Virtuosos of Faith

Monks, Nuns, Canons, and Friars
as Elites of Medieval Culture

edited by

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Assumptions, Potential and Reinterpretation

Eva Schlotheuber

At first glance, it is not difficult to describe religious women as an elite within medieval society. When we consider figures such as the abbesses Hrostvit of Gandersheim, Mathilda of Quedlinburg or Hildegard of Bingen, it is quite clear that they were powerful role models. Through their education, ancestry and social authority, they stand before us as representatives of an elite who established standards not only in their own time, but also for long afterwards.[1] Nevertheless, if we look beyond the charismatic gifts of individual women and their authority to speak based on claims of divine grace, and we consider the place of women religious as a group in medieval society, the answer to this question becomes more complicated.[2] How can we define and explain the collective status of this elite, or the exemplary quality of the *mulieres religiosae*, in practice?

The clergy were the foremost of the three orders, the *laboratores, bellatores,* and *oratores,* which, since the High Middle Ages, had been recognised as the ideal ordering of society.[3] It granted them a privileged position within society. Indeed, monks and secular clerics functioned as members of the *oratores* primarily by virtue of their preaching and authority as teachers. But these roles were

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1   I. CRUSIUS, Im Dienst der Königsherrschaft: Königinnen, Königswitwen und Prinzessinnen als Stifterinnen und Äbtissinnen von Frauenklöstern und -stiften, in: E. SCHLOTHEUBER / H. FLACHENECKER et al. (eds.), Nonnen, Kanonissen und Mystikerinnen: Religiöse Frauengemeinschaften in Süddeutschland (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 99), Leiden/Boston 2008, pp. 59-77; B. MAYNE KIENZLE/ D. L. STOUDT/ G. FERZOCO (eds.), A Companion to Hildegard von Bingen, Leiden 2014.

2   E. SCHLOTHEUBER, Hildegard von Bingen und die konkurrierenden spirituellen Lebensentwürfe der ‚mulieres religiosae' im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert, in: R. BERNDT/ M. ZATONYI, Unversehrt und unverletzt: Hildegards von Bingen Menschenbild und Kirchenverständnis heute (Eruditi Sapientia 12), Münster 2015, pp. 323-367.

3   O.G. OEXLE, Deutungsschemata der sozialen Wirklichkeit im Mittelalter, in: O.G. OEXLE / B. JUSSEN / A. VON HÜLSEN-ESCH et al. (eds.), Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen: Mittelalterforschung, historische Kulturwissenschaft, Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Erkenntnis, Göttingen 2011, S. 340-401; N. M FRYDE / P. MONNET / O. G. OEXLE et al. (eds.), Die Deutung der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft in der Moderne = L'imaginaire et les conceptions modernes de la société médiévale = Modern conceptions of medieval society, Göttingen 2006.

prohibited for religious women. Their social, economic and religious activities were further restricted, since as a rule they lived – or were expected to live – in strict enclosure.[4] To what extent was the superior status of religious women due to individual charismatic gifts? Or did they as a group hold a prominent position within broader sacral and secular social structures? And if so, why? Did their role and duties in fact differ significantly from those of male religious, or were nuns considered as more or less the same, only subordinated because of the limitations attributed to the female sex? Within this context I can only touch on these complex questions very briefly here, and will therefore concentrate on three aspects: (1.) The social status and function of women's religious communities within medieval society; (2.) The theological foundations of the spiritual role of religious women; and (3.) The transformation, or rather, the creative appropriations of the ideal of the *sponsa Christi* among Poor Clares and Dominican nuns.

I. The social status and function of women's religious communities within medieval society

The origins of familial dynastic expansion in the European Middle Ages were frequently tied to the foundation of women's monasteries.[5] We need only think of Chelles, near Paris, founded by the Merovingian queen Chlothilde, or Nivelles, the cradle of the Carolingians, or Gandersheim, the family foundation of the Ottonians.[6] These examples illustrate the great political, social and spiritual significance of female communities for familial self-perception, as well as

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4   F. J. GRIFFITHS / J. HOTCHIN (eds.), Partners in Spirit: Women, Men, and Religious Life in Germany: 1100-1500 (Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 24), Turnhout 2014.

5   SCHLOTHEUBER, Hildegard von Bingen (note 2 above), pp. 323-326; G. ALTHOFF, Zur Darstellung der ‚Anfänge' von mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Adelsfamilien, in: U. FRIEDRICH / A. HAMMER / C. WITTHÖFT, Anfang und Ende: Formen narrativer Zeitmodellierung, Berlin 2014, pp. 91-104.

6   F. J. FELTEN, Frauenklöster im Frankenreich: Entwicklungen und Probleme von den Anfängen bis zum frühen 9. Jahrhundert, in: Frühformen von Stiftskirchen in Europa: Funktion und Wandel religiöser Gemeinschaften vom 6. bis zum Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts: Festgabe für Dieter Mertens zum 65. Geburtstag (Schriften zur südwestdeutschen Landeskunde 54), Leinfelden-Echterdingen 2005, pp. 31-95; J. HAMBURGER / E. SCHLOTHEUBER (eds.), The ‚Liber ordinarius' of Nivelles: Liturgy as Interdisciplinary Intersection (Studies in the Late Middle Ages, Humanism, and the Reformation 111), Tübingen 2020; G. ALTHOFF, Ottonische Frauengemeinschaften im Spannungsfeld von Kloster und Welt, in: J. GERCHOW / T. SCHILP (eds.), Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifte im Frühmittelalter (Essener Forschungen zum Frauenstift 2), Essen 2003, pp. 29-44; H. RÖCKELEIN, Bairische, sächsische und mainfränkische Klostergründungen im Vergleich (8. Jahrhundert bis 1100), in: E. SCHLOTHEUBER / H. FLACHENECKER (eds.), Nonnen, Kanonissen und Mystikerinnen: Religiöse Frauengemeinschaften in Süddeutschland (Studien zur Germania Sacra 31; Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 235), Göttingen 2008, pp. 23-55.

their role in anchoring the intergenerational power and influence of a family within a region. The nuns performed the classic duties of prayer, commemoration of the dead and maintenance of the *memoria* of their patrons. The monasteries functioned as dynastic strongholds, familial mausoleums and as social and economic centers of lordship where the family's offspring were educated.

Through these specific duties, female communities remained tightly bound to the networks of their founders over generations. The monasteries certainly functioned not only as places of remembrance, but also – we might say – as a 'space of self-reflection'. They offered family members, religious as well as lay, a place in which to collectively negotiate and rethink diverse female role models and ideas so as to adapt them to their own time or to (re)formulate them anew. The founders also often played a decisive role in the choice of the observance the women followed or to which order the monastery belonged, depending on their related intentions or social orientation. Each community thus always developed in constant exchange with the religious and social conditions and needs of their time. On the other hand, the religious shaped society by their ideals and spiritual practice. The multiple interrelationships and interdependencies between the monasteries as a 'special social and religious space' and lay society thus accompanied and generated social transitions, and the constant development of new concepts of life within medieval society.

One hardly needs to say that this outline of the status and social role of women's monasteries also holds true for male communities. Male monasteries were far more places of scholarly education, centres of powerful spiritual radiance, familial strongholds or commemorative sites for great dynasties, representing an important cornerstone for potential social advancement for their family members. In principle, male monasteries therefore functioned in the same way as women's monasteries to endow and stabilise social elites across generations.

In many respects we find little significant difference in how male and female monasteries functioned in the economic, political and social constitution of elites. But does this hold true for the theological status ascribed to them? In the transformation of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, new and competing ideas about possible forms of life for religious women prevailed, influenced by the great movements of religious poverty and lay piety. At the same time, the internal organisation and hierarchical structure of the church was reshaped decisively, and during this process religious women also had to be assigned a new place.[7] Both developments were closely intertwined, and both significantly

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7   E. SCHLOTHEUBER, Neue Grenzen und neue Möglichkeiten – religiöse Lebensentwürfe geistlicher Frauen in der Umbruchszeit des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts, in: B. STOLLBERG-RILINGER (ed.), ,Als Mann und Frau schuf er sie': Religion und Geschlecht (Schriftenreihe des Exzellenzclusters Religion und Politik 7), Würzburg 2014, pp. 87-107.

altered the place of religious women within the official church and in medieval society overall. As a result, a quite specific theological basis for women's religious communities developed as part of the internal diversification in society.

II. The theological foundations of the spiritual role of religious women

Since the reform movements of the twelfth century, we encounter in the sources the ideal of a nun who dedicated her life to prayer, intercession and meditation within strict enclosure.[8] These self- and public images of nuns were defined by an internal orientation towards God rather than by theological training. The idea of a life shaped by chastity, contemplation and prayer within enclosure, which required no particular intellectual qualifications, justified the high spiritual and social status of nuns as special intermediaries between God and the world. The 'renunciation of the world', or enclosure, and the obligation to observe chastity, made the *imitatio Christi* possible for nuns in the sense of an inner similitude to their heavenly bridegroom. Their proximity to the divine, understood as bodily closeness to Christ, was expressed symbolically through the 'social' status of the nun as the 'bride of the highest King' (*sponsa Christi*).[9]

The conceptual ideals related to the *sponsa Christi* become obvious at the nun's transition into religious life, celebrated as rite of passage, as a 'spiritual wedding'.[10] The nun's decision *for* the heavenly bridegroom and 'against the world' featured the centre of these entrance rituals. This choice was understood as a 'bloodless martyrdom', accompanied by a life of chastity and enclosure. In imitation of the Virgin Mary, the 'bloodless martyrdom' not only secured the martyr's crown for the nun in the hereafter, but also secured her a high social rank in the secular and spiritual hierarchy. Nuns' high status was made clearly visible in a characteristic medieval manner through the so-called ritual of the consecration of virgins or 'coronation' of nuns. The frequent high aristocratic

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[8] H. UFFMANN, Inside and Outside the Convent Walls: The Norm and Practice of Enclosure in the Reformed Nunneries of Late Medieval Germany, in: Medieval History Journal 4 (2001), pp. 83-108.

[9] See for the discussion of this ideal E. SCHLOTHEUBER, Klostereintritt und Bildung: Die Lebenswelt der Nonnen im späten Mittelalter: Mit einer Edition des ‚Konventstagebuchs‘ einer Zisterzienserin von Heilig-Kreuz bei Braunschweig (1484-1507) (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe 24), Tübingen 2004, pp. 104-112.

[10] R. AMSTUTZ, Die liturgisch-dramatische Feier der ‚Consecratio virginum‘ nach dem Pontifikale des Bischofs Durandus (Ende des 13. Jh.): Eine Studie zur Rezeption der Zehnjungfrauen-Parabel in Liturgie, Ritus und Drama der mittelalterlichen Kirche, in: H. J. ZIEGELER (ed.), Ritual und Inszenierung: Geistliches und weltliches Drama des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit, Tübingen 2004, pp. 71-112; SCHLOTHEUBER, Klostereintritt (note 9 above), pp. 156-174.

origins of religious women appear to have made their privileged position self-evident. For Hildegard of Bingen, for example, high social and spiritual status were inseparable elements of her personal and public image.[11]

Nobility of birth and nobility of soul, as one, are therefore emphasised in the female saints lives of the High Middle Ages. The status of the *sponsa Christi* granted the nun unmediated access to the heavenly ruler in a manner comparable to the position of a secular queen, who was considered to be an intercessor and 'ear of the king' in a similar way. The nuns' status also opened up a particular path to knowledge for religious women, through their closeness to Christ, the source of all wisdom.[12] To borrow the term coined by the Dominican Heinrich Seuse, Christ was *ewige wisheit* (eternal wisdom), and all theological and spiritual knowledge derived from him.[13] Christ the Bridegroom therefore was understood to be the direct source of the nuns' knowledge. This unmediated access to the divine was thus thought to predestine religious women for their special duties as intercessors between God and the world, and established in a fundamental way the high value of their prayer.

The advent of scholastic theology, based on the access to the divine via *ratio*, decisively altered the status of religious women. The education of clerics in the cathedral schools and universities qualified them to preach, conduct biblical exegesis and to administer the sacraments, whereas canon law prohibited these activities for women. Because the prerequisites for clerical office and their responsibilities within the ecclesiastic hierarchy were more precisely defined, the status of religious women appreciably declined. This period was defined by the profound dispute known as the Investiture Controversy, through which the boundaries between clerics and the laity were grasped more clearly and redefined. According to canon law, consecrated nuns were considered lay people. Women therefore were now prohibited from approaching the altar, which was reserved to priests. The subordination of religious women to clerical authority was justified on the grounds of their 'weakness', their *infirmitas*, which, accord-

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[11] A. HAVERKAMP, Tenxwind von Andernach und Hildegard von Bingen: Zwei ,Weltanschauungen' in der Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts, in: L. FENSKE / W. RÖSENER / T. ZOTZ (eds.), Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag, Sigmaringen 1984, pp. 515-548.

[12] J. HAMBURGER / E. SCHLOTHEUBER / S. MARTI et al. (eds.), Liturgical Life and Latin Learning at Paradies bei Soest, 1300-1425: Inscription and Illumination in the Choir Books of a North German Dominican Convent, Münster 2017, vol. 1, p. 51.

[13] B. Wachinger, Hymnenmeditation im Gespräch mit Gott, in: G. VOLLMANN-PROFE / C. DIETL / A. GEROK-REITER et al. (eds.), Impulse und Resonanzen: Tübinger mediävistische Beiträge zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Haug, Tübingen 2007, pp. 323-364, here: pp. 326 s.

ing to Aristotle, precluded them from full development of their rational faculties.[14]

Excluded from rational paths to divine knowledge, the spiritual life of women developed from now on along fundamentally different lines to that of men. While for men the decisive path to God was based on intellectual understanding, on reason (*ratio*), women achieved the greatest possible access to the sacral sphere through their physical integrity, their *virginitas*, following the model of the Virgin (Mary). On the other hand, female weakness, which precluded their rational access to the divine, predestined women for the special grace of God and proximity to Christ as their bridegroom. Female weakness was thus transformed into a particular strength.[15] It constituted a specific and complex 'elite concept', which assured religious women as a group a firm place within the sacral and secular hierarchy. Henceforth, religious women manifested their specific spiritual authority as intercessors between God and the world, in the public arena through a dual paradox: firstly, the transformation from a supposed physical and spiritual weakness (*infirmitas*) into spiritual strength, and secondly, by their constant spiritual presence through prayer, despite – or may be better because of – the physical separation of enclosure. The theological position of the nun within sacral and secular structures arose primarily in connection with the high aristocratic Benedictine convents and was closely associated with them. This concept was decisively 'challenged' by the social expansion of female monasteries at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries through the movement for religious poverty.

III. The transformation, or rather, the creative appropriations of the ideal of the *sponsa Christi* by the Clares and Dominicans.

In high middle ages, in many places in southern France and northern Italy as well as in the Holy Roman Empire, religious groups emerged on their own initiative and dedicated themselves to following Christ in penitence and in imitation of the wandering life of the apostles.[16] Many operated at the margins of

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[14] Cf. HAMBURGER / SCHLOTHEUBER / MARTI et al. (eds.), Liturgical Life (note 12 above), pp. 50-53.

[15] C. MEIER, Von der ‚Privatoffenbarung' zur öffentlichen Lehrbefugnis: Legitimationsstufen des Prophetentums bei Rupert von Deutz, Hildegard von Bingen und Elisabeth von Schönau, in: G. MELVILLE / P. VON MOOS (eds.), Das Öffentliche und Private in der Vormoderne (Norm und Struktur 10), Köln/Weimar/Wien 1998, pp. 97-123.

[16] H. GRUNDMANN, Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen über die geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen der Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und über die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik (Historische Studien 267), Berlin 1935 (reprint 1977); E. BÜNZ / St. TEBRUCK / H.

church structures, so that they – like the Waldensians – were quickly condemned and regarded as heretics. In this religious *milieu,* new models of religious life for women among the Dominicans and Poor Clares emerged.

The model of the noble Bride of Christ, who was raised as a young child within the cloister and who sacrificed herself to Christ through prayer, free from physical labour (and economic necessity), was completely unsuited to the ideals of the Poor Clares and Dominican nuns, who had emerged originally as a counter-movement. On the contrary, the image and role model of the women in this movement for religious poverty was Martha, the one who served, who represented the *vita activa.* The higher estimation of the life of contemplative prayer (Mary) to charitable works (Martha) was precisely the tension that the new forms of religious life encountered and challenged.[17] It is fascinating to ask, therefore, whether Clare of Assisi drew upon the ideal of the nun as a *sponsa Christi* for her community.

Interestingly, Clare incorporated this ideal fully, but she reinterpreted the way to access the status of a bride of Christ in a significant way. Emphasising the foundational idea of *sancta paupertas* of St Francis, she adopted the ancient theological concept that a person could recognise the divine in the soul as in a mirror and therefore had the ability to recognise it within themselves. For Clare, the three main principles of the reflection of an individual's soul were poverty (*paupertas*), humility (*humilitas*) and love (*caritas*).[18] Holy poverty of course formed the beginning and the outline of the mirror of the soul – and was therefore the decisive prerequisite for the way to God for the Poor Clares. Voluntary poverty, understood as the most significant aspect of *infirmitas*, or weakness, and charitable works 'ennobled' the Clares. Through this they became the 'true Brides of Christ', seeking to follow and imitate the Bridegroom Christ through this most crucial ideal. Clare of Assisi, therefore, redefined the ritual of the consecration of virgins by promoting exclusively individual poverty, an old and accepted aspect of the complex phenomenon *imitatio Christi.*

G. WALTHER (eds.), Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter Festschrift für Matthias Werner, Köln 2007.

[17] HAMBURGER / SCHLOTHEUBER / MARTI et al. (eds.), Liturgical Life (note 12 above), pp. 68-72.

[18] Klara von Assisi an Agnes, Ep. 4,3, in: W. W. SETON, The letters of Saint Clare to b. Agnes of Bohemia, in: AFH 17 (1924), pp. 513-519. J. SCHNEIDER / P. ZAHNER (eds.), Klara-Quellen: Zeugnisse des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts zur franziskanischen Bewegung, Münster 2013; H. D. HEIMANN / A. HILSEBEIN / B. SCHMIES et al. (eds.), Gelobte Armut: Armutskonzepte der franziskanischen Ordensfamilie vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart, Paderborn 2012; E. SCHLOTHEUBER, Klara von Assisi und Agnes von Prag: Die Besitzlosigkeit als besondere Herausforderung für Frauengemeinschaften, in: M. ŠMIED / F. ZÁRUBA (eds.), Svatá Anežka Česká a velké ženy její doby = Die heilige Agnes von Böhmen und die großen Frauengestalten ihrer Zeit (Opera Facultatis theologiae catholicae Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis Historia et historia artium Vol. XIV), Praha 2013, pp. 56-73.

The first convent for women founded by St Dominic at Prouille was a monastery that attracted women who had rejected Catharism. Prouille stood at the beginning of an unprecedented wave of new foundations of Dominican female communities.[19] This popularity raises the question of why the Dominicans were so attractive to women in the thirteenth century. The *nova religio*, the new spirituality of the Dominicans, was virtually a revolutionary idea in light of the existing monastic landscape for women. Like the Poor Clares, they envisaged a new model of life no longer based on aristocratic ancestry and virginity, but one of charitable activity undertaken in personal poverty (*vita activa*). But because they sought to reclaim women from the Cathars and Waldensians, among whom women held a privileged status, the Dominicans wanted to make the choice of a religious life possible for *all* women, widows and orphans, married and children, for the young and the old, independent of rank, economic or intellectual prerequisites. Such social 'opening' of the monastery was far from easy, and presented a significant challenge in every respect.[20]

In their own interpretation, the Dominicans offered women an alternative to a 'sinful' life in the world at any point of their life and the option voluntarily to choose the 'direct path' to salvation of their souls. This idea was a clear reaction against a monastic life, which until that time had been available for the most part only to women of higher social status, who bound their daughters mostly as children to its spiritual obligations. Because they had not freely chosen their own way of life, many of these women often later lacked the internal motivation to pursue it. It was for this reason that Meister Eckhardt emphasised, that 'life experience' (*Erfahrung des Lebens*) first enabled the women to decide truly for the world or for Christ as Bridegroom. Eckhardt sketches the Dominican ideal as a 'third model of life', as a synthesis of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* which was to overcome the opposition of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* by a novel spiritual concept, the apostolic-contemplative form of life of the Dominicans, the *nova religio*.[21]

The voluntary decision to embrace a religious life, the power to renounce the world at any age, independent of social status or education, and the equiva-

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[19] S. CHABANNE, Saint Dominique et les femmes: chronique du catharisme ordinaire de Fanjeaux, naissance et développement des moniales de Prouille, Lyon 1994.

[20] HAMBURGER / SCHLOTHEUBER / MARTI et al. (eds.), Liturgical Life (note 12 above), pp. 70-72.

[21] Meister Eckhart, Die deutsche Werke. Meister Eckharts Predigten, ed. J. QUINT, Stuttgart 1958-1976, vol. 3, no. 86, p. 490; K. FLASCH, Meister Eckhart: Philosoph des Christentums, München 2010, p. 260: „[Eckhart] stellt mit sanfter Ironie Maria unter den Verdacht, sie sitze wohl mehr der süßen Lust zuliebe Jesu zu Füßen als "vernünftigen" Nutzens wegen […]. Sie [Martha] wird zur Leitfigur einer neuen, einer dritten Lebensform. Sie hat sich dem Leben ausgesetzt, sie hat es aufgesucht. Dadurch hat sie etwas begriffen, was man ohne Aus-sich-Herausgehen niemals erfahren kann."

lence of manual labour with choir service performed in strict enclosure: these appear to be the essential elements of this new model of religious life. Dominic himself had prohibited Dominican nuns from participating in the consecration, or coronation, ritual.[22] In Dominican nunneries, both widows and women who had previously been married, whom the church forbade to be consecrated, lived alongside those who had entered as children or young girls. Dominic anticipated that the coronation ritual would have made these differences evident and created tensions. The Dominicans nevertheless adopted and strongly emphasised the ideal of the 'Bride of Christ,' which underpinned their requirement for the strict enclosure of women. The admission requirements for this exclusive and privileged form of life, however, were no longer reserved to the nobly born and the virgins, but were now exclusively rooted in the nobility of the soul, created by making a self-directed 'right' decision for a religious life.

IV. Conclusion

The ideal of the nun as 'Bride of Christ' ensured a high status within spiritual and secular hierarchy, both for individual religious women and for religious women as a collective elite. Although the idea of the nun as a Bride of Christ harked back to the origins of female religious life, it gained increasing importance as an ideal clearly distinct from the role and duties of the monks and secular clerics only in the High Middle Ages. This process was closely connected to the development of the church hierarchy. The role of women religious within the official church, the church of the clergy, had to be defined in a new way. Because their status and role was actually based on a double paradox – that is, on the transformation of the 'weak into the strong' and a 'physical withdrawal from society within constant spiritual presence', – this model was flexible and open to fundamental reinterpretation, such as occurred in the thirteenth century through social transformation and the advent of the new mendicant orders. While Clare formulated *sancta paupertas* as the exclusive principle for achieving proximity to God, for the Dominicans it was 'voluntary conversion', the 'free choice' of the individual for *conversio*. The traditional combination of noble birth and virginity still held its important place in communities of the canonesses or old benedictine convents. Together with both new forms we can see theologically an exclusive restriction of access to the *imitatio Christi*. This had its highest expression in the nun's marriage to the heavenly bridegroom and the

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[22] Humbert of Romans, Liber Constitutionum Sororum Ordinis Praedicatorum, in: Analecta Sacri Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, Rome 1897-1898, ch. 16, p. 343: *Nolumus autem quod alique sorores benedicantur, cum beatus Dominicus hoc ordinasse dicatur circa illas que fuerunt in suo tempore, et huiusmodi benedictio soleat aliquibus esse occasio ut super alias se extollant*. See for the discussion of this crucial phenomenon Hamburger / Schlotheuber / Marti et al. (eds.), Liturgical Life (note 12 above), pp. 61 s.

renunciation of the world, both of which formulated and founded a general pre-eminence and a collective claim for the nun as elite.