

A Companion to Mysticism  
and Devotion in Northern Germany  
in the Late Middle Ages

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# A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages

*Edited by*

Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann  
and Anne Simon



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*Cover illustration:* Gothic Brass Fountain at the Convent of Lüne (14th century). Photo and rights: Convent of Lüne.

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*In memoriam* Timothy McFarland  
1936–2013  
University College London

A wonderful friend and inspiring colleague  
to whose encouragement we owe a great deal



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## PREFACE

The editors of the volume are very grateful to the British Academy for the award of a small research grant which made it possible to bring the contributors together from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, the USA and the UK. The three lively days of constructive and productive discussion have meant that the volume is richer and more coherent. Besides the authors, the other participants at the workshop in Newcastle were Ulla Bucarey, Mary Fischer, Stephen Mossman, Rianne Mus, Friedel Helga Roolfs, and Timothy McFarland to whose memory this volume is dedicated; he not only put Dorothea of Montau on the map of mysticism but throughout the process was a lively partner for all our discussions. Thanks go also to the Faculty's "Medieval and Early Modern Studies Group" and to the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University for enabling the group to be inspired by a trip through ecclesiastical Northumbria.

We regard the translations as a distinctive feature of this volume. The early ones were done by Laura Ball, the later by Anne Simon. For help and consultation with the various translation tasks involved, we are indebted to Friedel Helga Roolfs, Frauke Thees and Gabriele Wright; for critical reading to Rabia Gregory, Jeffrey F. Hamburger, Silvia Ranawake, Ann Marie Rasmussen, Annette Volting and especially to Nigel F. Palmer and Stephen Mossman whose profound knowledge of the religious landscape of late medieval Germany provided a constant point of reference. For the dialect map, we received help from Robert Peters, who further defined the Low German dialects, and Sheila Watts, who clarified the English terminology. The copy-editing was done by Suzanne Dorf Hall and Rhonda Kronyk with the help of Jenny Lemke, Aletta Rochau and Almut Sichler.

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Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann and Anne Simon  
Newcastle upon Tyne, Easter 2013



## CHAPTER FIVE

### TEXT PRODUCTION AND AUTHORSHIP: GERTRUDE OF HELFTA'S *LEGATUS DIVINAE PIETATIS*

Balázs J. Nemes

The corpus of works produced by the visionary nuns at Helfta illustrates the complexity of both textual transmission and authorial identity in the high and late Middle Ages. By tracing the transmission of texts—either in their entirety or in extracts—and by documenting hitherto unknown manuscript witnesses to that transmission, this contribution demonstrates the extent of interconnected monastic networks and the impact of visionary texts from Helfta. The choice of extracts, their adaptation, and their integration into new contexts are particularly crucial for understanding the processes of transmission and nature of authorship.

#### *The Helfta Corpus. Text, Excerpts and Marginalia*

The fifth book of the Memorial of the Abundance of Divine Sweetness by the holy virgin Gertrude [of Helfta] contains much about this holy virgin [Mechthild of Hackeborn] and her sister, the abbess Gertrude [of Hackeborn], who belonged to the aforementioned convent [Helfta]. In the same place resided the other holy virgin Mechthild [of Magdeburg], as may be ascertained from the Prologue of her Revelations [*Lux divinitatis*]. (Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten/Luthers Geburtshaus, H 546, fol. 68r)

These marginalia from a manuscript rediscovered just a few years ago in Eisleben demonstrate a remarkable knowledge of the history and literature of the circle of Helfta visionaries. The manuscript, which contains a series of excerpts from the *Liber specialis gratiae* by Mechthild of Hackeborn, was completed in 1361. However, the above quotation dates from the last quarter of the 15th century, and was added during a detailed comparison of the manuscript's contents with those of an existing copy of the same book (probably Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1003 Helmst) from the Erfurt Charterhouse St Salvatorberg.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the manuscripts of the *Liber* referred to here and their relationship to each other, see Nemes, *Von der Schrift zum Buch—vom Ich zum Autor. Zur Text- und Autorkonstitution*

Whoever annotated the copy not only successfully avoided confusing the two Gertrudes at Helfta, a frequent mistake after the printing of the *Liber* in German in Leipzig in 1503,<sup>2</sup> but also avoided conflating the two Mechthilds, a persistent error in other circles, such as that of the Basel Charterhouse.<sup>3</sup> That the author of this quotation must have been a member of the Erfurt Charterhouse is supported by two things: the Erfurt ownership mark, and the fact that the marginalia were written by an anonymous colleague of the librarian Jakob Volradi,<sup>4</sup> who worked on the Charterhouse's great book catalogue towards the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries, expanding it in various ways.<sup>5</sup>

For more than 500 years there has been consensus about the names to be associated with Helfta's revelatory literature, but not about the texts to be included in this corpus. Volradi's anonymous colleague mentioned not just the *Liber specialis gratiae* and the *Legatus divinae pietatis*, but also the *Lux divinitatis*, the Latin translation of Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*. The prologue says that the *Lux divinitatis* deals with the revelations of a blessed woman (anonymous in the prologue of the *Lux divinitatis* although not in the rest of the text) who spent the last 12 years of her life as a holy woman in Helfta (*sanctimonialis in helpede*). The edition of the *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechthildianae* (1875–1877) by Louis Paquelin includes the corpus as defined by Volradi's colleague. However, strictly speaking, the *Lux divinitatis* should be removed from this corpus of visionary literature from Helfta because of its Dominican origin, probably in Erfurt,<sup>6</sup> and replaced by the seventh book of *Das fließende Licht*, composed at Helfta. Ever since the first edition of the *Legatus* by

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in *Überlieferung und Rezeption des "Fließenden Lichts der Gottheit" Mechthilds von Magdeburg* (2010), 225–229.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the confusion of the Abbess with the visionary Gertrude, see *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechthildianae*, ed. Paquelin (1877), vol. 1, XIX–XXIII.

<sup>3</sup> See Nemes, *Schrift*, 109–110, 336–338 and 389–396.

<sup>4</sup> See Nemes, *Schrift*, 229–233. On this scribe, see Eifler, "Ich habe sehr neugierig gesucht und gelesen und fast alle Bücher der Bibliothek unseres Hauses durchgelesen". Beobachtungen zur Lektüre- und Studienpraxis in der Erfurter Kartause am Beispiel der Sammelhandschrift des Bruders N." (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Large parts of the catalogue have been edited in Lehmann, ed., *Bistum Mainz, Erfurt*, 2 (1928). This is complemented by the print of the *Prohemium longum* in Märker, *Das Prohemium longum des Erfurter Kartäuserkatalogs aus der Zeit um 1475. Edition und Untersuchung* (2008), vol. 1, 45–312.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nemes, *Schrift*, 208–245. In addition see Nemes, "Mechthild im mitteldeutschen Raum. Die Moskauer Fragmente und andere Handschriftenfunde zur Rezeption des 'Fließenden Lichts der Gottheit' und seiner lateinischen Übersetzung" (2013).

the Cologne Carthusian Johannes Justus Lanspergius in 1536, the *Exercitia spiritualia* have also been included. However, given the uncertainty about their origin, they, too, should probably be excised from the Helfta corpus.<sup>7</sup> The corpus of 'Revelationes' from Helfta should thus consist only of the *Legatus*, the *Liber*, and the seventh book of *Das fließende Licht*. In the 13th century, these works from Helfta and Magdeburg<sup>8</sup> constituted a northern centre of mystical writing which is as significant as the contemporary mystical culture of Brabant (→ Fraeters).

The following discussion focuses on the *Legatus* and the differing accounts of its origins, and on the function of these narratives and the view of authorship presented within the text itself. While not wishing to lose sight of the actual circumstances of literary production in Helfta, it becomes less important to read as cultural-historical facts the various statements made in the text about its origins, i.e. the history of the text and "textual mysticism", which conceive the inscribing of divine revelations as one textual continuum stretching from the source of the inspiration via its medium (author) and its scribes to the recipient.<sup>9</sup> The narratives related to the genesis of the text need to be considered in more detail since the discovery of several Central German manuscripts has highlighted an area not hitherto associated with the circulation of this text. The study of

<sup>7</sup> For further information, see Nemes, "Die 'Geistlichen Übungen' Gertruds von Helfta. Ein vergessenes Zeugnis mittelalterlicher Mystik" (2004). Doubt as to the credibility of Lanspergius's ascription of the *Exercitia* to Gertrude allows the observation that the Cologne Carthusian enriches the *Legatus* with snippets of text not otherwise found in the manuscripts by Gertrude: cf. *Revelationes*, vol. 1, 459–460 (also *Gertrude d'Helfta*, ed. Clement, vol. 4, 428, n. 1) and 571–575 (also idem, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 5, 313–316) and 57 (also, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, ed. Doyère, vol. 2, 32, the latter all in *Gertrude d'Helfta: Œuvres spirituelles*. One of the three German prayers included in the edition of the *Exercitia* (*Gertrud von Helfta: Exercitia spiritualia. Lateinisch und deutsch*, ed. Ringler (2001), 66) is similar to a prayer noted in several Bavarian and Austrian manuscripts: Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. I.3.8 10, fols. 54r–55r; Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Cod. germ. 16, fols. 34v–35v; Esztergom, Főszékesegyházi Könyvtár, Mss. III. 171, fols. 25r–v; and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 4638, fol. 65v. On the enriching of (German) Gertrude-texts with chapters extraneous to the *Legatus*, see also *Gertrud von Helfta: Ein botte der götlichen miltekeit*, ed. Wieland (1973), 48 n. 2 and Schneider, *Pseudo-Engelhart von Ebrach, Das Buch der Vollkommenheit* (2006), LIII.

<sup>8</sup> For a critical view on the location of Mechthild in Magdeburg, see Dinzelbacher, "Mechthild von Magdeburg in ihrer Zeit" (2004), 157–158, and Voigt, "Review of: Hildegund Keul, Verschwiegene Gottesrede. Die Mystik der Begine Mechthild von Magdeburg, Innsbruck/Wien 2004" (2007), 384. See Nemes, "'sancta mulier nomine Mechthildis.' Mechthild (von Magdeburg) und ihre Wahrnehmung als Religiöse im Laufe der Jahrhunderte" (2014), for a discussion of Mechthild's status as a religious in traditional research and the history of her reception.

<sup>9</sup> Löser, "'Schriftmystik'. Schreibprozesse in Texten der deutschen Mystik" (2012), 199.

the transmission of these manuscripts would no doubt yield significant information to help in placing mysticism within its historical context, especially when checked against the entries and the classification of the *Legatus* in medieval monastic library catalogues.<sup>10</sup>

Until recently the number of known *Legatus* manuscripts was limited to five from the Swabian and Ripuarian areas and of Carthusian and Benedictine provenance:<sup>11</sup>

- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 15332 (1412, Buxheim Charterhouse, later the Premonstratensian monastery Roggenburg)
- Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 4224, fols. 83r–282v (1482–1490, Benedictine monastery Donauwörth)<sup>12</sup>
- Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 77/1061, fols. 1r–135r (15th century, unknown provenance)
- Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, Hs I 13, fols. 136ra–225va (15th century, third quarter, Mainz Charterhouse)
- Darmstadt, Landesbibliothek, Hs 84, fols. 27v–176v (1473, Cologne Charterhouse)

Two of these manuscripts (Munich and Vienna) transmit the whole text; the others contain only excerpts. None dates from beyond the end of the 15th century and, apart from one important exception, this is true for the majority of the other textual witnesses examined,<sup>13</sup> among them an

<sup>10</sup> See Nemes, “Mechthild im mitteldeutschen Raum,” for a discussion of this topic using the transmission of Mechthild’s writings at the end of the 15th century in the context of the Erfurt Charterhouse mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. See Williams-Krapp, “‘Wir lesent daz vil in sölichen sachen swerlich betrogen werdent.’ Zur monastischen Rezeption von mystischer Literatur im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert” (2008), and Williams-Krapp, “Mystikdiskurse und mystische Literatur im 15. Jahrhundert” (2012).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Gertrude d’Helfta*, vol. 2, ed. Doyère, 58–64; Barratt and Stoudt, “Gertrude the Great of Helfta,” (2010), 470.

<sup>12</sup> The identification of its provenance, named in the colophon as “Werdea”, with the “monastère de sainte Croix de Werdau” by Doyère in *Gertrude d’Helfta*, vol. 2, 60, and with “Kloster Heiliges Kreuz in Werden” by Unterkircher, *Die datierten Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek von 1451 bis 1500* (1974), 120 and Neddermeyer, *Von der Handschrift zum gedruckten Buch. Schriftlichkeit und Leseinteresse im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Quantitative und qualitative Aspekte*, vol. 1 (1998), 284 is incorrect: cf. Herrad Spilling’s review (1977), 444, of the catalogue by Unterkircher, and Rudolf, “Des Pseudo-Methodius ‘Revelationes’ (Fassung B) und ihre deutsche Übersetzung in der Brüsseler Handschrift Eghenvelders” (1976), 76.

<sup>13</sup> The manuscript cited in my dissertation, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Inventar.-Nr. 78 B 1a, fol. 203r (cf. Nemes, *Schrift*, 225, n. 538) does not, as indicated, contain any textual witnesses of the *Legatus*. The prayer to “sancta Gertrudis virgo”, here accompanied by a miniature, refers to Gertrude of Nivelles. The same applies to the manuscripts that Ankermann, following Grubmüller, “Gertrud von Helfta” (1981), 7, accounts for as previously unknown translations of the *Legatus* in *Gertrud die Große von Helfta*, 38 (1997), n. 95

extensive manuscript of excerpts dating from the end of the 15th century and originating in the Benedictine monastery at Erfurt. Along with the other manuscripts mentioned below, it provides evidence for the reception of the *Legatus* in the central German region, an area hitherto not associated with the circulation of these texts:<sup>14</sup> Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Q 49, fols. 163r–208v (with extracts from Books I and III–V).<sup>15</sup> Three more manuscripts point to Erfurt: Bonn, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, S 0726, fols. 361ra–364vb; Moscow, Russian State Library, Fonds 183, Nr. 281, fols. 181r–183v; and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. theol. lat. oct. 89, fol. 201r. The Bonn manuscript is a collection of theological texts written in Erfurt by one Mathias Pahe (and another hand) around 1410/20 and contains a vision of a mass that is printed in the *Sources chrétiennes* immediately after the fifth book of the *Legatus*.<sup>16</sup> The other two codices were produced in the Charterhouse itself: the Moscow manuscript dates from the middle of the 15th century and contains *Legatus* III, 75–80;<sup>17</sup> the Berlin manuscript dates from the last quarter of the 15th century and contains an *Ave Maria* which is essentially a short extract from *Legatus* IV, 12(11).<sup>18</sup> This bilingual German-Latin anthology in the form of a *rapiarium* contains several excerpts from the *Lux divinitatis*, all of which have been checked for accuracy against a German text in the Erfurt Charterhouse that seems to have been regarded as the original.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, it incorporates extracts in East Central German from all seven books of Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Das fließende Licht*,<sup>20</sup> evidence perhaps of the complete manuscript of *Das fließende*

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(Düsseldorf, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. C 96, fols. 110r–116r and Osnabrück, Staatsarchiv, Rep. 2 No. 21, fols. 191r–214v).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ringler, "Die Rezeption Gertruds von Helfta im Bereich süddeutscher Frauenklöster" (1998), 134, 136.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Eifler, *Die lateinischen Handschriften bis 1600*, 2 (2012), 258.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. <http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/dokumente/html/obj31275402> (Jürgen Geiß).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. <http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/dokumente/html/obj31300281> (Marie-Luise Heckmann).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Braun-Niehr, *Die theologischen lateinischen Handschriften in Octavo der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, pars 1 (2007), 150.

<sup>19</sup> On this phenomenon see Nemes, "Ein wieder aufgefundenes Exzerpt aus Mechthilds von Magdeburg 'Lux divinitatis'" (2008), 367; Nemes, *Schrift*, 365–379.

<sup>20</sup> See Braun-Niehr, Nemes, and Squires, "Ein neuer Textzeuge der mitteldeutschen Überlieferung des 'Fließenden Lichts der Gottheit' und seiner lateinischen Übersetzung" (2013). For more information regarding the Mechthild-transmission in Central German see Nemes, "Mechthild im mitteldeutschen Raum."

*Licht* recorded in the library catalogue of the Erfurt Charterhouse.<sup>21</sup> This catalogue is of interest for the transmission of texts by Gertrude since it mentions a series of manuscripts no longer extant that contained excerpts from the *Legatus*. It even refers to a complete copy of the *Legatus* owned by the Eisenach Charterhouse, founded by monks from Erfurt in 1378.<sup>22</sup> By far the most important new discovery is a manuscript pointing to neither Erfurt nor the charterhouse there, but, rather, to the East Central German region: Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. 827, fols. 8r–148r. This manuscript is particularly significant because it transmits substantial extracts from the *Legatus* and its dating indicates a period somewhere between the beginning and middle of the 14th century, thus making it the oldest known textual witness of Gertrude's revelations.<sup>23</sup>

The following newly discovered manuscripts confirm the reception of the *Legatus* in southern Germany: Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 8° Cod. 203, fols. 55r–57v (possibly from the Buxheim Charterhouse, first quarter of the 16th century, with extracts from *Legatus* III, 47 and 69 [sic] and IV, 26);<sup>24</sup> and Uppsala, University Library, Cod. C 517m, fols. 30v–173v (end of the 15th century with extracts from Book IV).<sup>25</sup> By contrast, a comment in the Darmstadt manuscript mentioned above, which transmits only Books 1–3 of the *Legatus*, suggests the Riparian region or, more precisely, the Cologne Charterhouse. The comment indicates that Books 4

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Lehmann, *Bistum Mainz*, 432, 16–23.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Lehmann, *Bistum Mainz*, 276,1 (medieval signature: B 31), 317,3 (D 13), 361,35 (F 69), 363,1 (F 74), 431,4–10 (J 2<sup>primio</sup>), 433,5 (J 7) and 433,18–23 (J 8). Lanspergius used another manuscript, no longer extant, of the *Legatus* (minus the prologue and Book 1) for his first edition, cf. Doyère, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 2, 64–65. The Vienna Manuscript cod. 4224 (see the list of manuscripts above) served as the source text, at first for an incomplete copy of the *Legatus* and later for a complete one (→ Hellgardt). Cf. Doyère, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 2, 58. A translation with the title *Ein botte der götlichen miltekeit* must already have been completed in the 14th century, earlier than previously assumed. This is clear from a short excerpt of the translation in two manuscripts: Gotha Cod. Chart. B 269 (cf. <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/6923>) and London, University College, MS Germ. 24, fol. 12v, ([www.handschriftencensus.de/3550](http://www.handschriftencensus.de/3550)). My thanks to the late Timothy McFarland (UCL) for drawing my attention to this manuscript. The legend of Saint Truta in *Der Heiligen Leben* also shows this text was accessible in this region around 1400. See Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländischen Legendare des Mittelalters*. (1986), 259 n. 15 and 415 (Pc 1 [= Pécs/Ungarn, Klimó könyvtár, Cod. AA. II. 21, fol. 450ra–466vb] should be added to the list of manuscripts that transmit the text).

<sup>23</sup> My thanks to Almuth Märker (Leipzig) for drawing my attention to this manuscript. Description: <http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/dokumente/html/obj3157101>.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Trede and Gehrt, *Handschriftenkataloge der Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg*, vol. 8 (2011), 360.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Andersson-Schmitt, et al., *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Uppsala. Katalog über die C-Sammlung*, vol. 5 (1992), 306–307.



and 5 were also present in the Cologne Charterhouse in a larger format, probably a quarto manuscript described in the Charterhouse catalogue from the 17th and 18th centuries as the fourth and fifth book of the blessed Gertrude (*Libri quartus et quintus B. Gertrudis*).<sup>26</sup> This manuscript might be identical to the four books of revelations attributed to one “virgin Truth” (*Revelationes Truthae virginis libri IV–V*) in Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Houghton Library, ms. Riant 90, fol. 71r–182v.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, two 15th-century prayer books from Swabia and the Cologne Charterhouse should be mentioned: Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, 8° Cod. ms. 193, fol. 75v (Swabia, second third of the 15th century);<sup>28</sup> and Darmstadt, Landesbibliothek, Hs 2772, fol. 61r and 90r (Cologne Charterhouse, around 1425).<sup>29</sup> While they may not necessarily be witnesses to the transmission of Gertrude’s writings, they contain a section of text found in the *Legatus*. The text in question is a prayer that had not until now been identified,<sup>30</sup> yet is quoted in *Legatus* II, 4 (1,3–13) and, according to Gertrude’s own words, was often recited. It would seem that Gertrude did not compose the text herself, but copied it from a prayer book.<sup>31</sup> The Munich and Darmstadt manuscripts appear to confirm this, as the prayer is included without being ascribed to Gertrude. This is significant because the author’s signature (“Truta” or “Gertrudis”) is otherwise the distinguishing feature of primary and secondary Gertrude transmission, and points to a prayer that Gertrude found in her prayer book and incorporated into the second book of the *Legatus*.<sup>32</sup> *Legatus* III, 19 (3,23–27) provides us with

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Staub, *Die Handschriften der Hessischen Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek Darmstadt*, vol. 5,1 (2001), 27–28.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Wagner, *Die “Epistola presbiteri Johannis” lateinisch und deutsch: Überlieferung, Textgeschichte, Rezeption und Übertragungen im Mittelalter; mit bisher unedierten Texten* (2000), 40; Moulinier, *Beate Hildegardis Cause et Cure* (2003), XXVII; and Metzger, “The Manuscripts of Writings by Ioannes Hagen de Indagine, O. Cart.” (2008), 190. The chapters from Books IV and V are preceded by the vision of the mass (fols. 71r–74r) which in the *Sources chrétiennes* is printed immediately following Book V of the *Legatus*: cf. the complete version digitized in colour on pds.lib.harvard.edu.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Daniel, *Die lateinischen mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek München. Die Handschriften aus der Oktavreihe* (1989), 136–137.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Achten, et al., *Die lateinischen Gebetbuchhandschriften der Hessischen Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek Darmstadt* (1972), 72 and 74.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, 2 (1993), 326.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (1995), 162.

<sup>32</sup> The Munich manuscript 8° Cod. ms. 193 contains prayers dating back centuries, as shown by the Passion prayer on fol. 127r, which, according to Elke Senne (Berlin), appears as an introductory prayer in a surviving manuscript of the *Liber specialis* (here: “spiritualis”) *gratiae* by Mechthild of Hackeborn from the end of the 13th and beginning of

a parallel case in the form of an anonymous Marian prayer in the following prayer books: Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Oct 52, fol. 224v (Erfurt Charterhouse, first half of 15th century) and Oct 62, fol. 54v (Erfurt Charterhouse, 15th century);<sup>33</sup> Frankfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. Praed. 169, fol. 315r (central Rhine region, perhaps from a Cistercian abbey, around 1490);<sup>34</sup> and Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Cod. 21600 (1639), fol. 146v (16th century).<sup>35</sup> The same prayer occurs in St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 519, pp. 77–78 (Benedictine monastery of St Gallen, before 1439) as a prayer of St Trude to the glorious virgin (*Oratio sancte Trute ad gloriosam virginem*).<sup>36</sup>

### *The Genesis of the Legatus*

These chance discoveries indicate how much research on the *Legatus* remains to be done; here, they draw attention to its texture, which, in accordance with the statements within the text itself, is particularly complex. These statements are inserted at more or less prominent points in the *Legatus* and can be read as strategies for validating the text and the truth it contains. Since they concern the circumstances surrounding the origins of the five books and refer to their genesis, production and validation, they construct a system of references for authorizing the text.

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the 14th centuries: Leipzig Manuscript ms. 671 from the Cistercian monastery of Altleitz in Saxony (My thanks to Almuth Märker, Leipzig, for allowing me access to Anette Löffler's manuscript description). This prayer is also found in Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B X 11, fols. 79v–80r (Basel Charterhouse, middle of the 15th century) and A VIII 27, fols. 211v–212v (Basel Charterhouse, end of the 15th century).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Bushey, *Die lateinischen Handschriften bis 1600*, 1, (2004), 282 and 366.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Powitz, *Die Handschriften des Dominikanerklosters und des Leonhardstifts in Frankfurt am Main* (1968), 379.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Clasen, *Legenda antiqua S. Francisci. Untersuchung über die nachbonaventurianischen Franziskusquellen, Legenda trium sociorum, Speculum perfectionis, Actus B. Francisci et sociorum eius und verwandtes Schrifttum* (1967), 67.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. von Scarpattetti, *Liturgica, Libri precum, deutsche Gebetbücher, Spiritualia, Musikhandschriften 9.–16. Jahrhundert* (2008), 286. Before Hieronymus of Brunn, the main scribe of the manuscript (not of our text!), became Dean in St Gallen in 1432, he was a cloistered member of the Benedictine monastery of Hersfeld in Hesse. Hersfeld is one of the monasteries that maintained connections with Helfta (see Hubrath, *Schreiben und Erinnern. Zur "memoria" im Liber Specialis gratiae Mechthilds von Hakeborn* (1996), 35 n. 45). Thus, this unique attribution to Gertrude in the transmission of the Passion prayer may be a literary reflection of the connections between both institutions otherwise documented only in charters; and the Benedictine monastery of Hersfeld might be one of the recipients of the literary *oeuvre* from Helfta.

Although it may be correct to regard Helfta as an island of written and illuminated literary manuscripts in the Saxon-Thuringian region,<sup>37</sup> we should bear in mind the context of a Cistercian convent that attracted nuns from the highest ranking noble families in Central Germany.<sup>38</sup> The powerful network of family connections and relationships seems to have fostered ideal conditions for literary activity by highly educated nuns.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the memorial character of the literature would have created and consolidated identity within the convent as well as presenting

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<sup>37</sup> Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 30. F. Schrader provides a good overview of the numerous Cistercian convents close to Helfta in "Die Zisterzienserklöster in den mittelalterlichen Diözesen Magdeburg und Halberstadt" (1970), 265–278. On the beguines in the region around Saxony and Thuringia, see Voigt, *Beginen im Spätmittelalter. Frauenfrömmigkeit in Thüringen und im Reich* (2012). This view of Helfta as an island must be relativized as soon we consider, for example, the 12th-century Benedictine reform convents of Lamspringe and Lippoldsborg (see Bertelsmeier-Kierst, "Audi filia et vide. Frauenkonvente nach der monastischen Reform" (2010), and the chapters in Schmidt-Glintzer, ed., *Die gelehrten Bräute Christi. Geistesleben und Bücher der Nonnen im Mittelalter* (2008) or the Cistercian convent of Wienhausen, which, like Helfta, was not incorporated. Wienhausen is characterized by an extensive (if not mystical) literary production in both Latin and the vernacular from around the same time (early 14th century) as the emergence of literary works in Helfta: cf. Mattern, *Literatur der Zisterzienserinnen. Edition und Untersuchung einer Wienhäuser Legendenhandschrift* (2011), and, in addition, the fragments of a rhymed version of the Passion found in the garments of an angel of the sculpture group of the Risen Christ (see Lähnemann, "Text und Textil. Die beschriebenen Pergamente in den Figurenornaten" (2013) <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/23637>). See also the German-Latin prayer books in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod Guelf. Helmst. 1265, 1319, 1321, 1399, 1417, 1430. These have been largely overlooked until now but were likely produced in the Cistercian convent of Wöltingerode around 1300.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Elm, *Frömmigkeit und Ordensleben in deutschen Frauenklöstern des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (1992), 39. On the convent's history see Oefelein, *Das Nonnenkloster St Jacobi und seine Tochterklöster im Bistum Halberstadt* (2004), 95–143 and Oefelein, (2005), 283–306. See also Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 32–34.

<sup>39</sup> Just how highly the nuns valued education is evident from the acknowledgment of Abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn in *Liber VI*, 1 (*Revelationes*, ed. Paquelin, 374–375), the reference to the prayers composed by Mechthild of Hackeborn in *Liber V*, 30 (*Revelationes*, ed. Paquelin, 365) and the numerous references to the literary activity of Gertrude of Helfta scattered throughout the *Legatus* (see above). See the account of Helfta's history produced by Abbess Sophia of Querfurt-Mansfeld (1292–1298) (Müller, *Leben und Offenbarungen der heiligen Mechthildis und der Schwester Mechthildis (von Magdeburg), Jungfrau aus dem Orden des heiligen Benediktus* (1880/1881), vol. 1, XXXII<sup>e</sup>). This account preceded the edition of Mechthild printed in Leipzig in 1503 and could be based on the lost convent chronicle. The nuns' aspiration to a very high standard of education is also reflected in the remains (exclusively incunabula) of the monastic library of Neu-Helfta, which has hitherto been little researched (cf. Junkte, "Die Inkunabeln der St Andreaskirche zu Eisleben," *Beiträge zur Inkunabelkunde, Dritte Folge* 8 (1983), 50–68, and von Rabenau, "Die Geschichte der Kirchenbibliothek von St Andreas in Eisleben als Spiegel der Kirchengeschichte des Mansfelder Landes" (1985/86).

Helfta as a paragon of the *Vita religiosa* to the outside world.<sup>40</sup> It is impossible to ascertain just how far the development of literature at Helfta was influenced by external forces such as friends and family in general,<sup>41</sup> or those in charge of the nuns' spiritual welfare in particular. It is not known who had the *cura monialium*, although it is generally assumed to have been the Dominicans.<sup>42</sup> However, while there are occasional references to Dominicans in documents from Helfta, as well as in the *Liber* and the seventh book of *Das fließende Licht* (but not in the *Legatus*), they never appear as confessors, preachers or spiritual teachers, but only in the context of intercessionary prayers.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, in Helfta's 'golden' decades before its destruction and relocation to just outside the gates of Eisleben (1258–1342/46), the convent maintained relationships with other orders, including the Benedictines, Franciscans and the Teutonic Order in Halle.<sup>44</sup> There is also documented evidence of connections to the Cistercian monastery of Sittichenbach from 1290 onwards, although, as a non-incorporated Cistercian convent, Helfta was not subject to it. Against this background it is doubtful whether the *cura monialium* ever fell exclusively to one institution.<sup>45</sup> It is more likely that the spiritual and sacramental care of the nuns lay with a provost, probably a lay priest, appointed by the Bishop of Halberstadt since Helfta fell within the latter's jurisdiction. Unlike Abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn, whose life and death were given a literary memorial in both the *Liber* and the *Legatus*, the provost may not appear as an independent figure in the visionary literature produced in Helfta; but according to *Legatus* Prol. (4,3) and III, Prol. (1,9), and to

<sup>40</sup> See Hubrath, *Schreiben*, as well as Mattern, *Literatur*, 341–387.

<sup>41</sup> Helfta functioned as the "house" or family monastery and burial place of the Counts of Mansfeld and Querfurt-Mansfeld and was obliged to preserve the *memoria* of the founding family: cf. Oefelein, *Nonnenkloster*, 121. Members of the founding family, from among whose ranks the convent recruited members, are mentioned in relation to several intercessional prayers in the *Liber* in particular (cf. *Liber* V, 10–11, V, 15 and VII, 20).

<sup>42</sup> For a critical evaluation of Mechthild of Magdeburg's relationship to Heinrich of Halle on the one hand and Wichmann of Arnstein on the other, see Nemes, *Schrift*, 99–114 and 211–214.

<sup>43</sup> For instances of this in the *Liber* see Spitzlei, *Erfahrungsraum Herz. Zur Mystik des Zisterzienserinnenklosters Helfta im 13. Jahrhundert* (1991), 34; and Bynum, "Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns of Helfta" (1984), 176.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 35. Rebuilt outside the gates of Eisleben in 1346, the convent seems to have maintained contact with the Cistercian nuns from Wöltingerode in the 15th century (Hubrath, *Liber*, 170).

<sup>45</sup> Bangert, "Die sozio-kulturelle Situation des Klosters St Maria in Helfta" (1999), 35 and Palmer, "Deutschsprachige Literatur im Zisterzienserorden. Versuch einer Darstellung am Beispiel der ostschwäbischen Zisterzienser- und Zisterzienserinnenliteratur im Umkreis von Kloster Kaisheim im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert" (2005), 253–254.

*Liber V*, 31 (p. 369), he authorized and, to a certain extent, initiated the revelations that circulated under the names of Mechthild of Hackeborn and Gertrude of Helfta.<sup>46</sup>

Certain statements within the text itself indicate that an abbess also played an important role in realizing the 'Mysticism Project' at Helfta: the first five books of the *Liber* were published at her instigation. The Eisleben manuscript mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is the only textual witness of the *Liber* so far discovered to identify the "abbatissa" of *Liber V*, 31 as "Sophie" (fol. 73r).<sup>47</sup> This was Sophia of Querfurt-Mansfeld, a descendant of the convent's founder, Burchard I of Mansfeld. Sophia was elected Abbess following the death in 1292 of Gertrude of Hackeborn and held office until 1298. Although it is unclear whether the other two books of the *Liber* were produced during this period or during the interregnum (1298–1303), the second half of the *Legatus*, comprising Books III–V and I,<sup>48</sup> certainly was. Evidence is provided by datable comments in the text, and by the fact that there is no mention of the abbess's initiative. Commission by the religious superiors, or *praelati* (cf. *Legatus Approbatio*, 3; Prol. [4,3] and III,Prol. [1,9]), is mentioned instead. While the *Liber* and the books of the *Legatus* already mentioned mark the later phases of

<sup>46</sup> An obituary with a eulogy on the virtuous life of the murdered "Her [...] prepositus" (for the transcription of the name see Meyer and Burckhardt, *Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Basel. Abteilung B: Theologische Pergamenthandschriften*, vol. 1 (1960), 594) indicates the esteem in which the provosts at Helfta were held. This text, which dates from 1367, was written during the tenure of Abbess Jutta II of Stolberg (1361–1383) and is now regarded as an independent literary witness on a par with the two visionary texts and the chronicle of the convent's history from 1451 by the Abbess Sophie of Stolberg (now available in the original: Oefelein, *Nonnenkloster*, 96–97). The manuscript in Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B V 32, fols. 75va–vb, contains the text, which had already been made known by Morin, "Un rouleau mortuaire des moniales de Sainte Marie d'Helfta" (1925), 100–102, but not hitherto noticed in the literature on Helfta. The manuscript comes from the Basel Charterhouse, although it belonged to the Westphalian priest Gottschalk Kamenschede, who may have acquired the volume along with other codices in Cologne in the 1380s/90s (Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts in den Handschriften des Mittelalters" (2002), 217–218, and Rubino and Sturlese, *Bibliotheca Eckhardiana Manuscripta. Studien zu den lateinischen Handschriften der Werke Meister Eckharts*. Vol. 1 (2012), 61–62 and 64–65).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Grössler, *Die Blütezeit des Klosters Helfta bei Eisleben*, (1887), 25 n. 1.

<sup>48</sup> The widespread opinion that Book I does not belong to the "secunda pars" mentioned in the Prologue needs to be re-evaluated (cf. Grimes, "Writing as birth: the composition of Gertrud of Helfta Herald of God's Loving-Kindness" (2007), 338). In the prologue to Book III we find an allusion to the book (which is "hardly begun") associated with a revelation supposedly received by Gertrude while composing the second part. This allusion refers to Book III, as shown by the quotation from Isaiah used by God to highlight His intended purpose for the book. The same quotation is repeated in *Legatus* III, 64 (3, 10–14).

Helfta's 'Mysticism Project', its beginning is signalled by *Legatus* Book II, composed in 1289 while Abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn was still alive. It is, however, less easy to say which phase the seventh book of *Das fließende Licht* belongs to. Historically, it is usually regarded as having originated in Helfta but, although scholars have maintained that the initiative to record revelations in Helfta came from Mechthild of Magdeburg,<sup>49</sup> we cannot say with any certainty she actually arrived in the convent in 1270.<sup>50</sup> The status of the seventh book within the corpus of texts from Helfta is also unexplained. The literature from Helfta focuses on convent *memoria*, an aspect which characterizes the textual contents of both the *Legatus* and the *Liber*. It does not, however, play such a programmatic role in *Das fließende Licht*, the odd reference to the convent's collective consciousness or environment notwithstanding.

The six thematically ordered books of the *Lux divinitatis* sit more easily within the context of literary production at Helfta, creating as they do a memorial to the visionary mystic identified in the text as one Sister Mechthild (*soror mechtildis*).<sup>51</sup> However, individual amendments to the translation of *Das fließende Licht* and its reception in the 14th century indicate that its transmission occurred primarily within Dominican circles.<sup>52</sup> Looking at textual transmission also reveals the *Liber* and *Legatus* were already being copied together in 14th-century manuscripts, but both were copied separately from the *Lux divinitatis* and the seventh book of *Das fließende Licht*, despite the fact this was probably produced in Helfta. It seems that Mechthild of Magdeburg never belonged to the 'official' corpus of revelations that originated at Helfta in either German or Latin. Her inclusion in the written canon (via the *Lux divinitatis*) appears to have been undertaken for the first time in Erfurt in the 15th century by the colleague of

<sup>49</sup> The identification of the "soror M." or "soror Mechtildis" who occasionally appears in the *Liber* and *Legatus* with Mechthild of Magdeburg is uncertain (cf. Peters, *Erfahrung*, 122–125), particularly as there were several nuns with this popular name in Helfta (cf. Strauch, *Beiträge*, 278–280; Neumann, *Beiträge*, 41 n. 43 and Ankermann, *Gertrud die Große*, 37). The biographical information contained in the prologue to the *Lux divinitatis* and, above all, the reference to Helfta could have originated from confusion with Mechthild of Hackeborn (cf. Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum. Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (1988), 121 n. 33).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Nemes, *Schrift*, 126–131.

<sup>51</sup> See Nemes *ibid.*, 317–342 and 342–357.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Nemes *ibid.*, 208–245 and Nemes, "Mechthild bei den 'Gottesfreunden'—Die Gottesfreunde bei Mechthild. Oder: Wie gottesfreundlich ist das 'Fließende Licht der Gottheit' Mechthilds von Magdeburg?" (2014). See also Federer, *Mystische Erfahrung im literarischen Dialog. Die Briefe Heinrichs von Nördlingen an Margaretha Ebner* (2011), 324–338.



Jakob Volradi mentioned above, although the impact of this inclusion was not felt until the edition by the monks of Solesmes in 1875/77.

### *Authorizing the Legatus*

Several techniques are used to legitimize the publication of the divine revelations imparted to a nun. One is to surround the text with quotations from the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers in the form of marginalia.<sup>53</sup> According to the closing section of the Prologue, they were added by its author (i.e. the scribe of Gertrude) in order to underpin individual statements theologically.<sup>54</sup> The *Liber* and the *Lux divinitatis* also have marginalia.<sup>55</sup> The fact that the *Legatus* was provided with a document of approval is reminiscent of the *Miroir des simples âmes* by Marguerite Porète, whose orthodoxy had to be verified by an expert theologian.<sup>56</sup> The many references to the Bible and the lives of the Church Fathers, particularly in the *Lux divinitatis*, perform the role of a commentary, although, unlike in the prologue to the *Legatus*, there is no explanation of their function. The defensive attitude in the *Legatus*, which is even more pronounced in the accompanying work, the *Approbatio doctorum*,<sup>57</sup> is surprising, not only because of the text's unmistakable "Catholicity" (Kurt Ruh), but also because it deals with the communal work of conventuals as instigated by the convent leaders and for the benefit of the community.<sup>58</sup> Important though the inclusion of the convent in the liturgically anchored

<sup>53</sup> A selection of these is reproduced in Doyère, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 2, 85–87 and Clément, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 4, 485–491 and vol. 5, 311–313.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Doyère, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 2, 90–91.

<sup>55</sup> In the Wolfenbüttel manuscript of the *Liber* comments and marginalia have been added throughout the text (Hubrath, "The *Liber specialis gratiae* as a Collective Work of Several Nuns" (1999), 234 n. 5). The same applies to the surviving German and Latin Mechthild manuscripts, in particular the Einsiedeln manuscript of *Das fließende Licht*, Cod. 277 (now accessible online at [www.e-codices.ch](http://www.e-codices.ch)) and the Basel manuscript of the *Lux divinitatis*, Cod. B IX 11. In the case of *Das fließende Licht* it can be safely assumed that the reference apparatus, which consists of commentaries, quotations and (in the case of the German transmission) cross-references to the work, did not arise as an additional text in the course of reception but was already present in the vernacular source of the Latin translation and therefore during Mechthild's lifetime (cf. Nemes, *Schrift*, 114–125).

<sup>56</sup> Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart. Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen* (1988), 34–36. Another case of mysticism suspicious to scholastic theology would be the revelations by Elsbeth of Oye, cf. Nemes, *Schrift*, 205–206.

<sup>57</sup> Doyère, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 2, 104–107. See also Doyère, *Gertrude d'Helfta*, vol. 3, 349–350 and Nemes, *Schrift*, 223–224.

<sup>58</sup> See Bynum, "Women Mystics."

life of Gertrude may be,<sup>59</sup> what follows focuses on the writer who speaks in the final section of the prologue and throughout the rest of the work. She is considered by Kurt Ruh to be the “actual author” of large parts of the *Legatus*.<sup>60</sup>

Apart from the second book of the *Legatus*, which is regarded as authentic due to the text itself citing Gertrude as the author, there are numerous instances of another speaker inscribing herself into the text, thematizing the writing process and reflecting on her role as scribe. The first person statements regarding her role in the genesis of the text consistently suggest a single person behind them, not in the sense of a historical figure, but of an assumed persona. She remains anonymous and portrays herself as completely in the service of her blessed sister, who is identified by name as Gertrude only in the titles of *Legatus* IV,<sup>17</sup> and in the mass of Gertrude appended to the edition.<sup>61</sup> However, she is no mere stenographer: in large sections of Books III–V it is difficult to distinguish between copied and original text, between text and commentary.

Gertrude’s anonymous sister could most readily be called an author—in Kurt Ruh’s definition of the term—in the first book with regard to her role as a hagiographer. She presents herself as a member of the convent (cf. I,10 [4,9–10]) and a spiritual friend of Gertrude (cf. I,5 [2,4–6]). Her familiarity with Gertrude—a basic requirement for the credibility and validity of any hagiography, and which may therefore be a topos—affords her insights into the secret spiritual life of her sister. In good hagiographical fashion she also draws on eyewitness accounts (I, 14 [1,1–2]) and letters addressed to Gertrude (I,7 [4,1]). She further structures the material available to her: first, by incorporating cross-references; second, by illustrating individual points by weaving into the material eyewitness accounts and quotations from the Bible and the Church Fathers. As in the final section of the Prologue, she anticipates criticism by referring to a particular

<sup>59</sup> Regarding the dominance of liturgical influence in the visionary literature of Helfta, see Harrison, “I am wholly your own”: Liturgical piety and community among the nuns of Helfta” (2009); Benke, “Mystik und Liturgie” (2003); Abril, “Gertrude of Helfta” and Harris, “Gertrude of Helfta: a liturgical spirituality?” (2000).

<sup>60</sup> Ruh, *Geschichte*, 2, 318. Ruh sees “Sister N.” as the key figure for a historical understanding of Gertrude of Helfta and Mechthild of Hackeborn (*Geschichte*, 316). He points out that Sister N had not only worked on the *Legatus* but also (according to Ruh: together with Gertrude) on the *Liber* (Ruh, “Gertrud von Helfta. Ein neues Gertrud-Bild” (1992)). For a critical view see Nemes, *Schrift*, 284 n. 765 and n. 777 (with further literature).

<sup>61</sup> According to Hubrath the name Mechthild is mentioned only twice in the *Liber* “and a historical identification is only possible because of the remark that she was the sister of the Abbess (Gertrude of Hackeborn), whose name is also known not from the *Liber* but from monastic records” (*Schreiben*, 45).



revelation given to Gertrude which makes clear that the recording of the revelations is God's will (I,15 [1,1–2]). In realizing God's will, the writer is guided by two main principles: readability in her arrangement of the material, and usefulness in its content. This approach is something she justifies at every turn (for example, I,11 [13,18–22]). The same principles of structuring and composition are used in the text types attributed to Gertrude herself in the *Legatus*, namely prayers, collections of *dicta*, poems, and devotional exercises.<sup>62</sup>

A comparable picture emerges through the various details concerning the process of writing that are scattered throughout Books III–V, where a nun—identified as such by the Prologue to Book III—again adopts the role of scribe. Furthermore, the Prologue tells us that she was charged by her superiors with recording the subsequent text. Her activity as an author is indirectly authorized by God Himself, as Gertrude recognizes following a vision of the Heart of Jesus. There she comments that it pleases the Lord if she allows everything to be written down for the benefit of all (III,30 [2,24–25]). In dealing with the revelations communicated to her, the nun displays a remarkable literary independence in Books III–V as well; something also expressed in remarks made in her own right. She is not merely a stenographer, as she, too, structures the material (cf. IV,35 [3,1], V,9 [1,31–33], V,22 [3,21–22]) and links similar themes together (cf. III,66 [1,11–12] and IV,4 [9,1]). At one point she adds a quotation from Bernard of Clairvaux as explanation (IV,26 [2,8–25]); elsewhere she appears in her own right to comment on Gertrude's words and the events of her life (see, for example, III,12 [1,23–26], III,13 [2,12–15], III,14 [4,1–5], III,18 [9,10–14] and III,53 [2,1–5]). She also omits some material “for the sake of brevity” (V,1 [18,3] and IV,27 [5,7–11]). The material selected is therefore what she—not Gertrude—considers useful (cf. III,66 [connecting text] and V,9 [1,3–4]).<sup>63</sup>

These sections of text that thematize autonomous authorial activity are not the only instances to reveal traces of an editorial approach to the material: there are also, for example, the exact parallels between *Liber* VII, 1–10 and *Legatus* V,4.<sup>64</sup> Textual material beyond the marked quotations

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Legatus* I,1 (2,17–41); I,4 (2,1–8); I,7 (1,17–23); I,11 (4,1–3); III,54 (2,9–12); IV,23 (10,11–15); V,4 (1,5–6); V,27 (1,1–4) and V,30 (5,1–3).

<sup>63</sup> The nuns working with Mechthild of Hackeborn on creating the *Liber* worked according to entirely comparable principles (cf. Haas, “Mechthild von Hackeborn. Eine Form zisterziensischer Frauenfrömmigkeit” (1984), 222–225; Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 49–52 and Löser, “Schriftmystik”, 169–173).

<sup>64</sup> See Spitzlei, *Erfahrungsraum*, 46 n. 132 and Ankermann, *Gertrud die Große*, 58. These parallels—and the cross-reference between *Liber* I,31 (108) and *Legatus* III,9 in which the

from the Bible and the Church Fathers also seems to have found its way into the *Legatus*. This is indicated by the above observations about its transmission, as they suggest the adaptation of prayer texts from elsewhere in *Legatus* II, 4 and III, 19; and, finally, the biblically inspired phrase “in the beginning of this book” (*in principio hujus libri*) gives an intertextual link from *Legatus* III,64 (3,10–14) to the Prologue.

The closing chapters of the *Legatus* are as important as the Prologue in determining the function and validity of the text, since they thematize the scribe's participation in creating the book. In response to Gertrude's plea to God to preserve the book from all error, she is reassured that “with the same love with which I in my freely-given grace poured out all that is written in this book, I also committed it to the memory of the one who listened to you, who collected and ordered it all to my greatest delight” (V,33 [1,27–32]). It is this quotation that caused Kurt Ruh to regard the scribe as the actual author—which is more a reflection on Ruh than on the scribe.<sup>65</sup> At the beginning of *Legatus* V,34, the scribe introduces herself as the “compiler of this book” (*compilatrix hujus libri*),<sup>66</sup> using a term common in learned circles that here implies far more than a mere compiler in the sense of Bonaventura.<sup>67</sup> The scribe of the *Legatus* at times adopts the role of a commentator. Furthermore, just as Gertrude commends the book to God in a ‘recorded’ conversation in Book V,33 and a little further on in the form of a hymn of praise (V,35), the compiler also feels authorized to present the finished book to God (V,34). In such an arrangement the distinction between one's own words and those of another, between text and commentary, is of no significance,<sup>68</sup> particularly since God has assured Gertrude that He has entrusted the revelations to the memory of the scribe. This is new: until now it has always been Gertrude as the chosen one (*electa*) who was presented as the guarantor for the transmission of the divine message—a message subject to repeated distortion until it was transferred into the medium of writing, which, in

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connection between the books is created by a reference to the same event rather than by a common section of text—seem to be the reason for the widely accepted scholarly opinion that one of the nuns who helped Mechthild of Hackeborn to record her revelations was Gertrude of Helfta. See Nemes, *Schrift*, 281–282 n. 765.

<sup>65</sup> See also Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 53–55.

<sup>66</sup> Lanczkowski translates this phrase with “Verfasserin dieses Buches,” clearly relating her to Gertrude (*Gertrud von Helfta: Gesandter der göttlichen Liebe* (1989), 504; likewise Kiening, *Mystische Bücher* (2001), 52).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book” (1976), 127–128.

<sup>68</sup> Also Harrison, “Oh! What treasure is in this book? Writing, reading, and community at the monastery of Helfta” (2008), 89.

the eyes of God, affords His message the widest possible impact.<sup>69</sup> Thus we learn from the scribe that Gertrude could not express in human words everything that was revealed to her (cf. III,12 [2,1–3] and IV,11 [6,3–7]), and that some things worthy of report (IV,26 [2,30–31]) will have to be passed over in silence. Other ‘textual omissions’ occur because “although she understood every single word that she received, she could not keep everything in her memory due to weakness” (IV,48 [16,3–5]). Even those things that could be memorized are “fragmentary” and can only be partially expressed through “allegories” (IV,55 [1,7–11]). Typically, God accepts such ‘textual deterioration’ as inevitable, and urges Gertrude, who is portrayed by her fellow nun as a messenger (cf. IV,13 [2,6–8]) or channel (cf. I,11 [1,8–14]),<sup>70</sup> to convey the message in written form as well as orally (II,10 [1,8–10]). Committing the message to a form of written memory no longer bound to the personal memories of Gertrude and her scribe guarantees its permanence and survival (cf. I,15 [1,14–16] and IV,13 [2,15–21]). Thus the process of writing and the text itself offer even Gertrude the possibility of re-remembering later (cf. II,21 [2,9–11] and 22 [1,4–7]). Her readers should, by way of contrast, be led to remember (cf. II,21 [2,7–9]), thereby transcending a situation that requires the simultaneous presence of speaker-messenger and listener.<sup>71</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that participation in and the reading of the message conveyed by the *Legatus* are viewed very much as the same thing (see, for example, Prol. [4,19–24], II,23 [22,19], II,24 [2,1–3]).<sup>72</sup> Through the text itself, as well as through the reading of it, its recipients are absorbed into the now “extended speaker situation”<sup>73</sup> of a conversation that originally took place between God and His messengers, namely Gertrude and the nun. This is thematized in the Prologue (cf. 2,9–17) and in one of the final chapters of the *Legatus*

<sup>69</sup> Köbele, *Bilder der unbegriffenen Wahrheit. Zur Struktur mystischer Rede im Spannungsfeld von Latein und Volkssprache* (1993) demonstrates that this also affects the literary and linguistic composition of the texts from Helfta (although not *Das fließende Licht*), 104–122.

<sup>70</sup> The second book, however, which is regarded as authentic, presents her as a self-aware author who assumes that her text will continue to exist even after her death (*Legatus* II, 23 [22, 19–20]).

<sup>71</sup> It should be noted that the literary *oeuvre* of Helfta arose during a period of transition for the convent. See Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 40.

<sup>72</sup> The same applies to the *Liber* of Mechthild of Hackeborn (Hubrath, *Schreiben*, 52).

<sup>73</sup> This expression has been taken over from Ehlich in the full knowledge that he does not confine the text and the process of transmission that guarantees it to the written form (“Text und sprachliches Handeln. Die Entstehung von Texten aus dem Bedürfnis nach Überlieferung” (1983), 38).

(cf. V,34 [1,11–19]), and lends the written material a claim to validity that can hardly be bettered. This claim is, of course, guaranteed by the fact that at programmatically pivotal points in the book the written material claims God as its author (in the Prologue and Book V,33).

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Books do not, however, fall from Heaven, and writing does not—except in post-Structuralist fantasies—write itself. As a philologist, one does not want to leave the text to God's authorship, however much the writing would assert this for itself. Like Kurt Ruh, we are far more interested in discovering the actual author. In this quest, Friedrich Nietzsche provides a helpful analogy: his book *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* was created at the end of the 19th century in comparable circumstances to the *Legatus*. He had recourse to a scribe, his secretary Heinrich Köselitz, alias Peter Gast. However, his reason was not humility, as in Gertrude's case (at least according to the prologue to *Legatus* III), but short-sightedness. This state of affairs led Nietzsche to make the following observation: "Truth to tell, it was Peter Gast, at that time a student at the University of Basel and a devoted friend of mine, who was responsible for the book. With my head wrapped in bandages and extremely painful, I dictated while he wrote and corrected as he went along—to be accurate, he was the real composer, whereas I was only the author" (Nietzsche, *Ecce homo* 5: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 327). Similarly, it is a characteristic of monastic literature that Cistercian visionary literature may be guaranteed by the authority of a named, saintly nun—the author—but producing the literary record is ultimately the task of the convent.<sup>74</sup> This is important for our understanding of the *Legatus*: by focusing solely on its protagonist, one risks misunderstanding the communicative achievement and social function of the text, for Gertrude functions solely as the authority for the validity of the text and is, in this sense, "only" the author. In light of these remarks, certain characteristics of the "actual author" (Kurt Ruh) may surely be attributed to this "actual scribe". The voice of this fellow nun from Helfta is also heard in the Prooemium, which occurs before the extracts from the *Legatus* in the Leipzig manuscript ms. 827,<sup>75</sup> another previously unknown witness to literary production in Helfta. In it Gertrude's sister nun speaks,

<sup>74</sup> Palmer, "Deutschsprachige Literatur im Zisterzienserorden", 253.

<sup>75</sup> This came to my attention too late to be fully worked into this article. See Märker and Nemes, "Eine hagiographische Figur meldet sich zu Wort. Zu einem neu entdeckten Text der Helftaer Klosterliteratur" (2014).

describing her own role in the textualization of the divine revelations received by Gertrude, already thought of as deceased. The nun includes new information: Gertrude's family names, and some previously unknown details about the origin of the text and a series of chapters that are not currently part of the known corpus of Gertrude's revelations.

The discovery of the Leipzig manuscript sheds new light on the persona visible in the hagiographical parts of the *Legatus*. This persona might simply be part of a strategy of "personalizing the author" (Hugo Kuhn) by personifying the voice of the narrator.<sup>76</sup> However, the writing sister nun might also be more than a mere literary device. In the case of 14th-century Dominican Sister Books, for example, author writers are known to be responsible for recording the divine grace imparted to their fellow sister, and for reinforcing the validity of their reports through their status as eye witnesses.<sup>77</sup> By analogy, the anonymous sister of the *Legatus* could be a nun from Gertrude's immediate surroundings who helped in the composition of the book and even became a ghost writer, co-authoring the text and pre-empting Peter Gast by centuries.

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<sup>76</sup> Kuhn, "Versuch einer Literaturtypologie des deutschen 14. Jahrhunderts" (1980), 85.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster. Historische Funktion und rhetorische Legitimation frauenmystischer Texte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (1999), 243–245.

## TEXTUAL APPENDIX

## TEXT PRODUCTION AND AUTHORSHIP: GERTRUDE OF HELFTA'S

## LEGATUS DIVINAE PIETATIS

Edition: Doyère et al. (*Sources chrétiennes*, Nr. 139, 143, 255, 331). The translation of the Prologue is based on the partial translation in Laura M. Grimes's essay: "Writing as Birth: The Composition of Gertrud of Helfta's *Herald of God's Loving-Kindness*," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 42.3 (2007), 329–345, consulting the complete translation of the first three books by Margaret Winkworth (in *The Herald of Divine Love*). For the extracts from Book V, the German translation of Johanna Lanczkowski (WBG 1989) was consulted. Revision and further translation: Laura Ball and editors.

5a) *The Prologue to Gertrude of Helfta's Legatus divinae pietatis* (I,1)

The Prologue to Book I of the *Legatus* describes the role of divine inspiration in the genesis of the text and the transmission of God's loving kindness through the book to the appropriately devout author, reader and copyist. God emerges as a co-author who chooses a title for the work, *The Herald of the Divine Loving-Kindness*, that expresses its intention.

1. Omnium bonorum distributor Spiritus Paraclitus, qui spirat ubi vult, prout vult et quando vult, sicut congruentissimum quaerit secretum aspirandi, sic etiam ad salutem plurimorum congruentem ordinat modum aspirata in lucem proferendi, ut patet in hac famula Dei, quam licet larga supereffluxio divinae pietatis non desierit sine intervallo temporis immanare, emanandi tamen ordinavit intervalla. Unde et liber iste diversis temporibus est conscriptus, ita ut pars una conscriberetur post octavum annum acceptae gratiae et pars altera circa vicesimum annum perficeretur.

The Spirit, the Paraclete, dispenser of all good things, who breathes where he wills, how he wills and when he wills, seeks to keep his inspiration a most fitting secret; yet for the salvation of many he also ordains a fitting way of revealing his inspiration, as clearly shown in this handmaid of God. Although the vast flood of God's loving kindness never ceased to flow continually into her, He nonetheless ordained a pause before it flowed out. So it was that this book was written down at various times: one part written down eight years after her reception of grace and the second part completed about twenty years later.

2. Quas utrasque partes se acceptare Dominus singulis vicibus dignanter declaravit. Nam cum prima pars conscripta fuisset et ipsa cum humili devotione eam Domino commendasset,

For both of these parts, the Lord signified his gracious acceptance of it. When the first part had been written down and she had dedicated it to the Lord with humble devotion, she

tale a benignissima pietate Dei accepit responsum: “Nemo a me elongare potest memoriale abundantiae divinae suavitatis meae.” Per quod verbum intellexit Dominum velle imponi libello illi tale nomen: scilicet *Memoriale abundantiae divinae suavitatis*. Et adjecit Dominus: “Si quis cum devota intentione spiritualis profectus in hoc libro legere desideraverit, ipsum mihi attraham in tantum quod quasi inter manus meas leget in eo, et ego memetipsum illi in hoc opere sociabo, ut sicut fieri solet quando duo legentes in una pagina, unus alterius sentiat flatum, sic ego intraham flatum desideriorum ipsius, quo viscera pietatis meae commoveantur super eum. Insuper aspirabo ipsi afflatum meae divinitatis, quo ipse interius per spiritum meum renovetur.” Subjunxit etiam Dominus: “Qui vero simili intentione in eo conscripta descripserit, pro singulis immittam ei a suavitate divini Cordis mei tot sagittas amoris, quae in anima ipsius jucundissimas delectationes divinae suavitatis commovebunt.”

3. Secunda vero pars dum conscriberetur, etiam nimis voluntatem ipsius demulcens, et ipsa hoc nocte quadam querulando Domino proponeret, ipse eam solita benignitate demulcens, inter caetera sic dixit: “Dedi te in lucem gentium ut sis salus mea ab extremis terrae.” Quod cum illa de libro isto, qui tunc vix incoeptus fuerat, dictum intelligeret, admirans ait: “Et quomodo, Deus, per hunc libellum aliquis poterit percipere lucem cognitionis, cum voluntatis meae nullatenus sit ut plura

received this answer from the sweetest loving kindness of the Lord: “No one can separate this memorial of the abundance of my divine sweetness from me”. She understood by these words that the Lord Himself wanted the book to be given the following title: *Memorial to the Abundance of Divine Sweetness*. The Lord added: “If anyone wishes to read this book with the devout intention of spiritual progress, I shall draw them so closely to me that they will read it as if my own hands were holding the book and I myself shall keep them company at the task. As when two people are reading the same page, each is aware of the other’s breath, so shall I draw in the breath of their longings. Thus the core of my loving kindness will be moved to have mercy on him. Moreover I shall breathe into him the breath of my divinity which, through my Spirit, will create him anew within”. The Lord also added: “Whoever copies what is written here with a similar intention, for every single word I will fire at him, from the sweetness of my divine heart, as many arrows of love which will set in motion in his soul the most delightful pleasures of divine goodness”.

One night, while the second part was being written to the great delight of God’s will, she was making complaint to the Lord. He soothed her with His usual kindness and said, amongst other things: “I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth”. As she knew that He was speaking of the book, which was scarcely begun, she said wonderingly: “And how, O my God, could anyone be granted the light of knowledge through this little book, since I do not want any



conscribantur, et etiam ipsa pauca jam scripta nequaquam permittam manifestari?" Ad quod Dominus: "Cum ego Jeremiam in prophetam eLegissem, ipse videbatur sibi nec loqui scire nec congruentem discretionem habere, cujus tamen eloquio ego correxi gentes et regna. Similiter quaecumque luce cognitionis et veritatis per te illustrare disposui, non frustrabitur, cum aeternam praedestinationem meam nullus hominum possit impedire, quia ego quos praedestinavi hos et vocabo, et quos vocavero hos et justificabo, qualicumque mihi complacet modo."

4. Altera vice, dum iterum in orando niteretur obtinere a Domino, ut permitteret se prohibere scribentem hunc librum, quia tunc obedientia praelatorum eam tam violenter non cogeret ad scribendum sicut antea fecerat, Dominus benigne respondit: "An nescis quia quemcumque voluntas mea cogit, super omnem obedientiam est coactus? Ergo cum voluntatem meam, cui nemo potest resistere, scias in scribendo libro isto, ut quid turbaris? Nam et ego scribentem instigo et fideliter juvabo atque quod meum est illaesum conservabo." Tunc illa voluntatem suam beneplacito divino totam conformans dixit ad Dominum: "Quo vocabulo, dilectissime Domine, vis hunc libellum praetitulari?" Ad quod Dominus: "Liber iste meus *Legatus divinae pietatis* nominabitur, quia pietatis meae supereffluentia in ipso aliquantulum praelibabitur." Quod illa multum admirans ait: "Cum personae illae quae nominantur Legati majori fungantur auctoritate, quid huic libello, quem tali denotas vocabulo, dignaris concedere auctoritatis?" Respondit

more to be written and I will not allow the little that is already written to be shown to anyone?". To which the Lord answered: "When I chose Jeremiah to be my prophet, he thought he was incapable of speaking with knowledge or discretion, yet by the words of his mouth I reproved peoples and kings. In the same way, my intention to clarify certain things through you by the light of knowledge and truth shall not be frustrated, for no one can hinder what has been predestined from eternity. For those whom I have predestined I shall call; and those whom I have called I shall justify, in the way which pleases me".

Another time, when she again pleaded in prayer with the Lord, asking whether He would allow her to stop writing this book, for obedience to the ecclesiastical powers no longer drove her to write with the same force as in times past, the Lord answered full of kindness: "Do you not know that whosoever is forced by my will, is obliged above and beyond any other obedience? Therefore, since you know my will, which no one may resist, in writing this book, why then are you troubled? For I will encourage the scribe and support her faithfully; and that which is mine I will preserve unsullied". Then she, conforming her entire will to the divine pleasure, said to the Lord: "What title do you want this book to have, most loving Lord?". The Lord replied: "This book of mine will be called *The Herald of the Divine Loving Kindness*, for some of the overflowing abundance of my loving kindness will spill over into it". At this she marvelled greatly and asked: "If people called legates act with greater authority, what authority do you then



Dominus: “Ex virtute divinitatis hoc concedo ut quicumque ad laudem meam cum recta fide et humili devotione devotaque gratitudine in ipso legerit, et aedificari quaerit, venialium peccatorum remissionem consequatur, et obtinebit gratiam spiritualis consolationis et insuper habilitabitur ad gratiam ampliorem.”

5. Post haec, dum illa recognosceret Domino complacere ut duae partes jungerentur in unum, devotis orationibus requisivit ab eo quomodo permisceri deberent quae singula ipse singulis, ut praescriptum est, vocabulis dignatus est disjungere. Respondit Dominus: “Sicut gratia prolis electae uterque parens quandoque affectuosius respicitur, sic ex utrisque hunc librum conjungendum praeordinavi, unde ex utrisque sortiatur vocabulum, scilicet *Legatus memorialis abundantiae divinae pietatis*, quia legationem divinae pietatis meae faciet ad memoriam electorum meorum.”

6. Et cum in consequentibus pateat huic jugiter affuisse divinae dignationis praesentiam et tamen quandoque inseratur “apparuit” vel “affuit ei Dominus”, sic intelligendum est, quod quamvis vere frequenter affuerit ipsi speciali quadam praerogativa, pro causa tamen et pro tempore quandoque magis imaginariam exhibuit illi formam, ad capacitatem proximorum quibus hoc notificandum praeordinavit. Similiter etiam sciendum est de his quae in consequentibus videntur diversa, quia Deus amator universorum, in visitatione unius, plurimorum diversimode quaerit

deem worthy for this little book, to which you give the name *Legatus*?”. The Lord replied: “By virtue of my divinity I grant this: that anyone who reads it for my praise with correct faith, humble devotion and religious gratitude and who seeks to be edified and to receive remission of venial sins will obtain the gift of spiritual consolation; and will, moreover, become capable of more ample grace”.

Then, having recognized that it would please the Lord to bind both parts together, she enquired of Him in humble prayer as to the manner in which they should be combined, after He had declared Himself to distinguish the different parts by different titles, as noted before. The Lord replied: “Just as because of a chosen child sometimes both parents are regarded more affectionately, so have I preordained that this book should result from a union of both parts and the title emerge from both: that is, *The Herald: A Memorial of the Abundance of the Divine Loving-Kindness*, for it will herald my loving kindness in the memory of those that I have chosen”.

Since it will become clear from what follows that the presence of the divine favour constantly supported her and yet she sometimes inserted “He appeared” or “The Lord was with her”, this must be understood to mean that, although He was indeed often with her as a special privilege, nonetheless there were periods when, for some reason or some time, He appeared to her in a form more amenable to the imagination, in conformity to the capacity of those around her, to whom He preordained that a particular revelation should be communicated. Similarly, it is also essential to know, in regard to the

salutem. Et quamvis tam ferialibus quam festivis diebus pius Dominus continue indifferenter gratiam suam huic infuderit, tam per imaginationes corporearum similitudinum quam etiam per puriores illuminationes cognitionum; si quid tamen de imaginationibus corporearum similitudinum ad intellectum humanum in libello isto describi voluit, ad discretionem legentium et capacitatem divisum est in quinque.

7. In quorum primo continetur de commendatione personae et testimoniiis gratiae. In secundo libro continentur quae ipsamet, instigante spiritu Dei, per gratiarum actionem conscripserat de modo susceptae gratiae. In tertio vero exponuntur aliqua de beneficiis sibi impensis, sive revelatis; in quarto autem annotantur visitationes quibus in quibusdam festis consolata est a divina pietate. In quinto deinde exprimuntur aliqua de his quae sibi Dominus dignatus est revelare ex meritis animarum decedentium. Et subjunguntur aliqua de consolationibus quibus Dominus extrema ipsius dignatus est praevenire.

8. Sed quia Hugo dicit: "Suspecta est mihi omnis veritas quam non confirmat Scripturarum auctoritas." Et infra: "Nec rata poterit esse quantumlibet verisimilis revelatio sine attestatione Moysi et Helyae, id est, sine Scripturarum auctoritate." Ergo in marginibus annotavi quae simplex ingenium et inexercitatus sensus meus in instanti ad memoriam potuit

varied material that follows, that God, the lover of all, in visiting one seeks in different ways the salvation of many. Just as the loving Lord continually poured His grace into her without alteration, on weekdays and holy days, sometimes through the means of sensible corporeal similitudes, sometimes through purer intellectual visions, so, too, did He will this book to record images of His bodily likenesses according to the capacities of the human intellect. For the readers' estimation and comprehension it is divided into five books.

In the first book of these is contained the recommendation of the person and the witnesses of grace. In the second book is contained what she herself, encouraged by the Spirit of God, did record with gratitude about the manner in which she received grace. In the third book, something of the gifts of grace imparted or revealed to her is described. In the fourth book are recorded the visitations by which she was comforted on various feast days by divine love. In the fifth book, something is conveyed of those things the Lord deemed worthy to reveal to her about the merits of the souls of the dead and also something of the comforts He deemed her worthy of at her own death.

However, as Hugh says: "I hold suspect all truth which is not confirmed by scriptural authority"; and, further down, "No revelation, however probable it appears, should be endorsed without the witness of Moses and Elijah, that is, without the scriptural authority". I have therefore recorded in the margin what my simple wit and inexperienced understanding could recall on the

revocare, sperans ut, si quis acri ingenio et exercitato sensu affuerit, multo probabiliora atque convenientiora testimonia possit adhibere.

spur of the moment, in the hope that if anyone of keen wit and experienced understanding should come across it, he would be able to cite far more credible and appropriate witnesses.

### 5b) *In Praise of the Book (V,33)*

Book V, § 33 *De commendatione libri hujus* ("In Praise of This Book"): After completion of the book Christ imbues it with His sweetness and sanctifies it in terms equating the book with the Eucharist.

Cum liber iste conscriptus esset, apparuit illi Dominus Jesus, habens ipsum impressum pectori suo, dicens: "Hunc librum meum ad hoc intimis divini pectoris mei impressi, quo singulas litteras in eo conscriptas dulcedine divinitatis meae pertranseam medullitus, sicut medo suavissimus micam recentis similaginis efficaciter pertransit, ut omnis qui ad laudem meam cum humili devotione in ipso legerit, fructum ex hoc consequatur aeternae salutis." Tunc oravit Dominum ut eundem librum ab omni conservare dignaretur errore ad suam laudem et gloriam. Qui extensa venerabili manu sua super illum, signo sanctae crucis communivit, dicens: "Eodem effectum quo in hac missa panem et vinum transubstantiavi omnibus in salutem, etiam omnia in libro isto conscripta caelesti benedictione mea modo sanctificavi omnibus, sicut supra dixi, cum humili devotione in ipso legere volentibus in veram salutem." Et subjunxit Dominus: "Sic, inquit, delectat me labor hunc librum meum mihi conscribentis quasi tot olfactoriola mihi ad ornatum appenderit, quot litteras in ipso conscripsit, ex quibus singulis triplici miro modo afficior delectamento, quia profecto in eis sapit mihi inexplicabilis

After this book had been written, the Lord Jesus appeared to her, holding it pressed to His breast and saying: "I have pressed this book which is mine deep into my divine breast to saturate every single letter written in it with the sweetness of my divinity, as sweetest mead drenches a bite of fresh bread with sweetness, so that each one who reads it in humble devotion for my praise will gain the fruit of eternal life. Thereupon she prayed to the Lord that He would deem this book worthy to preserve it from all error, for His praise and glory. Then He stretched out His venerable hand over the book and sealed it with the sign of the holy Cross, saying: "Through the same power by which, at mass, I have transformed the bread and wine for the salvation of all, I have sanctified everything written in this book by my heavenly blessing for the true salvation of all those, as I have said, who read it in humble devotion". The Lord added the following words: "I delight in the work of the scribe who has written this book for me, as surely as if she had adorned me with as many vials of perfume as there are letters in the book. Each of these fills me with marvellous delight in three forms: I taste in them the unspeakable, divine sweetness of my divine love,

dulcedo divini amoris mei, ex quo cuncta in eo conscripta profluxerunt. Et afficit me suavis redolentia bonae voluntatis ipsius scribentis. Necnon alludit mihi forma meae gratuitaet pietatis quae patet in singulis ejusdem libri scriptis. Ego enim in eodem amore, quo omnia in libro isto conscripta gratuita pietate mea tibi infudi, eodem etiam amore eadem memoriae a te audientis commendavi, componens et ordinans ac per manus ejus secundum optimum beneplacitum meum conscribens universa. Ego enim saepe dictum librum meum sanctissima conversatione mea operiam, roseisque monilibus quinque vulnerum meorum adornabo, ac septem donis Spiritus sancti, tamquam septem sigillis, divina virtute mea consignabo, ut non sit qui ipsum de manu mea erueri possit."

from which all the things written in this book have flowed; the good will of her who writes for me delights me with its delicious fragrance; and the form of my freely given grace, which shows through in all that is written down. With the same love, with which I in my freely given grace poured out all that is written in this book, I also committed it to the memory of the one who listened to you, who collected and ordered it all to my greatest delight. For I will cover this book which even now I often have called mine with my most holy life and adorn it with the rose-coloured jewels of my five wounds and seal it with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, as with seven seals, by my divine might, so that no one shall be able to pluck this book from my hand".

### 5c) *The Reception of the Book (V,34)*

Book V, § 34: *De acceptatione hujus libri* ("The Reception of This Book"): Observed by an eyewitness, the compiler offers the completed work to the Lord, who promises to guide the pious reader Himself but to destroy the scornful one.

1. Hinc alia vice, dum compilatrix hujus libri communicatura eumdem occulte in manica sub pallio suo deferret oblaturum Domino in laudem aeternam, hoc nullo penitus hominum sciente, et more solito flexis genibus in obviam dominici corporis profunde inclinaret, visus est ab alia persona Dominus, quasi ex incontinentia profusivi amoris, cum ingenti gaudio in obviam ejus genua flectendo eam blande circumplecti, dicens: "Ego dulcedine divini amoris mei penetrabo et penetrando fecundabo omnia verba libri hujus mihi modo oblata, immo veraciter impulsu spiritus mei

On another occasion, when she, the compiler of this book, went to Communion, she carried it secretly in the sleeve of her habit, under her mantle, to offer it to the Lord for His eternal praise, without anyone knowing. She genuflected in the usual way and, approaching the body of the Lord, prostrated herself before it. At this point another person saw the Lord approaching her with great manifestations of love and joy, embracing her tenderly and saying: "I will penetrate all the words in this book which you have offered me with the sweetness of my divine love—

conscripti. Et quicumque humiliato corde ad me veniens, amore amoris mei in eo legere voluerit, huic ego revera in sinu meo quasi digito proprio sigillatim quaeque sibi utilia demonstrabo, et insuper me ipsi tam dignanter acclinabo quod, quemadmodum quis diversis speciebus saturatus afflatu suo aspiraret se osculari volentem, sic ego ex afflatu divinitatis meae effectum animae suae salutarem ipsi efficaciter inspirabo. Qui vero curiosa instigatur elatione, a tergo mihi adveniens, quasi dorso meo incubuerit ad introspectandum, et invertendo perscrutando hujus libri mei textum, hunc certe cum pondus ejus amplius supportare noluerit, divina virtute mea confusum deicere non verebor.”

and, penetrating them, make them fruitful—for they were truly written by the power of my spirit. And I will take whoever comes to me with a humble heart, desiring for love of my love to read this book, onto my lap and with my finger point out all specifically that is beneficial for him. And I will incline myself graciously towards him, so that, in the same way that someone who has been sated by both species of the Eucharist breathes onto the one who wishes to kiss him, I will breathe into the reader efficaciously with my divine breath to effect his soul’s salvation. However, whoever is spurred on by curiosity and self-aggrandizement to come to me underhandedly, leaning as it were on my back to spy over my shoulder and scan the text of my book to pervert it: I will not suffer the burden of his weight for a moment; I will not hesitate to destroy the disgraced with my divine power.

#### 5d) *The Conclusion of the Book (V,36)*

Book V, § 36 *Conclusio hujus libri* (“The conclusion of this book”): This passage praises God’s fruitful co-authorship of the work, which leads the narrator and reader of the book upwards to His grace and their salvation.

Ad laudem et gloriam Dei amatoris humanae salutis conscriptus est liber iste; sed causa brevitatis plurimis, immo pene innumeris, omissis, consummatus est tam evidenti et, ut ita dicam, tam miraculoso adjutorio divinae misericordiae, quod vel etiam saltem per hoc solum innotescere potuit quam uberem animarum fructum ipse praevenit et subsequitur optimorum datorum ex eo requirat. Nequaquam tamen exhausto rivulo divinarum influxionum in hanc electam suam directo, sed partito

This book was written to the praise and glory of God, the lover of human salvation. For the sake of brevity many things, nay, things almost without number, have been omitted. It was completed with the remarkable—I might even say wondrous—help of divine mercy, which alone at least could reveal that overabundant fruit of the soul which the author and finisher of all good gifts expected from it. Without, however, being exhausted, the stream of divine outpourings flowed directly into this person, His chosen one, and

nobiscum quod nobis congruebat, electam suam, quasi per ascensorios gradus imaginationum deducens ad secretiora, immo ad puriores et excellentiores sapientiae haustus, perduxit, qui nequaquam corporearum imaginationum obumbrationibus ad publicum nostrum possint perducere. Quae tamen omnia incontinentissima Dei pietas cum universis hic scriptis ad salutem egentium tam copiose faciat exuberare, quo, adaucto centuplicato fructu, in librum vitae scribi digni inveniantur. Et interim legentes in libello isto simpliciores, qui per se non sufficiunt natate in profluvio divinae pietatis, saltem hoc vehiculo iter arripiant, et quasi manu ductione beneficiorum proximi sui delectati, vacando lectionibus, meditationibus et contemplationibus, ipsi tandem gustare incipiant quam dulcis est Dominus et quam revera beatus est qui sperans in eo totum cogitatum suum jactat in ipsum. Quod benignitate sua nobis praestare dignetur qui in Trinitate perfecta vivit et regnat Deus per infinita saecula saeculorum. Amen.

shall be given to us as we deserve it. Yet through a gradual elevation of the imagination the Lord has led His chosen one upwards, as if over ascending stairs, to higher graces of vision and more secret things so she might taste the purer and more delightful fountains of wisdom, which can by no means be understood through the shadow images of bodily imagination possessed by the uninitiated.

May the eternal loving kindness of God join all this with that which is written here and make it so fruitful for the readers' salvation that they may bring forth fruit a hundredfold and be found worthy to be written into the book of life. And meanwhile the simpler readers of this book, those who are not able by themselves to swim in the stream of divine grace, may at least travel by this vehicle and rejoice that they, too, may be led by the hand through their neighbour's gifts of grace until finally they begin to taste, by reading, meditating and contemplating, how sweet the Lord is and how truly blessed he is that hopes in the Lord and throws all his care upon Him. May God in His loving kindness preserve this, God, who lives in the perfect Trinity and rules world without end. Amen.