Rules, Constitutions and Statutes of Medieval Religious Communities of Women (except Benedictines) and of Related Communities of Men: Bibliography

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Introduction

This bibliography lists foundational and legislative documents of a variety of medieval communities of women. It is personal, practical, inclusive, and a work in progress.

It is personal in that it has been assembled to facilitate my own research into the liturgical lives of medieval communities of women; rules, constitutions and the like usually include information regarding liturgical practices. However, I hope that it may be of some use to other students of medieval women’s communities as well.

It is practical in that it includes foundational and legislative documents that I personally have been able to obtain. It sets aside studies about women’s communities and their “rules,” and concentrates on the full texts of these documents themselves. In practice this means that they have appeared in printed editions during the last 100-150 years. Some “rules” of medieval women’s communities are readily available in modern printed editions, while others are available in specialized libraries. Some, however, are obscure and difficult to locate. Confusion is possible in some cases because the same title may apply to more than one document.

This work is inclusive in that, where possible, I include documents of communities of men that are related to the women’s communities under consideration. It is often instructive to see if women’s practices were the same as or different than those of men with whom they were closely associated. In addition, documents are included for communities that are known to have had female members but whose documents do not explicitly refer to women.

This work is still in progress, as manuscript and archival materials continue to come to light and are published, as 16-18th century printed collections of documents are reprinted, and as obscure references are located. I am conscious, for example, that this bibliography is particularly thin with respect to documents from individual communities of canonesses.

The Bibliography

For the purposes of this project, “medieval” begins with the Rule of Augustine (ca 400) and concludes with the Constitutions of Teresa of Avila (1566).

It was difficult to find a satisfying way to list the wide variety of communities and documents collected. Here they have been arranged in eleven categories, based on (a) type of religious community, (b) foundational documents of particular significance, and (c) whether the documents name women or do not do so. Documents for communities of women take precedence
over those for men. Documents that name women take precedence over those that do not. Within each category documents have been listed in rough chronological order.

In the literature, rules and constitutions are variously dated according to the actual date of composition or according to the date of approval by ecclesiastical authorities. Sometimes, however, the date when the community in question was actually founded is of particular interest. Here, documents for women are dated only to the century, unless more precise information is included in the title of the document or is required for identification. When a series of documents for individual communities is listed, only the date of the earliest is indicated.

The bibliography includes multiple editions of documents, where these exist. It includes editions in Latin (usually the original language) as well as in Middle English and modern English (where these exist). A few editions in French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Irish are also included. I have not evaluated the quality of individual editions.

A few bibliographies and secondary studies that have been particularly useful are listed at the beginning.

Benedictines have been excluded from this listing because I have already prepared the following bibliographies having to do with women and the Rule of Benedict.

Feminine Versions of the Rule of St. Benedict
Masculine Vernacular Versions of the Rule of St. Benedict
Women and the Rule of St. Benedict: Miscellaneous Documents

All may be found at www.compusmart.ab.ca/fhenders, under “Medieval Women’s Religious Rules.”

In addition, the website, Feminine Versions of the Rule of St. Benedict (www.osb.org/aba/rb/feminine) contains complete texts of a number of such feminine versions.

I am grateful to the staff of the University of Alberta Interlibrary Loan Document Delivery section for all their efforts to obtain materials from near and far.

**Foundational and Legislative Documents**

It must be emphasized that some communities of women did not feel a need for rules, constitutions, statutes or the like. In addition, some such documents have simply not survived. The present work, then, considers only a fraction of the religious communities that women established during the medieval period.
Medieval communities of women might use a variety of documents to express their self-understanding as a community, to enunciate basic principles governing their mode of life, and to set out rules that directed the details of their daily living.

Some documents were foundational and emphasized basic principles; these were not so much legal in nature but “forms of life,” a type of spiritual and wisdom literature. Others interpreted and implemented the fundamental principles; some included more than one type of material.

Some documents applied to a single local community; others to regional groupings of similar communities; still others to entire religious orders – or to the female members of orders.

These documents had a variety of names; most commonly they were called rules, constitutions, statutes, ordinances, and customaries. Here I use the term “documents” to include them all.

Both then and now, the term “rule” was and is used in (at least) three ways; this sometimes leads to confusion. In one usage, “Rule” designates the most foundational document in the lives of religious communities (e.g., Rule of Benedict, Rule of Augustine). Rules are often supplemented by other documents (constitutions, statutes) that interpret, adapt and extend the provisions of the Rule.

In another usage, “rule” refers to the constitutions of a community. These may be more important than the Rule on a day to day basis, and may be what distinguishes one community from another if they both use the same Rule.

Finally, “rule” may be used for all or various combinations of these documents.

In titles of documents listed here I use whatever usage of Rule/rule that is found in the sources. Otherwise I use Rule to designate a foundational document, and rule or “rule” to designate collections of documents used by a community. Whenever possible I try to be precise in using the term “constitutions” and the like.

The relationship that exists between a Rule and a set of constitutions may vary from one community to another. First, there are communities in which the Rule alone is considered to be sufficient and there are no constitutions.

In other cases the Rule alone was sufficient in the early stages of the community’s life, but constitutions were later added to record interpretations that were thought to be important. In time such constitutions might distinguish one “branch” or expression or an order from another, or one order from another when they both followed the same Rule.

Another situation existed when a community’s Rule contained basic principles but few directions for the details of daily living. Constitutions were therefore necessary and important
almost from the beginning, and in many ways they became the more important document. Because of their significance they might be referred to as the “rule”; the actual Rule faded into the background.

**Women’s Communities and Men’s Communities**

The relationships of medieval communities of women to communities of men were also diverse and complex. The following are but a few examples.

First, a woman’s community might have no special relationship with any community of men. Secular canonesses, for example, were quite independent; they were not connected in any institutional way to communities of canons (though individual canons might provide liturgical ministry to the canonesses).

Other communities might have both female and male members, though they lived in separate houses with separate leaders/authorities. They were not divided into male and female “branches,” however. The same Rule and constitutions were used by both women and men. These documents might be written using generic masculine forms and women might not be explicitly referred to at all.

A third example is communities that were divided into “first orders” of men, “second orders” of women, and “third orders” for women and men together (secular and regular tertiaries). They shared a common foundational document, but had separate constitutions.

Fourth, women and men might follow separate Rules/rules, though these may be related. The two groups may be linked by the charism of a founder and/or foundress (e.g., Clare and Francis), and governance of the women’s communities might be controlled by the men.

In addition, there were “mixed” communities of women and men, sometimes with a single leader/authority. In some cases the women were central; in others cases the men. In some cases the women and men might use different Rules (Benedict, Augustine) and have separate constitutions as well, though the latter might be written with both in mind. In other cases they followed the same Rule but had separate constitutions.

In any case, it is important not to read back into the medieval period the centralized and highly regulated organization of religious orders of the last four centuries.
Principal Sources, Bibliographies and Secondary Studies

Principal Sources:


Bibliographies:


Secondary Studies:


Monastic Communities of Women
and Mixed Monastic Communities, 5-8th c.

Rules of Augustine [late 4th - early 5th c]

Note: The term Regula Augustini or Rule of Augustine has been applied to each of the following three distinct works, to all three together, or to various combinations of these texts. It is for this reason that the plural “Rules” is used here.

The Ordo monasterii (Regulations for a Monastery). This formerly was called the Regula seconda. Incipit Ante omnia.

The Praeceptum (Rule). This formerly was called the Regula tertia. Incipit: Haec sunt quae.

The Obiurgatio (Reprimand to Quarrelling Nuns) (Letter 211, cc.1-4), written by Augustine and addressed to a community of nuns. Incipit: Sicut parata est.

Both the Ordo monasterii and the Praeceptum exist in grammatically masculine and grammatically feminine versions. The incipit of the feminine version of the Ordo monasterii is sometimes Primum igitur. The feminine version of the Praeceptum or Rule is also called the Regularis informatio with the incipit Haec sunt quae.

To these must be added what is termed the Regula Recepta: the Later Version of the Rule. This is the Rule (Praeceptum) preceded by the first sentence of the Regulations for a Monastery (Ordo monasterii); the remaining portions of the latter document were eventually suppressed. The designation Regula tertia often really refers to this Regula Recepta rather than to the “pure” Praeceptum.

On these matters see especially Forman and Sullivan, above; Lawless, below; and Dickinson, below.

Rules of Augustine for Women

“Regulam Sanctimonialis,” [= Obiurgatio, Sicut parata est], in Codex Regularum, I, 348-349.


“Regula,” [= Praeceptum or Regularis informatio, Haec sunt quae], in *Codex Regularum*, I, 349-352.


“La regola di Santo Agostino in volgare, lasciandone certi Capitoli non necessarii alle suore, trasmutato il nome di frate in suora,” in *Antologia Agostiniana*, vol. 3. Roma: Scuole Tipografica Salesiana, 1901, pp. 132-141. [Italian version for women, ca. 1330.]


**Rules of Augustine for Men**

“Regula secunda,” [= Ordo monasterii, Ante omnia], in *Codex Regularum*, II, 122-123.


“Regula Augustini” [= Praeceptum in its Textus Receptus version], in *Patrologia latina* 32:1377-1384.


*Other editions:*


**Rule of Caesarius for Women** [6th c]


**Rule of Caesarius for Men**

“Regula ad monachos,” in *Codex Regularum* I, 145-147; *Patrologia latina* 67:1099-1104.
Rule of Walderbert for Women [6th c]


“Regula cuiusdam Patris ad virgines,” in Patrologia latina 88:1053-1070.


Rule of Aurelian for Women [6th c]

“Regula ad virgines,” in Codex Regularum, I, 370-374; Patrologia latina, 68:399-406.

Rule of Aurelian for Men:


Rule of Leander for Women [6th c]


“Psallendo pro Sancto Devotio” [fragment, 7th c]

Rule of Donatus for Women [7th c]


Rule of Columbanus for Women [fragment, 7th c]


Rules of Columbanus for Men

[See Forman and Sullivan for the following analysis.]

“Regula monachorum,”
   in *Codex Regularum*, I, 174-174 [under the title Regula coenobialis];
   in *Patrologia latina* 80:209-216 [under the title Regula coenobialis, chapters 1-9];

“Regula coenobialis,”
   in *Codex Regularum*, II, 174-179 [under the title Poenitentialis];
   in *Patrologia latina*, 80:216-224 [under the title Regula coenobialis, chapter 10: De diversitate culparum];

Rule of Fructuosus for Women, Men and Families [7th c]

“Regula Monastica Communis,” in *Codex Regularum*, I, 208-219; *Patrologia latina* 87: 1109-1130.

**Rule of Fructuosus for Men**

“Regula Monachorum Complutensis,” in *Codex Regularum*, I, 201-207.

“Regula Monachorum,” in *Patrologia latina* 87: 1099-1110.


**Rule of the Celi De for Men and Women [9th c]**


[Section 41 of the Rule of Tallaght, below, refers to a Celi De community that includes women as well as men.]

**Customs of Tallaght for Men and Women [9th c]**

Irish Rules for Men


Joseph O Neill, “The Rule of Ailbe of Emly,” in Eriu 3 (1907) 92-115. [In Irish and English.]


John Stachan, “Cormac’s Rule,” in Eriu 2 (1905) 62-65. [In Irish and English.]


Mac Eclaise [pseudonym], “The Rule of St. Carthage,” in Irish Ecclesiastical Record (1910) 495-517. [Also referred to as the Rule of Mo-chuta or of Fothad. In Irish and English.]


**Communities of Canonesses, 9-12th c**

**Institutes for Canonesses** [9th c]


“De Institutione Sanctimonialium,” in *Patrologia latina* 105:935-976.

**Rules for Canons**


“De Institutione Canonicularum,” in *Patrologia latina* 105:818-934.

“Regula Canonicularum Regularium,” in *Codex Regularum*, II, 109-120.

**Communities of Women and Mixed Communities for Which the Rule of Benedict Was Foundational**

**Cistercians** [late 11th - early 12th c]

**Feminine Version of the Cistercian Customary**


**Cistercian Men**


“Regula Conversorum Ordinis Cisterciensis,” in *Codex Regularum*, II, 426-428.


**Fontevraud / Fontevrault [12th c]**

“Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi,” in *Patrologia latina* 162:1079-1082. [44 precepts for women]


“Vetusta Statuta,” in *Patrologia latina* 162:1083-1085. [7 precepts for women]

“Haec autem presbyteriis...” in *Patrologia latina* 162:1085. [7 precepts for men]

“Haec vero statuta,” in *Patrologia latina* 162:1085-1086. [8 precepts for men]

[The basic Rule was that of Benedict. In some cases the published “precepts” are little more than chapter titles. For this analysis, see Berenice M. Kerr, *Religious Life for Women c. 1100 - c. 1350: Fontevraud in England*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999. pp 7-10

**Gilbertines [12th c]**

“Regulae Ordinis Sempringensis sive Gilbertinorum Canoniciorum,” in *Codex Regularum*, I, 467-536. [The entire constitutions; individual sections below]

“Capitula generalia...”, in *Codex Regularum*, I, 467-481. [Women and men]

“De Canoniciis et Novitiis...” in *Codex Regularum*, I, 482-515. [Men]

“Institutiones ad Moniales Ordinis Pertinentes,” in *Codex Regularum*, II, 515-531. [Women]
“Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus,” in *Codex Regularum* II, 532-534. [Women]

“Capitula de Monialibus et Sororibus infirmis,” in *Codex Regularum* II, 534-536. [Women and men]


[Note: The basic Rule of Gilbertine women was that of St. Benedict.]

**Rule of Abelard for Women** [12th c]


[Note: Although Abelard was attempting to replace the Rule of Benedict, the latter was the starting place for his work and the Rule actually in use at The Paraclete.]

**Statutes for The Paraclete** [12th c]


[Note: The basic Rule for The Paraclete was that of St. Benedict.]

**Humiliati** [13th c]

Celestines [13th c]

“Constitutionum Monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti Congregacionis Coelestinorum,” in *Codex Regularum*, IV, 497-596. [Chapter 13 (pp. 515-516) is entitled De Monialibus]

Communities (Rule of Benedict) Which Are Known to Have Had Female Members but Whose Documents Do Not Explicitly Refer to Women

Vallombrosans [11th c]


Camoldolese [11th c]


Sylvestrines [13th c]


Olivetans [14th c]

“Constitutiones Monachorum Benedictinorum, Congregationis Montis Oliveti,” in *Codex Regularum*, V, 18-118.

Female Anchorites, Recluses and Hermits

Rule of Aelred for Anchoresses [12th c]

“De vita eremetica, ad sororem liber,” in *Patrologia latina* 32:1451-1474.

C. Horstmann, “Informacio Aldredi Abbatis Monasterij de Rieualde ad Sororem Suam Inclusam Translata de Latino in Anglicum per Thomam N., in *Englische Studien* 7 (1884) 304-344. [Middle English and Latin.]


**Rule of Simon of Ghent** [excerpt, 13th c]


**Ancrene Riwle for Anchoresses** [13th c]


Rules for Men


Communities of Women and Mixed Communities for Which the Rule of Augustine Was Foundational

**Praemonstratensians** [12th c]


Part IV, chapter 11: De receptis sororibus (pp 112-114).
Part IV, chapter 12: De non recipiendis sororibus (pp 114-115).

“Statuta Candidi & Canonici Ordinis Praemonstratensis,” in *Codex Regularum*, V, 191-330. [This late version does not refer to women.]

**Dominicans** [13th c]

“Constitutiones Sororum Ordinis Praedicatorum,” in *Codex Regularum*, IV, 128-140.


Dominican Tertiaries [13th c]

“Regula, seu formae vel modi vivendi, Fratrum et Sororum de Militia Jesu Christi, de Paenitentia Beati Dominici,” in Codex Regularum, IV, 143-149.

Dominican Men

“Constitutiones Fratrum Praedicatorum,” in Codex Regularum, IV, 10-128.

“Liber de Instructione Officialium Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, in Codex Regularum IV, 150-197.

“Tractatus de Judiciis,” in Codex Regularum, IV, 198-204.


“Constitutiones Antique Ordinis Fratrum Predicatorum,” in A. H. Thomas, ed., De Oudste


Mercedarians [13th c]


“Constitutiones Fratrum sacri et regalis Ordinis B. V. Mariae de Mercede Redemptionis Captivorum” (1218), in Codex Regularum, III, 439-568.

Chapter 9 (pp 485-486) is entitled “De Monialibus”

Hermit Nuns of St. Augustine [Order of Saint Augustine, 13th c]


“Le Constitutioni recate in volgare per le Donne, e Monache di Santa Elisabetta della convertite di Firenze in via Chiara dell’ ordine di santo Agostino,” in Antologia Agostiniana, vol. 3. Rome: Scuola Tipografica Salesiana, 1901, pp. 142-163. [In Italian, for women.]

“Las Constitutiones de la Horden de los Frayres Hermitanos de Sant Augustin,” in Ignacio Aramburu Cendoya, Las primitivas Constituciones de los Agustinos (Ratisbonenses del ano 1290). Valladolid: Archivo Agustiniano, 1966, pp 163-188. [In Spanish, for women.]
Modern Devotion [14th c]

Sisters of the Common Life


Windesheim Sisters


Brothers of the Common Life


Bridgettines [14th c]


James Hogg, ed., The Rewyll of Seynt Saviour and Other Middle English Brigittine Legislative


Communities (Rule of Augustine)
Which Are Known to Have Had Female Members but Whose Documents Do Not Explicitly Refer to Women

Canons Regular [Peter de Honestis, 12th c]]
“Regula S. Petri de Honestis pro Canonicis Regularibus Ecclesiae Portuensis scripta,” in Codex Regularum, II, 139-175.

Trinitarians [12th-13th c]
“Regula Ordinis SSS Trinitatis seu Redemptionis Captivorum,” in Codex Regularum, III, 3-11.

Canons Regular [S. Jacobi di Monti, 13th c]

Order of St. Jerome in Spain [14th c]
Communities of Women Associated with or Inspired by Clare or Francis


**Rules for Clare** [13th c]


**Rule of Clare** [The Rule of 1253]


“Prima Regula Sanctimonialium S. Clarae a Beato Francisco pro eisdem conscripta,” in *Codex Regularum*, III, 34-38.


**Rule for Clarisses** [Rule of Urban IV, 1263]


**Rule for Minoresses** [Rule of Isabella, 13th c]


**Constitutions of Colette** [15th c]


“Minighthe & Ordaighthe do rinedh ar riaghail ar mathar naomhtha S. Clare” [1622], pp. 52-128 [even pages], in Eleanor Knott, “An Irish Seventeenth-Century Translation of the Rule of St. Clare,” *Eriu* 15 (1948) 1-187. [In Irish]
Franciscan Tertiaries [13th c]

“Regula Tertiariaorum, sive Fratrum de Poenitentia,” in *Codex Regularum*, III, 39-42.


Franciscan Men:


“Seconda Regula, B. Patris Francisci pro Fratribus Minoribus,” in *Codex Regularum*, III, 30-33.


“This is the reule of seynt fraunseis,” in *The English Works of Wyclif*, ed. F. D. Matthew. Early English Text Society. Original Series 74, 1880, pp 40-45. [Middle English]


**Rule of St. Francis of Paola for Women** [15th c]

“Regula Sororum Ord. Minimorum S. Francisci de Paola,” in *Codex Regularum*, III, 91-95.

**Rule of St. Francis of Paola for Tertiaries** [15th c]

“Regula Utriusque Sexus Fidelium Ordinis Minimorum St. Francisci de Paula,” in *Codex Regularum*, III, 96-100.

**Rule for Men**

“Regula Ordinis Fratrum Minimorum St. Francisci de Paula,” in *Codex Regularum*, III, 84-90.

**Third Order Franciscan Hospitallers (Soeurs Grises)** [15th c]

“(Statuts des religeuses du Tiers Ordre de St. Francois, dites Soeurs grises hospitalieres...” pp


Other Communities of Women  
or Other Communities with Female Members

**Carthusians** [12th c]


**Grandmont** [12th c]


**Carmelites** [13th c]


**Repentant Communities [14th c]**


“La regle des Penitentes de Sainte Marie-Madeleine, d’apres le manuscrit de Saint-Quirin de Huy,” *Academie royale de Belgique. Bulletin de la Commission royale d’histoire* 121 (1956) 85-
145. Regle, 102-120; Instituciones, 120-145.

**Beguines** [14\(^{th}\) c]


**Ursulines (Angela Merici)** [16\(^{th}\) c]


**Hospital and Hospitaller Communities with Female Members**

**St. John of Jerusalem** [12\(^{th}\) c]


**Sigena** [12\(^{th}\) c]


**Order of the Holy Spirit “in Saxia”** [13\(^{th}\) c]

“Regula Ordinis S. Spiritus in Saxia” (1204), in *Codex Regularum*, V, 503-518; *Patrologia latina*, 217:1137-1156.  
“Sisters” are referred to frequently.

**Hotels-Dieu and Leproseries** [12\(^{th}\) c]


“Statuts de l’Hopital Saint-Jean de Jerusalem” [only men are mentioned], 7-15.

“Statuts de l’Hopital d’Aubrac” [1162, women and men], 16-21.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu d’Angers” [1200-1210, women and men], 21-33.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu de Montdidier et de l’Hotel-Dieu d’Amiens” [1207-1233, women and men], 34-42.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu de Paris” [1220, women and men], 43-53.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu Saint-Julien de Cambrai” [1220, women and men], 53-56.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu de Coeffort, au Mans” [1231-1234, women and men], 57-60.

“Statuts de l’Hopital Comtesse, a Lille” [1250, women and men], 61-96.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu Notre-Dame, au Puy” [1249, women and men], 96-100.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu-le-comte, a Troyes” [1263, women and men], 101-119.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu de Saint-Pol” [1265, women and men], 119-127.
“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu de Pontoise” [1265, women and men], 128-151.

“Statuts de l’Hotel-Dieu de Vernon” [1265-1270, women only], 151-179.

“Statuts de la Leproserie Saint-Lazare de Montpellier” [ca. 1150, women and men], 181-183.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Meaux” [ca. 1190, men only (?)], 184-190.

“Reglement de la Leproserie de Chateaudun” [1205, men only (?)], 191-193.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Noyon” [ca. 1250, women and men], 194-199.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Lille” [1239, women and men], 199-203.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Lisieux” [1256, women and men], 203-205.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Brives, pres le Puy-en-Velay” [1259, men only (?)], 206-214.

“Statuts de la Leproserie du Grand-Beaulieu de Chartres” [1264, women and men], 214-223.

“Statuts de la Leproserie d’Amiens” [1305, women and men], 224-230.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Pontoise” [1335, women and men], 230-237.

“Statuts de la Leproserie de Lecheres” [1336, women and men], 238-239.

“Statuts de la Leprosrie Saint-Lazare de Paris” [1349, women and men], 240-246.

“Statuts de la Leproserie des Andelys” [1380, women and men], 246-251.

Military Orders
Which Are Known to Have Had Female Members
but Whose Documents Do Not Explicitly Refer to Women

**Templars** [12th c]


**Teutonic Order** [12th c]


**Order of Santiago** [12th c]


**Order of St James** [12th c]