M. Bartoli, *Saint Clare: Beyond the Legend*

**Notes**

p. 58, Clare’s tonsure was not a monastic consecration but a penitential gesture. Clare did not become a nun but a penitent, a “religious woman” (*mulier religiosa/mulier devota*). Francis and the brothers at that time were also only penitents and they accepted Clare as one of their own.

pp. 70-71, description of what it means to be a penitent and why they wanted that: For Francis penance became the fundamental human condition. For him to be a man meant to be a man of penance because a relationship with God is implicit in our being human. From this it follows that to be in relationship with God means to be less, to be humble, a sinner, a penitent. Penance is the condition of one who knows God, the only condition possible for us before God....

Recall the original meaning of “penance” (the Greek *metanoia*) as a “change of mind/heart,” a “mental turnaround.”

p. 60, Clare entered the abbey of San Paolo delle Abbedesse not as a nun but as a servant, a *conversa*.

pp. 62-63, the church officially recognized the status of a “religious woman” for women who had begun penance at home, not only for those who entered monasteries as nuns. The same protection was enjoyed by Francis.

p. 65, status as a penitent was guaranteed by the Church which offered special protection and considered the penitent an ecclesiastical person and exempt from civil jurisdiction.

p. 68, before Clare and the sisters moved to San Damiano she understood herself to be simply a penitent; after they moved to San Damiano she begins to think of hers and the sisters’ life as a new community, more along the lines of an enclosed monastic community (the term “abbess” used in her *Testament* and the *Rule of Clare*). This was in fact the only path available to religious women in the Middle Ages.

p. 69, the juridical/canonical situation of Clare’s community was unclear as Francis had no canonical authority in the church; p. 70, Clare’s *Testament* and *Rule* contradict the *Early Rule* of the friars, which explicitly said that they are not to receive into obedience any women. Clare wanted to stress that Francis made an exception for her and her sisters.

p. 77, elements of asceticism and body mortification were present in penitential movements of the time, various penitents “competing” for being most austere. Women in fact took the lead in this competition because they were seen as weaker than men and tried to prove that they were just as capable (see echoes of this in Clare’s *Letters to Agnes of Prague*).

A general note on Clare and the papacy: Clare’s *Testament, Rule*, and letters show a continuous struggle between her community and the church authorities about the “no possessions” clause on the one hand, and the different position of women in the Middle Ages compared to that of men.