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UNEQUAL TWINS: VISIONARY ATTITUDE AND MONASTIC CULTURE IN ELISABETH OF SCHÖNAU AND HILDEGARD OF BINGEN*

Felix Heinzer

In the Taunus Mountains north of Frankfurt, the days preceding Palm Sunday in the year 1153 must have been accompanied by diluvial rain, as we learn from the so-called *Liber Visionum* of the 12th-century Benedictine nun Elisabeth of Schönau.¹ We would rather expect to find such information in a chronicle or similar annalistic source, rather than in a book identified as a collection of visions—definitely not in a work of the temper of Hildegard's *Liber Scivias*. Yet this surprising detail, which could even arouse suspicion about a possible confusion of literary genres, should be perceived as a warning, keeping us from an overly homogeneous notion of the medieval concept of visionary experience. "Vision," obviously, can refer to different modes of "seeing" things beyond the borders of natural perception and to a wide range of different textual genres.²

Visualizing Monastic Liturgy

The *Liber Visionum* of Elisabeth of Schönau opens with a cycle of visionary records that are closely embedded in the life of the monastic community at Schönau, thus assuming a diary-like character, as the above-mentioned case of Palm Sunday witnesses, where Elisabeth presents herself as the narrator:

* I am indebted to the participants of the October 2006 Medieval Studies Seminar at Harvard University for their critical comments on an initial presentation of this article's considerations, which in turn draw on two preliminary studies of mine: an article on Elisabeth of Schönau titled "Imaginierte Passion. Vision im Spannungsfeld zwischen liturgischer Matrix und religiöser Erfahrung bei Elisabeth von Schönau" in *Nova de Veteribus. Mittel- und neulateinische Studien für Paul Gerhard Schmidt*, ed. Andreas Bihrer (Munich, 2005), pp. 463–76; and "Hildegard und ihr liturgisches Umfeld," an unpublished contribution to a symposium, organized in 1998 in Bingen under the leadership of Wulf Arlt (Basel), on the musical aspects of Hildegard's oeuvre.

¹ Elisabeth of Schönau, *Liber Visionum* 1, 44, in *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth und die Schriften der Äbte Ekbert und Emecho von Schönau*, ed. Friedrich W. Roth (Brünn, 1884), p. 23 (Latin text, see n. 4).

² See the important study by Barbara Newman, "What Did It Mean to Say 'I Saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," *Speculum* 80.1 (2005): 1–43.

I had earnestly asked our brothers to celebrate the office of Palm Sunday that day in the meadow where we could see them. They were not able to do this because the brooks had flooded; instead, they conducted the service behind the church where we were not able to see it. And the Lord respected the desire of His handmaid, and with the eyes of my mind I saw everything that they did there.³

This short text offers paradigmatic insight into important features and conditions of this type of vision. The episode is narrated with remarkably scant sobriety and without any features of prophetic rhetoric. Arguing from the perspective of a more sophisticated and more spectacular concept of vision and visionary—and again, Hildegard is a good example of such an opposition—one might even hesitate at first glance to consider this kind of imaginary process as a “real” vision. What is related here is actually located in the horizon of a more general culture of visibility, since it appears to be an outflow of a strongly developed desire of seeing, in this case a kind of spiritual substitution for physical view. The ceremony, which Elisabeth is not able to observe because of bad meteorological circumstances, is shown to her inner eyes (*vidi oculis mentis omnia quae illic gesta sunt*).

Yet there is another, even more important aspect of this description that is absolutely symptomatic of the entire range of this early part of Elisabeth’s visions: the immediate dependence on the celebration of liturgy, which lends this first cycle of visions, as Kurt Köster describes it, a character of being a “witness of ecstatic participation in the ecclesiastical year, intimately linked to monastic liturgy.”⁴

A closer reading of the text shows an interesting switch of registers at the beginning of its last phrase. The formula *respexit dominus desiderium ancillae suae*, inserted rather abruptly at this point, is an obvious allusion to a biblical text, Mary’s praise of the Lord’s unexpected favor in the *Mag-*

³ *Liber Visionum* 1, 44, p. 23; “Rogaveram fratres nostros diligenter ut illo die officium Palmarum celebrarent in prato quod est ante conspectum nostrum, et non potuerunt propter inundationem rivulorum, sed retro ecclesiam ubi videri a nobis non poterat id peregerunt. Et respexit dominus desiderium ancillae suae (cf. Lk 1:48) et vidi oculis mentis omnia quae illic gesta sunt ab eis.” For the English version of this and the following quotes from Elisabeth’s writings, I gratefully make use of the translation by Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau: The Complete Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 2000), p. 71.

⁴ Kurt Köster, “Elisabeth von Schönau,” in *Verfasserlexikon. Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Berlin, 1980), pp. 489–94, here p. 490. See also Peter Dinzelbacher, “Die Offenbarungen der hl. Elisabeth von Schönau,” *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige* 97 (1986): 462–82, here 467–68.

nificat (*Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae*, Lk. 1:48), which indicates a deliberate theological upgrading of the related episode. This hint (among several others) of a literary intertext reminds us of the fundamental problem of the editorial reshaping, in its written form, of the visionary experience, a topic to which we will return later. In Elisabeth's case, this editorial process can be ascribed to her brother, Ekbert.⁵ Persuaded by Elisabeth to abandon his brilliant career as a learned cleric for the sake of ascetic perfection as a monk, Ekbert joined his sister at Schönaue in 1155 and quickly assumed an authoritative role of spiritual leadership for her.⁶

Ekbert's presence, as well as the mention of *fratres* in the text, alludes to an essential aspect of Elisabeth's historical situation.⁷ Schönaue is a double monastery of monks and nuns, following a widely observed tradition of German reform monasticism of the 11th and 12th centuries. This was especially true in the realm of the abbey of Hirsau in the northern Black Forest after its adoption of the Cluniac *consuetudo* in the 1080s, at which point the abbey became an important and widely influential center of Gregorian renewal.⁸ Schönaue (as well as Disibodenberg, where Hildegard of Bingen lived) was integrated into the Hirsau movement. Following the model of Cluny, Hirsau and its circle placed a significant—and, according to contemporary critics, even overwhelming—emphasis on the importance and dignity of the liturgy. Thus, if monastic life in general, in its capacity of spiritual and aesthetic creativity, is deeply marked by the experience of a lifelong performance of liturgical offices, especially through liturgical singing, then this appears to be even more the case in a Cluniac-influenced context, such as that of the Hirsau movement. This becomes of considerable interest for the issues I would like to discuss here. The detection of a common background shared by Elisabeth and Hildegard

⁵ For a general evaluation of Ekbert, see Kurt Köster, "Ekbert von Schönaue," *Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Berlin, 1980), pp. 436–40.

⁶ For more details, see Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönaue. A Twelfth-Century Visionary*, pp. 15–17 and 50–67.

⁷ For the historical background, see Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönaue. Visionary*, pp. 11–27, and, more recently, Joachim Kemper, "Das benediktinische Doppelkloster Schönaue und die Visionen Elisabeths von Schönaue," *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 54 (2002): 55–102.

⁸ See Michel Parisse, "Doppelkloster," *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 3 (1986): 1257–59; Kaspar Elm and Michel Parisse, eds., *Doppelklöster und andere Formen der Symbiose männlicher und weiblicher Religiösen im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1992). Especially regarding the double monasteries in the Hirsau movement, see Urban Küsters, "Formen und Modelle religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im Umkreis der Hirsauer Reform des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts," in *Hirsau. St. Peter und Paul 1091–1991*, vol. 2, ed. Klaus Schreiner (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 195–220, and, of course, Kemper, "Das benediktinische Doppelkloster Schönaue."

might allow us to sharpen the comparison between the two figures and to identify their specific attitudes toward their common monastic heritage, especially in relation to the liturgical frame of their spirituality. We possess very detailed knowledge about the liturgical repertory of Hirsau and its related establishments, down to the single chants and rubrics, thanks to a normative text, the so-called *Liber ordinarius*.⁹

As for Elisabeth herself, it is interesting to note how the liturgically oriented pattern of her visions underwent a substantial change, beginning in 1155 with the arrival of her brother at Schönaue. We can observe a significant shift from a predominantly Christological focus, with a particular emphasis on the earthly career of the Savior, to a broader range of theological and ecclesiastical subjects. Elisabeth increasingly assumed the role of an oracle delivering visions on demand, as it were. The most notable were probably the revelations regarding St Ursula and her 11,000 virgin companions during the huge campaign of excavations organized in Cologne on the so-called "Ager Ursulanus" around 1160.¹⁰

Yet, the transition of 1155 is not only content related, it also implies a fundamental functional turn: while the addressee of the earlier visions was the visionary herself—it was she who wanted to see and to know for herself—the later revelations are mostly public messages to other people. This represents "more than a change in subject matter or spiritual concerns"; this dramatic shift can be called "a change of genre," as Anne L. Clark subtly states.¹¹ And this transition "from visionary diary to thematic collection of revelations,"¹² guided, as it were, by Ekbert, implied at the same time an alteration in Elisabeth's status: she sees herself increasingly in the role of a "divinely ordained preacher and prophet."¹³

⁹ Accessible through a couple of manuscripts, the oldest of which hails from the abbey of Rheinau near Schaffhausen, and published as the official liturgy of that house by Anton Hänggi, ed., *Der Rheinauer Liber Ordinarius*, Spicilegium Friburgense 1 (Freiburg, 1957). However, Hänggi's edition can be used (with some methodological caveats with regard to local additions) as a reference point for the Hirsau tradition itself, as I have been able to demonstrate in my article, "Der Hirsauer Liber Ordinarius," *Revue Bénédictine* 102 (1992): 309–47 (reprinted in: Felix Heinzer, *Monastische Reform und Buchkultur im deutschen Südwesten* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 185–223), and as I do in this chapter.

¹⁰ Wilhelm Levison, "Das Werden der Ursula-Legende," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 132 (1927): 115. See also Peter Dinzelsbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 178–79 and 194–95; Dinzelsbacher, "Die Offenbarungen," pp. 473–74; Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönaue. Visionary*, pp. 37–40.

¹¹ Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönaue. Visionary*, p. 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

In this study, however, I shall focus on the earlier, systematically liturgy-based type of vision, hitherto largely disregarded by modern scholars (and to some extent even by Clark), because to my mind this kind of visionary experience is of great and far-reaching interest. The case of the Palm Sunday procession, presented at the beginning of this essay, is symptomatic of this attitude. The matrix of this kind of visionary experience is constituted by monastic community life, and more particularly by monastic liturgy. Yet—and this is of fundamental importance—its final object is never the liturgical ceremony as such, but the spiritual participation in the mystery represented by the rite: here, the Savior's entrance into Jerusalem, which the strongly mimetic procession of this feast commemorates and actualizes.¹⁴

The dynamics of this interaction between vision and liturgy can be illustrated by following Elisabeth on her itinerary through the Passion Week. The visions are regularly inspired by a passage from a liturgical chant. The starting point—the evening before Palm Sunday, with the celebration of the feast's vespers—is particularly instructive, since the launching moment of the visionary actualization of this liturgical moment can be linked to a specific phrase within a chant, the extended, dialogically structured responsory, *Ingressus Pilatus*.¹⁵ Here, Elisabeth stands between the sisters (*stabam inter eas*) and sings the office with them, as we may assume; precisely at the moment the responsory reaches its emotional climax at the word *crucifigatur*, which refers to the mob's scandalized shouting and demanding the execution of Jesus on the cross, Elisabeth falls into a violent ecstasy (*in exstasim cecidi cum magna corporis mei concussione*) and is granted the vision of the Savior hanging on the cross (*et vidi salvatorem quasi in cruce pendentem*).¹⁶

¹⁴ For general aspects of the liturgy of this feast, see Hermann J. Gräf, *Palmenweihe und Palmenprozession in der lateinischen Liturgie* (St Augustin bei Bonn, 1959).

¹⁵ CAO 6966, "Ingressus Pilatus cum Jesu in praetorium, tunc ait illi: Tu es rex Iudaeorum? Respondit: Tu dicis quia Rex sum. Exivit ergo Jesus de praetorio, portans coronam et vestem purpuream. Et cum indutus fuisset, exclamaverunt omnes: Crucifigatur quia Filium Dei se fecit. V. Tunc ait illis Pilatus: Regem vestrum crucifigam? Responderunt pontifices: Regem non habemus nisi Caesarem.—Et cum . . ." For the place of this chant during first vespers of Palm Sunday in the context of the Hirsau liturgy, see Hänggi, *Der Rheinauer Liber Ordinarius*, p. 108, l. 26.

¹⁶ *Liber Visionum* 1, p. 43; Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 22: "Post haec in festivitate Palmarum in priori vespera, cum dicerent sorores responsorium Ingressus Pilatus et usque ad hoc verbum processissent crucifigatur, stabam inter eas, et in exstasim cecidi cum magna corporis mei concussione, et vidi salvatorem quasi in cruce pendentem."

If liturgical chants often act as the initial stimuli for visions, they also can serve as places that bring the visionary back into the realm of normal sensations and consciousness, as the preface to the *Liber Visionum* relates, when Elisabeth is said to have uttered biblical phrases or liturgical texts frequently in such moments. This is akin to the matters she had dealt with before in her visionary state and is said to have happened spontaneously.¹⁷

A typical example of this situation is the great vision of crucifixion on the afternoon of Good Friday. Here, Elisabeth sees Christ's body being laid in the tomb, while this moment of the passion is scenically represented in the liturgical rite of the *depositio* concluding the Mass of the day:

Finally, however, coming into ecstasy, I again saw the Lord on the cross, and then in that hour He gave up His spirit . . . Certain men came and unfastened the body from the cross, and carried it with great veneration to a green and pleasant garden. They wrapped the body in a clean shroud and placed it in a tomb. Then at last, having regained my spirit, with bitter weeping I seized this lament: 'Our shepherd, the fount of living water, has departed; at his death the sun was darkened' et cetera. And I added, 'Hail Mary, partner of the martyrs when you were stabbed with the blood of your crucified child'. And I continued, 'When the Lord was interred, the tomb was sealed' et cetera.¹⁸

The texts Elisabeth is said to have recited after her ecstasy (*resumpto spiritu*), i.e. *Recessit pastor* and *Sepulto domino*, are no casual quotations, but correspond exactly to two of the chants prescribed by the Hirsau Ordinary for the ritual *depositio* ceremony,¹⁹ while the short invocation *Ave*

¹⁷ Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 2: "Sepius etiam canonice scripture testimonia. aliaque divinarum laudum verba congruentia his quae per spiritum viderat absque omni premeditatione."

¹⁸ English translation from Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Works*, p. 74. *Liber Visionum* 1, p. 48; Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 24: "Tandem autem in exstasim veniens, vidi iterum dominum in cruce, iamque in illa hora emisit spiritum . . . quidam viri accedentes solverunt corpus a cruce et detulerunt illud cum veneratione in hortum quendam viridem et iocundum, et circumposita ei munda sindone, locaverunt illud in monumento. Tunc demum ego, resumpto spiritu, cum fletu amarissimo huiusmodi querelam arripui: 'Recessit pastor noster, fons aque viva, in cuius transitu sol obscuratus est' et cetera. Et adieci: 'Ave Maria, consors martyrum, transgladiata crucifixi nati sanguine.' Et adieci: 'Sepulto domino, signatum est monumentum' et cetera."

¹⁹ See Hänggi, *Der Rheinauer Liber Ordinarius*, p. 132, ll. 8–12: "Duo ex ipsis ordine priores portant crucem quos alii tres cum turibulo et candelabris praecedunt, sacerdote hebdomadario et armario illos comitantibus, simulque cum eis suppressa voce cantantibus R. Ecce quomodo moritur, R. Recessit Pastor, Ant. Ioseph ab Arimathia, Ant. Sepulto domino."

Maria consors martyrum inserted between the two liturgical pieces, which obviously recalls the prophecy of the sword piercing through Mary's soul (Lk. 2:35), is taken from a litany-like prayer to the Virgin ascribed to Ekbert of Schönau²⁰—another proof of the influence of Elisabeth's brother on the spirituality of his sister, if not a rather clear signal of his editorial intervention.

This example highlights another important aspect: Elisabeth's reference to the *depositio* chants attests a peculiar affinity of her visionary imagination for dramatically accentuated moments of liturgical celebration. This is not the only case. On Holy Friday morning, for instance, waking up from a long ecstasy, Elisabeth comes ashore from her vision of the Lord as man of sorrows by means of reciting the two verses *Christus dominus factus est obediens* and *Vita in ligno moritur*:

In the morning, at the third hour . . . I came into ecstasy in which I remained until the sixth hour. Then I saw how they were dressing the Lord in a purple garment and wrapping Him in a scarlet mantle, and, placing a thorny crown on His head, they mocked Him. Then they stripped Him of those garments, dressed Him in His own clothes, laid the cross upon Him, and led Him outside the city into a certain place that looked plowed but without verdure. There, they stripped Him, raised Him up on the cross, and fastened Him to it. They did the same to two others. Then I awoke and with copious tears burst into these words, 'Christ the Lord was made obedient unto death' (Phil 2:8). And I added: 'Life dies on the wood; hell is robbed of its sting.'²¹

Both of these texts are taken from the very suggestive *Tenebrae* rite that follows the singing of lauds on Maundy Thursday and ends, in complete darkness, with a dialogue between the community and two singers

²⁰ Friedrich W. Roth, *Das Gebetbuch der hl. Elisabeth von Schönau* (Augsburg, 1886), p. 14; with the version *Ave martyr cum martyribus transgladiata filii morte* appearing a second time toward the end of the manuscript, at this point with the rubric *Salutacio E.[kberti] ad S. Mariam*; see Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 286.

²¹ English translation from Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Works*, p. 73. *Liber Visionum* 1, p. 47; Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 24: "Mane autem hora tertia veni in exstasim in qua permansi usque circa horam sextam. Tunc vidi, quomodo induerunt eum tunicam purpuream, et chlamidem coccineam circumdederunt ei, et imponentes capiti eius coronam spineam, illuserunt ei. Et post haec, exeuntes cum vestimentis illis induerunt eum vestibus et imposuerunt ei crucem et duxerunt extra civitatem in locum quemdam, quasi aratum, et nihil viroris habentem. Ibi eum denudantes levaverunt in crucem et affixerunt. Similiter et alii duobus fecerunt. Tunc expegefacta sum et cum lacrymis uberrimis in haec verba prorupi: 'Christus dominus factus est obediens usque ad mortem.' Et adieci: 'Vita in ligno moritur, infernus ex morsu dispoliatur.'"

standing behind the high altar. The extinguishing of the candles simulates the arrest of Christ and his abandonment by the fleeing apostles.²²

Other instances are evident in relation to the Palm Sunday procession, as well as the ceremony of washing the feet in the chapter hall on the evening of Maundy Thursday, the so-called *mandatum*, which triggers a vision of Christ Himself washing the feet of his apostles as proof of his humility and love.²³ Even the aforementioned responsory, *Ingressus Pilatus*, although it does not belong to a dramatized liturgical ceremony, might be noted here again, since it is in itself dramatically structured.

Liturgical rituals not accompanied by texts or chants—purely action-based moments, so to speak—are also departure points for visions, but only rarely. One of the few examples occurs during the Maundy Thursday Mass, where the elevation of the chalice at the end of the *Canon Missae*²⁴ prompts a vision of the Savior hanging on the cross with his blood pouring into the chalice from his wounded side and feet:

After this, at Mass on Holy Thursday, I saw—as I usually did—everything that was being done at the altar, and when the priest said the canon and raised the chalice to the sight of God, I saw the Lord Jesus as if hanging on the cross above the chalice and blood from His side and His feet seemed to flow down into it.²⁵

This case is of multiple interest, for not only does it recall—albeit in another register of visibility, and in advance of later developments—the iconographic program of the famous “Mass of Saint Gregory,” with its

²² Hänggi, *Der Rheinauer Liber Ordinarius*, p. 115, ll. 21–32: “per custodes ecclesie omnia lumina extinguuntur . . . absque sonitu duo fratres retro principale altare versi in chorum cantant . . . Ad quartum vero versiculum, id est V (CAO 8449) ‘Vita in ligno moritur infernus ex morsu despoliatur’ sine Kyrie eleyson subiungit (CAO 8443) ‘Christus dominus factus est obediens usque ad mortem.’”

²³ *Liber Visionum* 1, p. 46; Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 23.

²⁴ According to Peter Browne, *Die Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1933; 2nd ed., Rome, 1967), pp. 41–42, this rite is not to be confused with the elevation of the chalice following the rite of consecration, which is introduced only towards the end of the 12th century and then only in France, from whence it spread. For different aspects of piety related to such liturgical elevation, see Browne, pp. 49–69; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi. The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 49–82; and Hans-Bernhard Meyer, *Eucharistie. Geschichte, Theologie, Pastoral*, Gottesdienst der Kirche 4 (Regensburg, 1989), pp. 165–66 and 178.

²⁵ English translation from Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Works*, pp. 71–72. *Liber Visionum* 1, p. 45; Roth, *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth*, p. 23: “Post haec in cena domini ad missam vidi, sicut soleo, omnia quae circa altare gerebantur, et dum sacerdos canonem diceret et calicem in conspectu dei exaltaret vidi supra calicem dominum Jesum quasi in cruce oponentem, et de latere eius et pedibus sanguis in calicem defluere.”

amazing popularity starting at the end of the 14th century,²⁶ but it also constitutes a case of substituting “sacramental viewing.”²⁷ Furthermore, it foreshadows exceptional experiences of mystical communion with Christ’s body, such as those reported in some chapters of the 14th-century Dominican *Schwesternbücher*.²⁸ Besides such extraordinary similes, Elisabeth’s chalice vision leads to a more general consideration: the necessity to contextualize the *Liber Visionum*, especially the first layer under discussion here, within a more general current—that of late medieval visual piety.²⁹ Yet it is remarkable that physical images, i.e. paintings, statues, or miniatures, never occur as triggers for Elisabeth’s visions and ecstasies: “not even one of them happened in front of a material image of the Virgin or the Crucifix.”³⁰ Instead, they primarily originate within the liturgy and specifically in association with liturgical texts—more precisely, from liturgical chants—which act as substitutes for images and their stimulating function of spiritual imagination.

If it is indeed the chanted word, as opposed to the written or spoken one, that functions as a starting point for Elisabeth, this appears highly suggestive of two significant points.

The first is the importance of musical heightening of the texts. Around 1100, John of Afflighem speaks of the *potentia musicae in commovendis mentibus hominum*, an idea fostered by the medieval theory of music as early as the late-Carolingian *Musica enchiriadis*, as Fritz Reckow underscored in a magisterial article on this topic.³¹ A musically enhanced text

²⁶ See Andreas Gormanns and Thomas Lentjes, eds., *Das Bild der Erscheinung. Die Gregorsmesse im Mittelalter*, KultBild 3 (Berlin, 2007).

²⁷ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 63.

²⁸ A typical case is that of a nun of St Katharinenthal visited at her sickbed by Christ himself in the guise of a priest who puts in her mouth a piece of flesh ripped out of his hand and tells her: “this is my flesh and my blood” (... *der sass nider zu ir fur das bett und brach ein fleischli uss seiner hant und gab ir das in ir mund und sprach zu ir: dis ist mein fleisch und mein blut*). See Ruth Meyer, *Das St. Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch. Untersuchung, Edition, Kommentar*, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters 104 (Tübingen, 1995), pp. 105 and 198–99; and Caroline W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption. Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991), p. 123.

²⁹ See the works of Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary. Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York, 1998); and David Morgan, *Visual Piety. A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley, 1999).

³⁰ Jean-Claude Schmitt, “La culture de l’Imago,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 51 (1996): 3–36, here 25–26.

³¹ Fritz Reckow, “Zwischen Ontologie und Rhetorik. Die Idee des *movere animos* und der Übergang vom Spätmittelalter zur frühen Neuzeit in der Musikgeschichte,” in *Traditionswandel und Traditionsverhalten*, eds. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen,

thus appears privileged in a competition with an image, and even more so than the naked word!

The monastic context of the music appears as the second point of significance. While the vision itself is a personal experience, singing liturgical chants is not an individual exercise, but rather a joint and regular performance of a community involving aspects of rituality, hence solemnity and repetitiveness. Elisabeth actively participates in the liturgy of her monastery for years and years: a continuous and, as the medieval writers would say, "ruminating" performance of text and music, which is in itself the fundamental condition for the type of vision we have dealt with in this first part of our study.³²

Echoing Heavenly Liturgy

Although points of contact between Elisabeth of Schönau and Hildegard of Bingen have been outlined frequently,³³ one aspect has attracted relatively little attention: their common roots in the monastic reform movement of the 11th and 12th centuries, more precisely in the current of Hirsau. This is especially the case for Hildegard. As already mentioned, Disibodenberg near Kreuznach, the place where Hildegard began her religious career, was originally (like Schönau) a double monastery of the Hirsau movement. Scholars have demonstrated that Hildegard belonged to a small group of women at Disibodenberg living under the spiritual leadership of the former hermit Jutta of Sponheim.³⁴ This group most probably followed the Benedictine rule and observed, as Jutta's bibliography underlines, the celebration of the *regularis cursus*, i.e. the liturgical office. In addition, recent scholarship has documented Disibodenberg's incorporation within the sphere of Gregorian reform after the reorganization of 1108; this was the year in which Archbishop Ruthard, a strong partisan of this current, replaced the canons who had lived on the mountain with Benedictine monks from the Hirsau-oriented monastery of St James in Mainz.³⁵

1991), pp. 145–78: p. 157, note 39. See also Anders Ekenberg, *Cur cantatur? Die Funktionen des liturgischen Gesangs nach den Autoren der Karolingerzeit* (Stockholm, 1987), pp. 178–88.

³² See Carolyn Muessig, "Prophecy and Song: Teaching and Preaching by Medieval Women," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, eds. Beverly Kienzle and Pamela Walker (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 146–58.

³³ For instance, by Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Visionary*, pp. 21–25.

³⁴ See Franz Felten's essays in this volume, pp. 15–38, 39–56.

³⁵ Franz Staab, "Reform und Reformgruppen im Erzbistum Mainz. Vom 'Libellus de Wiligisi consuetudinibus' zur 'Vita domnae Juttae inclusae,'" in *Reformidee und Reformpolitik*

An important confirmation of Disibodenberg's affinity to Hirsau is furnished by a late 12th-century liturgical source: a manuscript definitely written to be used for the celebration of the monastic office at Disibodenberg, now conserved in the Swiss abbey of Engelberg as Ms. 103.³⁶ Its main text, an antiphonary with a diastematic notation (fols 73v–171v), clearly demonstrates its affinity to the Hirsau liturgy, as shown by a comparison with the *Liber ordinarius* and the evidence of some very distinctive fingerprints from the Hirsau repertory. A few examples from the manuscript should suffice as demonstrative of its affiliation with Hirsau: it contains, among others, the office *Venerabilis Gallus* for the patron saint of St Gall (fols 148r–149v), received at Hirsau and circulated beyond the borders of the initial cult area through the far-reaching reform movement;³⁷ a series of antiphons for lauds for the Feast of the Annunciation (*Quando venit plenitudo temporis* etc.), mostly consisting of hymn strophes (fol. 107r);³⁸ and quotations of *incipits* from the characteristic Hirsau hymns “Christe fili Jesu,” for the feast of St Benedict (fol. 105r), and “Hic est vere christicola,” for the *commune confessorum* (fol. 161r).³⁹ Even the fragmentary hymnary (fols 174r–175v), of scant expressiveness since it breaks off in the midst of the Christmas hymn “A solis ortu,” shows a typical Hirsau feature, i.e. the triad *Dei fide*, *Qua Christus hora*, and *Ternis ter horis*, which

im spätsalisch-frühstaufischen Reich, ed. Stefan Weinfurter, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 68 (Mainz, 1992), pp. 119–87, here 158 and 179; Franz Josef Felten, “Hildegard von Bingen zwischen Reformaufbruch und Bewahrung des Althergebrachten. Mit einem Exkurs über das Leben der Reformbenediktinerinnen auf dem Disibodenberg,” in *Spiritualität im Europa des Mittelalters. L'Europe spirituelle au Moyen Age*, eds. Jean Ferrari and Stephan Grätzel (St Augustin bei Bonn, 1998), pp. 123–49; Franz Josef Felten, “Noui esse uolunt . . . deserentes bene contritam uiam. . .”. Hildegard von Bingen und Reformbewegungen im religiösen Leben ihrer Zeit,” in *Ange-sicht*, pp. 27–86.

³⁶ The manuscript was brought to the attention of scholars by Ephrem Omlin, “Das ältere Engelberger Osterspiel und der Cod. 103 der Stiftsbibliothek Engelberg,” in *Corolla Heremitana: Neue Beiträge zur Kunst und Geschichte Einsiedelns und der Innerschweiz*, eds. Albert Knoepfli, P. Maximilian Roesle and Alfred A. Schmid (Olten, 1964), pp. 101–26.

³⁷ See Kathrin Schulze, “Das Gallusoffizium. Untersuchungen und Edition” (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Philos. Fakultät I/II, Magisterarbeit: unpublished M.A. thesis, 1994).

³⁸ Antiphons 1 and 3–5 are taken from the hymns “Pangue lingua gloriosi” (AH 50 n° 66) and “A solis ortus cardine” (AH 50 n° 53), to compare with Hänggi, *Der Rheinauer Liber Ordinarius*, p. 92 (critical apparatus to ll. 20–21).

³⁹ See my study, “Liturgischer Hymnus und monastische Reform—Zur Rekonstruktion des Hirsauer Hymnars,” in *Der lateinische Hymnus im Mittelalter. Überlieferung, Ästhetik, Ausstrahlung*, eds. Andreas Haug et al., Monumenta Medii Aevi Monodica Subsidia 4 (Kassel, 2004), pp. 23–52, here 42–49.

Hirsau borrowed from Cluny, appears here in a series of common hymns for Terce, Sext, and None (fol. 174v).⁴⁰

As with almost every liturgical manuscript stemming from the Hirsau movement, the Engelberg (alias Disiboden) Antiphonary displays interesting additions to the repertory fixed by the *Liber ordinarius*.⁴¹ Due to space constraints, we must forego a detailed presentation of these complements (mostly versified offices)⁴² and simply note that the majority have parallels in manuscripts extant from houses dependent upon Hirsau.

These observations are of considerable importance for contextualizing Hildegard, and at the same time for carving out differences between herself and Elisabeth. Like her Schönauf counterpart, Hildegard was originally shaped by the traditions of Hirsau reform monasticism. Although she left Disibodenberg with her nuns around 1148–1150 and went to Rupertsberg near Bingen, where she lived with her community in a more or less independent situation,⁴³ she did not completely break with the monks of Disibodenberg. Even her eventual contact with the Trier abbey of Sts Eucharius and Matthias failed to change her monastic orientation, since this monastery was also well established within the Hirsau movement⁴⁴

⁴⁰ For this group, see Heinzer, "Liturgischer Hymnus und monastische Reform," pp. 37–38.

⁴¹ This tolerance with respect to local or regional traditions is a typical feature of the flexibility of the Hirsau movement. See Felix Heinzer, "Musik und Liturgie zwischen Reform und Repräsentation. Ein Graduale-Sequentiar des frühen 13. Jh. aus der schwäbischen Abtei Weingarten (A-Wkm 4981)," in *Wiener Quellen der älteren Musikgeschichte zum Sprechen gebracht. Eine Ringvorlesung*, ed. Birgit Lodes, Wiener Forum für ältere Musikgeschichte 1 (Tutzing, 2007), pp. 113–36, here 120–21.

⁴² These offices include, by way of example, the "Gaude mater ecclesia" (AH 5 n° 12) for *Conceptio Mariae* (fols 76r–77v), also in Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. LX (from Zwiefalten) and as an addition to the *Liber ordinarius*, Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 59 (from Rheinau, cf. Hänggi, *Der Rheinauer Liber Ordinarius*, LIV and pp. 256–57), or the typical reform office for Benedict, "Praeclarum late" (AH 25 n° 25) for St Benedict (fols 105r–106r).

⁴³ A possible background aspect—aside from Hildegard's emancipatory aspirations—could also be seen in the interdiction of common office celebration by monks and nuns in one and the same choir by the Second Lateran Council in 1139 (Concilium Lateranense II, c. 27: *prohibemus, ne sanctimonialia simul cum canonicis vel monachis in ecclesia in uno choro convenient ad psallendum*. Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *Decreta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, 3rd ed. (Bologna, 1973), p. 179; compare also Felten, "Hildegard von Bingen zwischen Reformaufbruch und Bewahrung des Althergebrachten," p. 145.

⁴⁴ Petrus Becker, "Der eigentliche Anlaß und auch der geistliche Anstoß zum hochmittelalterlichen Aufstieg von St. Eucharius... war die hirsauische Erneuerung des Klosters durch die Initiative Erzbischofs Bruno von Lauffen (1102–1124)" [The actual inducement and also the spiritual impetus for the advancement of St Eucharius during the High Middle Ages... was the Hirsau Reform of the monastery due to the initiative of Archbishop Bruno

and shared its liturgical customs.⁴⁵ The conclusion is obvious: the liturgical practice that marked Hildegard's monastic life throughout was fundamentally identical to that of Elisabeth.

That is why it is all the more interesting to observe a complete lack of influence exerted by institutional liturgy on Hildegard's visionary experience, in contrast with Elisabeth; on the other hand, the liturgically labeled chants in Hildegard's writings do not appear to have any echo in the context of regular liturgical practice.

In regard to this second point, the Disibodenberg antiphonary (which on paleographical grounds should be dated to after Hildegard's death in 1179) is obviously of considerable interest. The manuscript shows no trace at all of any of Hildegard's "liturgical" compositions, not even—and this seems particularly remarkable—of the antiphons and responsories for the abbey's patron saint Disibod (*O mirum admirandum*, etc.),⁴⁶ which Hildegard, as her epistolary tells us, had created explicitly for her former house at Abbot Kuno's special request.⁴⁷ Lieven Van Acker has produced evidence that these texts could be a later interpolation: in the oldest layer of the manuscript tradition, they appear only *in margine*.⁴⁸ Thus, there is no documentary proof that they were ever used in the official liturgy of Hildegard's former monastery. The same holds true for Hildegard's works commissioned by the abbey of Sts Eucharius and Matthias in Trier: these

von Lauffen (1102–1124)], *Die Benediktinerabtei St. Eucharius-St. Matthias vor Trier*, Germania Sacra NF 34 (Berlin, 1996), p. 250.

⁴⁵ Becker, *Die Benediktinerabtei*, p. 402.

⁴⁶ In the Engelberg manuscript, Disibod's feast is provided with an octave, a clear hint as to his status as patron saint of Disibodenberg, as stated by Omlin, "Das ältere Engelberger Osterspiel und der Cod. 103 der Stiftsbibliothek Engelberg," p. 120. Omlin's observation can be complemented by the evidence of the litany of the saints (fols 71r–72v), which can be considered as an expanded form of the Hirsau standard (discussed in Heinzer, "Der Hirsauer Liber Ordinarius," pp. 325–30) and in which Disibod appears exactly at the place traditionally reserved for the former Hirsau patron saint, Aurelius. Whereas Hirsau lists: Gregori, Hilari, Martine, *Aureli*, Ambrosi, Augustine; Engelberg provides: Gregori, Hilari, Martine (double invocation), *Disibode*, Ambrosi, Augustine (emphasis added). The double invocation of Martin, as well as the preferential treatment of the saint in the corpus of the antiphonary, might indicate an—elder?—patrocinium of Martin at Disibodenberg. Regarding the intriguing question of Disibodenberg's patron saint(s) in the 12th century, see Omlin, "Das ältere Engelberger Osterspiel und der Cod. 103 der Stiftsbibliothek Engelberg," pp. 120–21. On Hildegard's chants in honor of Disibod, see *Symph.* (Eng.), pp. 180–88.

⁴⁷ *Epistolarium*, II, 74 and 74R, pp. 160–62. This episode recalls Elisabeth's involvement in the "commission" of visionary information about names and kinship ties of the members of St Ursula's entourage (see p. 88 and note 10).

⁴⁸ Lieven Van Acker, "Der Briefwechsel der heiligen Hildegard von Bingen. Vorbemerkungen zu einer kritischen Edition," *Revue Bénédictine* 98 (1988): 141–68, esp. 162.

items do not appear in the abbey's liturgical books.⁴⁹ It is interesting to compare the traditional office for the saint's feast, probably a creation of Abbot Remigius of Mettlach (†1095),⁵⁰ with Hildegard's Eucharist song, the responsory *O Eucharist columba*.⁵¹ The contrast between the two is absolutely striking: the narrative structure of Remigius' office closely follows—at times even literally quoting—the *vita* of its hero⁵² in the style of a classical medieval *historia*,⁵³ and differs starkly from the hymnic gesture of *O Eucharist columba*, which is devoid of any reference to the saint's life and passion. This represents a cultural clash between two completely different conceptions of liturgical poetry, and it leaves little doubt as to why Hildegard's song did not penetrate into the traditional office and crack its firmly established unity of content and form.

If this were the situation (as was very likely), then the reception of such pieces during Hildegard's lifetime would have been restricted exclusively to the immediate realm of her charismatic authority and leadership, i.e. to her own community of Rupertsberg. What, then, about the role of these and other "liturgical" creations by Hildegard within her own nunnery? Barbara Newman's assertion that Hildegard "intended her music for Mass and the Divine Office at her monastery"⁵⁴ is difficult to prove, since there are no liturgical manuscripts extant from Bingen.

There is, however, an often-discussed testimony that seems to plead in favor of a liturgical use of Hildegard's unorthodox creations by her community: the statement by her secretary and intimate confidant, Guibert of Gembloux, in his *Epistola XVIII*, probably written in 1175; speaking of Hildegard in the third person, he writes:

Hence, when she [that is, Hildegard] returns to normal conversation with men from that musical consonance she hears inside, on feast days, thinking of God and remembering all such things, she enjoys the frequent resonance of the sweet melodies of the songs she hears and retains in spiritual harmony, and she wants these melodies which are more beautiful than what

⁴⁹ Becker, *Die Benediktinerabtei*, pp. 402–03.

⁵⁰ Anselm Rosenthal, "Das Fest des hl. Eucharist in der Benediktinerabtei St. Matthias/Trier um das Jahr 1500," *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 34 (1982): 97–120.

⁵¹ *Symph.* (Eng.), p. 206, canto 52.

⁵² Rosenthal (see note 50), pp. 110–14, shows this very ostensively in his edition of the office by a synoptic presentation of the two texts.

⁵³ See Ritva Jonsson, *Historia. Études sur la genèse des offices versifiés*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Studia Latina Stockholmiensis 15 (Stockholm, 1968); Joachim Knappe, "Zur Benennung der Offizien im Mittelalter. Das Wort 'historia' als liturgischer Begriff," *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 26 (1984): 305–20.

⁵⁴ *Symph.* (Eng.), p. 12.

common musical competence of men is able to realize, to be sung publicly in the church, associated with texts composed in honour of God and the Saints. Who has ever heard similar things of another woman?⁵⁵

One point must be discussed in relation to earlier interpretations of this famous (and difficult) text. The expression *Communi instrumento* is to be read as an ablative of comparison, depending on *gratiores* (similar to constructions such as *melle dulcior*, *luce clarior*, etc.), and should not be misunderstood (as often claimed by earlier scholarship) as evidence that the songs were provided with accompaniment by musical instruments common to the period. It should be read as a type of antonym to the supernatural qualities of the melodies that Hildegard hears and retains in her visions: melodies of heavenly origins, and therefore of a beauty that exceeds human musical competence. The text thus establishes an opposition between the heavenly sphere, accessible to the visionary at least for a moment, and the earthly world, represented by the two parallel elements: *communis hominum conversatio* and *commune humanae musicae instrumentum*.

If, on the basis of a close reading of this text, the idea of an instrumental accompaniment of Hildegard's chants may be revealed to be a myth,⁵⁶ what about the performance of her creations in general? The expression *in ecclesia publice decantari facit* appears to be clear and unequivocal, and the same seems to hold true for the famous controversy between Hildegard and Tenxwind of Andernach: in the latter's criticism of supposed extravagances of liturgical practice in the Bingen community,⁵⁷ she also

⁵⁵ "Inde est quod ad communem hominum conversationem ab illa interni concentus melodia regrediens, dulces in vocum etiam sono modos, quos in spiritali harmonia discit et retinet, memor Dei, et in reliquiis cogitationum huiusmodi diem festum agens, sepius resultando delectatur, eosdemque modulos, communi humanae musicae instrumento gratiores, prosis ad laudem Dei et sanctorum honorem compositis, in ecclesia publice decantari facit. Quis similia his umquam de alia quavis femina audivit?" Guibert of Gembloux, *Epistolae*, ed. Albert Derolez, CCCM 66 (Turnhout, 1988), p. 231. See also *Symph.* (Eng.), p. 12; and Michael Klaper, "Kommentar," in *Hildegard von Bingen, Lieder. Faksimile Riesencodex [Hs. 2] der Hessischen Landesbibliothek Wiesbaden fol. 466–48v*, ed. Lorenz Welker (Wiesbaden, 1998), p. 6.

⁵⁶ Another notable detail, the expression *prosis... compositis*, does not concern the problem of the function of Hildegard's songs but rather the interesting issue of her "composing technique," especially the relationship between music and text. Guibert may have had in mind a scenario that allowed for an addition of (subsequently created?) texts to the melodies Hildegard hears in her visions—a situation that even terminologically matches the process of underlying texts (*prosa* or *prosulae*) to sequence melodies or other kinds of chant melismas.

⁵⁷ See Alfred Haverkamp, "Tenxwind von Andernach und Hildegard von Bingen: zwei Weltanschauungen in der Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts," in *Institutionen, Kultur und*

uses the phrasing *in ecclesia*.⁵⁸ These expressions have been considered as chief witnesses for liturgical performance of Hildegard's creations. John Stevens, however, proposed a more differentiated understanding of the term *in ecclesia*, at least with regard to Tenxwind's letter: "It is significant, that Tenxwind . . . does not speak of the nuns singing *in choro* ("in choir"), the proper place to sing the office or Mass, but uses the phrase *in ecclesiae*, i.e. elsewhere in the church."⁵⁹ Hence, while the choir would remain the locus of the official liturgy, the nave of the abbey-church might be considered as a less regulated space, and therefore open to non-canonical forms of sacred music and representation. This appears to be an attempt to "save" the possibility that Hildegard's chants were performed in worship, outside the traditional liturgical service. Whether this interesting idea can be maintained is open to further critical discussion. One might generally think of less regulated spaces and moments of liturgical practice of a monastery as, for example, the broadly developed practice of monastic processions on Sundays and feast days,⁶⁰ where, following the ritual circulation through the buildings of the monastery, the nuns of the community were to sing an antiphon in honor of their patron saint—in *chorum de patrono*, as the *Liber ordinarius* repeats again and again—as they processed back to the choir of the church. This is actually a kind of "blank space" for individual practice, as, for instance, Raffaella Camilot-Oswald was able to show for the repertory of the 12th-century processional manuscript Clm 13125, from the Hirsau-dependent monastery of St George at Prüfening near Regensburg. This text corresponds precisely throughout to the Hirsau ordinary, with one exception: it includes the only locally known "Inclite Christi martyr Georgi," probably created at Prüfening and serving as *de patrono* chant in the aforementioned Sunday and feast day processions.⁶¹

Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag, eds. Lutz Fenske, Werner Rösener, and Thomas Zotz (Sigmaringen, 1984), pp. 515–48.

⁵⁸ *Epistolarium*, I, 52, p. 126, l. 14.

⁵⁹ John Stevens, "The Musical Individuality of Hildegard's Songs," in *Context*, pp. 163–88, here 172, note 5.

⁶⁰ Omlin, "Das ältere Engelberger Osterspiel und der Cod. 103 der Stiftsbibliothek Engelberg," p. 102, already underlined the important status of processions, especially in the milieu of the Cluniac reform. See also Walter von Arx, *Das Klosterrituale von Biburg (Budapest, Cod. lat. m. ae. Nr. 330, 12. Jh.)*, Spicilegium Friburgense 14 (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1970), pp. 80–81.

⁶¹ Raffaella Camilot-Oswald, *Quellen liturgischer Musik aus dem mittelalterlichen Regensburg. Katalog der Handschriften und Handschriftenfragmente*, Monumenta Monodica Medii Aevi. Subsidia (Kassel, forthcoming). I warmly thank Raffaella Camilot-Oswald for her kindness in informing me about the results of her research in advance of publication.

Could we imagine a similar use for Hildegard's isolated chants in honor of Disibod, Rupert, Eucharius, Matthias, and Boniface at Rupertsberg and in other monasteries that were in close contact with her?⁶²

This remains an open issue. Yet, even more interesting than the debate concerning whether some of Hildegard's visionary creations made the transition to liturgical acceptability is the reverse question about the liturgical preconditions of her visions.

There is indeed such a claim in Hildegard's writings, and even a very proud one, but it hints at a diametrically different perspective compared with what we have seen in the case of Elisabeth of Schönau. As an absolute key text for this pretension we can quote the introduction to *Scivias* 3.13 that precedes the seven chants in honor of the highest ranks of celestial hierarchy, i.e. Mary, the angels, and the different grades of saints, mostly rubricated as antiphons or responsories (albeit with no consistent use of the terminology and the structural principles of these liturgical genres). At the end of this introductory part, Hildegard presents this collection of songs as having been produced by the heavenly "sound" (*sonus*) she perceived in her ecstasy: "And that sound, like the voice of a multitude singing in harmony in praise of the highest (celestial) ranks, spoke as follows: 'O overshadowing gem' etc."⁶³

As an offshoot of visionary inspiration, these songs should thus be of totally different style and quality compared with established liturgical chants—and indeed they are. Traditional liturgical texts, at least those from the complex known as the Gregorian repertory, were taken primarily from the Bible, and are thus considered to be of divine inspiration (which did not, however, include their melodies). Later layers of liturgical poetry, such as tropes, sequences, versified offices, etc., which are clearly products of individual artistic efforts, are obviously situated outside this realm. This lack of divinely inspired quality, which first found expression at the Synod of Meaux in 845 and appeared regularly in later periods of ecclesiastical reform, could easily be considered as a hindrance to

⁶² Stevens, "The Musical Individuality of Hildegard's Songs," has also proposed the hypothesis that these chants were used as votive antiphons (see note 59), pp. 173–74. Regarding the fluctuating terminology used for processional chants (antiphon vs. responsory), see Edward Nowacki, "Antiphon," in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Kassel, 1994), pp. 657–58.

⁶³ *Scivias* 3, p. 615: "Et sonus ille, ut vox multitudinis in laudibus de supernis gradibus in harmonia symphonizans, sic dicebat: O splendidissima gemma..." My translation follows *Symph.* (Eng.), pp. 7–8.

canonical acceptability.⁶⁴ With regard to the antiphons and responsories transmitted in *Scivias*, Hildegard, in a certain sense, almost paradoxically suspends this criticism of human “invention” and “fiction” (*adinventiones vel fictiones*, as the Synod of Meaux expresses its censure). While she obviously cannot draw on a biblical origin for the texts of her chants, she puts forward the even more audacious claim for their visionary origin (including the music!), presenting them, as Barbara Newman elegantly put it, as the “transcription of a celestial concert” that reproduces heavenly liturgy itself.

However, the rather scholarly and “unhymnic” style in the texts of some of these pieces seems to clash heavily with this claim. One example is the first part of the Marian chant *O splendidissima gemma*, which opens the above-mentioned series of visionary songs in *Scivias* 3.13:

O most splendid gem,
and fair grace like the sun
which streams in you,
a spring leaping from the Father's heart,

that is His only Word,
through which he created
the prime matter of the world,
which Eve disturbed.

This Word the Father,
made a man in you,

And therefore you are that one shining matter,
whereby the Word exhales all principles,
to form all creatures in the prime matter.

In the notated sources, the chant is rubricated as an antiphon, albeit without any relationship to a specific psalm or canticle, a point that appears to be typical of the liturgical “vagueness” of Hildegard’s creations. While the “rhapsodic,” melodic language of *O splendidissima*, with its wealth of repetitive elements and its aspects of “ruminating” circularity,⁶⁵ could be

⁶⁴ Andreas Haug, “Ein neues Textdokument zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Sequenz,” in *Festschrift Ulrich Siegele zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Rudolf Faber (Kassel, 1991), pp. 9–19, esp. pp. 17–18. On these tendencies of the Carolingian era as a possible background for the ban of such non-biblical elements, see Pierre-Marie Gy, “Les tropes dans l’histoire de la liturgie et de la théologie,” in *Research on Tropes*, ed. Gunilla Iversen (Stockholm, 1983), pp. 7–16.

⁶⁵ These observations dovetail perfectly with the conclusions of the Bingen conference of 1998 (see note 1), and are open to diverging interpretations, from a hypothesis of deliberate rupture with conventional musical rules, in the sense of a conscious artistic strategy, right up to a verdict of compositional amateurishness and even deficiency. See also Jürg

interpreted as a type of musical reflection of heavenly singing, on the textual level the evidence presents a rather strange mixture of contrasting features. If we are indeed in the presence of a vocabulary that is at least in part remarkably poetical (such as the initial lines *O splendidissima gemma et serenum decus solis*, or the expression *fons saliens de corde Patris* to describe the eternal birth of the second person of the Trinity), we also detect a gesture towards treatise-like argumentation in the passages dealing with concepts of creation and incarnation (as in the series of relative clauses: *qui tibi infusus est...*, *qui est unicum verbum suum...*, *per quod creavit...*, or the rather clumsy formulation *et ob hoc es tu...*, to give just a few examples) that recalls formulations from the writings of highly speculative theological writers, such as Johannes Scotus Eriugena and others. To find such elements in a chant that claims to be not only poetical, but also to echo the heavenly liturgy itself, is odd.

Scivias 3.13 is not the only text that articulates such pretensions. Hildegard's controversy with Tenxwind mentioned above points to the same direction. The very core of this conflict between two enthusiastic women, both rooted in the milieu of Gregorian reform, is actually not the clash of two opposite "Weltanschauungen" of which Alfred Haverkamp spoke,⁶⁶ but rather a fundamental difference in the concept of liturgical celebration. More precisely, it lies in Hildegard's shocking claim for the eschatological quality of the liturgical celebration in her church at Rupertsberg, clearly illustrated by the biblical argumentation she deploys in her answer to Tenxwind: in order to justify her practice, Hildegard refers to chapter 14 of the Apocalypse. The attitudes and attributes of the Rupertsberg nuns, criticized by Tenxwind, are said to be imitations of the signs of the elect in heaven in that the nuns have the names of the Lamb and of his Father written on their foreheads (*Habentes nomen eius et nomen Patris eius scriptum in frontibus suis*—Apoc. 14:1), which is appropriate because they are the virgin brides of Christ, who follow the Lamb wherever he goes (*Sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit*—Apoc. 14:4).⁶⁷ Like the chants in *Scivias* 3.13, this liturgical choreography claims to transcend the traditional liturgy of the earthly Church and to participate instead in the eternal liturgy of the saints in heaven, rising indeed to the most central—virginal—circle of this heavenly liturgy. The phrases between the two verses of the

Stenzl, "Wie hat 'Hildegard vom Disibodenberg und Rupertsberg' komponiert? Ein analytischer Versuch mit den E-Antiphonen und dem Ordo Virtutum," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 64 (2007): 179–210.

⁶⁶ Haverkamp, "Tenxwind von Andernach und Hildegard von Bingen," pp. 515–48.

⁶⁷ *Epistolarium*, I, 52R, p. 129, ll. 38–39.

Apocalypse are not explicitly quoted here, yet any medieval reader of the epistolary would think of them when reading Hildegard's text:

I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. They sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been redeemed out of the earth. (Apoc. 14:2–3)

Are Hildegard's visionary songs an echo of the sound from heaven, a *vox de caelo*, an anticipation of that "new song," which no one can understand and sing except the virginal circle of the elect in heaven? Although not explicitly formulated, such connotations cannot be ignored, and what marks Hildegard's specific attitude and gives it a breath of scandal for her contemporaries is precisely this obliteration of the demarcation between a mediated anticipation of the eternal adoration and praise of God peculiar to the traditional concept of liturgy, and the claim for an apparently unrefracted identification with the "heavenly liturgy."

Tradition or Innovation?

It is beyond doubt that the Hildegardian concepts of vision and liturgy are different from or even contrary to those of Elisabeth, for whom the traditional repertory, with its strongly biblically rooted texts, acts as a canonically established, "objective" reference for Christologically oriented visions. This situation appears almost inverted in Hildegard, whose visionary ecstasy produces a range of newly invented chants with strong textual and musical idiosyncrasies that constitute a sort of "liturgical shadowland," as John Stevens so aptly expresses in the title of his article on Hildegard as a composer.⁶⁸ To simplify the difference even more: in one case, liturgy produces vision, and in the other, vision produces liturgy.

At this point, however, we must also consider a general problem inextricably linked with medieval visionary literature, i.e. the issue of the refraction of the ecstatic experience during the process of recording it in written form—the only form through which we today may access this experience. The visionary production of both Hildegard and Elisabeth underwent editorial refining by their erudite environment. In the case of

⁶⁸ Stevens, "The Musical Individuality of Hildegard's Songs," pp. 163–88.

Hildegard's songs, the possibility cannot be discounted that their presentation results both from the immediacy of "visionary audition" (*verba, que in visione audit*, as Guibert formulates almost paradoxically but very accurately in his letter 18),⁶⁹ as well as from subsequent "liturgizing" of these pieces. This may have been a general concern for Hildegard's entourage (especially those skilled in this regard), who sought to present a hagiographical structure of their heroine's oeuvre through the deliberate accentuation of its extraordinary features. Lieven Van Acker demonstrated such a strategy for the epistolary in an exemplary manner.⁷⁰ For Elisabeth's visions, I already dealt with such aspects, if only briefly, when I discussed the role of Ekbert.⁷¹ They are transmitted in a reshaped version written by her brother after her death. He incidentally also alludes to an important—albeit often neglected—aspect of mediation: the translation from an originally vernacular (in this case German) form of the visionary's utterance into Latin for at least a part of the visions.⁷²

In light of this process, it must be considered whether the reference to the liturgy and to liturgical texts in the first part of Elisabeth's *Liber Visionum* might not simply be part of a hagiographical "lifting" along the lines of that which we have noted for Hildegard. The intention, however, would have been quite different: Ekbert's aim would not have been the highlighting of outstanding and even transgressive aspects, as was the case with Hildegard; rather, it would have been to present Elisabeth as an exemplary Benedictine nun living in strict conformity with the liturgically centered normativity of her order. Yet, looking more closely at Ekbert's strategy, it seems that he was even more interested in modeling his sister as a figure with prophetic aspirations based on the example of Hildegard. Actually, Elisabeth's *Liber viarum Dei*, written between June 1156 and August 1157 after her visit with Hildegard in 1156 and under Ekbert's immediate influence, is symptomatic evidence of this tendency; even its title is a programmatic reference to (and reverence toward!) the model of Hildegard's *Liber Scivias* (c.1141–1151).⁷³ In view of the primary cycle of Elisabeth's visions considered in this essay, this would mean that the systematic reference to monastic life, and especially to regular liturgy, should not be considered

⁶⁹ Guibert of Gembloux, *Epistolae*, 18, p. 230, l. 182.

⁷⁰ See the conclusion, pp. 166–68, from "Der Briefwechsel der heiligen Hildegard" mentioned in note 48.

⁷¹ See above pp. 87–88.

⁷² For a discussion of this problem, see Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Visionary*, pp. 28–31.

⁷³ More on this in Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Visionary*, pp. 21–22 and 34.

as a result of hagiographical strategies, but rather as a residual feature of Elisabeth's own experience that survived any restyling by her brother, and might thus account for a rather sound air of authenticity.

The fundamental differences between the two visionary cultures, which we are able to observe in Elisabeth and Hildegard, must thus be placed in relation to their biographical context. Until her death in 1163, Elisabeth remained firmly embedded in the restricting conditions of her double monastery situation, while Hildegard, after her departure from Disibodenberg, enjoys the privilege of considerable autonomy, ruling as abbess of her new foundation in Rupertsberg. This process of charismatically legitimated emancipation from her established monastic background might also have led to the self-assured non-conformism of musical and textual language in her so-called liturgical creations, which clearly and deliberately diverge from canonical tradition.

It is exactly this non-conformist aspect that seems to make Hildegard's writings—as an offspring of what we might call an emancipated career—appear more spectacular than Elisabeth's, at least from a modern point of view, and this has led to an uncontested dominance of Hildegard in modern scholarly and popular interest. This appears all the more interesting when one considers the medieval resonance of their respective works: nearly 150 extant manuscripts attest to the broad and international spread of Elisabeth's work, which, for example, reached England beginning around 1170, and at the beginning of the 13th century was known even in Iceland.⁷⁴ This scope of dissemination was unknown to Hildegard's writings during the same period.

A further distinction between the two appears in the type of vision that we dealt with in the first part of the article. During the women's lifetimes and shortly thereafter, there occurred a thematic shift from the earlier tradition's "otherworld" journeys through Purgatory and Paradise—still present, for example, in the topologically structured visions of the Irish knight Tundal or Tnugdal, written in 1148, and even in the late 12th-century case of the anonymous monk of Eynsham⁷⁵—to what Peter Dinzelbacher has called "die Begegnung mit dem Minne- und Passions-Christus" ("the

⁷⁴ Kurt Köster, "Elisabeth von Schönau. Werk und Wirkung im Spiegel der mittelalterlichen handschriftlichen Überlieferung," *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 3 (1951), 243–315, and Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau. Visionary*, pp. 48–49.

⁷⁵ Thomas Ehlen et al., eds., *Visio Edmundi monachi de Eynsham. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur mittelalterlichen Visionsliteratur*. ScriptOralia: Reihe A: Altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe 25 (Tübingen, 1998); Robert Easting, ed., *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham* (Oxford, 2002).

encounter with the loving and suffering Christ").⁷⁶ This type of engagement is hardly perceptible in Hildegard, whose visionary interests and spiritual attitude are definitely more behind the times, whereas Elisabeth—ironically more in the early layer of the *Liber Visionum* than in the later, prophetically styled parts of her visionary oeuvre—can be considered a harbinger of later developments. Actually, the use of official liturgy, especially chant texts, as a framework for personal meditation, and even mystical and visionary contemplation, is a tendency that can be observed frequently in the 13th and 14th centuries, especially in the milieu of Cistercian and Dominican nunneries. Although Elisabeth thus seems to foreshadow mystics like Gertrude of Helfta, Mechthild of Hackeborn, or the protagonists of the Dominican *Schwesternbücher*,⁷⁷ there is nonetheless a significant difference between the Schönaue Benedictine and most other German mystics of subsequent generations: Elisabeth's complete silence about a possible mystical dialogue that her visionary encounters with Christ might have produced. While Gertrude and Mechthild or the Dominican nuns at Töss, Diessenhofen (St Katharinental), Colmar, and elsewhere report—often explicitly and sometimes rather at length—their intimate dialogues with the bridegroom of their soul, Elisabeth is absolutely reticent regarding such revelations. Her only concern seems to be the visual presence of the suffering Christ: to see him, not to speak with him.

Yet this manifest desire of visual encounter with the "Savior," the dominating impetus of this "visionary re-creation of the events of Jesus' life,"⁷⁸ again foreshadows later religious experience, as was already suggested in the discussion of the chalice vision on Maundy Thursday. It evokes famous instances of visual devotion, such as the spectacular performance of Christmas 1223 in the cavern of Greccio, when Francis of Assisi staged a "new Bethlehem" with manger, hay, and living animals because, as his biographer Thomas of Celano reports, he wanted to celebrate the memory of that little child born in Bethlehem and see as closely as possible with physical eyes (*corporeis oculis*) the infant in its defenselessness, lying on

⁷⁶ Peter Dinzelbacher, *Revelationes*, Typologie des sources du moyen-âge latin 57 (Turnhout, 1991), p. 32.

⁷⁷ Cf. the almost forgotten article by Stephanus Hilpisch, "Chorgebet und Frömmigkeit," in *Heilige Überlieferung. Ausschnitte aus der Geschichte des Mönchtums und des heiligen Kultes. Festgabe zum silbernen Abtsjubiläum Ildefons Herwegen*, ed. Odo Casel (Münster, 1938), pp. 263–84.

⁷⁸ Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönaue. Visionary*, p. 103.

the hay between ox and ass.⁷⁹ *Volo pervidere*—the expression Thomas of Celano attributes here to his hero—would perfectly suit Elisabeth’s insistent desire of visibility.

It goes without saying that Elisabeth is much too firmly rooted in traditional structures of “old” Benedictine monasticism and in a class society centered on nobility to be won over to a type of proto-Franciscan (or, more generally speaking, pre-mendicant) attitude: “her piety does not neatly fit into a periodized scheme,” as Anne L. Clark rightly states.⁸⁰ Yet at least to some extent, and especially given her poignant interest in Christ’s humanity, the attitude of Elisabeth’s religious culture already seems to point the way to what we might call the spirituality of the Gothic age, particularly in comparison with her counterpart on the other side of the Rhine, the still very “Romanesque” Hildegard.

⁷⁹ Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima S. Francisci*, I 84: “Volo enim illius pueri memoriam agere, qui in Bethlehem natus est, et infantilium necessitatum eius incommoda, quomodo in praesepio reclinatus et quomodo, adstante bove et asino, supra foenum positus exstitit, utcumque corporeis oculis pervidere.” *Legendae S. Francisci Assisiensis saeculis XIII et XIV conscriptae*, in *Analecta Franciscana* 10 (1926–1941), pp. 3–115, here 84.

⁸⁰ Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau, Visionary*, p. 134.