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In the late ninth century, the nuns of Monheim played an active role in the evangelisation of south-eastern Germany by promoting the cult of Walpurgis and by providing accommodation for the many pilgrims who made their way to Monheim. Furthermore, the nuns of Monheim devised their own liturgical forms to cope with all those pilgrims, and in the absence of any priest, it was the abbess herself who said blessings over them. This may seem a strange point from which to begin a discussion on gender and conversion in the circle of Boniface. The case of Monheim, however, raises in sharp detail the culmination of a phenomenon whose origins, I would argue, are well rooted in the time and circle of Boniface: namely, the interesting and crucial role played by nuns in early medieval society. My purpose in this paper is to ask whether there was a change in Gaul in the second half of the eighth century in the way that the missionary work was understood by Boniface himself and by his contemporaries, and how such a change influenced the role played by women in the missionary circle of Boniface.

Boniface and conversion

Let me first fill in the historical background. The history of the Frankish Church in the first half of the eighth century was dominated by the activities of missionaries, who had emerged, relatively suddenly, as the new dominant figures in the ecclesiastical history of the Frank-
ish kingdom. Foremost among those missionaries was Wynfrith, ‘an impressive but troubled’ Anglo-Saxon who, after an abortive missionary expedition to Frisia in 716, returned to Hesse and Thuringia two years later charged by Pope Gregory II ‘to teach the heathens’. This time he was also given the new name of Boniface. The abundant and explicit evidence concerning Boniface and his activities — the vitae of Boniface himself and of his Anglo-Saxon followers as well as his copious correspondence — might give the false impression that Boniface was sent by the Pope to convert the heathens in a virgin pagan territory.

Reality, however, was quite different. From other contemporary sources and thanks to modern research it is now clear that the regions to which Boniface was sent and in which he operated were far from

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being pagan, nor was he the only missionary working there. In fact, Boniface hardly converted any pagans to Christianity. A close examination of the sources reveals that Boniface was mainly preoccupied with the enhancement of ecclesiastical rules and regulations and with the reorganisation of the Frankish Church. Like Caesarius of Arles two hundred years before him, Boniface wanted to bring the Frankish Church into line with ecclesiastical norms from which he thought it had deviated. Thus, promoting Roman norms in doctrine, canon law, and liturgy in an already Christianised territory, rather than Christianising pagan tribes, was the heart of Boniface's labour on the Continent.

At a fairly early stage of his mission, Boniface travelled to Rome to seek the Pope's approval for his activities, and supported by the early Carolingians he completed the reorganisation of the Church east of the Rhine by the early 740s. Under the auspices of Carloman, Boniface became one of the most influential bishops in the Frankish kingdom, but not for long. After Carloman's retirement to the monastery of Monte Casino in Italy, Boniface seems to have had little access to the Frankish court and consequently little influence on the Frankish Church. Only then Boniface embarked on a more 'traditional' mission-


ary activity among the pagans of north Frisia, where he was murdered in 754 near Dokkum shortly after arriving there.\(^\text{11}\)

Against this background, one has to redefine the term 'mission' in order for it to fit the work of Boniface and his followers. The idea of 'mission' as the conversion of pagans into Christianity is far too blunt an analytical model with which to dissect the role of Boniface and his pupils.\(^\text{12}\) Resorting to such a notion of 'mission' ignores both the multiformality of Boniface's activities and the limited role he had in converting pagan people. After all, Boniface was nothing like Martin of Tours.\(^\text{13}\) Therefore, I would suggest, we should understand 'mission' in the Bonifacian context as the inculcation of certain Christian ideas and norms, and as the instillation of Christian values, beliefs and practices in an already Christianised society. Bearing this in mind, it is well justified to use the term 'mission' to describe the various activities of Boniface and his disciples. This sort of activity, which preoccupied Boniface most of his time on the Continent, had some important implications regarding the instruments Boniface and his followers deployed in order to achieve their goal.

**The role of monasteries**

The promotion of Christianity within the Frankish kingdoms went hand in hand with the foundation of monasteries, for monasteries served as pastoral centres as well as missionary stations, where many of the leading missionaries were monks and ascetics.\(^\text{14}\) Boniface did not

\(^{11}\) WILLIBALD, *Vita Bonifatii*, c. 8.

\(^{12}\) There is an abundant literature concerning the definition and meaning of conversion in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. For a useful summary, see D. Praet, 'Explaining the Christianisation of the Roman Empire', *Sacris Erudiri* 33 (1992-3), pp. 5-119; see also Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*, A.D. 481-751 (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1995), pp. 155-7.


fail to notice that, and many monasteries, notably Fulda, Fritzlar, Tauberbischofsheim, Ochsenfurt, Hersfeld, Karlburg and Holzkirchen, were established by him or his followers in the regions of his activity, while charismatic learned men and women from Anglo-Saxon England, as well as from Francia, Thuringia and Bavaria were recruited to lead those newly founded communities. According to Rudolf of Fulda, Boniface wanted monasteries to be established so that people would be attracted to the Church through them:

> When the blessed man saw that the church of God was increasing and that the desire for perfection was firmly rooted he established two means by which religious progress should be ensured. He began to build monasteries, so that the people would be attracted to the church not only by the beauty of its religion but also by the communities of monks and nuns.

In other words, Boniface envisaged that monastic communities would participate in the conversion of the laity, especially of the countryside, and so aid the growth of the Church. The result of the monastic development which occurred in the Frankish Kingdom under the influence of Boniface is extremely significant, for the monastery became a rallying-point for the rural lay society and the high Christian standards aimed at by Boniface. Consequently, monks and nuns became the facilitators for the creation of new religious allegiances and new religious patterns of observance, as we shall see. Although some precedents to these new developments can be observed in the work of Amandus, who founded and encouraged the foundation of several monasteries, Boniface's age seems to mark a change in missionary attitudes, which

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16. See Willibald, Vita Bonifatii, c. 6; Rudolf of Fulda, Vita Leobaee Abbatisae Bischofesheimensis, c. 11, ed. G. Watz, MGH SS XV:1 (Hannover, 1887), pp. 121-131. For an English translation, see Talbot ed., The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries, pp. 205-26 [reprinted with introduction and notes in Noble and Head eds., Soldiers of Christ, pp. 255-77]. On the fact that most of these men and women were closely connected by friendship and kinship, see Mckitterick, Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany, pp. 10-27.
17. Rudolf of Fulda, Vita Leobaee, c. 10: 'Videns itaque vir beatissimae ecclesiae Dei crescere et certantibus studiis ad vota perfectionis accendi, duplicem viam ad perfectum religionis instituens, monasteria construere coepit, ut ad idem catholico populi non tam ecclesiae gratia quam monachorum ac virginum congregatio-nibus raperentur'.
18. It is worth noting that such a role envisaged for monasteries indicates that there was not a close adherence to the Benedictine rule.
19. On Amandus and his work, see E. de Moreau, Saint Amand: Apôtre de la Belgique et du nord de la France (Louvain, 1927); P. Riché, 'Amand d'Elmone', in Iadem
involved a whole new perception of the role of monasteries and nunneries in the Frankish kingdoms.

This new situation in which the monastic community became the focal point of the missionary activity entailed some implications regarding the role played by women, and more precisely by nuns. Boniface, it seems, did not see any difference between male and female monastic communities, at least as far as the missionary activity was concerned. According to Rudolf, both monks and nuns were to share the burden, and in a letter to abbess Bugga Boniface himself refers explicitly to ‘soldiers of Christ from both sexes’ (milites Christi utriusque sexus). As already noted by Henrietta Leyser, ‘high on the list of obstacles which Boniface encountered were shortage of helpers and shortage of books and although women could not of course become priests, they could still do much to remedy both defects’. Thus, it is not at all surprising to find nuns and nunneries playing a central role in Boniface’s missionary scheme. Nuns were regarded by Boniface as co-missionaries, and nunneries were destined to become conversionary and pastoral centres like any other male community in the Frankish kingdom.
The case of Leoba

We can penetrate rather deeper into this world through one of the hagiographical texts relating to Boniface and his disciples, namely the *Vita Leobae*, composed by the monk Rudolf of Fulda at about 838, and dedicated to a certain nun named Hadamout. At the very beginning of the preface Rudolf bluntly declares his didactic purpose. ‘... I have written about the life and virtues of the holy and revered virgin Leoba ...’, he writes to Hadamout ‘... in order that you have something to read with pleasure and imitate with profit’. The didactic aim of this composition and the fact that in writing it Rudolf drew heavily on earlier hagiographical works, mainly the *Vita Sancti Martini* by Sulpicius Severus, the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, and the fifth-century life of Bishop Germanus of Auxerre, led some scholars to question the veracity of Rudolf's narrative.

Stephanie Hollis, for example, emphasising Rudolf's didactic purpose and personal preoccupation, argues that Rudolf refashioned Leoba's life in order that it might serve as an exemplar for monastic women in an age of rigidly segregated and enclosed female monastic communities. Thus, Rudolf was reluctant to present monastic women participating in missionary activity, simply because it entailed interaction with the laity, which Rudolf's own monastic ideal disproved. His solution, according to Hollis, was to reconcile truth with didactic purposes and, consequently, to present Leoba as a miracle worker. Julia Smith, on the other hand, stressing the subordination of Carolingian hagiographers to the literary conventions of Late Antiquity, argues that Rudolf submerged Leoba within a traditional, male texture. The fact that Rudolf had to construct Leoba's life within the dominant male hagiographical tradition, for no conventions for the writing of fe-


29. Ibid., pp. 213-4.

male hagiography developed in the early Middle Ages, led Smith to wonder ‘how much relationship, if any, this image of Leoba bore to the real story of her life’.31

Both approaches, the one which understands Rudolf’s *Vita Leobae* as a compromise and the other which regards it as a textual fabrication, highlight our difficulty to determine the relations between Rudolf’s text and the changing reality of Leoba’s time. It has to be acknowledge that we are dealing with a ninth-century composition which, on the one hand, projects a certain image of Leoba and her activities, but on the other hand should not be accepted at face value as an accurate reflection of reality. In other words, Leoba’s image in Rudolf’s *Vita Leobae* suits the ideals of Rudolf’s own time and of Fulda’s monks two generations after Boniface. Hence, although Boniface’s legacy had a lot to do with Rudolf’s views and standards, one has to remember that we are looking at Leoba and her nuns through Rudolf’s ninth-century prism.

These reservations, however, must not be taken to imply that the *Vita Leobae* lacks any historical or documentary value. In fact, Leoba’s case, as pointed out by Janet Nelson, is a very interesting one. ‘For she does not fit the usual categories of earlier medieval female sanctity. ... Nor is her *vita* a mere compound of hagiographic topoi. On the contrary, its distinctive details lend it some claim of authenticity’.32 Furthermore, Rudolf goes out of his way to establish the credibility of his sources, which are primarily the notes taken by the priest Mago and by some other monks who had interviewed Leoba’s four disciples - Agatha, Thecla, Nana and Eoloba.33 Thus, Rudolf is careful to place himself as close as possible to the people who knew Leoba herself and, by implication, to eliminate any scepticism concerning his sources that might damage the credibility of his account. It is well justified, then, to use the *Vita Leobae* in order to look for the role played by women in the circle of Boniface, as reflected in Rudolf’s own ideals; and indeed an interesting picture of the close involvement of nuns in the conversion of lay society emerges from it.

Rudolf begins his account of Leoba’s life with a long description of the double-monastery at Wimbourne in Dorset, where Leoba spent

most of her youth under the tutelage of Abbess Tetta. 34 Leoba gradually became famous for her learning and piety, on account of which Boniface sent letters to Tetta, asking for Leoba to be sent to help him in his mission. 35 According to Rudolf, Boniface ‘knew that by her holiness and wisdom she would confer many benefits by her word and example’, 36 and shortly after her arrival she was given the abbacy of Tauberbischofsheim. 37 The presence of Leoba and her nuns introduced a new constant religious element into the neighbourhood of Tauberbischofsheim and three incidents, on which Rudolf reports, give us a rare glimpse of Leoba and her nuns at work.

The first story to shed some light on the matter is described by Rudolf as an attempt made by the devil to destroy the nuns’ good reputation. 38 One night, the poor little crippled girl, who sat by the gate of the nunnery begging alms, drowned her newborn baby in a pool by the river that flowed near the monastery. When the body was discovered early in the morning, the whole village, burning with rage, reproached the nuns. ‘Look for the one who is missing from the monastery’, suggested one woman, ‘and then you will find out who is responsible for this crime’. 39 Needless to say, the nuns were shocked by the harsh accusation brought up against them, and Leoba in her distress, ordered them all ‘to go to the chapel and to stand with their arms extended in the form of a cross until each one of them had sung through the whole Psalter, then three times a day, at tierce, sext and none, to go round the monastic buildings in procession with the crucifix at their hands, calling upon God to free them, in his mercy, from this accusations’. 40 After the third procession Leoba went straight to the altar and,

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34. On the early life of Leoba, see RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, cc. 2-9.
35. From Leoba’s own letter to Boniface (dated by Tangl to soon after 732) she seems to be based at the nunnery at Minster in Thanet, see BONIFACE, Epistola 29, pp. 52-3.
36. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 10: ‘... propter sanctitatem vitae et sapientiae doctrinam, qua plurimi et verbo profuturam noverat et exemplo’. The notion of docere verbo et exemplo goes back at least to Gregory the Great’s Regula pastoralis. See, for example, R. MARKUS, Gregory the Great and his World (Cambridge, 1997), especially pp. 17-33.
37. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 11.
38. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 12.
39. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 12: ‘Videte, videte, quam ex eis monasterio desit, et eam scelus hoc perpetrasse cognoscite!’
40. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 12: ‘... praecepit omnibus oratorium ingredi, et extensis in crucis modum brachiis stare, quoadusque singularum psalterium totum ex ordine psallendo complerent; et deinde per tres vices in die, hoc est hora tertia, sexta et nona, vexillo crucis elato, cum laetanis monasterium circuere et pro purgatione sua divinam misericordiam invocare’.
stretching her hands to heaven, begged God to reveal the truth. Immediately afterwards, the little girl, ‘the dupe and the tool of the devil’, as Rudolf calls her, seemed to be surrounded with flames and confessed her crime.

Far from being a mere miracle story, this incident illustrates the circumstances and the slow change of mentality by which Leoba came to play a central role in the region. Settled with her nuns in Tauberbischofsheim, Leoba provided the inhabitants of the area with a spectacle of stunning asceticism. It was a spectacle that was closely watched by the lay population of the neighbourhood, and that raised strong feelings of respect and admiration. These feelings, which gradually began to evolve in the hearts of the people, are apparent even through the veil of the acerbic remarks that one of the villager women made:

Oh, what a chaste community! How admirable is the life of nuns, who beneath their veils give birth to children and exercise at the same time the function of mothers and priests, baptising those to whom they have given birth. ... Now go and ask those women, whom you compliment by calling them virgins, to remove this corpse from the river and make it fit for us to use again.

Raising feelings of admiration and respect, which then will draw the laity closer to the Christian belief and the Christian church, was precisely the rationale that stood behind Boniface's plan, as Rudolf perceived it, to use monasteries and nunneries as missionary instruments — 'so that the people would be attracted to the church not only by the beauty of its religion but also by the communities of monks and nuns'.

Leoba and her followers, then, must have impressed the inhabitants of the region with their prolonged ascetic labour, and the question that

41. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 12: 'antiqui hostis et captiva pariter et ministra'.
42. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 11
43. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 12: ‘O quam casta congregatio, quam gloriosa conversatio virgínís, quae sub velo posítæ filíos paríunt, et matrüm paríter ac presbíterorum fungentes officio, eósdem quo/n gêneriunt ipseae baptízant! ... Nunc ergo rogate eas, quam virgínin appellatíone sublimare soletis, ut tollentes cadáver de flu/mine nobis aquam reddant usíbilem’. On the basis of this passage, Stephanie Hollis came to the conclusion that ‘Leoba and her nuns may have carried out lay baptisms because there was a shortage of priests'; see Hollis, Anglo-Saxon Women, p. 289. Such an assertion is extremely difficult to confirm because of the total lack of evidence. It is reasonable to assume that if such an act were indeed performed by the nuns, one would have heard about it from contemporary sources, such as Boniface's own correspondence or the Frankish Church councils.
44. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 10.
needs asking here is: why were the nuns the first to be blamed for the scandalous crime? Is it just because the river flowed by their monastery, or should another explanation be sought?

According to Rudolf, exposing the crime of the crippled girl was Leoba’s first miracle in Germany, which implies that the whole incident happened at a fairly early stage of Leoba’s residence at Tauberbischofsheim. If that is the case, then it is not surprising that when such a crime occurred and threatened to break the village’s social harmony, the nuns, as a newly imposed element in the region, were the first to be blamed. The process through which the nuns secured a central role within society was not yet completed in Tauberbischofsheim. Indeed it is arguable that by that stage the nunnery had already become part of the social texture of the region, not only because beggars were gathered at its gates, but also because the nuns were held in high esteem. Nevertheless, it was too early for them to achieve an unquestionable status.

That such a status was obtained, is revealed by another incident, on which Rudolf reports. Once, a severe storm came up, the sky was obscured by dark clouds that day seemed turned into night, and terrible lightening and thunderbolts struck terror into the heart of everyone. The villagers, shaking with fear and believing that Doomsday has come, were driven into their houses for shelter. When the storm worsened, they all fled to the church, where Leoba tried to calm them. She promised that no harm would come to them, and asked them all to join her in her prayers. However, when the people could not endure the noise and the wind any more, they rushed to the altar where Leoba was praying to seek her protection. Only after her kinswoman, Thecla, had spoken to her, did Leoba rise, pray to the Virgin Mary, and the storm die out.

In this account, Leoba and her nuns already secured for themselves a paramount religious role within the region of Tauberbischofsheim. Furthermore, Leoba herself is portrayed as an indisputable spiritual leader, whom the villagers considered to be their ultimate protector. This impression is confirmed by Thecla’s own words to Leoba: ‘be-

45. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 12.
46. The reaction of the horrified villagers suggests that infanticide was not as common as thought by several scholars, such as E. Coleman, ‘Infanticide in the Early Middle Ages’, in S.M. Stuard ed., Woman in Medieval Society (Pennsylvania, 1976), pp. 47-70.
47. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 14.
loved, all the hope of these people lies in you; you are their only support.'

As pointed out by Peter Brown, 'the average believers were encouraged to draw comfort from the expectation that, somewhere, in their own times ... a chosen few ... had achieved, usually through prolonged ascetic labour, an exceptional degree of closeness to God'. Such a belief gave rise to unassuming and direct expectations for help and comfort from religious persons. In the region of Tauberbischofsheim, it was the nuns, and foremost among them Leoba, who were regarded by the people as closer to God, and therefore in a better position to pray on behalf of the entire population. That is why the villagers took refuge in the church, which was most probably inside the monastery itself, and that is exactly why they rushed to Leoba to seek her protection.

That Leoba and the nuns of Tauberbischofsheim were perceived in such a way by the inhabitants of the region is confirmed by yet another incident reported by Rudolf. This time a great fire broke out in the village next to the monastery. Most of the wooden houses were consumed by the flames, and the fire spread with increasing rapidity towards the monastery. The terrified villagers ran in a mob to Leoba, begging her to avert the danger which threatened them. Leoba calmed their fears, and ordered them to take a bucket and bring some water from the stream that flowed by the monastery. She then sprinkled some salt blessed by Boniface into the water, ordering the people to pour back the water into the upper part of the spring, and to draw water from the lower part to throw into the fire.

Here again, Leoba appears as the saviour of the people and, as Peter Brown would have put it, an 'arbiter of the holy'. No doubt that the villagers at the neighbourhood of Tauberbischofsheim regarded Leoba as a genuine spiritual figure and a representative of a superior power. Her reputation as a miracle worker must have spread throughout the region after her first public miracle which, as Rudolf relates, 'came to the ears of everyone'. Leoba's miracles, although presented

48. Rudolf of Fulda, Vita Leobae, c. 14: 'O dilecta, dilecta, in te opes populi huius, in te votorum summa consistit'.
50. Ibid., pp. 58 and 61.
51. Rudolf of Fulda, Vita Leobae, c. 13.
52. Brown, Authority and the Sacred, p. 60.
53. Rudolf of Fulda, Vita Leobae, c. 12: 'hoc autem in Germania primum et ideo celebre, quia publicum fuit'.
by Rudolf as dramatic and utterly exceptional, were no more than logical reactions to the various situations. After all, what can be more natural than distracting the attention of the terrified villagers by prayers until the storm had passed, or pouring water on a fire. Yet, even that could not impair Leoba’s reputation, for, as already noted by Thomas Hobbes, ‘reputation of power is power, for it draweth to itself those who seek protection’. Leoba, it seems, came to play a crucial role in the imagination of the people around Tauberbischofsheim, for she made the heavenly power present at her own time and place.

The role assumed by Leoba and her nuns seems, in more than one way, to resemble the role played by the holy man in Late Antiquity, as described and refined recently by Peter Brown. Thus, Leoba appears ‘less ... as an arbiter and as a patron, than a rallying-point — a facilitator for the creation of new religious allegiances and of new religious pattern of observance’. This is exactly what Boniface had in mind when he pondered upon using monasteries as missionary instruments. Under Leoba Tauberbischofsheim was actively and successfully engaged in missionary work and, as Rudolf reports, the miracles performed by Leoba inspired devotion among the inhabitants of the region:

The people’s faith was stimulated by such tokens of holiness, and as religious feelings increased so did contempt of the world. Many nobles and influential men gave their daughters to God to live in the monastery in perpetual chastity; many widows also forsook their homes, made vows of chastity, and took the veil in the cloister. To all of these the holy virgin pointed out both by word and example how to reach the heights of perfection.

56. BROWN, Authority and the Sacred, p. 60
57. RUDOLF OF FULDA, Vita Leobae, c. 16: ‘Talibus igitur virtutum signis fides in populis succensa fervebat, et crescente religione crevit simul et mundi contemptus. Multi enim nobiles et potentes viri filias suas Deo in monasterio sub perpetua virtutis signis et munere sancte servitutis tradiderunt, multaque matronae, relictae saeculari conversatione, castitatem profitebantur, et suscepto velamine sacro, monasticam vitam elegerunt; quibus virgo sancta et summa virtutum veniendi et verbo viam praeceperunt et exemplum’. The donation of Children to a monastery was perceived in the circle of Boniface as an evidence for the monastery’s good reputation. In his Life of Sturm, Eigil relates that soon after Boniface’s mission in southern Bavaria got under way, ‘... coeperunt ei certatim viri in servitium Domini nutriendas suas offereboles ...’. See, EIGIL, Vita Stur-mi, c. 2, ed. P. ENGELBERT, Die Vita Sturmi des Eigil von Fulda: Literarkritisch-
No doubt the presence of Leoba and her nuns had quite an influence on the entire region, for they had turned Tauberbischofsheim into a successful missionary station, and into a prominent centre of 'vocations féminines'.

It is true that even before Leoba, women had an important role in the promotion of Christianity throughout the Frankish kingdom. Furthermore, throughout the Merovingian period nunneries functioned both as centres of culture, where manuscripts were being copied and high standards of education were maintained, and as religious centres that provided the inhabitants of their region the same pastoral care that any church or a male monastic community had offered. Hence, there is little place to doubt that women held a special place in the religious culture of the Frankish kingdoms, whether they became ancilla Dei or whether they endowed monasteries and supported the new faith from outside.

Yet, the case of Leoba and the nuns of Tauberbischofsheim illustrates more than anything else the new crucial role of religious women in the Frankish kingdom. Nuns in the second half of the eighth century became, under the influence of Boniface and his missionary scheme, facilitators for the creation of new religious allegiances and of

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new religious patterns of observance, and consequently nunneries became a rallying-point, where the inculcation of Christian ideas and values took place. Furthermore, when compared with the activities of nuns and nunneries in Merovingian Gaul, Leoba’s role is even more apparent. Jonas of Bobbio’s account on Burgundofara and her activities, for example, reveals how little interaction with the outside world the nuns of Faremoutiers had. Thus, the case of Leoba points to a major change in perception regarding the role of nuns and nunneries, not only in the eyes of Boniface himself who regarded both monasteries and nunneries as the instrument for his missionary plan, but also by the people who were willing to accept those institutions and their inhabitants as their new religious guides.

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