and the monks, and at the same time give prominence to St. Augustine as the champion

⁴ Sermo 356, 1-2. Migne PL 39, 1574f.

⁵ Gallia Christiana X. Instr. 204. – Detailed representation of the canonical reform of the 11th century with numerous examples in: Charles Dereine, S. J., Vie commune, règle de Saint Augustin et chanoins réguliers au XI^e siècle. Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique XLI (Louvain 1946) 365-406.

⁶ Further details on this in: Jakob Mois, Das Stift Rottenbuch in der Kirchenreform des 11. – 12. Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur Ordensgeschichte der Augustiner-Chorherren (München, 1953; Verl. Frz. X. Seitz, München 5, Rumfordstrasse 23) pp. 75-93; 243-246.

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and model of the *vita apostolica*.⁷ Nevertheless this did not reduce the variety of the forms of life of the “Augustinian Canons”. Their statutes were at first quite different from those of the Benedictines, partly marked also by older canonical rules; only gradually did a loose association, with like statutes, crystallize around important reform houses (e.g. St. Ruf in Avignon – Rottenbuch-Marbach – St. Quentin in Beauvais – Sta. Maria in Portu near Ravenna – St. Victor in Paris).

Discussion about the “Rule of Augustine”

It is striking that in the customaries of the Augustinian canons of that time, which have come down to us in writing, the actual Rule of Augustine appears very little. Still, Peter de Honestis, the composer of the Statutes of Sta. Maria in Portu-Ravenna (which were approved by Pope Paschal II in 1116), says in the forward that he and his confreres had specifically investigated whether one of the holy fathers had not composed a reliable and satisfactory rule for clerics living in common, which would somewhat correspond to what the monks possessed in their rule (of Benedict). Otherwise they had put together the following statutes to no avail.⁸

Ignorance of the text of the Augustinian Rule could not have been the reason for this, for it can be traced back to the 7th – 8th century in manuscripts. The difficulty lay in the fact that, as is well known, tradition offered two different texts as the Rule of Augustine. In the old codices these were almost always connected with one another and separated only by an “Amen”.⁹ The first, very short rule-text, called the *Ordo Monasterii* or *Disciplina Monasterii* (formerly, usually *regula secunda*)^{9a} was not workable for a house of canons just as it was. This was because of its completely unusual ordering of the liturgical day schedule, its commitment to manual labor and strict silence. The other rule-text, called *Regula ad servos Dei* (formerly, *regula tertia*), was much more detailed, but so generally composed that, for a regulated common life in a monastery, it made more precise statutes indispensable. Hence the noticeable reserve on the part of the canons regular. Although they named themselves after St. Augustine, when it came to the Augustinian rule-text they did not consider the first part (*Disciplina Monasterii*) but only recognized the *Regula ad servos Dei* as the Rule of Augustine. The following declared their support for this: the old houses of canons St. Ruf-Avignon, Rottenbuch, St. Quentin-Beauvais, St. Paul-Narbonne, Maguelonne, Marbach, etc.

⁷ This description is found for St. Jean-des-Vignes (near Soissons), 1089; St. Johann in Ripoll (Dioc. Of Vich) 1089; Rottenbuch, 1090 and 1092; Maguelonne, 1095. Urban II also stresses strongly the line of tradition “a primordiis sanctae ecclesiae.”

⁸ Migne PL 163, 703.

⁹ So already in the oldest manuscript, Paris Bibl. Nat. 12634 (7th -- 8th century). Occasionally in the 9th century the *Regula ad servos Dei* is found alone (e.g. Cod. Lat. Mon. 28118). Cf. Arbesmann-Hümpfner, loc. cit. (note 2) p. 490.

^{9a} On the investigations of the Augustinian Hermits, which put the question of the composer of the Rules of Augustine on a new basis, cf. W. Hümpfner’s summary in: *Lexikon für Theologie u. Kirche*, 2. Auflage, I. 1104-1105. – For the *Disciplina Monasterii* (= *Regula II*) a completely convincing proof of the personal drafting by Augustine must remain problematic; cf. M. Verheijen in: *Augustinus Magister*, I. (Paris, 1954) pp. 255-63.

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However, the fact that the *Regula Sti. Augustini* plays so inconspicuous a role in the statutes of the earliest reform houses shows clearly that the Augustinian *anima una et cor unum in Deo* was understood by them more as lived community than as rigid commitment to an authentic rule-text. Besides the *Regula*, Sermons 355 and 356 were considered as highly valued witnesses to the *vita apostolica* in the spirit of St. Augustine.

Moreover, we must consider that the monastic reform movement of the 10th – 11th century on the whole in its stormy emergence to new forms of life was not just concerned about literal inviolability of the “Rule of Order”. The reform of Gorze-Trier, as well as that of Cluny, interpreted the *Regula Sti. Benedicti* in part very unconventionally and fashioned their constitutions accordingly.¹⁰ Only with the monks of Cîteaux (founded 1098) appeared the slogan about *puritas regulae*, from which St. Bernard then derived the challenge to a literal following of the Rule of Benedict *ex integro* – certainly even for his order a never completely attained ideal!¹¹

From “ordo antiquus” to “ordo novus”

The force of the spread of Cistercianism also encompassed a few houses of Augustinian canons in France and bordering areas. Bernard of Clairvaux especially supported the canons regular wherever he could. They took on the severities of the Cistercian way of life, abstinence from meat, manual labor, perpetual silence, wool clothing, even the title of “abbot” for the provost (e.g. Arrouaise, Hérival, St. Victor-Paris). Such asceticism is feasible in a monastery of monks that is hidden from the world but not in a house of canons with predominantly priestly and pastoral duties. Nevertheless to justify it, the reformed canons of the strict movement refer to the Rule of Augustine *ex integro*, i.e. to the *Disciplina Monasterii*, which until then had been set aside by the canons regular as unsuitable.

In the German area the monastery of Springiersbach (Mosel), which was founded in 1107 “secundum instituta regulae a beato Augustino conscriptae”, for the first time decided on the complete rule-text as the basis of its common life.¹² However, Provost Richard, the son of the foundress, encountered conflict regarding the literal observance of the *Disciplina Monasterii* with his canons, who complained to Pope Gelasius II. The papal decision (August 11, 1118) urged sound moderation and demanded that for the office they should follow the Roman *ordo*. Provost Richard did not give in, but obtained from Pope Callistus II in 1119 express confirmation for physical labor and silence “according to the example of the Apostle (Paul) and in accordance with the instruction of St. Augustine”.

The dispute only flared up more seriously, however, and had broader repercussions when St. Norbert at his foundation at Prémontré (1120) likewise opted for

¹⁰ Kassius Hallinger, Gorze-Kluny, in: *Studia Anselmiana*, 22/23; 24/25 (Rome, 1950-51).

¹¹ Koloman Spahr, Die Regelauslegung im “Neukloster”, in: *Festschrift zum 800-Jahrgedächtnis Bernhards v. Clairvaux* (Wien, 1953) pp. 22-30.

¹² Ch. Dereine, Les coutumiers de Saint-Quentin de Beauvais et de Springiersbach, in: *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique*. XLIII (1948) pp. 411-442.

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the Rule of Augustine *ex integro* and in addition took on characteristics from the Cistercians and during his preaching tours began to strongly recruit for this new form of canonical life. By so doing he made the Augustinian canonries of the older movement his opponents. They rejected, with the rigorous style of the *moderni regulares* (as they were called in the statutes of St. Quentin-Beauvais), also the rule-text of the *Disciplina Monasterii* as non-Augustinian. On the other hand the Norbertines tended to disregard the second part of the Rule of Augustine [= *Regula ad servos Dei*] because it was “originally composed for women”.¹³ Under the influence of the highly regarded abbey of St. Ruf in Avignon, which belonged to the oldest houses of France, and whose abbot, Pontius, soundly defended the previous tradition, many Augustinian canonries resisted the effective recruitment of Norbert of Prémontré. Thus there occurred on its own, about 1120 till 1125, a split within the canons regular. The *ordo antiquus* supported the moderate principles of the *Regula ad servos Dei* as the authentic teaching of St. Augustine on the *vita apostolica* – the *ordo novus* of Norbert and his like-minded companions appealed to the stricter norm of life, to the *Disciplina Monasterii*, which was viewed as an essential component of the Rule of Augustine.

The Position of the Bavarian and Austrian Canonries on

ordo antiquus or novus

In the south German area the new dispute about the Rule of Augustine probably became well known beyond the canonry of Klosterrath (= Rolduc) near Aachen. Provost Richer, who was sent there from Rottenbuch (1112), first brought the customs of his Bavarian monastery, but then (1119) along with the title of Abbot he also introduced strict abstinence according to the monastic model. Soon after Richer’s death two canons of Springiersbach became Provosts in Klosterrath, Bertulph (1123) and Borno. These men brought with them the rigorous statutes of Springiersbach and thereby caused a serious rift in the monastery at Klosterrath. Archbishop Conrad of Salzburg introduced the Rule of Augustine into his Cathedral chapter in 1120. At that time he requested from Richer four canons from Klosterrath. After the fire at Klosterrath in 1123 more confreres fled to Salzburg. Thus the stricter customs of Klosterrath as well as the statutes of Springiersbach were known to the canonries of the Salzburg ecclesiastical province.¹⁴

It only came to an open crisis when Gerhoh of Reichersberg, then still a canon in Rottenbuch, came to know St. Norbert on his trip to Rome in 1126, and from him became enthusiastic about the “pure and unabridged” Rule of St. Augustine. He returned with this and a letter of Pope Honorius II to Rottenbuch, which longed for the exact observance of the Rule of St. Augustine – “which you have in written form before your

¹³ Cf. the letter of Bishop Walter of Maguelonne (c. 1121) in Ch. Dereine, Saint Ruf et ses coutumes aux XIe et XIIe siècles, in: *Revue Bénédictine* LIV (1949) 161-182; *Dialogus inter Cluniacensem et Cisterciensem monachum* (1156, aus Aldersbach Ndb.) in: Edm. Martène, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum* V (Paris, 1717) 1624f.

¹⁴ *Annales Rodenses*, *Monumenta Germ. Hist. Scriptores* XVI. 688-723; J. Mois, loc. cit. 172-179; The customs of Rottenbuch were transplanted by Manegold v. Lautenbach to Marbach and form the basis of the *Constitutiones Marbacenses* (besides those of St. Ruf-Avignon) (J. Mois, loc. cit. 266-271).

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eyes”.¹⁵ Still, Provost Udalrich and the majority of the canons of Rottenbuch remained faithful to the previous moderate movement and rejected the *Disciplina monasterii* as an Augustinian Rule. Other canonries followed this example, which Gerhoh indicated in a critical comment in the *Liber de aedificio Dei*. St. Augustine intended to keep only such clerics at his church who would live in the spirit of the Apostles. He composed a short little book to explain the “Rules of the Saints”. In many (!) monasteries this little book was mutilated in that “the first chapter was removed in part because of its obscurity, in part because of its strictness, which would have caused offence to narrow-minded brothers.” Gerhoh wants no compromise. With good intention there would be no difficulties for the canons. Through obedience to the Rule of St. Augustine they would become co-disciples of St. Peter and the other Apostles.¹⁶ However, the advocates of the shortened Rule of Augustine likewise hoped for this, and they were victorious, for Gerhoh also finally returned to the moderate movement. For the time being only the Praemonstratensians insisted on the entire rule.

It is striking that the statutes of Springiersbach, which came to Salzburg by way of Klosterrath and which were inspired by the *Disciplina Monasterii*, found their way into the canonries of Austria and even continued to have an effect there for a long time. In addition to the manuscript from the Salzburg cathedral chapter^{16a} already examined by Ludwig Fischer, Alois Zauner was able to point out the same statutes in the canonries of St. Florian (Cod. XI 250) and Klosterneuburg (now Cod. Vind. Pal. 4724).¹⁷ In this connection also belongs the text of the Rule of Augustine from Ranshofen, already published by Eusebius Amort, which in uninterrupted chapters connects the *Disciplina Monasterii* with the *Regula ad servos Dei* and adds the letter of Pope Gelasius II to Provost Richard of Springiersbach, even if with a changed introduction: “Determinatio Gelasii Papae in Regulam b. Augustini ad Regulares Canonicos.”¹⁸ However, while the oldest statutes of St. Florian, because they go back to Springiersbach-Klosterrath, breathe the spirit of the *ordo novus*, the oldest manuscript of the Rule from St. Florian (Cod. XI 249, fol. 27r – 31r), which dates from the end of the 11th to the beginning of the 12th century, contains only the text of the *Regula ad servos Dei*. It corresponds, therefore, to the view of the *ordo antiquus*.¹⁹

So there are still questions to be answered here and discoveries to be made in the store of old manuscripts. May this little overview be a stimulus to such research!

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“Geist und Regel des hl. Augustinus in der Kanoniker-Reform des 11. – 12. Jahrhunderts”,
In Unum Congregati 6 (1959), Heft 1, pp. 52-59.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 249f.; 260f.

¹⁶ Migne PL 194, 1277.

^{16a} It is now Cod. Vind. Pal. 1482; wrongly claimed as the work of St. Ivo of Chartres.

¹⁷ Alois Zauner, Die ältesten Statuten des Augustiner-Chorherrenstiftes St. Florian, in: Mitteilungen d. Oberösterr. Landesarchivs III (1954) 359ff.

¹⁸ *Vetus disciplina Canonicorum reg. et saec.* (1747) p. 134. – Zauner mentions (loc. cit. 352) a Rule of Augustine (which?) also in Cod. Vind. Pal. 1482 and two letters of Pope Gelasius II to Springiersbach.

¹⁹ Cf. the contribution of Dr. Frz. Linninger in this periodical, 1. Jahrg. 1954, pp 34-36.