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### Carthusians

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#### Carthusians.

Monastic order, for which Bruno of Cologne (c1030–1101) laid the foundations in 1084. With a small group of companions, he left Reims for Grenoble, and, assisted by Bishop St Hugh (1053–1132), found a suitable place high in the French Alps to lead the life of a hermit in a semi-cenobitical setting. Not having intended to found a religious order, Bruno did not leave a Rule himself. Guigo (1083–1136), the fifth prior of the Chartreuse, compiled the *Consuetudines Cartusiae* (1121–7); together with subsequent rulings of General Chapters they came to form the *Statuta antiqua* (1271), the *Statuta nova* (1368), the *Tertio compilatio* (1509), the *Nova collectio* (1582), the *Statuta renovata* (1971), and the *Statuta Ordinis Cartusiensis* (1991). The first General Chapter (1140/41) formulated an aim for liturgical uniformity, and after a period of development the liturgy was codified in 1259, remaining more or less stable until the end of the sixteenth century.

During that period, the Carthusian order grew significantly throughout Europe, with between thirty and fifty new foundations each century, and a particularly striking number of 106 new foundations in the fourteenth century. In England, the first Charterhouse was founded at Witham in 1175–6 by St Hugh of Lincoln. Nuns were affiliated in the order in the mid-thirteenth century under a somewhat milder rule. From the sixteenth century onwards, the order's growth diminished, and suffered seriously during the Reformation: 39 charterhouses were suppressed and several nunneries were plundered. In England, Carthusians were the first religious adherents to be put to death by Henry VIII. At the end of the eighteenth century (already marked by a lack of new foundations), disaster struck, as numerous charterhouses were suppressed by Emperor Joseph II, and even more were closed down in France during the Revolution. The Grande Chartreuse was eventually reopened in 1816, followed by a revival of the order in France and Italy. In 1901, however, French Carthusians were once again expelled, only returning to the Grande Chartreuse in 1940. The Carthusians were re-established in England in 1883, at Parkminster in West-Sussex (Hogg 2014).

Carthusian monks spend as much time as possible in their cell, where they pray, study, work, eat, and sleep. In the early days of the order, they left the solitude of their cell only twice on weekdays, to celebrate Matins and Lauds (celebrated consecutively) and Vespers together in church: the little hours of the Office were recited alone. Mass was celebrated only on Sundays and feast days. On those days, communal life is emphasized: all offices are celebrated in church (excepting Compline), and dinner is enjoyed together. The Carthusian lifestyle has fundamentally shaped their music and liturgy, which are characterized by simplicity and reduction. The general principles are succinctly formulated in a prologue found in two antiphonaries, possibly written by Guigo (Becker 1971, pp.183–97; Anon. [Gaillard] 1995, 'L'office choral').

The Carthusian antiphony has generated the most scholarly attention. While most responsories belong either to the Western mainstream or local traditions in Southern France (24 chants being unique to the Carthusians [Becker 1971, p.105]), it is especially the arrangement of the antiphony that has provided the key to the early history of Carthusian liturgy. Because the gradual shows similarities to Cluny, Grenoble, and Lyon, it was thought that the antiphony had similar influences; in addition, it was assumed that the Carthusian enterprise was from the outset a monastic one, employing a monastic Office. Through analysis of the series of responsories for Matins and the whole corpus of antiphons, Becker (1971, 1975) undermined both assumptions while offering a plausible alternative narrative. When leaving for Grenoble, Bruno and his companions must have taken essential liturgical books with them. All of them being canons, not monks, they presumably continued celebrating the Roman (secular) Office, with nine lessons and responsories for Matins, as many eremitically inspired groups did in the 11th and 12th centuries. Soon, however, the Carthusians adapted the antiphony, excising large parts, and fashioning a strictly biblical arrangement of Matins responsories. For unknown reasons, in the years after 1100, this adapted secular Office was transformed to a monastic one, with twelve lessons and responsories for Matins, breaching the existing arrangement. In the following decades, the remaining liturgical books were compiled or adapted. When Guigo I wrote his *Consuetudines*, the monastic Office had been in place for almost three decades, which explains his silence about the liturgical prehistory.

The idiosyncrasy of the Carthusian antiphonary and other chant books is especially the result of the principle (probably inspired by Agobard of Lyon, c775–840) of including only chants based on biblical texts (though retaining, among others, the Gaudeamus introits and the great O Antiphons). Notably, it seems that at first hymns were completely excluded from the Office. Four Ambrosian hymns are mentioned in 1143, with the corpus growing only slightly thereafter (Pollice 1996). The plainchant repertory was further restricted by the use of a very small Kyriale, the reduction of the corpus of alleluias to about 60, and the omission of offertory verses. Even major liturgical services such as those from Holy Week were shortened, and processions were not allowed.

In contrast to the Cistercians' reforms, however, the Carthusians' editorial activity did not extend to the Gregorian melodies: these were generally preserved intact (though the Carthusians did not have an exemplar as the Dominicans had; see Devaux 1995, pp.228–32). In their earliest surviving liturgical manuscripts the Carthusians adopted Aquitanian notation, with a multiplicity of vertical bars added through the staves (Lambres 1970, pp.26–9; Devaux 2008, pp.19–22). Recent research has shown that the Carthusians may have made an important contribution to the development of the musical staff (Haines 2008).

In the centuries following the compilation of their liturgical books, the modest character of the plainchant repertory was carefully guarded, initially by keeping the calendar's growth in check. The Carthusian calendar was initially about half the size of those from Cluny and Citeaux and grew slowly, mainly because local saints and feasts requiring a Mass were largely avoided (Moustier & Hourlier 1957). In spite of this restraint, the order prescribed a daily Mass in 1200, and from 1337 priest monks had to celebrate daily private Masses as well (Stoelen 1946). Musically speaking, however, not much changed, as the Carthusians made greater use of common rather than proper chants for new feasts, while novelties from the later Middle Ages such as tropes and sequences were ignored.

The Carthusian Order of Mass was clearly related to that of Cluny and the Cistercians. Its idiosyncrasy was mainly the result of ignoring major developments in the West, up to and including the Tridentine Mass of 1570. The Carthusians retained a small number of priestly prayers, especially at the opening and close of Mass. Available prefaces were kept at a minimum, and the Last Gospel was never introduced. Only a deacon assisted the celebrant, and candles and incense were used with moderation (Tiroit 1981; Cluzet 1994; Devaux 1995).

Carthusian musical practice was unsurprisingly plain, and remained so over the centuries. All musical instruments were banned and there was no schola, let alone polyphony. The Credo and Gloria were not sung responsorially, and Gradual and Alleluia verses were sung by all. Interestingly, the *Consuetudines* allowed time for preparation, and the monks practiced the readings and perhaps also chants after None on the day before Sundays and feast days (Lambres 1970, pp.32–3; Anon. 1995, 'La récordation').

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See also: [PLAINCHANT, §7\(II\)\(A\): CARTHUSIANS](#).

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