

Recent Research on Canons Regular in the German Empire of the 11th and 12th Centuries

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For decades the reform movement of the canons of the 11th and 12th centuries remained to a great degree unnoticed by historians. The Premonstratensians, who in this report are treated only in passing, have to be regarded as a certain exception. Cluny, Gorze, Hirsau and the reform papacy fill the spectrum of church and monastic reform of this period. But for about twenty years now the significance of the canons regular has more and more become the focus of attention. And today you can no longer avoid ascribing to them an essential portion of the deep reaching reform efforts of the time. Their heyday can be situated in the first half of the 12th century. During this time they contributed not only a series of popes – Honorius II, Innocent II, Lucius II, as well as Hadrian IV shortly after mid-century and finally Gregory VIII in the second half of the century – but they also gave inestimable momentum for the area of the German Empire, which forms the basis of this report. As expected, this is the case for the spiritual and intellectual interests, but, perhaps more decisively, as we can recognize today, also for the areas of constitutional law and politics.

Unquestionably the impressive work of Charles Dereine must be placed at the beginning of a research report on canons regular, even if he doesn't consider the German canons regular as the focal point. In a number of articles, beginning in 1946 with *Vie commune, règle de Saint Augustin et chanoines réguliers au XIe siècle*, he brought the canonical reform altogether into the consciousness of historical science and published the sum of his results in the extensive encyclopedia article *Chanoines*. Here is available the first scientifically based overview about the history of canons, therefore of clerics, that is to say, canons living in a community. Whether they lived at a cathedral church or in a monastery, their form of life was codified in the 816 reform statutes of Aachen, which were generally binding for the first time. Then in the first half of the 11th century, reform groups among them of an eremitical character began to orient themselves to the *vita apostolica* and the life of the early church as well as (since the 2nd half of the 11th century) the model of life handed on by Augustine and his clerical community. These, who were now called canons regular as opposed to the “secular canons” who remained outside of the reform, shortly after 1100 divided up into the more traditional *ordo antiquus* and the more radical *ordo novus*. This, among other things, brought about the later splitting off of the Premonstratensians. This movement of the canons regular, since Pope Urban II, had received a well defined place in the overall structure of the Church and, in the meantime having become rather coenobitic, came to a temporary standstill in the second half of the 12th century. Nine years after Dereine's *Chanoines* the whole development of the canonical institute was revised, this time with an orientation to the German area. This was expounded in the dissertation of Josef Siegwart who with special emphasis points out that in the 10th and beginning of the 11th centuries numerous interim reforms are noted among the cathedral and monastic clergy. Therefore the “actual” canonical reform, which followed thereafter, did not occur suddenly. He also stresses,

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though, following Dereine, their initial predominantly eremitical organization as opposed to the preceding coenobitical reforms.

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The norm of life of the canons regular was concretized from the last third of the 11th century by a general following of the *vita apostolica* and the *vita communis* of the early church based more and more on the regulations handed on by Augustine. *Secundum regulam Augustini vivere*, first employed in Rheims in 1067, in fact still signified in the beginning – according to the conclusions of Jakob Mois – a life according to the example of Augustine that was known from his numerous writings. But since the beginning of the 12th century the reference was more and more concretely made to the Rule of Augustine, which consequently became the foundation of the canons regular. Since, however, two rules of Augustine had been handed down, namely the *Praeceptum* (also called the *Regula tertia*) and the *Ordo monasterii* (also called the *Regula secunda*) – the other “rules of Augustine” practically played no role – there arose an ongoing discussion lasting till this very day over which is the authentic Rule of Augustine. The current definitive edition of Luc Verheijen unreservedly attributes the *Praeceptum* to Augustine. In the case of the *Ordo monasterii* only the first and last sentences are from him, the rest is from his follower Alypius. In 1107 at the founding of the reform monastery of Springiersbach in the Diocese of Trier and in 1108 in a confirmation document for the reform monastery of Hamersleben in the Diocese of Halberstadt, the entire rule, i.e. the stricter *Ordo monasterii* (=OM) together with the *Praeceptum*, was imposed as a foundation. The consequence was the splitting off of the more radical trend of the *ordo novus*, which followed the OM, from the more moderate trend of the *ordo antiquus*, which rejected the OM. On the strength of his broad manuscript basis, Verheijen can now establish certain tradition groups, which prove to be groups of particular observances and reform trends. Thus he can, among other things, summarize the rule-tradition in the Salzburg area and relate it to the norm of life in Springiersbach, which, through the privilege of Pope Gelasius II of August 11, 1118, made possible a moderate *ordo novus*, i.e. an adaptation of the regulations of the OM to the respective life conditions of a monastery. As far as we can say today, in the area of the German Empire the *ordo antiquus* characterized the reform groups of Rottenbuch in the Diocese of Freising and Marbach in the Diocese of Basel. On the other hand, the *ordo novus* characterized the reform groups of Springiersbach, Steinfeld (later Premonstratensian) in the Diocese of Cologne, probably also that of Hamersleben and naturally the Premonstratensians. A moderate *ordo novus* was prevalent in the Salzburg group and in Klosterrath (=Rolduc) in the Diocese of Liège.

Another way to differentiate the various obediences of canons regular is by way of the customaries, that is, the more detailed regulations and prescripts with respect to the rule. These give details regarding day schedule, offices, punishments, liturgy, etc. Only now for the first time are we learning to estimate their value without reservation for monastic as well as for canonical research. There are great gaps to be filled here in making available editions of works. One must think only of the venture taken by Kassius Hallinger with the *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* for the use of monks. The most commendable achievement in this area for the German canons regular is to be

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ascribed to Josef Siegwart for his edition of the Marbach *Consuetudines* of c.1122. In addition to the text, he has added a study (although not final) on the spread of these *Consuetudines*. He has also determined as the sources from which the Marbach writer drew, the *Consuetudines* of Cluny and above all those of St. Ruf near Avignon, a center for canons regular. Since then we cannot rank highly enough the significance of the *Consuetudines* of St. Ruf, which was founded in 1039. They formed not only the foundation of their own reform circle, which expanded through France, Spain and to a slight degree even into Italy, but over and above that they influenced the norm of life of almost all the canons regular of the entire German Empire. These *Consuetudines* of St. Ruf had an effect namely not only beyond Marbach and Rottenbuch, which was not far from it, but -- as I can prove in the soon to appear edition of the *Consuetudines* (1123/28) of Springiersbach and Klosterrath – even beyond these usages, which depend on the *Consuetudines* of Marbach and Hirsau. These *Consuetudines* were in force not only in Springiersbach and Klosterrath but above all in the reform circle of Salzburg. Other *Consuetudines* played a comparatively modest role, for instance those originating (1115/16) in St. Maria in Porto near Ravenna. These became significant for the reform circle of Regensburg. It is still unknown which *Consuetudines* were followed in the Saxon reform circle of Hamersleben and of Neuwerk near Halle.

Of course, in addition to the *Consuetudines*, letters, treatises and discourses of individual canons regular naturally help us to better understand their ideals and goals. Manegold of Lautenbach (dean in Rottenbuch 1085 – c.1094; first provost of Marbach c.1094 – 1103) occupies a prominent place among the German canons regular even if present research no longer maintains the long cherished opinion that he could have been, so to speak, the father of the school of Laon. Nevertheless he must “be considered as an important figure at the time of the emerging early scholasticism”. Wilfried Hartmann has now published one of Manegold’s principal works, the *Liber contra Wolfelmum*, to which his dissertation had already been devoted. The literary work of Manegold, though, was overshadowed by that of Gerhoch of Reichersberg (provost of Reichersberg 1132-1169). The latter was one of the most eminent representatives of historical symbolism who, since the comprehensive biography of Peter Classen, has taken on clear characteristics. His until now unpublished works were edited by D. and O. van den Eynde and A. Rijmersdal and his *Liber de novitatibus huius temporis* of 1155/56 is now available in the excellent edition of Nikolaus M. Häring.

An anonymous canon regular from Klosterrath has left us an extremely interesting narrative source of a different type, which introduces us directly to the economic, political and legal situation of a reform monastery. This is the *Annales Rodenses*, a mixture of foundation account, book of tradition and monastery chronicle for the years 1104 to 1157. It is preserved in the original and has been recently published in a facsimile edition by P. C. Boeren and G. W. A. Panhuysen. The dating, which was settled on in the introduction of this work, has in the meantime been corrected by F. L. Augustus: for the first part (1104-1153) to c.1155 and for the rest (1154-1157) to c.1180.

Finally, there still remains a glimpse into the area of documentary sources, e.g. charters, books of tradition and property documents. Here primarily, exemplary new editions were drawn up for the Bavarian monasteries of canons regular, by Hardo-Paul Mai for Rohr and by Waldemar Schlögl for Dießen. In addition there will soon be available in this series the charters and traditions of St. Nikola near Passau. Georg

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Johannes Kugler edited the charters for Neustift near Brixen. Unfortunately the postdoctoral thesis of Walter Zöllner, an edition of the charters of Hamersleben, is only available in a typewritten copy.

Let's turn now to a few aspects of research. The most important impetus for research on the German canons regular came from the investigation of Jakob Mois on the reform circle of Rottenbuch. In this work Mois had questions in mind about the actual beginning of the canons regular movement in the German area, their connection with the general reform movement, their position and distinction, compared with the monks, as well as their expansion in the 12th century and he used Rottenbuch as an example to demonstrate this. This was the obvious example since the first effective reform center in the German Empire came into being with the foundation of Rottenbuch in 1073 by Welf IV and Altmann (1065-1091), the Bishop of Passau. The earlier foundations of Altmann around 1071 – the first in Germany, anyway – namely St. Nikola near Passau, St. Florian and St. Pölten, had only a very limited expansion and were, according to Siegfried Haider, intended primarily for diocesan care (a takeover by Archdiaconates?). The work of Mois indicated that from about 1100 the canons regular in the German Empire must have met with an explosive type of diffusion, that definite emphases developed, and that the papacy was able to pursue with them a well-directed policy.

These first beginnings were further pursued since then so that today, in addition to Rottenbuch with its reform circle of 8 monasteries, we also know of the center at Springiersbach with 11 monasteries; the center at the cathedral monastery of Salzburg (reformed in 1121) with 29 monasteries or cathedral houses; the center at Marbach with some 30 monasteries; Hamersleben, founded in 1107, with a type of pre-eminence in the reform circle of Halberstadt with 14 monasteries and four monasteries of Benedictine nuns which were influenced by it. Moreover there were smaller centers such as Neuwerk near Halle, whose influence was effective in the Dioceses of Magdeburg and Naumburg/Zeitz; St. Mang in Stadtamhof as the reform center for the Regensburg group, or Klosterrath, whose importance for the Diocese of Liège still needs further clarification. Furthermore, there are the reform monasteries in Thuringia and in the Dioceses of Passau and Freising. The overview for Lorraine is complicated in this respect, since here influences of St. Ruf (for St. Léon and Chaumouzey), Marbach (for St. Pierremont) and Arrouaise (five monasteries) converge. Independent monasteries (Hérival) existed as well. Altogether we can estimate 16 monasteries. Certainly this area still awaits a basic examination. This is the case even more for Alsace for which the works of Henri Dubled hardly take us anywhere. All in all today we see that from about 1100 into the second half of the 12th century the movement of the canons regular in the German Empire produced with tremendous results at least 150 reform monasteries, for the most part new foundations. This is without taking into account the perhaps equally large number of Premonstratensian monasteries and abbeys. Such numbers give us an idea of the immense dynamism of this reform.

A further step in the research must be to contrast these reform emphases and reform circles with one another. This contrasting is in order to understand their respective characteristics, not only in regard to their rules and *consuetudines*, as

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discussed, but also in their organizational and legal structure (for which the *consuetudines* naturally could likewise give information), and, going even deeper, as to their adaptation to the constitutional and political reality. We see today that the individual reform circles could show the same differentiated relation of the members as that which is known from the reform circle of Cluny (the model?). This is the case, by the way, not only for Germany, but also for the French area. The reform circle of St. Ruf can probably be regarded so to speak as a copy of the Cluniac reform circle. Likewise the reform circle of Marbach shows directly subordinated and legally dependent daughter foundations (= *cellae*, comparable to the priories). In these cases we could speak of an association of reform. It also shows those, which were included because of a relationship of observance. Even Springiersbach was able, if only for a short time, to build up a very strict association, and in the Salzburg reform circle we come across all variants: a strict reform association of monasteries, which were directly subordinate to the bishop or to the cathedral monastery; an observance circle with monasteries, which had received practically their entire convent from the reform center; then an observance circle with monasteries, which had taken over only the form of life; and finally one with monasteries or cathedral monasteries, which were dependent or influenced, and these in turn became centers of their own reform circle.

The trend toward building associations, which this indicated, lays the grounds for the assumption that the canons regular had to gain importance not only as a consequence of their eminent great spread, but also due to their strict organization and discipline. That raises the question about the actual supporters of the reform, the directing powers and leading persons. Mois has already tried to view the Rottenbuch reform as functioning with papal reform purposes. Since Gregory VII, papal reform bases in the German resistance faction were said to be operated through partially exempt reform monasteries that were transferred to the pope. Pope and reform monastery together would have tried to break the episcopal proprietary overlordship. Since the investigations of Bogumil and Weinfurter, we can recognize, however, that this assessment was reached one-sidedly from the point of view of the papal privileges. It did not sufficiently take into consideration the historical component of the region and that it is really applied to a certain degree to the Rottenbuch circle. It then indicates an exception, that is to say, an early phase. The canonical reform in Germany may have been in the main much more an episcopal move – in any case, this holds good absolutely for the two most powerful reform circles of Salzburg and Halberstadt. It was supported by the bishops and subject to their goals. These goals ran: to absorb the lay proprietary monasteries; to secure the episcopal authority through systematic reorganization of the diocese; to expand the episcopal radius of operation through gifts and transference on the side of the nobles (especially the lower!) and of the ministerial officials; to secure the diocesan legal rights and assets through episcopal and papal privilege. Along with this, in the case of reformers such as Bishop Reinhard of Halberstadt (1107-1123), Archbishop Konrad I of Salzburg (1106-1147), Bishop Otto of Freising (1138-1158) or Bishop Kuno of Regensburg (1126-1132), the moral and religious conviction should not and cannot be overlooked. However, at this point in time it must in no way conflict with political interests. An assumption for this episcopal reform policy was the fact that the canons regular, as clerics, in contrast to the monks, were completely integrated into the hierarchy of bishop-priest. Even with the Premonstratensians this was possible in the beginning.

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This could be demonstrated in the Diocese of Magdeburg. The diocesan bishop was as a rule their absolute competent superior. Through their reform enthusiasm, but also discipline, and through their ideals of poverty and their personal lack of possessions, they were without question best suited to work in the service of the diocesan church and episcopal politics. In Salzburg as in Halberstadt they were, whenever possible, assigned to lay proprietary monasteries and entrusted with foundations, which were endowed by the laity and transferred to the bishop. And above all – this is to be stressed, because it made the bishop’s intention obvious – they had to assume monasteries, which had been founded with episcopal and diocesan funds. By means of well-aimed privileges of the bishops in Halberstadt and Salzburg these reform monasteries were then separated off into special properties in the framework of the entire property of the dioceses. Each intervention into the property of these reform monasteries, even that of a successor in office, was meant to be prevented. In so doing, superficially dealt with, nothing further was accomplished than the reform demands of the canons regular. Behind this, however, we recognize a “safeguard policy” of the bishops which is comparable to the policy of separating the cathedral monastery goods in the 10th and 11th centuries in order to hinder a third person from stepping in. We also recognize a breaking up of the episcopal nature of proprietary church, which for one thing was concealed by a sovereignty of the office of the bishops that was increased with the help of the reform. This appeared somewhat in a control of the election of the provost, which was no longer understood in a way that corresponded to proprietary church law. More often than not granting free election of a provost in no way excluded the decisive influence of the bishop. For another thing a type of episcopal protective lordship, which sought to limit the powers of the ecclesial advocate, replaced the proprietary lordship. According to plan legally secured and reliable episcopal bases could be established at politically important places. In addition to the episcopal privilege of protection, the papal privilege appeared in support of it. And, at least in the examples of Halberstadt and Salzburg, this was in harmony with the reform bishops and not in a hard struggle against the episcopal proprietary lords, as Brackmann and Mois have assumed in the case of Salzburg. Within the diocese great shares in the work of pastoral ministry and administration were entrusted to the canons regular. This becomes especially obvious in the transfer of entire archdiaconates to them. The canons regular were a model for the clergy and reliable episcopal co-workers at the same time.

Here we can touch on a dispute, which at least for the German area may be somewhat clarified. Were the canons regular open to pastoral work? The first beginnings of the reform in the 11th century had been completely established in an eremitical way, and even for the German canons regular of the 12th century resentment toward pastoral ministry seems to be tangible. Thus, among others, Charles Dereine and Peter Classen hold a somewhat skeptical position against the taking on of pastoral ministry by the canons regular in the Bavarian-Salzburg area at the time of their beginning. Jakob Mois takes this position as well. Taking a contrary position in this is Josef Schmale who argues for a conscious and distinct striving after the *cura animarum* from the beginning. The contribution of Siegfried Haider confirms this set up for the Altmann reform. The canons under Reinhard of Halberstadt and Konrad I of Salzburg were assuredly quite open to the *cura animarum*. At this point in time the eremitical phase had already been far removed from the coenobitical. If the assignment of the

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Consuetudines, soon to be published by me, to Springiersbach and Klosterrath is accurate, they were ready for ministry there, although at Springiersbach reservations are mentioned. A work on the canons regular of Lorraine and Alsace who took an intermediate position could be informative, since one can still assume with Dereine that the eremitical and anti-pastoral element was much more pronounced among the French canons regular than among the Germans. The German bishops in any case were able, at least in most cases, to assign the canons regular completely to diocesan administration and care.

For this sketch of the initial research of a classification of the reform movement in the field of constitutional law and politics we now have available only the investigations on the Salzburg and Halberstadt reform circles. Thus their results may not yet be generalized. For the Klosterrath circle such an investigation is to be expected shortly. Odilo Engels gives several important references in this direction for the Springiersbach circle. Here it is admittedly less the Bishop of Trier who may prove to be the chief initiator of this close bond of association than the Rhenish Pfalzgraf Wilhelm of Ballenstädt. In general this could accent the fact that the reform of the canons regular in the Lorraine-Trier area and on the lower Rhine was undertaken rather by certain noble families and served their own purposes. Only further research will be able to clarify this. Moreover, it must be emphasized that a reform association could always direct itself against the bishop. Then, if the interests of the bishop didn't coincide, or no longer coincided with those of the canons regular, he no longer observed his position as protector or couldn't observe it or he placed himself against the papacy. In this respect the bishops must also always take into consideration the reform program in order to make use of it for their objective. The Halberstadt reform circle as well as that of Salzburg also fell apart for these reasons. The Halberstadt circle, even under Bishop Otto (1123-1135), went off on its own with its own general chapter that was "independent of the bishop". The Salzburg circle did not outlast the results of the Schism of 1159, which was detrimental to the Diocese of Salzburg.

A point of view still to be singled out is the absolute loyalty of the canons regular to "their" popes. As Franz Josef Schmale emphasized, the success of Innocent II was due precisely to the help of the canons regular and their "quiet detailed work". And since the undertakings of Moiss, Bogumil and Weinfurter, no less an importance could be attributed to them for the schism of 1159. In Germany the Diocese of Salzburg was particularly the most stubborn opponent of Emperor Frederick I and his fight against Alexander III, on whose side the Salzburg canons regular held firm until the absolute threat to their existence. And the canons regular of Halberstadt likewise took this position even against their bishop. It seems that in this field a far-reaching new assessment of the distribution of energy still needs to be made.

Only a few aspects of the more recent research on canons regular could be presented here. I would still like to refer (for the effectiveness of the German canons regular in the areas of the history of ideas, historiography, theology and state theory) to the basic, and in part already mentioned, works of Peter Classen, Erich Meuthen and Damien van den Eynde for Gerhoch of Reichersberg, and the works of Wilfried Hartmann and Horst Fuhrmann for Manegold of Lautenbach. They were the most significant reformers in Germany in this area. On the Premonstratensian side Anselm of Havelberg could still be added here. Research on the reform as a poverty movement is

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only in its initial stages for the German area. Related questions as to origin, position, significance, functioning and spiritual inclusion of the canon regular lay brothers as well as the contribution of the canons regular to care for the poor have not yet been especially treated for the German Empire. Nevertheless we cannot value highly enough the research efforts to this point in time, which are outlined here, considering the fact that the canonical reform of the first half of the 13th century – when after a general decline in the last third of the 12th century, not only in the Salzburg church province, a strong renewal began – was as good as not even noted by research. Only one essay of Gilles Gerard Meersseman is available on this, a drop in the bucket as it were.

Translated by Theodore J. Antry, O. Praem.

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“Neuere Forschung zu den Regularkanonikern im deutschen Reich des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts”,
Historische Zeitschrift 224 (1977) pp. 379-397.

It should be kept in mind that since the writing of this article other studies have been published, among which are: Caroline W. Bynum’s Docere Verbo et Exemplo: an Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality, Harvard Theological Studies XXXI, 1979.