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Abstract: “Bernard Ayglier and William of Pagula: Two Approaches to Monastic Law”

The paper examines the role of canon law in two monastic works, the *Speculum monachorum* (*SM*) (1272x74) of Bernard Ayglier (d.1282), abbot of Montecassino, and the *Speculum religiosorum* (*SR*) (c.1322) of William of Pagula, a canonist and secular priest (d.1332). Both works are both manuals of practical religious instruction, that is, large works that provide a comprehensive guide to the religious life for those who lacked the education to handle advanced theological and contemplative works. There is little secondary scholarship on the *SM* or the *SR*. The paper uses canon law in the narrow sense of the *Corpus iuris canonici* (Gratian’s *Decretum*, the *Liber extra*, the *Liber Sextus*, and the *Clementines*), although it refers occasionally to English provincial and legatine legislation.

The paper argues that the *SM* and *SR*, despite quite different approaches to canon law, read it in ways that are closer to monastic paradigms for meditating on the Bible, the Fathers and devotional material than to scholastic or professional readings of law. The conclusion that canon law could be read in a devotional mode is intended to supplement two prevalent interpretations in scholarship on late medieval law and monasticism. One interpretation looks at canon law under the rubric of monks as students in the schools and universities, and the subsequent careers of these students as administrators. (Clark, 2011; Dobson, 1973; Gilles, 1960) The other interpretation has grown out of the recent interest in normative monastic texts, and has concentrated on the relationship between the universal law of the Church and the customs of different monastic communities. (Boureau, 2001; Caby, 2009; Melville, 2001) It emphasizes the tension between the demands for centralized, universal and codified standards, and the desire of monks to preserve local practices. In both interpretations, canon law appears as an autonomous field of professional endeavor, whose goal was the successful administration of the Church by competent officials.

Bernard Ayglier claims that he “gathered various relevant passages from sacred scripture, canon law, and the *doctores*,” (ed. Walther, 57), but he quotes Gratian by name only twice, both times referring to *dicta Gratiani*, and mentions canon law explicitly on only one other occasion, in a discussion of monastic simony. It can be shown, however, that the *Decretum* is a silent source for many patristic quotations throughout the *SM* (e.g. seven out of nine citations of Jerome). The paper argues that Bernard treats the *Decretum* as a patristic florilegium, and makes no clear distinction between patristic and Bible citations in general, and those that had been formally recognized as part of the *ius commune*. The use of the florilegium as a source of patristic learning was a standard part of monastic meditative reading.

William of Pagula’s *SR* includes a corpus of papal monastic law, a genre that the paper traces back Pope Gregory IX’s statutes for the Black Monks in 1235. William clearly differentiates law from other normative sources, and provides careful references to canons and legal commentaries using the standard system of academic citation. His work is not an academic commentary, but an authoritative synthesis that abbreviates or paraphrases canons, and incorporates excerpts from canonists. The *SR* is a work of religious formation and devotion, and modern readers likely find the inclusion of a legal corpus jarring. The paper argues that the overarching motifs of acquiring wisdom ties the diverse material in the *SR* together. It suggests, drawing on Robert Sweetman’s concept of performative reading, that William of Pagula intended his audience to read the legal corpus in a meditative, devotional mode, rather than an academic or administrative one.

(Sweetman, 1999)

The paper concludes by stating that it seeks to supplement other approaches to monastic law, not replace them. Canon law could be important to late medieval monasteries in their roles as large corporate landowners, as centres of learning, and as places dedicated to holiness.

Scholars need to remember the importance of law in medieval religion, and the sacrality of canon law.

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