

The Prologue to the *Liber Visionum* of John of Morigny

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1.

Here begins the book of apparitions and visions of the blessed and undefiled and most holy virgin Mary, mother of God, which Mary graciously obtained and revealed with the permission of the supreme God. Here begins the book of the blessed Virgin, glorious Mary, which is called the *Flowers of Heavenly Teaching*, for the knowing of all the arts. That which in other books is often in itself grasped with difficulty by native wit, tediously and at excessive length over a long period of time in enormous and fussy volumes of books, is taught in this book by means of a very few easy prayers, conveyed through the revelation of angels and the subtlety of their unheard words,¹ and sometimes, according to the merits of the operator, through the vision, apparition, consolation and help of the undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God, in a short time, subtly, certainly and marvelously, by Him and through Him in whom all things are.

2.

Here begins the first prologue, in the name of our lord Jesus Christ. Amen

No one who lights a candle puts it in a hidden place or under a bushel, but rather sets it on a candlestick so that the light of clarity may appear to those coming in.² The glorious and undefiled mother of God, the virgin Mary, who is the light of sinners and the sun illuminating them in our time, showed certain miracles to me as to one born out of due time,³ illuminating me with the light of her grace

and plucking me from the snares of the devil.⁴ She did not want the said light of her grace to be put in a hidden place, but rather set on a candlestick so that she might indubitably be known by those of the present and future, and especially by her faithful, to be the most glorious queen of heaven, the most powerful lady of the world, and the greatest empress of hell.

3.

And so I, brother John of Morigny, unworthy monk, humble servant and minister of this same Virgin, and of her son, our lord Jesus Christ, can no longer keep hidden in my heart nor indeed endure the things she deigned in my own time miraculously to show to me and to fashion for me, having been kindled with extreme love, delight, and charity for her. Rather for the serenity of all I have proposed to lay it out most clearly in the present codex, in particular through the spiritual visions and sacred warnings by which she mercifully deigned to call me back from my old errors when I was blinded by the tricks of the roaring enemy. And I have done this for the praise and glory and honor of the most holy virgin Mary, and of her son, our lord Jesus Christ, and of the holy angels, and of the entire celestial court; for the salvation and perfection of both soul and body of all listeners and readers; and for the destruction of the enemy who invades seeking someone to devour;⁵ and for the destruction and rejection of all the seeds of his errors and the old tricks by which he made many his heirs, deceived them and led them—alas—into the darkness of perdition.

4.

How I compiled the present book, which concerns the cognition and acquisition of all sciences and arts through the revelation and license of her will.

Let it not amaze anyone that I have proposed that my visions are fit to be written down, since it is established and demonstrable that a piece of paper was returned to Theophilus by the virgin Mary in a vision, on which the same Theophilus had written of the contract binding his creator and his soul and given it to the enemy.⁶ Furthermore, the heresy of those who said and say that the soul is mortal⁷ is dismissed and condemned through diverse visions, since even in the absence of the body, future things are seen [in visions] as though they were present. But there is no way that this could be if the soul were not immortal. In any case, whatever we have proposed to declare in writing concerning visions, we have seen without doubt that these mysteries do happen in our time.

5.

But someone may say, it looks like presumption and vainglory to publish such things, because when a man discovers the treasure of heavenly revelation he hides it,⁸ and ought to hide it. I answer that one who carries a treasure on a public road does so in stupidity and vainglory—it seems that he wants to be robbed by bandits. [But] the opposite of this is done here: therefore [the argument] is wrong. Solomon⁹ [says that] we should always carry in public the treasure of our good works. According to this passage in Matthew: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”¹⁰ This must be understood to mean that you should let your work be public in such a way that your intention always remains secret, so that we may furnish an example to neighbors through good works, and yet bear secretly the intention by which we seek to please God alone.

6.

Again, someone might ask fatuously, were there not many other religious persons in our time, with more probity and more holiness? And those things were revealed to none of them. This question is fatuous, and there is no need to respond to it. Were there not many other lepers in the time of Elisha, more infirm, more disabled than Naaman of Syria? And yet nobody was healed except him alone.¹¹ Were there not twelve apostles? And nobody saw arcana except Paul—John being more beloved among the rest.¹² Was it said to Peter alone concerning him, “So I want him to remain, what is that to you?”¹³ And if Peter did not deserve to know this, in what way do we? But as St. Paul said, “Lest the abundance of revelations exalt me, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.”¹⁴ Likewise there was given to me not only a thorn in the flesh, but also urges to sins of every kind, so that I would not exalt myself. Whence I freely acknowledge that I am the least of all religious persons.¹⁵

7.

All the things written in this book are classified under the sacraments of penance, namely in order that they may be categorized among the seven principle spiritual sacraments mystically. We say “mystically” for several reasons, but especially on account of this: that in each vision a figure or mystery is always discovered. And since the glorious, blessed and undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God, desired to operate and to manifest so many great mysteries through her revelations and visions to an unworthy and wretched sinner, deigning to do so in my person, it was suitable, in accordance with the usual habit of the evangelists, that she should show a *thema* of the work or visions at first, to which all the following visions could mystically be connected.¹⁶ Whence the *thema* of the

visions, namely the first vision of this book which the sweet virgin Mary showed to me and fashioned for me must come first, and afterwards I will tell all the others in order in the best way I can with her help and support. For all the things written in this book have been canonized for our Lady and we classify them among the apocrypha of the faith.¹⁷ Here ends the prologue.

8.

Here begins the *Liber Visionum*. And in the first place I will tell about the first vision, which is like a *thema* for all the following visions, which I had when I was about twelve years old.

When I, John, was about fourteen¹⁸ years old and lived in the city of Chartres in the close of the blessed Mary, very close to the church, about a stone's throw away,¹⁹ this vision was shown to me as to one born out of due time.²⁰ On a certain night I was placed in a kind of ecstasy, whether in the body or out of the body I know not, God knows.²¹ And lo, I saw a certain horrible figure, and it seemed to me absolutely certain that it was the enemy of the human race. And that figure rose up against me, wishing and craving to suffocate me. When I saw it I fled aghast in great fear from its terrible face, and it pursued me hither and thither, and could not catch me, and yet pressed upon me as it followed, so that I left the house I was in, fleeing from the face of my persecutor. And when I went outside it did not cease to follow me; and when it rose up hugely I stopped in my tracks and ran towards the church of the blessed Mary. I entered it through the right hand door of the main entrance on the west front,²² and when I was in the church, I immediately lifted my eyes—I was next to the door at some distance from it—towards the image of

the blessed virgin Mary.²³ And lo, suddenly the devoted Virgin Mary counselled me sweetly with a sign of her arm that I should come to her. After seeing this I ran to her quickly and fled as though to the true comfort and refuge of sinners, guarding myself under her protection and under her hand. And I did not see my persecutor the devil any more after that; I had completely evaded his hand by the invocation, help and protection of the blessed Mary, the glorious undefiled mother of God. I was placed in such tranquillity I immediately woke up. When I woke, I did not understand the vision, but I thought about it a little bit, and in my heart I commended to perpetual memory the mystery of that which I saw come into being in my own person with my own eyes. Here ends the *thema*.

9.

How I was deceived by the devil. Here begins Part I of this book and what happened to me after this first vision.

Since the exordium of our sermon should come from the mouth of the Lord,²⁴ for that reason I, John, neither wish nor dare to presume anything on my own account (as some do, presuming on their own account, concerning whom the Lord complains, saying, “they asked not [counsel] at the mouth of the Lord!”²⁵ That is, they have not sought the advice of the Lord. And in Ezechiel it is written, “do not presume to say things which you do not hear”²⁶). And later on, I had dared to write the following visions, when I had returned from school and I, together with others, had been canonically convoked by the love of²⁷ our reverend father Abbot William of Ransignon in the year of our Lord 1308, in the month of September, by the same William, with our sub-prior.²⁸ And not only by him,

but by the blessed and undefiled virgin Mary mother of God, who appeared to me in an excess of mind, and said only “come hither” and nothing more. At this point I was at Morigny, and had been more or less lingering in the cloister together with the other brothers. One day, praying in the chapel of the blessed Mary, I petitioned her by means of the prayers in this book; I took counsel by formulating three questions, of which the last one is relevant to the matter in hand. The first was whether it would please her at some point to deign to reveal to me by her grace if she wanted me to be a scholar any more, as I had been. The second, if I remained in the abbey, if I should I hold any office. And third, if I might manifest the visions which in times past she had revealed to me, and commit them to writing for her praise and the glory of her name. For if it was not her will I dared not write. Well when it pleased her, on a certain day she appeared to me in an excess of mind, in a dream, before the doors of a church, and deigned to respond mercifully to my questions, and counsel me sweetly, saying “you will be a monk, and you will move, and you will tell what I have told you.”

10.

And after I heard this, she said nothing to me, but immediately withdrew, and I woke up. And marveling, I understood by [the speech of] the aforesaid revelation, “you will be a monk,” that it pleased her for me to remain in the abbey (and so it happened), and that I would have a mobile office in which I would often move from place to place, in accordance with her words, “you will move”—which could not be if I had remained cloistered. But so it was, because on the eighth day after the aforesaid I was made the reeve of our house,²⁹ which is a responsible job, very laborious and mobile. And it pleased her that I should commit my visions to writing according to her words, “and tell what I

have told you.” And I ask and admonish all of you to whom the present book comes, as Augustine says, to “pay no attention to who I am who speaks, but to the one whose words I speak,”³⁰ namely the blessed and undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God. Concerning the necessity of saying these words she said to me, “and tell what I have told you.” May she grant to me by her wonted pity and counsel to say in her name things which please her, and may we come through her to eternal life, Amen.

11.

About my errors in the nefarious sciences and especially in the *Ars Notoria*, which is handed on by the devil.

She told me all these things, the most potent queen of heaven, the glorious and undefiled mother of God, the virgin Mary, my friend and helper, most swift counselor and most sweet and true comforter. She told me to write for her praise and glory, to celebrate her in present and future times. But after I had the first vision described above, which is called the *thema* (to which as I said previously all the subsequent visions are connected mystically), I began to undertake the yoke of religion, setting out to serve as a soldier in the order of the blessed Benedict. About four years after my entry into the order,³¹ a certain book was passed on to me by a certain cleric in which there were contained many nefarious things of the necromantic art. I took a copy from it of as much as I could get, and after that I returned [it] to the cleric. I was noticed by the devil, and tempted, and blinded as the temptation prevailed, I began to think how I might be able to attain to the perfection of this nefarious science. I sought counsel about this from a certain Lombard medical expert named Jacob.³²

When I had consulted with him, he said to me: “Get permission to use the school [*studia*],³³ and when you have obtained it look for a certain book called the *Ars Notoria*, and in that way you will discover the truth not only about this knowledge, which you seek information of, but about all of the sciences.” And so I did this, and I finally got the book after seeking it for some time, and having got it I immediately set to the task of performing this work and obtaining its effect to the best of my ability.

12.

How the *Ars Notoria* is woven and fabricated fallaciously within and without.

Now this book, the [*Ars*] *Notoria*, at first glance (that is outwardly) appeared to be holy and of all books the most beautiful and useful and even the most holy, because the writing in it has to be done in diverse colours and there are extremely beautiful figures in it coloured in diverse colours. It is a very short book, and by means of it the omnipotent God promises and bestows on the operators in a brief time the acquisition of all the sciences of scripture and the arts. In it are holy and wondrous prayers and figures of which the mystery, as it says therein, is rather a miracle than a normal exemplar of erudition. O cunning of the ancient serpent! O furor of the envious lion, circling and seeking someone to devour!³⁴ This is the craftiness of the ravening wolf! O false hypocrisy of the enemy, you who appear outwardly in sheep’s clothing, inwardly a ravening wolf! You cannot deny this to me, you cannot conceal it; I have tested you, I have discovered you, and I have seen you in the aforesaid book, most ingeniously contained! For I, John, have proven in actual fact, through myself and through many other witnesses, that this book, the *Ars*

Notoria, is without doubt a fountainhead of malice, origin of deviation, teacher of error, bag of tricks, river of iniquity, false advocate of grace; in it peace is bound to hatred, faith to falsehood, hope to fear, and madness is mixed with reason. This Art is a pleasant tempest, a brightly lit night, a twilight day, a live death, a foolish reason, and a deviant prudence; it is evanescent prosperity, sick pleasure, unguent outwardly sweet but fatally poisonous within. It is a sad paradise, which first pleases, second wounds, third kills. It is outwardly a mild lamb but inwardly a ravening wolf; a honey of bitterness and a sweetness of absinthe; a true argument but a false solution. First it lays out its assumption, which is sweet and true; second, it makes its declaration, which is bitter and false; third, it brings all to a conclusion in an evil end. It deceives everyone using it and leads to the darkness of perdition. By it are all evils compounded, and more, because without it nothing can be accomplished in necromancy; in fact inasmuch as it is the more subtle [art], it is the more deceptive. It is composed in five tongues—Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldean, and Arabic—in such a way that it cannot be understood or expounded by anyone, and the more you study it the more obscure it becomes.³⁵

13.

Here follows the second vision.

Well after I first got hold of the said book of the *Ars Notoria* and and looked into it, I was deceived into believing that there was no evil in it. On a certain evening, one day after I had fasted, I uttered certain prayers from that book which is called *Ars Notoria*. And lo, in the night, placed as it were in an excess of mind, I saw the following vision. It seemed to me that I was in the field next to my mother’s house in the village of Otronicum,³⁶ and it was

night, and the moon was shining, and there was moonlight on the western wall of the aforesaid field. I was facing that direction, and there on the wall appeared the shadow of five fingers of someone's hand. And the shadow of those fingers was very horrible, because each of them was so big and fat that one could hardly fight it with five human hands. But I turned towards the moon and looked into the firmament so that I could see where the shadow of the fingers was coming from. And there in the firmament I saw the figure of a certain malign spirit (that is, the devil), so terrible, so formless, so foul, that no ear has heard of it, nor has it arisen in the human heart.³⁷ And it was holding its hand open in front of the moon, so that the shadow of its fingers appeared on the wall of the field. Well its head was directly above my zenith, and its shape [*exteriora*] towards the east, but the figure was so big that its body down to the hips stretched all the way from my zenith to my horizon—for I could not see the hips or the rest of its shape [*exteriora*], because they were below my horizon. And when I saw this figure, I could not look at it long because of its great foulness, but fell flat on the ground so that I could not see it, saying, "Truly, truly, inexplicable is the figure of demons!" After I said this I roused myself and went into my house, which was beside the field, and said to those who were inside, "Come and look at some amazing things in the sky!" And I went up into a certain solarium, taking some people with me to show what I have described to them. When we were looking out through the window of the solarium I pointed out to them the aforesaid figure, terrible as before, although I had not looked at it very hard. But then suddenly the figure descended into the field I had come from in the likeness of a holy man, and now he was very simply dressed in black clothes and was wearing a black diadem around his head. When I saw this I repented a little that I had called him a malign spirit, and then I

immediately woke up. And when I woke, wondering much about this, I considered in my heart who he might have been.

14.

Concerning the third vision which is an exposition of the preceding.

When I had thought a bit about what I had seen I began to ask God in my heart to show me what it was and what it meant, and I uttered a certain prayer for intelligence³⁸ which is written in the same book, in order to know these things. I did not believe there to be any evil in it, but rather even as all things work together for good for those loving God,³⁹ He would not want to trick me through an ignorant supposition because I believed that it was in His name. According to my intention, I brought my prayer to its effect. Well, after I had uttered the aforesaid prayer, turning onto my other side, I was immediately as though in an ecstasy, and I saw this vision: it seemed to me that I was entering a certain church and lo, in the choir of that church one of the Friars Minor was reading a glossed psalter to some of his students. He called me and said, "come here," and when I had come to him he said to me, "sit down here beside me and read in this book." So I sat down and read out these words: "I have seen the wicked exalted and elevated on high like the cedars of Lebanon: and lo, he was not; I sought him but he could not be found."⁴⁰ And when I had spoken this he said to me: "He who showed himself, who was he?" After this had been spoken and heard I woke immediately, and marvelling I glorified God and gave thanks, because he had showed me the interpretation of my vision. But from that hour I began to feel doubt about this science, because there might be some evil in it. And yet since the evil in it appeared good at first glance, I thought

of it in my heart as “doubt”.

15.

How I learned the Ars Notoria and how I operated through it.

Now I, John, while I was a student in school, suffered many poverties in books and exemplars, as well as in many other necessities,⁴¹ and above all I desired with my whole heart to come to the knowledge of all the sciences. And since it was not possible to do this by taking courses [*doctrinam successivam*] on account of my poverty, and in the foresaid book was contained a means by which I might be able to attain my purpose by instant teaching [*doctrinam subitaneam*], setting aside all other studies I undertook to study in it more frequently; and I studied in it so much that I figured out what I had to do to make it work. Once I had grasped this, I set to acquiring my proposed desire, the work of this book according to its teaching, better than I had [previously] been able to do.

16.

The fourth vision.

After I had begun the work of this book, when I had already laboured in it all the way to the twenty-ninth lunation,⁴² the day the moon completes her course, in the night after twilight, after uttering a certain prayer from this book which is called the *Signum Gracie*⁴³ I immediately extinguished the candle and got into my bed, and when I was lying down I fell into an ecstasy. And lo, suddenly the room in which I lay was filled with a great light, and there appeared to me two men whom I saw but I could not quite catch what they looked like. And between them there came a third, but I could neither see nor hear him, I only sensed

him. One of the ones I saw stood at the head of my bed and the other at the foot, and the one at the head spoke to me, saying proudly, cruelly, and arrogantly, “If you had been praying to me for eighty days and more, perhaps you would have been able to attain what you seek by now.”⁴⁴ And the other, standing at the foot, responded “John, hear what father says.” At once believing that he who spoke first was the Father, he who spoke second the Son, and the Holy Spirit was the one I did not see but sensed, rising and weeping with my hands joined, I said to the Son, “Remember, Lord, that you were God and man at the same time, and are, and will be.” Right away he answered, “And I say unto you that in eight days you will have a vision.” And as soon as he had said that I immediately woke up. Thinking about this vision I did not understand it immediately, believing it good and true and fashioned by God (although it was not, but by the devil who had transformed himself into an angel of light in order to deceive me).⁴⁵ Nevertheless I did as he had told me, and petitioned God through the time period he had indicated (because [that is] according to the teaching of this book, the [Ars⁴⁶] Notoria), using the prayer beginning *In nomine sancte et indiuidue trinitatis*.⁴⁷

17.

Note the fifth vision.

And after I began the book, lo, in the fourth lunation of my work,⁴⁸ I saw this vision: it seemed to me that some proud, great, arrogant and disdainful man came into the chamber in which I was lying, not by the door but by the chamber window. And circling around my bed, he said these words, speaking proudly, “If you are willing to worship me and do me homage, you will have everything you seek.” I said to him, “There is no way I will do this.”

For I did not think that this science involved that kind of thing. And when I had spoken, lo, there entered two other monks in the habits of the Friars Minor through the same window, and standing next to my bed, they petitioned me and said, “Sir, do what that great lord told you to!” I answered, “That is not possible.” And the proud one who had entered first said, “If you don’t do it, I’ll take boiling lead and pour it into your mouth, and so you will die!” And I said, “Even if I must die, I won’t do it.”

18.

While all this was going on, there was a certain Friar Minor near my room who was sitting on a bench by the chamber door, and he heard and saw everything that was said and done. I thought to myself, “Now it will be known in our house among my brothers that this knowledge comes to me from the devil, because he sees this and will proclaim it to the others.”⁴⁹ And the whole time I was thinking this, those two were incessantly petitioning me to do the will of this great lord. I was not in any way willing to agree. Well, after the great lord had declared that I would accede to his will neither through threats nor blandishments, he went out by the door. The other two stayed behind and petitioned me incessantly to do what that lord told me to. And in the end, worn out, I said: “Call him back and I’ll do it.” When they heard this they called him back, but he would not come. And when I realized that he was not going to come back, I said to them, “Show me how he wanted homage to be done to him.” They said, “Get out of bed and we’ll show you.” So I got up, and they showed how the homage had to be done, and when I saw it, I commended it to perpetual memory. And wondering about this vision in my heart, I felt a great deal of doubt about this science, that it might in truth be evil. I said, “My lord Jesus Christ, if there is anything in this science or art which is

contrary to you, or yours, or to the Christian faith, don’t let it have any effect.” I did not set aside my work at this point, but continued, saying to myself, “Possibly the devil is molesting me in this way (and yet the Lord pursues him) to the end that I might not obtain the effect of this book, although it is actually very good—on this account I’ll not set aside the work. Rather I will wait the end and see.”

19.

Sixth and seventh visions.

As I was pursuing my work, before I had come to the end, it was twice revealed to me by all the angelic spirits that in this book’s prayers in outlandish tongues there was an invocation of malign spirits hidden so subtly and ingeniously that nobody in the world, however subtle he be, would be able to perceive it.⁵⁰ And after hearing these things, at that point I began to feel even more doubt about this science.

20.

Note that I still had not set aside my work for the reason just given. Here follows the eighth vision.

When I was working with the aforesaid science, I had many other wondrous visions which are not really relevant here, through which I learned necromancy in both kinds with the help of the Art of these books. Similarly geomancy, pyromancy, hydromancy, aeromancy, chiromancy, and geogonia,⁵¹ and almost all their subdivisions. How I learned these things would take too long to tell. Anyway, when I was still unwilling to withdraw from this science on account of the aforesaid visions, I saw

another vision. On a certain night it seemed to me that one of the angels of the cherubim came to me in my room, clothed in a black tunic, and he ordered me to descend from my chamber. And since I was unwilling I thought that he was going to say something to me. When I was on the stairs at the door of the chamber he gave me a push between the shoulder blades and I fell on the stairs, tumbling all the way down to the bottom step. Then when I wanted to get up, there came a malign spirit present (that is, the devil) and he caught and held me. When I saw that I had fallen into his hands, that I was caught, unable to tear myself away from him, I shouted out to the angel, "O cherub, I had no idea about this!" And he answered, "Why didn't you say something before?" After saying this he withdrew, and I remained in the hands of the enemy, who, seizing me and sort of holding me, led me out of my mother's house. Because he was threatening me very much—telling me that I could not escape his hands, that he would kill me in the end—I was also very much afraid that he would kill me. He kept on looking for an opportune place to fulfil his purpose, leading me through street corners and some houses, but he could not find one. While he was leading me hither and thither I sometimes asked him not to kill me, and always he answered that he was going to do it. And then I thought to myself that if I could find a confessor I would confess and repent that I had sinned and done these things, and that I would not do them after this or sin any more. Well as soon as I had this thought, lo, the enemy let me go and betook himself a bit away from me, and I immediately heard the angels singing so sweetly and melodiously that in the whole of my life I have not heard so sweet a song or canticle. But I was unable to see them.

21.

Well, thereafter I looked for an opportunity to escape from the company of the enemy, and from that point on little by little he drew further away from me. And lo, a crowd of people got in front of me, and I, by now some distance away, put him behind me, and joined the crowd. As soon as I was in it I did not see the enemy any more, but I was still afraid that he might find me once again. I ran to a bishop who was there in the crowd and confessed my sins to him,⁵² and once this was done I no longer feared the enemy even if he found me. When I was leaving the said confessor, I entered a church by the south side, and there, next to the altar that was in the northern end, upon the steps of the altar of the said church, stood the sweet and undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God, adorned in the very whitest robes. Her beauty was so great and of such a kind that no human tongue would be adequate to the vision and delectation of her. And I was struck with wonder, and justly so, since indeed the sun and the moon marvel in her company. Next to her stood the blessed John the evangelist, dressed in Jacobite⁵³ garb, marvellously beautiful beyond measure. After seeing this, all thoughts removed, my heart exulted in such great happiness that I never felt the like. And filled with great joy I ran to them; and lo, the Jacobite, the blessed John came to meet me. He embraced me and kissed me, and I kissed him, and he said to me: "John, you are stupid, and you have done wrong. See that you do so no more." And because of my excessive joy I could not think how to respond, except with, "Have mercy on me." Having said this I moved on, and coming to the blessed Mary I embraced her, and she spoke as the blessed John had done, and I said the same thing back, and once we had exchanged these words they went away directly. And when I had withdrawn I entered the choir of the church, and there in the choir was an altar with someone celebrating

mass on it. He had got past the *accio* of the mass,⁵⁴ and around the altar were the four evangelists in white clothes,⁵⁵ and lo, one of them, who had the head of an eagle and a man's body and limbs, came to me and I embraced him.⁵⁶ I sat down there holding him in my lap, and as he sat he spoke with me, and I was put into such a state of relaxation that I straight away woke up. Justly marveling, I gave thanks to God, who deigned to show me such great secrets, and in everlasting memory of this vision I composed and fashioned the prayer which begins *Ave, salve*, etc.⁵⁷ Well then I truly knew that the said *Ars Notoria* was deeply evil, and I put it away from me a little bit, but not entirely.

22.

Ninth vision of the prohibition of the *Ars Notoria*.

But after this I saw the ninth vision: there came to me a certain great tribulation, and while this tribulation was going on I saw many horrible visions every day. One day I wanted to find out what they meant, and in order to know this I uttered a prayer of the said book of the *Ars Notoria* for memory,⁵⁸ as is my habit. And lo, on the following night, I saw this vision. It seemed to me that there was a malign spirit lying beside me in my bed. Getting up swiftly when I saw him, I chased him away violently with a drawn sword; I struck, and he went away. When he had been put to flight, lo, there was a man coming into my chamber, quite tall, and with a long face and a long nose high up in the middle of it, clothed in a robe not exactly white but as though it had been burned—that is, his robe had the colour of ashes—and he called me and said to me, “You are to interpret a vision for me.” Well at that point I recalled what I had said the prayer for previously, and I said: “O sir, but

you are to interpret for me.” He responded: “That’s to no purpose. And don’t poke into matters that don’t concern you any more, because if you go on doing it we will make you shut up.”

23.

Having said this he spoke to me again: “Come here, because I wish to confess with you.” And taking me by the hand, he led me to the bench next to my bed and we both knelt on the bench in the manner of people confessing. He began to confess, saying, “I am a great man, strong and powerful, and I have dispensed mercy where I should have dispensed justice, and I want you to absolve me of this.” I said to him, “It seems to me that this is not a sin,” and he said, “My conscience chides me. Absolve me quickly.” So I said, “I absolve you of that which your conscience chides you.” But when I wanted to absolve him with the common words of absolution, he said to me, “Don’t use those words, but open your mouth and I will fill it.”⁵⁹ When I opened my mouth I uttered these words of absolution to him, as if I had seen them in a book: *Rex regum, princeps principum et dominus dominancium, homo deus filius Marie natus ex virgine*,⁶⁰ and after I had spoken this last word I exclaimed in a loud voice saying, “O cursed Jews,” speaking thus to absolve him: “May He absolve you from those things which you have now confessed to me, of which your conscience chides you.”⁶¹ And when I had said this, he went away from me and I immediately woke up. Well, then I understood, I knew without doubt, and I had proven by experience, that the book of the *Ars Notoria* was entirely malign, that it did not please my Creator that I should operate through it any more, and that what I had done in it displeased him. And because of this, from that point on I wholly put away the work of the said nefarious book or art, and I made confession and repented of what I had done.

4.

Tenth vision: against the necromantic arts.

After I had put away the *Ars Notoria*, I, brother John, lapsed into the necromantic arts. I got so good at them that I was in the process of composing a new necromancy and I was also making the *Rings of Solomon*.⁶² Well one morning during this period I woke up—or so it certainly seemed to me—and got out of bed, and was just bringing the fourth ring of Solomon to its conclusion, when I heard a voice at my ears saying, “Fool, fool, and fool!” With fearful amazement I said, “In truth, I am a fool.” And again the voice spoke: “In truth, you *are* a fool. And if you knew how how much you will have to suffer on account of the things you are doing, you wouldn’t ever do them again for any reason.” After I had heard these things, the voice withdrew. I didn’t see anybody. I was petrified with fear when I worked on the rings, but I did not dare to confirm them on account of this incident. And I put away the arts of necromancy, not in part but in whole⁶³—and yet all the time I was still composing my book of mastery in the new necromancy.

25.

Eleventh vision: how after operating I was beaten by a good angel in front of the omnipotent Lord Creator.

Since God, the Creator of all, saw that fear of him had not recalled me from evil, he decided to recall me by force, through strenuous ecclesiastical discipline.⁶⁴ Thus one night in an ecstatic dream I saw a man robed in a red toga or *epitogium* coming into the solarium where I was, along with some others clad in similar costume. He sat down there in the throne like a master. And seeing by the

revelation of the Holy Spirit in my heart, I knew this to be the lord Jesus. Coming before him I sought mercy, prostrate, as is the custom for monks in the chapter before masters of the order. And then the lord Jesus, my master, ordered one of his associates to beat me harshly. One of them got up and began to hit me hard with his fist, saying “Take that,⁶⁵ because of the things you have done and are doing that are contrary to your Creator.” And he beat me very hard, so much that I was awakened by the extreme pain and suffering I was enduring. I was much amazed, being in pain in my shoulders and the other places where I had been beaten, and I smarted for almost the whole of an hour. And thus the Lord chastized me and did not deliver me to death. And because of this I put away the necromantic arts, and the book of that art which I was composing, and I repented and confessed. Here ends the first part of the vision.

26.

Here begins the second part, about the visions that I had after making confession and the revelation of this book. This is the first vision that comes from God.

The condiment of Grace is a marvellous thing, deserving of admiration, inaccessible to human wit, and one which must greatly be wondered at. Later on, because I repented and made confession about my operation of the book and the *Ars Notoria* (fleeing from the face of the enemy, and with the sweet virgin Mary, the undefiled mother of God, calling me as it were from afar with a sign of her arm) I saw a vision as follows. It seemed to me that I was in the great church of the virgin Mary at Chartres, in front of the main altar of the church, and I was petitioning the glorious Virgin there. And when I had petitioned her a little bit, lo, the silver image, having been transformed

carnally and corporeally into the selfsame Virgin, descended from the altar and came to me. Taking me by the hand, she led me to the middle of the steps in front of the altar and said to me, “Stand here, and worship God, and give Him thanks.” And since I didn’t want to pray using the usual prayers I said nothing but “*Gracias ago tibi.*” And when I was there with knees bent and hands clasped, the whole choir was singing *Te Deum laudamus* because of the miracle that the blessed virgin Mary had fashioned in my person in the sight of all. While they were singing, I meditated in my heart and said, “Mary, if the book of that most nefarious art of necromancy is discovered to be mine, will it be said that this is no miracle, but by means of that art that I made your image descend and change? And what shall I do with the books of this science? Shall I remove and hide them from my colleagues?”⁶⁶ While I was thinking these things over, I woke up. And in memory of this vision I composed the prayer *Gratias ago tibi*, [also] *Gloriose flos celorum*, and the other that follows it.⁶⁷

27.

Note the second vision. How I was in the company of the angels.

I saw another vision again on another day. It seemed to me that I was again in the great church of Chartres, near the door on the northern side, and there came before me, from the southern side, an angel of beauty marvellous beyond measure, clad in a red dalmatica, whose wings from his shoulders to his feet were most decorously closed behind him and hung down becomingly. A multitude of angels was following him who were clothed in white.⁶⁸ When I saw him coming towards me I moved aside a little for reverence, so that I could give him and his

companions room to go by, and he moved past me, regarding me softly but saying nothing. When I saw his company in such order, as sweet and beautiful as I can possibly describe, I greatly desired in my heart to enter their company—and I would gladly have entered it, except that I did not dare. Seeing [this], one of those who were following him, a youth of beauty marvellous beyond measure, left the others behind and came to me and said “Come with us.” And I said “Oh, Sir, I dare not!” He answered, “Come without fear. For it pleases the Lord, and he has commanded that we take you with us.” And he took me by the hand and led me to that blessed company so long desired by me. When I was among them and together with them, we all left the church at once by the north door, circling the church until we came before the main door on the western side. While I was among them I was filled with such great joy that I wished always to remain with them, and burned with such great charity that I kissed them on the cheeks very tenderly. In this way I showed my love to each one equally, because I knew not whom to love more. And while I was in that very noble and delectable company, not knowing whether I was in the body or out of it, God knows,⁶⁹ I awoke. Marveling at what I had just come through, I gave thanks to God.

28.

Third vision: concerning confirmation of the verse beginning *Ave gloriosa virginum regina* which the Chancellor of Paris composed.

I saw another vision. I had with me a verse for the virgin Mary which begins *Ave gloriosa virginum regina*, and I had a very great desire to recite it and to say it in honour of the blessed virgin Mary. But I did not dare,

because one of my companions told me that all those who said it would be excommunicated on account of the fact that the person who had first composed it had been condemned.⁷⁰ And little works [*capitula*] cannot survive whose authors are condemned. Anyway, on account of this I felt doubt. And to remove this doubt, I saw this vision. It seemed to me that I was in the said church of Chartres between the altar and the choir, and I heard the canons of the church singing the aforesaid verse in the choir. And I said to myself, “if this verse were forbidden, those who are singing it would be excommunicated. And therefore I am well able to say it, just as they are, because it does not displease the Virgin, in fact it pleases her.” And when I had heard this and thought about it, I woke up, and I did not have any more doubts about the verse, because it well pleased the Virgin that I should say it. And this I did, and I interwove it with the prayer, *Gloriosa flos celorum*.⁷¹

29.

A note about some of the other visions and the composition of certain prayers.

Many glorious and beautiful visions I saw which would be too long to narrate word for word. I saw a city set above the clouds, I saw heaven clear as crystal, and around the edges and within it, as if it had been an army pavilion, I saw the coming of the Antichrist, but the righteous paupers were naysaying him, just as this vision will appear later.⁷² I composed the first prayer of this book after the ninth vision, the said prayer having been made and spoken in memory of this vision⁷³. I composed the prayer which begins *Excellentissima*⁷⁴ while I was operating the *Ars Notoria*, after the first vision. The prayer *Propositii*⁷⁵ I composed after I had put away the *Ars Notoria*, on account

of my recall. And the prayer which is called *Invocacio sancte Marie*⁷⁶ I composed similarly after I repented that I had operated in the said science. Moreover, after I had composed it, there happened to me a great tribulation, and I desired to see whether I could escape that tribulation. I said that prayer thrice, with tears, at a certain late hour. And when I was in my bed I fell into an ecstasy and heard a voice like the voice of many waters and like the voice of a trumpet saying to me, “John, don’t you know that gold is tried in a furnace?⁷⁷ Why therefore did you seek this?” And I woke up immediately with the voice still ringing in my ears and I knew that it was not possible to avoid the tribulation, but that I had to bear it patiently—wherefore that prayer became very commendable to me. And many other secrets I saw and heard and knew.

30.

Note the last vision concerning the due licence held to compose this book for the utility of many.

When I, John, had seen and perceived that I had been called back and escaped in a measure from persecution by the enemy who was harrassing me, and was as though wholly under the protection and the guardianship of the blessed and undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God, I knew that, according to her whom I had seen, I could not attain my purpose. And so, thinking about the loss of my work, the restraint which had been put on me as was described, I did not know what I ought to do in order to obtain the good part of my purpose, except for the fact that through sacred visions it had been shown to me that the blessed virgin Mary was very much my friend and intimate in everything good for my soul’s salvation, not on account of my merits but only because her pity, mercy, and grace

anticipated it. And in the measure that I had, and have, and eternally will have a deal of faith, hope, and charity, to that extent whatever good I sought from her assiduously, devoutly, and held fixed in my mind, and hoped for, without doubt she would gladly give and concede to me. I therefore thought that when she appeared to me again, as was her habit to do, I would seek licence from her to compose a book with only thirty simple prayers through which I could bring about my purpose, destroying the other book, the *Ars Notoria*, and all the old errors of the false enemy.

31.

Well since I often petitioned devoutly before the image of the selfsame Virgin in her church, one night she heard my prayer and I had this vision. It seemed to me that I was in the church at Otronicum before the altar of the blessed virgin Mary, in the southern part of the same church—a church which was founded for and is dedicated to Saint Peter. And standing before the image of the blessed Mary in the southern part I prayed to her and requested that if it pleased her for me to compose the book which I had described, to tell me this and to give me licence if she was willing. I spoke thus to her: “My lady and my friend, if it pleases you, may I compose a book of just thirty simple prayers, by which I might be able to come to understanding of all the scriptures, arts and sciences, in your name, since it turned out that it did not please you that I should do this through the *Ars Notoria*?” And lo, that wooden image was transformed into the human likeness of the same undefiled Virgin, and she spoke with me, saying, as though unwilling and heavily, and as though she tired herself by speaking, “It pleases me that you should compose such a book as you have asked me for.” And I said to her, “Hey, my lady, how will I recognize it and be able to compose it?” And she responded: “When you do it, I will give you such elo-

quence that you will fashion it well.” And when this had been said I woke up and gave thanks to the blessed and glorious virgin Mary. I did not begin the book straight away, but when I was able to put it in order and compose it, I brought it to appear in due time with her help.⁷⁸ **Here ends the second part of the vision.**

32.

Here begins the third part, concerning the second witness to the fact that the *Ars Notoria* ought to be condemned.

And so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established⁷⁹, our lord Jesus Christ, and the blessed virgin Mary, his devout mother, desired that two witnesses against the evil *Ars Notoria* make manifest and bring forth for me what it is, so that I and my successors from now on might feel no doubt whatsoever concerning the sorceries of this same *Ars Notoria*.

33.

Now I, John, had a sister named Gurgeta who, when about fifteen years of age, by then already very capable,⁸⁰ asked me spontaneously of her own will—I did not force her—daily and often to teach her to read. Considering her great age, I asserted that she would not now become very good at it. But she always contradicted me, and since she petitioned me for some time, seeing her desire and wanting to know by what spirit and will she might be led (following the apostle who says “Try the spirits, whether they are of God”⁸¹), I tested as best I could that all these things came from a good spirit. I again considered that she might be able to succeed by means of the *Ars Notoria* in knowing how to read in a brief space of time, with her age not hindering her, and without hardship. So at that point first I set her to the *Ars Notoria*, as boys learn who have learned nothing, and I pointed out the letters to her.⁸² And she

learned so much—she who had never seen letters—that within the reckoning of half a year she wrote everywhere whatever she read. And what’s more, in the church before all the people sang an alleluia perfectly all by herself, without help, as graciously as an angel. But look what happened in the meantime.

34.

Concerning my sister’s vision against the *Ars Notoria* after she had used it.

After my sister Gurgeta had entered into the *Ars Notoria* in the customary manner she saw many horrible visions, among which the following one recurred often. In ecstasy while sleeping, she saw, or rather sensed, that a certain malign spirit came and stood near her in her bed, and the malign spirit pressed so hard upon the girl’s sides and back that she could neither speak nor cry out. He was always talking to her, threatening that he would kill her and torment her and not leave her in peace. He told her this many times and threatened her in many ways, and she was so greatly terrified by him and incurred so much fear that she dared no longer lie down alone at night.

35.

Well it happened one night that she was lying in the chamber in which she she was accustomed to sleep, together with another girl who was lying with her, and around midnight as she lay awake she sensed the malign spirit come. Stricken with fear, she cried out to me and said, “My brother, that spirit is here, I feel him, for God’s sake chase him away if you can!” I answered her, “My sister, what’s wrong?⁸³ Commend yourself to God, cross yourself and say *Pater noster* and *Credo in deum* and *Ave Maria*,

and he will do you no harm, whatever he said.” But in fact the spirit actually came nearer to her, and he began to torment her and whip her so that she cried out loud as though demented, and she said to me, weeping tearfully “Oh my brother, look, he’s got me now!” When she had spoken I silently incurred great pain and fear, thinking that she endured these things on account of the work of the *Ars Notoria*. Then I said to her, “Dear sister, renounce the *Ars Notoria* and its pomps and works, and tomorrow promise God and the blessed Mary before her image in church that you won’t operate through this art any more if the blessed virgin Mary will lift the fear of this spirit from you.” This she promised she would do, and immediately the spirit moved some distance away from her. Rising from my bed, I got some light burning in the chamber, and when I looked in her bed I saw nothing. And she said to me “Look: up to now I sensed that I was in his power, but he has withdrawn from me somewhat.” And still I saw nothing, but I comforted her as best I could, speaking to her about God’s trustworthiness and his love, and as I comforted her the spirit withdrew completely. And on the next day she did as I had told her to.

36.

And after that, seeing the spirit caused no fear. When she so much as looked at him he did not dare to touch her bed or get into it, but, as she recounted, whenever he appeared to her afterwards she was strong against him, and rose up against him, and beat him, and crushed him under her feet,⁸⁴ and thrashed him, so that the malign spirit cried out to her for mercy many times. As to these things, I was there, and I saw, and I testify that they are true.⁸⁵ For which reason I have pointed out on my own behalf and by means of one other witness that the *Ars Notoria* is maleficent.

37.

Concerning the good visions my sister had after she put away the Ars Notoria.

Well after my aforementioned sister withdrew from the work of the Ars Notoria entirely then she began to see visions of God. One night rapt in ecstasy she saw the Creator of all in three persons sitting at a great table in a certain church, and she was quite naked before him. She said to him tearfully on her knees: "Have mercy on me, because I give myself to you intact." He said to her in answer, "Do you have the power to give yourself?"⁸⁶ And she responded, "My Lord, I do have it." And he said to her, "Then I receive you my daughter." And straight away she woke up and told me these things.

38.

Another vision of hers.

After this on another day she saw in sleep that the blessed and undefiled virgin Mary mother of God appeared to her and said to her: "Daughter, you will be in the service of my son, and there in our church at Rosetum the Lesser⁸⁷ you will serve us." Well she saw this vision often. Also she saw many times in sleep that the blessed Virgin said to her, "Daughter, cut off your hair" (because she had very beautiful hair). And so she did. Likewise it was said to her that if she desired to speak with the glorious virgin Mary at will, that she should do penance, and she did so, because at first what she used had been linen clothes. Also she saw in sleep the nave of a certain church which was filled with a choir of angels in the air.

39.

Also the blessed virgin Mary said, "Daughter, in order to get your place in the said Abbey of Rosetum, someone other than I must speak." And when she had recounted this, she said to me, "for God's sake, brother, I beg you to go to Rosetum and seek a place for me, for it appears, as I know truly, that someone other than the virgin Mary should speak, and I know and believe without doubt that when you ask a place for me, it will be granted and given us." I said to her, "Well how am I supposed to do this, when neither I nor you nor anyone in our entire family knows anybody there?" She said, "It's not my doing, but for God's sake do what I ask." Agreeing to her request, I went alone to Rosetum, where I had never been and knew nobody, and as she told me to, without making any excuse or contradiction, as if the Holy Spirit were working (because in point of fact He was doing so), I got a place, namely the third vacancy.⁸⁸ She knew immediately about this achievement (or concession) just as if she had been present. When I came back to her she said to me, "You got my place on Tuesday." And I said to her, "How did you know?" And she said to me, "It was revealed to me." And I found this really amazing.

40.

Another vision.

Also after that the virgin Mary appeared to me, and in answer to my question about this ("How is it possible that she can become a nun when she needs so many worldly goods to give to the said abbey before she can

enter, and when as to worldly goods, she seems to have few or none?") she responded, "I will provide the necessaries for her." And from that time to this my sister waited devoutly for that promise and that place. At the time when I wrote this page (namely the year of the incarnation of the Lord 1313, kalends of June) she was still waiting for what the most sweet virgin Mary might deign to concede to her and fulfill in her, as she promised to her and to me. She saw many other things, and so did I, which are not written in this book; we wrote this down and told you this so that you should know and believe that the Ars Notoria is evil and the present art is good.

41.

Concerning the third witness against the Ars Notoria.

Having seen about the second witness, here follows about the third witness. I, John, was petitioned many times by a certain monk of the order of Saint Bernard,⁸⁹ and finally being persuaded, I taught him how one ought to operate through the Ars Notoria. After I taught him, he undertook the operation of it. Well, when he had been working at it for quite some time, at length, asking by means of it in the customary manner about the interpretation of certain names or words of this art, he saw the following vision. As he recounted it, it seemed to him that he was in the cloister of his abbey, namely Fontainejean,⁹⁰ and he entered a place in which his books of this art, and others, were lying around. And he found a monk there holding a psalter. He was reading this psalm in it: *Deus iudicium tuum regi da.*⁹¹ And then this monk⁹² began to look on in the psalter with the person who was reading, and the one who was reading, seeing this, said to him, regarding him rather indignantly: "What are you looking for? What are

you after? The thing you're looking for is not here." (Someone also said to him certain things which are not relevant to our purpose.) Anyway, since that which he sought concerned the operation of the Ars Notoria, it was said to him that what he was looking for was not in the Psalter. And since the Psalter concerns divine law and is pleasing [to God], it plainly appears that the Ars Notoria does not concern the divine law and is not pleasing to God.

42.

And henceforth, taking into account all that we saw, all those of us using it do justly adjudge, pronounce, and especially hold fit to be reprov'd that selfsame Ars Notoria, as entirely false and wicked and nefarious and damned and cursed, on the strength of my own experience and the authority and counsel of two other faithful witnesses. And therefore those of you who are and have been deceived in it and through it, bear the alien gods from your midst.⁹³ Turn yourselves to the lord God with your whole heart, and to his glorious and undefiled mother, the virgin Mary. Ask and seek from them in the faith through the present art what you sought before, when you were deceived, through that other reprobate art, outside the faith, from the devil and his minions—according to what the blessed James said in his canonical epistle, first chapter: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."⁹⁴ **Here ends the Liber Visionum which concerns the reprov'ing of the Ars Notoria and the revelation of the present Art.**

43.

Now follows the Book of the virgin Mary, and first concerning an exhortation of readers and the condition of the elect.

The night is far spent and the day is at hand.

Therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; walk honestly, as in the day.⁹⁵ Walk in the light when you have the light; be as the children of light, so that the shadows of the Ars Notoria do not gather you in any more.⁹⁶ I beseech you therefore, you who have been deceived in it, come to the waters. Not you magnates of this world, nor you proud, nor you wealthy, nor you vain, nor you luxurious ones; not you promiscuous ones, nor you effeminate; not you wrathful, nor you contentious, nor you homicides; not you thieves, nor you greedy ones, you misers; not you idolaters, nor you infidels, nor you schismatics, nor you heretics. Because it is written that Wisdom will not enter into the malevolent soul, nor dwell in the body subjected to sins.⁹⁷ But come, O you peacemakers, you faithful, you mild, you chaste; come you poor, come you humble ones, come all you virtuous folk: come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.⁹⁸

44.

Concerning the intention of the operations which those desiring to enter upon this art ought to have, and their purity.

On a certain night after prayers, when I, brother John, had asked about this, the virgin Mary showed me through a revelation what intention someone ought to have in pronouncing and saying the prayers, figures, and visualizations composed in this book. For it seemed to me that I was in the great church at Chartres, between the choir and the altar, and there, upon the altar, the blessed virgin Mary

appeared to me, lying in a bed and holding her son, our lord Jesus Christ, in her arms, in the same manner as in the parturition of the Virgin herself, and in the nativity of our lord Jesus.⁹⁹ And coming before the altar to her, I said: “My lady and my friend, I am wondering very much about you: you are the queen of heaven, lady of the world, and empress of hell—and where is your glory, where is your crown? Because just as you have appeared to me, you have manifested things which are in such a simple guise. And on many other occasions too.” And she, responding very sweetly, said: “If I appear to you simply, John, and to others of my simple faithful [*quia multum preparatum meum congesiuam meam honorata sum*¹⁰⁰].” And she added, “Look and see.”

45.

And thereupon I saw the abominations which today many religious secretly perform in their hearts, which nobody sees except God alone, and whomever He wants to reveal it to. They do these things there, and I have seen them in the figure of one religious person; for I saw one religious of our church and of our order, and he was at the altar, as if preparing himself to celebrate divine things. But like a monster, he had his head on backwards, unnaturally, so that his feet, chest, arms were in the proper order, namely eastward, facing the altar, but his whole face and throat were facing the door and the congregation. As a greater confirmation, the virgin Mary showed me the same thing happening similarly in a second instance to a religious behind the altar. And thirdly, concerning the same man, I saw that he sought something from the glorious virgin Mary, and that she was unwilling to hear him, and he could not have what he was looking for. And then the virgin Mary said to me, “John, do you serve me as he does? One who honours me and my son with words, but whose

heart is far away from us, even one who, while dealing with divine things, meditates on and holds his heart towards worldly things, on account of this also has his head on backwards. And such a one, as you see, is abominable to us.” And I, fearing and wondering very much, said “Oh, my lady, let it not come to pass now that I should serve you [so]!” Then she said, “Well, I say unto you that I do not want prayers, nor figures, nor visualisations, only your heart.” So after seeing and hearing these things, I woke up. And on this account let it be noted by all, on the authority of the blessed and undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God, that if the heart is not held toward the blessed and glorious virgin Mary, then prayer, figure, and visualisation are to no avail. Moreover, if the intact heart of the operator is fixed and set on her, then prayer, figure and visualisation obtain the desired effect as a gift of God.¹⁰¹

46.

How and where the virgin Mary is accustomed to appear, for the most part.

Because the most glorious virgin Mary, mother of God (who comes to those in peril in every quarter to provide safety through her ineffable mercy towards us) deigns to show signs anew, work further wonders and transform prodigies¹⁰² for us sinners in modern times, as was shown somewhat above; on that account, for the praise and glory of God and of his mother, I have determined to describe how and where the blessed Virgin usually appeared in visions (for in her goodness she deigned to appear to me, although I am unworthy).

47.

Well for the most part it was in church, though sometimes outside over the doors of the church, in her venerable image fashioned and portrayed as if brought to life in stone, wood, or sculpted metal. Sometimes it was in the likeness of a venerable and religious matron; sometimes in the likeness of a gracious queen of lovely and wondrous beauty. Sometimes it was with her blessed Son, sometimes alone at the entrance to a church, sometimes in front of the church—rarely elsewhere. Sometimes she regarded me with a serene countenance, sometimes with irritation; she smiled with agreeable speech, or indignantly chastized. But sometimes she was silent, or offered her hand or foot to be kissed. She did not listen to prayers which did not directly or incidentally concern salvation, but sometimes she conceded just or honest ones. Sometimes she put off answering, and sometimes she pretended to hear, not so that she might deny [the request] wholly, but so that she might blow it brighter or make me more careful to my request. Likewise sometimes Christ appears hanging on the cross, and sometimes the saints and sometimes the blessed angels appear, responding willingly to just and honest prayers. And visions appear in many other ways as well, through the pure generosity of merciful God.

48.

But albeit that the seeker who lives purely, inflamed by charity, has made himself fit to a greater or lesser degree, nevertheless with the greatest effort the operator must beware that he not seek how this is able to happen amongst the rationalizations of physics or natural philosophy, and that his heart should not vacillate through want of faith and fall into error. For then, affected by sins, when he had finished with the prayer, he would be deprived of its effect. For the gifts and works of the glorious, gracious and merci-

ful God cannot be comprehended by human senses. Therefore one must persist confidently, with works of faith, hope and charity only, together with the most devout prayers and the continual action of grace, so that the faith and constancy of the operator are proven.

49.

Sometimes with divine permission a malign spirit appears transformed into an angel of light¹⁰³ and urges things contrary to those that were said or demonstrated before by the blessed Virgin or by the good angels. Also sometimes when the glorious Virgin appears there will be a malign spirit at hand too, speaking first with her permission, always falsely persuading against salvation. Sometimes he appears alone in the likeness of the glorious Virgin in order to deceive and destroy — for the old serpent, that dragon of iniquity, the enemy of the human race, strives with a simulacrum of the truth to subvert to their ruin those whom he cannot deceive with his guileful falsehood. But the signs by which he is known, as well as I have been able to note them, are these: first, that Satan can never appear alone in a church or another [holy] place—rather the blessed Virgin will appear, or there will be a good angel appearing with him. In other cases, although he may appear in the likeness of the Virgin, this will be in an unclean place or in a dark one (not in broad daylight), or in a place of ill-repute, as in a brothel or in a tavern, or sometimes in a ditch or in a cave. The third sign is that before he goes away he will always tempt you concerning some sin or other, but especially luxury, or will strive to do you some other mischief, and he will always give wrong answers or doubtful ones to your questions. Sometimes you will know him by other signs revealed by the Holy Spirit in order to keep you safe and clean. Do not believe or acquiesce lightly to all visions, but by council of the Saviour, try the

spirits, whether they are of God, and seek their discernment from the Holy Spirit in prayers.

50.

Here begins the Book of Visions of the blessed and undefiled virgin Mary, mother of God *which she gave to her servant John in the year of our Lord 1308 after the reprobation of the nefarious Ars Notoria and the other parts of necromancy.*¹⁰⁴ Imagine that you are on the road to Paradise. (Note: this page should be in the beginning of the book, before *Nemo accendit.*)¹⁰⁵

¹The wording echoes a passage early in the *Ars Notoria*, quoted here in Robert Turner's seventeenth-century English translation: "Therefore [Solomon] calleth this a Notory Art, because it should be the Art of Arts, and Science of Sciences; which comprehendeth in itself all Arts and Sciences, Liberal and Mechanick; And those things which in other Arts are full of long and tedious locutions, filling up great prolixious Volumes of Books, wearying out the Student, through the length of time to attain to them: In this Art are comprehended very briefly in a few words or writings, so that it discovereth those things which are hard and difficult, making the ingenious learned in a very short time, by the wonderful and unheard-of Vertue of the words." (*Ars Notoria: The Notory Art of Solomon Shewing the Cablistical Key of Magical Operations etc.* [London: J. Cottrel, 1657], 27) There is a modern reprint of Turner's text (Seattle: Trident, 1987), and it is also available online at www.avesta.org/notoria.htm as well as in pdf format at http://w3.one.net/~browe/pdf/Ars_notoria.pdf.) A fifteenth-century *Ars notoria* in Clm 276 (one of the *Liber visionum* manuscripts [MH]), reads at the end of the passage "inaudito verborum ac virtutum angelicarum subtilitate sciantur," which is still closer to the wording of the *Liber visionum*.

²Mt 5:15; Mk 4:21; Lk 11:33.

³Cf. 1 Cor 15:8, an account of Christ's belated visionary appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus, long after he had appeared to others; the phrase is used again at the beginning of paragraph 8 below. A number

of allusions to the Pauline epistles in the opening sections of the *Liber visionum* serve to present John as something akin to a new Paul. Like Paul, John's early life set him at odds with the true faith and, like Paul, he was subsequently appointed as an "apostle," through the intervention of Mary, the divine figure whom John says oversees "our time."

⁴2 Tim 2:26.

⁵1 Pt 5:8.

⁶Theophilus is said to have been a church official during the later years of the Roman empire who was converted from his devout way of life by an evil Jew and persuaded to renounce Christ and dedicate himself to the devil, even putting his conversion to evil in writing. After he came to his senses, however, he prayed to the virgin Mary, who seized the record of his foolish deed from the devil and returned it to Theophilus, who then publically burned it amid general rejoicing. The story was popular in late-medieval Europe, circulating in vernacular languages as well as Latin; the authoritative life is by Paul the Deacon, edited in *Acta Sanctorum, Februarii*, vol. 1 (Antwerp: Iacobum Meursium, 1658), 480-87. John compares his life to Theophilus's on several occasions in the *Liber visionum*.

⁷For a scholastic defense of the immortality of the soul against assertions of its mortality, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles: Book Two: Creation*, trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), chapter 79.

⁸Cf. Mt 13:44.

⁹It is unclear what text attributed to Solomon is being referred to (particularly since the passage here could be punctuated differently, giving the attribution a different possible content). It may be that some phrase or sentence has gone missing. Perhaps the most that can be said with any certainty is that the crux seems to involve a transition from a more literal to a more spiritual notion of treasure.

¹⁰Mt 5:16.

¹¹This story is told in 2 Kings 5.

¹²2 Cor 12:1-4; Jn 21:20.

¹³Jn 21:23.

¹⁴2 Cor 12:7.

¹⁵Cf. 1 Cor 15:9.

¹⁶A *thema* is the biblical verse that heads a sermon, on which the whole is based, often taken from the gospel for the day.

¹⁷John is probably trying to link the *Liber visionum* with other commonly read visionary and apocalyptic texts such as the *Visio pauli* and the *Transitus sanctae mariae*. For various senses of "apocrypha," see *Decretum gratiani seu verius decretorum canonicorum collectanea* (Paris: Apud G. Merlin, 1561), Pars I, Distinctio XV, cols. 57-62, which gives the phrase various meanings, not all complimentary. The *Decretum* also provides a list of canonical books.

¹⁸The chapter heading says "twelve," the chapter itself "fourteen"; this could be a slip, but could also be a way of stating that John was thirteen without mentioning the unlucky number.

¹⁹The close of the blessed Mary surrounds Chartres cathedral and was home to a variety of residents in the fourteenth century. John may have been one of the "children of the alb" who had lodgings about twenty metres from the north transept. If so, he was studying singing and reading, singing in the choir, and ministering to the cathedral's Augustinian canons when he had his first vision. See Claudina Billot, *Chartres à la fin du moyen age*, Civilisations et sociétés 76 (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1980) (fig. 20 has a map of the close); L'Abbé A. Clerval, *Les Écoles de Chartres au Moyen-Age* (Chartres: Imprimerie Garnier 1895, reprinted Frankfurt: Minerva, 1965), 360-5.

²⁰Cf. again 1 Cor 15:8.

²¹Cf. 2 Cor 12:2-3. Although John compares his experience with Paul's vision, it later becomes clear that most of his encounters with spiritual forces take place in dreams. Some writers (including Augustine) did in effect elide the distinction between visions and dreams, but John's determination to do this—even in his formal defense, the section *de obpugnacione istius sciencie* in the *Liber figurarum* (GZ f. 146v col2)—allows him to dignify dream experiences in a fashion many late-medieval theorists would have frowned upon.

²²The tympanum over this door depicts Mary seated with the Christ child in her lap surrounded by angels and figures of the seven liberal arts. Though he suppresses the pictorial content of its tympanum, John's reference to this door anticipates the aim of the *Liber visionum* as of the *Ars notoria* itself, the attainment of knowledge of the arts by prayers to angels and other divine entities. If John is representing himself as one of the "children of the alb" (see earlier note), he is here taking a most indirect route into the building.

²³Chartres contains numerous images of the Virgin in stained glass and

elsewhere, but here John most likely refers to the silver gilt sculpture, Notre Dame la Blanche, which was kept on the main altar in the fourteenth century. In the vision described in paragraph 26, below, which has its mise-en-scene at Chartres, John speaks of the “silver image” which “descended from the altar” after being transformed into the living Virgin; and later in the book also John writes of the importance of the vivification of this silver image. (Notre Dame la Blanche, now lost, was replaced in the seventeenth century by a clothed and painted pearwood sculpture, Notre Dame du Pilier, now kept off the ambulatory, since the number of people praying to the previous sculpture disrupted the services, according to Étienne Houvet, *Chartres: Guide of the Cathedral*, tr. Malcolm Miller [Chartres: Éditions Houvet-la Crypte, ND], 10. The power which John’s story localizes in the silver image seems to have become the inheritance of Our Lady of the Pillar.)

²⁴Col 4:3.

²⁵Jos 9:14.

²⁶Unidentified.

²⁷The manuscripts read either “ad lectionem” or “a dilectione” but it is tempting to read “ad electionem,” “for the election of our reverend father... as abbot.” This would make better sense of “canonice conuocatus.” *Gallia Christiana*, vol. 12 (Paris: ex typographia regia, 1770), cols. 1176-84, lists a certain “Gulliemus” as abbot of Morigny in 1315 (and still abbot in 1335), the last record of his predecessor (Nicholas) dating from 1308.

²⁸This incident took place at least eight years after the *thema* vision, according to the chronology established by the rest of the prologue. Although it must have happened before or in 1300, the date of that vision is uncertain because John does not tell us at what age he became a Benedictine novice (paragraph 9). However, in 1308 he was possibly in his early or mid 20s.

²⁹ “Preposita nostre camera”: a plausible meaning for “praeposita” here is offered by J. H. Niermeyer, *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1997): “Monk who ranks second in a monastery behind the abbot and who is charged in particular with manorial and household management” (sense 3). However, since Morigny is described as having both an abbot and a sub-prior, John’s charge is likely to have been more local: “camera” might possibly describe a smaller group or “household” within a monastery.

³⁰ Unidentified.

³¹ That is, John enters the novitiate at Morigny and, after an undisclosed period, is sent away to university to study and to train for the priesthood. According to Clerval, *Les Écoles de Chartres* (note to paragraph 8), Chartres’ children of the alb sometimes, but not always, went on to become canons. How John became a novice at Morigny is not clear, but in the early 1300s the master of the children of the alb was a certain Robert, who came from Étampes, near Morigny.

³²It is unclear whether the information John seeks has to do with the best way to avoid the temptation, or the best way to practice necromancy (in fact Jacob’s advice concerns both aspects of the problem by offering John an apparently “safe” means to obtain knowledge of necromancy among other things). In general physicians (like monks) were among the classes of society more likely to own magic manuscripts and hence might be thought to know something about necromancy (as well as temptation, perhaps) on that account. See Frank Klaassen, “English Manuscripts of Magic, 1300-1500: a Preliminary Survey,” in *Conjuring Spirits* (cited above), 6-7.

³³John never tells us where he studied as a novice; it may have been at Chartres, or at Orléans (where we know from the *Nova compilatio* that he studied later on). Wherever it was, his community apparently did not supervise him closely, providing him with poor financial or pedagogical support but also with considerable freedom of movement.

³⁴This and other allusions to the “roaring” enemy derive from 1 Pet 5:8.

³⁵“It being a Science of so Transcendent a purity, that it hath its Original out of the depth and profundity of the *Chaldee*, *Hebrew*, and *Grecian* Languages; and therefore cannot possibly by any means be explicated fully in the poor Thread-bare scheme of our Language.” (Turner, 7.) The idea that the various prayers cannot be comprehended by human sense or expounded in translation is reiterated elsewhere in the *Ars notoria*, often connected to discussion of the intrinsic powers of the various languages in which they are written.

³⁶We have not yet been able to identify the location of this village. We know from later in the text (paragraph 31) that the village had a church dedicated to St. Peter, with a side-chapel dedicated to the Virgin.

³⁷Cf. 1 Cor 2:9, where the verse applies, however, to God, not the devil.

³⁸This could be any one of a number of prayers among the generals of the *Ars notoria* which are for memory, eloquence, understanding and perseverance.

³⁹Cf. Rom 8:28.

⁴⁰Cf. Ps 37:35-6 (the King James version has the tree as a bay; the Vulgate gives cedar). According to the *Glossa Ordinaria (Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria* [Paris: 1590], vol. 3, cols. 689-90), the verse applies either to the temporary worldly elevation of the wicked or, according to Cassiodorus, to the devil: “Hoc et de diabolo potest accipi, cui religato locus nocendi est ablatu.”

⁴¹That is, John had the resources neither to acquire the basic course texts nor to make his own copies from borrowed exemplars, a common practice among medieval students.

⁴²The first round of prayers in the *Ars notoria* are to be pronounced at appointed times, four times a day every four lunations (one lunation equals one day of the month) and the user “shall profit in all Sciences in one Moneth, and attain to them in an extraordinary wonderful manner” (Turner, 12). John seems to have reached the end of the first month in his formal practice of the *Ars Notoria*.

⁴³“These are Orations also, which are of great vertue and efficacy to our Salvation: The first whereof is Spiritual and teacheth Divinity . . . Therefore *Solomon* commandeth it to be called, The Signe of the Grace of God” (Turner, 34). This appears to refer to the prayer beginning *Achacham, Yhel, Chelychem, Agzyraztor, Yegor, &c.* (Turner, 36).

⁴⁴The suggested timespan here, “80 days,” seems to conflict with the statement above, that he had proceeded to the “29th lunation” with the *Ars notoria*. However it is also clear that he had been trying prayers in an ad hoc way for some time before he figured out how to pursue the practice systematically. The words of the dream figure might suggest that it is just under three months since John first obtained the text.

⁴⁵2 Cor 11:14.

⁴⁶John uses the closely linked terms “art” and “knowledge” somewhat interchangeably; thus the *Ars notoria* occasionally becomes, as here, the *Scientia notoria*.

⁴⁷*In nomine sancte et indiuidue trinitatis*: this is the opening prayer of the *Ars notoria*.

⁴⁸It is unclear why this vision comes at the “fourth lunation” since the visionary figure told him to expect a vision in “eight days.” Many such inconsistent details of the visionary experiences seem to have been recorded by John with painstaking care.

⁴⁹There was rivalry between the Benedictines and the Franciscans

(Friars Minor), but it is not clear why John here associates them with the devil and the *Ars notoria*. The vision evokes the atmosphere of a university lodging, in which young men from a diversity of backgrounds live together with inadequate privacy and in an atmosphere of gossip and intrigue.

⁵⁰Critics of the *Ars notoria* often ventured to suggest that its prayers invoked demonic, not angelic, powers. Discussion of some of the grounds of condemnation of the Solomonic *Ars notoria* by Thomas Aquinas and others may be found in Fanger, “Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk’s *Book of Visions* and its Relation to the *Ars Notoria* of Solomon,” in *Conjuring Spirits* (cited above), 222-5.

⁵¹The meaning of this word remains obscure. Other manuscripts give it as *geonegia*. John’s list of “exceptive arts” here is identical to the list given in the *Ars notoria* (Turner, 51), which ultimately probably derives from the longer list of magic arts found in Isidore, *Etymologie*, VIII.ix.I ff and cited by other encyclopedists. However the term “geonegia” is not found in Isidore and (like the term “exceptive arts” itself) appears to be peculiar to the *Ars notoria*.

⁵²Only serious sins, which lay beyond the competence of an ordinary priest, had to be confessed to a bishop.

⁵³GZ’s reading—*indutus iacintinus*, “dressed in blue”—makes good sense, but John’s “jacobite” apparel is mentioned several times in the course of the *Liber virginis marie*. Du Cange gives two possible meanings for the noun “jacobita,” pilgrim to Compostella, and Dominican friar (Charles du Fresne du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infinae latinitatis* [Niort: L. Favre 1883-87]). The latter is probably correct: there was a Dominican house in Chartres, east of the Porte S. Jean, and it contained a chapel dedicated to St. John the evangelist.

⁵⁴The “accio graciaram” is the last part of the mass, which includes the Benedicite.

⁵⁵Or, “with albs on.” Albs were the distinctive costume worn by the Augustinian canons of Chartres cathedral.

⁵⁶I.e. St. John. The scene, an altar surrounded by the four evangelists in animal shape, recalls the Book of Revelation’s description of the throne of heaven (Rev 4), a scene realized in more detail in the second part of the *Liber virginis marie* (see Watson, “John the Monk’s *Book of Visions*,” cited above).

⁵⁷This is Prayer *4 of the *Liber visionis marie*, according to the

numeration in Watson, “John the Monk’s *Book of Visions*,” Synopsis, 190. In the *Liber*, a rubric states that this prayer was written “postquam prima vite apparuit mihi beata virgo Maria, in memoria illius visionis specialiter.” Since the first section of the *Liber* states that the prayers in it were written in 1304-07 (Synopsis, 189), and since this is seems to have been one of the earliest prayers written (although see paragraph 29), the date at this point in the narrative must be c.1304.

⁵⁸Perhaps the prayer “to obtain a good Memory” (Turner, 21), though many of the general prayers are for memory, among other things.

⁵⁹Cf. Ez 2:8: “But you, son of man, hear what I say to you: be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you”; also Ez 3:3: “Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” This is God’s commissioning of Ezekiel as prophet.

⁶⁰This is Prayer *1 in the *Liber virginis marie* (Watson, Synopsis, 188), and echoes the opening of the prayer to rhetoric in the *Ars notoria*: “Oh most Holy Judge, eternal King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” (Turner, 69)

⁶¹The exclamation “O cursed Jews” perhaps suggests John’s belief that the *Ars notoria* was originally a Jewish production, and recalls again the story of Theophilus (see note to paragraph 4), whose perversion from true Christianity is said to be caused by an evil Jew.

⁶²The *Rings of Solomon* is a fairly tame image magic text, not the grimoire of blatantly diabolic character that one might imagine from John’s sense of guilt about it. In the *Speculum Astronomiae*, Albertus Magnus separates image magic texts into two classes, declaring that the first class, which includes the *Rings of Solomon*, and involves engraved characters and exorcistic names, is “somewhat less unsuitable” than the second class, which involves invocation and suffumigation—though the first type is “nevertheless detestable.” Albert refers to both classes of text as “necromantic”. (For relevant passages in Albert see the edition by Paola Zambelli, *The Speculum Astronomiae and its Enigma* [London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992] 240-41.) It is clear that John similarly understands “necromancy” as something evil, but it does not necessarily imply the overt conjuring of demons in his mind. Charles Burnett discusses uses of the term “necromancy” applied to image magic in “Talismans: Magic as Science? Necromancy among the Seven Liberal Arts” in *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996).

⁶³Thus all manuscripts. Perhaps he meant to write “in part, but not in whole.”

⁶⁴This scene could be modeled on disciplinary practices John encountered at Morigny, where in obedience to the Benedictine Rule the abbot will have conducted similar public beatings.

⁶⁵“Take that” may be fanciful for “tene”. Perhaps “stop” or “restrain yourself from...”

⁶⁶Or “I will remove and hide them from my colleagues.”

⁶⁷See Prayer *5: *Gratias tibi ago domine Ihesu Christe* is the incipit of Section iii), *Gloriosa flos celorum* the incipit of Section i); “the other that follows it” is probably *O Revelatrix omnium secretorum* (Section iv), which is an especially powerful prayer in the *Liber figurarum* (Watson, Synopsis, 191).

⁶⁸Or “in albs.”

⁶⁹Cf. 2 Cor 12:2-3 (already quoted in paragraph 8).

⁷⁰It is odd that John’s search for literary models for his burgeoning project should have been distracted by worry about the orthodoxy of the author of “Ave gloriosa”; Philip Chancellor was a powerful advocate of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, more given to condemning than to being condemned. For biography, see the article on Philip Chancellor in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. J.R Strayer et al. (NY: Scribner; 1982-89) and *Philippi cancellarii parisiensis summa de bono ad fidem codicum primum edita studio et cura Nicolai Wicki*, Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Opera Philosophica Mediae Aetatis Selecta 2 (Berne: Editiones Francke, 1985), 11*-28*.

⁷¹This is the hymn: “Ave gloriosa/ Virginum regina,/ Vitis generosa,/ Vitae medicina,/ Clementiae resina.// Ave copiosa/ Gratiae piscina,/ Carnis maculosa/ Munda nos sentina,/ Munditiae cortina” (Guido Maria Dreves, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi* [Leipzig: O. R. Reiland, 1895], vol. XX, number 220). In John’s prayer, this becomes: “Aue virgo graciosa,/ Tu virginem es regina/ Atque vite medicina/ Tu es vitis generosa,/ Clemencia tu resina/ Tu es graciae piscina.// Aue virgo copiosa,/ Tu es stella matutina,/ Tu es sine culpa spina breuitate/ Legis gloriosa,/ Mundicia tu cortina/ Pure munda nos sentiua / Venustate vernans rosa” (GZ 110v col2).

⁷²*Inferius*: this could mean “later in time” (i.e. during the last days), or it could be a reference to a now lost vision described in the *Antiqua compilatio* (of which this prologue seems originally to have formed a

part).

⁷³In Vision 9 (paragraphs 22-3) John is given the words “*O rex regum* etc.”, which fill his mouth as if he were “seeing them in a book”. This becomes Prayer *1 in the *Liber virginis marie* (Watson, Synopsis, 188).

⁷⁴*O Excellentissima* is the incipit of Prayer *2, said to be the “*prima de beata Maria*” (Watson, Synopsis, 189). According to this passage, the prayer was written even earlier than *Ave salve gloriosa*, before the second vision described in Section 13.

⁷⁵Section iv) of Prayer *5, *O Revelatrix*, is a prayer “*ad exprimendum propositum*” also called “prayer of proposition” (Watson, Synopsis, 191), already mentioned in paragraph 26 above.

⁷⁶Prayer *6, *Surge Beatissima*, also called “*invocacio beate Marie dei genitricis*” (Watson, Synopsis, 191).

⁷⁷Cf. Pr 7:21; Wis 3:6.

⁷⁸It is not clear when this incident—which legitimates the composition of the *Liber virginis marie*—took place, or whether it was before or after John was licensed to record the visions he recounts in this Prologue (in the fall of 1308, see paragraph 9). The passage does tell us that the composition and structuring of the prayers took time, and that the *Liber* was complete when the Prologue was written, around 1313.

⁷⁹2 Cor 13:1.

⁸⁰*Tunc iam potens*; perhaps “already her own mistress;” see paragraph 37 and note.

⁸¹1 Jn 4:1.

⁸²John teaches Gurgeta to read by the standard medieval method, but using the *Ars notoria* instead of a Book of Hours. Later in the *Liber visionum* he adapts this method so that students learn to read by studying his prayers to God and the virgin (GZ f. 135v col. 1, a discussion entitled “How to teach young people who have learned nothing.”)

⁸³“*Quod habes tu?*” perhaps a literal rendition of the French expression “*Qu’est ce que tu as?*” (“What’s the matter with you?”).

⁸⁴Cf. Ps 91:13.

⁸⁵Cf. Jn 21:24 and 1 Jn 4:14, both verses in which the apostle John testifies to the truth of the gospel from his personal experience.

⁸⁶*Potestas dandi*: Cf paragraph 33 above and note.

⁸⁷This is probably the Benedictine convent of Rosetum, or

Rozay-le-Jeune, founded c. 1106 near Paris and later moved to Villachassons, a few miles due west of Sens, east and south of Morigny, and north of Fontainejean. The abbess at the time may have been a certain Anna d’Inville. For information, see *Gallia Christiana*, vol. 12 (Paris: ex typographia regia, 1770), cols 188-90; the convent is not mentioned in Cottineau’s *Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbeyes et prieuries*, but does have an entry in the list of female religious houses in Bruce L. Venarde, *Women’s Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), Appendix A (187-210).

⁸⁸Space at Rosetum was evidently limited, and Gurgeta’s lack of worldly goods made her a relatively unattractive recruit from a financial standpoint. In theory, religious houses no longer accepted dowries by the early fourteenth century; in practice, dowries were a financial necessity for many cash-strapped monasteries and convents, especially the latter. For a discussion, see Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France*, Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 18-27.

⁸⁹John the Cistercian of Fontainejean is mentioned several times later in the *Liber visionum*; in particular he undertakes to write an elaborate Office of the Angels at John of Morigny’s request. (This Office had been commissioned by the Virgin, but John of Morigny did not have time to do the work himself; GZ 135v col 1).

⁹⁰Fontainejean or was a daughter-house of the Cistercian abbey of Pontigniac, founded in 1124 south of Sens. See *Gallia Christiana*, vol. 12, cols. 228-31. In 1303 the abbot’s name was John.

⁹¹Ps 72:1. The heading of this psalm associates it with Solomon; some medieval authorities considered it to be by him, or to have been written for him by his father David. According to Augustine and Cassiodorus, the psalm has as its theme the reconciliation between God and human-kind and the two natures of Christ (see *Biblorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria* etc. Paris: 1590, vol. 3, cols. 955-56).

⁹²I.e. the first monk, John’s Cistercian friend.

⁹³Jos 24:23.

⁹⁴Jas 1:5.

⁹⁵Rom 13:12.

⁹⁶Cf Eph 5:8; according to King James “For ye were sometimes darkness but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

(where the rest of the chapter concerns obedience and living in the Lord).

⁹⁷Wis 1:4.

⁹⁸Is 55:1. The King James version has: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Note that the phrase “come to the waters” has already been used by John two sentences earlier, so that the whole list beginning “Not you magnates of the world...” has been inserted into the Isaiah verse.)

⁹⁹John refers to the iconographic tradition for representing the nativity, of which there are several examples in Chartres cathedral. Meditation on the birth of Christ includes wondering reflection on the poverty and simplicity of its circumstances, and so this scene appropriately introduces a vision attacking hypocrisy and ostentation.

¹⁰⁰The meaning of this phrase remains obscure. The word *congesiva* (clear and identical in all mss) is in none of the dictionaries we have been able to consult. It may be related to OF “congéé” which can mean permission, license. *Preparatum* looks like a noun, perhaps “adornment,” so that a possible sense might be: “that is because I’ve been [too] much honored for my adornment and my permissions.” However this is a guess.

¹⁰¹Prayers, figures, and visualisations are the three main categories of exercise the *Liber visionum* prescribes for its users. In the *Liber figurarum*, Mary’s words here are referred to again to justify the inclusion of the uneducated, the elderly, and the blind as practitioners of John’s opus, even though none of these can perform it in a regular fashion (GZ 140v col2). That passage dates this vision to the period in which the *Antiqua compilatio* was being written, thus to c. 1311-15—long after most of the earlier visions in the Prologue.

¹⁰²Sir 36:6.

¹⁰³See 2 Cor 11:14, already alluded to in paragraph 16.

¹⁰⁴Italics distinguish Vienna insertion. This sentence is in only the one manuscript, and may well not be by John; perhaps a later reader is here trying to make sense of the order of composition of different part of the text.

¹⁰⁵“This page” refers to the brief introduction to the *Liber visionum* as it appears in MH (see Watson, “Book of Visions,” Synopsis, 188). Consisting of some short prayers and a much abbreviated version of John’s conversion story, the introduction was probably first written as

the prologue to the book of thirty prayers John was licensed to compose in the fall of 1308 (paragraph 9). After John composed the much longer Prologue edited here, around 1313, adding a longer opening to the book of thirty prayers (now entitled the *Liber virginis Marie*, as he refers to it in paragraph 43)—he decided to move the original prologue to a new place, between paragraphs 1 and 2, and wrote a note to this effect (paragraph 2 begins with the words ‘nemo accedit’). This note, which probably began life in the margin of his autograph, was incorporated into the text by John’s early copyists, rather than acted upon. It occurs in all manuscripts of the text that we have seen.