

# The Revelations of St. Elizabeth

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A Translation into Modern English, made from the Latin text  
in Cambridge Magdalene College MS F.4.14

## **Note from the Translator's Introduction**

*Although today virtually unknown, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Revelations of St. Elizabeth of Hungary circulated in two Latin and two Middle English versions, as well as in French, Italian, Spanish and Catalan. Elsewhere I have discussed the problems of their authorship, date, and original language and have argued that the original text was written in Middle High German, probably by the Dominican nun Elsbet Stigel, Suso's spiritual daughter and biographer, and then translated (twice) into Latin. Further, I have suggested that the "Elizabeth of Hungary" with whom it claims to originate is not the popular St. Elizabeth of Thuringia (d. 1231) but her obscure great-niece, Elizabeth of Töß (d. 1336), like her aunt the daughter of a king of Hungary, who spent her short life as an enclosed Dominican nun in the convent of Töß, near Wintertur in Switzerland.*

**Here begin the visions of the blessed virgin Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary.**

### **I.**

One day blessed Elizabeth, constant in private prayer, was seeking Christ her spouse with devout mind and anxious spirit and was not finding him as she usually did. She began to cut short her prayer and grow concerned in her heart as to what the reason could be that her spouse was not visiting her, through the infusion of sweet consolations, as he had been accustomed to do at other times. When she had just made up her mind silently to have recourse to some friar for advice on this, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and said to her, "Elizabeth, if you are willing to be my pupil, I shall be your mistress."

She replied, "Who are you, mistress, who wish to have me as your pupil and handmaid?" The Virgin Mary replied to her, "I am the mother of the Son of the living God, whom you have chosen as master and spouse."

Then blessed Elizabeth fell to the ground and worshipped. On bended knees she placed her joined hands between the hands of the Virgin. <sup>1</sup> The blessed Virgin said once again, "If you are willing to be my daughter, pupil, and handmaid, I shall be your mother, mistress, and teacher. And when you have been sufficiently instructed and educated by me, I shall lead you to your dear spouse my Son, who will receive you into his hands, as I have just now received you." Then she began to counsel her, saying, "Avoid disputes, quarrels, slanders and complaints. Do not lend your ears to complaints about yourself, nor allow your heart to become heavy on their account. But bear in mind that nothing so bad can be said of you but that something even worse could be said than what is said!"

## II.

On the next feast of the Blessed Virgin following this, on that very day the handmaid of God, Elizabeth, was weeping most bitterly in prayer, fearing that she had not fully kept the advice of the Virgin mentioned above. There suddenly appeared to her, not in a dream but in a waking state, the blessed Virgin, who called her with sweet speech by her own name and said, "Elizabeth my sweetest daughter, do not torment yourself so greatly because you have not completely conformed to my perfection. But struggle constantly against sin and say just once the great angelic greeting with which Gabriel, God's messenger, greeted me, <sup>2</sup> and every offence shall be generously forgiven you by my Son."

## III.

In the process of time, on the day of the feast of St Scholastica, <sup>3</sup> the handmaid of God, Elizabeth, was continuing steadfastly in prayer. As she prayed she was weeping most bitterly, because she could not restrain herself from audible groans and vocal cries. Suddenly there appeared to her the Blessed Virgin Mary, accompanied by John the Evangelist. The Blessed Virgin said, "Elizabeth, you have chosen me as your mother, mistress, and teacher. But I want you to draw me up a document concerning this choice and freely-willed promise, so that you cannot go back on your decision. For that purpose I have brought with me my Son's beloved disciple, John the Evangelist, so that if you agree he will draw up a public document." Then blessed Elizabeth, on bended knees and with joined hands, paid homage on the ground and said, "Do with me, my lady, as with your handmaid, whatever you please." And she confirmed this donation with an oath. And St John, on the instructions of the blessed Virgin Mary, drew up a public document to this effect.

## IV.

Once on the Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord <sup>4</sup> while praying with great concentration, she was reciting the Hail Mary in a loud voice, with much devotion and shedding of tears. The Blessed Virgin appeared to her in visible form and said to her, "I have come to teach you the prayer which I made as a young girl when I was still living in the Temple. <sup>5</sup> I resolutely decided in my heart that I wished to have

God as father and I made up my mind to do whatever would please him, so that I might find favour in his sight. I made myself learn his law and all the commandments contained in it. In particular I committed to memory three commandments, being eager to keep them with the greatest care and with all my might. These are: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself (Dt 6:5). Love your friend and hate your enemy" (Lv 19:18 and Mt 5: 3). For I understood that man and angel were good, and my enemy was the devil and, insofar as he is evil, the evil man. From that love of God and neighbour, and from the fear and hatred of the enemy (that is, of the devil and sin), every fulness of grace and virtue has descended to me. That love cannot take root in the human heart unless there is there hatred of the enemy, that is, of the devil and sin.

"If therefore you wish to obtain that love, do as I did in the Temple in my earliest youth. For I would rise in the middle of the night and, standing before the altar with complete concentration of mind, I would ask the Lord for his grace by which I might be able to keep these commandments I have mentioned, and I would make seven petitions, one after the other, in prayer before the altar.

"The first was, that he would give me his grace by means of which I should be able to fulfill the first commandment, that is, on loving God above all things, with all my heart, all my mind and all my strength.

"The second was, that I should be able to fulfill the second commandment, on loving my neighbour as myself, and that he should make me love what he himself loved.

"The third was, that I should be able to fulfill the third commandment and that he should make me hate the enemy of the human race because from him derive vice, sin, and whatever he himself hates.

"The fourth was, that he should give me humility, patience, kindness, gentleness and other virtues, by which I might be made lovely in his eyes.

"The fifth was, that he should allow me to see the time when that blessed virgin should be born who, according to the sayings of the prophets, was to bear his son; and that he would keep safe my eyes with which I might see her, my ears with which I might hear her speak, my tongue with which I might praise her, my hands with which I might touch her, my feet with which I might run to her, my knees on which I might do her homage, and see and do homage to her son lying on her lap.

"The sixth was, that he would give me grace by which I might be able to keep all the commandments of the priests and the rules of the Temple.

"The seventh and last was that he would deign to keep safe his holy Temple and all his own People, to serve him forever."

Having heard this, blessed Elizabeth burst out with these words: "Most excellent lady, were you not sanctified in your mother's womb? How was it that you said these things? Were you not free from every sin and filled with every grace?" <sup>6</sup>

The Blessed Virgin replied, "Listen, Elizabeth. Undoubtedly, daughter, I was such as you say. However, you should know this in truth, that at that time I considered myself vile and wretched and unworthy of every grace of God's, just as you now consider yourself, and even more so. And so I was always asking God that he would deign to infuse into me his grace and strength."

## V.

Furthermore, one night Christ's handmaid, Elizabeth, had begun to meditate on how God the Father was well pleased in the glorious Virgin while she was yet living, in that he was willing to take flesh from her. The Blessed Virgin replied, "God did with me, my dear daughter, as one who knows how to play the cithara or viol. For first he tunes the instrument, so that it makes a sweet, harmonious sound; afterwards, chanting and plucking, he makes music. In this way did God the Father first tune and adjust in me every movement and sensation, both of body and mind. Then he touched me with the finger of his Spirit and tuned all my words and deeds to his good pleasure.

"Frequently he would raise me, accompanied by angels, to contemplate the court of heaven, where I would find such great solace and increase of mental sweetness that when at length I came to myself, I was so intoxicated with love for that heavenly homeland that I longed to embrace stones, trees, animals and all other creatures, and to serve them for love of him who had created them. I would also long to serve all the ladies who came to the Temple, for love of their creator, whose ineffable sweetness I was tasting.

"Therefore, daughter, when God wishes to give you some grace or consolation, you should accept it with humility and allow him to do whatever he likes with you. You ought not to be arrogant under the cloak of humility and say, 'Lord, why do you do these things to me? I am not worthy', and suchlike. For just as he is most wise, so he knows what he should do with you better than you do yourself. And the glory is his if he performs some miracle in you, not your own."

Now it so happened that while this intimate conversation was continuing at some length, one of Elizabeth's fellow nuns walked past the place where Christ's handmaid was praying. Blessed Elizabeth, reproaching her soundly, said with great asperity, "Why at this time of day did you walk across me from one side to the other?" She began almost to threaten her with her words and gestures.

As that woman was retreating, the Blessed Virgin said to Christ's handmaid, Elizabeth, "Daughter, how foolish and indiscriminating you still are! While you have me here with you, you should not pay attention to anything of this world. Now

therefore profit from my presence this night. For by my son's special grace I have been sent to you so that you may confidently ask questions and I shall tell you the truth concerning everything that you ask. However, since you allowed your attention to wander to the action of that fellow of yours, and you rebuked her with such lack of discretion, I wish to give you as penance that you may not go back to bed tonight. Nor do I at present intend to reveal to you any secrets that I would have told you if you had not affronted my dignity."

## VI.

So when that night had come to an end and day had just broken, Christ's handmaid, Elizabeth, began earnestly to lament and to be distressed by the offence which she had offered the majesty of the glorious Virgin the night before, as recounted above. She was very afraid that she would never be able to recover such great grace and consolation. The Blessed Virgin replied to her silent thought, appearing to her and saying again and again, "Do not be afraid, daughter, and do not distress yourself with any foolish uncertainty about losing me because of your past sin; for your sin has already been forgiven you through your penitence. And I have now come to you so that you may ask what you like, for I am ready to answer your questions on everything, according to the promise I had made."

Blessed Elizabeth immediately said, "Lady, I ask you to tell me what it was that prompted you to ask the Lord to promise, of his special grace, that you would see the birth of that virgin from whom his son was to be born."

She replied, "One day when I had had consolation from God, more wonderful than I had ever experienced before, and had come to myself, with most burning heart I began to consider whether I could do something, or have something in myself, on account of which God would permit me never to be separated from him, and this I began to strive. And with this thought I rose up and went to a book and began to read it. And on the first page of the book there met my eyes that text of Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive ...' (Is 7:14). And while I considered and meditated on how greatly virginity pleased God, given that he wished his Son to be born of a virgin, in my heart I resolved at once to preserve my own virginity out of reverence for her and, if I should chance to live to see her, to serve her in virginity all the days of my life, wandering with her, if necessary, through the whole world.

"After this, therefore, on the following night, while I was praying to God with devout mind, asking that he would allow me to see that virgin of whom I have spoken before I died, suddenly so great a shining light appeared before my eyes, although I was in darkness, that the sun was nothing in comparison. And from out of that shining light I heard a voice saying to me, 'Virgin of the stock of David, you shall bear my Son.' And it added, 'Know with complete certainty that that honour and reverence which, out of love for me, you longed to pay another virgin, shall be paid to you by others. I wish you to be that virgin who is to bear my Son. And not only will you possess him through you and in you, but in right of marriage you will

be able to give him to whomsoever you please. Anyone who has not loved you nor believed that you were the mother of my Son, who took flesh from you for the salvation of the human race, will not have my grace or love, nor will he enter my Son's kingdom. You alone will be able to offer to others my Son and his grace, which you will receive from me.'

"Having heard these words I was beside myself with excessive astonishment and wonder, and fell prostrate on my face as if dead, for I could not hold myself upright. But suddenly God's angels were there, raising me up from the ground and strengthening me and saying, 'Fear not, for you are blessed above all women and on you has alighted God's grace, through which can be easily fulfilled all that the Lord has said to you.' From that time forth I did not cease, day and night, to render praise to my creator with heart, mouth, and deed, looking forward with firm and certain confidence to the day and the hour that those things that had been revealed to me by the Lord should be fulfilled. I used to say to myself over and over again, 'Most kindly Lord, in that it is your pleasure to offer so great a grace to your unworthy handmaid, I ask that you give me the spirit of your wisdom, <sup>7</sup> by which I may worthily conceive your Son, the creator of heaven and earth, and serve him as he wishes. Give me the spirit of understanding, by which with enlightened mind I may have the strength to fulfill all his will, <sup>8</sup> insofar as is possible in this world. Give me the spirit of counsel, by which I may protect and guide him as is fitting while he is still crying in his human weakness, as yet unable to speak. Give me the spirit of strength, by which I may with courageous heart bear title of his dignity in my heart and constantly cleave to it. Give me the spirit of knowledge, by which I may instruct all those who will have to do with him and who will wish to imitate him. Give me the spirit of loving-kindness, by which [I may foster] <sup>9</sup> his human nature and delicate constitution as shall be fitting. Give me also the spirit of the fear of the Lord by which I may serve him with humble mind and proper reverence. My dearest daughter, all that I asked was granted me, as you can understand from the angelic greeting with which I was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel.'" <sup>10</sup>

## VII.

On another occasion Christ's handmaid, Elizabeth, was standing in prayer and thinking how great a grace God had done the glorious Virgin. The Blessed Virgin appeared to her and said to her, "My daughter, you think that I had such great grace from my creator without any effort on my part. But it was not so except for that grace of sanctification in my mother's womb. I gained every other grace with much physical and mental effort, for instance by praying continually day and night with most burning love, and by lamenting with most bitter groans, and by always thinking, saying and doing whatever I believed most pleased my creator, and with the greatest care avoiding every offence, however trivial." She added, "You may hold it as immutable, daughter, that no influx of devotion perfectly pleasing to God, or gift of grace or virtue, descends on the human heart, except through devout prayer of the mind and harsh affliction of the body. For after someone has made a perfect offering to God of body and soul, the two combined, and God has dedicated them to

his service and honour, of his grace the Lord God, the most high, begins to make that human soul joyful to such an extent that she cannot bear it. But through sweetness and astonishment she is rendered incapable, like a man drunk on sweet and potent wine who is beside himself and because of the weakness of his head cannot bear it.

"And then that soul recognises that she has done nothing pleasing to God that is superior to such great consolations. And she thinks herself much indebted to God, and more worthless and despicable than she had ever thought herself. But after such a soul has come to herself, she should render praise and thanks to God with all the devotion and affection of her mind, and should think herself unworthy of every grace, and ungrateful for so great a blessing, and she should bewail this with much fear. And when God sees that such a soul is always greatly humbled as a result of the gifts she has received, he is all the more sedulous to give her gifts of graces, so much so that he fulfills, as it were, her desire in this world, so that it seems to her that her conversation is with God in heaven and not on earth with men and women. It also seems to her that she has a paradise within her. This, I say, was what happened to me while I was still alive.

"When, therefore, I was completely consumed within by the love of God, and experienced such great sweetness from him that for his sake, the whole world grew worthless in my sight, and one day with devout mind was alone in my private chamber, suddenly the Angel Gabriel was with me and, as the gospels say, greeted me saying, 'Hail, full of grace ...' When I heard this greeting I was terrified at first, but afterwards I was comforted and reassured by his friendly and loving conversation, not doubting that the message he brought was true. I flung myself on the ground and on bended knees with joined hands I worshipped and said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord,' and so on. Having said this, I was immediately rapt in ecstasy. Divine grace flooded me in such fulness that I experienced great sweetness and consolation in my soul. And in that rapture the Son took flesh from my purest blood, without any thought or carnal pleasure on my part.

"The principal reason God did me this grace was the faith and humility with which I gave full credence to the angel's words, and humbled myself completely and yielded to the divine will. And so he condescended to bestow on me so great a grace. So you too, daughter, in all that God promises you or does, do not hesitate from lack of faith or resist him, saying, 'Lord, why are you doing this to me?' But following my example say, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord,' and so on. Even if sometimes what he promised you is not fulfilled, or what has been bestowed on you by the Lord is taken away from you, blame yourself and think that you have committed some offence in the sight of the divine majesty, on account of which the divine decree has changed. Therefore anyone who wants to obtain eternal life must obey God's commands from his heart in firm faith, submitting himself to him through true humility and obedience, because these are the opposites of the two sins of our first parents, Adam and Eve, who lost the grace and dignity in which they had been created on account of pride and disobedience."

## VIII.

Further, on another occasion, on the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord, the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, in a lengthy and long-continued prayer, was humbly asking God with great devotion and shedding of tears to give her the grace by which she might love him with her whole heart. The Blessed Virgin appeared and said to her, "Who loves God with his whole heart? Is that not you, Elizabeth?" When she was afraid to assent and say that she loved God with her whole heart but, remaining silent throughout, made no reply at all, the Blessed Virgin said to her, "Do you want me to tell you who loves God perfectly? Truly, Bartholomew the Apostle loved him, as did Laurence the Martyr and John the Evangelist and the other apostles and martyrs." She added, "Would you be willing for his love to be flayed, grilled, and to drink poison?"

And since she did not dare either affirm or deny that she was willing to suffer these things for the love of Christ, the Blessed Virgin said, "Truly I tell you, daughter, that if for the love of God you are willing to be stripped of all worldly things and of the cravings of your own will, so much so that you wished neither to possess nor to crave anything in this world, I shall obtain for you from my son the merit which St Bartholomew has for his flaying. And if you patiently tolerate injuries and insults, and whatever inconveniences are inflicted on you, you will have the same merit which St Laurence has for the grilling of his body. And when you gladly and humbly tolerate criticisms, mockery and abuse from others, you will have the same merit that John the Evangelist had for the drinking of poison. And if you are willing to trust me and obey me with respect to the carrying out of all that has just been said, I shall be at your side and I shall be with you, always helping you when it is appropriate."

## IX.

Moreover, on another occasion the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, was praying, and in her prayer was considering with devout mind how the Blessed Virgin used to pray, according to her own revelation, as described before. The Blessed Virgin replied to her, "In praying, daughter, I was acting like a man who wants to construct a beautiful fountain from scratch. First he goes to the foothills of the mountain beneath which water wells up, and he listens carefully to discover in which area there are streams of water flowing through. When this has been investigated through hearing, he immediately begins to excavate in that part of the mountain until he finds the headspring of the welling streams. Then he channels the water to the site of the fountain. He makes the site wide, beautiful, and sparkling clean, so that the water there will be always kept pure and bright. After that, he constructs a wall around the fountain and sets up a stone column in the middle of the fountain, making spouts all around it through which the water may freely flow on every side. And the water is available for people to drink. This is what I did, spiritually speaking.

"For I went to the mountain when I carefully listened to and learnt the Law of Moses



and all the commandments of the Decalogue. Then I discovered the stream of water when, through reading, meditating, and praying, I learnt that the headspring of all goodness was to love God with all one's heart, all one's soul and all one's strength. Then I channelled the water to the site of the fountain when I conceived a firm desire of loving all that God loves, and hating all that he hates. Then I did indeed keep the water sparkling clean and bright when I was zealous to protect the desire of my heart and the emotions of my lower nature, keeping them unharmed from all defilement of sin. Then I constructed a wall around the fountain when I took care to protect unharmed all the virtues and especially humility, patience, and kindness, together with faith, hope, and charity, right to the end of my life. Then I set up a column and inserted spouts in it when I gave myself as model and source of help for all those who loved me and wanted to cleave to me, always ready to stand by them and offer them the water of divine grace to drink.

"All those things, daughter, did God fulfill in me, and he gave me as a model to the entire human race so that not a single one might be excused. For anyone who wants to follow me and yield to my advice will find grace at my hands and salvation. And you should know for certain, daughter, that anyone who does not love me will not be able to find grace from my Son or, consequently, from the Holy Spirit. And so, dearest daughter, I tell you these things so that you may learn to seek grace from God in prayer with faith and humility, as you know that I did, from what has been said. For without prayer it is impossible to obtain God's grace.

"However, virtues and graces are not distributed by God to all alike, because people do not all alike know how to request from God with faith and humility in prayer, and to protect when they do obtain them. So people ought to encourage each other in prayer, so that one may share with another what God has given him, and may receive from others what he does not himself have. Hence I wish, daughter, that you should pray punctiliously not only for your own salvation but also for that of others. For by these means shall grace be increased both for you and for others, and your prayers will be fruitful."

## X.

Moreover, the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, was groaning in spiritual affliction for three years because it seemed to her that she could not have her own confessor. Consequently, whenever she wanted to make her confession, God the Father, taking pity on her desolation, assigned her St John the Evangelist as confessor, instructing him that whenever she wanted to confess he should himself hear her, and absolve her by his authority. It was God's will that when she confessed to St John, she would fully call to mind all her sins. But when she confessed to her other confessor, she could scarcely remember what she should say, and after his absolution she did not remain happy and joyful as she did when she confessed to St John.

## XI.

It happened that one day the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, suffered from some accursed woman a great and remarkable injury, by which to human eyes she seemed seriously hurt. When at last she recovered herself, mindful that she had suffered an injury, and inflamed by a fervent attack of charity, she turned to prayer. Praying devoutly, with unspeakable groaning and lengthy shedding of tears, she began to petition the Most High for the aforesaid woman and for all others from whom she had received some injury. She broke out in these words, "Sweet and merciful Father and eternal God, you who render good for evil, I ask that you should render to the woman who did me this injury remarkable joy of timely consolation, so that she may rejoice. From this ought I to rejoice, if I were your daughter."

When she had said this, suddenly a voice sounded in her ears, saying, "Elizabeth, you have never framed any prayer that pleased me as much as this one. For this has pierced right to the depths of my heart. And so I declare to you that all your sins are forgiven you." And when she was enumerating one by one all those which she held in her recent memory, saying, "I did such and such," the voice replied, "These and all others are forgiven you."

Then she said, "You -- who are you that speak to me and forgive all my sins?" And the voice said to her, "I am he to whose feet Mary Magdalene drew near, and went away cleansed of every sin" (Mt 26:6–13 etc.).

Once while the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, was considering in prayer what she could do that might greatly please God, she heard a voice saying to her, "Hope in the Lord and do good and dwell in the land and you shall feed on its riches. Delight in the Lord and he will give you the requests of your heart. Hope in him and he himself shall perform it and he shall lead forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the midday sun. Be subject to the Lord and pray to him" (Ps 36:3–7).

One day when the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, was persevering in prayer and was most bitterly weeping over her sins, Jesus who is the comforter of those who mourn appeared to her and said, "My dearest daughter, let not the memory of your sins trouble or sadden you, for all your sins are forgiven you." And when she replied to the contrary and said that she was convinced that if he wished to treat her with justice and not mercy, she ought to be condemned to the pains of hell, Jesus replied and said, "My daughter, justice has already been done to God the Father for your sins, and full satisfaction made to him already for everything, according to the demands of justice. For if you have offended God with all the limbs of your body, I have suffered for your sins and those of the entire human race in all the limbs of my body. For if you have offended with your hands and feet, my hands and my feet were fixed with harshest nails to the wood of the cross. If you have offended with your head, my head was lacerated most painfully with thorns. If with your eyes, my eyes were bound and covered with a blindfold. If with your ears, my ears heard blasphemies and revolting insults. If with your tongue, my tongue was sprinkled with strong vinegar and torn. If with your heart, my heart was pierced with a lance. If you have offended God with your entire body, my entire body has been scourged,

so that from the soles of my feet to the top of my head there could be seen in me no trace of wholeness (Is 1:6). You can therefore see, daughter, that suitable satisfaction has been most justly done to God the Father for your sins. Truly, I have borne in my heart the languors of every sin and their sorrows – I who did no sin, nor was any guile found in my mouth" (Is 53:9).

## XII.

Moreover the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, was praying on when suddenly with the eyes of her mind she saw a hand <sup>11</sup> which had long fingers and a wide broad palm. In the midst of the palm was a bleeding wound. She immediately understood that it was the hand of Christ. She was wondering why it was so slender and long: immediately she was given the answer that it was so slender because when Christ was living in the flesh, during the night he held his hands stretched out in prayer, and during the day while preaching the kingdom of God through the towns and villages, he toiled with his hands, feet, and whole body.

After this she heard a voice saying to her, "Elizabeth, for the third time I say to you, your sins are forgiven you and you have my grace." She replied to this voice, "Lord, if I am made as holy as you say, why is it that I cannot stop myself from offending your majesty in some way every day?" The voice said to her, "Because if you did not sometimes offend, you would not be so humbled and consequently you would not love me so much and you would become worse than the devils, who believe and tremble (Jas 2:19). Therefore I have not sanctified you to such an extent that you are unable to sin. But it is enough for you that I have given you so much grace that, rather than willingly offend me mortally, you would allow yourself to be killed, and to die."

Having said this, Christ appeared fully to her. It seemed to her that frothing, foaming blood flowed abundantly from his side. She began to wonder at this, and Christ said to her, "Do not wonder, daughter, for when I was hanging on the cross, because of the extremity of pain all my limbs were dislocated, my vital organs were shattered and my veins opened. And so the blood from my side was abundant like this, and flowed out foaming."

All that has been said above, the handmaid of Christ, Elizabeth, asserted around the time of her death (which took place in the year of our Lord 1231) <sup>12</sup> she had seen and heard. She used to say that she had such great certainty concerning all these things that she would rather choose death than doubt that even the smallest part of it were not true.

## *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> This is the standard gesture of feudal submission in the Middle Ages, with which a vassal pledged his fealty to his feudal lord, or monks and nuns pledged loyalty to their superiors.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the "Hail Mary."

<sup>3</sup> 10 February. Scholastica (c. 480–c. 543) was St Benedict's sister and was traditionally regarded as the first Benedictine nun.

<sup>4</sup> That is, Christmas Eve (December 24).

<sup>5</sup> It was widely believed in the Middle Ages that Mary's parents had offered her to the Temple at an early age and that she had grown up there until she reached puberty and was married to Joseph.

<sup>6</sup> Here Elizabeth alludes to the Immaculate Conception.

<sup>7</sup> The seven petitions that follow are structured on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, derived from Is 11:2–3.

<sup>8</sup> The Latin MS here reads *humilitatem* (i.e. humility); I have conjecturally emended it to *uoluntatem*.

<sup>9</sup> The Latin MS here reads *sciencia*, which must be corrupt.

<sup>10</sup> That is, in saying "Hail Mary, full of grace," Gabriel was recognising the graces bestowed on her.

<sup>11</sup> The Latin MS reads *magnum* here, clearly a mistake for *manum*.

<sup>12</sup> This was the year of St Elizabeth of Thuringia's death.