

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

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The formation of the constitutions of the OSCO (1967–1990) (Dom Armand Veilleux)

□□The Constitutions of a religious order are not simply a juridical text regulating its internal functions and its relations with the institutional Church. They are a text in which an order expresses its perception of its spiritual identity and mission. In approving them, the Holy See acknowledges in an ecclesial way the form of Christian life lived within this order or institute. The process of the formation of such a text is perhaps as important as the text itself. The way that our order developed its Constitutions from 1965 to 1990 is an exceptional case of the participation of the entire membership of an order in the development of a text expressing its own charism. It will be worth the trouble to recount this history, and, to highlight the particular characteristics of this undertaking, it will be useful to say a few words about its prehistory.

8.5.1. The Constitutions between 1893 and 1925

At the time of the “Chapter of union” of 1892, the three principal congregations issuing from la Trappe decided not only to unite in one body, but also to constitute themselves into an autonomous monastic order. It was decided at the same time immediately to draw up Constitutions. These were finalized the next year, at the Chapter of 1893, held at Sept-fons, and approved by the Holy See on August 25, 1894. The outline of these Constitutions is very revealing of the ecclesiology of the time. A first section deals with the government of the order—the General Chapter, abbot General, definitors, procurator General, fathers immediate, abbots or titular priors, etc. The second section deals with observances, and finally the third section with entry into the order. Our Constitutions of 1990 reversed this pyramid, much as Vatican II had done in the constitution *Lumen Gentium* for the Church. This decision by the capitulants of 1892 to finalize the Constitutions immediately was of utmost importance for the subsequent evolution of the order. These Constitutions gave a clear and strong sense of identity to the order, an identity which helped it pass without too much difficulty through the challenge of two world wars, and allowed it to launch, with tremendous energy, into a vast program of foundations to the four corners of the earth. This clear identity also allowed the order to transform itself, from an essentially European, and predominantly French, order to an international and multicultural order without losing its spiritual identity. After the publication of the Code of Canon Law in 1917, our order immediately began the task of revising its Constitutions. This new version, prepared at the General Chapters meeting at Cîteaux in

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1920 and 1921—the first General Chapters after world war i—was approved by the holy See in 1924. as for the Constitu-tions of the nuns, which had not been affected by the union of the Congregations in 1892, they were also reviewed after the publication of the Code of Canon law and received the approval of Rome in 1926.