
The Booke of Gostlye Grace is the Middle English translation of the Liber Spiritualis Gratiae, the visions and revelations of Mechtild of Hackeborn (1241–1291), a mystic of the Benedictine convent of Helfta, Germany. This edition makes available a text preserved in British Library, MS Egerton 2006, collated with Oxford, MS Bodley 220.

The original thirteenth-century compilation of Mechtild’s experiences was longer than the Middle English translation. Entitled Liber Specialis Gratiae, it is believed to be partially written by St. Gertrude the Great, Mechtild’s celebrated companion in the Helfta community. As early as the mid-fourteenth century, a condensed version was in circulation on the Continent. The two surviving fifteenth-century English copies are descendants of an untraced translation of a Latin abridgement, designated Liber Spiritualis Gratiae, “spiritualis” being a misinterpretation of the scribal abbreviation for “specialis.”

Mechtild’s spiritual biography enjoyed a wide readership among religious and literate lay people and was considered worthy of such company as Rolle, Hilton, SS. Birgitta, Catherine of Siena, and Elizabeth of Schonau in libraries and anthologies of mystical writings.

The introduction to this edition examines the textual relationships of the Latin and Middle English copies, discusses the contents and features of Mechtild’s revelations in light of medieval spirituality, and accounts for the appeal of The Booke of Gostlye Grace to its English readers. The text itself (613 pages) is on microfiche, and the print volume includes the textual apparatus and notes, a glossary and indexes.