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A Sister in the World: Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in the *Golden Legend*[1]

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I begin this essay with background information for a study of Elizabeth's life story as disseminated throughout Western Christendom by Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*: first, her historical originality as a model of sanctity, and second, the remarkable transmission of the *Legend* itself, both in Latin and the vernacular. I conclude this section with a note on the larger political agenda of the *Legend*. The essay continues with sections on the uniqueness of Elizabeth's example as a "sister in the world" within the context of other saints' lives in the *Legend*, the author's evidently purposeful deletions and additions to his source for her life, and Elizabeth's legacy as perpetuated by the *Golden Legend*.

Keywords: Elizabeth of Hungary, thirteenth-century sainthood, *Golden Legend*, Franciscan spirituality, *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum*

The story of St Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–31, canonized 1235) as disseminated all over western Christendom by Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*[2] (completed ca. 1276), could not more perfectly fit the theme of "Hungarian saints abroad."

Originally written in Latin for fellow Dominicans to use as a preaching aid, the *Legenda Aurea* (hereafter LA) was the most copied book in the Middle Ages after the Bible, with over a thousand manuscripts catalogued by Barbara Fleith in her magisterial work of scholarship.[3] The entire collection is arranged in chronological order according to the liturgical year, beginning with Advent and ending in late November. Of the 178 chapters authored by Jacobus (many more were added later), the majority are saints' lives, sequenced according to their feast days.[4] The remaining chapters are mainly devoted to church holidays, with the

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at a session of the Women in the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, 48th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, 2013. I wish to thank the WIFIT community for encouraging my work.

2 When referring collectively to the *Legend* in all its incarnations, Latin and vernacular, I will call it the *Golden Legend*, the equivalent of its traditional Latin title.

3 The Latin MSS are listed and described in Fleith, *Studien*, 55–331.

4 When quoting or referring to the Latin LA, I will use the now standard edition, Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni. Tavarnuzze: SISMEL, 1998, (cited as Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*). When quoting or referring to the *Legend* in English, I will use the only modern English translation: Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saint,* trans. William Granger Ryan.

penultimate chapter devoted (somewhat oddly) to a summary of world history with an emphasis on the author's native Lombardy. Our Elizabeth appears twice in the LA, in a fully developed *vita* at the position appropriate for her feast day (then November 19),[5] and again briefly noted as representing a milestone in the author's capsule history of the church in the thirteenth century.[6] Her presence in the LA is especially remarkable, and obviously purposeful on the part of the author, as Jacobus included only four thirteenth-century saints in the entire collection, preferring saints of the remote past, and only one woman among these near-contemporaries.[7] As we will see, Jacobus gave special attention to her *vita*, crafting it as quite distinct from any other saint's life in the entire collection, and using it to support a new model of the holy woman as "sister in the world,"[8] both active as "Martha" in her works of charity, and contemplative as "Mary" in her intense piety and personal communication with Jesus.[9] However, despite the foundational importance of Elizabeth's example and the wide-reaching influence of the LA, Elizabeth's legend as specially rendered by Jacobus has received very little focused attention, with only one sustained treatment (so far as I know) devoted to this topic alone.[10]

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, (cited as Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*). Two fully annotated editions of the *Legend* are now available: Jacques de Voragine, *La Légende dorée*, (edited and translated by Alain Boureau in Modern French), and Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea, con le miniature,* (edited and translated by Giovanni Paolo Maggioni and Francesco Stella, a Latin–Italian bilingual edition).

5 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1156–79; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:302–18.

6 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1282; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2: 384.

7 On the four saints, Francis, Dominic, Peter Martyr, and Elizabeth, see Vauchez, "Jacques de Voragine."

8 The exact phrase "sister in the world" is found not in Jacobus, but in the source for all or most of Elizabeth's *vita*, the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum* (Statements of the Four Handmaids), based on the depositions taken from Elizabeth's close female associates at her canonization hearing, January 1235. As reported in the *Dicta*, Elizabeth said "Vita sororum in seculo despectissima est et, si esset vita despectior, illam elegissem" ("Dicta," in *Quellentstudien*, 135); "The life of the sisters in this world is the most despised of all. If there were a life that was more despised, I would choose it" ("Dicta," trans. Wolf, 212). The edition of the original Latin is "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 112–40. The *Dicta* have been translated into English by Kenneth Baxter Wolf, "Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum," in Wolf, *The Life and Afterlife,* 193–216, (cited as "Dicta," trans. Wolf) and by Lori Pieper as "Statements of the Four Handmaids," in Pieper, *The Greatest of These is Love*, 119–48.

9 See Luke 10:38–42. Jacobus praises Elizabeth as Mary in her prayers and Martha in her works of mercy: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1167, 1169; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:310, 311.

10 The only previous study entirely devoted to Elizabeth in the *Golden Legend* is Konrád, "The Legend of Saint Elizabeth," easily available online. My approach (as focused on Jacobus's selective use of the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum* and the political agenda involved) is complementary to, not duplicative, of hers. Other discussions of Elizabeth in the *Golden Legend* have been brief: she is one of the four thirteenth century saints discussed in Vauchez, "Jacques de Voragine." Ottó Gecser includes the LA in his comprehensive overview of the thirteenth-century sources on Elizabeth's life: "Lives of St. Elizabeth," 71–73. Both annotated editions of the *Golden Legend* have informative notes on her chapter: Jacques de Voragine, *La*

I will begin with background information for a study of Elizabeth's legacy as spread far and wide by the *Golden Legend*: first, her historical originality as a model for sanctity, and second, the remarkable transmission of the *Legend* itself, both in Latin and the vernacular. This section concludes with a note on the larger political agenda of the *Legend*. I will continue with sections discussing the uniqueness of Elizabeth's example within the context of other saints' lives in the LA, the author's evidently purposeful deletions and additions to his major source for her story, and Elizabeth's legacy as carried forward (in large part) by the *Legend*.

Elizabeth the "Modern Saint"

Elizabeth lived at a time of renewal for the definition of sanctity in western Christendom. As explained in the foundational study by André Vauchez, the canonization of St Thomas Becket (1173) inaugurated an era in which saints who had recently died were increasingly popular with the laity and also sought after by the papacy as role models for Christians of their own day.[11] These saints were actually understood and referred to as "new."[12] Beginning with St Francis (1228) and St Dominic (1234), members of the newly founded mendicant orders were quick to be canonized. Accordingly, mendicant communities were also among the strongest voices for the promotion of a new type of saint—living by rule, yet active in the world, with a new emphasis on the *vita apostolica*, especially zeal for the care of souls and relief of the poor.[13] For our present purposes, it is important to remember that the mendicant movement provided new opportunities for women, even married women, to practice the ideals of humility, poverty, and a Christian life in the world. While some female mendicants (such as Clare of Assisi) would enter the cloister, others—with clerical support—remained in the lay estate while pioneering a life of hands-on involvement with the ill and the poor.[14] Elizabeth of Hungary, as a "sister in the world," was not unique in this regard. To give just one example, another contemporary holy

Légende dorée, 1454–58, and Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, *con le miniature* 2:1694–96. See also Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time,* 161–64, and Epstein, *Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 150–51.

11 Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 106–112.

12 Ibid., 111.

13 For an overview of the mendicant role in the new model for sanctity, both as saints and as promoters of causes, see Ibid., 113–27.

14 On female mendicant saints specifically, see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 348–54; on lay female "new" saints, see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 369 ff.

woman with a similar life trajectory was the married beguine Marie d'Oignies (d. 1213), who like Elizabeth rejected personal wealth and devoted her entire life to good works in the world, especially direct treatment of the most repulsive medical conditions. Like Elizabeth and others, she was supported by a powerful male hagiographer, the bishop and crusade preacher Jacques de Vitry.[15] In a striking departure from the usual misogamous tropes of medieval hagiography, both women's husbands are described as supportive of their wives' apostolic lifestyle, including their devotion to the poor,[16] although unlike Elizabeth, Marie requested and was granted a celibate union.

Like Marie's, Elizabeth's example was promoted as a corrective and rebuke to heresy as it threatened the hegemony of the Catholic church. Since the leading heresy of the time, Catharism, affirmed a radical rejection of the body, Elizabeth's unusual status—as happy wife and mother before her widowhood—was obviously welcomed as opportune.[17] Elizabeth also role-modeled orthodoxy through her humble obedience to the brutal demands of her confessor, the inquisitor and crusade preacher Conrad of Marburg,[18] although I will argue that (as testified by her female companions and thus partly reflected by Jacobus) she maintained her spiritual independence in crucial ways and even at times resisted his demands, as guided by her conscience.

While acknowledging that Elizabeth's achievement did not arise in a vacuum, it is equally important to note the strikingly original elements in her self-fashioned paradigm for sanctity. As explained by André Vauchez, she surpassed other saints of the thirteenth century, both in her intimate participation in the life of the poor, and in her practical and larger-scale achievements in the provision of care for the suffering. For example, she set up a distribution center at the foot of Wartburg Castle for those too infirm to reach the elevation of the château,[19] and in her widowhood she created her famous hospital in Marburg. Also highly distinctive, if not absolutely unique in her day, was Elizabeth's *Speisegebot*, her refusal to partake of food obtained through oppression of the poor.[20] Elizabeth's

15 On parallels between Marie d'Oignies and Elizabeth, see Wolf, "The Life," 63 ff., and Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 107. Elizabeth's aunt, St Hedwig (canonized 1267), practiced good works as a laywoman following the death of her husband; see Wolf, "The Afterlife," 4, n.4.

16 Wolf, "The Life," 61 n.82.

17 Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 100. See also Michael Goodich, "The Politics of Canonization."

18 Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 101.

19 Vauchez, "Charité et pauvreté," 165–66 [29–30].

20 See nn. 49–51, below. Vauchez reviews but rejects the theory that she practiced the *Speisegebot* on Conrad's orders to boycott food from lands her husband had seized from the church, or as a penance for

uniqueness transcended the domain of good works; in her report of personal conversation with Jesus, she also practiced at the forefront of late medieval mystical experience.

A Legend on the Move

To understand the *Golden Legend* as a vector for Elizabeth's reputation throughout the reaches of western Christendom, it is necessary first to review the textual history and transmission of the work as authored in Latin by Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1230–98), the Dominican prior provincial of Lombardy and later Archbishop of Genoa. Jacobus completed his first redaction before 1265, the date appearing on a manuscript of this family.[21] No later than 1272-76, the author added ten more chapters (including Elizabeth's) to the collection, bringing the number of chapters to 178.[22] The original purpose of the work is not in doubt: the Latin *Legend* was created by a Dominican for Dominicans, especially future preachers[23] studying at university. By the 1270s, the LA had spread through Dominican channels to the University of Paris, where it became a textbook for students who belonged to the Franciscan order and the secular clergy as well.[24] As documented by Fleith, Elizabeth's *vita* was included in the majority of manuscripts copied at the University of Paris,[25] and from that center of influence, it spread to other universities and Europe at large. Many graduates, of course, would use their education to play a pastoral role as preachers and teachers to the laity.

While circulated widely in Latin, the LA was quickly translated into virtually every European vernacular, beginning at the turn of the fourteenth century. At least one version survives, and usually more, in French, English, Langue d'Oc, Catalan, Italian, several dialects of German, Czech, Hungarian, and other

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wives of crusaders; he argues that she considered seigneurial exactions of food to be organized robbery of the poor: "Charité et pauvreté," 169–70 [33–34].

21 Fleith, *Studien* 14–15, calls 1252 (the death of Peter Martyr) the *terminus post quem* for the LA, and 1265, the date of a first redaction MS, the *terminus ante quem*.

22 For the earliest dateable MS of the second redaction with Elizabeth's *vita*, see Maggioni, *Ricerche sulla composizione*, 96, also 9–12, 550. Maggioni explains how 178 chapters are original to Jacobus, and of these 178, which ten belong to the author's later redaction: *passim*, esp. 131–34.

23 On the LA as a collection for use in sermons, see Boureau, *La Légende dorée: le système narratif*, 21–23; Boureau, Introduction, xxix–xxx; and Fleith, *Studien*, 37–42.

24 For Fleith's complex argument documenting the university connection on the basis of *pecia* markings, see her *Studien*, 41–42, 419 ff., and Fleith, "*Legenda aurea*: destination," 41–48. Boureau considers but dismisses Carla Frova's argument for the absence of a university connection: Introduction, xxiii–iv.

25 Fleith, *Studien*, 341, 355–56.

languages.[26] In tandem with its emerging popularity in the languages that lay people could read, the *Golden Legend* was quickly recognized as an important book both about and for women. Although out of 200-plus saints named in the LA only 41 are women, and only five of these were married, this total equals dozens of female saints with a record of action and achievement[27] that was obviously "relatable" to women. In at least one case, his life of St Katherine of Alexandria, Jacobus appears to have strategically enhanced the prestige of a woman saint, "[by supplying] five reasons, apparently original to him, why she was admirable ... her wisdom, eloquence, constancy, chastity, and dignity"; these "reasons" include her prowess at the philosophy and public preaching traditionally limited to men.[28] Many vernacular manuscripts of the *Golden Legend* were commissioned, and/or owned, by influential laywomen and by houses of women religious.[29] For our present purposes, the most interesting example may be the *Légende dorée* in its literal French translation by Jean de Vignay (ca. 1333), which includes the life of Elizabeth among the full roster of legends authored by Jacobus.[30] One manuscript even displays a presentation picture from the Workshop of the Master of the Cité des Dames, showing the translator presenting a copy of the work to his patroness, Queen Jeanne de Bourgogne.[31] To use as his Latin

26 On the *Legend* in French, English, Langue d'Oc, German, and English, see the articles in Dunn-Lardeau, Legenda aurea: *sept siècles*. On at least twelve MSS of the LA in Italian, see Falvay, "St Elizabeth," 139 and 139 n.6. On the *Legend* in Italian, English, Czech, and Hungarian, see Konrád, "The Legend of Saint Elizabeth," 22–88. On eight different versions in French, see Ferrari, "La *Légende dorée*." The most popular French translation was by Jean de Vignay; the modern edition is Jacques de Voragine, *Légende dorée,* édition *critique,* (edited by Brenda Dunn-Lardeau). On a German translation complete with Elizabeth's *vita*, see Williams-Krapp, "Die deutschen Übersetzungen." For more on the vernacular translations, see n. 29, below.

27 For example, see the erudition of Katherine of Alexandria and Paula; also Mary Magdalene as "apostle to the apostles" who (with her sister Martha) preached to the pagans in France, all located via the index to any edition.

28 Epstein, *Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 159.

29 For examples of women who commissioned vernacular translations, see Maddocks, "Pictures for Aristocrats," 8, on de Vignay's highly popular translation as originally presented to Queen Jeanne de Bourgogne, wife of Philip IV de Valois. See Ferrari, "La *Légende dorée*," esp. 128, on another French translation commissioned by a woman, Béatrice de Bourgogne. On a "comtesse" who ordered saints' lives in Catalan, see Brunel, "Les saints franciscains," 110. On Isabella of Castile's ordering a Spanish "santoral," see Gatland, *Women from the Golden Legend*, 4. On ownership of an Italian *Legend* by Lady Judith of Forzate, a Dominican tertiary of the Lombard province, see Richardson, *Materials for a Life*, 8–9. For an example of a German legend in a house of Béguines, see Wetzel, "Légende et spiritualité monastique," 211–26.

30 Elizabeth's *vita* appears at Jacques de Voragine, *Légende dorée,* édition *critique*, 1069–83.

31 Formerly London, British Library, MS Phillipps loan 36/199; now privately owned. For description and discussion, see Maddocks, "Illuminated Manuscripts of the *Légende dorée*," 156–57. She includes a

prototype, de Vignay would have doubtless had access to a manuscript of the complete LA in Latin as reproduced for students at the University of Paris, to judge from the evidence discussed above.

What kind of book was the *Golden Legend*, that foundational collection of exemplary Christian lives? On close inspection, it is found to be surprisingly limited in terms of "redeeming social value." Few of the saints in the collection, the majority of them ancient martyrs, provide any kind of practical model for everyday Christian living. Although many saints are described as engaged in works of charity, I agree with Sherry Reames that the book is devoted far less to instruction in love of neighbor, than to affirming Church authority above all, praising virginity as the supreme way of life, and denigrating marriage and children as a stumbling block to salvation.[32] I would add that the book is from beginning to end a justification of faith-based violence and killing, both in ancient times, and in the author's immediate milieu. As retold in the LA, the passions of ancient saints quite often feature more pagans killed by divine intervention than Christians martyred; to give just one example, four thousand onlookers were annihilated by a shower of miraculous debris at the scene of Katherine of Alexandria's decapitation.[33] Jacobus's contemporary Peter Martyr, one of the four "contemporary" saints included in the collection, was murdered by heretics as he was on a mission to convert or kill *them*.[34] In the chapter on St Dominic, the saint is approvingly described as signing off on orders to have a group of heretics burned alive, sparing only one of them on a seemingly random premonition.[35] Just as with the Jacobus's own Order of Preachers and his late medieval Catholic Church, a major agenda of the *Golden Legend* is to shore up clerical authority and orthodoxy, even by intimidation and deadly force.

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reproduction of the presentation picture at "Illuminated Manuscripts of the *Légende dorée*," fig. 66. I wish to thank Hillary Maddocks for sharing in our personal communication her knowledge of the manuscript and its sale into private hands.

32 Reames, *Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination,* passim, especially 26, 98–99, 106–07.

33 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1210; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:338.

34 Peter questions a heretic taken captive, no doubt with the intention to have him killed if he does not recant: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 1:423; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:256.

35 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:732; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:47.

Elizabeth's Vita as Unique within the Golden Legend

Elizabeth's model of sanctity appears to have been just as original in the 1270s as it had been four decades earlier at the time of her death and canonization, to judge from the evidence of her *vita* as rendered by Jacobus de Voragine. While the historical Elizabeth was not entirely unique in her achievements, as noted above, there is simply no other life story similar to hers in the *Legenda Aurea*. In a variety of ways, Elizabeth's *vita* stands alone, showing forth her distinctive contribution to medieval Christian spirituality despite the mediating voices of agenda-driven clerical interpreters.

Jacobus was evidently quite concerned to choose an acceptable role model for women aspiring to sanctity in his own time and place. The most striking novelty in Elizabeth's portrayal, and one with no counterpart elsewhere in the LA, is the ambiguous religious status she adopted after the death of her husband—putting on a dingy gray habit suggesting the Minorite tradition, embracing celibacy once a widow, spinning wool with her own hands, and living in poverty with the poor, but not entering a cloister or taking formal vows. Her life transition included renunciation of earthly ties, on terms defined with precision by herself. In early widowhood, supervised by her confessor, but by her handmaids' account acting with passionate conviction, Elizabeth prayed the Lord

> to fill her with contempt for all temporal goods, to take from her heart her love for her children, and to grant her indifference and constancy in the face of every insult. When she had finished her prayer, she heard the Lord saying to her: "Your prayer has been favorably heard." Elizabeth told her women: "The Lord had heard my voice graciously, because I regard all temporal things as dung, I care for my children no more than for [my other neighbors/aliis proximis], I make light of all contempt and disrespect, and it seems to me that I no longer love any but God alone.[36]

Elizabeth's prayer to be released from love for her children is cruel and bizarre by any human standard, but compared to the lives of other canonized parents in the LA, it is mild and respectful of family ties. The collection abounds with examples of mothers (and at least one father) who prayed for their children

36 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1166; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:309, with my preferred translation and original Latin in square brackets. For Isentrude's testimony on which this passage is based, see "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 126, and "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 205.

to get sick and die (before losing their virginity), or to be swept off to heaven by martyrdom before their mothers' eyes.[37] Biblical prototypes were the mother of the seven martyred sons (including a small child) in the Book of Maccabees[38] and the gospel admonition to hate one's parents, spouse, and children for the sake of the Lord.[39] Closer to Elizabeth's era, St Angela of Foligno (1248–1309) prayed for her mother, husband, and children to die so that she might devote her life to religion; her prayer was answered as she wished. Even if Angela's plea is a trope of hagiography not to be understood as an actual death-wish, it is extreme even by the standards of its time.[40] By contrast, Elizabeth is approvingly described by Jacobus as constructing her great renunciation with a loophole allowing her to love her children according to the biblical mandate that she love her neighbor as she loves herself, meaning she will never hurt them and will help them if she can. As a "sister in the world," Elizabeth will not renounce all ability to love and be loved. Clearly, Jacobus wished to present an alternative to the extreme anti-family asceticism of Catharist heresy, and indeed, certain other chapters in his own *Legenda*.

Elizabeth had a lifelong gift for emotional intimacy, as evident from the testimony of her female companions. The naturalistic portrayal of her everyday personal bonding with friends is unlike any other descriptions in the *Legenda*. Guda, one of the four handmaids who testified at her canonization hearing, had lived with Elizabeth since the two women were about four or five years old until shortly after the death of Elizabeth's husband in 1227.[41] At the age of four, Elizabeth had been sent from the home of her parents, King Andrew and Queen Gertrude of Hungary, to be brought up in the home of her future husband Ludwig, who was soon to inherit his father's position as landgrave of Thuringia. Thanks to Guda's testimony, we have almost the only description of childhood in the entire LA, and the only one with a hint of a budding personality

37 Legends in which parents pray for their children to die or rejoice at their martyrdom, located via the index to any edition: St Hilary (both daughter and wife); St Sebastian (exhorting the parents); St Paula (who didn't pray for her children to die, but abandoned all but one of them); St Petronilla (whose father St Peter prayed for her to get sick and die while still a virgin); St Sophia; St Julitta (whose martyred son was only three years old); St Felicity; St Symphorian.

38 2 Maccabees 7.

39 Luke 14:26.

40 See Tomkinson, "'Poverty, Suffering and Contempt,'" 114–15. More typical for saints' lives is the approving report that he or she displayed no emotion on the death of child or children: Vauchez, *Sainthood,* St Charles of Blois, 365; Elizabeth's aunt St Hedwig, both husband and son, 373.

41 "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 112; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 193.

in a setting of naturalistic detail. For example, in a game that seems like tag, Elizabeth would always try to run into the chapel, where she would pray; at age five, she pretended to read the psalter even though she could not yet read; and if she won anything at games, she would share with playmates who had less than she.[42] Although the child Elizabeth was pious, she was not oppressively so; she clearly enjoyed the same pastimes as other little girls, was a welcome companion, and displayed at an early age her lifelong generosity to the needy.

On the basis of the testimony of handmaid Isentrude, who had served Elizabeth since her marriage to Ludwig, Jacobus recounted an intimate companion's description of a saint's happy married life that is also completely different from anything else in the LA. Throughout the rest of the collection, almost all of the hundreds of saints are virgins, with only five named saints being married women. Of the saints who did marry, many (most famously St Cecilia) agreed with their spouse to a celibate union. Almost never in the 178 chapters is a normal marriage presented as a positive, much less a sanctifying influence for either husband or wife.[43] There is nothing comparable elsewhere in the *Legenda* to the glimpse of a happy marriage in the following incident recalled by Isentrude:

> She often rose during the night to pray, though her husband begged her to spare herself and give her body some rest. She had an arrangement with one of her maids who was closer to her than the others, that if by chance she overslept, the maid would wake her up by touching her foot. Once by mistake she touched the landgrave's foot. He woke up with a start but understood what had happened, and patiently put up with it and pretended not to have noticed anything.[44]

42 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1157; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:303. Based on Guda's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 112; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 193. On the growth of interest in childhood and the childhood of saints, see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 509. On Elizabeth's childhood with an emphasis on its commonalities with conventional hagiography, see Goodich, "A Saintly Child."

43 Like a man, a woman is safer and happier unwed; Domitilla is dissuaded from marriage in the chapter on Saints Nereus and Achilleus by arguments that *husbands* are cruel, abusive, and unfaithful to their wives. A rare exception to the overwhelmingly misogamous LA is Elizabeth's ancestor St Stephen of Hungary, cited in Jacobus's brief history of the world, who was converted to Christianity by his wife "Gala": see Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1276; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:380.

44 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1159; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:304. Based on Isentrude's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 116; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 197.

This vignette is unique within the LA in several ways. Nowhere else does Jacobus acknowledge such a commonplace marital practice as sleeping close together, much less with tolerant amusement, and (as noted earlier), almost never does he portray a husband and wife in a true partnership supporting each other's spiritual concerns. Jacobus's record of Elizabeth's grief at her husband's death (in Otranto, struck down by illness as he attempted to go on crusade) is also markedly at odds with a collection in which the generality of sainted spouses prefer to be liberated through widowhood or cheer on one another's martyrdom.[45] Channeling the resignation of Job as well as Jesus in Gethsemane, but unmistakably affirming her love and grief for Ludwig, Elizabeth is quoted as lamenting

> You know, O Lord, that I loved him dearly, as he loved you, yet for love of you I deprived myself of his presence and sent him to relieve your Holy Land. Delightful as it would be for me to live with him still, even were we reduced to go begging through the whole world, yet I would not give one hair of my head to have him back against your will, nor to recall him to this mortal life. I commend him and me to your grace.[46]

Indeed, according to André Vauchez, the tender portrayal of Elizabeth's happy marriage in the handmaids' testimonies (and the *vitae* based on them) was an outlier that was not be repeated in saints' lives of the later Middle Ages.[47]

Scores of saints in the LA give money or goods to the poor, but following Isentrude, Jacobus portrays Elizabeth as taking a stand on systemic injustice and organizing programs for long-term social betterment that have no counterpart anywhere else in the *Legend*, and indeed, were remarkable by the standards of their time.[48] Elizabeth not only imposed on herself the pains of poverty; she tried to challenge the larger socioeconomic structure that oppressed the powerless. Willingly obeying her confessor, she adopted a food boycott known as the *Speisegebot*, designed to prohibit all sustenance acquired by plunder or robbery of the poor:

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45 For examples, located via the index to any edition, see St Anastasia; St Hilary (hoping for death of daughter and wife); St Adrian; St Genebald (in the life of St Remy).

46 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1165; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:308. Based on Isentrude's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 124; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 204.

47 Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 383–84.

48 See n. 20, above.

> Master Conrad forbade her to eat any food about which she had the slightest qualm of conscience, and she obeyed his behest so meticulously that however abundant the delicious foods might be, she and her servingmaids partook of the coarser fare. At other times she sat at table and divided and moved the food around on her plate, so as to seem to be eating and to ward off any notion that she was superstitious: thus, by her urbanity, she put all the guests at their ease. When they were traveling and she was worn out with the length and labors of the journey, and she and her husband were offered foods that might not have been honestly acquired, she accepted none of them and patiently ate stale black break soaked in hot water, as her maids did. . . . The Landgrave was tolerant of all this and said that he would gladly do the same himself if he were not afraid of upsetting the whole household.[49]

Again, the Landgrave is described as supporting his wife's spiritual journey even when he could not follow. Although the boycott was required by her confessor, it is clear that Elizabeth was deeply committed to the practice. According to Kenneth Wolf, "[of] all the different aspects of Elizabeth's saintly regimen reported to the commission by her handmaids, the *Speisegebot* was the most distinctive. I know of no other examples of such precise restrictions on consumption tied to issues of economic justice."[50] If this type of renunciation was not absolutely unique to Elizabeth, it was at least extremely rare.[51] The saint's commitment to alleviating poverty on the systemic as well as the individual level was active as well as passive. While her husband was still alive, Elizabeth fed the hungry and assisted the sick and dying, providing hands-on care even to the most disfigured,[52] all of these actions deriving from the standard repertoire of Christian good works and echoed in countless other saints' lives.

However, Elizabeth went further than giving handouts or other fleeting ministrations by establishing what seems to have been a day care center where the children of poor women, presumably patients in hospital, were not only fed and cared for, but obviously treated as children:

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49 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1160–61; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:305–06. Based on Isentrude's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 115–16; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 196.

50 Wolf, "The Life," 66. See also n. 20, above.

51 According to McNamara, "The Need to Give" 210, citing Jacques de Vitry's *Life of Marie d'Oignies* 2:44, Marie in her youth chose to live on herbs she picked herself rather than partake of food from her mother's house, which she regarded as the fruit of injustice and usury; on parallel renunciation by wives of usurers, see Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 94 n. 39.

52 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1161–62; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:306–07.

> In the same house [her hospital in Eisenach] Elizabeth saw to it that children of poor women were well fed and cared for. She was so gentle and kind to them that they all called her Mother and, when she came into the house, followed her around as if she were in fact their mother, and crowded about her to be as close to her as possible. She also bought some small dishes and cups and rings and other glass toys for the children to play with. She was riding up the hill, carrying these things in the fold of her cloak, when they came loose and fell to the rocks below, but not one of the toys was broken.[53]

Elsewhere in the LA, there is no such natural and sympathetic depiction of childhood or childcare, much less of organized care for the children of the poor. Beyond her personal attention to individual patients, Elizabeth addressed the larger problem of the impoverished ill in her community by having hospitals built, first in Eisenach near Wartburg Castle where she lived with Ludwig,[54] and during her widowhood in Marburg where she spent her final years.[55] Elizabeth is the only saint in the collection, male or female, to carry out such a large-scale and practical plan. The medical volunteerism of St Francis—visiting a leprosarium, kissing the hands of the patients, and leaving them money—seems disorganized and sporadic by comparison.[56] In the sustained attention and hands-on intimacy of her work as a hospital sister at Marburg, Elizabeth surpasses any other saint portrayed by Jacobus. There is no detail quite like this one in any other saint's life of the collection: "After the hospital was built, she committed herself to serving the poor like a simple servingwoman. . . . she humbled herself so completely that when a poor child who had only one eye and was covered with scabs came into the hospital, she took him in her arms to the privy seven times in one night and willingly washed his bedclothes."[57]

Jacobus is also careful to describe Elizabeth's contemplative life with vivid circumstantial detail, in a manner having no counterpart elsewhere in the LA.

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53 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1162–63; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:307. Based on Isentrude's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 119–20; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 200.

54 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1162; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:307. Based on Isentrude's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 119; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 199.

55 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1169; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:311. Based on handmaid Elizabeth's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 127–28; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 206.

56 As described in the "Life of St Francis," Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1017; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:221. André Vauchez agrees that Elizabeth surpassed other thirteenth century saints in the hands–on intensity and organization of her care for the poor and ill: "Charité et pauvreté," 165–66 [29–30].

57 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1169; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:311. Based on handmaid Elizabeth's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 128; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 207.

Following Isentrude, he describes how at mass during Lent, Elizabeth received such a powerful vision that on returning home exhausted

> she rested on the lap of one of her maidservants and gazed through the window at the heavens, and such joyousness swept over her face that she burst out laughing [risus mirabilis sequeretur]. Then, after she had for some time been filled with joy by this vision, suddenly she was weeping. Opening her eyes again, the earlier joy was renewed in her, and when she closed them again, back came the flood of tears. This went on till compline, as she lingered in these divine consolations. She did not speak a word for a long time, then suddenly exclaimed: "So, Lord, you wish to be with me and I with you, and I want nothing ever to separate me from you!"
> Later on her [handmaidens] asked her to tell them [rogaretur ab ancillis], for the honor of God and their own edification, what was the vision she had seen. Conquered by their insistence, blessed Elizabeth said: "I saw the heavens opened, and Jesus leaning toward me in a most kindly way and showing me his loving face. The sight of him filled me with ineffable joy, and when it was withdrawn, I could only mourn my loss. Then he, taking pity on me, gave me again the joy of seeing his face and said to me: "If you wish to be with me, I will be with you." And you heard my answer.[58]

The above passage is one of only two quotations of a near-contemporary female contemplative in the LA (Jacobus also cited Elizabeth of Schönau in repeating some details from her vision of the Assumption of the Virgin[59]), and it is the only one to describe the experience of a visionary encounter with Jesus. As explained by André Vauchez, this passage represents a clear choice on the part of Jacobus to embrace the creative forms of contemplation already introduced by women in the beguine milieux of Flanders and Germany.[60] In his study of the LA, Jacques Le Goff notes Elizabeth's joyful spirituality, including her holy laughter, as a "modern" thirteenth-century development in a monastic culture where laughter had been discouraged, and it was debated whether Jesus had ever laughed at all.[61] Other saints in the collection are described as cheerful, but

58 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1167–68; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:310. Based on Isentrude's testimony, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 122–23; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 202–03.

59 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:787; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:82–83. Jacobus's quotation of Elizabeth of Schönau is explained by Alain Boureau at Jacques de Voragine, *La Légende dorée*, 1345–46, nn. 18–20.

60 Vauchez, "Jacques de Voragine," 53.

61 Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, 163.

Elizabeth's mirthful outburst is unusual if not unique within the LA.[62] Following Isentrude, Jacobus describes Elizabeth as at home and alone during her vision except for her female companions; they were the ones who asked her to describe it and the ones who reported it later. Conrad neither was present when Elizabeth saw and spoke with Jesus, nor did he tell the story. By endorsing all aspects of Elizabeth's contemplative model, Jacobus shows himself to be one of the thirteenth century mendicants, especially Dominicans, who engaged in the fruitful exchange between clerics and holy women that led to a new movement in spirituality and in the process, the emergence of a vernacular literature to support it.[63]

It is unclear whether Jacobus fully recognized the radicalism of Elizabeth's mystical revelation in a context independent of male authority. In most of her *vita*, he reports approvingly on Elizabeth's subservience to her confessor, while not appearing to recognize her spiritual independence of his authority, and even her occasional rebellion. Solely in order to make her suffer and break her will, Conrad dismissed her beloved long-time attendants Guda and Isentrude, causing great pain on both sides, replacing them, at least at first, with harsh and uncongenial women.[64] Although Elizabeth accepted the change, she never defends his arbitrary punishments as justified, saying only that she herself had chosen his harsh discipline in order to grow closer to God by depriving herself of earthly satisfactions:

> "*For God's sake* [propter deum] I fear mortal man as much as I ought to fear the heavenly judge. Therefore *I choose* to give my obedience [obediantiam facere volui] to Master Conrad, a poor, undistiguished man, rather than to some bishop, so that every occasion of worldly consolation may be taken away from me."[65]

62 For example, St Dominic is lauded for his cheerful and calm disposition, but with no mention of laughter: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:734; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:53. Jacobus writes approvingly that St Bernard seemed never to laugh spontaneously, only to force his laughter: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:817; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:101.

63 Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, esp. 192–97, and Coakley, "Friars as Confidants."

64 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1166; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:309. Based on the testimony of Isentrude, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 126–27; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 205.

65 Emphasis added. Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1166; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:309. Based on the testimony of Irmgard, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 135; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 212.

Later, Conrad had her flogged so severely that marks were still visible on her body three weeks later, all because, as rendered by Jacobus, she had visited a convent at "the earnest request of some nuns . . . without obtaining permission from her spiritual master . . ."[66] Consoling herself and her companions, Elizabeth never expressed remorse for her innocent action or any intention to change her behavior; rather, she accepted Conrad's punishment as practice in resigning herself to adversity imposed by the will of God: "The sedge grass lies flat when the river is in flood, and when the water recedes, the sedge straightens up. So, when some affliction befalls us, we should bow to it humbly and, when it passes, be lifted up by spiritual joy to God."[67] It is unclear whether Jacobus recognized Elizabeth's spiritual independence of her "master"'s will, an independence with no parallel in any saint's example amid the relentlessly pro-clerical agenda of the LA.

Finally, Jacobus adorned his *vita* of Elizabeth with expressions of tenderness that are remarkable in comparison to other chapters in the collection. In a departure from his usual style, he interpolates a personal meditation, complete with first person verbs exceptional for the LA, at the scene of her holy deathbed:

> The bird that perched between Elizabeth and the wall, and sang so sweetly that she sang with it, we take [credimus] to have been her angel, who was delegated to be her guardian and also to assure her of eternal joy. . . . We believe [credimus] that the birds that sang jubilantly on the ridge of the church roof were angels sent by God to carry her soul to heaven.[68]

On this note of personal affirmation, Jacobus moves on to his recitation of her posthumous miracles, of less concern to us here.

66 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1166; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:309.

67 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1166–67; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:309. Based on the testimony of Irmgard, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 135–36; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 212.

68 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1172; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:313; on these passages as Jacobus's personal interjections, with first person verbs unusual for him, see Alain Boureau's discussion in Jacques de Voragine, *Légende dorée*, 1457 n. 63.

Reworking His Source: What Jacobus Chose to Omit, Revise, or Retain

Within the context of the LA, as we have seen, Elizabeth's *vita* is exceptional. As discussed by André Vauchez, Elizabeth's life is the only one in the entire collection that was based on a sort of rough draft primary source,[69] a group of testimonies from the saint's canonization hearing of just a few decades earlier. Even more remarkable, this document, known as the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum* (Statements of the Four Handmaids),[70] is based entirely on the voices of women, translated from their native German into Latin and filtered by clerical authorities, but nonetheless replete with details that only an intimate female companion would know.[71] André Vauchez's analysis underscores the uniqueness and extraordinary value of the handmaids' testimony:

> The *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum* constitutes a very precious document. In contrast with later processes of canonization, the witnesses express themselves with almost total freedom; their statements are only rarely guided by questions and they are not yet bound by the rigid system of *articuli interrogatorii*, as would be the case in the fourteenth century.[72]

In much of his life of Elizabeth, as we have seen, Jacobus closely adhered to the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum,* a new type of source for the life of a new type of saint.

In certain crucial passages, however, he altered his source (or deleted material entirely) with the effect of bringing Elizabeth's radical new model of sainthood into line with the mainly conservative values of the work as a whole: promotion of Catholic orthodoxy, unquestioned church authority, traditional

69 Vauchez, "Jacques de Voragine," 48. He is referring to the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum*, agreed to be almost the only if not the only source for the *vita* portion of Elizabeth's legend in Jacobus's LA: see n. 70, below. On medieval sources for the life of Elizabeth, including later *vitae*, see Gecser, "Lives of St. Elizabeth," and Reber, *Elisabeth von Thüringen*, 9–34.

70 From my personal comparison, I agree with Vauchez, see n. 69 above, and Gecser, "Lives of St. Elizabeth," 72 and 72 n.107, that Jacobus used only the earlier version, the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum*, and not the *Libellus*, available as *Der sogenannte Libellus*, ed. Huyskens. As explained by Andre Vauchez, "Charité et pauvreté," 163 [27], five sets of documents were used in Elizabeth's canonization process, concluded in 1235: Conrad of Marburg's *Summa Vitae*, the *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum*, and miracle depositions collected in 1232, 1233, and 1235.

71 Vauchez, "Jacques de Voragine," 48. For more discussion of the sources of Elizabeth's legend in the LA, both *vita* and miracles, see Konrád, "The Legend of Saint Elizabeth," 19–22. Konrád agrees, 20, that the *Dicta* is the most important, and possibly the only source for Elizabeth's *vita* in the *Legenda*.

72 Vauchez, "Charité et pauvreté," 163 [28]; translation mine.

subservience for women, and inextricable from all these, violence in the service of faith. Jacobus appears to have maintained consistency with this agenda both in his changes to the record, and in what he chose to retain.

It is no surprise that Jacobus omitted from his *Legenda* the sole anecdote from the handmaids' testimony where Elizabeth directly questioned clerical authority, in this case a group of male religious who seem to have been proudly showing her around their cloister church:

> Once when she came to a certain cloister of monks who had no possessions and who fed themselves only from daily alms, she was shown the sumptuous gilded sculptures in their church. She said to the approximately two dozen monks who were standing near her: "Look, it would be better to invest this revenue in your clothing and food than in your walls, because you ought to carry such images as these only in your hearts." When one of them said, with regard to a particularly beautiful image, that it suited her well, she responded: "I have no need of such an image because I carry it in my heart."[73]

As he states elsewhere in the LA, Jacobus held a favorable view of religious images in church; he considered such pictures a conduit for the word of God and an aid to Christian faith.[74] Clearly, this particular example of Elizabeth's audacity and spiritual independence could not be admitted into the very conservative and always pro-clerical *Legenda Aurea*. For Jacobus, the problem went beyond the fact that he disagreed with her negative opinion of the visual arts. The entire LA, at least in the chapters authored by Jacobus, contains no approved example of a lay person (much less a woman) defying or even standing in opposition to any representative of the clerical estate.

In another case, Jacobus simply rewrote the handmaids' testimony to justify Conrad's cruelty and render Elizabeth at fault. According to the eyewitness testimony of Irmgard, one of Elizabeth's replacement handmaids who seems have become her close friend, the incident where Elizabeth entered the convent

73 "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 214; "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 137–38.

74 St Ambrose had a vision of St Paul whom he recognized only by a painting he had seen: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 1:538; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 1:327. A Jewish boy-convert remains steadfast through martyrdom with the comfort of the Virgin Mary, whom he recognizes by a painting just seen on the altar as he took communion with the Christian children: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:796; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:87.

at Altenberg, and was flogged by Conrad as punishment, did not take place exactly as described by Jacobus and quoted above. As Irmgard tells the story,

> [t]he ladies who were there [at the convent at Altenberg] asked Master Conrad to give permission to blessed Elizabeth to enter the cloister upon her arrival so that they could see her. Master Conrad responded: "She may enter, if she wishes," confident that she would not. But Elizabeth, taking Master Conrad at his word, did enter, thinking that she had permission to do so. . . . Because Sister Irmgard had been responsible for getting the key and opening the door to the cloister—though she had not entered with Elizabeth—Master Conrad had her prostrate herself alongside blessed Elizabeth and ordered Brother Gerhard to beat them hard with a certain kind of whip that was big and long. While Gerhard beat them Master Conrad sang the *Miserere mei Deus*.[75]

Irmgard's testimony puts Conrad clearly in the wrong for punishing Elizabeth, who did not knowingly disobey his command, and even more at fault for causing a handmaid to be lashed for merely helping her mistress. Both women bore stripes on their bodies for three weeks or more.[76] (Elizabeth's little daughter Gertrude had been placed at the convent,[77] a fact not mentioned in the handmaid's testimony, which may explain why Conrad was so enraged at the visit—he may have judged his spiritual daughter to be backsliding from her renunciation of love for her children.) Jacobus could not accept such an open, well justified critique of "Master" Conrad, who (as he must have known) was an inquisitor authorized by Pope Gregory IX to root out heresy throughout the German lands during the same period as he served as Elizabeth's confessor.[78] As Elizabeth's confessor, Conrad of Marburg could not be censured, even by implication.

In another case of simply suppressing details of the story in order to whitewash Conrad's brutality, Jacobus omitted Isentrude's account of Elizabeth's Christian charity as superior to that of her "Master," as the saint defied his command to limit her almsgiving; if caught red-handed aiding a pauper, Elizabeth bore her confessor's chastisements willingly, "mindful of the buffeting suffered

75 "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 135–36; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 212.

76 Irmgard, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 212; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 212.

77 Wolf, *The Life and Afterlife*, 212 n.57.

78 Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 95–106.

by the Lord,"[79] but she is never said to have obeyed her confessor's restrictions on her charity, only to have accepted his punishments as opportunities to share in the suffering of Jesus. Clearly, Jacobus had no place in his agenda for any obvious breach of unquestioning obedience to clerical authority, whether bravely articulated by Irmgard after the fact, or reportedly practiced even by a saint.

Although Jacobus followed his source in paraphrasing Elizabeth's beautiful speech on the return of her husband's bones (quoted above), where she honors him for having set forth on crusade,[80] the Dominican introduced a detail not present in the *Dicta,* by inserting a statement that she had originally exhorted her husband to go.[81] As noted by Eszter Konrád, this may be Jacobus's most significant alteration to his major source for the *vita*,[82] as it transforms Elizabeth from a mere supporter to the instigator of her husband's fatal voyage as he joined in a chaotic attempt to "rescue" the Holy Land.

This time hewing closely to Irmgard's testimony, Jacobus approvingly reports that Elizabeth approved of and practiced faith-based violence at the personal level as well as (in his account) promoting it overseas. When a poor old woman in her hospital in Marburg refused to go to confession, Elizabeth beat her with rods until she complied.[83] In the incident at the convent noted earlier, the saint not only accepted the cruelty done to her, but appears to have had no objection when a handmaid was forced to share in the punishment. Of course, there is also the enigma of why a saint who was so deeply concerned with oppression on the larger societal scale, would have chosen as her spiritual father an inquisitor who from 1227 (near the beginning of his association with her) was actively engaged in a reign of terror across the German-speaking lands. Attended by the same Gerhard who whipped the saint and her handmaid, and licensed by Pope Gregory IX, Master Conrad traveled from town to town accusing of heresy anyone who was unlucky enough to be brought to his attention, often by informers with agendas of their own. The accused had only two choices: confess their "guilt" or be burned at the stake. To save oneself, it was also necessary to implicate others. When Conrad was finally murdered in March 1233 by a group of nobles he had been reckless enough to accuse, Pope Gregory professed

79 Isentrude, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 127; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 206.

80 Isentrude, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 124; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 204.

81 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1163; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:307.

82 Konrád, "The Legend of Saint Elizabeth," 22.

83 Testimony of Irmgard, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 129; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 207; story retold by Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1169; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:311.

himself grief-stricken, but pointedly neglected making any moves to have the inquisitor canonized; Conrad had made himself too much hated, and his victims were now held to be martyrs themselves.[84] By all accounts, and with Jacobus's evident approval, Elizabeth clung to this monster during her married life and for as long as she lived.[85]

As noted above, St Elizabeth is mentioned in two different chapters of the LA, not only in her rather lengthy *vita*, but in Jacobus's capsule summary of historical events leading up to his own day. Honoring crusaders and inquisitors, Jacobus places Elizabeth's life firmly in the context of the war on heresy to which his work was so heavily devoted:

> At this time the Orders of Friars Preachers and Friars Minor arose. Innocent sent legates to King Philip of France to get him to invade the Albigensian area in the South and destroy the heretics. Philip took them captive and had them burned at the stake. Finally Innocent crowned Otto (IV) emperor, exacting an oath that he would safeguard the rights of the church. . . . Saint Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary and wife of the landgrave of Thuringia, lived at this time. It is recorded that among a great number of miracles she raised many, namely, sixteen, dead to life and gave sight to a person born blind. It is said that an oil still flows from her body.[86]

For Jacobus, Elizabeth's shining example is a weapon in the crusade against heresy, just as surely as the violence often used to carry it out.

Jacobus also refashioned the "givens" of Elizabeth's *vita* in a more conservative direction by adding a passage describing how the saint was unwilling to marry, preferring to die a virgin, but agreed to marriage only in obedience to her father's will and to bring Christian children into the world; he elaborates, ". . . while bound to the law of the conjugal bed, she was not bound

84 Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 95–100. As noted by Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 60–61, other inquisitors were "martyred" in the line of duty, but of these, only Peter Martyr was canonized; the common people simply refused to report any miracles of dead inquisitors, thus denying the basis for a process. Even Peter Martyr's canonization was unpopular and much criticized: see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 415–16 and 415 n.10.

85 I am aware of only one study entirely devoted to the moral conundrum of Elizabeth's intimacy with Conrad: Werner, "Die heilige Elisabeth," 45–69. At 63, Werner pleas for understanding Elizabeth in terms of her own time, not ours; however, Conrad was widely despised by his contemporaries: see Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 98–100.

86 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1282; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:384.

to enjoyment."[87] This passage reinforces the pro-clerical, thus anti-matrimonial bias of the LA as a whole, but is obviously at odds with the statements by her female companions, who never testify that Elizabeth was reluctant to marry Ludwig, and who describe the couple as deeply in love and enjoying a normal married life that included sleeping together. Further on, Jacobus makes an important omission in his retelling of events from the handmaids' testimonies, evidently in the interest of portraying Elizabeth as strictly conforming with the subjection of women as required by her faith. The handmaids describe how when Elizabeth was visited by wealthy matrons during her married life, she would rebuke them for their prideful lifestyle "as if she were preaching (quasi predicans.)"[88] Of course, women were not allowed to preach, and Jacobus never shows us an Elizabeth doing anything like predication. His *vita* keeps her spoken communication within the limited territory allowed to women and already defended on behalf of the beguines: he describes her as "giv[ing] instruction to the ignorant (incultos homines edoceret),"[89] speaking words of consolation to the sick ("verba exhibebat consolationis")[90] and recounting her vision of Jesus in a private context, as noted above, but never preaching.[91] It is notable that Jacobus gives us female saints who preached in public, but all in ancient times: the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, her sister Martha, and Katherine of Alexandria,[92] among one or two others. His model of sainthood for the "modern" woman allowed for an active life where the saint might give edification in private even to men, but she would be subservient to clerical authority and sternly enjoined from preaching.

87 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1158; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:304.

88 Isentrude, "Dicta," in *Quellenstudien*, 117; "Dicta," trans. Wolf, 198.

89 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1159; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:304.

90 Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1163; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:307.

91 For a discussion of the private admonitory speech permitted to women, including Beguines, see Wolf, "The Life," 77 n. 144.

92 Mary Magdalene, "apostle to the apostles," "preached Christ fervidly to them [a public crowd of pagans] (Christum constantissime predicabat)": Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 1:376; Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 1:631. Katherine of Alexandria's "eloquence was admirable; it was abundant when she preached (habuit enim eloquentiam facundissimam in predicando)": Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:340. Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1214. Martha also preached ("predicaret") in public: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:684; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:24. The Virgin Mary kept her memory of the Incarnation in her heart until it was time to preach it or write it ("tempus predicande vel scribende") to Luke the Evangelist and others wanting to know: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, 2:1069; Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, 2:253. However, Jacobus stopped short of suggesting that a contemporary woman should be allowed to preach.

A Golden Legacy

Although the *Golden Legend* was not the only source transmitting Elizabeth's legacy to the world, it is safe to say that none traveled any further abroad or in a greater number of manuscript witnesses, at least in the later Middle Ages. (The *Dicta Quatuor Ancillarum*, Jacobus's major source for her *vita*, survives in seven manuscripts.)[93] So indebted to the *Golden Legend* for its dissemination to the world, how is Elizabeth's legacy alive today? Except to historians, Conrad of Marburg and his war on Catharism are largely forgotten, while Elizabeth's golden paradigm endures. As recognized by her contemporaries, St Elizabeth invented and lived a new model of sanctity, the "sister in the world" combining direct experience of Jesus with hands-on relief of the sick and poor, and not only with occasional palliative measures, but in programs of ongoing societal impact such as a daycare center and hospitals. As explained by Gábor Klaniczay, "Elizabeth's life and saintly glory became the major career script" for other women to follow.[94] Although it is anachronistic to call Elizabeth a Franciscan tertiary,[95] her example certainly helped give rise to the movement. She is the patron saint of Third Order and an inspiration to secular Franciscans[96] along with many others who continue her works of mercy in the world. As a happily married mother, she opened the door to a model of sainthood that was relatively supportive of family ties, especially by the standards of her time. She was a woman of spiritual courage and independence in a brutally patriarchal milieu. Jacobus affirmed her association with violence as a means of defending the faith; in the interest of honesty this part of her legacy must be confronted, not denied. However, the majority of his chapter on Elizabeth is devoted to memorable examples of her loving kindness in action. This is the legacy of St Elizabeth of Hungary that continues to instruct and inspire.

93 Gecser, "Lives of St. Elizabeth," 55. Of course, there were other lives of Elizabeth outside the LA: see Gecser, "Lives of St. Elizabeth," passim. The LA was a major source for the spreading of her story, but not the only one.

94 Klaniczay, "Legends as Life Strategies," 99–100, with emphasis on her saintly relatives.

95 According to Vauchez, *Laity in the Middle Ages*, 108, citing research by Meersseman, the Third Order was not founded until 1289 with the papal bull by Nicholas IV, *Super Montem*.

96 Pieper, *The Greatest of These is Love*, 101, explains how secular Franciscans (including herself) are especially inspired by Elizabeth's example.

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