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Introduction:

Gender, Catholicism, Women's Spirituality over the *Longue Durée*

Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen M. Mangion

This volume emerged from the realization that the history of women religious¹ was attracting the interest of an increasing number of scholars. We noticed the steady growth of the History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland (H-WRBI), a network of scholars initiated by Carmen Mangion and Caroline Bowden in 2001 to encourage research in the history of women religious.² Their annual conferences are consistently well-attended and gather scholars from all parts of the globe. Recently, other major conferences have testified to the vigour of research in women's spirituality. We have already mentioned Claire Renkin and Katherine Massam's 2007 conference in Melbourne (Australia), focusing on 'The Spirituality of Religious Women: From the Old World to the Antipodes, 1400-1900'. In 2009, Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith organised a conference on 'Women and Religion in Britain c. 1660-1760 in Oxford (UK), while Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Claire Sorin welcomed over forty speakers from thirteen countries to speak on 'Women and Spirituality' in Aix-en-Provence (France).

Noticing the efflorescence of research in this field did, in turn, raise questions on how to place our own work within the history of European Catholic women's spirituality over the *longue durée*. We became curious about overarching themes which could apply to the study of female roles within the Catholic Church in the varied circumstances of their countries

and times. What were the continuities and discontinuities that influenced, hindered and spurred on women whose spirituality became the core of their many identities? This collective publication, which federates the efforts of academics and specialists in this field, provides some revealing insights into the factors which affected the relationships of Catholic women with their Church; it shows that female spirituality was not isolated by national contexts, but rather influenced by the passage of time as well as shifting understandings of gender. Contributors utilise a mix of sources including liturgical manuscripts, devotional texts, prescriptive literature, biographies, autobiographies, correspondence and hymns. They approach the investigation of gender, spirituality and Catholicism from varied vantage points and methodologies which provides an interdisciplinary lens that highlights insights into the diverse dimensions of spiritualities. These varied outlooks include post-structural analysis and textual archaeology as well as liturgical, cultural, Church and gender history and allow for a fuller understanding of the interplay at work between femininities and spiritualities in Britain and Europe.

Derived from St Paul's reference to 'spiritual persons' as those 'influenced by the Holy Spirit of God',³ the term spirituality became linked to seventeenth-century French spiritual writers and clergy. In subsequent centuries, the general understanding of spirituality became increasingly non-denominational. Today, spirituality is broadly understood to give meaning and purpose to life and to provide a transcendental experience to those in search of the sacred. It can be attained through meditation, prayer or communion with the natural world. This transcendence can lead to a sense

of connectedness with something greater than oneself, such as nature, the universe or a higher being. For some, spirituality is thoughtful and passive, while for others it is emotional or action-oriented. Notions of spirituality are not fixed, but rather culturally derived and constantly shifting, fashioned by a myriad forces including gender, ethnicity and class. Since spirituality mirrors specific times, places and cultures, it can be used as an analytic tool to examine various facets of society.

Each of the ten essays gathered here focuses on specific persons or groups within the cultural milieus of England, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Of course, we cannot hope to present in this volume an all-inclusive overview of how such complex concepts as gender and spirituality interact with the history of Catholicism, but each piece should be seen as a small contribution towards a greater understanding of their interactions. These essays, exploring female relationships with piety and religious vocations in their various contexts, raise similar questions. It appears that, when studying the religious endeavours of women within the Catholic Church, regardless of time and place, one is confronted with issues concerning norms and margins, be they vocational, social or institutional. Authors therefore question whether or not female agents for the Church differentiated themselves from male religious and whether they considered their strengths and failings as defined or influenced by their sex. In studying women's voluntary contributions to the Catholic Church, each chapter engages with the gendered preconceptions within which they operated. To what extent were female contributions to the Catholic Church limited by socially-defined gendered acceptability? Such

considerations, in turn, lead to the questioning of the relationship of these women's vocations with the (male) institutional orthodoxy of the Church they aimed to serve. Indeed, the success or failure of female movements was often decided by women's positions regarding canonical conformity, religious rules and clerical authority. Yet did success depend upon institutional orthodoxy?

The following chapters consider a denominational, Roman Catholic spirituality. Despite their varied geographical and chronological contexts, all are linked to a shifting theological vision. Moreover, our understanding of the gendered nature of spirituality and Catholicism is informed by our designation of gender as a category of analysis which allows the development of diverse observations of femininities and masculinities. Consequently, this collection of essays reflects the gendering of both women and men as spiritualities shift over time and place.⁴ As can be seen in this collection, women did not confine themselves to operating within official boundaries.⁵ Their faith legitimated actions which were often unconventional. The underlying tension between the authority women believed came from God and the (male) ecclesiastical view of this authority sprang partly from gendered discourses.

Gender and religious status: women in the institutional Church

Until the thirteenth century, women enjoyed a certain amount of freedom in the ways they were allowed to express their spirituality. For instance, the Flemish Mary of Oignies (1177-1213) was one of the most famous living saints, yet she was not a nun. Though married, she and her spouse consensually vowed to live together in chastity and converted their home

into a leper hospital. Free from the constraints of a religious establishment, with its rules, its strict *horarium*, its enclosure and its male authority, Mary of Oignies was able to develop a spirituality which was flexible, in direct personal interaction with the world but also with the divine. When she quickly became renowned, it was not simply as a charitable soul whose apostolate brought much-needed succour to her neighbours, but also as a mystic and a saint who enjoyed unmediated spiritual communion with God. Her a-institutional choice of life was translated into greater spiritual freedom, a mysticism which allowed her – despite her status as a laywoman - to yield great influence even over clerics such as her confessor and later, hagiographer, Bishop Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240).⁶

Although the Catholic Church was initially benevolent towards unorthodox avenues for female spirituality, issues of control were always present. When Clare of Assisi aligned her Poor Ladies of San Damiano (later known as the Poor Clares) with the Franciscan family recently approved by Innocent III, she was perceived to borrow from male expressions of spirituality, since she assumed the ideal of absolute poverty, a new feature of religious life spearhead by Francis. This unorthodox choice met with clerical opposition and in 1215-16, Clare went directly to the pope to seek his help. In response, her Poor Clares were granted a rare papal favour, the unique Privilege of Poverty, in which Innocent III recognized their right to remain in poverty in imitation of Christ. The Poor Clares were the only female order to be able to secure such a thorough endorsement from the papacy, and to gain such protection. Such success reflected Clare's charisma and power. Yet, despite initially supporting

Clare's ideal, the clergy - including Francis himself - became uncomfortable with what it entailed. Clare was to fight for the rest of her life for what she saw as the initial *raison d'être* of her order: poverty and the imitation of Christ, against a clerical hierarchy for whom neither was appropriate as defining traits of the Poor Clares. The decades of conflict which peppered Clare's experience testify to the difficulties which faced women whose vocation did not fit clerical definitions of acceptable female religious life. Later still, after the deaths of both Francis and Clare, the spirituality of the female Order was deeply transformed.⁷ Anna Welch's chapter demonstrates that Clare's status in the Franciscan movement was muted by subsequent leaders, which reflected the lack of clarity and unity amongst the Friars' themselves.

Although the varied ways of life of spiritual women at times provoked the suspicion of their secular neighbours and local divines, Pope Gregory IX's 1233 bull *Glorium virginalem* offered informal religious groups a measure of papal protection, since it no longer suspected quasi-religious women of heresy. However, by the end of the century, concerns arose about the status of woman in the institutional Church. Pope Boniface VIII's 1298 decree *Periculoso* reduced the temporal power of abbesses and demanded the complete separation of religious women from the outside world.⁸ Although the Bull was applied only loosely for a long period of time, it was a sign of things to come, as it reflected the Church's growing desire to contain the women in its midst through the imposition of walls, rules and ecclesiastical control.⁹ After several decades of relative disregard, this initial movement of conventualization was followed by a wave of inner

reforms when Church officials, helped by zealous nuns and abbesses, attempted to impose higher standards of spirituality and purer moral values to fight the perceived slackness of certain convents. The observance of the same *horarium* and of identical Rules in daily life created a strong sense of cohesion within communities, and dynamized the intensity of their spiritual lives as a group. However, as the reformed communities were placed more directly under the control of bishops and ordinaries, the powers of female governance and the convents' contacts with the outside world were subject to further erosion.¹⁰

Yet the relationship between male representatives of the Church and the women who sought to serve it was not always tense or confrontational. Many religious institutes adopted male-defined Rules and conditions willingly and viewed a cloistered life in contemplation, following episcopal guidance, as the most holy path to spiritual perfection. Many women never questioned increasing institutionalisation and some welcomed it wholeheartedly. It is difficult to assess, over a period of several centuries, the level of resistance or compliance with which female groups encountered male control. The cloistered existence of two of the most renowned religious women studied in this volume, Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) and Teresa of Àvila (1515-82, in religion Teresa de Jesús), points to the continued attraction of an institutional life supported and encouraged by the Church. For many women, and their families, this was the most viable option of lived spirituality, and they celebrated the benefits of *clausura*. Institutional religious life represented an important connection to their

Church as well as being a source of authority. This fed their spirituality and allowed them to become spiritual leaders within the convent.¹¹

The Protestant Reformation heralded another period of increased episcopal control over the women who wished to be recognized officially as religious. In order to offset Protestant advances, the Catholic Church implemented a two-pronged strategy. First, it embarked upon a vigorous effort of reform from within, a Catholic Reformation meant to eradicate the abuses of the Church, to purify its practice and strengthen its spirituality. Second, an aggressive, missionary movement was launched as a counter-attack against the progress of Protestantism intended on re-conquering territory and souls. Whilst many enclosed institutions, both male and female, offered their prayers as a means of religious action to further the success of the Catholic offensive against the spread of Protestantism, Ignatius Loyola founded his Society of Jesus, the Constitutions of which were approved in 1540 by Paul III. The Jesuits' mission was to catechise and proselytize in the world, focusing in great part on the education of boys and the conversion of men. They were to be soldiers of God, regular clergy unconfined by enclosure. Their mobility and flexibility enabled them to work effectively to re-establish the spiritual authority of Rome, and their apostolate appealed greatly to both lay and religious women.

Despite this appeal, ecclesiastical authorities were unwilling to apply a similar line of action across the boundaries of gender. Rather than open female religious life to action in the world, the Church embraced Boniface VIII's *Periculoso* when, in 1563, the Council of Trent defined women religious as strictly enclosed, denying them the chance of an apostolic

mission outside the cloister: 'After religious profession no nun may go out of her monastery on any pretext even for short time, except for a legitimate reason approved by the bishop [...].'¹² This was followed by decrees crystallizing the Church's rigidity towards what it deemed acceptable for women in the institutional Church: according to Pius V's *Circa Pastoralis* (1566) and *Lubricum Vitae Genitus* (1568), enclosure was a prerequisite for female communities claiming religious status.¹³

Despite their usefulness given the disputed circumstances of sixteenth-century religious strife, women who embraced vocations which differed from this model were to remain secular. Militant apostolic work, catechesis and the salvation of souls were considered better suited for men, since women were deemed physically, morally and spiritually unable to endure the difficulties awaiting them when faced with such duties.¹⁴ One of the main obstacles hindering women's participation in the active work of the Catholic offensive resided in the belief that women were, by nature, flawed and therefore unsuitable for such missionary ventures.¹⁵ This combination of religious tradition and vivid suspicion of female constancy made the idea of women missionaries unacceptable to Church authorities.

Men of the Church, in their capacities as chroniclers, spiritual directors or administrators, often de-emphasized the multifaceted and flexible nature of female movements. As they named them, defined them as groups, sometimes even attributed male founders for them and imposed established conventual Rules upon them, they sought to keep control of female movements. As shown in Querciolo Mazzonis's chapter on Angela Merici's

Italian Ursulines, unrequited clerical control could change the initial essence of female religious endeavours. Initially, Merici's lay women were responsible for their own lives, and their Company was managed by women for women. Yet issues of authority and control created tensions between the congregations and both their secular and religious neighbours. Although Angela Merici had obtained Paul III's approval in 1544, in 1582, the Milan Archbishop Carlo Borromeo (1538-1584), reorganized the Ursulines into religious congregations, where the members lived together as laywomen with an apostolic and educational focus.¹⁶ As they spread to the rest of Italy, then France in the seventeenth century, they deviated from the religious type of life initially envisaged by Angela Merici.

The Englishwoman Mary Ward (1585-1645) encountered a similar struggle to persuade the Church to validate her proposed institute modelled on the Society of Jesus. As Laurence Lux-Sterritt's chapter explains, even Mary Ward's Jesuit confessor Roger Lee was intimidated by her vocation: in the Rules he had penned for her in 1612, the English Ladies were to be a teaching and enclosed, not a militant, missionary cohort. Mary Ward's continued search for papal approval and her determination to apply the Ignatian Rules to her Institute led to her ultimate trial in 1631, when her English Ladies were ordered to disband and the foundress was labeled a heretic.

The tension between the cloister and the world has always been at the very core of monastic life; yet recent influential studies have convincingly argued that enclosure was not so hermetic as to prevent all communication between the two worlds.¹⁷ Convents had a deep impact upon the societies in

which they operated, and conversely were influenced by them too. *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe* explores English convents in France and the Low countries and shows that enclosed English nuns transcended the boundaries of their physical claustration: their religious vocations stemmed from the troubled context of English Catholicism. The taking of vows became a complex act, both spiritually intimate and very public, as a political gesture. The spirit of the English mission was present at the heart of spiritual life, since these houses constantly evoked the sufferings of their coreligionists at home. The same was true of the aristocratic nuns of Naples discussed by in *Invisible City*, though sometimes enclosed to suit their families' economic circumstances, these women's influence went further than the thick walls of their convents and enjoyed a certain authority in the city.

Therefore, as noted in *Nuns: A History of Convent Life*, general debates over issues such as monastic observance or strict enclosure were influenced by the varied local circumstances of each convent.¹⁸ Local conditions invariably influenced life in religious houses, and softened the Tridentine spirit of uniform *clausura* with more nuanced realities, leading at times to a rather more flexible model of female monastic life. With time, papal attitudes slowly shifted to take into account the successes of women who, through their work outside the cloister, emerged as successful Christian missionaries. Yet this evolution was not straightforward, and did not willingly concede religious status to these pious workers. In his 1727 *Pretiosus*, Pope Benedict XIII gave his approbation to women who took simple vows and appeared outside convent walls; but if this edict allowed

tertiaries to exist, it pointedly ignored the issue of religious status. Later, in *Romanus Pontifex* (1732), Benedict XIII reversed *Pretiosus* and insisted that religious status for women implied strict separation from the world.¹⁹ Despite papal hesitations, lay and clerical support for women religious living religious life outside the cloister became more encouraging by the eighteenth century. This support was based on the practical needs of a parish or a diocese, as simple-vowed women religious provided much-needed education, health care and parish assistance. Recent research on eighteenth-century French women religious asserts that their institutions, charity schools, nursing homes and hospitals, were tolerated and encouraged for pragmatic reasons: they filled a need.²⁰ Rome's acceptance of simple-vowed women religious was reflected in *Quamvis Justo* (1749), which gave women's religious congregations legitimate and juridical authority although their members were not considered 'true nuns'.²¹ As Laurence Lux-Sterritt's essay establishes, such times offered Mary Ward's eighteenth-century successors a welcome window of opportunity: they negotiated with Rome and gained approval as an enclosed institute, accepting traditional conventual hierarchy and ecclesiastical control. When they became devoted to the education of girls, they endorsed a role which the Church deemed better suited to women, but in so doing they created a community which diverged greatly from Mary Ward's initial ideals.²²

Gender and forms of religious life: multifarious female organizations

The historiography of female Catholic spiritualities illustrates that women's expressions of piety have tended, across the ages, to take less institutional forms than their male counterparts.²³ As Caroline Walker

Bynum explained, ‘the basic characteristics of women’s piety cut across the lines between lay and monastic, heterodox and orthodox, churchly and sectarian. Although women were found in all institutions – Church, monastery and sect - their mystical, charismatic piety seemed to express itself most comfortably in amorphous groups, such as beguine or tertiary communities, or in friendship networks within religious houses’.²⁴ Indeed, since the Church was embodied by its male clergy, women were, to some extent, excluded, and even those who most wished to serve the Church would never be part of it in the same way as men. Women’s piety expressed itself in modes which bypassed male institutional forms, and resisted external pressures towards institutionalisation.

As shown in *Sisters in Arms*, despite the Church’s attempts at controlling female religious life, the avenues chosen by Catholic women remained, through the ages, extremely varied, nuanced and difficult to categorize neatly.²⁵ The labels which helped categorize women religious into enclosed nuns, recluses, tertiaries or lay sisters did not encompass the variety of female religious identities and women’s endeavours often blurred clerically-given theoretical definitions. In keeping with this seemingly adaptable, flexible nature which centred on experience rather than structure, female organizations often seemed less preoccupied by their religious status than by a personal dedication to God and to the Church. Their outlook reintroduced the self at the core on their relationship with the divine, giving an important place to self-surrender and mysticism as privileged vectors of their experience of the sacred.

Indeed, not all religiously-inclined women entered the convent: some were married, others were widows, whilst others still, remaining single, preferred to serve the Church from outside its ranks, in a secular capacity. The reasons for such choices were varied, sometimes linked to a refusal by cloistered institutions, at other times owing to more pragmatic considerations linked to property ownership. The Italian Angela Merici (c. 1470-1540) first founded her Ursulines as a community of secular women, serving the Church and the community outside the convent and without clerical control. Querciolo Mazzonis's chapter illustrates that as spiritual laywomen, the Ursulines' 'third status' remained somewhat vague. Yet since their roles did not compete with male institutional roles, they gained papal approval in 1546. Merici's original idea of a female laity 'free to follow their personal inspiration' gave women a new space to develop their spirituality, outside the traditional '*aut maritus, aut murus*', a husband or a cloister. These women were offered a degree of religious freedom more associated with a-institutional structures than with rule-oriented religious Orders.

In the sixteenth century, the confessional crisis of the Reformation, created a new environment in which female religious life rapidly acquired 'distinct configurations responding to the new circumstances'.²⁶ A specifically female type of active, uncloistered spiritual existence developed to such an extent that it became a feature of Catholic social and religious life by the seventeenth century. In the Netherlands, the religious movement of *Devotio Moderna* give rise to the Sisters of the Common Life who lived

together bound by a private promise.²⁷ Moreover, some spiritual women chose a-institutional forms which were neither cloistered nor communal, neither nuns nor beguines, but operated on a more independent level, one that required the balancing of diverse roles. Yet these spiritual virgins did not count themselves as part of the laity, but rather as part of the Church. As both spiritual daughters and spiritual mothers, Dutch spiritual virgins had to manoeuvre delicately between obedience and authority, balancing sometimes conflicting responsibilities. The paradox of submission which Monteiro identifies is an important feature in many of the essays in this collection. The institutional Church relegated religious women as subordinate to religious men, and reminded them of this through prescriptive literature which gendered ideals such as obedience and submission as feminine. Yet religious women used their faith to create for themselves a measure of authority and a mode of action by creating a-institutional cohorts. These forms of actions were not without gendered boundaries, but within those boundaries women had latitude to be both spiritual and temporal leaders. Unlike women religious, they did not cling to the visible signs and symbols of institutional recognition. Their spirituality was fluid and less constrained by the requirements of the Church.

In France, the *filles séculières* (single laywomen who practised a religious lifestyle in the world) became educators, nurses and catechists, and lived in communities; yet they took only simple vows, since their unenclosed apostolate differentiated them from the solemn-vowed contemplative Orders. Apostolic, charitable vocations soon came to be

construed as a typically female form of involvement in the service of the Church. By the eighteenth-century, Italian 'lay congregations' such as *Maestre Pie*, or 'Pious schoolmistresses' formed a bridge between new and old forms of religious life and were precursors to the congregations of the nineteenth century.²⁸ Many founders in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century were like Thérèse Couderc (1805–1885) whose experience of the French Revolution informed her passion for what she saw was the 'work of the Lord'. As Kate Stogdon demonstrates, Couderc and her Sisters of Our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle sought to 're-construct and re-invigorate Roman Catholicism' in France.²⁹

The amorphous groups and communities that emerged gave women opportunities to practise their devotion together without entering recognised convents. Such groups sometimes gathered single women, virgins and widows only, whilst others accepted married women. These cohorts did not feel the need to answer to a precise name, to pay deference to a specific founder or figure of authority or to observe strict rules. They existed purely to allow women of a spiritual nature to dedicate themselves to their faith through the practice of charity and a life of apostolate: action was at the core of their lived spiritual experience, whilst a corporate identity remained relatively unimportant. Yet despite these women's dedication to the Church, Rome and the ecclesiastical hierarchy remained ambivalent about them.³⁰

The essays in this volume show that female forms of religious life escape classification and boundaries. Not only do they appear to defy Church definitions which differentiated between religious and secular, they also blurred the boundaries between action and contemplation and transcended

geographical determinism. The influential *La sainteté en Occident*³¹ proposed a typology of medieval sainthood which was defined geographically. It presented a North/South dichotomy according to which nearly all northern European saints came from an aristocratic background and extolled virtues such as austerity and separation from the world. In southern Europe sainthood took on a less elitist face; sanctity was granted to more popular, often urban figures who generally were actively involved in the apostolate and charitable works.

Although this theory was also endorsed by the authors of *Saints and Society*,³² it has since been challenged by Caroline Walker Bynum, who argues that northern women did not always embrace the more reclusive forms of piety by becoming nuns, contemplatives or mystics and rejecting the world; conversely, she shows that not all southern women worked in the world and dedicated their piety to others in their active, neighbourly apostolate as tertiaries. In agreement with this interpretation, this volume argues that female forms of religious life escape attempts to reduce them to categories or binary classifications. Bynum rehabilitates the under-studied functions of religious or quasi religious women who combined both the roles of Martha and Mary, valuing forms of contemplation and mystical life whilst at the same time extending their apostolate and charity in the world. Therefore, the model presented by the Low Country beguines 'raise[s] doubts both about the north/south dichotomy and about the innerworldly-active/world-fleeing-contemplative dichotomy.'³³ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the same region had witnessed the development of the beguinages, informal communities of women who chose to live together

whilst retaining their secular freedom.³⁴ The essays contained in this volume come to a similar conclusion with regards to the dichotomy of action and contemplation. The female movements studied here tend to support Bynum's conclusion that 'in the women's self-understanding, there is in general no contrast between action in the world and contemplation (or discipline) that flees the world'.³⁵ The case studies offered, which span both northern and southern Europe and Britain over the *longue durée*, highlight how even nuns who accepted and treasured claustration as holy nevertheless considered themselves as active through their writings, their prayers and their devotions.³⁶ Conversely, active women also cherished contemplative elements of their lives and spent much time in prayer and communion with the divine. The roles of Martha and of Mary seemed intertwined rather than mutually-exclusive.

As echoed in the chapters of this collection, the active impetus which was already present from the early modern era in female Catholic spiritualities intensified with time, and although its gradual acceptance was subject to variations in different countries or regions, by the nineteenth century, the 'mixed life' of active spirituality had become more commonplace. Active women in this 'era of the nun'³⁷ were credited for the development of a distinctly Catholic spiritual ethos promulgated through their schools, orphanages, reformatories and hospitals. In France, female religious associations, both religious and lay, were one of most characteristic forms of female religiosity in the first half of the nineteenth century and were in the forefront in providing welfare services.³⁸ Convent networks made 'the most profound impact on the provision of charity' in Ireland.³⁹ In Spain, the

resurgence of women religious occurred in the last quarter of the century, but they also became the ‘unrivalled spearhead of Catholic revival’.⁴⁰

The tension between a Jesuit-like vocation and a more gendered (and clerically-acceptable) educational sphere of activity was a common pattern in innovative female endeavours. It affected various groups, including the Cenacle Sisters, who, in the nineteenth century, incorporated the Jesuit *Spiritual Exercises* as a foundation for their own spiritual life and also employed them in retreats given to women. This was a new domain of apostolic ministry; no other female congregation had ever given the *Spiritual Exercises* in France. The death of the congregation's male co-founder put their endeavours at risk of failure. Founder Thérèse Couderc was aware that male support was necessary for this new venture to succeed, especially since such work could be construed as an infringement upon ministerial responsibilities and a possible trespass on the work of male clergy. In 1836, she successfully defended this vocation against some of her sisters who, supported by local clergy, wished to steer away from their Ignatian undertakings and prioritize the education of girls.

Indeed, by the nineteenth century, the needs to catechise, to teach and to nurse were unremitting and this work became integrated with the spirituality of simple-vowed women religious. Religious congregations became the foot-soldiers of Rome as the practical needs of the Church far outweighed some gendered limitations of femininity. The explosion of women's groups in nineteenth-century Italy active in the welfare and education of poor girls were linked by a 'powerful need for community and solidarity'. Many were transformed into active religious congregations such as the Servants of

Charity in Brescia (1844) or the Canossian Daughters of Charity in Verona (1808) whose remit was to form 'good, Christian mothers'. Between 1800 and 1860, at least 127 new foundations were approved in Italy.⁴¹

Yet, as Carmen Mangion's chapter argues, prayer remained the core of this 'mixed life', but balancing the contemplative with the active required constant attention. There were those, from both within and without the convent, who saw the 'mixed' life as too contemplative and others who saw it as too utilitarian. Yet, action was construed as a pathway towards sanctity, and for the Church, active religious life was an important means of re-Catholicising the masses of unchurched Catholics. Interestingly, much of the nineteenth-century historiography of female laity and religious focuses less on spirituality *per se* than on the charitable features influenced by a robust Catholic faith. This reflects the dominance of social and cultural studies but perhaps also is symptomatic of the perceived a-historicism of religion and spirituality.

However, freedom from the cloister did not necessarily lead to a more flexible understanding of spirituality. As congregations grew in size, their missions expanded and cloistered walls were replaced by an invisible cloister, a strict morality codified in Rules and constitutions. Though imposed by the Church, these strictures were endorsed by women's congregations. Carmen Mangion's chapter explains that after their founder's death, the Sisters of Mercy were not content with a simple Rule and constitutions but implemented a guide which included more complex regulations to monitor religious life and encourage uniformity. The addition of Rule upon Rule increased the distance between the religious sisters

themselves, and separated them also from their charges and co-workers. Prayer life was strictly defined and timed, as were all aspects of religious life; these changes met with clerical approval and were confirmed with the codification of canon law in 1917.

Gender and spiritual expressions: the authority of female piety and writings

The essays in this volume show the complex realities of Catholic female spiritualities: they illustrate how women involved in important religious endeavours could be secular or religious, active or contemplative, Northern or Southern European. Yet more importantly, they also demonstrate that these female movements escape such classifications or binary definitions, since they often reconciled modes of spirituality which they did not see as antithetical but rather as complementary. The outward configurations which female religious groups adopted expressed their religious spirit, one which was less preoccupied with status or propriety than with efficacy. These women sought to further the faith, and to contribute to the broad mission of their Church; as individuals, rather than institutions, they offered their services to God in a manner which was not always mediated by male clerical input. The essays in this volume all agree that female piety in many ways bypassed clerically-imposed rules, structures, vows or hierarchy. In their individual religious endeavours, women often claimed to obey the revealed will of God, and referred to a mystical closeness with the divine. Indeed, a tradition of female mystics, prophets and visionaries was already well-established in the thirteenth century. For instance, Mechtild of

Magdeburg (1207-82), as a beguine, had written *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* to describe how she was filled with God's presence from the age of twelve. The avenue of mysticism, buttressed by the Mendicant Orders, offered opportunities for female piety increasingly to differentiate itself from men's, favouring a direct rapport with the divine. Famous figures of medieval mysticism, such as the recluse Benedictine Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), voiced their intimate relationship with the divine: in her *Revelations of Divine Love*, or *Showings*, Julian recorded the visions she received in May 1373 and insisted upon the unmediated nature of her relationship with God. Distinct from theologians of her time, she emphasized the human nature of God. Thus comforted by her faith in a kind and loving God, she suggested that Christians must surrender their souls to God in their quest for divine presence. This philosophy of hope, love and self-surrender was shared by many of the prominent women present in this collection.

The spiritual women studied in this volume illustrate the importance of mysticism in the female experience of the divine. Clare of Assisi, even before her meeting Francis (1181-1226), had already acquired a reputation as a mystic, dedicating much of her time to contemplation, meditation and prayer; her deep conviction that her vocation was the will of God gave her the strength to struggle against all opposition to see her Franciscan ideal accepted. Similarly, Frenchwoman Marguerite Porete (c.1250-1310) wrote her *Mirror of Simple Annihilated Souls* in order to convey to others the lights she claimed she had received directly from God; she did not present herself as the self-willed author of the book, but rather, as Rina Lahav's

chapter reveals, 'as an annihilated self which ha[d] become the vessel of God's message'. Not unlike Clare of Assisi, Porete refused to stop pursuing her religious goals, and did not hesitate to disregard ecclesiastic censorship in order to be true to what she saw as her Godly duty to proselytise.

The motif of mystical revelation is problematic, since self-surrender to the perceived will of God could become the very cornerstone of female resistance to male authority. Women who, when speaking in their own names, self-consciously acknowledged the normative feminine ideals which subordinated them to the authority of clerics, became much less pliable when invested with what they saw as a divine mission. The language of self-surrender could be used as a discursive tool to deflect criticism or perhaps exhibit agency. In Spain, Teresa de Jesús's writings testified to her direct knowledge of God and edified not only her female followers but also her spiritual director and the clerics who surrounded her. Using what one literary scholar has called her 'pragmatic stylistics', she subtly turned the tables on the perceived spiritual weakness of women, in order to make it an asset.⁴² Teresa claimed that, since a woman's judgement was indeed feeble, she needed God's direct guidance. Therefore, when she obeyed His commands, all opposition was bound to be futile or misdirected.

Such convictions were to be found across Europe. Mary Ward's endeavours for the recatholicization of England following the Ignatian model found their source in a series of visions culminating in 1611 with what she described as the divine commandment to 'Take the Same of the Society'.⁴³ It was this revelation which gave her the determination to struggle against much opposition to see her Society of Jesus for women

established and recognized, since such was the will of God. Mary Ward described the feelings that compelled her, almost against her will, to leave behind the ideal of the so-called perfect life of monastic contemplation and forsake her personal inclinations in a gesture of self-offering.⁴⁴ Although the path indicated to her was not one which she had spontaneously chosen, she resolved to embrace it as her godly duty, and would not hear clerical injunctions to abandon her mission.

Such rhetoric of empowerment through mystical self-surrender was typically feminine and it persisted, although it became rarer, into the nineteenth century. Kate Stogdon's chapter demonstrates that in France, Thérèse Couderc used the motif of self-surrender to challenge ecclesial responses to her requests when she disagreed with the nature of the response. Couderc used the language of obedience and humility but remained insistent that the work of the congregation, giving retreats, needed guidance not from diocesan priests, but from the Jesuits.⁴⁵

Over the chronological span of this volume, the female spiritual voice was to be subject to increasing attempts of clerical control. Women's mysticism became the object of suspicion, especially after the confessional crisis of the sixteenth century when the developments of the Protestant Reformation 'led ecclesiastical figures to rally to the defence of their institutions, deflected the attention of many members of religious orders from promoting the cult of the "living saint" to the doctrinal controversy, and increased caution in preaching and in publicizing visions and spiritual doctrines that would soon come to seem suspect.'⁴⁶ Following both the Enlightenment's dedication to reason and the Catholic Church's efforts to

contain modes of spirituality which evaded its control, the status of mysticism gradually diminished. Although forms of female mysticism survived into the nineteenth and even the twentieth centuries, they did not enjoy the same kudos as in centuries past, and were neither celebrated nor publicised. The mystic visions and revelations of women such as Mary Potter (1847-1913), founder of the Little Company of Mary, were dismissed by otherwise supportive clergy as 'bouts of imagination'.⁴⁷

As the essays in this collection affirm, many women upset the gendered preconceptions and role-distributions of their age when they defended their religious writings or their apostolic works. Church authorities were unsettled by the unmediated nature of their expressions of piety, which sometimes bypassed its control or usurped the perceived preserves of the clergy. Hence, women's choices in their modes of spiritual experience came under close scrutiny.

Women's religious writings and teachings were particularly subject to caution; those who did not gain clerical support were to face insurmountable difficulties, trials, and sometimes condemnation.⁴⁸ As Rina Lahav's chapter shows, Marguerite Porete had chosen to write her *Mirror of Simple Annihilated Souls* using the form of a sermon. As she aimed to edify her audience, she followed typical prescriptions in sermon-writing, and in so doing she contravened several of the Church's conventions. Here was a woman who flouted the Pauline decree against women speaking publicly on religious subjects; moreover, what she taught was the result of her own immediate experience of God, and was not approved by Church officials.

Finally, and perhaps even more importantly, she had used 'male' means of instructing. Porete therefore challenged gender norms: she not only altered traditional exegesis to fit her new theology, which in itself threatened the teachings of the Church, but did this using a typically clerical standard of expression, the formulaic sermon. Yet Porete did not seem to accept the gendered limitations imposed upon her work, and she defended her right to speak in public. When her work was condemned by the Inquisition, she refused to stop her teaching. For refusing to heed the Pauline order enjoining women to be silent, and for transgressing perceived female religious limitations, she paid the ultimate price and was executed in 1310.

In the context of the so-called Counter-Reformation, Mary Ward also believed that her divine revelations empowered her to speak and act despite the social and religious restrictions imposed upon women. Her uncompromising stance regarding the capabilities of the female self lends itself to a radical understanding of the agency of women. Ward identified women's abilities and failings and saw them as no different than men's. She wrote: 'There is no such difference between men and women, that women may not do great matters, as we have seen by the example of many Saints who have done great things, and I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much.'⁴⁹ Clearly, she saw no issue with women's agency, autonomy and leadership, especially in the urgent circumstances of the Catholic struggle against Protestant progress.

Ward's superseding of gendered limitations to pragmatic efficacy in times of crisis echoed the famous words of one she would have recognized as a female exemplar, the Spanish Teresa de Jesús. Even as a recognized

mystic, Teresa de Jesús required male approval for her writings, although they were directed at her female subordinates and aimed to teach and inspire other women. In the *Way to Perfection*, Teresa defended women's spiritual rights, reminding her readers that Jesus gave women as much love as he did men, and even credited them with more faith. Empowered by her direct, mystical 'knowledge of God', she used her authoritative voice to share her knowledge with religious men. She denounced men's despotism over the religious endeavours of women, which she claimed went contrary to God's will: 'I see that times are so bad that it is not right to reject virtuous and strong spirits, even if they be women'. These words are highly reminiscent of those written by Mary Ward in the seventeenth century. Yet, as Elizabeth Rhodes's chapter demonstrates, Teresa went further than to claim the recognition of female worth in the Church: she actually critiqued male spiritual guidance, which she argued led to risks to the souls of women. She criticized their lack of confidentiality (which if gendered female would be identified as gossiping) and their need for humility in accepting God's will when they were not favoured with spiritual gifts. She actively attempted to redefine masculinity by transmitting her spiritual values to men. In leaving this book as a legacy to her sisters, she was expecting them also to play a role in the 'management of masculinity'.

Yet Teresa was ever cautious when she dealt with the religious politics of gender: aware of gendered constraints imposed upon female religious writing, she used 'a pattern of linguistic choice motivated by deliberate strategies and constrained by social roles'.⁵⁰ By appropriating what male authorities defined as the acceptable language of women, a low-key, humble

style, she appeared both unpretentious and unthreatening. Such precaution, she knew, was essential since, to some men such as the nuncio Felipe Sega, she was guilty of teaching others against the Pauline prohibition.⁵¹ Yet when she spoke as a 'little woman', she deflected opposition by endorsing patriarchal preconceptions of female acceptability as a vehicle for a message which remained, nevertheless, very personal, unorthodox and powerful.

As Jenna Lay's essay also illustrates, female writings could wield considerable charismatic authority. Reading was an important form of spirituality which fed the spirituality of contemplative sisters, and women such as Barbara Constable (1617-84) contributed to the corpus of reading material available for nuns to study. Thus, communal spirituality was shared through 'learning, example and instruction.' Spiritual reading and contemplative prayer acted as an intermediary between God and the reader, and when Constable established her own 'interpretative authority', her writings came to play an important mediating role between the penitent and the divine, a role which would normally have been the preserve of the clergy. However, Lay also notes that Constable employed the modesty topos to disguise her authority. Moreover, Barbara Constable's advice 'to Preachers' and 'for missionaries' added her voice to discourses of 'contemporary religious politics and spiritual controversies'. Her work was not simply for private convent consumption; she meant it for a wider audience. Like Teresa de Jesús, she wanted to influence those outside the convent with her ideas on spiritual direction and her theories on the nature of religious authority.

As the chapters on Barbara Constable and Teresa de Jesús illustrate, women's religious writings could sometimes become effective forms of communication which breached the divide between the convent and the world. However, such female writings were rarely allowed to become authoritative, since women's use of 'male' modes of expression continued to be condemned by the Church throughout the ages. Women were therefore forced to create their own avenues of expression. In the nineteenth-century, they circumvented their exclusion from the pulpit and from formalized theological training by utilizing other forms of literary genres to develop and communicate theological ideas. Since formal sermons and treatises were declared masculine theological discourses, women used the language of more acceptable literary devices, such as the essay or article which appeared in the periodical press, the letter, the novel or the devotional manual, to assert their theology.⁵² Nancy Cho's essay establishes that women also communicated their faith through vernacular hymn-writing which, as an acceptable form of feminine labour, provided a versatile means of communicating complex theology in more accessible language. Cho suggests Catholic women appropriated this medium and used it not only to explain theological precepts, but also to raise awareness of social concerns and to educate Catholics, particularly children, about their faith. Female Catholic hymn-writers were both lay women and women religious and their hymns served to document their Catholic spirituality. These hymns were used to advocate Catholic devotions, instruct about doctrinal ideas, commemorate the English recusant past and controversially, to pray for the conversion of England. Cho suggests that Catholic female hymn-writers

used the Virgin Mary as a frequent *topos*. Mary was the archetype of the feminine divine and provided for a more gynocentric spirituality enabling hymn singers to reflect on the valuable female roles in the history of Catholicism. So Catholic women, barred from other avenues of expression reserved to the clergy, found in hymn-writing a means to disseminate their own approach to spirituality.

Conclusions

Spirituality represents an important nexus through which women have been socially constituted and ideologically stimulated. The essays in this volume highlight the diversity of women's spiritualities, showing that Catholic women were not always satisfied with the normative modes of spirituality defined by the Church. Religious women throughout history expanded the boundaries of institutional and spiritual life, creating for themselves new, flexible identities. Authorities in Rome attempted to organize, to control and to standardize. Female responses to such normative control varied greatly. Some women needed to be true to their spiritual identities, or to follow their personal message from God, while others adapted their ideals to conform to Church standards. Whilst some, such as Mary Ward, claimed institutional boundaries, others such as the Dutch spiritual virgins and widows refused them. Yet, although ultimate 'success' did depend on a measure of institutional orthodoxy, the continuous pressures of testing the boundaries slowly altered the parameters of religious life.

The women discussed in this volume therefore share much in common, despite the specificities of their national contexts or even beyond the

changes which transformed female Catholic life over time. Considered together, these case studies indicate that women did not shrink from facing overwhelming odds to achieve their goals and determine their own spiritual lives. In the process, they developed an expertise in certain areas such as charity, schooling or nursing, and they found a specifically female voice through gendered modes of spiritual expression.

Yet women's tendency to disregard considerations of status or gendered role distributions, and their ability to respond to particular sets of circumstances in a pragmatic way may invite us to reconsider the very paradigm of gender in female Catholic life. In the same way as they transcend the binary oppositions between enclosed and non enclosed, contemplation and action, religious and secular, these women somewhat point to a spirituality of a 'third gender', one in which the dichotomy between male and female was seen as reductive.⁵³ Women often went beyond this rigid gendered separation to undertake whatever form of religious life they believed to be suited to themselves and to their particular, local circumstances. When they bemoaned ecclesiastical control or denounced rules imposed by men, did they seek to rehabilitate the feminine, or did they indicate that they preferred an inclusive view of spirituality, free of gendered divisions?

In this introduction, we have attempted to sketch out what we see as the parameters of women's spirituality; in so doing, we were influenced by the steadily growing body of research on Catholic women's spirituality. Yet, we are also aware that there is much more research that needs to be completed.

We hope this volume encourages others to question and explore the dynamic qualities of women's spiritualities.

¹ Women religious is the term used to refer to both contemplative nuns who took solemn vows and lived a life of prayer within an enclosed community and active sisters, who took simple vows and whose apostolic work, typically teaching or nursing, occurred outside convent walls.

² Their website is located at <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Bedford-Centre/history-women-religious/>.

³ *St James Bible*, 1 Cor. 2:13, 15; Eph. 1:3.

⁴ U. King, 'Religion and Gender: Embedded Patterns, Interwoven Frameworks', in T.A. Meade and M.E. Weisner-Hanks (eds) *A Companion to Gender History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 72, 76.

⁵ P. Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 210.

⁶ A. B. Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Mary of Oignies, Mother of Salvation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

⁷ P. Ranft, *Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 65-7.

⁸ M. E. Weisner, *Women and Gender in Premodern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 216.

⁹ F. Medioli, 'An Unequal Law: The enforcement of clausura before and after the Council of Trent', in C. Meek (ed.), *Women in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 136-52.

¹⁰ M. Weisner, *Women and Gender*, p. 217.

¹¹ E. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922)

¹² Session 25, 3-4 December 1563, in N. Tanner (ed.) *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), vol. 2 p. 778. Also, E. Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and its Commentators, 1298-1545* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

¹³ On the tensions between the cloister and the apostolate for religious women, see E. Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-century France* (Kingston, Ont: McGill, Queen's University Press, 1990) and R. Liebowitz, 'Virgins in the Service of Christ: The Dispute over an Active Apostolate for Women during the Counter-Reformation', in R. Radford Ruether (ed.) *Women of Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp. 131-52.

¹⁴ Liebowitz, 'Virgins in the Service of Christ', pp. 31-52 and E. Rapley, 'Women and the Religious Vocation in Seventeenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies*, 18.3 (1994) pp. 613-31.

¹⁵ J. O'Faolain and L. Martines, *Not in God's Image* (London: Virago, 1979).

¹⁶ T. Ledochowska, *Angèle Merici et la compagnie de sainte Ursule à la lumière des documents*, 2 vols (Rome: Ancora Press, 1967).

¹⁷ For a sweeping study, see J.A.K McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholics Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,

1996). For the early modern era, see L. Evangelisti, *Nuns: A History of Conventual Life, 1450-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and C. Van Wyhe, *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe. An Interdisciplinary View* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). For influential analyses of monastic life in specific countries, see H. Hills, *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and C. Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2003).

¹⁸ Evangelisti, *Nuns*.

¹⁹ L. Jarrell, O.S.U., *The Development of Legal Structures for Women Religious Between 1500 and 1900: A Study of Selected Institutes of Religious Life for Women* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Catholic University of America, 1984), pp. 26-8.

²⁰ Rapley, *The Dévotes*, pp. 195 and 41.

²¹ C. Orth, *The Approbation of Religious Institutes* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1931), p. 54. The Munich convent of the English Ladies clashed with the Bishop of Augsburg over issues of authority. The matter was adjudicated by Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) whose response in *Quamvis Justo* served to give tacit approval to congregations and recognised the authority of the superior of a congregation in certain matters.

²² J. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

²³ Weisner, *Women and Gender*.

²⁴ Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 63.

²⁵ McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*.

²⁶ G. Zarri, 'The Third Status', in A. Jacobson Schutte, T. Kuehn, S. Seidel Menchi (eds), *Time, Space and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2001), p. 182.

²⁷ W. Sheepsma and D. F. Johnson, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries: The Modern Devotion, the Canonesses of Windesheim, and their Writings* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004).

²⁸ M. Caffiero, 'From the Late Baroque Mystical Explosion to the social apostolate, 1650-1850', in L. Scaraffia and G. Zarri (eds), *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 193.

²⁹ K. Stogdon, 'A Journey with Thérèse Couderc: Inspiration, Liability or Possibility for Change?', *Feminist Theology*, 16: 2 (2008), p. 211.

³⁰ Rapley, *The Dévotes*, p.16.

³¹ A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1981).

³² D. Weinstein and R. M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

³³ C. Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), p. 68.

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- ³⁴ See F. W. J. Koorn, 'Women without Vows: The Case of the Beguines and the Sisters of the Common Life in the Northern Netherlands', in E. Schulte van Kessel (ed.), *Women and Men in Spiritual Culture, XV-XVII Centuries, A Meeting of North and South* (The Hague: Netherlands Government Publishing Office, 1986). Male communities formed in this model did exist, but they were not numerous.
- ³⁵ Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p. 69.
- ³⁶ Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe*.
- ³⁷ C. Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin: les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au XIX e siècle* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1984).
- ³⁸ H. Mills. "'Saintes soeurs" and "femmes fortes": Alternative Accounts of the Route to Womanly Civic Virtue, and the History of French Feminism', in C. Campbell Orr (ed.), *Wollstonecraft's Daughters: Womanhood in England and France 1780-1920* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 145-6.
- ³⁹ M. Luddy, 'Religion, Philanthropy and the State in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Ireland', in H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to 1850* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 49.
- ⁴⁰ F. Lannon, *Persecution, Privilege, and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 61.
- ⁴¹ Caffiero, 'From the Late Baroque Mystical Explosion', p. 204.
- ⁴² A. Weber, *Teresa of Ávila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- ⁴³ Letter to the Nuncio Antonio Albergati, c.1621, in C. Kenworthy-Browne (ed.), *Mary Ward, 1585-1645: A Brief Relation with Autobiographical Fragment and a Selection of Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), p. 146.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin*.
- ⁴⁶ G. Zarri, 'Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century' in D. Bornstein and R. Rusconi (eds), *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 248.
- ⁴⁷ E. A. West, *One Woman's Journey: Mary Potter Founder - Little Company of Mary* (Richmond, Victoria, Australia: Spectrum Publications, 2000) pp. xii, 42, 103
- ⁴⁸ D. Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004).
- ⁴⁹ *Three speeches of our Reverend Mother Chief Superior made at St Omer having been long absent*, in U. Dirmeier CJ (ed.), *Mary Ward, und ihre Gründung. Die Quellentexte bis 1645*, 4 vols (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2007), vol. 1, p. 358.
- ⁵⁰ Weber, *Teresa of Ávila*, p. 15.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁵² J. Melnyk, 'Introduction', in J. Melnyk (ed.), *Women's Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of Their Fathers* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), pp. xii-xvi.
- ⁵³ McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*.