This is the life of the noble lady the Sister von Hohenfels, how she became a Dominican sister in the old Ötenbach and how she turned her back on the world with the help of an extraordinary revelation from God.

The noble lady Ita von Hohenfels, whose life was so much in this world, that she had all she could wish of friends, possessions, and honor. And she focused her wishes on the single goal of how she could find joy in this world. Yet no matter how much joy and pleasure she experienced, she was never satisfied and sought always for more and more joy, since she didn't consider whether it was proper joy and didn't recognize anything other than she should seek joy wherever she could find it.

And then her lord the knight of Hohenfels died and she became a widow. Then her heart fell into speculation about how she should order her life so that she could gain more joy. But she could not decide whether to turn to God or to the world. And God had mercy upon her one day when she was at mass. There he showed her the hand of our Lord and above the hand floated a cross which was like living flesh colored brown and red. She recognized immediately that it was the blood of our Lord, and from this hand came a light over her and into her and filled her from head to foot. And she knew at once that it was God and that is what she should do, and she was so healed that it seemed to her as though nothing else had happened except that God had broken every part of her. And in this revelation she fervently desired that she should see God, and he answered her and said: "I shall not yet appear to you."

And from this mercy she was so strengthened that she lost all interest in earthly joys and gained ever more desire for the holy life and for true poverty, and she confided this to her friends. And they were so angered by this that they captured her and wanted to force her to accept the world and attempted everything they could to bring her back to the world. But nothing helped. And she was so determined that she took a knife and threatened to cut her own
nose off rather than return to the world. And when her friends saw this they left her alone.

And so she sent her messenger out

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to learn where the nearest cloister was and whether the people there were good. God gave guidance so that she came to the poor, pious holy sisters of Ötenbach with so much wealth that the cloister was improved in every way. And she gave everything of her own free will so that she wouldn't have any more clothing and food than her sisters did by the grace of Christ.

How she became so modest and took on all of the foulest duties and chores and accepted all of the terrible things God inflicted upon her. Because of this he also permitted her to see many mysterious things.

WHEN she was taken into the holy order, she did her utmost to take on all of the most awful duties that the convent had to offer. For many years she washed all of the pots and pans and carried water for the kitchen on her back. She strove unceasingly to fulfill two aims in particular. The one was that she acted always as if she dedicated her heart to God. The other was that she worked with the utmost effort on her spiritual exercises, to such a degree that we cannot describe it. And our Lord inflicted upon her a punishment such that she came into such fear that she thought whatever she did was a cardinal sin. This punishment stayed with her for five years. After this God inflicted yet another punishment upon her. This was doubt concerning her faith, such that she could no longer believe that God had the kind of being that was ascribed to Him, or that the soul was real, this she could not believe. This punishment she endured also for five years with the greatest pain, yet in such a way that she did not neglect a single good work for the sake of the punishment.

She took on the most strict regimen with much waking and night-long prayers and extraordinary discipline to the degree that she cut into her own flesh with knives until she reached the bone so that her flesh hung from her body and the blood ran so from her that one it see it wherever she went. But no matter what she did to herself, by the end of the third day she was always made whole again. This was finally forbidden by her superiors. So then she took up iron nails and no matter how much she scarred her flesh and how much she carved herself, she never thought it was enough, or that she was serving God as well as others had done.
In this dilemma she called on God with the greatest seriousness and in that moment she heard a voice from God which spoke to her: "The living spirit is within you and God knows you," and with these words she was transported and was taken to a beautiful meadow and saw there the wise?? and the evil enemies/demons and saw how great the wise?? was and recognized the difference the wise?? make between religious people and worldly people and between the venial and the cardinal sins and how many (sinners) the evil fiend leads around with him, as numerous as flies and they were so terrible that no one could describe it with living words, yet they could do her no harm. And then the living power of God was made known to her, and the power that your? spirit gives life so that he may endure always the wise?? and still not perish. And when she saw this and recognized it, the wise? was poured into her so that her spirit found the "wise? and so that she was suffering the wise with the living power of God for a short while. The wise? was not like the other.

After this revelation, she thought that she was transported into heaven and saw our Lord in his living power according to his divine nature and according to his eternity and with that she saw and recognized how the angels and the souls are together in the living power with God and how God is in them and the eternal divine living power with which God is within them. When she grasped this then she was transported further and saw her body lying before her, and from that her spirit became so depressed, for it thought it would have no more to do with the body and then the spirit came again to her body. And when she saw that the spirit was again bound to her body she screamed, "Mercy!" and "Agony!" and her body became so ill that she fell into great discomfort from the miracles that she had seen in heaven.

How God inflicted her with the burden of doubt and how she assured herself of a place in the eternal life.

During the rapture just described she experienced three things that she long possessed and practiced with great virtue. The first was the light of truth in which God had allowed her to experience the mysteries, both spiritual and corporeal. The second was like a conversation without actual words with which God would commune with her soul. The third was the knowledge from which God became apparent to her, what God allowed her to learn, so that she would come to know many things as if she had seen them with her own eyes, and so she was able to follow this path of mercy for a very long time.
One day she stood in mass and suddenly two faces appeared to her surrounded by light, and she said, "Mercy, Lord! Do you have two faces?"

Then our Lord spoke: "No, I? The face that you see here is that of the evil fiend and you should be tested by him with spiritual challenge. Find a good translation for "Anfechtung" and you will not be permitted help from anyone." With that she fell into the challenge of doubt so profound that she thought no one could ever withstand it as long as he lived, unless he were in a state of grace like that of Adam when he was created. And the entire time it was as if hell itself stood open to her and that she was so created that she would have to enter it, and that her chair was placed next to that of Lucifer. She was subjected to this trial for five years and resigned herself to the fact that she would never again see God, yet for that reason she never wished to serve him any less. And when she went to take the holy sacrament, she did not do it because she had no encouragement from God, but rather because she had God here as much as she wanted.

After this she was enraptured and saw and felt the peace that the soul receives after the battle when it is in the kingdom of heaven. And she saw and felt that which she could never express in words, how much divine holiness and softness inhabits this peace. And security was given to her in this state of peace. And his security she never lost and she was so certain of heaven that she began to desire death with unparalleled lust and feared no death, no matter how terrible it might be. She also became aware in this security how no one with a good will will be lost.

With this came a new trial to follow the trial of doubt. This trial was of such severity that to her everything became bitter, no matter what she did, and she had to give the greatest effort to the battle to overcome her own desires, just as it was when she first came to the spiritual life. This battle and this ordeal she endured for five years, until our Lord again bestowed upon her the light of truth and the freedom such that she could think of God when she wished it, so that she could not err.

And after this she was enraptured in her prayer and saw how the blood and flesh of Jesus Christ is made one with the saints and with the souls such that God's blood and his flesh illuminate through each individual soul with wondrous decoration and their holy lives, just as it was on earth with the martyrs or with special purity or with the virtue that they practiced with extraordinary wonders had shone with wondrous light and illuminated the
blood and body of our Lord and how great and joyous the union was. And she saw how the blood and body of Christ fell into the souls and how the souls fell into his body and into his blood just as though they were one. And saw despite everything how extraordinarily the light shown all around. And she beheld Saint Catherine, how our Lord had united himself with his blood and with his flesh in her. and her purity and her martyrdom shone out of his blood and out of his flesh with wondrous decoration for other saints many of whom she saw. And Saint Dominic and Saint Augustine she saw with wondrous dignity and decoration shine out from God and God out from them. Afterwards she had peace and freedom with God for a long time. But after that the evil fiend came to her in the form of a man and said to her: "You claim that God is good, but He is not. For He is evil and everything that is evil came from him, for He knew quite well when He created the angel (Lucifer) that he would become the evil fiend. And He knew of Eve and Adam and that all human beings would fall thanks to Lucifer's guidance." And because of this she fell into great suffering, and no one could counsel her about it and this ordeal lasted five years as well. But then she was enraptured and transported into the kingdom of heaven and saw and recognized and beheld the martyrdom/passion of our Lord in a sweet state of softness and she beheld especially clearly his human body as he was taken down from the cross and it became clear to her how divinely and how benevolently he had given himself to all human beings with his martyrdom. And she saw how glorious and great the joy is that we have from his martyrdom, and which we would have had if Adam had not fallen. And when she came to herself again then she beheld the presence of our Lord in her soul, as it had been given to her in the kingdom of heaven, when he was taken down from the cross. The same presence stayed with her for a long time after that. And she saw it and beheld it in divine holiness and sweet consolation as often as she came to herself.

How God gave her the supernatural gift of purity, which was given at the same time to the angels, and how she denied her body with such great sacrifice both food and
Once she was at prayer and at prayer she was illuminated in such a way that it became clear to her the purity of the body of our lady and at the same time she recognized who the holy ghost came over her and reduced her and how her blood and her body were united with God and God with her and recognized this and beheld Him in such holiness that she could not describe it in words. To her was also given the gift and grace of supernatural purity of body and of soul which is so great that no one may earn them in this life. Then God gave her of his free will to whom he wishes and that is a hand of purity. Whoever has this will never be moved by corporeal or concerns of the flesh in the heart or in the body. This was said also by her confessor of her brother Albrecht von Bello and he said also that this purity resembled that (of?), as much as a human being in this life may have it. She enjoyed this purity more than twenty years before her death. She rode the same and said whoever has this purity that is like a great holiness for the soul and body, which can be measured an good works and by which all earthly things are measured. She had this in such measure that she could fulfill her basic needs without food or drink or clothing, and it was her habit that she would give to her sisters any wine and fish and (?) and anything else which was especially good, or else she would consume very little of it, until finally that was forbidden. And then she became so despondent that they had to relent and allow her to do it. She also took up the habit of sleeping very little, because she spent each night with devotions and other works, from which she became so ill that she could no longer arise out of bed. Then she had a spindle brought to her and worked on her spinning while lying in bed and such things brought her almost to her death. A miraculous and great thing she experienced her later years. Our Lord would appear to her while she slept in the shape of a man on earth and gave himself to her in such a good and divinely tender and in a divinely holy and comforting way that he was a fortress for her against the despondence that assailed her. Our Lord took this from her and also gave her to know many things. This possession by the Lord was like a divine tenderness and a so loving goodness with which she gave to God her soul that she could not describe it with words only with a parable of a mother loving her newborn child with hearty love and pressing it to her breast. With such goodness and love did God caress and love her soul in the greatest holiness with divine tenderness, so that when she awoke one could see the transformation and holiness in her face.
One during the holy communion she saw our Lord's left hand and above it a cross which was illuminated through and through and had a wonderful color with which it was decorated, yet she could not recognize how the decoration really was and the hand floated and the cross too from the hand of the priest, and she saw that the left hand of our Lord took the host from the priest and blest each sister with his godly hand. In addition to this she received the blessing that whenever the preacher or the laypreacher sang mass or spoke and raised the body of our Lord high, that the offering was turned into a flowing light and went from small to larger and was illuminated with red such that she could no longer discern the true shape of the offering. And she also saw that the arms of the priest were illuminated up to the elbows as if they were made of solid gold. And she also received the blessing that she cried through each mass.

Yet she remained adamant no matter how much she suffered that she did not lament and her heart was so united with God that she never required any sort of comforting from her friends or from anyone. And God was so kind to her that she paid no attention to the ridicule of men and also did not concern herself with that which her friends gave to her and tried at no time to win something from it, but rather she gave it all to the convent.

How the evil fiend brought her intense and horrible suffering and also how the news of her death was spread.

The evil spirit was able to inflict upon this pious sister the greatest degree of care and suffering, both in body and in heart, by means of several measures which we cannot describe in full. He especially would plague her with his presence. Often he would appear to her in the form of a wolf and spring upon her as if he meant to devour her. And one time she had the distinct impression that he actually passed through her body and screamed: "Your soul will never be saved," (??) and this gave her the most concern. Another time she thought that her body was experiencing how he reached into her and wanted to extract everything that was within her and that a gaping wound was ripped in her.(??). Such things happened so often that the evil fiend became so familiar to her that she no longer felt any fear. All that was left to him then was to steal from her that which she meant to wear on her head and hide it from her and other things as well and then she would seek and seek and never find the thing and become exhausted until finally he would return it to her.
Before her death she heard three times that a voice called from the her and invited her to attend her own death. And as death took hold of her it was as if in her sleep fifty arrows were being shot into her body, and from this she realized the agony that she would have to suffer before her death. And she was frightened and began to worry whether she could survive the ordeal. And then an angel appeared to her and comforted her and spoke: "Take hold of yourself." The ordeal will be transformed into eternal joy and into extraordinary reward. And from this and other reassurance provided by God she lay happily and securely without any fear at all even though she experienced an awful death.

A sister was told during mass that God had prepared such an awful death for her for two reasons. One was that God wished to take all of her pain from her while she was still on this earth. The other reason that her death was so bitter was that God wished to grant by means of her ordeal the possibility to other souls that she could lead them, too, into the kingdom of heaven and that they would keep her company.

With this we all finally understood the humiliating transformation and the divinely rigorous life led by our dear sister of Hohenfels. We should all see in her an exemplar such that no sister of the order should desire or seek that special privileges be granted to her regarding clothing, food, or drink, further that she should be granted special exemption from the common work of the cloister and from the rules of the Order, for the sake of her noble pedigree or wealth or for the sake of reputation or honor which she might gain in this world. We especially ask that our sister be seen as exemplary in her dedication to all good things that are part of spiritual life, further that the least spiritually advanced sisters should abandon those humiliations that God inflicts upon them through the more powerful, in such a way that they do not seek to glorify themselves with the joys they have abandoned and thereby ignore the benefits of modesty which their superiors should like them to enjoy; or else that they do not wallow in despair for the sole purpose that their gifts, God's grace, and their piety will be visible everywhere. For this is a sign of true spirituality.

Source
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