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Elena Cornaro Piscopia

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Elena Lucrezia Piscopia Cornaro (1646 - 1684) Italian theologian and mathematician, the first woman to earn a doctorate at the University of Padua (the second did so in the 20th Century).

Born of a church lawyer and a housewife, young Elena, unlike other girls of her time, was taught Greek and Latin, and other languages. She also studied mathematics and theology. After becoming a deaconess at a Benedictine convent, she went on to study at the University of Padua where she earned a philosophy doctorate, becoming the first woman to earn such a degree. She began teaching mathematics at the university until her death, however, she is more remembered for her charity work.

References

- [1] “Elena Lucrezia Piscopia Cornaro” in *Catholic Encyclopedia* New York: Encyclopedia Press (1913)