

**The Revelations of
St. Birgitta of Sweden,
Volume I**

DENIS SEARBY

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St. Birgitta of Sweden
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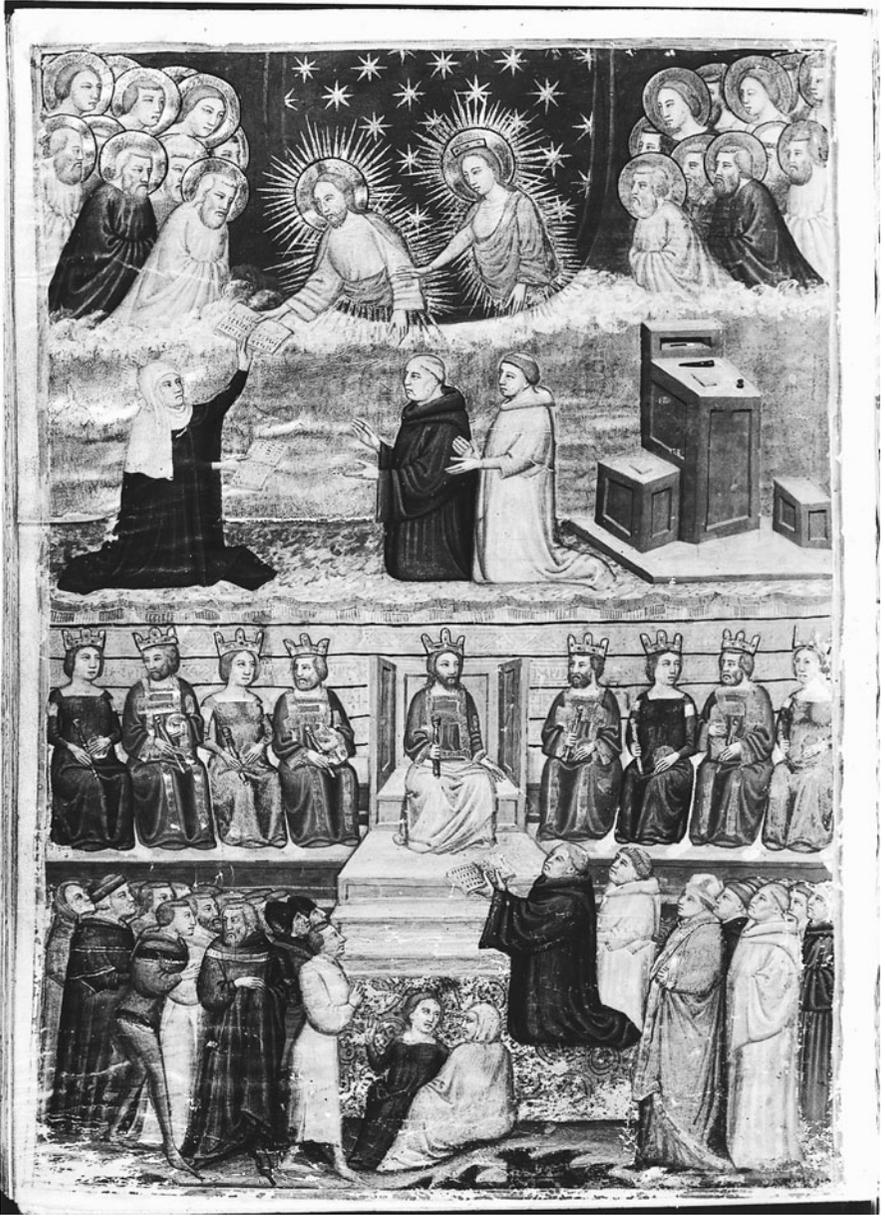


FIGURE I. Frontispiece to Book VIII in the Neapolitan MS from c. 1380, MS 498, fol. 343v, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

The Revelations
of St. Birgitta
of Sweden
Volume I

Liber Caelestis, Books I–III

TRANSLATED BY DENIS SEARBY
WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES BY
BRIDGET MORRIS

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Preface

This is the first part of a four-volume translation of the *Revelationes* of St. Birgitta of Sweden into modern English, indeed, the first translation of the complete corpus into English since the Middle Ages. It follows the critical edition of the Latin text, which was commissioned in the 1950s by Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (The Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities), Stockholm, and copublished with Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet (The Medieval Swedish Texts Society), Uppsala; the final volume in this series was published in 2002.

The Birgittine corpus comprises twelve “books”: seven books of *Revelationes*, Books I–VII (the *Liber caelestis*), followed by Book VIII (the *Liber caelestis Imperatoris ad reges*) and four supplementary books known as the *Regula Salvatoris*, *Sermo angelicus*, *Quattuor orationes*, and *Revelationes extravagantes*. In the ordering of the books, we have followed the layout of the *editio princeps*, issued by Bartholomaeus Ghotan in Lübeck in 1492. Books I–III are contained in the present volume, and are preceded by a general introduction, which outlines the various stages in the textual history of the *Revelationes*. The subsequent volumes in the series will contain Books IV and V (volume 2), Books VI, VII, and VIII (volume 3), and the *Regula Salvatoris*, *Sermo angelicus*, *Quattuor orationes*, and *Revelationes extravagantes* (volume 4). Volume 4 will also contain translations of a few related but noncanonical Birgittine texts, as well as indexes covering subjects, names, places, and biblical quotations for the entire corpus.

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Very many of our Birgittine friends and colleagues have shown an enthusiastic interest in this enterprise, and encouraged us along our way. Above all, we would like to extend our very warm thanks to Stephan Borgehammar, whose idea it originally was to produce an English translation in advance of the Jubilee celebrations of the seven hundredth anniversary of Birgitta's birth in 2003, and who set about seeking funding and launching the project in 1999. His editing and translating skills, as well as his knowledge of medieval Swedish hagiography and Birgittine sermons, have been an enormous asset to our project. Although he moved to work at the Center for Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Lund in 2003, he has maintained a keen interest in our work, and has made invaluable comments on issues relating to the translation as well as theological matters. It is a pleasure also to thank Tore Nyberg, who has always been on hand to offer a word of support or help resolve a thorny problem. Birgitta Fritz has been an astute reader who has kindly read through drafts of historical materials and corrected us on details where our knowledge was lacking; we extend our most grateful thanks to her. Many others have offered support in a variety of ways, giving advice on specific problems we have encountered as we proceeded, and helping to resolve practical difficulties. In particular we would like to acknowledge Jon Adams, Hans Aili, Mia Åkestam, Birger Bergh, Lars Bergquist, Sten Eklund, Roger Ellis, Olle Ferm, William Flynn, Alf Hårdelin, Monica Hedlund, Arne Jönsson, Veronica O'Mara, Claire Sahlin, Ulla Sander Olsen, and Thomas Shepherd. We would also like to thank the editors of the Latin critical edition for the interest they have shown in this project, and indeed, for paving the way to make an English translation at all possible.

Thanks are also due to the staff at Oxford University Press for their expert help and guidance.

This project would not have been launched without the sponsorship of Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation), which has generously provided financial support since 1999 and enabled us to bring the present volume to completion. In particular we would like to acknowledge the help and support we have received from the Foundation's representative, Kjell Blücker, and from the Department of Theology at the University of Uppsala, and Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, for their accommodating administrative support.

We gratefully acknowledge the following who have granted permission for the reproduction of illustrations. Professor Jan Svanberg, Department of the History of Art, University of Stockholm; The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; Kungl. Biblioteket (The Royal Library), Stockholm; Biblioteca centrale della Regione siciliana, Palermo; Riksantikvarieämbetet (The National Heritage Board) with the Antiquarian-Topographical Archives (ATA), Stockholm. We are also grateful to Claes Gejrot, Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives, Stockholm) for allowing us to make available the Latin text on Riksarkivet's Web site (see www.ra.se), and to Sara Risberg for preparing the electronic version of the Latin text.

In providing an English translation of the *Revelationes* that is based on and can be linked closely with the Latin archetype, we are creating a bridge that extends from Sweden and Scandinavia towards an international readership. It is our hope that with this translation we will help widen access to one of the major female saints of the later Middle Ages and make her works more readily available outside the Swedish-speaking or Latin-reading world.

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Abbreviations

Add.	<i>additio</i> , addition, addendum
Birgittine-Norwegian	an early text of the Swedish vernacular tradition that displays elements of a pre-Latin version of the revelations
Decl.	<i>declaratio</i> , “explanation”
DS	<i>Diplomatarium Suecanum</i> , Svenskt diplomatarium, 1829–
Ex.	<i>Revelationes extravagantes</i>
Gh	first printed edition of the collected corpus of <i>Revelationes</i> , produced in Lübeck by Bartholomeus Ghotan
KL	<i>Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid</i> (Encyclopedia of the Cultural History of the Scandinavian Middle Ages)
KVHAA	Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (The Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities)
int.	<i>interrogatio</i> (Book V)
Lat.	Latin
OM	<i>Olaus Magnus. A Description of the Northern Peoples</i> , ed. P. G. Foote, 1996–98
PL	<i>Patrologia latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1841–64
QO	<i>Quattuor orationes</i>
rev.	revelation, <i>revelatio</i>
RS	<i>Regula Salvatoris</i>
SA	<i>Sermo angelicus</i>

- SFSS Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet
(Swedish Medieval Texts' Society Series)
- Sw. Swedish (medieval or modern)
- Söderwall *Ordbok öfver svenska medeltids-språket*, ed. K. F. Söderwall et al. (Dictionary of Medieval Swedish), 1884–1973

Chronological Table

St. Birgitta's Life and Order

In the following table, the significant historical events of the period that have a bearing on or form a backdrop to the visions are placed alongside the main events of Birgitta's life.

New Year, 1302/1303	Birgitta Birgersdotter, born in Finsta, near Norrtälje, in the eastern part of Uppland, not far from Uppsala (the seat of the Swedish archbishop), to Birger Persson (Finsta family), <i>lagman</i> —interpreter and codifier of the law and judge—of the province of Uppland, and Ingeborg Bengtsdotter, from the <i>lagman</i> 's branch of the Folkung family, and connected with the royal Folkung dynasty. Second oldest of seven children; only she, a sister, and a brother grew to maturity.
1305–14	Pope Clement V.
1309–76 c. 1312	Residency of Papacy in Avignon. Death of Birgitta's mother. Birgitta moves to the home of her maternal aunt, Katherina Bengtsdotter, and uncle, Knut Jonsson (Aspenäs family), who was <i>lagman</i> in Östergötland. Records of some childhood visions.
c. 1316	Birgitta marries Ulf Gudmarsson (Ulvåsa family) from Östergötland, later a knight and <i>lagman</i> in the neighboring province of Närke.
1316–34	Pope John XXII.
1319	Election of Magnus Eriksson (age three) as king of Sweden.

- 1322 Crisis in minority government; Knut Jonsson becomes a Councillor of the Realm (*drots*).
- c. 1319–c. 1340 Birth of eight children: Märta [m., against Birgitta's wishes, Sigvid Ribbing [d.c. 1350], Karl [d. 1372], Birger [d. 1391], Katherina [later St. Katherina of Sweden; m. Eggard van Kyren, widowed soon afterward; first abbess of Vadstena; d. 1381; beatified in 1482], Bengt [died in infancy], Gudmar [died in infancy], Ingeborg [d. c. 1350], and Cecilia [d. 1399].
- 1332 Magnus Eriksson becomes king of Sweden.
- 1334–42 Pope Benedict XII.
- 1335 Marriage of Magnus Eriksson to Blanche (Blanka) of Namur.
- c. 1335–1340s Birgitta stays at court of King Magnus Eriksson, as mentor (*magistra*) to Queen Blanche. Acts of piety recorded, e.g., care for the poor, reading to the servants in her household, asceticism in private life.
- 1337 Outbreak of Hundred Years' War between France and England.
- 1339 Pilgrimage of Ulf and Birgitta to Nidaros (Trondheim).
- c. 1341–42 Pilgrimage of Ulf and Birgitta to Santiago de Compostela. Return through Arras, where Ulf became ill; vow of chastity undertaken by the couple. Back in Sweden, they take up residence in the vicinity of the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra, Östergötland.
- 1342–52 Pope Clement VI.
- 1344? 1346? Death of Ulf Gudmarsson at Alvastra monastery.
- 1344? 1346? At Alvastra, a few days after Ulf's death, Birgitta receives her "calling vision," commissioning her to become the *sponsa et canale* [bride and channel] of Christ. Supported by clerics Master Mathias Ovidi (Mathias Övidsson), canon of Linköping, Prior Petrus Olavi (Peter Olofsson) of the Cistercian abbey of Alvastra, and Master Petrus Olavi (Peter Olofsson) of Skänninge.
- 1344/46–49 Birgitta resides near Alvastra abbey, where she receives many revelations, including those collected in Books I, II, and V.
- 1346 English Victory at the Battle of Crécy, 1346; Battle of Poitiers, 1356.
- c. 1346 Revelation of the Rule (the earliest version, in which Christ speaks in the first person).
- 1 May 1346 King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanche donate Vadstena palace to become a monastery, the church of which was to be a burial place for the Folkung

- family; Birgitta and her plans not specifically mentioned.
- 1347 Birth of Catherine of Siena (d. 1380).
- 1348–49 Bishop Hemming of Åbo (Turku) and Prior Petrus Olavi of Alvastra travel to see the pope in Avignon to obtain his recognition of Birgitta's earlier revelations (in Master Mathias's version); they also visit the kings of France and England, with the purpose of making peace.
- 1348/1350 Magnus Eriksson's crusades to the Eastern Baltic.
- 1349 Birgitta leaves Sweden to go to Rome, with Master Petrus and others. Travels via Milan. Lives at a cardinal's palace at San Lorenzo in Damaso. Her confessor Petrus of Alvastra arrives later. She never returns to Sweden.
- 1349–50 Black Death comes to Norway 1349; to Sweden 1350.
- 1350 Jubilee year in Rome.
- 1350–70 Birgitta makes pilgrimages to the important churches of Rome, and also may have visited shrines such as those in Pavia, Ortona, Bari, Naples, and Assisi. She continues her charity and asceticism, and makes contacts with Roman nobility, e.g., Orsini and Colonna families.
- 1352–62 Pope Innocent VI.
- c. 1354 Birgitta moves with her household to a house in present-day Piazza Farnese, then owned by her friend, the widowed noblewoman Francisca Papazura. Remains there for the rest of her life. The house was donated to Vadstena abbey in 1383.
- 1360s Makes acquaintance of Queen Johanna of Naples (1326–82).
- 1362–70 Pope Urban V.
- 1364 Magnus Eriksson deposed.
- 1368 Birgitta (with her sons) meets the pope.
- 1364–89 Magnus's half-nephew, Albrecht of Mecklenburg, becomes king of Sweden.
- 1367 Birgitta meets Alfonso of Jaén, who becomes her confessor.
- 1368 Pope Urban V meets Emperor Karl IV in Rome.
- 1369 Rebuilding work begun on Vadstena palace, to transform it into a monastery.
- 1370 Birgitta meets Pope Urban V in Montefiascone, and petitions him for authorization of her order.
- 5 August 1370 Approval granted by Urban V for a revised version of the Rule, to be added as constitutions to the Augustinian Rule.

1370	Urban V returns to Avignon and dies soon after.
1370–78	Pope Gregory XI.
November 1371	Birgitta sets out for the Holy Land, via Naples and Cyprus.
March 1372	Death of Birgitta's favorite son, Karl, in Naples.
May–September 1372	In Jerusalem Birgitta witnesses a cycle of visions relating mainly to the birth and passion of Christ. Also visits the courts of Cyprus and Naples on the home-ward journey.
23 July 1373	Birgitta dies in Rome. Buried initially in the convent of the Clarissan sisters of San Lorenzo in Panisperna.
1374	Birgitta's remains taken home through eastern Europe, where miracles were recorded en route, to Vadstena. Birger and Katherina accompanied the cortege.
4 July 1374	Enshrinement of relics at Vadstena; a first collection of miracles presented to Archbishop Birgerus Gregorii.
1375	First novices enter Vadstena monastery.
1376	A second collection of miracles ratified in Stockholm, at the behest of Bishop Nicolaus Hermanni.
1377	The first and second application for the canonization. Papal investigators travel to Vadstena for examination.
1377	Outbreak of Great Schism.
1377	Gregory XI returns to Rome.
1378–89	Pope Urban VI (in the Roman Obedience).
1378–94	Clement VII (in the Avignon Obedience).
1378	Third application for Birgitta's canonization, under Pope Urban VI.
3 December 1378	A further version of the Rule (now in the third person).
1379	Canonization process opened; four cardinals lead the investigation.
1380s	Papal bulls relating to the Order, especially its incomes; privileges that regulate the position of Vadstena monastery in relation to ecclesiastical and secular bodies.
1381	Death of Katherina Ulfsdotter, Birgitta's daughter, first de facto abbess.
23 October 1384	Inauguration of Vadstena monastery, and first vows taken. Provision in Rule for sixty nuns, thirteen priests, four deacons and eight lay brethren. Order known as <i>Ordo Sancti Salvatoris seu Sanctae Birgittae de Svecia</i> (later "Sancti" was changed to "Sanctis-

	simi"). Bishop of Linköping diocese becomes the monastery's <i>pater et visitator</i> .
1387–1412	Kalmar Union, uniting the three Scandinavian kingdoms.
1389–1404	Pope Boniface IX (in the Roman Obedience).
7–8 October 1391	Birgitta's canonization declared.
1392–94	First two houses abroad: Maria Paradiso (Florence) (1394–1776) founded with help of Vadstena brethren; and Marienbrunn/Fons Mariae (Danzig/Gdańsk) (1396–1835).
1399	Vadstena monastery had to prove its right to the Vadstena estates and show that it had been a private royal property and not ancient crown property.
1400	Royal town privilege for the dwellings and lands around Vadstena; the town came under the control of the monastery.
1400–1500	Founding of houses throughout Europe, each one with an independent status, under the supervision of the local bishop. Many were dynastic foundations, and many had links with Hanseatic merchant circles.
1410–15	Pope John XXIII.
1 May 1413	John XXIII's bull, <i>Mare Magnum</i> [The Great Ocean]; confirmation of previous papal privileges that established definitively the development of the order and helped outline the relation of the daughter-houses to the mother abbey.
1414–18	Council of Constance. Elects Martin V as pope of all Christendom.
1415–1539	Syon Abbey, England, founded by King Henry V at Isleworth; nuns of the Abbey in post-Reformation exile in Netherlands and France, and from 1594 in Lisbon; returned to England in 1861.
1417–31	Pope Martin V.
1 July 1419	Pope Martin V confirms Birgitta's canonization.
1422	Pope Martin V objects to the idea of male and female monastic life in one abbey under an abbess, forbids any more abbeys of this type, and orders existing brethren to move away from houses with nuns. Dispensations granted for many of the existing abbeys on the basis of applications by individual founders and their families.
1423–35	Houses for men only in Genoa, Rome, Venice, Vicenza, Pisa, and Bologna. All new foundations halted.
1431–45	Council of Basel. Opposition to orthodoxy of some

- Revelations voiced. Cardinal Johannes de Turrecremata (Torquemada) writes his *Defensorium*; also a defense by Heymericus de Campo.
- 1431-47 Pope Eugene IV.
- 1435 Prohibition of double monasteries canceled. Pope Eugene IV reinstates the original practice of having monks live in the same monastery as nuns, but requires them to live in a separate enclosure under the authority of the abbess.
- c. 1437 Foundation of Mariënwater, Maria ad Aquas Frigidas, Rosmalen, motherhouse of the Netherlandish branch.
- 1489 Translation of St. Katherina of Sweden; henceforth celebrated annually on 2 August in all Birgittine houses and in Sweden.
- c. 1500 Order has around twenty-five houses in total: The northern Baltic countries: Mariental (Vallis Mariae), Tallinn/Reval, Estonia (1412-1575); Marienwohld (Silva Mariae) Lübeck (1413-1558); Marienkron (Corona Mariae) Stralsund (1421-1525; consecrated 1445). Scandinavia: Maribo/Habitaculum Mariae, Lolland (1416-c. 1556); Naantali/Nådendal/Vallis Gratiae, in eastern part of Swedish kingdom, present-day Finland (1440-1591); Munkeliv, Bergen, Norway (1425-1531); Mariager/Ager Mariae, Jutland (1446-c. 1590). From the Danish branch were founded Gnadenberg/Mons gratiae (1426/1435-c. 1556); Maria May Maihingen bei Öttingen (1473-c. 1580); Maria Altomünster (1497-). Italy, and elsewhere: From Paradiso, Maria Scala Coeli, Genova (1441-1799) was founded. Other Polish houses were founded from Gdańsk: e.g., Maria Triumph/Triumphus Mariae, Lublin (1424-1835).
- 1535 Richard Reynolds, brother at Syon monastery, martyred.
- 1595 House at Vadstena dissolved; last nuns go into exile in Poland.
- 1605 First house in Gallo-Flandria.
- 1613 First house of seven founded by Agnes Jastkowska (d. 1630) in Poland. The last survived until c. 1907.
- 1615 Papal approval obtained for monasteries with men only, the "Novissimi Birgittani." Pope Clement VIII gives permission to found a monastery in the Netherlands. A total of ten houses are founded.
- 1629 Marina de Escobar founds the Spanish branch, the "Spanish Recollection," for women only. Five houses

- founded in Spain in the seventeenth century, one in Mexico in 1743.
- 1794 Execution during French Revolution of two sisters in Gallo-Flandrian houses, Anne Marie Erraux and Marie Françoise Lacroix (beatified in 1920).
- 1911 New “reformed” or “Swedish” (because it intended to move to Sweden) branch of the order founded in Rome by the Swede Elisabeth Hesselblad (1870–1957). Since 1931 its generalate/motherhouse (under the *abbatissa generalis*) has been Birgitta’s house in Piazza Farnese, the Casa di santa Brigida, and it exercises full authority over all houses of this branch.
- 1935 Birgittine sisters from the reformed branch of the order established in Vadstena.
- 1963 House at Vadstena reverted to the original Rule and placed under the abbey of Maria Refugie, Uden, Netherlands.
- 1960s Official feast day changed from day of canonization (7 October; later changed by Urban VIII to 8 October) to day of death (23 July).
- 1970 Richard Reynolds canonized.
- 1976 A male community founded in the United States (since 1986 in Amity, Oregon).
- 1983 The missionaries of St. Birgitta founded in Mexico City, which now has two houses.
- 1991 The house at Vadstena, Pax Mariae, becomes an independent abbey with an abbess as elected head.
- 1999 Declaration by Pope John Paul II of Birgitta as one of Europe’s three female patron saints.
- 9 April 2000 Mother Elisabeth Hesselblad beatified (feast day in the Birgittine Order and in Sweden 4 June).
- 2005 Five houses remain that follow the “original” rule in modernized form: Pax Mariae, Vadstena (1963–); Maria Refugie Uden (1437–); Maria Hart/Cor Mariae, Weert (1843–); Syon Abbey, South Brent, Devon (1415–); and Altomünster (1497–). Eleven houses exist from the Spanish Recollection (all five of the seventeenth-century foundations, and six in Latin America). About forty-five convents around the world belong to the Rome-based “reformed” branch.

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The Entire Birgittine Corpus

All volumes are published in two series, by KVHAA and SFSS (ser. 2, latinska skrifter)

Contained in Volume 1 of the present translation:

Prologue of Magister Mathias of Linköping

Date: c. 1346

Ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen, 1977 (printed 1978)

Book I (sixty chapters)

Mixture of early revelations

Date: Sweden years, 1344–49

Ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen, 1977 (printed 1978)

Book II (thirty chapters)

Revelations on the knighthood

Date: Sweden years, 1344–49

Ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen† and Birger Bergh, 2001

Book III (thirty-four chapters)

Revelations on clerics

Date: Sweden and Rome years, mainly 1349–51

Ed. Ann-Mari Jönsson, 1998

Contained in Volume 2 of the present translation:

Book IV (144 chapters; includes the *Tractatus ad sacerdotes*, chs. 131–35 and the *Tractatus ad pontifices*, chs. 136–44)

Mixture of revelations on various subjects

Date: Sweden and (mainly) Rome years, 1344–71
Ed. Hans Aili, 1992

Book V (also known as the *Liber quaestionum*; a brief preface, sixteen questions and answers, and thirteen interspersed revelations)
Dialogue between Christ and a cleric
Date: Sweden years, 1344–49
Ed. Birger Bergh, 1971

Contained in Volume 3 of the present translation:
Book VI (122 chapters)
Mixture of revelations on various subjects
Date: Sweden and Rome years, 1344–71
Ed. Birger Bergh, 1991

Book VII (a brief preface, thirty-one chapters)
Revelations mainly on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem
Date: 1371–73
Ed. Birger Bergh, 1967

Epistola Solitarii ad reges (Prologue to Book VIII)
Date c. 1377
Ed. Arne Jönsson, in Aili, *Book VIII* (below)

Book VIII (also known as the “*Liber caelestis Imperatoris ad reges*”; sixty-one chapters)
Revelations concerning worldly leaders
Date: Sweden and Rome years, 1344–71
Ed. Hans Aili, 2002

Contained in Volume 4 of the present translation:
Regula Salvatoris
The Birgittine Rule, the “Rule of St. Saviour” (prologue and preface, thirty-one chapters)
Date: Sweden years, probably sometime between 1346 and 1348
Ed. Sten Eklund, 1975

Sermo angelicus de Virginis excellentia
Matins readings for the nuns of the order (prologue, twenty-one chapters)
Date: Rome years, probably 1354
Ed. Sten Eklund, 1972

Quattuor orationes
Four major prayers (preceded by preface)
Undated
Ed. Sten Eklund, 1991

Revelationes extravagantes (prologue, 116 chapters)

Additional materials on a wide variety of subjects, including supplements to the Rule

Date: Sweden and Rome years, 1344–71

Ed. Lennart Hollman, 1956

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The Revelations of
St. Birgitta
of Sweden
Volume I

General Introduction

I. Swedish Prophet and Visionary

The *Revelationes* of St. Birgitta of Sweden are the repository of a vast outpouring of locutions and visions, received over a period of thirty years, from the time of her widowhood in the mid-1340s until her death in 1373. In judgmental and prophetic language, the *Revelationes* make observations on the human condition and convey a critique of the church and an appeal for reform. At the same time they embody a tender devotion to the humanity of Christ and a personal identification with the Virgin Mary. Through the somewhat clumsy prose there emerges an image of a commanding and charismatic visionary who develops a contemplative mysticism that is always interwoven with social engagement and a commitment to the salvation of the world. Collectively, the *Revelationes* are an evocative embodiment of a deep inner piety and a passionate desire for regeneration and renewal; beneath them all beats the Swedish saint's great heart: candid, stern, imaginative, and demanding.

Historical Background

Saint Birgitta lived in a time of political and spiritual uncertainty. During her childhood in Sweden the royal fratricidal conflicts of the first decades of the fourteenth century led to the election of three-year-old Magnus Eriksson as king in 1319. During her married years there was a short-lived period of relative stability when Magnus reached his majority in 1332, but that was broken by internal dissension and an economic crisis precipitated mainly by the purchase in the same year of the southern province of Skåne (Scania) from Den-

mark, and also by Magnus's failed expansionist campaign in the eastern Baltic from 1348 to 1351, and the ravages of the Black Death from 1349 through 1350. Magnus's attempts to increase revenue by stringent taxation caused deep resentment, not least among the traditional aristocracy—Birgitta's own class—which was further deepened as Magnus rejected the aristocracy and elevated his own favorites. The king also borrowed money that was intended for the papal treasury and was excommunicated for defaulting on the payments. In the 1350s, indeed, Birgitta issued a revolutionary manifesto against him (Ex. 80). The aristocracy deposed Magnus in 1364 and replaced him with Albrecht of Mecklenburg, who, in turn, was overthrown in 1389. The Union of Kalmar was established in 1397, uniting for the first time in their history the three Scandinavian kingdoms of Sweden with Finland, Norway, and Denmark under Queen Margareta of Denmark, who became queen of the three kingdoms.¹

Much of the Swedish countryside in the Middle Ages was inhospitable forest terrain, and primarily it was only the central regions that were inhabited; communications were best achieved by means of coastal and inland waterways, whereas the vast areas of forestland easily separated small provincial communities. The meager population was engaged mostly in farming, animal husbandry, and fishing, although in some central areas, men worked in iron mines. Urban centers emerged slowly and by the end of the medieval period there were some twenty towns, many of which, especially in the coastal regions, attributed their growth to the Hanseatic League and trading arrangements with German merchants.

Although Sweden hovered on the verge of civil war for parts of the fourteenth century, it was nevertheless a time when a cultural awakening was taking place. The provincial laws were unified in *Magnus Erikssons Landslag*, which formed the constitutional basis of society for centuries to come, and the town law, *Magnus Erikssons Stadslag*, was issued around the same time. The polemical treatise *Um styrilse konunga ok höfðinga* [*On the government of kings and leaders*], based on Giles of Rome's treatise on kingship c. 1280, was paraphrased probably for Magnus's sons in c. 1345; it raises new issues for the role of the monarchy, arguing for strong royal power rather than group government by the king in council with the aristocracy, and suggesting that kingship by inheritance is preferable to kingship by election. The church had been expanding since the archbishopric in Uppsala was founded in 1164 and the country was divided into six mainland dioceses and one in Finland. Regarding the monastic orders, the Cistercians were established in the twelfth century and became owners of large portions of land who subsequently developed a network of houses for both men and women throughout Sweden. In the following century the Dominicans and Franciscans established strong links in the urban centers in the central regions around Mälardalen. Other monastic orders, such as the unreformed Benedictines, made little impact, and the Carthusians were not introduced until 1493. The cathedral schools introduced continental learning and many Swedish-born clerics and scholars were educated abroad, first in Paris and then in Prague, and later in Northern Germany (mostly Leipzig or

Rostock). Sweden did not have a university until Uppsala University was founded in 1477.

In the wider sphere, in the international church, there were deep divisions, and for almost the entire fourteenth century the papacy had its seat in Avignon. The popes, Clement VI (1342–52), Innocent VI (1352–62), and Urban V (1362–70), lacked the political means and will to end the “Babylonian captivity” of the papacy and return to Rome; and when eventually there was a return to the Holy City by Gregory XI (1370–78), it was followed soon afterward by the Great Schism in 1378, with two competing popes in Avignon and Rome. Bereft of the presence of the papacy for almost the entire fourteenth century, therefore, the Eternal City was in an impoverished and dilapidated state, affected by civil unrest, disease, and continual power struggles within the nobility. It was to this city, which had lost much of its sacred stature, that Birgitta came in 1349, and where she spent the next twenty-four years of her life working for the restoration of the papacy there. She saw her mission not just as an expedient moral or political act but also, more apocalyptically, as the fulfillment of historical necessity and destiny, and as a signal for the dawning of a new age.

The Prophetic Tradition

Birgitta ranks among several female visionaries and mystics of the Middle Ages. Others from this same time period include Elizabeth of Hungary (d. 1231) whom Birgitta herself acknowledges (Book IV 4); Dorothea of Montau (d. 1394), a widowed saint whose prophecies were in a similar vein as Birgitta’s; and the English housewife Margery Kempe (1373–c. 1438), an ardent admirer of Birgitta’s, who followed in her footsteps to Rome. Nor was she unique in issuing prophetic calls for the reform of the church and the salvation of mankind. Her name was—and is—frequently set between Hildegard of Bingen, the erudite and staunchly orthodox twelfth-century mystic; and Joan of Arc, the fierce political campaigner in the fifteenth century; and she is commonly set alongside her younger contemporary, Catherine of Siena (1347–80). Catherine, although of different background from Birgitta, corresponded with princes and was consulted by papal legates, and she attempted to heal the rifts and civil unrest that ravaged Italy in her time; at the outbreak of the Great Schism she implored Pope Gregory XI to leave Avignon and to reform the clergy and the administration of the papal states.² With Catherine, Birgitta was one of the truly forceful prophetic voices of the fourteenth century. Her popularity is explained in part because she reflected the spirit of her times and articulated what others wanted to hear: people systematically searched her prophecies for the message to reform society, which they then used in varied contexts and for decades after her death to address the uncertainties of their own time. Prophetic voices such as hers were not, of course, all female; another of Birgitta’s contemporaries is the Franciscan John of Roquetaillade (b. 1322), whose writings, visions, and oracles were written from his prison cell in Avignon. Drawing on the biblical book of the Apocalypse, he warns of the things

that are destined to happen, including a great persecution of the clergy for their loose way of living, and their death by sword, fire, hunger, plague, and other miseries. He also predicts that the cardinals would leave their pleasant abode (*requies*) in Avignon, that apocalyptic happenings in nature would occur, mob justice (*justitia popularis*) would arise, and the rich and powerful would be robbed of all their wealth and means. A pontiff would come as the “*reparator*” of the world, who would restore and redeem Rome and banish all corruption from the Holy City.³

Birgitta, too, draws heavily on the Book of the Apocalypse, in a mystical state that has been described thus by Anders Piltz: “The process of revelation, in Birgitta’s case, is not a kind of delirium, it is a mental activity on the highest possible level of intellectual presence, in close contact with the Bible text. In the biblical narratives, mainly in the Apocalypse, the receptive Birgitta achieved a means of rationalizing and structuring the flood of images and impressions which had invaded her imagination.”⁴

Views of Birgitta’s spirituality vacillate between comparisons with the affective states of the southern German mystics, and their graphic and stark devotion to the passion of Christ, to the suggestion that she is not a mystic at all, and instead an author of instructive religious literature. As Piltz suggests, she comes somewhere in between these two extremes. Although there are many strands to Birgitta’s spirituality, some predominant themes may be briefly outlined. The most dominant theme is her apostolic mission and work toward the salvation of humankind, which she sees as degenerate, and work toward the reform of the church, which she sees as emasculated and morally bankrupt.⁵ With reforming zeal she preaches conversion to all levels of society, but mainly to the higher ranks and to religious, and she continually states that the personal will and sound intention of the individual—from the lowly layman right up to the pope himself—must be a necessary condition to enact change. Not only does she address clerics and their leaders, she also directs her message at secular leaders in authority and at those responsible for monastic reform, pointing to human weakness, and emphasizing the workings of God’s order and justice. Further, she expresses her aspiration for a new monastic order, outlining not only details of daily life in a new foundation but also the general guiding principles to be upheld. Another theme is her messages to friends and family, and she is also concerned with her own spiritual life and development, voicing her doubts and uncertainties, especially in the early years of her calling. In an age of deep affective piety toward the physical aspects of the incarnation, her great devotions are the nativity and passion of Christ; and in addition, a constant feature of her spirituality is a close identification with the Virgin, as friend, mother, and confidant.

Visionary States

As a mother of eight children, who had close family connections with the Swedish church, the court, the nobility, and the royal house of Sweden, Birgitta had a strong practical mind and was a powerful and enterprising organizer

and administrator.⁶ Although she espoused a visionary mysticism, which had a prophetic tone of admonition and censorship, generally in her visions she remained close to everyday experience. She seems to have had no difficulty in becoming rapt in spirit, and spent much of her time in prayer, meditation, and ecstatic states; many of the “revelations,” indeed, vacillate freely among these spheres. Her asceticism was nurtured and stirred up by tears, mortification, and other physical privations, as well as by reading the scriptures, reciting the Office, and contemplating liturgical texts or psalms in private. During her marriage she composed a number of prayers and four longer meditations in her native tongue. These formative pieces remain outside the official textual canon, but they mark the beginnings of a process toward deeper spiritual states and are written in an unadorned, unself-conscious style, as is illustrated here:

My Lord, I bewail to you how my heart seems to be inclined. It seems as if there is a boil in my heart. There are also through my heart two thorns and around the outside of it is drawn a membrane which constricts it and oppresses me very severely. My dear Lord God, this is impossible for me to do myself without your help; therefore I ask you for the sake of all the humility which you revealed in the world: tear out the membrane which I associate with pride, and weave about it the humility which without beginning has been in the virtue of your divinity. My Lord God, I pray to you because your head was crowned with thorns: rip out the thorn that is in my heart, which is bodily love for my husband or children, friends or relatives, and replace it instead with divine love for the gain of my fellow Christian. I ask you, my dear Lord, because your blessed hands and feet were torn asunder by the nails: rip out of my heart that thorn which is worldly desire and place there instead longing and desire for your service and for your eternal kingdom.⁷

Birgitta’s widowhood in her early forties was accompanied by her conversion to a life of service to God, and she dispensed with her wealth and made provisions for her children, some of whom were still very young. Her revelations often came in response to personal crises, in times of upheaval, loss, and self-denial, and the spiritual journey upon which she embarked in the tumultuous years of her early widowhood was indeed the most productive of her visionary life: in just a few years she received well over half of her entire output of visions, including the vision of a new monastic rule. Her “calling” revelation, received a few days after her husband’s death, describes the point of her conversion:

After some days, when the bride of Christ was worried about the change in her status and its bearing on her service of God, and while she was praying about this in her chapel, she became rapt in spirit; and while she was in ecstasy, she saw a bright cloud from which she heard a voice saying to her: “Woman, hear me.” Completely terrified, and fearing that it was an illusion, she fled to her

chamber; and at once she confessed and received the body of Christ. Then after some days, when she was at prayer in the same chapel, again that bright cloud appeared to her; and from it, she again heard a voice uttering words like those before, namely "Woman, hear me." Then the lady, thoroughly terrified, again fled to her chamber; and she confessed and communicated, fearing as before that the voice was an illusion. Then, after some days, when she was praying, she was indeed rapt in spirit, and again saw the bright cloud and in it a human likeness, who said this: "Woman, hear me; I am your God, who wishes to speak with you." Terrified, therefore, and thinking it was an illusion, she heard again: "Fear not," he said, "for I am the Creator, not the deceiver, of all. I do not speak to you for your sake alone, but for the sake of the salvation of others. Hear the things that I speak; and go to Master Mathias, your confessor, who has the experience of discerning the two types of spirit. Say to him on my behalf what I now say to you: for you shall be my bride and my channel, and you shall hear and see spiritual things, and my Spirit shall remain with you even until your death."⁸

Some of her visions are clearly apprehended intellectual illuminations in which the content and meaning are at once understood, whereas at other times the sense is uncertain. Primarily, the revelations are locutionary, although some carry a visual element. Sound and sight are the projection of an intellectual debate, and what she hears and sees are general issues in a sharp form, where the detail or metaphorical image shines out vividly, but the meaning is not always immediately clear.⁹ When she was roused from her vision she retained a clear memory of what she had seen and attached importance to it even though she may not always have understood it. Then, in collaboration with her confessors, an interpretation was imposed upon it. Sometimes there were repeated attempts to explore a vision further and additional revelations on the same subject are recorded, either with a similar wording, or with a stylistic reworking, or else offering a new interpretation of the same visual imagery. For example, a revelation that deals with Magnus Eriksson's Baltic campaign (Book IV 2), using imaginative visual imagery, is further explored in a more sober exegesis on the same theme (Book IV 129), and messages about the expediency of the crusades occur sporadically in several books, with significant overlapping and interweaving in both language and imagery. Whether these were all distinct and separate "revelations" or "visions" received over a period of months and years, or whether they were repeated attempts to understand a smaller number of visionary experiences remains an open question that cannot be entered into here.

Although in her "calling" vision, Birgitta was summoned to be Christ's "bride and channel" (*sponsa et canale*), she is not the passive bride of traditional mysticism, and only rarely does she transcend into a unitive experience with the divine or adopt the standard metaphors of love favored by earlier mystics.¹⁰ Instead, she is called to an active life: "It is good for the bride to grow tired

toiling alongside the bridegroom, so that she can all the more confidently take her rest with him" (Book I 2.12). As the "channel," moreover, she is commissioned to be the conduit of Christ's word, a medium through which divine words are spoken, and through which she is to communicate God's message to mankind for its salvation. As the specially chosen bride and channel, therefore, she is cast in a role as God's intermediary on earth, and thereby authorized to speak forth boldly on the pressing issues of her day and to make herself heard, when in other circumstances she so easily could have been pilloried for transgressing the boundaries that traditionally applied to female participation in the public sphere. She is careful not to overstep these boundaries, and on more than one occasion she expresses astonishment that she, as a woman, a Swede, and a speaker of a little-known language, should have been chosen for the special role as mediator of the divine word.¹¹

Swedish Writer

Birgitta has been described as Sweden's first female writer, and critics over the years have depicted her variously as homespun, crudely realistic, impassioned, sensitive, lyrical, and learned. She undoubtedly exhibits all of these characteristics, but she is not a *litterata*, and her writings are normally provoked by a private meditation, a point of moral doctrine, an autobiographical reflection or event, or by people who have sought or to whom she offers advice. She lacks literary ambition in a conventional sense and does not sift her material in any way. As a whole, her writings show a resemblance to Old Testament "prophetic literature," which delivers the divine message or "word" using symbolic actions, allegories, prophecies, and threats to render judgments and laments on the state of the world and to denounce immorality and corruption.

Birgitta's consciousness of being a woman sets the tone and subject matter of many of the revelations, and her imagery frequently concerns specifically female affairs, ranging from childbirth and domestic chores to the education of children and recipes for the kitchen. A public figure with domestic interests and concerns, she bridges and transgresses the boundaries of female experience, frequently turning a bodily or maternal image into a spiritual one. For example, the extended account in Book VII chapters 13–14 of the parting of the soul from the body of her son Karl, after his death, uses graphic childbirth imagery. Her feminine viewpoint is further underpinned by her close identification with the Virgin, whom she frequently casts as her role model or alter ego, and who later also becomes the devotional focus of the Birgittine order. Yet by no means does she show an exclusive interest in things female and she is equally capable of engaging her interest in contemporary scholastic discourse that belonged to the male domain, even though such interests were sometimes greeted with antipathy. One of her detractors indeed said, "It would be more useful for you to spin finely like a woman than dispute about the Scriptures" (Book IV 124). Her writings do not imply a sense of women's inferiority to men, beyond her acceptance of the orthodoxy of the church's teaching on the subordination of women, and the sources are always careful

to insist that she retained her humility as a woman, never speaking out of turn in public, and communicating with others through her male advisors. While in worldly affairs she makes a distinction between the respective roles of men and women, in their spiritual roles she makes no such distinction, and adopts an equal view of the two sexes, emphasizing always the inner intention of the individual in the process of salvation.¹² However, not surprisingly, given the political tone and subject of many visions, men are far more frequently at the receiving end of her visions than women.

As the daughter of a wealthy and learned lawman (*lagman*), who was responsible for the codification of the provincial law of Uppland in 1296, Birgitta was well placed to receive the highest possible level of education. She probably learned to read and write during her childhood, and she would have had access to clerics or chaplains who could read aloud and spontaneously translate Latin works into the vernacular. She owned a number of books, including a Bible that she had had translated into Swedish. This may have been the paraphrase of the Pentateuch, which builds to a large degree on Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*.¹³ She read stories of the lives of the saints to her servants and instructed her husband to recite the Office of the Virgin with her.¹⁴ Another work that is specifically referred to is the *Speculum Virginum*, which contains a dialogue between a fictitious monk and a virgin nun, teaching the imitation of Mary.¹⁵ A surviving book that she always carried with her, according to its colophon, was the *Liber de modo bene vivendi ad sororem*, a manual written for nuns.¹⁶ She also knew saints' lives, perhaps through the text known as the *Fornsvenska Legendariet* [Old Swedish Legendary] that was compiled between 1276 and 1307 by a Dominican friar from Östergötland, and is based on Jacob of Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. The *Vitae Patrum* and the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great are among other works she may have known.¹⁷ Another of her formative literary influences must have been the law, which she was familiar with not only through her father but also her husband and other members of her family who were lawmen; indeed, justice and legalism are insistent strands that run through her revelations. In the vernacular she may have had access to contemporary secular and courtly writings such as *Erikskrönikan* (c. 1320), which presents an idealized picture of Swedish history up to the early fourteenth century, or some of the common courtly romances in circulation in contemporary Europe. However, at some point she seems to have tired of hearing secular romances, or judged them unsuitable reading, for in Book VI 27.1 she is asked, "Why does it please you to hear about the deeds of the worldly and the battles of the mighty, and why do you occupy yourself with such vain listening?"

Birgitta's sources enter the text of the revelations at second or third remove, and thus they are difficult to identify with certainty. As we have already noted, her spiritual life involved a complete immersion in the words of scripture, and her mind is constantly flooded with biblical images and impressions, which are reused and restructured, sometimes confused and conflated into a text that alludes only tangentially to the original biblical text, but nevertheless retains much of its familiarity. Biblical borrowing was also accompanied by the pow-

erful workings of reminiscence, allowing echoes of what had been read or heard to come to the surface of her mind in free association of chance and subconscious connections: images, words, and phrases are linked together, often in a random and unstructured fashion.¹⁸ In her prophetic interpretations of the Bible, she depicts the biblical scenes as dramas into which she herself steps as an active participant. In her early revelations she appears to rely more heavily on the Old Testament, while in the revelations from the Rome-period later on in her life, the New Testament takes greater prominence. The book of the Apocalypse also figures very strongly; but clearly, she knows every biblical book included in the Vulgate extremely intimately.

Birgitta appears to have read the Bible like an engrossed but untrained reader, puzzling critically over its apparent inconsistencies and contradictions. She describes the scripture as “golden” in Book IV 1 and Ex. 91, and in Book IV 129 she muses on the purpose of the writing down of the Gospels. She accepts that sometimes there is more directness and apparent transparency in the Bible than other times and, submitting to the authority of the clerics who answered her queries, she frequently acknowledges that God had his own reasons for creating and making things the way they are (for example, Book V int. 16, question 3).

Birgitta applies her knowledge of the Bible to her own age, thus giving her revelations a sense of contemporaneousness that is yet distanced in time. She combines contemplation with a political vision, and like an Old Testament prophet she is concerned with justice and just relations between the powerful and their underlings, as well as between equal individuals. Her use of the Bible is for a moral purpose, for providing exegesis that emphasizes a moral point and gives spiritual counsel, rather than adopting a more academic style of literal exposition. In this she may owe a debt to her confessor Mathias of Linköping, whose commentaries on the Bible and the Apocalypse were written in the 1330s and 1340s. Closely linked with the biblical influences are the liturgical sources and, since she spent so much of her time following a quasi-monastic routine—both at Alvastra in the early years of her widowhood and later in Rome—her knowledge of the annual liturgical cycle no doubt infused her entire language at all levels of communication.

II. Textual History

The Four Confessors

Many of Birgitta’s literary, legal, and devotional interests were no doubt mediated through the clerics in her household and those whom she knew in the public sphere, and it is such men in authority who came to play a vital role in the transmission of her revelations. The revelations were initially recorded in Swedish, but translated straightaway into Latin. In order for her to play an active role in the recording of the revelations but also, we are told, to enable her to read the Bible and other books of spiritual enlightenment in Latin, she received initial Latin instruction in Sweden from her sons’ tutor, probably Ni-

colaus Hermanni.¹⁹ Magnus Petri (later Confessor General at Vadstena Abbey) and Bishop Hartlev of Västerås testify that she could speak Latin fluently but was ignorant of grammar when she left Sweden in 1349.²⁰ However, one of the canons at the Lateran church said that when he spoke with her around 1350 she used only her native tongue, although she learned Latin quickly. Her confessors, on the other hand, state rather blandly that she had a reasonably good command of Latin.²¹ Some revelations, with a little more realism perhaps, refer to her struggles with Latin grammar: in Book III 27 she mentions the grammatical parts of speech and in Book III 30 St. Agnes, her mentor, shows her how to add an adjective to a noun. Book IV 74 mentions an old proverb she had studied that day in her Latin lesson and Book VI 105 tells how she tired of studying and preferred instead to visit the pilgrim sites of Rome.

Whatever her exact ability in Latin—and the sources are not consistent—Birgitta was clearly an active participant in the recording of the *Revelationes*.²² The *locus classicus* for describing the process can be quoted here:

The words that were given her from God she wrote down in her mother tongue with her own hand when she was well and she had us, her father confessors, make a very faithful translation of them into Latin. She then listened to the translation together with her own writing, which she herself had written, to make sure that not one word was added or subtracted, but was exactly what she had heard and seen in the divine vision. But if she was ill she would call her confessor and a scribe, especially appointed as secretary for this, whereupon with great devotion and fear of God and sometimes in tears, she spoke the words to him in her native language in a kind of attentive mental elevation, as if she was reading them in a book; and then the confessor dictated these words in Latin to the scribe, and he wrote them down there in her presence. When the words had been written down she wished to hear them and she listened very carefully and attentively.²³

During the early years of her calling, her spiritual mentor was Master Mathias Övidi (c. 1300–c. 1350), canon of Linköping cathedral, who was a prolific writer with a European reputation as a theologian, and who was said to have been expert in the “discernment of spirits.”²⁴ His two handbooks on the art of poetry, the *Poetria* and *Testa nucis*, demonstrate his breadth of learning in the humanist tradition. His most substantial work, preserved only in fragments, is the alphabetical concordance of the Bible, known as the *Alphabetum distincionum*, and is probably the work the Birgittine sources refer to as his glossary of the Bible.²⁵ Another work is the *Homo conditus*, a theological handbook intended for preachers, which is complemented by the *Copia exemplorum*, a pastoral manual containing homiletic *exempla*.²⁶ Probably his most original work is the *Exposicio super apocalypsim*, which gives a literal and spiritual exposition of the book of Revelation.²⁷ Mathias was a traditionalist who emphasized biblical study as a basis of theology, and a learned preacher who had a mistrust of logic-chopping scholastic argument. He may have battled intellec-

tually with some of the new doctrines and controversies that were dominating contemporary continental theological discourse, and Birgitta suggests that he underwent a personal struggle of faith at some stage in his life, when he was confronted by heretical demons asserting “We are the truth.” Her advice to him, when faced with doubt, is to “Preach firmly.”²⁸

Mathias may have been Birgitta’s confessor during her marriage, and he is referred to as the person to whom she was told to turn in her “calling” vision, referred to above. He wrote a strong defense of her visionary calling and publicly acknowledged her new role as prophet and visionary in his Prologue that precedes Book I (see further “Introduction” to Book I below, p. 41), and is known by its opening words, *Stupor et mirabilia*. He appears also to have sought divine knowledge, through her, while he was writing his commentary on the Book of the Apocalypse, asking her to pray for spiritual knowledge of when the Antichrist would come and whether the book of the Apocalypse was indeed written by St. John, “for many claimed the opposite” (Book VI 89.1). By the end of the 1340s their relationship may not have been quite so close, however. According to tradition he participated in King Magnus Eriksson’s crusade to the eastern Baltic and died shortly afterward, possibly of the Black Death, in 1350.²⁹

While she lived near the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra, in the diocese of Linköping, Birgitta was also supported by the sub-prior, named Petrus Olavi (c. 1307–90), who, together with his namesake, Petrus Olavi of Skänninge (d. 1378 in Vadstena), became the main translator and transcriber of her revelations and the author of her *Vita* (often called the *Process Vita* because it was part of the Acts of Birgitta’s canonization process).³⁰ The former Petrus Olavi (usually referred to as Prior Petrus) records that Birgitta received her first revelation in 1346 in Alvastra and he witnessed early “miracles” while she still lived in Sweden. Around this time, he accompanied Bishop Hemming of Turku/Åbo on a mission to the kings of England and France with the revelations that Birgitta had received concerning the Hundred Years’ War (Book IV chs. 103–5), and Hemming also took letters to Pope Clement VI in Avignon (Book VI 63), urging him to return from papal exile to Rome. Petrus did not travel with Birgitta to Rome when she left in 1349 to participate in the Holy Year of Jubilee—he is known to have been present at Master Mathias’s death and was still in Sweden in 1350—but he was a regular traveler between Sweden and Rome in the following years. He was present at Birgitta’s deathbed on 7 October 1373, at her burial, and in January 1374, with her children Birger and Katherina, he accompanied the cortege carrying her remains homeward to Sweden. Afterward he dedicated much of his energy toward her canonization, although he did not live to see it come to fruition. Apart from being the principal transcriber of the revelations and coauthor of the *Process Vita*, Petrus also wrote the *Additiones*, also known as the *Constitutiones Prioris Petri*, which are clarifications and subsidiary statutes of the Birgittine Rule.³¹

The other Petrus Olavi (referred to as Master Petrus) was born in Skänninge, not far from Vadstena, where he became head of the hospital, Helgeandshuset.³² He was probably educated abroad, in the liberal arts, and

earned the title “Magister artium,” although he is not thought to have held a higher qualification in theology. In Rome he was head of Birgitta’s Swedish household and managed its finances, and he had a reputation for piety and practical affairs. After Birgitta’s death he returned to Sweden where he helped in the founding of the monastery at Vadstena, becoming its first Confessor General. His death is mentioned in the *Diarium Vadstenense*, which also states that his grave was associated with miracles in subsequent years; indeed, later there was a move to have him beatified. The *Vita* he composed with Prior Petrus was handed to Bishop Galhard of Spoleto in December 1373.³³ Petrus is also known to have worked on parts of the sisters’ liturgy for the monastic foundation at Vadstena, the *Cantus sororum*, a work that was probably composed in Rome between 1353 and 1366.³⁴

In many ways Birgitta’s last confessor, the Spaniard Alfonso Pecha da Vadaterra (c. 1327–89) was the most influential. He had been the bishop of Jaén in Andalusia, and his knowledge of canon law and connections within the curia would later contribute in obtaining papal authorization for her monastic order as well as her canonization.³⁵ He had resigned his bishopric in 1368 and seems to have gone to Italy to take up a religious profession in an eremitical order, but shortly afterward he went to Rome, where he met and was deeply impressed by Birgitta. He shared with her his noble background, his knowledge of secular and political affairs, and a disenchantment with contemporary secular and religious morals; and they both embraced a spiritually pure and elitist form of life and explored new models of monasticism. Alfonso was the overall editor of the *Revelationes* (see further below); he also edited Book VIII under the title *Liber caelestis Imperatoris ad reges* and prefaced it by a defense of Birgitta’s prophetic gifts, the *Epistola Solitarii ad reges* [*The Hermit’s Letter to Kings*].³⁶ Another compilation by Alfonso is a florilegium, the *Caeleste viridarium*, a collection of excerpts of the *Revelationes* for the sisters at Vadstena, on the subject of the Life of Christ and the Virgin, to which he also wrote a prologue outlining his intention of collecting revelations from the entire corpus of Books, and in which he outlines the need to recast the material to avoid unnecessary duplication. Another work he wrote was the *Epistola Servi Christi*, which is directed at the Vadstena sisters.³⁷

While the hand of the individual editors cannot easily be identified in the *Revelationes*, it is clear that each had a significant role to play in their transmission. Mathias, the established theologian, endorsed and consolidated Birgitta’s reputation in Sweden, and may have been involved in recording some of the earliest visions. He may also have been the person to decide that the revelations should be translated immediately into the language of the church in order that they should reach a specific audience and, although for the most part they were not actually published until after her death, some were clearly circulated as private letters and messages during her lifetime.³⁸ In 1346 Mathias participated in a commission that was established to ratify the revelations and confirm her status as a visionary.³⁹ It is more difficult to distinguish between the respective roles of Prior Petrus and Master Petrus. Prior Petrus’s role was probably to produce the first copy in Latin, to collect and sort the growing body

of material, and make accessible some of the texts for limited circulation. Master Petrus must also have assisted in transcribing the revelations and stood in for Prior Petrus when he was unavailable, as was the case for the dictation of the *Sermo angelicus*.

It was Alfonso who gave the revelations the shape in which we know them today. Three years before her death, Birgitta asked him to copy out the revelations that, until that point, had been kept largely secret. In 1372 her request was repeated in a vision received while she was staying at Famagusta in Cyprus during her pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Ex. 49). In this revelation, Christ compares himself to a carpenter who hews a piece of wood in the forest, carries it home, and makes a lovely woodcarving, which he then paints and adorns. When his friends see it could be made lovelier still, they add more paint. The explanation is that God has placed words from his divine forest into Birgitta's heart and her friends have gathered them into books and ornamented them. In order that the texts may be translated into other languages, the confessors are instructed to hand them over to Alfonso for him to adorn further while preserving their orthodoxy. The last part of this vision explains how Birgitta struggles to turn her revelations into words: her heart is not always in a state to express what she feels, but rather she weighs up her vision in her mind and writes and rewrites it until she arrives at the correct sense.⁴⁰ Whereas the Swedish confessors in the initial phase had recorded and strictly observed every turn of phrase, now Alfonso was authorized to emend and alter the text, and was licensed to ensure not only that its style was acceptable to a learned readership but also that the visions remained within the boundaries of orthodox dogma.⁴¹

The Revelations during Birgitta's Life

We cannot tell how many of the visions Birgitta wrote down were in her native tongue. The sheer length and number of them—some seven hundred visions in all—suggest that she is unlikely to have written them down in the form in which they survive today, although it is possible that she used wax tablets and a stylus to record the key images and raw material of the vision, out of which a written version was subsequently produced in collaboration with her confessors.⁴² Three extant manuscript fragments provide some clues about the texts at the earliest stage of their history. The first of these, chronologically, dates from the mid 1340s, and contains the Swedish text of the revelation that was included in Master Mathias's *Stupor et mirabilia* (see Prologue § 32–40, p. 51 below) and starts with the words “Jak mathias kanunker aff lin . . .” [“I Mathias, canon of Lin(köping)”]. It describes a devout and tearful person who gives seven “words” of advice and admonishment to the courtiers and knights of Sweden, “swerikes mæn” [“men of Sweden”].⁴³ It has been suggested by Jan Liedgren that this vernacular text was issued by Mathias as a broadsheet to be circulated among the Swedish noble class, as a stern stricture urging moral reform for the country's salvation. Liedgren makes a convincing case for the priority of the Swedish text over its Latin equivalent in the *Stupor et mirabilia*. Although the Swedish text is defective, it is possible to glimpse a succinctness

and simplicity of style in the following lines, and to compare it with the hypotactic syntax of Mathias's Latin text from the authorized version (Prologue § 32–33):

Jesus Christus theþe sik henne wakande [ok Ey i]
 sympne/ok sagþe hæenne þæssin sy[u orþin]
 ok bøþ þæt hon skulde mik þøm [opinbara ok iak]
 til hertilse skulde þøm andrum framføra þ[þøm allum]
 Þæt första ær þæt [at Lucifer]
 fioll aff hymmerike firi hø[gfærþ han]
 haffþe aff sik siælwm . . .

[Jesus Christ appeared to her while waking and not in sleep, and told her these seven words and bade her reveal them to me and that I should present them all to others. The first point for consideration is that the devil fell from heaven on account of the pride he had of himself . . .]

Initium autem huius reuelacionis facte ad predictam dominam, transmissum ad me, qui hunc prologum premisi, ut ceteris illud notum facerem, taliter a Christo assumebatur: "Diabolus tripliciter peccauit, scilicet superbia, eo quod ipsum bene creauit . . ."

[The beginning of this revelation was made to this lady and transmitted to me who have added this prologue so that I might make it known to others. It was received from Christ in the following manner: "The devil sinned in three ways: by pride in my having created him well . . ."]

A second fragment of interest is a letter containing parts of Book III chapters 8–9 (Cod. Holm. A65a, Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm). It probably dates from 1349 when Birgitta passed through Milan on her way to Rome, and it records an exchange between her and the recipient of a letter, apparently the confessor to Archbishop Giovanni Visconti of Milan. The leaf contains three separate texts: on the recto there are three questions from the Virgin to the cleric concerning his relationship to the "bishop" (cf. Book III 8.1–13); there is a further text on a separate subject, which forms part of Book III 9, underneath; on the verso the cleric's brief answers are given, under which there is another short text in which the Virgin declares the cleric's words to be false (cf. Book III 8.14–18). The leaf may have been written by Master Petrus, or else a scribe very close to him (an inscription reads "Hec petrus de vadstena quondam venerabilis domine birgittie confessor") and the reply, in a different hand, may be by the cleric himself.⁴⁴ A third hand has written at a later date "scriptum in libro magno," probably to confirm that the text had been entered into the "large book," perhaps the earliest collection written by Prior Petrus and Master Petrus that is no longer extant. This fragment offers an important example of the piecemeal construction of the Birgittine texts in a composite creation consisting of different parts, dates, and hands, and recorded well before the Latin text became fixed in its authorized form.

Two better-known fragments that further illustrate the earliest phase in the textual development are the autographs in Swedish (MS A65, Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm; see p. 2 above for picture), both of which date from the Rome years and are the only surviving record of Birgitta's handwriting.⁴⁵ Autograph A concerns church abuses and was written in 1361; it contains part of Book IV 49. Autograph B contains a letter to four Swedish noblemen concerning King Magnus Eriksson, written in 1367, and it contains part of Book VIII 56 (and Ex. 80). These autographs on three paper leaves are written in a cramped, angular script, indeed, in a typical wax tablet style that is seen in a number of older private letters.⁴⁶ Bertil Högman, who has shown that these texts are genuine autographs, rather than copies, has written of the hand: "What is clear is that it is very distinctive and cannot possibly be attributed to a professional scribe. The person who has held the pen must be inexperienced in writing. Evidence of this is also seen in the unusually large number of scribal errors, . . . and in the limited use of abbreviation marks."⁴⁷

Thus some of the earliest fragmentary early drafts are in the form of letters, and it is worth mentioning that a few further letters attributed to Birgitta survive, including a letter to her son Birger on courtly behavior and manners.⁴⁸

The Early Editions

The authorized text that survives today is an eclectic composite that is built up from many seamless layers of editorial emendation. As the individual texts were copied, and as they found their way into the hands of different editors, they departed, in formulation if not in essence, from their original oral and written form. Apart from the few texts mentioned above, the fate of all the other original notes and drafts is unknown. They were gathered in bundles and booklets, and perhaps formed larger volumes, as mentioned above. By the end of Birgitta's life they must have comprised an unwieldy body of material, some gathered in Sweden but the majority in Rome. When Alfonso set about preparing the *Revelationes* for the canonization petition, some of the texts may have been organized into larger units, and there was probably a rough ordering and division into Books, to which he added chapter headings.⁴⁹ Certain crude thematic or temporal strands can be discerned in their ordering.⁵⁰ Book I covers Birgitta's visionary calling and her earliest visions; Book II concerns the class of knights and deals largely with Swedish political affairs; Book III contains revelations directed at the clergy, many of them dating from the early Rome period in the 1350s; Book IV comprises revelations dealing with political and moral matters from different periods of her life; Book V, the *Liber quaestionum*, in the form of a catechetical debate on the divine order in the natural world, dates from the Sweden years; Book VI is mixed in content, and contains revelations from both the Sweden and the Rome periods, many having to do with the church; and Book VII contains a chronologically ordered account of Holy Land revelations (1372–73).

Although Birgitta's confessors and editors may well have included dates

in their original records of the visions, no dates were included in the subsequent editing. Only the revelations that were witnessed by or related to Alfonso (such as those in Book VII) can be dated with relative safety. Sometimes, the evidence of the canonization proceedings supplies, through the testimony of witnesses, some supplementary detail on the circumstances of origin: for instance, a visit to a saint's shrine in Italy makes it possible to associate—usually only speculatively—a particular vision with a particular saint or place. Thus, although the visions were for the most part prompted by actual events, they have been stripped of their circumstantial and particular origins, and invested instead with universal meaning.

Alfonso's first redaction was ready at some point before 29 May 1377, when a member of the examining commission, Johannes de Hispania, proposed the canonization to Pope Gregory XI. This redaction contained seven books and included the *Stupor et mirabilia*, Book I (60 chapters), Book II (30 chapters), Book III (34 chapters), Book IV (130 chapters), Book V (sixteen lengthy questions and answers, interspersed with thirteen revelations, and preceded by a prologue by Alfonso), Book VI (109 chapters), and Book VII (31 chapters), which is often referred to as the last, "ultimus liber secundum Alfonsosum." Copies were made and distributed to each member of the papal commission, which, besides Alfonso, consisted of five cardinals, an archbishop, and three masters in theology. Alfonso had had four years to edit and rubricate the collected text, and at times he probably did not scrutinize all the revelations as closely as he would have liked, which accounts for some of the anomalies and inconsistencies that occur, and suggests, inevitably perhaps, that he was more familiar with some parts of the text, such as the later, papal, and Holy Land visions, than others, such as those that relate to Swedish local affairs.

After Gregory's death in March 1378, the entire process had to be reopened under his successor, Urban VI, who on 15 December 1378 appointed a larger commission including six cardinals, a number of named bishops, and several unnamed theologians and participants. Alfonso was again a member of this committee, as was Matheus of Krakow, of the University of Prague (and later of the University of Heidelberg and bishop of Worms), who was an influential disseminator of the *Revelationes* in eastern Europe. The contents of the collection presented to this commission were in all likelihood identical with those presented to Gregory's committee, although at this time the collected corpus was still expanding. There remained revelations that had not been included in the central canon, relating partly to secular and political affairs, and partly to the Birgittine order. Alfonso began to incorporate such additional materials into his subsequent version, which is often referred to as the "second redaction" and was completed c. 1380. The additions comprised, first, the *Liber caelestis Imperatoris ad reges*, consisting of fifty-eight chapters, of which twenty-seven are duplicated but revised versions of revelations already found in Books I–VII, mainly concerning kings and emperors; and it was preceded by Alfonso's preface, the *Epistola Solitarii ad reges*. Certain other texts are found in manuscripts of the second redaction: the *Sermo angelicus*, which was the Matins readings intended for use by the Birgittine nuns, the *Quattuor orationes*,

four major prayers in praise of Christ and the Virgin and, occasionally, the *Regula Salvatoris*, the rule of the Birgittine order, and a *Vita*.⁵¹

By 1380 the witnesses had finished giving their testimonies in the canonization process, and all the documents were gathered into a book known as the *Liber attestacionum*, which also included official documents and protocols as well as the *Process Vita*.⁵² However, because of the difficulties within the church caused by the outbreak of the Great Schism, several years passed and it was not until after the death of Urban VI in 1389 that the proceedings were reactivated under Pope Boniface IX. The petitions and documents were again laid before this pope, and a sumptuous copy of the *Liber attestacionum* and the *Revelationes* was presented to him in 1391. The exact contents of this “canonization redaction” are unknown, but Carl-Gustaf Undhagen argues that it is most likely to have contained simply the first Alfonsine redaction, which had already been approved by the previous commissions, without the supplementary additions that had been incorporated in the intervening years in certain manuscript copies.⁵³

The material continued to expand, and some of the additions included revelations that had been omitted by Alfonso, either deliberately on sensitive political or theological grounds, because they were obscure or cast a negative light on Birgitta, or because they had been left in Sweden and never passed through his hands. In Alfonso’s second redaction, for example, Book IV ends at chapter 130, but later it came to be supplemented with five revelations on the morals of the clergy (including a short treatise with a semi-independent status known as the *Tractatus ad sacerdotes*, Book IV chs. 132–35), and nine further chapters, some in letter form, which urge a return of the papacy to Rome. This tract had been issued by Alfonso in the 1370s with the title *Tractatus de summis pontificibus*, Book IV chs. 136–44.⁵⁴ Other censored, rejected, or half-forgotten texts came to be incorporated into later editions, either as *additiones* and *declarationes*—explanatory and circumstantial information that glossed existing revelations—or gathered (mostly by Prior Petrus, who returned to Sweden in 1380 to undertake this task) in a separate book, known as the *Revelationes extravagantes*, consisting of some 116 revelations on disparate topics.

Medieval Manuscripts

After the establishment of the Birgittine order in the 1380s, the canonization in 1391, and the gradual spread of the Birgittine cult throughout Europe, interest in the *Revelationes* grew rapidly, especially in Italy and elsewhere on the continent. The enthusiasm was accompanied by a corresponding demand for copies to be made, and gradually, different manuscript traditions began to emerge in different geographical locations. The number of copies in circulation must have been roughly ten for the first papal commission under Gregory XI and fifteen for the second under Urban VI. By 1380 there were probably about fifty copies in circulation, most of them in royal or ecclesiastical hands in southern and central Europe. The foremost scriptorium producing these early manuscripts was in Naples, where the Birgittine cult was quick to develop.

Three Neapolitan illuminated manuscripts have survived: the oldest is in the Biblioteka Narodowa in Warsaw (MS 3310), written in 1377 and reflecting Alfonso's earliest redaction of the same year; as such it is the only surviving manuscript of the earliest phase of the history of the Latin text.⁵⁵ The other two early Neapolitan copies (representing Alfonso's second redaction) are in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (M.498) and in the Biblioteca centrale della regione Siciliana in Palermo (MS IV.G.2), both from c. 1378.⁵⁶

Of the subsequent copying in various European *scriptoria*, there are today about eighty extant manuscripts that contain Books I through VIII, and one hundred that reflect the variegated transmission of the remaining texts. In terms of their relationship they fall into two main families, denoted β and π . The manuscripts of the latter family include at least some of the additional material, which appears in various arrangements and groupings in the various manuscripts.⁵⁷

The manuscripts produced in Vadstena represent an important text version. It is very likely that a copy was sent to the motherhouse at an early date and, according to a letter dating from before 1433, Alfonso himself sent to Vadstena a copy of the *Revelationes* together with a book containing the Rule "for reference and perpetual remembrance."⁵⁸ Although these two volumes are not described in detail, they were apparently ornately decorated with gilt lettering and illuminations. Another reference to the existence of a manuscript

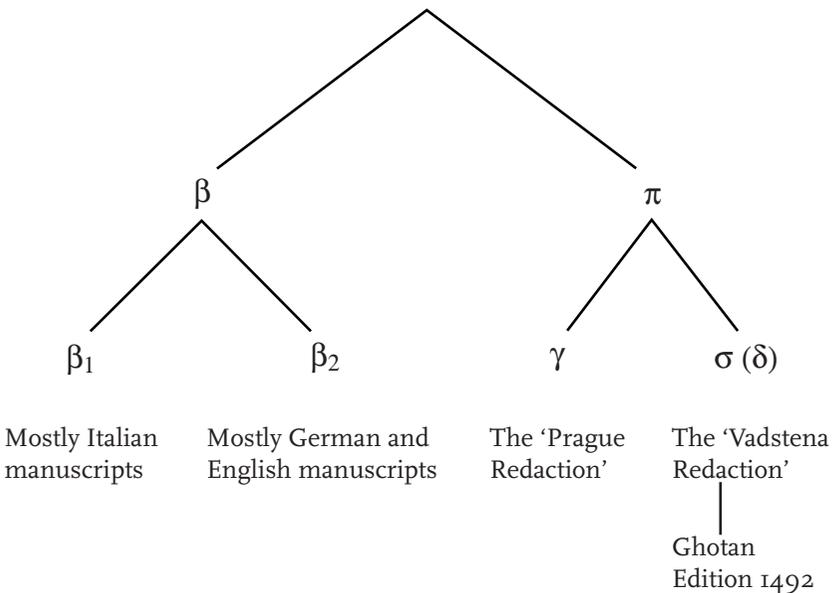


FIGURE 3. The main Latin manuscript groups.

at Vadstena occurs in 1417, when the Confessor General, Ericus Iohannis, showed to the commission examining the case for canonization of the Swedish saint Brynolf Algotsson a volume that consisted of seven books, and is thought to have been called “Liber Alfonsi” at the monastery.⁵⁹ Although this volume disappeared at the closure of the monastery in the sixteenth century, it seems likely that it formed the basis of the copies that were subsequently made in Sweden, the most outstanding surviving examples of which (belonging to the π group) are the Codex Kalmarnensis (formerly held by Kalmar Stifts- och Gymnasiebibliotek) and the Codex Falkenberg, both now in Lund University Library.

Like the Vadstena manuscripts, the volumes produced elsewhere often had a local character, with an arrangement and specific details that are peculiar to their region of origin. One such distinct version (within the π group) was established in Prague at the end of the fourteenth century, probably through the influence of Mattheus of Krakow. This Prague recension is distinguished by a reordering of the books with the *Epistola Solitarii* and *Liber ad reges* interpolated between Books II and III, and the *Sermo angelicus* between Books IV and V. Another important copy from another geographical region is the deluxe large folio Harley 612 in the British Library, which was written at the Birgittine house of Syon in England around 1440, and belongs to the β_2 group of manuscripts. It consists of fourteen books, and also includes a number of English defenses of the saint, the *Caeleste viridarium*, as well as other material relating to the canonization, including biographies of individuals in the Birgittine circle.⁶⁰

Some of the works within the Birgittine corpus enjoyed an independent circulation from the start, such as the *Sermo angelicus*, which, although included in most *Revelationes* manuscripts, was part of the Birgittine office and thus it also circulated in Birgittine breviaries as a liturgical text. The *Quattuor orationes* and the *Regula Salvatoris* likewise had an independent tradition, and were not, for the most part, included in the manuscripts of the *Revelationes*. The other supplementary materials mentioned above also have a very disparate tradition: some of the supplements are rare, and indeed, a few have not survived in any manuscripts but can be found only in the *editio princeps* of 1492.

The Printed Editions

The *editio princeps* was commissioned by Vadstena Abbey. Two men, Petrus Ingemari, later Confessor General at the monastery, and a layman named Gerhardus, a German by birth, went to Lübeck in September 1491 to the printer Bartholomaeus Ghotan to arrange for the printing of the complete text; Petrus probably undertook the proofreading, while Gerhardus, mentioned in the *Diarium Vadstenense* as being a good artist, “bonus pictor,” was probably in charge of the woodcut illustrations. They took with them at least two manuscripts that formed the basis of their edition and were copies of the “Vadstena” manuscript tradition. Both brethren returned to Vadstena on 25 November 1492, with the work accomplished. This first printed edition, often referred to as the “Ghotan

edition," marks a defining point in a continuous history of textual augmentation and alteration since Alfonso's first redaction, fixing the shape and form of the text for the first time. Furthermore, although it contains errors, it is important for textual criticism as it includes a number of variants based on manuscripts that are now lost.⁶¹ The edition opens with the *Epistola domini Johannis Cardinalis de Turrecremata*, which is an abbreviated version of the defense written by the Spanish Dominican Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1388–1468, the uncle of the Grand Inquisitor), in connection with the controversy surrounding the *Revelationes* at the Council of Basel in the 1400s.⁶² Torquemada's *Epistola* also includes the *Bulla canonizationis beatae Birgittae*, issued by Pope Boniface IX on 7 October 1391, and Martin V's *Confirmatio canonizationis beatae Birgittae*, dated in Florence 1 July 1419. The volume continues with Master Mathias's *Stupor et mirabilia*, Books I through VII, the *Epistola Solitarii*, Book VIII, the *Regula Salvatoris*, *Sermo angelicus*, *Quattuor orationes*, *Revelationes extravagantes*, and ends with *Vita abbreviata sanctae Birgittae*, an extensive alphabetical index, and a prayer to St. Birgitta.

The Ghotan edition was followed by eight later editions, which mainly are based on it. The second edition was produced in Nuremberg in 1500 by the renowned printer Anton Koberger, and with the patronage of the Austrian nobility and the emperor Maximilian. It contains seventeen woodcuts that have been associated with the atelier of Albrecht Dürer. The third edition, based on Koberger's edition, was also published in Nuremberg in 1517, by F. Peypus. It was followed by the edition of the great Swedish historiographer and exiled Catholic Olaus Magnus, who had charge of Birgitta's house in the Piazza Farnese, where he installed a small printing press, and, among other publications, produced his edition of the *Revelationes* in 1557. The fifth edition was edited in 1606 by the theologian Bishop Consalvo Durante, who made an attempt to emend some of the errors in Ghotan's edition, and introduce commentaries. The subsequent three editions were all based on Durante's, and printed respectively in Antwerp in 1611, Cologne in 1628, and Rome in 1628. The last edition (before the modern-day edition) was based on the 1628 edition and produced in Munich in 1680 by Simon Hörmann, the Confessor General at the Birgittine abbey of Altomünster.⁶³

Swedish "Retranslation"

When the monastery at Vadstena was inaugurated in 1384, a Swedish version was required for use by the newly professed nuns in their devotions, and a translation of the entire corpus was quickly produced around this date. Although the identity of the translators is unknown and the original translation is lost, some twenty-five manuscript copies and fragments in medieval Swedish survive, dating from between 1385 and 1500.⁶⁴ For the most part this translation back into St. Birgitta's original language is a literal and unidiomatic rendering of the Latin text, a verbatim translation that follows the Latin quite slavishly.

This Swedish "retranslation" merits mention in connection with the present English translation of the Latin text, however, because there are a small

number of individual revelations that suggest that there may have been more than one Latin text or an older Swedish version available to the translators, and that this version might predate the authorized Latin version. The translators at Vadstena in the 1380s may have had access to some of Birgitta's own autographs, early drafts in Swedish and Latin, or details that existed in oral tradition but were never committed to writing. Although the number of revelations that reflect this "mixed" textual tradition is comparatively small, it is nevertheless important to note that the Swedish translation has a history that runs parallel with the evolving Latin text, and to remember that on rare occasions the Swedish text may reflect a reading that is closer to Birgitta's original formulation than the extant Latin text.⁶⁵ There are odd phrases and expressions that suggest a characteristically Swedish turn of phrase that is alliterative, resonant, pithy, and reminiscent of the vernacular style encountered, for instance, in the Swedish provincial law texts. While such suggestive readings may of course reflect the stylistic achievement of the translators, it is equally possible that they reflect early Swedish records of the visions, even the original voice of Birgitta herself, as it was remembered or transmitted within the early history of the monastery. Mainly, however, Swedish priority can only be traced in very few cases. The example of the autographs, which was discussed above, serves to illustrate the complexity of the translated text: when they were retranslated into Swedish, the translator apparently had at hand, and freely drew from, both the autograph and a Latin text (which of course would have had authoritative status over the Swedish autograph, despite its being in the saint's own hand).

Another text that illustrates an independent strand in the Swedish tradition is the so-called "Birgittine-Norwegian" (*Birgittin-norsk*) text (MS E 8902 [formerly Skokl. 5], Riksarkivet, Stockholm), dating sometime between 1379 and 1425.⁶⁶ This work is a compilation of twenty-five texts, which together contain a political message and make an appeal for moral and financial support from the Norwegian nobility. It is possible that the collection reflects on the ill-fated Birgittine foundation of Munkeliv near Bergen.⁶⁷ It is an adaptation of a Swedish text for Norwegian readers, written in a hybrid Norwegian-Swedish, and copied by Norwegian scribes in a vernacular that was understood by Norwegians and intended for a Norwegian audience. As well as containing four passages that are not found in any other sources, many of the texts in this compilation appear to derive from material that does not pass through the authorized Latin tradition at all.⁶⁸ Overall, they are more graphic and coarse and far less carefully edited than the established tradition. Therefore, as an early independent vernacular version of selections of the *Revelationes*, they form an important part of the textual history.

A further text of interest is the *Quattuor orationes*, for which there may have been a Latin original in circulation before the publication of the authorized text. A single leaf fragment, now housed in Riksarkivet, Oslo, contains a text that is markedly different from the authorized Latin text. Sten Eklund has shown that the fragment represents an earlier version, and that it shares close similarities with the extant Swedish text.⁶⁹

All of the arguments surrounding the status of the Swedish translation are

made difficult by the fact that we know so little about the circumstances in which the translation was produced. We do not know, for instance, how many translators there were, whether any of the translators were nuns, how they worked, or whether any of the work was done outside the monastery. Nor do we know how many revelation texts in fragments lay idly in the monastic library, at the disposal of the translators, or how much of an oral tradition there was at Vadstena among Birgitta's followers, in which people remembered things that she had spoken and described. Although the argument of intertextual contamination and borrowing has increasingly gained ground in recent years, far from making our knowledge clearer it clouds it further, revealing a constant fluidity of converging textual layers and rendering impossible the task of identifying "original" readings.

Later Receptions

The *Revelationes* continued to be reproduced, translated, and cited in the centuries following Birgitta's death. But even following the renewal of her canonization at the Councils of Constance and Basel, discussions regarding their orthodoxy continued. At the Council of Basel, which commenced in 1431, their authority and orthodoxy was officially brought into question. One hundred twenty-three articles were presented at the Council, where, among other things, it was suggested that they were written by Mathias of Linköping. Defenses by theologians, such as Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, were presented, arguing vehemently in favor of the authenticity of the *Revelationes*. Nevertheless, the Council prohibited them from being designated "heavenly" and from being circulated without commentaries by orthodox theologians.⁷⁰ Indeed, even for Birgitta's defenders, it was thought more prudent to say that the *Revelationes* were "about" the revelations of St. Birgitta, rather than directly labeling them as "Revelations."⁷¹

The texts of the *Revelationes* lent themselves greatly to excerpting for specific use, and to the creation of dedicated compilations, whether they were addressed to kings and civil authorities, pontiffs and bishops, lay and devotional readers, or followers of the monastic order. This process probably began as soon as the revelations were written down. We have already mentioned a number of compilations as part of the general history of the text, such as the two treatises at the end of Book IV and Book VIII, the *Caeleste viridarium* by Alfonso, and the Birgittine-Norwegian texts. Other revelations were reworked into other genres of writing. Some twenty-five prayers attributed to Birgitta, for instance, or passages excerpted from her revelations, are included in late-fifteenth-century and early-sixteenth-century nuns' prayer books from Vadstena.⁷² Similarly, the vast collection of sermon materials from Vadstena Abbey in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries contains many excerpts from the *Revelationes*.⁷³ Other significant compilations from later years include the *Onus mundi* by Johannes Tortsch, which emphasized Birgitta's prophetic mission, and Tortsch's *Lucidarius revelationum sanctae Birgittae*, containing guidance on how to choose materials for preaching.⁷⁴ Other works in Latin include the

Opusculum vitae et passionis Christi eiusque genetricis Mariae (Anvers 1489), and an anthology published under the title *Thesaurus animae fidelis ex revelationibus beatae Birgittae salubriter collectus* (Cologne 1517).

The *Revelationes* were also widely disseminated throughout Europe in a number of vernacular translations, most frequently in places where a monastic house was established.⁷⁵ The survival of the different vernacular traditions is varied: from Denmark, where only a few parchment fragments remain, to Italy and the Netherlands, where very many excerpts of the *Revelationes* survive in dozens of manuscripts. Most of the European vernaculars are represented, two of the earliest being the Czech translation by Thomas of Stitny, and the German by Tortsch, published in Cologne around 1430. In England, where the Birgittine following was strong in the fifteenth century, there were several vernacular texts.⁷⁶ Birgittine translation ranges from the compilation of prophecies used for propaganda purposes to excerpts around certain themes, and these translations have continued to be made right down to the present day, into French, German, Italian, Polish, and Spanish.⁷⁷ A translation into modern Swedish was undertaken by Tryggve Lundén during 1957 through 1959.⁷⁸

Alongside the gradual development of a Birgittine canon, a number of apocryphal texts came to be associated with the Swedish saint, such as the work known as the “Fifteen Oes,” a sequence of fifteen prayers on Christ’s sufferings at his passion, each beginning with “O.” It was one of the most popular devotions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, available in as many as ten European languages, and particularly popular in England and the Low Countries. It was falsely associated with Birgitta in the fifteenth century and has been attributed to her in numerous editions and translations ever since: a testimony, if one were needed, of the enormous following she left behind her, not only in terms of her prophetic voice and her orthodox upholding of traditional doctrine but also of her influence on private devotion.⁷⁹

III. Style

By their very nature revelation texts are more subjective and fluid than other genres of medieval texts, and Birgitta and her later scribes and editors were probably constantly engaged in a search for improved ways of expressing a revealed truth in everyday prose, without compromising the authority of the divinely revealed message. What the written text aims to achieve is a version that is not necessarily identical with what Birgitta or her first confessors wrote down, but to express as closely as possible the most true and complex version that mirrors the spiritual message and its agreed meaning, both in terms of its theology and its verbal expression. From the uncontrolled experience that has been revealed to her and that she sees in her mind’s eye or hears with her “spiritual ears,” a verbal formulation is worked out as a collaborative undertaking. These early versions, to varying degrees in the different visions, were gradually refined and reworked. However, in the end it is the final, “authorized” Latin version, in which the hands of Mathias, Prior Peter, Master Peter, and

Alfonso have left their traces almost indistinguishably, that brings us as close as it is possible to get to witnessing the resonance of Birgitta's own powerful voice.⁸⁰

Structure and Oral Style

Individually, the revelations have a simple structure. They are usually related to Birgitta by the Lord or the Virgin Mary or some other denizen of heaven, occasionally God the Father, or else with another saint as the mouthpiece, such as St. Agnes or St. John the Baptist. With the exception of the book-length sustained visions (Book V, *Sermo angelicus*, *Regula Salvatoris*), they vary in length between a few lines and a few pages. The shortest revelation, Book IV 56, contains seventeen words; the longest, Book VIII 48, contains over seven thousand words. Many open with a formula such as "The Mother of God spoke to her Son," "The Son spoke to the Bride," and frequently the speech turns into dialogue, with Birgitta variously placed in the role of friend, bride, daughter, and confidant and confessant. Within each revelation there are transitions in the presentation, such as a move from a descriptive image to a metaphorical interpretation, sometimes ending with a summary recapitulation, expressed in terms of a moral stricture or warning. Moreover, the image or theme in question may recur in a subsequent revelation. Not infrequently, the revelations are structured in a way that resembles the methods of sermon composition and contain echoes of preachers' methods: by distinguishing different senses of a word or image, for example, and by providing an orientation for the intellect with numerical composition and exemplification of a truth in a narrative.

Since so many revelations are presented within the framework of a dialogue, a pervasive dimension of intimacy is created: Christ often anticipates the bride's questions or reads her thoughts, as, for instance, when she prays for mercy for sinners, including herself, or for the city of Rome, or for the conversion of the infidels. She also displays a biting sarcasm, as is illustrated in her wry comment on what present-day clerics have done to the Ten Commandments: "... recomposed them into a single phrase. And what is this phrase? 'Put out your hand and give us some money!'" (Book I 56.7-10). Sometimes, even, she breaks into a song of praise, as in Book III 29.

An oral strand threads throughout the text, reflecting the patterns of daily speech, which enter the style at different levels. The text can vacillate between various voices, using the first-, second- and third-person forms and suggesting a withdrawal from one argument and entry into a different voice, reflecting a constant inner debate as well as the collaborative working out of the verbal formulation. Such shifts in the narrative may be signaled by a formula: "Now you may ask me and say" (Book I 54.12) or "The spirit or the bridegroom answered" (Book I 4.2). Glosses or synonyms are also often adopted to make an image clearer. There are exclamatory statements of everyday speech or colloquial expressions (e.g., "and such like," "as it were") signifying a train of thought in a random sequence. A conversational tone is especially well illustrated in those sections where we are given a description of what Birgitta "saw,"

and these passages contrast with the passages that echo biblical language, as, for example, the imperatives familiar from the prophetic tradition, such as “you shall be,” “listen,” “I am,” “Blessed are you,” as well as praise formulas and commands to Birgitta to obey the messages she receives.

Latin Style

The Latinity of the *Revelationes* is mainly unpolished and unrefined. It is basic workaday medieval Latin, heavily influenced by the Latin Vulgate and the standard liturgical language of the church. The syntax is straightforward and uncomplicated, clauses tend to be coordinated rather than subordinated, ablative absolutes seldom occur, and indirect discourse is rarely used and then only in its simplest form. Many standard rhetorical devices are employed, of the type that are habits of thought unconsciously used by medieval writers, which aid memory and reinforce the previously stated theme. Asyndeton, repetition of the subject, recapitulatory pronouns in the organization of long sentences, and tautologies for emphasis are all present, as are enumeration, symmetry, parallelisms, and antithesis. Other devices include the juxtaposition of opposites, the superimposition of apparent contradictions, the repetition of initial words in successive clauses (anaphora), the conjunction of synonyms or antonyms in pairs, alliteration, the repetition of a stem with variation in inflexion, prefix, suffix, tense, or part of speech (paregmenon). Some of these features reflect a learned rhetorical style, and were probably adopted by the confessors and assimilated into the evolving text. Where some chapters are simple in their use of rhetorical devices, others are richly enhanced with them: Book I 47, for instance, has triads, anaphora (*magis–magis–magis*), and antitheses (*centum–unum, centies–semel, pro mundo–pro me*).⁸¹ A comparison between the highly worked *Sermo angelicus*, which is written in polished liturgical Latin, and the *Extravagantes*, which are written in a plain, raw style that echoes the vernacular language, illustrates the two extremes in the Latin style registers.

The vocabulary is limited and displays some idiosyncrasies. Certain words are given unexpected meanings, for example, “*apiastrum*” in Book II 19.98 must mean “queen-bee,” and “*fundare*” in Book III 27.11 means “to trust in.” There is a certain obvious preference for Latin constructions that lie close to Swedish usage, for example, the use of “*scire*” as equivalent to “to be able to” (“*kunna*”), or “*ita quod*” to express result, “so that” (“*så att*”). There are also a few “*Suecisms*,” effects of Swedish usage, sprinkled throughout the text.⁸² Moreover, the language is repetitive; a limited number of grammatical constructions are repeatedly and invariably used; nouns and verbs are frequently and unnecessarily repeated; and whole descriptive phrases used in earlier revelations often return in later ones almost verbatim.

Imagery

Birgitta’s mind is encyclopedic and synthetic, her imagination fierce and fertile, and she shows sharp powers of observation and a keen intelligence and un-

derstanding. Striking images in unusual juxtapositions frequently form the nucleus of the visionary experience, in a succession of points that are sharp enough to fix themselves in her mind in discrete parcels. It can indeed be argued that it is in these vivid sections of the prose that we hear her voice most distinctly. Altogether, several hundred images are used in the *Revelationes*, most of them conventional biblical images (for example, allusions to fire, water, mountains, the choice between two roads, the armor of a Christian knight, the vineyard, the king who travels away from home and then returns, sheep and shepherds, wolves, and the parent who is reconciled to a lost son). Other images refer to scientific and technical matters, homely affairs (such as cheese making and beer production), family life (weaning a baby, disciplining a child, handling servants), social matters (legal disputes, marriage customs), the observation of nature (plants and birds, including fictional fantastic ones), and to birth and death.⁸³ Some of the standard images are used in such a way that they become memorable turns of expression, vivid metaphors, and almost poetical descriptions. When Mary recalls how she contemplated the beauty of the child Jesus, she remarks, "Joy seeped through my soul like drops of dew" (Book I 10.13). In a later revelation, Mary says, "As a magnet attracts iron to itself, so too I attract hard hearts to God" (Book III 32.3). Furthermore, focus is often thrown on small, graphic details, such as the bloody footprints that Jesus left behind as he was led away from the pillar of scourging (Book I 10.19) or the way the guilty bishop is dragged off with a rope about his neck while God and all his saints avert their eyes (Book III 4.17). In Book I 30.8 Christ describes his heart as "nothing but a lump of flesh," and in the *Quattuor orationes*, in a prayer of praise to all of Christ's limbs, he is praised for his "precious and blessed nostrils" and "clean teeth" (QO 3.70, 72).

Some revelations have their point of departure in a biblical passage, and at other times the similitudes are simply didactic fictions, such as that of the sorcerer selling false gold in Book I 21. These allegories frequently branch out into related allegories or applications. A good example of this may be found in Book II 14 where God is compared to a skilled goldsmith who sends his servants out to sell his gold for ten talents weighed twice over. This is all explained in detail and the explanations include additional, shorter allegories. Not infrequently the allegories and vignettes are presented with abrupt transitions or are applied in what to us appear illogical and inconsistent ways. For example, in Book II 5 Absalom leaves his father David and goes off to a "grove of few trees" and presumes to act as king. But a few lines later we are told that this grove and its trees stand for the church and the seven sacraments. In the explanation of the allegory of a maiden and a king in Book III 24, we find the maiden representing the church, and the church is said to have three sons, but in the allegory itself it was the king who had three sons. Examples of metaphors and allegories, such as these, demonstrate the vast range of images that swarmed around her very prolific mind and they show what a passionate and receptive storyteller she must have been in person.

IV. Note on the Translation and the Annotation

The editors of the critical editions have reconstructed an archetype text on the basis of the best readings from a selection of carefully chosen manuscripts, using a traditional stemma technique. It is this archetype that forms the basis of the present translation. Occasionally, we have adopted a reading that was relegated to the apparatus of variants by the modern editor; in such cases our choice is explained in a textual note. The notes also alert the reader to a small number of places where a significant variant exists that has been rejected by the editor but nevertheless might be the reading of the archetype. The reader wishing to pursue a detailed codicological, philological, or paleographical study must of course refer to the individual volumes of the critical edition.

The simple, straightforward Latin has been translated into simple, straightforward English. Anglo-Saxon root words have been preferred to Latin synonyms whenever convenient, although wide use has been made of the traditional theological and spiritual vocabulary. Ambiguous expressions in Latin are left ambiguous in the English translation; and an explanation is added if appropriate. We have not sought to impose a uniform style but have endeavored to follow the varieties of the style of the revelations themselves. To prevent the translation from becoming too clumsy, however, we have interfered with a certain amount of leveling, in particular with tense sequences, number, and redundant adverbs. Some syntactic change has also been necessary, especially in the breaking down of periodic sentences into shorter ones. A large number of redundant particles and connectives (e.g., “et,” “autem,” “item,” “sic”) have been omitted or replaced by punctuation as appropriate. In the same way, many of the large numbers of superlatives have been reduced to positives. The Latin is frequently characterized by redundancy and repetition (e.g., “cum . . . tunc . . . post . . . tunc,” “quomodo et qualiter”), which we have retained to the extent that it does not unduly compromise idiomatic usage.

An effort has been made to render the Latin into an English style that is as modern as possible. However, given that we are dealing with a medieval text written in a language that was archaic even for medieval people, allowances have now and then been made for certain archaisms that are closer to the Latin than a more modern alternative would have been. The resulting translation may strike some readers as being uneven. But then the style of the *Revelationes* is uneven, combining awkward Latin with powerful and intensely memorable imagery.

A word about gender is required. The translation has aimed to be gender-neutral in general statements about the human situation, although we acknowledge that we have not always been successful in this aim due to the ambivalent use of the word “homo” to mean both humankind and an individual person, often specifically a male person, within the same context. There are often sudden transitions made from a general to a specific reference that complicate this issue. In such cases we have selected the term that is most in

keeping with a well-modulated modern English prose style, but also leaving room for variation in different contexts.⁸⁴

Upon the completion of the critical edition of the *Revelationes* in Latin in 2002, and because some of the earliest volumes are now out of print, or difficult to obtain, a decision was made by Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien to make the Latin text available electronically. It can now be searched on the ‘Corpus Reuelacionum Sancte Birgitte’ website of Riskarkivet (The National Archives of Sweden): <http://www.ra.se/ra/diplomatariet/CRB/index.htm>. Although the electronic text at present does not contain the textual apparatus or the scholarly introductions and is still subject to further refinement, it may easily be searched online.

To enable the reader to find the Latin text with ease, references in the present translation are given exactly as in the critical editions, and referred to by Book, chapter and paragraph number (for example, IV 5.6 = Book IV, chapter 5, paragraph 6). With regard to orthographical practice, since the critical editions of the *Revelationes* are not fully consistent, we have decided, when quoting, to follow the orthography of the edition in question.⁸⁵ However, titles of Latin works are given in classical orthography.

The ornate chapter headings by Alfonso of Jaén have been retained at the head of each chapter (indented), but supplemented with shorter, summary headings in modern English, to aid quick reference (in italics). Likewise, where they occur, the medieval explanatory materials (the *additiones* and *declarationes*, which we have translated as “additions/addenda” and “explanations”) are also indented, to indicate their status as secondary editorial additions.⁸⁶

Each revelation is accorded at least a rough date, although most of these dates are not by any means certain and there is still plenty of room for discussion; in this, we have been guided chiefly by the suggested datings of Trygve Lundén in his Swedish translation and those of Birgit Klockars in her pioneering work on the contextual circumstances of the *Revelationes*.⁸⁷ We have given the date for the commencement of the visions as 1344, the most likely date of Birgitta’s widowhood, although the date 1346 is sometimes given as an alternative possibility.⁸⁸

We have restricted the biblical references largely to direct citations (from the Vulgate), and to unusual or less familiar biblical allusions or passages. Since, as we have mentioned, Birgitta’s language is completely infused with biblical language we have felt it better to apply strict methods to indicate quotations rather than to register every possible biblical echo. Referring the reader to a biblical passage only on the basis of certain stylistic similarities or coincidences in word choice may lead to confusion, the more so given that the present English translation may not reflect the English translation of the cited passage in the Bible. Therefore, the biblical verses referred to are only a fraction of the possible number that could be mentioned.⁸⁹ In the case of parallel passages in the synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—only one of the references is given (normally Matthew).

We have put speculative and contextual matter in the introductions to individual books, and kept the notes to individual revelations deliberately brief.

In the notes the first aim, as already mentioned, is to pinpoint any linguistic or interpretative difficulties in the Latin text. In cases of ambiguity we have consulted the medieval Swedish translation to see how the Swedish translators at the end of the fourteenth century interpreted such passages, which is not, of course, to imply that such a reading is to be preferred to the Latin text. However, it does help on occasion to understand how the Latin text was being understood by the Swedish translators in the 1380s, and how the Latin translators were sometimes casting around for an appropriate translation of a word that, to their ears, may have had an ambiguous meaning in Birgitta's original language. The second aim of the notes is to indicate instances where a word is more suggestive in the Swedish translation of the 1380s, again without implying that such a reading might be more original; for example, in Book II 1 the Latin word *avis* ("bird") is rendered in Swedish by the more specific word *fiskemakan* ("the seagull"). References to the Swedish text are to Klemming's edition of *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelsen* (BU), unless otherwise stated. The third aim of the notes is to indicate the small number of cases where there is reason to suppose that a pre-archetypal text still exists (primarily the "Birgittine-Norwegian" tradition). Our fourth aim is to identify duplicated revelations with a cross-reference, and also to indicate parallel passages in the canonization proceedings. The fifth aim is to explain terms and factual matters, especially where they relate to historical circumstances. Identifying individuals remains problematic, however, as so much circumstantial information has been stripped out of the texts: for example, although there are innumerable references to a certain king, we cannot be absolutely sure that the word *rex* unequivocally refers to King Magnus Eriksson, although in many cases it almost certainly does. It has been difficult to draw a satisfactory line in determining the criteria for these explanatory comments, but our guiding principle has been to provide a note where the text requires some explanation on a specific detail to make it more easily understood. We have endeavored to keep references to the secondary sources to a minimum, mainly restricting ourselves to those that have been written in recent years, or where substantive comment has been made by an individual scholar on a point of detail.

In the notes a cross-reference is occasionally given to a cognate image or reference in a nearby or similar revelation, especially in the case of the more striking or unusual images; a full index of imagery will be provided in volume 4.

Finally, a note is required on the spelling of personal names, for which it has been hard to adopt a workable consistency. In general we have tried to find a close vernacular equivalent to reflect the place of origin of a person concerned, but if that proved difficult we have given a Latinized form, or, in some cases, a Swedish alternative spelling for the Latin one. For the saint's name we have chosen to adopt the most common Latin and Swedish form, Birgitta, rather than its anglicized version, Bridget.⁹⁰

NOTES

1. For an overall survey of Scandinavian history for the period see Helle, *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*; Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia*. See too the one-volume encyclopedia in English, *Medieval Scandinavia* ed. P. Pulsiano and K. Wolf; and the multi-volume encyclopedia in the Scandinavian languages, *KL*. For information on individuals, see the national biography, *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*.

2. Although the two women never met, there is evidence of some contact between their confessors, and between Catherine and Birgitta's daughter, Katherina of Sweden. See Noffke, *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, p. 81.

3. E. F. Jacob sums him up thus: "There is a mixture of contemporary theory and observation that runs through the allegories which he presents . . . John of Roquetaillade is too bizarre a figure to have much influence upon fourteenth-century history or upon the annals of his order; but significant he certainly is, indicative of certain currents in the political and scientific speculation of contemporary Europe, of the break-up of the ordered medieval world. . . ." See Jacob, *Essays in Later Medieval History*, p. 194.

4. Piltz, "Revelation and the Human Agent," p. 182.

5. See further Fogelqvist, *Apostasy and Reform*.

6. For information about her biography see the chronological table of her life (p. xvii); and Morris, *St. Birgitta of Sweden*.

7. Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 2, pp. 265–66. For a translation of these meditations, and a discussion of the prayers, see Morris, "Four Birgittine Meditations."

8. *Post aliquos dies, cum sponsa Christi sollicita esset de mutacione status sui ad seruiendum Deo et super hoc stabat orando in capella sua, tunc rapta fuit in spiritu, et cum esset in extasi vidit nubem lucidam et de nube audiuit vocem dicentem sibi: "Mulier, audi me." Et ipsa perterrita timens, quod esset illusio, aufugit ad cameram suam, et statim confessa accepit postmodum corpus Christi. Demum cum post aliquos dies staret in oracione in eadem capella, iterum apparuit ei illa nubes lucida, et de nube audiuit iterum vocem, similia verba proferentem sicut prius, scilicet: "Mulier, audi me." Et tunc ipsa domina perterrita iterum fugit ad cameram et confessa et communicata fuit sicut prius timens illam vocem esse illusionem, deinde cum post aliquos dies iterum oraret, et rapta est in spiritu et iterum vidit nubem lucidam et in ea similitudinem hominis sic dicentem: "Mulier, audi me, ego sum Deus tuus, qui tecum loqui volo." Conterrita igitur illa putans illusionem, audiuit iterum: "Noli" inquit, "timere, quia ego sum omnium conditor, non deceptor, non enim loquor tecum propter te solam, sed propter salutem aliorum. Audi que loquor et vade ad magistrum Mathiam, confessorem tuum, qui expertus est duorum spirituum secundum discrecionem, dic ei ex parte mea, que dico tibi, quia tu eris sponsa mea et canale meum et audies et videbis spiritualia, et spiritus meus permanebit tecum vsque ad mortem." Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 80–81; cf. Ex. 47.*

9. For further references and a discussion of her visionary experience, see Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 54–71.

10. On unitive experience, see Dinzelbacher, "Saint Bridget and Mysticism"; on mystical imagery, see Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*.

11. E.g., Ex. 46. See further on the bride and channel, Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 34–77; Piltz, "Inspiration, vision, profetia."

12. See further, for example, Sjöberg, *Hustru och man*.

13. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 78. See further Thorell, *Fem Moseböcker*.

14. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 64, 78–79.

15. Ex. 96; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 491. The Latin is edited by Seyfarth; see also Mews, *Listen Daughter*.
16. Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, MS C 240; the text is printed in PL 184, cols 1199–1306. The manuscript has a Spanish provenance, which has led scholars to suggest that she may have acquired the book during her pilgrimage with her husband to Santiago de Compostela in the early 1340s; although it is equally likely to have been acquired during the Rome years. See also McGuire, “A Benedictine-Cistercian Source?”
17. See further on her reading Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna*, which remains a classic work for the cultural and literary background.
18. On this general process in medieval writing see further Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, pp. 91–95.
19. Schück, *Två svenska biografier*, p. 316. Nicolaus was bishop of Linköping, 1375–91; see further Lundén, *Nikolaus Hermansson*. Article 38 in the canonisation process deals with her knowledge of Latin (Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 24).
20. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 276 and 300. Magnus Petri was Birgitta’s friend and companion in Rome and the Holy Land; he played a major role in the canonization; d. Florence, 1396.
21. They use phrases like “partially” (*pro parte*), “sufficiently well” (*satis competenter*). See Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 95 (*Vita*) and 393 (Alfonso).
22. For recent general discussions on the mediation of the visions, see Ellis, “The Divine Message”; Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, ch. 4, pp. 109–35.
23. “. . . verba diuinitus ei data scribebat in lingua sua materna manu sua propria, quando erat sana, et faciebat illa translata in lingua latina fidelissime a nobis confessoribus suis et postea ascoltabat illa cum scriptura sua, quam ipsa scripserat, ne vnum verbum ibi plus adderetur uel deficeret, nisi que ipsa in visione diuinitus audierat et viderat. Si vero erat infirma, vocabat confessorem et scriptorem suum secretarium ad hoc specialiter deputatum, et tunc ipsa cum magna deuocione et timore Dei et aliquando cum lacrimis referebat ei verba illa in uulgari suo cum quadam attenta eleuacione mentali, quasi si legeret in libro, et tunc confessor dicebat illa verba in lingua latina illi scriptori, et ille scribebat illa ibidem in sua presencia, et postea cum erant verba conscripta, ipsa volebat illa ascoltare et ascoltabat valde diligenter et attente” (Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 84).
24. On Mathias see especially Strömberg, “Magister Mathias’ ställning”; Strömberg, *Magister Mathias och fransk mendikantpredikan*; Piltz, *Prolegomena*; Piltz, “Magister Mathias of Sweden.”
25. Ed. Bergh, *Magister Mathias Lincopensis, Testa nucis*; Piltz, “Mathiae canonici Lincopensis Alphabeti distinccionum.”
26. Ed. Piltz, *Magistri Mathiae . . . Homo conditus*; Wählin, *Magister Mathias. Copia exemplorum*. This work mentions Marie of Oignies (p. 35), whose life must have been known to Birgitta.
27. Ed. Billing-Ottosson, *Magister Mathias Lincopensis*. This is the work that the Italian preacher Bernadino of Siena (1380–1444) copied and used as a source for his sermons, and that Nicholas of Cusa (1401–46) ordered to be copied, after hearing Bernadino draw on the Swedish theologian’s work.
28. Book VI 75; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 530, 620; and Book V int. 16.3, in which he is compared with the arrogant protagonist of Book V. See also Book I 3.8–9.
29. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 267–68, and 324.
30. The main source of our knowledge of Prior Petrus comes from the Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 472–562 and from some of the *Extravagantes*.
31. See Höjer, *Studier i Vadstena klostera historia*, pp. 72–75; Cnatingius, *Studies in the Order*, pp. 14–25; Risberg, *Liber usuum*, p. 10.

32. Petrus of Skänninge's life is known mainly from *De vita domini Petri Olavi*, probably written by the later Confessor General, Ulpho Birgeri in 1426–27. There is also information in *Fragmentum de vita et miraculis Magistri Petri Olavi*, by Brother Mathias Laurentii, d. 1486. For further references, see *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, “Peter Olofsson.”

33. For the *Diarium* entry, see Gejrot, *Diarium*, p. 36. There are two principal, variant, versions of the *Vita*; see Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 71–101 and 614–40 (in the present translation we refer usually to the former). The relations between the surviving versions are complex and not unambiguous; see further Ekwall, *Vår äldsta Birgittavita*. For an English translation of the *Vita*, see Tjader Harris, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 71–98.

34. See Lundén, *Den heliga Birgitta och den helige Petrus*; Härdelin, “Birgittinsk lovsång.” See also Collins, *The Bridgettine Breviary*, Introduction.

35. On Alfonso's life and writings, see Colledge, “*Epistola Solitarii*,” Jönsson, *Alfonso of Jaén*, and Gilkær, *The Political Ideas*. The two latter scholars provide new perspectives, but are not in agreement on all points.

36. See Voaden, “Rewriting the Letter,” on the *Epistola*, and Gilkær, *The Political Ideas*, on Book VIII.

37. See Jönsson, *Alfonso of Jaén*, pp. 173–79. The *Caeleste viridarium* has not been edited.

38. *Process Vita*, Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 98. Many were intended as letters (e.g., IV 4); see Öberg, *Kring Birgitta*.

39. See further Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, pp. 38–50; and below p. 41.

40. The same message was also confirmed in VII 31:6. See also Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, p. 12 note 31.

41. In fact, Alfonso's main stylistic contribution seems to have been to make the texts more verbose. Materially, he does not appear to have contributed much, apart from ordering the revelations into eight books and writing headings for all of them.

42. Remains of wax tablets (which contain space for up to fifty words) have been discovered in sites in Scandinavia; see KL “vaxtavlor.” The preface to the *Sermo angelicus* states that Birgitta sat, waiting to become rapt in spirit, with her “writing tablet, paper and pen in her hand,” suggesting that she made use of a writing tablet before making a fair copy on paper. Eklund, *Sermo angelicus*, p. 75.

43. The fragment consists of three parchment leaves, which were used as wraps for legal documents dating from 1359 that belonged to the Cistercian monastery in Julita, which was a daughter-house of Alvastra. It was discovered and described by Liedgren, “Magister Mathias' svenska kungörelse”; see also Moberg, “Heliga Birgittas första uppenbarelse”; Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, pp. 41–44.

44. See further Jönsson, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book III*, which includes a facsimile, pp. 250–51. The fact that this original draft is preserved makes it possible for us to compare this version with the Latin of the authorized text and both of them to the Old Swedish version printed in Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelseser I*, (MS A33). For further discussions on these chapters, see Jönsson, “Sveriges märkligaste enskilda arkiv”; and reviews of *Book III* by Borgehammar in *Kyrkohistorisk årskrift*; and Ellis in *Mystics Quarterly*.

45. They were authenticated and examined by Högman, *Heliga Birgittas originaltexter*.

46. See comments by Sam Jansson in Brøndum-Nielsen, *Nordisk Kultur*, p. 85, and Jansson, *Svend Dahls Bibliotekshandbok*, p. 115 n1.

47. Our translation. "Säkert är, att den är mycket egenartad och absolut ej kan härröra från en yrkesmässig skrivare. Det måste vara en vid skrivning ganska ovan person, som hållit pennan. Härpå tyda också de ovanligt talrika skrivfelen . . . samt det ringa bruket av förkortningstecken." Högman, *Heliga Birgittas originaltexter*, p. 17.

48. There are three letters in Latin and one in Swedish, as well as a letter fragment in Swedish, DS IX:1 (1970) no. 7622 and X:1 (1970) no. 105 and X 106; Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 5, pp. 140–41, Klemming, *Bonaventuras betraktelser öfver Christi lefverne*, p. xxxiii (fragment). Such texts will be translated in Volume 4 of the present publication.

49. The textual history is fully described in the edition of Book I, by Undhagen; see too on the earliest manuscripts, Aili and Svanberg, *Imagines Sanctae Birgittae*.

50. Tore Nyberg has observed that the books are structured into units that are in proportionate relation to one another in length, containing approximately thirty/sixty/one hundred and twenty chapters, and with some cohesion of subject matter. Although none of the extant manuscripts supports his thesis (in that they do not have unambiguous round numbers), it is quite plausible that in intention Alfonso had a symmetrical arrangement in mind. Nyberg also notes that seven, which was the original number of books, is a sacred number. See Nyberg's "Introduction" in Tjader Harris, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 32–39.

51. It appears that those who commissioned manuscripts of the second redaction were at liberty to choose from among these supplementary texts. See Aili and Svanberg, *Imagines Sanctae Birgittae*, 1, pp. 39–42. The RS was not a regular part of the corpus before the Ghotan edition of 1492.

52. The documents relating to the canonization are edited by Collijn in *Acta et processus*.

53. Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, pp. 33–37.

54. These chapters have been separately edited by Arne Jönsson, *St. Bridget's Revelations to the Popes*.

55. This manuscript has not been used in all the critical editions, as it was forgotten during the post-war years; its existence was rediscovered in 1960 and again in 1993, but it is only in recent years that scholars have paid it due attention.

56. See further Aili and Svanberg, *Imagines Sanctae Birgittae*, I pp. 89–101, on these earliest manuscripts.

57. In the early editions (especially Book VII and Book I) a larger number of manuscripts were used to establish the text, while in the later editions, as more certainty was established, several manuscripts could safely be discounted.

58. "Pro exemplari et memoriali perpetuo"; Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, p. 12 n31.

59. Brynolf Algotsson, 1278–1317, was bishop of Skara diocese (see further Introduction, Book II, pp. 170–71 below).

60. See further Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, pp. 92–113, 182–85.

61. See further Bergh, "Tillförlitligheten."

62. See further Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 221–23; Undhagen, "Une source"; Fredriksson Adman, *Heymericus de Campo*.

63. See Collijn, *Sveriges Bibliografi intill år 1600*, pp. 117–28; Hollman, *Den heliga Birgittas Reuelaciones extravagantes*, pp. 19–27.

64. Two manuscripts, Cod. Holm. A 5a (c. 1425), written for lay use at Vadstena for the Bölje family, and its direct copy, Cod. Skok. 136 (c. 1425), written for the Oxenstierna family, contain the complete corpus, although they lack certain chapters in

Book I 47–49 and Book IV 132–35, which concern sinful priests and are deliberately omitted, “ne clerici scandalizentur.” Another important manuscript is MS Ups. C 61 (c. 1500), which contains some early linguistic forms (for diplomatic editions of Books V and VII, see Morris and Lindell). There is as yet no critical edition of the Swedish text; but see the eclectic edition by Klemming (1857–84), which draws mainly on MS Holm. A 5a, but uses MS Holm. A 33 (c. 1450) for Books I–III, because these sections in MS A 5a are influenced by Danish linguistic forms. Other errors and lacunae in MS Holm. A 5a are supplemented from other MSS. Two branches within the Swedish tradition can be traced, one a faithful, almost word-for-word translation and the other a slightly more idiomatic reworking. The major differences are seen in the lexicon, in the use of circumlocutions, loanwords, and synonym pairs, and in the syntax, with subordinate clauses replacing latinized participial clauses and genitive noun phrases. On the Swedish tradition, see further Wessén, *Svensk medeltid. III*; and Wollin, “Två språk och två skikt.”

65. See further Moberg, “Heliga Birgittas första uppenbarelse”; (on Book IV 24) Aili, “St. Birgitta and the Text”; and (on Book V) Morris, *Book V*, pp. 33–52.

66. Ed. Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, pp. 423–522. A new edition is currently under preparation in a doctoral thesis by Jon Adams at the University of London.

67. See Gilkær, “The ‘Birgittiner-norske’ Texts”; Wessén, *Svensk medeltid. II*.

68. The four pieces can be found in Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, pp. 458, line 18, “Mz þy þæssom . . . swa mykklo hardare”; p. 465, line 25 “MOdhoren maria taladhe . . . þy aldrik ændas”; p. 487, line 1 “<H>on ær ekki . . . troo þa røne”; and “*Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 498, line 18 “Ek sæm tala . . . j þzta rike.” They will be translated in volume 4 of the present translation. Moberg, “Heliga Birgittas första uppenbarelse,” has shown that Birgitta’s original autographs were not used as sources for the Birgittine-Norwegian text, but that there was at least one intervening text before the Birgittine-Norwegian text was produced.

69. Eklund, “A Re-assessment”; and Eklund, *QO*, p. 104.

70. See Risberg, *Liber usuum*, p. 13.

71. “Stante huiusmodi indiscussa doctorum controversia non est tutum dictum librum reuelacionum aliter quam intitulantur libri apocryphi ‘De reuelacionibus celestibus’ intitulare” [considering that there is an ongoing controversy among the learned, it is not safe to give the said book of revelations another kind of title than that of the apocryphal books, i.e., “About heavenly revelations”]; see Fredriksson Adman, *Heymericus de Campo*, p. 223.

72. Geete, *Svenska böner*, pp. 67–68, 223–24, 393–96, 466–69, 471–72, 474, 478; Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, pp. 132–76; Geete, *Fornsvensk bibliografi*, pp. 101–2, Section A, no. 288, 289. For the complete catalog of the surviving Latin manuscripts from Vadstena, see Andersson-Schmitt et al., *Mittelalterliche Handschriften*.

73. See further Roger Andersson, “Birgittas revelationer i Vadstenabrödernas predikningar.” He notes that 31 percent of the sermon citations are from Book I, 22 percent from Book VI, and 19 percent from Book IV, with chapters I 32, I 47, and VI 35 the most frequently cited.

74. See Montag, “Reception of Saint Birgitta in Germany.”

75. On the various vernacular traditions see further Morris and O’Mara, *Translation of the Works of St. Birgitta*.

76. See further Ellis, “Flores ad fabricandam.”

77. Examples of later translations are: French (1624, with several reprints),

French 1834 (two reprints); German 1502, 1856 (one reprint) and 2000 (in progress); Italian 1883–85 (unclear whether complete); Polish 1698; Spanish 1901 (omits Book V).

78. Lundén, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser*, is based largely on the Ghotan edition of 1492, but it also makes use of the medieval Swedish in the case of dubious passages. See further Jönsson, “The Modern Swedish translator of St. Birgitta’s Works”; selections have also recently been translated by Hårdelin, *Heliga Birgitta*.

79. See Gejrot, “*The Fifteen Oes*”; and on the tradition in general, see Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 249–56.

80. Some modern textual critics challenge the idea of the possibility of reconstructing an “original” text, claiming instead that a medieval text is the sum of its surviving copies; see, for example, the discussion by Barratt, “How Many Children Had Julian of Norwich?”; and the review of the Latin critical edition (of Book III) by Roger Ellis in *Mystics Quarterly*: “There has been a consensus, from the beginning, that traditional textual criticism was an appropriate tool to use in the creation of a critical edition: reconstruction, not of St. Birgitta’s original Swedish text, since that survives only in two small fragments, but of the earliest Latin edition. . . . Readers, especially readers of the Kane and Donaldson edition of *Piers Plowman*, may wonder at the confidence displayed by the modern editors of the *Liber*. But my own researches, admittedly only in the narrower field of English manuscripts of the Latin *Liber*, do suggest a high degree of consistency in the subgroupings created: maybe the sacred status the text enjoyed among so many of its readers preserved it from greater disturbance.”

81. See Odelman, “Lärd och folklig retorik,” p. 18.

82. See Odelman, “‘Rarae aves’ ”; and see Westerbergh and Odelman, *Glossarium till medeltidslatinet i Sverige*.

83. See further Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna*, p. 69 et passim; the most striking images are noted in the Introduction in each Book in the present translation; see also the index of images in Volume 4.

84. In broad terms we have been guided by the approach adopted by Martha Nussbaum in her own translation work:

To use “he or she” as the unmarked pronoun in every instance seemed intolerably cumbersome. To opt for “he” everywhere seemed repugnant to my political sensibilities and also false to the current state of the language, where, increasingly, efforts are being made to give “she” equal time. It also seems clear to me that in the contexts where “he” most often would so occur in this book . . . its presence is far from being really unmarked: it does encourage the imagination to picture the character in question as male. . . . I therefore decided, on reflection, to follow Plato’s practice . . . by using “he or she” fairly frequently, in order to remind the reader not to think of men only, but reverting . . . to the masculine in between, in order to avoid cumbersome sentence rhythms. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, pp. 3–4.

85. For instance, the use of “u” and “v” in initial and medial position varies between the editions, and Aili (Book IV) reproduces the characteristic spellings of Codex Kalmarnensis.

86. The addendum (*additio*) generally contains some additional material, and is an extra, short revelation; the explanation (*declaratio*) contains a circumstantial detail; however, this distinction is not consistently applied.

87. Lundén, *Den Heliga Birgitta. Himmelska uppenbarelser*; Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna*.

88. Ekwall, "Årscykeln"; Ekwall, "Den heliga Birgittas makes dödsår" has argued for the date 1346, but according to Liedgren, "Två birgittinska data," the sources more unequivocally suggest 1344. Bergh, *Heliga Birgitta: Ättabarnsmor*, adds further arguments in support of Ekwall.

89. The critical editions are inconsistent in their citations, ranging from the direct quotations only in some editions to almost every biblical echo in others.

90. The name, from the Irish saint Brigid of Kildare (d. 525), probably entered western Scandinavia through missionary contacts in Norway; but it was only after the Swedish saint's death that it grew in popularity.

Book I



FIGURES 4a AND 4b. Opening initials of Master Mathias's Prologue and Book I; from MS IV.G.2 fol. 2r, and 3r, Biblioteca centrale, Palermo.

Introduction

Book I contains revelations that were all received and recorded in Sweden during the earliest period of Birgitta's calling, between 1344 and 1349. The collection was probably assembled initially by Master Mathias of Linköping, who submitted it along with other texts dating from the same period to a commission that was convened to verify its authenticity. According to I 52.8, he was told that "he should take care to set forth these words in writing to his own father (i.e., his bishop) . . . and he will convey them to the archbishop and later to another bishop. When these have been thoroughly informed, he should send them on to a third bishop." This meeting of bishops probably took place in Uppsala in 1346, under the direction of Archbishop Hemming Nicholai, and the bishops who participated were Petrus Tyrgilli of Linköping, Thomas of Växjö, and Hemming of Turku, in addition to Master Mathias and Prior Petrus of Alvastra.¹ The commission gave its recognition to Birgitta's visionary messages, and soon after, probably in 1348, a selection of them, including some that were directed at foreign magnates, was sent with a delegation to the pope in Avignon, an enterprise that was sanctioned and paid for by the Swedish king and led by Bishop Hemming, who was accompanied by Prior Petrus.² It is a generally held belief that the delegation was partly seeking papal authorization of those earliest revelations in Mathias's edition, and partly sending specific advice to the kings of France and England.

The Prologue to Book I, the *Stupor et mirabilia*, was written by Master Mathias of Linköping in a rhetorical style that is more complex and learned than the prose of the *Revelationes*. This text later seems to have been understood as a general introduction to the entire Birgittine corpus, as is suggested by a plural reference in I 3.9:

“who composed the Prologue to these books.” The Prologue is the first of several defenses of Birgitta’s prophetic authority that came to be written—most of them after her death—and has the purpose of legitimizing the revelations. Although Mathias does not question their authenticity and divine origins, he states in very strong terms that Birgitta’s miraculous deeds and words are truly “remarkable” and require only to be shown to be the work of a good rather than an evil spirit. Indeed, he goes so far in his enthusiasm as to state that the fact of Christ choosing Birgitta as the instrument of his divine grace was more extraordinary than the Incarnation itself (Prologue paragraphs 21–3). He was impressed by Birgitta’s ardent love of God and her robust and biting criticisms of the secular world, kings, knights, priests and ordinary Christians, as well as popes and bishops. He raises a number of issues in defense of Birgitta’s special calling: her holy life, the miracle of her remarkable words, the authenticity of the texts, a repudiation of suggestions that they are of diabolical origin; and he defends against her potential detractors her role as a simple, unlearned woman. Mathias also quotes a revelation she received after her “calling vision,” which contains an attack on the nobles of Sweden who have sinned in pride and greed, and how now they must be put to death, their limbs fed to wild animals, and their chattels confiscated (Prologue paragraphs 35–36).³ This “Prologue revelation” exists in an early draft in Swedish; see “General Introduction,” p. 15 above). Although it is alluded to in the *Vita*, after a description of Birgitta’s calling (“Afterwards, he added: ‘For three reasons, Lucifer fell,’ etc. as is more fully contained in the revelations of the heavenly book”), the revelation does not, in fact, occur elsewhere in the collected corpus of *Revelationes*.⁴

The impassioned rhetoric with which Mathias couches his defense, and the arguments he uses, may hint at some of the criticisms that had been leveled in the 1340s at Birgitta’s apparent spiritual gift. He rebuts the idea that the revelation could be false, and describes it as a marvel, reassuring doubters that there is nothing new in her visions, which are completely true. Finally, he lists a number of facts, including miraculous events, which corroborate the truth of the revelation. The Prologue breaks off suddenly, leaving the distinct impression that there is some concluding text missing.

Several revelations in Book I date from the earliest days and months of Birgitta’s conversion to a mystical life. They contain explicit autobiographical details, and hint at the conflict she faced between her former secular existence and her new life of devotion. Some allude to her recent widowhood (e.g., the death of her husband [I 2.4]) and her relatives and children, whom she must renounce (I 1.9). She must beware of being drawn back by familial love (I 20.7), and she is to “let go of riches” and the “pleasure of the body.” In return for the “presence of the family” and the “possession of goods,” God will reward her with his spiritual gifts (I 32.1; cf. also I 2.4). Some revelations speak of the duties of the bride and the status of marriage, spiritually understood (e.g., the important revelation of I 26 and I 40). Others refer to her feelings of doubt and uncertainty with respect to her calling (e.g., I 5), and the extraordinary fact that she, an unworthy woman, was chosen to be the medium of the divine message (e.g., I 4). She is taught how to pray in her private devotions but

warned that God does not listen when she prays for those who are already condemned (I 14). She is advised on her visionary calling, and on the need for abstinence, modesty in her dress, chastity, confession, humility, and obedience. She is told that her conceited heart needs taming, to which end she deserves to be beaten with the rod (I 12.3). Her asceticism is to be tempered by moderation, however, and she is told to observe “prudent abstinence from gluttony and from delicacies, as far as your natural constitution can endure it. Acts of abstinence that go beyond the capacity of nature are not to my liking, for I demand rationality and the taming of lusts” (I 38.6). In this comment there is an emphasis on pragmatism and practical moderation, which later comes to characterize the Birgittine order.

In addition to addressing various facets of Birgitta’s calling, Book I adumbrates several other themes that come to distinguish her entire output. One dominant theological issue is that of God’s goodness and providence, and the belief that whatever the vicissitudes of life, and provided people have a good intention, God will mete out his justice according to their deserts, but also with mercy; that everything in creation is ordered with a purpose, and for the greater edification of humankind (e.g., I 19.2). Justice and mercy, indeed, frequently go hand in hand in Book I (e.g., I 12.3). The judgment and wrath of God is of course a common theme throughout the Old Testament, and there are repeated echoes from the biblical books of the patriarchs and prophets, such as the “I am” formula at the opening of chapter 1: “I am the creator of heaven and earth,” which recalls “Jahweh,” the name of God, meaning “I (who) am” (see Exodus 3:4).

The reform of degenerate Christianity is another theme that starts to be introduced in Book I. Present-day clerics are sometimes the target of the criticism (e.g., I 47.13), as are secular rulers. Birgitta’s concern with social rank is suggested in I 48.22, where she indicates that priests are more careful about what they say while talking to people of higher social status. A few revelations begin to raise in general terms the legitimacy of the crusades against the heathens that were planned by King Magnus Eriksson in the eastern Baltic in 1348 (e.g., I 41, I 55, I 57; see further Book II Introduction). Another theme that starts to emerge in Book I concerns advice on the monastic ideal and the setting up of a new monastery, plans that were starting to gestate early in the 1340s, perhaps even while Birgitta’s husband was still alive. In I 18, for instance, she voices her concern about monastic acquisitions of estates and properties. Another of the Birgittine traits is the emphasis on preaching (e.g., Christ’s main work is described as preaching in I 40.10), which later comes to be a major theme among the brethren at Vadstena Abbey. Birgitta’s identification with the passion of Christ and her Marian devotion are two further themes. In I 9 she expounds on the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Virgin, and starts to develop her distinctive Mariology.⁵ The following revelation, I 10, is the first of three major revelations on the crucifixion (cf. IV 70 and VII 15). It contains maternal imagery and parallels with Birgitta’s own “calling,” her fear of illusion, her hesitancy in speaking out, and her sense of unworthiness. Other important Mariological revelations in Book I are chs. 22 and 27.

Christ speaks directly, with no interlocutor mentioned, in one-third of the visions in Book I (twenty visions), while the Virgin speaks directly in four visions; many of these monologues occur in the first part of the Book. Christ addresses Birgitta in seven visions, and the Virgin addresses Birgitta in six visions. There are a number of dialogues involving the voices of Christ, the Virgin, Birgitta, and also, less frequently, the heavenly host, Birgitta's guardian angel, the devil, or a saint such as John the Baptist or St. Peter. Occasionally, Birgitta's experience is visual, and she "sees" the deity, for example, a saint talking to Christ in I 16, or Christ looking angry in I 28; and in I 31 the description of the Virgin's beauty is essentially visual rather than auditory. Sometimes further circumstantial details are supplied to certain texts: there are explanations and addenda attached to chapters 3, 13, 16, 17, 23, 28, and 32.

Several references in Book I are made to Birgitta's visionary role and her calling. She is referred to as a "young" or "new" bride (I 4.2; I 12.13; I 38.3; I 58.1) and once as the "chosen wife of Christ" (I 40.13); while Christ is described as "the bridegroom Jesus" (I 21.1). Several revelations mention her material understanding (e.g., I 28) and the way in which she receives her vision "inwardly in her conscience" (I 40; cf. 4.1). There are several references to the authority of the answers she receives: in I 45 Christ's answer to his mother is given "because of this my bride who is standing here" (cf. I 48.1: "for the sake of this bride of mine present here"; I 41.4: "for the sake and knowledge and instruction of this bride here, who cannot perceive spiritual things except by means of physical ones"; and I 26.8: "for whose sake all this is being enacted"). Expressing her astonishment at having been chosen to be the mouthpiece of God, several revelations in this Book voice her "amazement within herself" (I 31.2) at her visionary experience, and she wonders why God did not choose someone prettier, holier, and richer than herself (I 34.17). The mystical language in I 34.9 describes the bond of fire descending from Christ to Birgitta. The importance of the spoken word engaged in a constant interior dialogue is further suggested in I 48.2, in a case when God the divine speaks to his human nature "in the manner of someone speaking to himself." When Birgitta is asked what is troubling her, she answers on behalf of herself and people in general, and her desire to be given a divine message "while the persons here present are listening" (I 22.1) might suggest that the vision was received in the presence of others, perhaps her confessors.

Finally, some of the more striking images in Book I are worth mentioning. Some images are used merely in passing, whereas others mix metaphors (such as the short vision of I 57 that mentions a giant, hunters, and rotten meat). Some twist into a complex web of evocative prose (e.g., the Virgin is a flower surrounded by other flowers that are the elect); while others are sustained throughout the entire vision (e.g., the gibbet in I 56.21, or savaged sheep in I 59). Occasionally they are reminiscent of folklore, for instance, the treasury with the thorny barbs inside it (I 16); a man dragged by the hair and crushed underfoot (I 18); a breast-feeding devil (I 21); untamed bulls (I 56.12); a bottomless sack (I 56.1); devils like crows (I 56.28); and the thick skin of a beast (I 56. 30). There are also lyrical images: Mary is like incense whose fragrance

wafted up to God (I 46.2); a soul is like liquid copper (I 28.10); the world is ocean spray (I 2.7) and a false dream (I 40.13); God's sweetness is like two people sharing a nut (I 42.7); the fruit of the briar is red on the outside but inside full of impurity and prickles (I 48.31); and all strength before God is "dry straw in fire" (I 50.2). Much natural imagery is used in Christ's and Mary's lyrical praise of each other: Christ is compared to "a seed that was never sown but still grew" (I 50.14) and Mary is described as a flower above all mountains (I 51). There are also technical and domestic images, for example, melted copper (I 53.29); gold in the fire of purgatory (I 29.3); Birgitta's body should be like a cheese mold (I 33.9); milk, cheese, wool from a sheep (I 38.3); a dog or a cat (I 46.13); a pregnant mother prepares her infant's clothing (I 47); smoking coal is equal to the loss of the love of God (I 54.14); a brooch worn on the clothing, grass cut by a scythe (I 54.28); and hot fat (I 56.19–20). Some of the imagery is crude and graphic, such as the descriptions of the blood and sweat of Christ in Gethsemane (I 39.2–3); Christ cut in pieces alive (I 58.1); God's words are like lard (I 52); and a man who slays his wife (I 47). Other revelations contain curious embellishments, for example, "birds and flies ate what dropped on the ground from offerings to the gods" (I 48.17); and "the pitch on Noah's ark is sticky, just as words enroot themselves like pitch" (I 52.7).

The late medieval editors of the first printed edition of 1492, the Ghotan edition, open Book I with a quotation in a woodcut title page that is taken from Book VII 30.4–6, 16, which calls for men and women of all classes of society to listen to the prophetic voice of the Revelaciones, and indeed is a suitable opening to the *Liber caelestis* as a whole:

The Son of God spoke: "Listen, all my enemies in the world, for I am not addressing my friends! Listen, all you clerics, archbishops, and bishops and all of lower rank in the Church! Listen, all you religious, of whatever order you are! Listen, you kings and princes of the earth and all you who serve! Listen, you women, princesses, queens, and all ladies and maidservants! All you inhabitants of the world, of whatever condition or rank you are, whether great or small, listen to these words that I myself, who created you, now speak to you! I complain, because you have withdrawn from me and given the devil your will, and you obey his suggestions. Truly, I have redeemed you with my blood, and I ask for nothing but your souls. Therefore, return to me with humility, and I will receive you as my children."

NOTES

1. See further Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, pp. 47–50.
2. See further Klockars, *Biskop*, pp. 153–78. It is unknown exactly which revelations were included, but it was probably those relating to the pope and the kings of England and France, specifically Book IV 103–5 and Book VI 63, as well as some revelations from Book I.

3. See further on the Prologue, Undhagen, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book I*, pp. 38–50; Børresen, “Birgitta’s Godlanguage”; Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 121–23.

4. Isak Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 81: “*Jnde addidit: ‘propter tria cecidit Lucifer’ etcetera, vt in reuelacionibus libri celestis plenius continetur.*”

5. See further, for example, Brodd and Hårdelin, *Maria i Sverige*, Koch, “Lignelses-, symbol- og billedsprog,” Sahlin, “His Heart was my Heart.”

‡ Prologue by Master Mathias

DATE 1340S

1 Amazement and wonders have been heard of in our land.¹ When Moses, the zealot of the law, heard² the law of fire³ given unto the chastisement of sinners from the midst of the fire of the zeal of God,⁴ it was amazing indeed. It is more wonderful that in our day the humble and meek in spirit should hear the voice of Jesus Christ, God and man, even as Elijah once heard it in the sound of a gentle breeze. 2 God, who had earlier made a stiff-necked, rude and ignorant people⁵ zealous for the justice of his law by means of fear, has now in his gentle mercy used love to bring to submission a people instructed in both the old and new covenants.

First came the fear of God like that great wind rending the mountains and crushing the rocks of hardened hearts. It was followed by an upheaval of penance that threw human hearts into a turmoil for the sake of their salvation. Then came the fire of divine charity, shining in the gospel of Christ and giving clear evidence both of his great love for his own, for he delivered himself to death for them lest they suffer eternal death, and of their love for him, for they deliver themselves up, one might say, for his glory. 3 God appeared in this fire not according to the greatness of his divinity but according to the humble condition of our slavery in which he has redeemed the world.⁶ Now follows the sound of God's gentle mercy summoning all people out of the feverish heat of sin into the peaceful breeze of his mercy through the prayers and merits of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy. In this breeze, the Lord, whose nature it is to be merciful, manifests his omnipotent divinity through his great and exalted compassion so that all those who have despised his mercy, so gently and so sweetly displayed, will be left without excuse when God's judgment is made known.

4 Is not that person inexcusable and worthy of being punished by divine justice who has scorned and disdained the mercy held out to him with such sweet words and deeds⁷ as contained in this collection of revelations? 5 For that reason, let all people prepare their souls and enlarge their wills so as to receive a good measure of mercy, pressed down, shaken together, running over beyond merit or hope,⁸ beyond wish or thought, to be poured out through the mediatrix⁹ of God and humanity by her Son, the fount of all piety.

1. "Amazement and wonders have been heard of in our land" (Jeremiah 5:30).

2. "Moses . . . heard"; cf. Exodus 19:18–20:18.

3. "The law of fire"; cf. Deuteronomy 33:2.

4. "The fire of the zeal of God"; cf. Ezekiel 36:5.

5. "A stiff-necked . . . people"; cf. Exodus 32:9.

6. "Even as Elijah once heard it . . . redeemed the world"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 19:11–12.

7. "Words and deeds"; Lat.: "verba et opera," a phrase that recurs in the Prologue regarding the words of Birgitta's revelations and the miraculous deeds confirming them cf. Book I 24–25, 30–31.

8. "A good measure of mercy, pressed down, shaken together, running over beyond merit or hope"; cf. Luke 6:38.

9. "Mediatrix," i.e., the Virgin Mary. The intercessory role of the Virgin is occasionally referred to with this term elsewhere, e.g., Ex. 50.19.

6 May those who read these revelations harbor no suspicions about a false inspiration. It is not to be believed that the evil spirit can deceive those who are truly just or convert sinners to the good or that he is able to infuse into cold hearts the love that he himself lacks or that he advances in any way the glory of God whom he envies. 7 Just as it is impossible for the spirit of truth¹⁰ to utter a lie or turn anyone away from justice or inspire pride or envy in hearts that are subject to him, or induce anyone to the contempt of God almighty, so too, due to innate malice and wickedness, the spirit of falsehood is altogether incapable of producing the opposites of these evils. 8 If anyone should protest that the evil spirit is capable of doing these good things or any one of them, then it follows that he concedes that the spirit of kindness and holiness is capable of their opposites. The inevitable error then results that evil is attributed to God and good to the devil, that the devil is held to be the prince and guide of the just and that God is blasphemed as protecting and encouraging the impious.

9 If you want to recognize the truly righteous person so as not to be deceived by seeming justice, know that the following things are rejected by someone who is truly righteous. First, all things that are truly evil insofar as they bring about eternal death, such as lust, greed, and pride. Then, too, false goods, such as the habit of vainglory in self-ostentation, or cowardice in defending justice, or being eager to judge others with a bitter zeal. Accordingly, the truly righteous person is humble by reason of virtue, firm by reason of humility, calm by reason of firmness of soul. 10 Hence someone who is truly righteous does not seek his own glory, and so the devil cannot use it to trick him. He does not shrink from the defense of justice out of cowardice and so, as a result, is not overcome by the ill will of other people. He does not allow his soul to succumb to any kind of distress and lose its proper seating in reason through impatient fervor. 11 Anybody who suffers mental distress is not for that reason devoid of justice, provided such distress does not unsettle him in the practice of patience and the other virtues. Even when Jesus Christ said to the Father in the midst of the sadness and distress of his mental agony: "Let this cup pass from me!" he showed that his distress had not unsettled his soul from its foundation in virtue by adding: "Not as I will but as you will."¹¹

12 You will also be able to observe this no less than what was said above in the allegory mentioned earlier. The great wind is vainglory that rends every outstanding virtue, as represented by the mountains, along with all constancy, as represented by the firmness of the rocks. The dread of threats and persecutors leaves the heart so shaken that it yields to human ruthlessness. 13 The righteous burn with the fire of zeal against sinners, but not yet with the patience and mildness of perfection. This is obvious in the case of the Pharisee who boasted of his own righteousness and burned with fiery indignation

10. "Spirit of truth" (also in Prologue 30) (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; and 1 John 4:6).

11. "Even when Jesus Christ said to . . . 'Let this cup pass from me!,' . . . 'Not as I will but as you will' "; cf. Mark 14:36.

against the publican,¹² just as Simon did, too, regarding Mary Magdalene.¹³ However, the Lord is not to be found in this kind of fervor, and it gives the devil a chance to tempt and deceive.

14 Such things must not be thought of this bride of Christ whom he chose for himself to be a minister of this kind of grace. While still living in matrimony, she got her husband to practice perfect continence so that they lived together for many years without either demanding or receiving the dues of marriage. While she was still married, she preferred a widow's sobriety in her clothing and food. Her interior devotion and constancy in prayer gave early indications in her of a great perfection of piety and grace in the future. 15 When she was released from the law binding her to a husband,¹⁴ she distributed her property among her heirs and among the poor, and then extricated herself from her ties to the world. A poor woman following a poor man, Christ, she kept nothing for herself but mean clothing and simple food. This is why, having rejected all worldly consolation, she was visited by Christ with wonderful consolations and graces. 16 In none of this did she seek her own glory but only that of God. She would have preferred to remain hidden out of humility, had she not been commanded to reveal herself to certain people out of obedience to the Spirit, or, rather, to Christ, who appeared to her in spirit. By enduring insults and abuse, she wished to add to the glory of Christ. By her truthfulness, meekness, and justice she gave expression to Christ's way of life in her own life, allowing herself to be hurt by low and despicable persons who did so gratuitously and with impunity.

17 Who could imagine that such a life could be exposed to the mockery of demons? Who would dare to accuse Jesus Christ of being so heartless as not to protect someone who had placed her hope in him and glorified not herself but him out of her great love for him? Would a good husband expose his chaste and faithful wife to the seductions of an adulterer?¹⁵ 18 Away with the rashness of ignorant opinion! Make room for God's grace and glory! His grace and glory are known to be so much the greater the more incredible they appear to our ignorance and to our mediocre faith.

Indeed, unless guided by the grace of the same Spirit, who could believe that Christ, who resides in heaven, would speak to a woman still living in this mortal condition? 19 However, just as—we have it from the very words of Christ himself¹⁶—when you look at mountains and forests, the sky seems close to their tops, although it is not, so too Christ, who reigns in heaven, may seem to the mind's eye to be close by, however remote he may be as to his bodily presence. Physical distance cannot disqualify a vision of this kind. 20 O most

12. "The Pharisee . . . the publican"; cf. Luke 18:9–14.

13. "Simon and Mary Magdalene"; cf. Luke 7:36–50.

14. "She was released from the law binding her to a husband"; cf. Romans 7:2.

15. "An adulterer"; cf. Book I 4.8.

16. "We have it from the very words of Christ himself": the source of the following statement is not biblical, nor is it attested elsewhere among the *Revelationes*. It might refer to a revelation in Mathias's early collection that is no longer extant.

admirable and wonderful grace and apparition, worthy of being revealed to every nation under heaven! Through it Jesus Christ, whom Christians have scourged and wounded so sorely that the seeds of righteousness are scarcely to be found remaining in them, displays mercy to the ungrateful and gently leads the accused to implore his forgiveness.

21 This apparition is even more amazing than the one by which he showed himself in the flesh.¹⁷ His body presented itself outwardly to bodily eyes, but in this apparition the God and man are presented to spiritual eyes. 22 In that apparition, a man who was about to die spoke to mortal men. In this he who lives forever speaks to those who are about to die in order to make them immortal. Through that apparition, while living on earth, he revealed the divine in the human. Through this one, while reigning in heaven, he reconciles human things to divine. 23 In that apparition, by dying for us, he repaid the debt of justice. In this, he promises to bestow the gift of mercy on us sinners, although there is no longer any debt to pay.

24 So amazing, I say, is this wonderful apparition that the small capacity of the human heart can scarcely believe it or comprehend the force of so great a miracle. Although reason itself finds a powerful truth in the very deeds and words heard in this apparition and known by experience, still the weakness of our understanding does not grasp what the reason of those who have heard the words and experienced the favors tells it to grasp. 25 Even I myself, who have written this, can scarcely grasp it, although the words and the deeds convince me entirely of the truth of this inspiration, and I judge it to be most worthy of being fully accepted. By no means do I expect everyone who hears about it to believe it, if they have not heard the words themselves or known the deeds. 26 Just as the resurrection of Christ is also said to have been made known gradually by means of many proofs, since fragile mortal minds could not grasp the news of the miracle all at once, I believe that Jesus Christ will work in the same way in this miracle as well: In the course of long periods of time he will make the greatness of it known by means of many proofs¹⁸ of miraculous powers, a greatness that the eyes of sinful minds, accustomed to darkness, cannot recognize without preparation.

27 Still, it should make it easier for everyone to accept its truth to know that no other faith than that which Christ preached is preached¹⁹ in these words and wonders. They do not give us a new Christ but the same one who suffered for us. 28 They neither subtract from nor add anything to the knowledge of the truth that is in Christ, but to (the knowledge of) his mercy. His mercy becomes so much the better known, being on greater display in these events, inasmuch as the misery of sinners exceeds what it was before. 29 Let us give

17. Mathias employs a remarkably bold hyperbole at this point, in stating that Birgitta's revelations are more extraordinary than the Incarnation; cf. Introduction, p. 42 above.

18. "By means of many proofs"; cf. Acts 1:3.

19. "Preached"; Mathias draws attention to preaching, which is a key feature of the *Revelationes*, and of the Birgittine order; see, for example, Book I 40.10.

thanks to the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation,²⁰ who in the many miseries of this ageing world proceeds with so much mercy to help the miserable, lest they fall into the pit of despair. 30 For he who attends seriously and faithfully to the words of the present book, which are few in comparison to the many others,²¹ will not be able to doubt that the words—not of her who is empty of power but of him who is full of the power of truth—could not have been uttered but by the spirit of truth. 31 Anyone who also desires to examine his miraculous deeds will find trustworthy witnesses by which he can confirm their truth, if he so desires.

32 The beginning of this revelation that was made to this lady²² was transmitted to me who have added this prologue so that I might make it known to others. It was received from Christ as follows:²³ 33 “The devil sinned in three ways: by pride in my having created him well; by greed, which made him seek not only to be my equal but even my superior; and by lust, which made him so delight in my divine glory that he would gladly have killed me, had he been able, so as to rule in my stead. This was why he fell from heaven and filled the world with these three sins and violated the human race through them. 34 For this reason I assumed a human nature and came into the world so that I might annihilate his pride by my humility and destroy his greed by my poverty. I submitted to the heavy punishment of the cross both in order that I might exterminate his abominable lust through the blood of my heart and through my death and, because the sins of the devil had closed it, in order to open heaven to mankind, provided that everyone is willing to struggle for it according to his or her ability.

35 But the people in the kingdom of Sweden are sinning now, just as the devil sinned before them, especially that class of men known as noblemen or knights. They are proud of the beautiful bodies I have given them. They strive for wealth, which I have not given them. They go so far astray in their abominable concupiscence that, if it were possible for them, they would rather kill me than go without their pleasures, or would put up with my terrible sentence that hangs over them for their sins. 36 Therefore, those bodies of which they are so proud will be struck down by the sword, lance, and hatchet. Beasts and birds will tear to pieces those lovely limbs in which they glory. Others will carry away the riches they gather against my will, and they themselves will be in want.

37 Due to their abominable lusts, they displease my Father to such an

20. “The Father of mercies and the God of all consolation”; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3.

21. “The words of the present book, which are few in comparison to the many others”: this obscure phrase probably means “the words of the revelation quoted in this Prologue, which are few in comparison to the many words of all Birgitta’s revelations”; cf. Undhagen, *Book I*, pp. 39–41.

22. “The beginning of the revelation that was made to this lady,” that is, the first of the revelations (consisting of both words and deeds) that was made to Birgitta.

23. This is the so-called Prologue revelation, which has no parallels elsewhere in the *Revelationes*, although it is referred to in the *Vita, Acta et processus*, p. 81; see further Undhagen, *Book I*, pp. 41–43; and Liedgren, “Magister Mathias’ svenska kungörelse.”

extent that he will not deign to admit them to the vision of his face. And since they would gladly kill me if they could, they shall be delivered to hell by the hands of the devil, and he will kill them in an everlasting death. 38 I would long ago have brought this judgment upon the kingdom of Sweden, had not the prayers of those friends of mine among them held me back and inclined me to mercy. The time will come when I shall gather those same friends to myself lest they behold the evils I will bring upon the kingdom. But some of my friends will still be alive then and will watch from the peak of their merits. 39 Since the kings and princes and prelates do not wish to recognize me for the benefits I confer, nor to come to me, I will now gather together the poor, the weak, the infants, and the wretched, and with them I will fill their places so that there will be no shortage of people in the host of the Lord due to their absence." 40 When the person to whom this revelation was made sighed and bewailed so harsh a sentence, the Lord added: "As long as a person lives, access to the kingdom of heaven is available. If people know how to change their lives, I know how to mitigate my sentence."

41 As for the facts corroborating the truth of the present case, they are as follows: First, it was an unlearned woman who set this forth. Being of a noble and honest character, a humble widow, she would not have been able to make it up even had she wanted to, since she was a simple and gentle soul. 42 Second, the man who wrote down these revelations²⁴ was a pious and simple monk, and he in no way wanted to put them in writing himself, since he considered himself unworthy and ignorant for such a task. However, Christ compelled him to do so through the fear of death, and he was on the point of death before he consented. Once he gave his consent, he was immediately cured all at once. 43 Third, a man in Östergötland,²⁵ suffering from diabolic possession, was made clean in the presence of two trustworthy witnesses²⁶ at the words of the aforementioned monk. This monk communicated the form of the words this woman had heard from Christ and did so on the command of Christ. 44 Fourth, another man in Sweden possessed by a devil was made clean in the same way through the same monk in the presence of trustworthy witnesses. 45 Fifth, a public prostitute²⁷ was converted through the intervention of the Blessed Virgin who appeared along with Christ to the same lady. 46 Sixth, a number of leading men in the realm were converted, who, at a suitable time and place, will unanimously avow—for otherwise they would be ungrateful to Christ—that they experienced a conversion in their hearts at her words as sent from him.

24. "The man who wrote down these revelations," that is, Prior Petrus of Alvastra. See Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 90, 510–12; Ex. 48. See further "General Introduction," p. 13 above.

25. "A man from Östergötland"; see Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 90, 539; Book I 32.

26. "In the presence of two trustworthy witnesses"; that is, Bishop Thomas of Växjö and Master Mathias of Linköping; see Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 539.

27. "A public prostitute"; see note to Book I 16:11.

‡ Chapter 1

On Christ's Good Deeds and the People's Ingratitude; Birgitta Must Love Him above All Else.

DATE: 1340S

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to his chosen and dearly beloved bride declaring his most excellent incarnation, condemning the profane violation and breach of our faith and baptism, and inviting his beloved bride to love him.

1 "I am the Creator of heaven and earth, one in divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. I am he who spoke to the prophets and the patriarchs, the one whom they awaited. For the sake of their longing and in accordance with my promise, I took flesh without sin, without concupiscence, entering the body of the Virgin like the sun shining through the clearest crystal. The sun does not damage the glass by entering it, nor was the Virgin's virginity lost when I took my human nature. 2 I took flesh but without surrendering my divinity. I was no less God, ruling and filling all things with the Father and the Holy Spirit, although I, with my human nature, was in the womb of the Virgin. Brightness is never separated from fire, nor was my divinity ever separated from my humanity, not even in death. 3 Next I willed for my pure and sinless body to be wounded from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head¹ for the sins of all men, and to be hung on the cross. It is now offered each day on the altar in order that people might love me more and call to mind my favors more frequently. 4 Now, however, I am totally forgotten, neglected and scorned, like a king cast out of his own kingdom in whose place a wicked thief has been elected and honored.

5 I wanted my kingdom to be within the human person, and by right I should be king and lord over him, since I made him and redeemed him. Now, however, he has broken and profaned the faith he promised me at baptism. He has violated and rejected the laws I set up for him. He loves his self-will and scornfully refuses to listen to me. Besides, he exalts that most wicked thief, the devil, above me and pledges him his faith. 6 The devil really is a thief, since, by evil temptations and false promises, he steals for himself the human soul that I redeemed with my own blood. It is not because he is more powerful, as it were, than I am that he is able to steal it, since I am so powerful that I can do all things by a single word, and I am so just that I would not commit the least injustice, not even if all the saints asked me to. However, since man, who has been given free will, voluntarily scorns my commandments and consents to the devil, then it is only just that he should also experience the devil's tyranny. 7 The devil was created good by me but fell through his own wicked

1. "From the sole of my foot to the crown of my head" (Deuteronomy 28:35; Job 2:7; Isaiah 1:6); cf. Book I 17.4.

will and has, as it were, become my servant for inflicting retribution on the wicked.² Although I am now so despised, nevertheless I am still so merciful that I will forgive the sins of any who ask for my mercy and who humble themselves, and I shall free them from the evil thief. 8 But I shall visit my justice upon those who persist in holding me in contempt, and hearing it they will tremble and those who experience it will say: 'Alas, that we were ever born or conceived, alas, that we ever provoked the Lord of majesty to wrath!'

9 But you, my daughter, whom I have chosen for myself and with whom I speak in spirit, love me with all your heart, not as you love your son or daughter or relatives but more than anything in the world! I created you and spared none of my limbs in suffering for you. And yet I love your soul so dearly that, if it were possible, I would let myself be nailed to the cross again rather than lose you. 10 Imitate my humility: I, who am the king of glory and of angels, was clothed in lowly rags and stood naked at the pillar while my ears heard all kinds of insults and derision. 11 Prefer my will to yours, because my Mother, your Lady, from beginning to end, never wanted anything but what I wanted. If you do this, then your heart will be with my heart, and it will be set aflame with my love in the same way as any dry thing is easily set aflame by fire. Your soul will be filled with me and I will be in you, and all temporal things will become bitter to you and all carnal desire like poison. 12 You will rest in my divine arms,³ where there is no carnal desire, only joy and spiritual delight. There the soul, both inwardly and outwardly delighted, is full of joy, thinking of nothing and desiring nothing but the joy that it possesses.

13 So love me alone, and you will have all the things you wish, and you will have them in abundance. Is it not written that the widow's oil did not fail until the day that the Lord sent rain upon the earth according to the words of the prophet?⁴ I am the true prophet. If you believe my words and fulfill them, oil and joy and exultation will never fail you for all eternity."

‡ Chapter 2

On the Duties of the Bride

DATE: 1340S

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to the daughter he had taken as his bride concerning the articles of the true faith, and about what adornments and tokens and intentions the bride should have with respect to the bridegroom.

1 "I am the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and the sea and of all that is in them. I am one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, not like gods of stone

2. "Retribution on the wicked"; cf. Ecclesiasticus 39:33-37.

3. "You will rest in my divine arms"; this may be a rephrased allusion to Song of Solomon 2:6: "his left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me," a verse that is frequently used in bridal mysticism.

4. "Is it not written . . . to the words of the prophet?" (3 Kings [1 Kings] 17:14-16; 18:41-45).

or gold, as people once said, and not several gods, as people used to think then, but one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons but one in substance, the Creator of all but created by none, remaining unchangeable and almighty, without beginning or end. 2 I am he who was born of the Virgin, without losing my divinity but joining it to my humanity, so that in one person I might be the true Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. I am he who hung on the cross, died and was buried; yet my divinity remained intact. Although I died through the human nature and body that I, the only Son, had taken, yet I lived on in the divine nature in which I was one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. 3 I am the same man who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and who now speaks with you through my spirit. I have chosen you and taken you as my bride in order to show you my secrets, because it pleases me to do so.

4 I also have a certain rightful claim on you, since you surrendered your will to me when your husband died. After his death, you thought and prayed about how you might become poor for my sake, and you wanted to give up everything¹ for my sake. So I have a rightful claim on you. In return for this great love of yours, it is only fitting that I should provide for you. Therefore I take you as my bride for my own pleasure, the kind that is appropriate for God to have with a chaste soul.

5 It is the duty of the bride to be ready when the bridegroom decides to have the wedding, so she can be properly dressed up and clean. You will be clean if your thoughts are always on your sins, on how in baptism I cleansed you from the sin of Adam and how often I have supported and sustained you when you have fallen into sin. 6 The bride should also wear the bridegroom's tokens² on her breast, I mean, you should bear in mind the favors and benefits I have done for you, such as how nobly I created you by giving you a body and soul, how nobly I enriched you by giving you health and temporal goods, how kindly I rescued you when I died for you and restored your inheritance³ to you, if you want to have it.

7 The bride should also do the will of her bridegroom. What is my will but that you should want to love me above all things and want nothing but me? I created all things for the sake of humankind and placed all things under them. And yet they love everything but me and hate nothing but me. I bought back their inheritance for them, which they had lost, but they have grown so estranged and turned so far from reason that, instead of eternal glory in which there is everlasting good, they would rather have passing glory that is as the ocean spray that rises up one moment like a mountain and then quickly sinks down into nothing.

8 My bride, if you desire nothing but me, if you hold all things in contempt for my sake—both children and relatives as well as wealth and honors—I will

1. "Give up everything"; cf. Matthew 19:27–29.

2. "Bridegroom's tokens" might refer simply to love tokens, or else to part of a bridal outfit, perhaps a brooch bearing the bridegroom's coat of arms or a betrothal gift; see further, the note to ch. 7.2.

3. "Restored your inheritance"; cf. Psalm 15(16):5; 1 Peter 1:3–4.

give you a most precious and delightful reward. I will give you neither gold nor silver as your wages but myself to be your bridegroom, I, who am the king of glory. 9 If you are ashamed of being poor and despised, consider how your God has gone before you, once his servants and friends had abandoned him on earth, because I was not looking for friends on earth but friends in heaven. If you are worrying and afraid about being burdened by work and sickness, then consider how severe a thing it is to burn in the fire! 10 What would you have deserved if you had offended some earthly master as you have me? For, although I love you with all my heart, still I do not act against justice, not even in a single detail. Just as you have sinned in all your limbs, you must also make satisfaction in every limb. 11 However, because of your good will and your resolution to improve, I commute your sentence to one of mercy and remit the heavier punishment in return for a small amount of reparation.

12 For this reason, embrace your small hardships cheerfully so that you can be cleansed and reach your great reward all the sooner! It is good for the bride to grow tired toiling alongside the bridegroom so that she can all the more confidently take her rest with him.”

✠ Chapter 3

Birgitta Must Love and Fear God and Seek Guidance from Her Spiritual Director

DATE: 1340S

Our Lord Jesus Christ’s words to his bride about her formation in love and honor toward him, the bridegroom, and about the hatred of the wicked for God, and about the love of the world.

1 “I am your God and Lord, the one you worship. It is I who uphold heaven and earth by my power. They are upheld by nothing else nor do they have any other supports. It is I who am offered up each day on the altar, true God and true man, under the appearance of bread. I am the very one who has chosen you. 2 Honor my Father! Love me! Obey my Spirit! Defer to my Mother as to your Lady! Honor all my saints! Keep the true faith taught to you by one who experienced in himself the conflict between the two spirits,¹ the spirit of falsehood and the spirit of truth, and with my help conquered. 3 Preserve true humility! What is true humility if not to render praise² to God for the good things he has given us?

4 Nowadays, however, there are many people who hate me and who regard

1. “Conflict between the two spirits”; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10; and 1 John 4:1–6. The individual here is Mathias of Linköping; see General Introduction, pp. 12–13 on his spiritual crisis.

2. “If not to render praise”: We translate according to the text chosen by the editor. Other sources of the Vadstena redaction of manuscripts, as well as Gh, add the words “nisi talem se ostendere, qualis est, et,” after “humilitas vera” (“What is true humility if not to show oneself as one is and to render praise, etc.”) The added words are consistent with Birgitta’s thought elsewhere; cf. Book I 34:4. See further Undhagen, *Book I*, pp. 145–46. Cf. also Gregory the Great *Moralia in Iob* 21, 28: “Sancti bona sua non sibi, sed Deo tribuunt.”

my deeds and my words as painful and empty. They welcome that adulterer, the devil, with wide arms, and they love him. Whatever they do for me, they do it with grumbling and resentment. They would not even confess my name, if they were not afraid of the opinion of others. 5 They have such a sincere love of the world that they never tire working for it night and day and are always fervent in their love for it. Their service is about as pleasing to me as if someone were to give his enemy money to kill his son. 6 This is what they do. They give me some alms and honor me with their lips³ in order to gain worldly success and to remain in their privileges and in their sin. The good spirit is thus impeded in them from making any progress in virtue. 7 If you want to love me with your whole heart and to desire nothing but me, I will draw you to me through charity, just like a magnet or lodestone draws iron to itself. I will lay you on my arm, which is so strong that no one can stretch it out and so rigid that no one can bend it back once outstretched. It is so sweet that it surpasses every fragrance⁴ and cannot be compared with the delights of this world.”

EXPLANATION

8 This was a holy man, a teacher of theology, who was called Master Mathias of Sweden, a canon of Linköping. He wrote an excellent commentary covering the whole Bible. He suffered very subtle temptations from the devil involving a number of heresies against the Catholic faith, all of which he overcame with the aid of Christ, and he could not be overcome by the devil. This is plainly set forth in the biography of Lady Birgitta. 9 It was this Master Mathias who composed the Prologue to these books that begins *Stupor et mirabilia*, etc. He was a holy man and spiritually powerful in word and deed.

10 When he died in Sweden, the bride of Christ, then living in Rome, heard in her prayer a voice saying to her in spirit: “Happy are you, Master Mathias, for the crown that has been made for you in heaven. Come now to the wisdom that will never end!”⁵

11 One can also read about him in Book I chapter 52 B; Book V, in the response to question 3 D in the last interrogation; and Book VI chapters 75 A and 89.

3. “Honor me with their lips”; Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8.

4. “Surpasses every fragrance”; cf. Song of Solomon 4:10.

5. These statements are based on Collijn, *Acta et processus, Vita*, pp. 78, 477, 530, and 620. Chapter 3, paragraph 10 occurs in Gh only; in 3.11 the equivalent references are Book I 52:8–9; Book V int. 16:36–37; Book VI 75:1–6 and 89.

‡ Chapter 4

Birgitta Must Learn to Discern between Good and Evil Spirits

DATE: 1340S

Our Lord Jesus Christ's words to his bride about how she should not worry or think that the things revealed to her come from an evil spirit, and about how to recognize a good or an evil spirit.

1 "I am your Creator and Redeemer. Why were you afraid of my words? Why were you wondering whether they came from a good or an evil spirit? Tell me, did you find anything in my words that your conscience did not dictate to you to do? Or did I command you anything against reason?" 2 To this the bride answered: "No, on the contrary, they are all true and I was badly mistaken." The spirit, or the bridegroom, answered: "I commanded you three things. From them you could recognize the good spirit. I commanded you to honor your God, who made you and has given you all the things you have. Your reason also tells you to honor him above all things. 3 I commanded you to keep the true faith, that is, to believe that nothing has been made without God and that nothing can be made without God. 4 I also commanded you to aspire to reasonable temperance in all things, since the world was made for human use so that people might use it for their needs. In the same way, you can also recognize the unclean spirit from three things, the opposites of these. 5 He tempts you to seek your own praise and to be proud of the things given you. He tempts you to betray your faith. He also tempts you to impurity in your whole body and in everything, and makes your heart burn for it. 6 Sometimes he also deceives people under the guise of good.¹ This is why I commanded you always to examine your conscience and disclose it to prudent spiritual advisors.

7 Therefore, do not doubt that God's good spirit is with you, seeing that you desire nothing other than God and are completely on fire with his love. I am the only one who can do that. It is impossible for the devil to draw near to you. Nor is it possible for him to draw near to bad people at all unless I allow it, either because of their sins or because of some secret decision known to me, for he is my creature, just like all others, and was created good by me, although he became evil through his own malice. I am Lord over him. 8 For this reason, they accuse me falsely who say that the people who serve me with great devotion are insane and have a devil. They make me out to be like a man who exposes his chaste and trusting wife to an adulterer. That is what I would be if I let someone who was righteous and full of love for me be handed over to a demon. 9 But because I am faithful, no demon will ever gain control of the soul of any of my devoted servants. Although my friends sometimes seem to be almost out of their minds, it is not because they suffer from the devil or

1. "Sometimes he also deceives people under the guise of good"; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14 (this refers the reader to the well-known passage about Satan transforming himself into an angel of light).

because they serve me with fervent devotion. It is rather due to some defect of the brain or some other hidden cause, which serves to humble them.

10 Sometimes it can also happen that the devil either receives power from me over the bodies of good people for their own greater reward or that he darkens their consciences. However, he can never gain control over the souls of those who have faith in me and take their delight in me.”

‡ Chapter 5

About a Besieged Castle

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s most loving words to his bride containing the wonderful image of a noble castle, which stands for the church militant, and about how the church of God will now be rebuilt through the prayers of the glorious Virgin and of the saints.

1 “I am the Creator of all things. I am the King of glory and the Lord of angels. I built for myself a noble castle and placed my chosen ones in it. 2 My enemies undermined its foundations and overpowered my friends so much so that the very marrow goes out of my friends’ feet as they sit fastened to the wood of the stocks.¹ 3 Their mouth is bruised by stones, and they are tortured by hunger and thirst. Moreover, enemies are persecuting their Lord. My friends are now begging and groaning for help; justice is clamoring for vengeance, but mercy says to forgive.”

4 Then God said to the heavenly host that was standing by: “What do you think regarding these people who have seized my castle?” 5 They all answered with one voice: “Lord, all justice is in you and in you we see all things. All judgment is given to you,² the Son of God, who exist without beginning or end, you are their judge.” 6 And he said: “Although you know and see all things in me, yet for my bride’s sake here, tell me what the just sentence is.” They said: “This is justice: that those who undermined the wall should be punished like thieves, that those who persist in evil should be punished like usurpers, and that the captives should be set free and the hungry be filled.”

7 Then Mary spoke, the Mother of God, who had been silent in the first exchange, and she said: “My Lord and most dear Son, you were in my womb as true God and man. You condescended to sanctify me who was an earthen vessel. I beg you: have mercy on them once more!” 8 The Lord answered his Mother: “Blessed be the word of your mouth! Like a sweet odor it ascends to God. You are the glory and the Queen of angels and all saints, because God was consoled by you and all the saints made joyful. And because your will has

1. The punishments of placing a person in stocks and stoning are attested in the Swedish provincial laws in a variety of ways. For example, a person could remain in stocks until his feet rotted, and stoning was a punishment for women accused of adultery or witchcraft. See further KL “dödsstraf,” “straffredskap,” “tortur.”

2. “All judgment is given to you”; cf. John 5: 22.

been as my own from the beginning of your youth, I will once more do as you wish.” 9 Then he said to the heavenly host: “Because you have fought bravely, for the sake of your love I will let myself be appeased for now. Behold, I will rebuild my wall on account of your prayers. 10 I will save and heal those who were oppressed by force and will honor them a hundredfold for the abuse they have suffered. If the doers of violence ask for mercy, peace and mercy will be theirs. Those who scorn it will experience my justice.”

11 Then he said to his bride: “My bride, I have chosen you and clothed you in my spirit. You hear my words and those of my saints who, although they see all things in me, yet have spoken for your sake, so that you might understand. After all, you, who are still in the body, cannot see in me in the same way as they who are spirits. 12 I will now show you what these things mean. The castle I spoke about is the Holy Church, which I built with my own blood and that of the saints. I cemented it with my charity and then placed my chosen ones and friends in it. 13 Its foundation is faith, I mean, the belief that I am a just and merciful judge. The foundation has now been undermined because everybody believes and preaches that I am merciful but almost nobody believes me to be a just judge. 14 They think of me as a wicked judge. A judge would indeed be wicked if, out of mercy, he let the wicked go unpunished so that they could further oppress the righteous. I, however, am a just and merciful judge and will not let even the least sin go unpunished nor the least good go unrewarded. 15 By the undermining of this wall, there entered into the Holy Church people who sin without fear, who deny that I am just and who torment my friends as much as if they had clapped them in stocks. No joy or consolation is given to these friends of mine. Instead they are punished and reviled as much as if they were diabolically possessed.

16 When they tell the truth about me, they are silenced and get accused of lying. They thirst with a passion to hear or speak the truth, but there is no one who listens to them or speaks the truth to them. 17 Moreover, I, God the Creator, am being blasphemed. For people say: ‘We do not know if God exists. And if he exists, we do not care.’ They throw my banner to the ground and trample on it, saying: ‘Why did he suffer? What good is it to us? If he would grant our wish, we will be satisfied—let him keep his kingdom and his heaven!’ I want to go into them, but they say: ‘We would die before giving up our own will!’

18 My bride, see what kind of people they are! I made them and can destroy them with a word. How insolent they are toward me! Thanks to the prayers of my Mother and of all the saints, I remain merciful and patient enough that I am now willing to send them the words of my mouth and to offer them my mercy. 19 If they want to accept it, I will be appeased. Otherwise they will know my justice and, like thieves, they will be publicly put to shame before angels and men and condemned by every one of them. Like criminals hung on a fork-shaped gallows³ and devoured by crows, they will be devoured by demons but

3. “Hung on a fork-shaped gallows” renders Lat. “in furca suspensi”; cf. Sw. “a stäghil äru satte” [are placed on a stake]. See KL “galge o. galgbacke.”

not consumed. 20 Just like the people sentenced to the stocks have no rest, they will find pain and bitterness on all sides. A scalding river will flow into their mouths but their bellies will not be filled, and they will be renewed for their punishment each day. 21 But my friends will be safe, and they will be consoled by the words that come from my mouth. They will see my justice along with my mercy. I will clothe them in the weapons of my love and will make them so strong that the adversaries of the faith will slide back like mud.⁴ When they see my justice, they will stand in perpetual shame for having abused my patience.”

‡ Chapter 6

On the Arming of Spiritual Knights

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s words to his bride about how his spirit cannot dwell in the wicked, and about the separation of the wicked from the good and the sending of good people armed with spiritual weapons to war against the world.

1 “My enemies are like the wildest of beasts who can never get their fill or remain at rest. Their heart is so empty of my love that the thought of my passion never enters it. Not once from their heart of hearts has a word like this escaped: “Lord, you have redeemed us, may you be praised for your bitter passion!” How can my Spirit dwell in people who have no divine love for me, people who are willing to betray others for the sake of getting their will? 2 Their heart is full of vile worms, I mean, full of worldly passions. The devil has left his dung in their mouths; that is why they have no liking for my words. And so with my saw I will sever them from my friends. There is no worse way to die than to die under the saw. Likewise, there is no punishment in which they will not share: they will be sawn in two by the devil and separated from me. I find them so odious that all their adherents will also be severed from me. 3 For this reason I am sending forth my friends in order that they might separate the devils from my members,¹ since the devils are my true enemies. I send them forth like soldier knights to war. Anyone who mortifies his flesh and abstains from illicit things is my true soldier. 4 For their lance they will have the words of my mouth and in their hands the sword of faith; on their breasts will be the breastplate of love so that no matter what happens they will love me no less. They must have the shield of patience at their side so as to

4. “Slide back like mud”: some sort of mudslide or landslide may be suggested here, or, metaphorically, the backward slide into hell; but “lutum” (Sw. “träkkir”) might also suggest “dung.” Cf. also chs. 19.7 and 46.18.

1. “My members”: in Christian literature, the frequent metaphor identifying the church with the body of Christ, and consequently, Christians with his limbs, dates back to St. Paul; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 5:29–30.

bear all things with patience. I have encased them like gold in a case: they should now go forth and walk in my ways.²

5 According to the designs of justice, I could not enter into the glory of my majesty without enduring tribulation in my human nature. So how will they enter into it? If their Lord suffered, it is not surprising that they should suffer as well. If their Lord put up with the whip, it is no great thing for them to put up with words. They need not fear because I will never abandon them. Just as it is impossible for the devil to get at the heart of God and divide it, so it is impossible for the devil to separate them from me. 6 And since, in my sight, they are like the purest gold, though they be tested with a little fire, I shall not abandon them: it is for their greater reward.”³

‡ Chapter 7

On Spiritual Clothing

DATE: 1340S

The glorious Virgin’s words to her daughter about the way to dress and the sort of clothes and ornaments with which the daughter should be adorned and clothed.

1 “I am Mary who gave birth to the Son of God, true God and true man. I am the Queen of angels. My Son loves you with his whole heart. So love him! You ought to be adorned with the fairest of clothes and I will show you how and what kind of clothes they should be.¹ 2 Just as before you had an underbodice, then a bodice, shoes, a cloak, and a brooch² upon your breast, so now you should have spiritual clothes. The underbodice is contrition. Just as the underbodice is worn closest to the body, so contrition and confession are the first way of conversion to God. Through it the mind, which once found joy in sin, is purified and the unchaste flesh kept under control. 3 The two shoes are two dispositions, namely the intention of rectifying past transgressions and the intention of doing good and keeping away from evil. Your bodice is hope in God. Just as a bodice has two sleeves, may there be both justice and mercy in your hope. In this way you will hope for the mercy of God because you do not neglect his justice. Think on his justice and judgment in such a way that

2. “For their lance . . . in my ways”: a passage about spiritual armor, echoing Ephesians 6:11–17, with some variations in the imagery used.

3. “Gold . . . tested with a little fire”; cf. Proverbs 17:3; 1 Peter 1:7.

1. The description of Birgitta’s clothing in this revelation is reminiscent of the expositions of the nuns’ clothing to be worn in the Birgittine order, RS 10–11. See also Book II 13 and Book IV 58; Isaiah 61:10 and Ephesians 6:13–17.

2. “Brooch” (Lat. “bractea”; Sw. “braz,” “braz”) refers in medieval Scandinavia to a clasp used to gather together two edges of material. Worn on various garments, it might have been ring-shaped or round, in various sizes, with filigree or inlaid ornamentation, in costly metals and sometimes decorated with stones. See KL “smykker,” which notes that the fourteenth-century ring-brooches sometimes bore a coat of arms, or an inscription such as AVE MARIA. Another type, with two pairs of hands grasping each other, was used as betrothal brooches.

you do not forget his mercy, for he does not work justice without mercy or mercy without justice.

4 The cloak is faith. Just as the cloak covers everything and everything is enclosed in it, human nature can likewise comprehend and attain everything through faith. This cloak should be decorated with the tokens of your bridegroom's love, namely, the way he created you, the way he redeemed you, the way he nourished you and brought you into his spirit and opened your spiritual eyes. 5 The brooch is the consideration of his passion. Fix firmly in your breast the thought of how he was scoffed at and scourged, how he stood alive on the cross, bloody and pierced in all his sinews, how at his death his whole body convulsed from the acute pain of the passion, how he commended his spirit into the hands of his Father. May this brooch be ever on your breast! 6 On your head let there be set a crown,³ I mean, chastity in your affections, making you rather endure lashing than be further stained. May you be modest and worthy! Think about nothing, desire nothing but your God and Creator. When you have him, you have everything. Adorned in this way, you shall await your bridegroom."

✠ Chapter 8

Mary Teaches Birgitta a Prayer of Praise to God

DATE: 1340S

The Queen of Heaven's words to her beloved daughter teaching her how she ought to love and praise her Son together with his Mother.

1 "I am the Queen of Heaven. You were concerned about how you should give me praise. Know for certain that all praise of my Son is praise of me. And those who dishonor him, dishonor me, since my love for him and his for me was so ardent that the two of us were like one heart. So highly did he honor me, who was an earthen vessel, that he raised me up above all the angels. 2 Therefore, you should praise me like this: "Blessed are you, God, Creator of all things, who deigned to descend into the womb of the Virgin Mary. Blessed are you, God, who willed to be in the Virgin Mary without being a burden to her¹ and deigned to receive immaculate flesh from her without sin. Blessed are you, God, who came to the Virgin, giving joy to her soul and to her whole body, and who went out of her to the sinless joy of her whole body. 3 Blessed are you, God, who after your ascension gladdened the Virgin Mary your Mother with frequent consolations and visited her with your consolation. Blessed are

3. The bridal crown started to be worn by Swedish women at their marriages in the fourteenth century. Otherwise little is known of bridal attire; see KL "dräkt."

1. "Without being a burden to her," i.e., without causing physical suffering or pain. The idea is that since Mary was preserved from original sin, she escaped the pain of childbearing that was a consequence of the Fall according to Genesis 3:16. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, thus alluded to here, was one of the points on which the *Revelationes* were criticized at the Council of Basel in the 1430s; see further Fredriksson Adman, *Heymericus de Campo*, pp. 16–18.

you, God, who assumed the body and soul of the Virgin Mary, your Mother, into heaven and honored her by placing her next to your divinity above all the angels. Have mercy on me because of her prayers!"²

‡ Chapter 9

On the Marriage of the Virgin's Parents, on Her Immaculate Conception, and Her Assumption into Heaven

DATE: 1340S

The words of the Queen of Heaven to her beloved daughter concerning the beautiful love the Son had for his Virgin Mother, and about how the Mother of Christ was conceived in a chaste marriage and sanctified in the womb, and about how she was assumed body and soul into heaven, and about the power of her name, and about the angels assigned to men for good or bad.

1 "I am the Queen of Heaven. Love my Son, because he is most worthy; when you have him, you have everything that is of worth. And he is most desirable; when you have him, you have all that is desirable. Love him, too, because he is most virtuous; when you have him, you have all the virtues. 2 Let me tell you how beautiful his love for my body and soul was and how much honor he gave to my name. He, my own Son, loved me before I loved him, since he is my Creator. He joined my father and mother in so chaste a marriage that there was no more chaste couple then to be found. They never desired to come together except in accordance with the Law, solely for the sake of procreation. 3 When an angel announced to them that they would give birth to the Virgin from whom the salvation of the world would come, they would rather have died than come together in carnal love; lust had died in them. But, I assure you, out of divine charity and on account of the angel's message they did come together in the flesh, not out of concupiscence but against their will and out of love for God. In this way my flesh was put together from their seed through divine love. 4 When my body had been formed, God sent the created soul into it from his divinity; the soul was immediately sanctified along with the body, and the angels watched over and ministered to it day and night. It is impossible to tell you what a great joy came over my mother when my soul had been sanctified and joined to its body. Afterward, when the course of my life was done, he first raised up my soul, as being mistress of the body, to a place more eminent than others next to the glory of his divinity, and then my body, so that no other creature's body is so close to God as my own. 5 See how much my Son loved my soul and body! There are some people, however, who wickedly deny that I was assumed body and soul, and there are others who

2. This is one of several prayers that are occasionally intercalated into a revelation text, although it is unlikely to be Birgitta's own. See further Undhagen, *Book I*, p. 154 n5.

simply do not know better. But the truth of it is certain: I was taken up to God's glory in body and soul. 6 Hear how much my Son has honored my name! My name is Mary, as the Gospel says. When the angels hear this name, they rejoice in their understanding and give thanks to God because he worked so great a grace through me and with me and because they see the humanity of my Son glorified in his divinity. 7 The souls in purgatory rejoice beyond measure, just like a sick man does as he lies in bed and hears a word of comfort from others and it pleases his heart and makes him suddenly glad.

8 At the sound of my name, the good angels immediately draw closer to the just souls to whom they have been given as guardians and rejoice over their progress. Good angels have been given to everyone as a protection and bad angels as a test. It is not that angels are ever separated from God, but, rather, that they assist the soul without leaving God and remain steadily in his presence while still inflaming and inciting the soul to do good. 9 The demons all dread and fear this name. At the sound of the name of Mary, they immediately let the soul go out of their clutches. Like a bird¹ with its claws and beak on its prey leaves it as soon as it hears a sound, but comes right back when it sees nothing happening afterward, so too the demons let go of a soul, frightened at the sound of my name, but fly back and return to it again as swift as an arrow, unless they see some improvement afterward.

10 No one is so cold in the love of God—unless he be one of the damned—that the devil does not immediately draw away from him if he invokes my name with the intention of never returning to his bad habits, and the devil keeps away from him unless he resumes his intention of sinning mortally. However, sometimes the devil is allowed to trouble him for the sake of his greater reward, but never to gain possession of him.”

‡ Chapter 10

On Mary's Childhood, the Annunciation, and Her Son's Birth and Passion

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin Mary's words to her daughter, offering a useful teaching about how she should live, and describing many marvelous details about the passion of Christ.

1 “I am the Queen of heaven, the Mother of God. I told you that you should wear a brooch upon your breast. I will now show you more fully how, from the beginning, when I first learned and came to an understanding of the existence of God, I was always concerned about my salvation and religious observance. When I learned more completely that God himself was my Creator and the judge of all my actions, I came to love him deeply, and I was constantly

1. “A bird” renders Lat. “avis”; cf. Sw. “nakor fughl ällir hökir” [any bird or hawk].

alert and watchful so as not to offend him in word or deed. 2 When I learned that he had given his law and commandments to his people and worked so many miracles through them, I made a firm resolution in my soul to love nothing but him, and the things of the world became altogether repugnant to me. Then, having learned that God himself would redeem the world and be born of a Virgin,¹ I was so smitten with love for him that I thought of nothing but God and wanted nothing but him. 3 As far as I was able, I withdrew from the conversation and the presence of parents and friends and gave away to the needy everything I had come to own. I kept for myself nothing but meager food and clothing. Nothing but God was pleasing to me. I always hoped in my heart to live until the time of his birth and perhaps merit becoming the unworthy handmaid of the Mother of God. I also made a vow in my heart to preserve my virginity, if that was acceptable to him, and to possess nothing whatsoever in the world. 4 But if God willed otherwise, my wish was that his will, not mine, be done, for I believed he was able to do all things and wanted nothing but the best for me. And so I entrusted all my will to him.

5 When the prescribed time arrived for the presentation of virgins in the temple of the Lord, I was also present with them thanks to the religious compliance of my parents. I thought to myself that nothing was impossible for God, and that, since he knew I desired nothing and wanted nothing but him, he would be able to preserve my virginity, if it so pleased him: otherwise, let his will be done! 6 Having listened to all the commandments in the temple, I returned home, burning more with the love of God than ever before, being inflamed with new fires and desires of love each day. For that reason I withdrew by myself even more from everything else and was alone night and day, fearing greatly lest my mouth say anything or my ears hear anything against God or lest my eyes look on anything delectable. I felt the same fear in my silence and was very anxious not to be silent upon those subjects about which I ought rather to have spoken.

7 While I was thus agitated in my heart and alone with myself, entrusting all my hope to God, at that very moment it came into my head to consider God's great power, how the angels and all creatures serve him, and what his indescribable and unending glory was like. 8 As I was wondering at all this, I saw three wonderful sights. I saw a star, but not the kind that shines from the sky. I saw a light, but not the kind that glows in the world. I sensed a smell, not of herbs or anything like that, but indescribably sweet, which quite filled me up so that I felt like jumping for joy. Right then I heard a voice, but not from a human mouth. I was quite afraid when I heard it and wondered whether it was an illusion. 9 An angel of God then appeared before me in the fairest human shape, although not in the flesh, and he said to me: 'Hail, full of grace!'² On hearing it, I wondered what this could mean or why he gave me such a greeting, since I knew and believed that I was unworthy of any such thing, or

1. "Born of a Virgin" (Isaiah 7:14).

2. "Hail, full of grace" (Luke 1:28).

of any good thing, but also that it was possible for God to do anything he wanted. 10 The angel said next: 'The offspring to be born in you is holy and will be called the Son of God.³ It will be done as it pleases God.' I neither thought myself worthy nor did I ask the angel 'Why?' or 'When will it be done?' but I asked: 'How is it to be that I, who do not even know a man,⁴ am to become the unworthy Mother of God?' The angel answered me, as I said, that nothing is impossible for God, but 'Whatever he wants to do will be done.'

11 When I heard the words of the angel, I felt the most fervent desire to become the Mother of God, and my soul spoke out of love: 'Here I am, may your will be done in me!'⁵ At that word, right then and there, my Son was conceived in my womb to the indescribable thrill of my soul and all my limbs. 12 When I had him in the womb, I bore him without any pain, without any heaviness or weariness in my body. I humbled myself in every way, knowing that the one I bore was the Almighty. When I gave birth to him, I did so without any pain or sin, just as I had conceived him, with such a thrill of soul and body that I felt like I was walking on air out of the thrill of it all. Just as he entered my limbs to the joy of all my soul, so to the joy of all my limbs he left me, with my soul rejoicing and my virginity unscathed.

13 When I looked upon him and contemplated his beauty, knowing myself to be unworthy of such a son, joy seeped through my soul like drops of dew. When I contemplated the places where, as I had learned through the prophets,⁶ his hands and feet would be nailed at the crucifixion, my eyes filled with tears and my heart was torn by sadness. My Son looked at my crying eyes then and became deathly saddened. 14 When I contemplated his divine power, I was consoled again, realizing that this was the way he wanted it and so it was the right way, and I conformed all my will to his. So my joy was always mixed with sorrow.

15 When the time of my Son's passion arrived, his enemies seized him. They struck him on his cheek and neck and spat at him as they made sport of him. When he was led to the pillar, he took off his clothes himself and placed his own hands on the pillar, and his enemies then mercilessly bound them. 16 Bound to the pillar, without any kind of covering, just as he had been born, he stood there and suffered the embarrassment of being naked. His friends had fled, but his enemies were ready for action. They stood there on all sides and scourged his body that was clean from every stain and sin.

17 I was standing nearby and, at the first lash, I fell down as if I were dead. When I revived, I could see his body whipped and scourged to the ribs. What was even more horrible was that when they pulled the whips back, the weighted thongs tore his flesh.⁷ 18 As my Son was standing there all bloody and covered

3. "The offspring . . . will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

4. "How is it to be that I, who do not even know a man?" (Luke 1:34).

5. "Here I am, may your will be done in me"; cf. Luke 1:38.

6. "Through the prophets"; cf. Psalm 21(22):17-18.

7. After "the weighted thongs tore his flesh," Sw. adds "swa som iordh fore ardhre" [like earth before a plow].

with wounds, so that no sound spot⁸ was left on him that could be whipped, then someone, aroused in spirit, asked: 'Are you going to kill him thus unsentenced?' And straightaway he cut his bonds. 19 Then my Son himself put his clothes back on. I saw that the place where my Son had been standing was covered with blood, and by his footprints I could tell which way he walked, for the ground seemed to be soaked with blood wherever he went. 20 They had no patience with him to let him get dressed, but pushed and dragged him to hurry him on. As my Son was being led off like a thief, he dried the blood from his eyes. Once he was sentenced, they placed the cross on him to carry. He did carry it for a while, but then someone⁹ came along and undertook to carry it for him. 21 As my Son was going to the place of his passion, some people struck him on the neck, while others hit him in the face. He was hit so hard and with so much force that, although I did not see who hit him, I heard the sound of the blow clearly. When I reached the place of the passion with him, I saw all the instruments of his death ready. When my Son got there, he took off his clothes himself, while the servants said to each other: 'These are our clothes¹⁰ and he will not get them back since he is condemned to death.' 22 My Son was standing there, naked as he had been born, when someone came running up and offered him a veil with which he joyfully covered his shame. Then his cruel executioners seized him and stretched him out on the cross, nailing first his right hand to the crossbeam that had a hole in it for the nail. They pierced his hand at the point where the bone was more solid. With a rope they pulled his other hand and attached it to the crossbeam in similar fashion. 23 Then they crucified his right foot with the left on top of it using two nails¹¹ so that all his sinews and veins became overstrained and burst. After that they put the crown of thorns on his head and it cut so deeply into my Son's venerable head that the blood filled his eyes as it flowed, blocked up his ears and stained his beard as it ran down. As he stood on the cross wounded and bloody, he felt compassion for me who was standing by in tears and, looking with his bloodied eyes in the direction of John, my nephew, he commended me to him.¹²

24 At the time I could hear some people saying that my Son was a thief, others that he was a liar, still others that no one was more deserving of death than my Son. My sorrow was renewed from hearing all this. But, as I said before, when the first nail was driven into him, that first blow shook me so

8. "No sound spot"; cf. Psalm 37(38):4, 8; Isaiah 1:6.

9. "Someone," i.e., Simon of Cyrene (Matthew 27:32).

10. "These are our clothes"; cf. Psalm 21(22):19; Matthew 27:35.

11. "Using two nails": the laying of the feet on top of each other and a consequent reduction of four nails to three started in the twelfth century and by the fourteenth century the four nails had largely disappeared; therefore, the four nails here may have originated with Birgitta herself (see further Ellis, "Flores ad fabricandam" p. 180). However, it is possible that the motif still persisted in early Scandinavian art; see, for example, Andersson, *English Influence*, pp. 286–88. The sentence about two nails is altogether omitted from the Swedish text, suggesting that the translators knew the idea was uncommon. This is the first of three descriptions of the crucifixion in the *Revelaciones*; see also Book IV 70 and VII 15, and further Ellis, "The Divine Message."

12. "He felt compassion . . . commended me to him"; cf. John 19:26–27.

much that I fell down as if dead, my eyes covered in darkness, my hands trembling, my feet unsteady. In the bitterness of my grief I was not able to watch until he had been fastened entirely to the cross. 25 When I got up, I saw my Son hanging there in misery and, in my thorough dismay, I, his most unhappy Mother, could hardly stand on my feet due to grief. Seeing me and his friends weeping inconsolably, my Son cried out in a loud and doleful voice to his Father, saying, ‘Father, why have you abandoned me?’¹³ It was as if to say: ‘There is no one who takes pity on me but you, Father.’ 26 At that stage his eyes looked half-dead, his cheeks were sunken, his face mournful, his mouth open and his tongue bloody. His stomach was sucked in toward his back, all the liquid having been consumed, as if he had no vital organs. All his body was pale and languid due to the loss of blood. His hands and feet were rigidly extended, being pulled toward the cross and shaped like the shape of the cross. His beard and hair were completely covered with blood. 27 There he stood, bruised and livid, and only his heart was still fresh, since it was of the best and strongest constitution. From my flesh he had received a most pure and well-wrought body. 28 His skin was so thin and tender that if it was even slightly scourged the blood would flow out immediately. His blood was so fresh that it could be seen in his pure skin. Precisely because he had the very best constitution, life contended with death in his wounded body. 29 At certain moments the pain in the limbs and sinews of his wounded body rose up to his still vigorous and unbroken heart and inflicted incredible pain and suffering on him. At other moments the pain went down from his heart into his wounded limbs and, in so doing, bitterly prolonged his death.

30 Surrounded by these sorrows, my Son looked at his friends who were weeping and who would rather have borne his pain themselves through his help or have burned in hell forever than to see him tortured so. His sorrow at his friends’ sorrow exceeded all the bitterness and tribulations that he had endured in body and heart, due to the tender love he had for them. Then, out of the exceeding bodily anguish of his human nature, he cried out to the Father: ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’¹⁴ 31 When I, his most sorrowful Mother, heard those words, my whole body shook with the bitter pain of my heart. As often as I have thought on that cry since then, it has still remained present and fresh in my ears. As his death drew near and his heart burst from the violence of the pain, his whole body convulsed and his head raised itself a little and then drooped back down again, his mouth fell open and his tongue could be seen to be all bloody. 32 His hands pulled back a little from the place of perforation and his feet had to bear more of the weight of his body. His fingers and arms stretched themselves out somewhat and his back stiffened tightly against the cross.

33 Then some people said to me: ‘Mary, your Son is dead.’ Others said: ‘He has died but he will rise again.’ As everyone was going away, a man came

13. “Why have you abandoned me?” (Psalm 21[22]:2; Matthew 27:46).

14. “Father . . . commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

and drove a lance into his side¹⁵ with such force that it almost went out the other side. When the spear was withdrawn, its point appeared red with blood. And it seemed to me as if my own heart had been pierced when I saw my beloved Son's heart pierced.¹⁶ 34 Then he was taken down from the cross. I took his body on my lap; it was like a leper's, all livid. His eyes were lifeless and full of blood, his mouth as cold as ice, his beard like twine, his face grown stiff. His hands had become so rigid that they could not be bent farther down than to about his naval. I had him on my knee just as he had been on the cross, like a man stiff in all his limbs.

35 After that they laid him in a clean linen and with my linen cloth I dried his wounds and his limbs and then closed his eyes and mouth, which had been opened when he died. 36 Then they placed him in the sepulcher. How I would rather have been placed in there alive with my Son, if it had been his will!

37 These things done, dear John¹⁷ came and brought me to his house. See, then, my daughter, what my Son has endured for you!"¹⁸

✠ Chapter II*

On Christ's Passion and How Birgitta Can Imitate Him

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to his bride about how he delivered himself up, of his own free will, to be crucified by his enemies, and about how to control the body from illicit movements through the consideration of his sweet passion.

1 The Son of God spoke to his bride, saying: "I am the Creator of heaven and earth, and it is my true body that is consecrated on the altar. Love me with all your heart, because I have loved you and delivered myself up to my enemies of my own free will, while my friends and my Mother were left in bitter grief and mourning. 2 When I saw the lance, the nails, the whips, and the other instruments of suffering ready, I still went on to suffer with joy. When my head was bleeding on all sides from the crown of thorns, and blood was flowing on all sides, then, even if my enemies had got hold of my heart as well, I would rather have let it be sundered and wounded than lose you. 3 So you are extremely ungrateful, if, in return for such great charity, you do not love me. If my head was pierced and inclined on the cross for you, your head should be

15. "A man came . . . the other side"; cf. John 19:34.

16. "And it seemed . . . heart pierced"; cf. Luke 2:35.

17. "John" i.e., John the Evangelist.

18. Sw. adds an injunction at the end echoing the great commandment, "Älska thy han af allo thino hiärta" [Love him then with all your heart], probably a later addition suggesting that this revelation, which was one of particular devotional interest, may have been excerpted and circulated in the vernacular.

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 438, line 24, through p. 439, line 30, "Gudhz son taladhe . . . þik mera naadh."

inclined toward humility. Since my eyes were bloody and full of tears, your eyes should keep away from pleasurable sights. Since my ears were filled with blood and heard mocking words against me, your ears should turn aside from frivolous and unfitting talk. 4 Since my mouth was given a bitter drink to drink but was denied a sweet one, keep your own mouth from evil and let it be open for good. Since my hands were stretched out by nails, let your works, which the hands symbolize, be stretched out to the poor and to my commandments. 5 Let your feet, that is, your affections, with which you should walk toward me, be crucified as to lusts,¹ so that, just as I suffered in all my limbs, so may all your limbs be ready to obey me. I demand more service of you than of others, because I have given you a greater grace.”

‡ Chapter 12

Birgitta's Guardian Angel Asks for Her to Be Beaten with a Rod

DATE: 1340S

About how an angel prays for the bride and how Christ asks the angel what it is that he asks for the bride and what is good for her.

1 A good angel, the guardian of the bride, appeared praying to Christ for her. The Lord answered him and said: “A person who wants to pray for another should pray for the other’s salvation. You are like a fire that is never extinguished, ceaselessly burning with my love. You see and know all things when you see me. You want nothing but what I want. So tell me, what is good for this new bride of mine?” 2 He answered: “Lord, you know all things.” The Lord said to him: “All things, whatsoever has been made or will be, exist eternally in me. I understand and know all things in heaven and on earth and there is no change in me. But, in order that the bride may recognize my will, tell me what is good for her, now while she is listening.” 3 And the angel said: “She has a big and conceited heart. Therefore she needs the rod in order to be tamed.” Then the Lord said: “What is your request for her, my friend?” The angel said: “Lord, I ask you to grant her mercy along with the rod.” And the Lord said: “For your sake, I will do so, since I never perform justice without mercy. This is why the bride should love me with all her heart.”

‡ Chapter 13

An Enemy of God Possessed by Three Demons

DATE: 1340S

About how an enemy of God had three demons within him and about the sentence passed on him by Christ.

1. “Crucified as to lusts” renders Lat. “crucifigantur a voluptatibus”; cf. Birgittine-Norwegian: “skulu kors-fästas ok atirhaldas af wrangom lustom” [should be crucified and restrained from evil desires]; cf. Galatians 5: 24.

1 “My enemy has three demons within him. The first resides in his genitals, the second in his heart, the third in his mouth. The first is like a seaman,¹ who lets water in through the keel, and the water, by increasing gradually, fills up the ship. There is a flood of water then, and the ship sinks. 2 This ship stands for his body that is assailed by the temptations of demons and by his own lusts as though by storms. Lust entered first through the keel, that is, through the delight he took in bad thoughts. Since he did not resist through penance or fill the holes with the nails of abstinence, the water of lust grew day by day through his consenting. The ship being then replete or filled with the concupiscence of the belly, the water flooded and engulfed the ship in lust so that he was unable to reach the port of salvation. 3 The second demon, residing in his heart, is like a worm lying in an apple² that first eats the apple’s core, and then, after leaving its excrements there, roams around inside the apple until the whole apple is ruined. This is what the devil does. First he spoils a person’s will and good desires, which are like the core where all the mind’s strength and goodness are found, and, once the heart has been emptied of these goods, then he puts in their place in the heart the worldly thoughts and affections that the person had loved more. 4 He then impels the body itself toward his pleasure and, for this reason, the man’s courage and understanding diminish and his life becomes tedious. He is indeed an apple without a core, that is, a man without a heart, since he enters my church without a heart, because he has no charity.

5 The third demon is like an archer who, looking around through the windows, shoots the unwary. How can the devil not be in a man who is always including him in his conversation? That which is loved more is more frequently mentioned. The harsh words by which he wounds others are like arrows shot through as many windows as the number of times he mentions the devil or as many times as his words wound innocent people and scandalize simple folk. 6 I who am the truth³ swear by my truth that I shall condemn him like a whore to fire and brimstone, like an insidious traitor to the mutilation of his limbs, like a scoffer of the Lord to perpetual shame. However, as long as his soul and body are still united, my mercy is open to him. 7 What I require of him is to attend the divine services more frequently, not to be afraid of any reproach or desire any honor and never to have that sinister name on his lips again.”

EXPLANATION

8 This man, an abbot of the Cistercian order,⁴ had buried someone who had been excommunicated. When he was saying the commen-

1. “Seaman” renders Lat. “nauta”; cf. Sw. “skip herra” [captain, skipper].

2. “Apple”: in classical Lat. “pomum” refers to any fruit, but in medieval Latin there is a shift toward the specific meaning “apple”; cf. ch. 35:7.

3. “I who am the truth”; cf. John 14:6.

4. The abbot has been identified as Ragnvald of the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra, who is mentioned in documents dated 1336 to 1349 (DS 3218, 3936, 4109, 4390); cf. Ortved, *Cistercieordenen*, 2, pp. 87–90. Book VI 30 appears to be about the same man. It is worth noting that Birgitta was regarded with suspicion and

datory prayer over him, Lady Birgitta, rapt in spirit, heard this: “He did what lay in his power⁵ and buried him. 9 You can be sure that the first burial after this one will be his own. For he sinned against the Father, who has told us not to show partiality and not to honor the rich unjustly.⁶ For the sake of a small perishable gain, this man gave honor to an unworthy person and placed him among the worthy, which he should not have done. 10 He also sinned against my Spirit, who is the communion and community of the just, by burying an unjust man next to the just. He sinned against me, too, the Son, because I have said: “He who rejects me⁷ shall be rejected.” This man honored and exalted someone whom my church and my vicar had rejected.”

The abbot repented when he heard these words and died on the fourth day.

⚡ Chapter 14

Advice on Prayer; on Three Groups of People Who Serve God for the Wrong Reasons

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s words to his bride about the manner and the reverence she should maintain in prayer, and about the three kinds of people who serve God in this world.

1 “I am your God who was crucified on the cross, true God and true man in one person, and who am present in the hands of the priest everyday. Whenever you offer any prayer to me, always end it with the desire that my will and not yours be done always. I do not hear your prayers on behalf of those already condemned. 2 Sometimes, too, you wish something to be done that goes against your salvation, which is why it is necessary for you to entrust your will to me, for I know all things and do not provide you with anything but what is beneficial. There are many who do not pray with the right intention, which is why they do not deserve to be heard.

3 There are three kinds of people who serve me in this world. The first are the ones who believe me to be God and the giver of all things who has power over everything. They serve me with the intention of obtaining temporal goods and honor, but the things of heaven are as nothing to them, and they would just as soon lose them so that they can obtain present goods. Worldly success

hostility by monks at Alvastra, where she resided in the 1340s (Collijn, *Acta et processus* 82, 545; Book IV 121; Ex. 55), which might provide some background to her criticism of the abbot here.

5. “Did what lay in his power” renders Lat. “Iste fecit, ut potuit”; cf. Sw. “giordhe som honom ey tilburdhe” [he did what he should not have done]. The Latin implies that he did what lay in his power as a cleric, whereas the Swedish states that his action was immoral.

6. “Not to show partiality . . . honor the rich unjustly”; cf. James 2:1–7; Leviticus 19:15.

7. “He who rejects me” (John 12:48); cf. Matthew 10:33; Luke 12:9.

in everything falls to their share, according to their wishes. Since they have lost the eternal goods, I recompense them with temporal comforts for whatever good service they do for me, right down to the last farthing¹ and their very last moment. 4 The second are the ones who believe me to be God almighty and a strict judge, but who serve me out of fear of punishment and not out of love of heavenly glory. If they did not fear me, they would not serve me. 5 The third are the ones who believe me to be the Creator of all things and true God and who believe me to be just and merciful. They do not serve me out of any fear of punishment but out of divine love and charity.² They would prefer any punishment, if they could bear it, rather than once provoke me to anger. They truly deserve to be heard when they pray, since their will accords with my will.

6 The first kind of servant will never depart from punishment or get to see my face. The second will not be punished as much but will still not get to see my face, unless he corrects his fear through penitence.”

‡ Chapter 15

About a King with Two Treasuries

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to his bride describing himself as a great king, and about two treasuries symbolizing the love of God and the love of the world, and a lesson about how to make improvement in this life.

1 “I am like a great and powerful king. Four things pertain to a king. First he has to be rich, second generous, third wise, and fourth, charitable. I am truly the king of angels and of all mankind. I have those four qualities that I mentioned. 2 In the first place, I am the richest of all, since I supply the needs of everyone and still possess as much after having given. Second, I am the most generous of all, since I am prepared to give to anyone who asks. Third, I am the wisest of all, since I know what is each person's due and what is best for him or her. Fourth, I am charitable, since I am more prepared to give than anyone is to ask.

3 I have, you might say, two treasuries.¹ Weighty materials, heavy as lead, are stored in the first treasury, and sharp-pointed spikes line the compartment where they are kept. But these heavy things come to seem as light as feathers to a person who starts by turning them over and rolling them, and then learns how to carry them. The things that before seemed so heavy become light, and the things that before were thought to be so sharp² become soft. 4 In the second

1. “Last farthing”; cf. Matthew 5:26.

2. “Do not serve me . . . out of divine love and charity”; cf. 1 John 4:18.

1. “Treasuries”: Lat. “gazophilacia” from Greek “gazophilakion”; Sw. “fågiurder” (“hapax legomenon” in this meaning of “treasury”).

2. “Were thought to be so sharp” renders “pungere credebantur”; cf. Sw. “syntos ok trodhos wara besk ok stingande som gadda” [were thought and believed to be bitter and sharp as a spike]. “Aculeus” [spike] might mean a sting, prickle, arrowhead, or barb; Birgitta might possibly have had a botanical metaphor in mind.

treasury there seems to be glittering gold and precious gems and delicious drinks. But the gold is really mud and the drinks are poison. 5 There are two paths into these treasuries, although there used to be only one. At the cross-roads, I mean, at the entrance to the two paths, there stood a man who cried out to three men who were taking the second path, and he said: 'Listen, listen to what I have to say! But if you do not want to listen, then at least use your eyes to see that what I say is true. If you do not want to use either your ears or your eyes, then at least use your hands to touch and prove to yourselves that I do not speak falsely.' 6 Then the first of them said: 'Let us listen and see if he is telling the truth.' The second man said: 'Whatever he says is false.' The third said: 'I know he is telling the truth, but I do not care.'

7 What are these two treasuries if not love of me and love of the world? There are two paths into these two treasuries: self-abasement and complete self-denial lead to my love, while carnal desire leads to the love of the world. 8 To some people the burden they bear in my love seems to be made of lead, since when they should be fasting or keeping vigil or practicing self-restraint, they think they are carrying a load of lead. If they have to hear gibes and insults because they spend time in prayer and in the practice of religion, it is as if they were sitting on spikes; it is always a torture to them. 9 The person who wishes to stay in my love should first turn the load over, that is, make an effort to do the good by willing it with a constant desire. Then he should lift it a little, slowly, that is, he should do what he can, thinking: I can do this well if God will help me.' 10 Then, persevering in the task he has undertaken, he will begin to carry the things that earlier seemed heavy to him with such a cheerful readiness that all the hardships of fasts and vigils or any hardship whatsoever is as light as a feather to him. My friends take their rest in a place, which, to the idle and wicked, seems to be lined by spikes and thorns but which offers my friends the best repose, soft as roses. 11 The direct path into this treasury is to scorn your own will, which happens when a man, thinking on my passion and death, does not care about his own will but resists it and constantly strives to be better. 12 Although this path is somewhat difficult in the beginning, there is still a lot of pleasure in the process, so much so that the things that first seemed to be impossible to carry later become very light, so he can rightfully say to himself: 'God's yoke is easy.'³

13 The second treasury is the world. In it there are gold, precious gems, and drinks that look delicious but are bitter as poison once tasted. What happens to everyone carrying the gold is that, when his body weakens and his limbs fail, when his marrow is wasted and his body falls to the earth through death, then he lets go of the gold and the gems, and they are worth no more to him than mud. 14 The drinks of the world, I mean, its delights, look delicious, but, once in the stomach, they make the head grow weak and the heart heavy, they ruin the body and a person then withers away like grass.⁴ As the

3. "God's yoke is easy"; cf. Matthew 11:30.

4. "A person then withers away like grass" (Psalm 101[102]:12; Isaiah 51:12).

pain of death approaches, all these delicious things become as bitter as poison. 15 Self-will leads to this treasury, whenever a person does not care about resisting the lower appetites and does not meditate on what I have commanded and on what I have done, but immediately does whatever comes to mind, whether licit or not.

16 Three men are walking on this path. By them I mean all the reprobate, all those who love the world and their self-will. I cried out to them as I stood at the crossroads at the entrance to the two ways, since, through my coming in human flesh, I showed mankind two paths, as it were, the one to follow and the one to avoid, the path leading to life and the one leading to death. Before my coming in the flesh, there used to be just one path. On it all people, good and bad, went to hell. 17 I am the one who cried out, and my cry was this: 'People, listen to my words that lead to the path of life, use your senses to understand that what I say is true. If you do not listen to them or cannot listen to them, then at least look—that is, use faith and reason—and see that my words are true. In the same way as a visible thing can be discerned by the eyes of the body, so too can invisible things be discerned and believed by the eyes of faith. 18 There are many simple souls in the church who do few works but are saved by means of their faith. Through it they believe me to be the Creator and redeemer of the universe. There is no one who cannot understand and come to the belief that I am God, if only he considers how the earth bears fruit and how the heavens give rain, how the trees grow green, how the animals subsist each in its own species, how the stars are of service to mankind, how things opposed to the will of man occur.

19 From all this, a person can see that he is mortal and that it is God who arranges all these things. If God did not exist, everything would be in disorder. Accordingly, everything has been arranged by God, everything rationally arranged for the sake of man's instruction. Not the least little thing exists or subsists in the world without reason. Accordingly, if a person cannot understand or comprehend my powers due to his weakness, he can by means of faith see and believe. 20 But, people, if you do not want to use your intellect to consider my power, you can still use your hands to touch the deeds that I and my saints have done. They are so patent that no one can doubt them to be the works of God. 21 Who raised the dead and gave light to the blind if not God? Who cast out demons if not God? What have I taught if not things useful for the salvation of soul and body and easy to bear? However, the first man says or, rather, some people say: 'Let us listen and test whether it be true!' These people remain for a time in my service, not out of love but as an experiment and in imitation of others, without giving up their own will but carrying out their own will along with mine. 22 They are in a dangerous position, since they want to serve two masters,⁵ although they can serve neither one well. When they are called, they will be rewarded by the master they have loved the most.

23 The second man says or, rather, some people say: 'Whatever he says is

5. "Serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13).

false and Scripture is false.’ I am God, the Creator of all things, without me nothing has been made. I established the new and the old covenants, they came out of my mouth, and there is no falsehood in them because I am the truth. Accordingly, those who say that I am false and that Sacred Scripture is false will never see my face, since their conscience tells them that I am God, inasmuch as all things occur according to my will and disposition. 24 The sky gives them light, nor can they give any light to themselves; the earth bears fruit, the air makes the earth fruitful, all the animals are determined in a certain way, the demons confess me, the righteous suffer incredible things for the sake of my love. They see all these things, yet they do not see me. 25 They could also see me in my justice, if they considered how the earth swallows up the impious,⁶ how fire consumes the wicked. Likewise they could also see me in my mercy, as when water flowed for the righteous out of the rock⁷ or the waters parted for them,⁸ as when the fire did not harm them⁹ or the skies gave them food¹⁰ like the earth. Because they see these things and still say I am a liar, they shall never see my face.

26 The third man says, or, rather, some people say: ‘We know very well that he is the true God, but we do not care.’ These people will be forever tormented, because they despise me, their Lord and God. Is not it great scorn on their part to use my gifts but to refuse to serve me? If they had acquired these things by their own industry and not entirely from me, their scorn would not seem so great. 27 But I will give my grace to those who begin to turn over my burden voluntarily and strive with a fervent desire to do what they can. I will work together with those who carry my load, that is, those who progress day by day out of love for me, and I will be their strength and will set them so on fire that they will want to do more. 28 The people who remain in the place that seems to prick them—but really is peaceful—are those who toil patiently night and day without wearying but growing ever more ardent, thinking that what they do is little. These are my dearest friends, and they are very few, since others find the drinks in the second treasury more pleasing.”

‡ Chapter 16*

Dialogue between the Virgin and a Devil Concerning the Soul of a Sinful Woman

DATE: 1340S

On how the bride saw a saint speaking to God about a woman who was being terribly afflicted by the devil and who was later delivered through the prayers of the glorious Virgin.

6. “Swallows up the impious”; cf. Numbers 16:31–35.

7. “Water flowed for the righteous out of the rock”; cf. Exodus 17:5–6.

8. “Waters parted for them”; cf. Exodus 14:16–22.

9. “The fire did not harm them”; cf. Numbers 11:1–2.

10. “Skies gave them food”; cf. Exodus 16: 4, 14–15.

* This is the “miracle” revelation alluded to by Mathias in *Stupor et mirabilia*; see p. 52.

1 The bride saw one of the saints speaking to God¹ and saying: "Why is the devil afflicting the soul of this woman whom you redeemed by your blood?" The devil answered immediately and said: "Because she is mine by right." And the Lord said: "By what right is she yours?" The devil answered him: "There are," he said, "two paths. One leads to heaven, the other to hell. 2 When she beheld these two paths, her conscience and her reason told that she should choose my path. And because she had a free will for selecting the path of her choice, she thought it would be advantageous to turn her will toward committing sin, and she began to walk along my path. Later I deceived her through three vices: gluttony, greed for money, and sensuality. 3 Now I dwell in her belly and in her nature.² I hold on to her by five hands. With one hand I hold her eyes, so she will not see spiritual things. With the second one I hold her hands, so she will not perform any good deeds. With the third one I hold her feet, so she will not stray over to goodness. With the fourth one I hold her intellect, so she will not be ashamed to sin. And with the fifth one I hold her heart, so she will not return through contrition."

4 The Blessed Virgin Mary then said to her Son: "My Son, make him tell the truth about what I want to ask him." The Son said: "You are my Mother, you are the Queen of Heaven, you are the Mother of mercy, you are the consolation of the souls in purgatory, you are the joy of those making their way in the world. You are the angels' sovereign Mistress, the most excellent creature before God. You are also Mistress over the devil. Command this demon yourself, Mother, and he will tell you whatever you want."

5 The Blessed Virgin then asked the devil: "Tell me, devil, what intention did this woman have before entering the church?" The devil answered her: "She had resolved to keep from sin." And the Virgin Mary said to him: "Inasmuch as her previous intention led her to hell, tell me, in what direction does her present intention of keeping from sin tend?" The devil answered her reluctantly: "The intention of keeping from sin leads her toward heaven." The Virgin Mary said: "Because you accepted that it was your just right to lead her away from the path of the Holy Church due to her previous intention, then it is now a matter of justice that she be led back to the church on account of her present intention. 6 Now, devil, I will put another question to you: Tell me, what intention does she have in her present state of conscience?" The devil answered: "In her mind she is terribly contrite and sorry about the things she has done, and she resolves never to commit such sins anymore but wants to improve as far as she is able." 7 The Virgin then asked the devil: "Would you tell me if the three sins of sensuality, gluttony, and greed can exist in a heart at the same time as the three good dispositions of contrition, sorrow, and the purpose of amendment?" The devil answered: "No." 8 And the Blessed Virgin said: "Would you tell me, then, which of these should shrink away and vanish

1. "God," i.e., Christ. The revelations often refer to Christ simply as "God."

2. "In her nature" renders Lat. "in natura eius"; cf. Sw. "j hånna natur"; i.e., in her sexual organs; see Söderwall "natur" 3).

from her heart, the three virtues or the three vices that you say cannot occupy the same place at the same time?” 9 The devil replied: “I say, the sins.” And the Virgin answered: “The path to hell, then, is closed to her and the path to heaven lies open to her.” Again the Blessed Virgin asked the devil: “Tell me, if a robber lay in wait outside the doors of the bride and wanted to rape her, what would the bridegroom do?” 10 The devil answered: “If the bridegroom is good and noble, he should defend her and risk his life for her sake.” Then the Virgin said: “You are the wicked robber. This soul is the bride of the bridegroom, my Son, who redeemed her with his own blood. You corrupted and seized her by force. Therefore, since my Son is the bridegroom of her soul and Lord over you, then it is your role to flee before him.”

EXPLANATION

11 This woman was a prostitute³ who wanted to return to the world because the devil was molesting her day and night, so much so that he visibly pressed her eyes into her head⁴ and, while many were watching, dragged her out of bed. Then, in the presence of many reliable witnesses, the holy lady Birgitta said openly: 12 “Get you gone, devil, you have vexed this creature of God enough.” After she had said this, the woman lay pressed with her eyes on the ground for half an hour and then got up and said: “Truly, I saw the devil in the vilest of shapes going out through the window and I heard a voice saying to me: ‘Woman, you have truly been set free.’ ”

13 From that hour on this woman was freed from all impatience and no longer suffered from filthy thoughts, and she came to her rest through a good death.

‡ Chapter 17

On a Proud and Greedy Person

DATE: 1340S, EARLY WIDOWHOOD, ALVASTRA

Christ’s words to his bride comparing a sinner to three things: an eagle, a fowler, and a fighter.

1 “I am Jesus Christ who am speaking with you. I am he who was in the womb of the Virgin, true God and true man. Although I was in the Virgin, I

3. The prostitute was possibly one Margareta from Västergötland, who practiced her profession in Stockholm and was converted by Birgitta in 1345 (Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 19 [but date given there is 1355], 524, 540, 585, 629). This woman may be identical to one alluded to in Ex. 51.30 who is possessed by several diabolical spirits.

4. “Pressed her eyes into her head”: it is unclear what torture she is undergoing exactly. Cf. Sw. “wt krista hänna öghon” [gouge out her eyes]. In the following section, “the woman lay pressed with her eyes on the ground,” but cf. Sw. “laa qvinnan nidhir thrykt swa som dödh vidh iordhena” [the woman lay pressed down to the ground as if dead].

still ruled over all things together with the Father. That man, who is such a wicked enemy of mine, is like three things. First, he is like an eagle that flies in the air while other birds fly beneath it; second, like a fowler¹ playing on a pipe smeared with sticky pitch, whose tune delights the birds so that they fly to the pipe and get stuck in the pitch; third, he is like a fighter who is first in every match. 2 He is like an eagle, because in his pride he cannot possibly tolerate anyone being above him, and he injures everyone he can get at with the talons of his malice. I will cut off the wings of his power and pride and remove his malice from the earth. I will give him over to the unquenchable oil² where he will be tormented without end, if he does not mend his ways. 3 He is also like a fowler in that he attracts everyone to himself by the sweetness of his words and promises, but anyone who comes to him gets caught in perdition and can never escape from it. For that reason the birds of hell will peck his eyes out³ so that he will never see my glory but only the everlasting darkness of hell. 4 They will cut off his ears so that he will not hear the words of my mouth. In return for his sweet words, they will cause him bitterness from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head,⁴ and he will endure as many punishments as the number of men he led to perdition. 5 He is also like a fighter who takes first place in wickedness, unwilling to yield to anybody and determined to beat everyone down. Like a fighter, then, he will have first place in every punishment; his punishment will be constantly renewed and never end. Yet, so long as his soul is with his body, my mercy stands ready for him.”

EXPLANATION

6 This was a very powerful knight who hated the clergy a lot and used to hurl insults at them. The preceding revelation is about him as well as the following one:

7 The Son of God says: “O worldly knight, question the wise about what happened to proud Haman⁵ who had scorned my people! Was not his an ignominious death and a great degradation? This man derides me and my friends in the same way. 8 For this reason, just as Israel did not mourn the death of Haman, my friends will not mourn the death of this man. He will die a most bitter death, if he does not mend his ways.” And that is what happened.

1. “Like a fowler”; cf. Jeremiah 5:26.

2. “Unquenchable oil” renders “olle inextinguibili”; cf. Sw. “osläkkeliko grytonne som är häluitis pina” [unquenchable cauldron that is the torment of hell]; cf. Mark 9:44.

3. “Peck his eyes out”; cf. Proverbs 30:17.

4. “From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head”; cf. Deuteronomy 28:35 et al. (cf. ch. 1.3).

5. “Haman”; cf. Esther 3; 5; 7.

‡ Chapter 18

*Instructions about a "House" (i.e., a New Monastery)*DATE: 1340S, EARLY WIDOWHOOD, ALVASTRA¹

Christ's words to his bride about how there ought to be humility in the house of God, and about how such a house denotes the religious life, and about how buildings and alms and so forth ought to be donated from goods properly acquired, and about how to make restitution.

1 "In my house there should be all that humility which now only gets contempt. There should be a sturdy wall between the men and women, because, although I am capable of defending everyone and supporting them all without any need of a wall, nevertheless, for the sake of caution and because of the devil's cunning, I want a wall separating the two residences. It should be a sturdy wall, moderately but not too high. 2 The windows should be simple and transparent, the roof moderately high, so nothing can be seen there that does not suggest humility. The men who build houses for me nowadays are like master builders who take the lord of the house by the hair as he enters and trample him underfoot. They raise mud up high and put gold underfoot. That is what they do to me. 3 They build mud, I mean, they pile up temporal and perishable goods to the sky, so to speak, while not caring at all about souls, which are more precious than gold. When I want to go to them through my preachers or through good thoughts, they grab me by the hair and trample me underfoot, I mean, they attack me with blasphemy and consider my works and words to be as despicable as mud. They think themselves much wiser. If they wanted to build things for me and for my glory, they would first build up their own souls.

4 Let whoever builds my house take the utmost care not to let a single penny that has not been rightly and justly acquired go to the building.² There are plenty of people who know they possess ill-gotten goods and yet are not at all sorry for it nor have the intention of making restitution and satisfaction for their cheating and stealing, although they could make restitution and satisfaction if they were willing. However, since they realize they cannot keep these things forever, they give a part of their ill-gotten goods to the churches, as if to placate me by their donation. They reserve their other legitimate possessions for their descendants. This does not please me at all.

1. According to Prior Petrus, this revelation took place in Alvastra monastery after Birgitta was widowed; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 82, 489. It adumbrates her plans for the physical layout of the new monastery.

2. Birgitta wants to ensure that estates donated to Vadstena monastery are legitimately acquired and cannot be lost through various types of claims. Most properties of the nobility were tax-exempt and could be transferred securely through inheritance. In the case of purchased properties, the seller's kinsmen had the right to reclaim a property within a given time limit, and thus the "acquisition" was not guaranteed. Similarly, donated properties were frequently reclaimed by kinsmen after the donor's death. See further Norborg, *Storföretaget Vadstena kloster*, and Andrae, *Kyrka och frälse*.

5 A person who wants to please me by his donations should first of all have the desire to mend his ways and should then do those good works he is capable of doing. He should lament and bewail the evil he has done and make restitution, if he can. If he cannot, he should have the intention of making restitution for his fraudulently acquired goods. 6 Then he should take care never to commit such sins again. If the person to whom he ought to restore his ill-gotten goods is no longer alive, then he can make a donation to me, who am able to pay back everyone. If he is unable to restore them, provided he humbles himself before me with a purpose of amendment and a contrite heart, I have the means to make restitution and, either now or in the future, restore their property to all those who have been cheated.

7 Let me explain to you the meaning of the house that I want built. The house is the religious life.³ I myself, the Creator of all things, through whom all things were made and exist, am its foundation. There are four walls in this house. 8 The first is the justice by which I will judge those who are hostile to this house. The second wall is the wisdom by which I will enlighten the inhabitants with my knowledge and understanding. The third is the power by which I will strengthen them against the machinations of the devil. The fourth wall is my mercy, which welcomes everyone who asks for it. 9 In this wall is the door of grace through which all seekers are welcomed. The roof of the house is the charity by which I cover the sins of those who love me so that they will not be sentenced for their sins. The window of the roof through which the sun enters is the consideration of my grace. Through it the warmth of my divinity is let in to the inhabitants.

10 That the wall should be big and strong means that no one can weaken my words or destroy them. That it should be moderately high means that my wisdom can be understood and comprehended in part but never fully. 11 The simple and transparent windows mean that my words are simple, yet through them the light of divine knowledge enters into the world. 12 The moderately high roof means that my words will be manifested not in an incomprehensible way but in a comprehensible and intelligible way.”

‡ Chapter 19

On People's Ingratitude toward God

DATE: 1340S

The Creator's words to the bride about the splendor of his power, wisdom, and virtue, and about how those who are now said to be wise sin the most against him.

1 “I am the Creator of heaven and earth. I have three qualities. I am most powerful, most wise, and most virtuous. I am so powerful that the angels honor

3. “Religious life”: Lat. “religio,” “the religious life” in general, or, specifically, the “religious order” God wanted Birgitta to found. We take it as the former.

me in heaven, and the demons in hell dare not look upon me. All the elements are at my beck and call. 2 I am so wise that nobody can succeed in tracking my wisdom. My knowledge is such that I know all that has been and all that will be. I am so rational that not the least little thing, whether a worm or some other animal, no matter how ugly, has been made without a reason. 3 I am also so virtuous that every good flows from me as though from a good spring and all sweetness comes from me as though from a good vine. Without me, nobody can be powerful, nobody wise, nobody virtuous. For this reason, the powerful men of the world sin against me exceedingly. I have given them strength and power so they might honor me, but they attribute the honor to themselves, as if they got it from themselves. 4 The wretches do not consider their own feebleness. If I were to send them the least little infirmity, they would immediately break down and everything would lose its value for them. How then will they be able to withstand my might and the punishments of eternity?

5 But those who are now said to be wise sin even more against me. For I gave them sense, understanding, and wisdom in order for them to love me, but the only thing they understand is their own temporal advantage. They have eyes in their head but look only to their own pleasures. They are blind as to giving thanks to me, who gave them everything, since nobody, whether good or wicked, can perceive or understand anything without me, even if I allow the wicked to incline their will to whatever they like. 6 Moreover, nobody can be virtuous without me. I could now use that commonly cited proverb: 'Everyone despises the patient man.' Because of my patience everyone thinks I am terribly foolish and that is why everyone looks down on me. 7 But woe to them when, after so much patience, I make my sentence known to them! Before me they will be like mud that drops down to the depths and does not stop until it comes to the lowest part of hell."

‡ Chapter 20

On the Chastity and Humility of the Bride

DATE: 1340S

A pleasant dialogue of the Virgin Mother and the Son with each other and of the Virgin Mother and the Son with the bride, and about how the bride should get ready for the wedding.

1 The Mother appeared saying to the Son: "You are the King of glory, my Son, you are Lord over all lords, you created heaven and earth and everything in them. May your every desire be done, may your every will be done!" 2 The Son answered: "It is an ancient proverb that says 'what a youth learns in his youth, he retains in his old age.'¹ Mother, from your youth you learned to follow

1. "What a youth learns in his youth, he retains in his old age"; cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, p. 722 no. 5872, "Disce, puer, dum tempus adest, evo iuvenili, Ut que te recreent, habeas etate senili."

my will and to surrender all your will to me. You rightly said: ‘May your will be done!’³ You are like precious gold that is laid out and hammered on a hard anvil, because you were hammered by all manner of tribulation and you suffered in my passion beyond all others. When my heart burst² from the vehemence of my pain on the cross, it wounded your heart like sharp steel. You would willingly have let it be cut in two, had that been my will. ⁴ Even if you had been able to oppose my passion and demanded that I be allowed to live, still you did not will to have it any other way than according to my will. For that reason you did well to say: ‘Your will be done!’ ”

⁵ Then Mary said to the bride: “My Son’s bride, love my Son, because he loves you. Honor his saints, who are in his presence. They are like countless stars whose light and splendor cannot be compared to any temporal light. As the light of the world differs from darkness, so—but much more—does the light of the saints differ from the light of this world. ⁶ I tell you truly that if the saints were seen clearly, as they really are, no human eye could bear it without being deprived of its bodily sight.”

⁷ Then the Virgin’s Son spoke to his bride, saying: “My bride, you should have four qualities. First, you should be ready for the wedding of my divinity wherein there is no carnal desire but only the most sweet spiritual pleasure, the kind that is appropriate for God to have with a chaste soul. In this way, neither the love for your children nor for temporal goods nor for your relatives should drag you away from my love. Do not let happen to you what happened to those foolish virgins³ who were not ready when the Lord wished to call them to the wedding and were therefore left behind.

⁸ Second, you should have faith in my words. For I am the truth, and nothing but the truth comes from my lips, and nobody can find anything but truth in my words. At times I mean what I say in a spiritual sense, and at other times according to the letter of the word, in which case my words should be understood according to their naked sense. Thus, nobody can accuse me of lying. ⁹ In the third place, you should be obedient in order for there to be not a single limb in your body through which you do wrong and which you do not submit to the proper penance and reparation. Although I am merciful, I do not relinquish justice. Therefore, obey humbly and cheerfully those whom you are bound to obey, so that you do not do even that which seems useful and reasonable to you if it goes against obedience. It is better to give up your own will out of obedience, even if its object is good, and to follow the will of your director,⁴ provided it does not go against the salvation of your soul or is otherwise irrational.

¹⁰ In the fourth place, you should be humble, because you are united in a spiritual matrimony. You should therefore be humble and modest on the arrival of your bridegroom. Let your handmaid be sober and restrained, I mean,

2. “My heart burst”: the idea that Christ’s pain is concentrated in his heart appears elsewhere, e.g., Book I 27.6; 53.7; Book IV 89.5; Book VII 15.15; QO 2.55.

3. “Those foolish virgins”; cf. Matthew 25:1–13.

4. “Your director,” i.e., Mathias of Linköping.

let your body practice abstinence and be well disciplined, because you will bear the fruit of spiritual offspring⁵ for the good of many. In the same way as when a shoot is grafted onto a dry stem and the stem begins to blossom, you must bear fruit and blossom through my grace. And my grace will intoxicate you, and the whole heavenly host will rejoice on account of the sweet wine I will give you.

11 Do not lose trust in my goodness. I assure you that just as Zechariah and Elizabeth rejoiced in their hearts with an indescribable joy over the promise of a future child, you, too, will rejoice over the grace I want to give you, and, besides, others will rejoice through you. 12 It was an angel⁶ who spoke to those two, Zechariah and Elizabeth, but it is I, the God and Creator of the angels and of you, who speak to you. For my sake, those two gave birth to my most dear friend John.⁷ Through you I want many children to be born to me, not of the flesh but of the spirit. 13 Truly, I tell you, John was like a reed full of sweetness and honey, for nothing unclean ever entered his mouth nor did he ever go beyond the limits of necessity⁸ in getting what he needed to live on. Semen never left his body, which is why he can well be called an angel and a virgin.”⁹

⚡ Chapter 21

A Sorcerer Is Compared to an Ugly Frog

DATE: 1340S

The bridegroom’s words to his bride making admirable use of a fine allegory about a sorcerer in order to illustrate and explain the devil.

1 The bridegroom, Jesus, spoke to his bride in allegories, using the example of a frog. He said: “A certain sorcerer had fine glittering gold. A simple and mild-mannered man came to him and wanted to buy the gold. The sorcerer told him: ‘You will not get this gold, unless you give me better gold and in greater quantity.’ 2 He answered him: ‘I desire your gold so much that I will give you what you want rather than do without it.’ After having given the sorcerer better gold in greater quantity, he took the glittering gold from him and put it in a case, planning to make himself a ring from it for his finger.

3 When a short time had passed, the sorcerer went to that simple man and told him: ‘The gold you bought and put in your case is not gold, as you think, but an ugly frog, which was bred in my breast and fed on my food. And

5. “The fruit of spiritual offspring”: this idea is central to Birgitta’s calling (cf. 20.12, “Through you I want many children to be born to me”). On Birgitta’s spiritual maternity, see further Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, p. 91.

6. “An angel,” i.e., Gabriel.

7. “John,” i.e., John the Baptist; cf. Luke 1:5–25, 57–80.

8. “Beyond the limits of necessity” renders Lat. “ultra mensuram perceptibilem”; cf. Sw. “owir vidhorthorftelika matto” [beyond the necessary measure]. See further on this passage Odelman, “Rarae aves,” p. 47.

9. Sw. adds at the end “for sit gudhelika lifwirne skuld som han hafde” [on account of the godly life that he led].

in order to test the truth of the matter, open the case and you will see how the frog will leap to my breast where it was bred.' 4 When the man tried to open it and find out, a frog could be seen in the case, the cover of which was suspended on four hinges that were about to fall off. When the lid of the case was opened and the frog saw the sorcerer, he leaped to his breast. The servants and friends of the simple man saw this and said to him: 'Master, his fine gold is inside the frog and, if you like, you can easily get the gold.' 5 'How?' he asked. 'How can I?' They said: 'If someone were to take a very sharp and heated lancet and thrust it into the frog's back, he would soon get the gold out of that part of the back where there is a hollow.¹ If he cannot find a hollow in it, then he should with every effort thrust his lancet firmly into it, and in that way you will get back what you bought.'

6 Who is this sorcerer if not the devil, enticing people to empty pleasures and glory? He promises that what is false is true and makes what is true seem to be false. He has possession of that precious gold, I mean, of the soul, which, through my divine power, I made more precious than all the stars and planets. I made it immortal and stable and more delightful to me than the rest of creation. I prepared for it an eternal resting place and dwelling with me. 7 I bought it from the power of the devil with better and more expensive gold by giving for it my own flesh, immune from every sin, and enduring so bitter a passion that not one of my limbs remained uninjured. I put the redeemed soul in a body as in a case, until the time when I would give it a place in the court of my divine presence.

8 Now, however, the redeemed human soul has become like a foul and ugly frog, leaping in his pride and living in slime through his sensuality. The gold, I mean, my rightful possession has been taken away from me. That is why the devil can indeed say to me: 'The gold you bought is not gold but a frog, bred in the breast of my delight. Separate the body from the soul and you will see that it will fly straight to the breast of my delight where it was bred.' 9 My answer to him is this: 'Since the frog is horrid to look at, horrible to hear and poisonous to touch, and is no good to me and gives me no delight but does so for you, in whose breast it was bred, then you can have it, since you have a right to it. And so when the lid is opened, that is, when the soul is separated from the body, it will fly straight to you, to remain with you forever.'

10 Such is the soul of the person I am describing to you. It is like an evil frog, full of filthiness and lust, fed at the breast of the devil. I am coming now to the case, I mean, to the soul's body, through its coming death. The case is suspended from four hinges that are about to fall off in the sense that his body is supported by four things, namely strength, beauty, wisdom, and sight, all of which are now beginning to fail him. 11 When the soul is separated from the body, it will fly straight to the devil on whose milk it was fed, since it has forgotten my love in taking upon myself for its sake the punishment it de-

1. The motif of stabbing a beast to obtain or destroy its essential organs occurs elsewhere in the *Revelationes*, e.g., Book IV 2.5.

served. It does not requite my love with love, but, instead, takes my rightful possession away from me. It owes greater service to me who redeemed it than to any other, but it finds greater pleasure in the devil.

12 The sound of his prayer seems like the sound of a frog to me, his looks are abominable to me. His ears will never hear my joy;² his poisoned sense of touch will never feel my divinity. However, because I am merciful, if anyone were to touch his soul now, although it is unclean, and to examine it to see if there be any contrition in it or any goodness in his will, if anyone were to thrust into his mind a sharp and heated lancet, I mean, the fear of my strict judgment, he could still obtain my grace, if only he would consent to it. 13 If there is no contrition or charity in him, still there might be some hope, provided someone could pierce him with a sharp correction and rebuke him strongly, because so long as the soul lives in the body, my mercy lies open to everyone. See how I died for love, yet nobody repays me with love, but they take from me what is justly mine. It would be just if people improved their lives in proportion to the efforts it cost to redeem them. 14 Now, however, people want to live all the worse in proportion to the pain I suffered in redeeming them. The more I show them how abominable their sin is, the more boldly they want to sin. Look, therefore, and consider how it is not without cause that I am angry: They manage to change for themselves my good will into anger. I redeemed them from sin, and they get themselves increasingly entangled in sin.

15 So, my bride, give me what you are obliged to give me, I mean, keep your soul clean for me, because I died for it in order that you might keep it clean for me.”

‡ Chapter 22*

Reassurance for Birgitta about Her Concerns

DATE: 1340s

The Mother’s gentle question to the bride, and the bride’s humble answer to the Mother, and the Mother’s useful reply to the bride, and about the progress of good people among the wicked.

1 The Mother spoke to the Son’s bride, saying: “You are my Son’s bride. Tell me what is on your mind and what you would like!” The bride answered her: “My Lady, you know it, because you know everything.” The Blessed Virgin said: “Although I know everything, I would like you to tell me while the persons here present are listening.” 2 The bride said: “My lady, I am afraid of two things. First,” she said, “I am afraid that I do not weep for my sins or make amends for them as much as I should like. Second, I am sad because your Son has

2. “My joy”; cf. Matthew 25:21, 23.

* Part of ch. 22 occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 489, line 18, through p. 490, line 7, “Hon hafuir þry þing . . . til gudz i iordhrike.” See further note to ch. 25.

many enemies." The Virgin Mary answered: "I give you three cures for your first worry. First of all, think about how all things that have spirit, such as frogs or other animals, have troubles from time to time, even though their spirits do not live forever but die with their bodies. However, your spirit, and every human soul, does live forever. 3 Second, think about the mercy of God, because there are none who are such sinners that their sin is not forgiven them, if only they pray with a resolution to improve and with contrition. Third, think about how much glory the soul gains when she lives with God and in God forever.

4 I give you three cures as well for your second worry about the enemies of God being many. First, consider that your God and your Creator and theirs is also their judge, and that they will never again sentence him, even though he patiently puts up with their wickedness for a time. Second, remember that they are the children of damnation and how hard and unbearable it will be for them to burn for all eternity. 5 They are most wicked servants who will get no inheritance, while the children will receive the inheritance. But perhaps you will say: 'Then should not one preach to them?' Of course! Remember that good people are frequently found among the evil. And adopted children sometimes turn away from what is good, like the prodigal son¹ who went to a far-off land and lived an evil life. 6 But sometimes preaching pricks their conscience and they return to the Father, as welcome then as they had been sinful before. So one should preach especially to them, because, though a preacher may only see wicked people in front of him, he should think to himself: 'Perhaps there are some among them who will become children of my Lord. I will therefore preach to them.' Such a preacher will get a very great reward.

7 In the third place, consider that the wicked are permitted to continue living as a trial for the good, so that they, exasperated by the habits of the wicked, might gain their reward as a fruit of patience. You can understand this better by means of an example. A rose smells sweet, is beautiful to the sight, gentle to the touch, but it only grows among thorns that are sharp to the touch, ugly to look at, and do not give off a pleasant scent. 8 Similarly, good and righteous people, although they may be gentle through patience, beautiful in their character, and sweet in their good example, still cannot make progress or be put to the test except among the wicked. The thorn is sometimes for the rose's protection, so that it will not be picked before it is in full bloom. Similarly, the wicked offer an occasion to good people not to follow them in sin, when, because of the wickedness of others, the good are held back from coming to ruin through immoderate merriment or some other sin.

9 Wine does not keep its quality well except in dregs, and neither can good and righteous people remain upright and advance in the virtues without being put to the test through tribulation and by being persecuted by the unrighteous. So put up gladly with the enemies of my Son. Remember that he is their judge

1. 22.5-6: "the prodigal son" (Luke 15: 11-32).

and, if justice demanded that he destroy them all, he could wipe them out in a moment. Tolerate them, then, so long as he tolerates them!”

‡ Chapter 23

The Moral Attributes of a Man of Great Repute Are Graphically Described; St. Lawrence Explains the Vision

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s words to his bride describing an insincere man, who is called an enemy of God, and especially about his hypocrisy and all about his characteristics.

1 “People think he is a well-dressed, strong, and dignified man, active in the battle of the Lord. However, when his helmet is removed, he is disgusting to look at and unfit for any work. His naked brain can be seen, his ears are on his forehead, his eyes at the back of his head. His nose is cut off. His cheeks are all sunken like those of a dead man. On the right side, his cheekbone and half of his lips have all fallen off, so nothing remains on the right except his uncovered throat. 2 His chest is full of swarming worms;¹ his arms are like a pair of snakes. An evil scorpion² sits in his heart; his back looks like burned coal. His intestines are stinking and rotten like pus-filled flesh, his feet are dead and useless for walking. I will tell you now what all this means.

3 On the outside he is the kind of man who seems to be decked out in good habits and wisdom and active in my service, but he is not like that at all. For if the helmet is removed from his head, I mean, if he were shown to people as he is, he would be the ugliest man of all. His brain is naked, inasmuch as the foolishness and frivolity of his ways are evident enough signs to good men that he is unworthy of so much honor. If he tasted my wisdom, he would realize that the more he is raised in honor above others, so much more than others should he clothe himself in austere conduct. 4 His ears are on his forehead because, instead of the humility he should have in his high rank, and which he should let shine for others, he only wants to hear his own praises and glory. Instead, he puts on pride and that is why he wants everyone to call him great and good.

5 He has eyes at the back of his head, because all his thought is for the present and not for eternity. He thinks about how to be pleasing to men and about what is required for the needs of the body, but not about how he might please me or about what is good for souls. 6 His nose is cut off, inasmuch as he has lost the discretion by which he might distinguish between sin and virtue, between temporal and eternal glory, between worldly and eternal riches, between

1. “Swarming worms”; cf. 2 Maccabees 9:9.

2. “Evil scorpion” renders Lat. “*pessimus scorpio*”; cf. Sw. “*wärsta etir orm som kallas skorpio*” [most evil poisonous snake which is called a scorpion]. Not indigenous to Scandinavia, the scorpion was associated with poisonous snakes in the Bible (e.g., Deuteronomy 8:15; Ecclesiasticus 39:30; Luke 10:19), and occurs in ancient tradition and exotic legend, sometimes as the incarnation of evil. See KL “skorpioner.”

those brief pleasures and eternal ones. 7 His cheeks are sunken, that is, all his feeling of shame in my presence along with the beauty of the virtues by which he might please me are altogether dead as far as I am concerned. He is ashamed to sin for fear of human embarrassment but not at all out of fear of me.

8 Part of his cheekbone and lips has fallen off with nothing remaining except his throat, because the imitation of my works and the preaching of my words along with heartfelt prayer have already fallen off from him so that nothing remains in him but his gluttonous throat. But he finds the imitation of depravity and involvement in worldly affairs³ altogether wholesome and appealing. 9 His chest is full of worms, because in his chest, where there should be remembrance of my passion and the memory of my deeds and commandments, there is only a concern for temporal affairs and a worldly desire. These worm their way through his conscience so that he does not think of spiritual things.

10 In his heart, where I should like to dwell and where my love should reside, there resides an evil scorpion with a stinging tail and an ingratiating face.⁴ This is because ingratiating and sensible-sounding words come out of his mouth, but his heart is full of injustice and falsehood, because he does not care if the church he represents gets destroyed, so long as he can carry out his selfish will. 11 His arms are like snakes because in his wickedness he reaches out to the simple-hearted and calls them to himself with simplicity, but, when it suits his purposes, he ousts them like poor wretches. Just like a snake, he coils himself into a ring by hiding his malice and iniquity, so that hardly anyone can detect his craftiness. 12 In my sight he is like a vile snake because, just as a snake is more odious than any other animal, he, too, is for me the most deformed of all, inasmuch as he sets my justice at naught and regards me as someone who is unwilling to inflict punishment.

13 His back is like coal, but it should be like ivory, insofar as his deeds should be more valiant and pure than those of others in order to support the weak through his patience and through the example of a good life. 14 But, instead, it is like coal, because he is too weak to endure a single word for my glory, unless it benefits himself. Yet he thinks he is valiant with respect to the world. Consequently, since he thinks he stands upright, he will fall, inasmuch as he is as deformed and lifeless as coal before me and my saints.

15 His intestines stink, because, before me, his thoughts and affections stink like rotting flesh, the stench of which no one can bear. None of the saints can bear him; instead, everyone turns his face away from him and demands a sentence passed on him. 16 His feet are dead, because his two feet are his two dispositions regarding me, I mean, the desire to make amends for his sins

3. "Involvement in worldly affairs" renders Lat. "reulucio secularium negociorum"; cf. Sw. "snärias ok wändas j wärzlíkom ärlíndom" [to be ensnared and embroiled in worldly affairs]. See Odelman, "Rare aves," p. 46, on the unusual senses of "reulucio" in the *Revelationes*.

4. "With a stinging tail and an ingratiating face"; cf. Pfeiffer, *Konrad of Meigenberg*, p. 282, "scorpio . . . hat ain gar sänftig antlütz geleich ainem käuschen junkfrawen antlütz" [the scorpion . . . has a very mild face, similar to that of a chaste virgin].

and the desire to do good. However, these feet are altogether dead in him, because the marrow of love has all been consumed in him and nothing is left except the hardened bones. And in this condition he stands before me. However, so long as his soul remains in the body, he can obtain my mercy.”

EXPLANATION

17 Saint Lawrence⁵ appeared saying: “When I was in the world, I had three things: continence with respect to myself, mercy with respect to my neighbor, charity with respect to God. Therefore I preached the word of God zealously, distributed the goods of the church prudently, and endured scourging, fire, and death joyfully. 18 But this bishop⁶ endures and covers up the incontinence of the clergy, liberally spends the goods of the church on the rich, and shows charity toward himself and his own. Therefore, I declare to him that a light cloud has ascended into heaven, overshadowed by dark flames so as not to be seen by many.

19 This cloud is the prayer of the Mother of God for the church. The flames of greed and of the lack of piety and justice overcloud it so that the gentle mercy of the Mother of God cannot enter the hearts of the wretched. 20 Therefore let the bishop quickly turn to divine charity by correcting himself, by admonishing his subordinates in word and example, and by encouraging them to improve. If he does not, he will feel the hand of the judge, and his diocesan church will be purged by fire and the sword and afflicted by pillaging and tribulation so that it will be a long time before there will be anyone to console her.”⁷

✠ Chapter 24

A Plea for Mercy for the “Daughter” and “Bride”

DATE: 1340S

God the Father’s words before the heavenly host, and the answer of the Son and Mother to the Father requesting a grace for his daughter the church.

1 The Father spoke, while the whole host of heaven was listening, and he said: “Before you I state my complaint that I gave my daughter to a man who torments her terribly and binds her feet to a wooden stake so that the marrow has all gone out of her feet.”¹ The Son answered him: “Father, I redeemed her with my blood and betrothed her to myself, but now she has been seized by

5. Saint Lawrence, d. 258, deacon and martyr, who, according to legend, presented the poor of Rome to the prefect of the city, describing them as the “treasure of the church”; feast day 10 August.

6. “Bishop”: possibly Pope Clement VI, pope in Avignon 1342–52.

7. “There will be anyone to console her”; cf. Lamentations 1:2, 17.

1. “Binds her feet . . . has all gone out of her feet”; see further note to ch. 5.2.

force.” 2 Then the Mother spoke, saying: “You are my God and my Lord. My body bore the limbs of your blessed Son, who is your true Son and my true Son. I refused him nothing on earth. For the sake of my prayers, have mercy on your daughter!”

3 After this the angels spoke, saying: “You are our Lord. In you we possess every good thing, and we need nothing but you. When your bride² went forth from you, we all rejoiced. But now we have reason to be sad, because she has been given over into the hands of the worst of men who offends her with all kinds of insults and abuse. So have mercy on her according to your great mercy,³ for she is in extremely great misery, and there is no one to console⁴ and free her but you, Lord, God almighty.” 4 Then the Father answered the Son, saying: “Son, your grievance is my grievance, your word my word, your works my works. You are in me and I am in you⁵ inseparably. May your will be done!”⁶

5 Then he said to the Mother of the Son: “Since you refused me nothing on earth, I will refuse you nothing in heaven. Your will shall be fulfilled.” 6 He said to the angels: “You are my friends, and the flame of your love burns in my heart. I shall have mercy on my daughter because of your prayers.”

≠ Chapter 25*

Why Christ Tolerates the Wicked

DATE: 1340S

The Creator’s words to the bride about how his justice keeps the wicked in existence for a threefold reason, and how his mercy spares the wicked for a threefold reason.

1 “I am the Creator of heaven and earth. You were wondering, my bride, why I am so forbearing with the wicked. That is because I am merciful. My justice bears with them for a threefold reason and for a threefold reason my mercy spares them. 2 First, my justice bears with them so that their time may be fully completed. Just as you might ask a righteous king who has some prisoners why he does not put them to death, and his answer is: ‘Because it is not yet time for the general session of the court¹ where they can be heard and where those who hear can take greater warning.’ In a similar way I tolerate the

2. “Bride,” i.e., the church.

3. “According to your great mercy”; cf. Psalm 50(51):3.

4. “There is no one to console” (Lamentations 1:2, 17).

5. “You are in me and I am in you”; cf. John 17:21.

6. “May your will be done” (Matthew 6:10; 26:42).

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 488, line 4, through p. 490, line 24, “Ek är þin gudh” . . . “spar min rätuisa.” The chapter also incorporates part of Book I 22.

1. “General session of the court” renders Lat. “placitum generale”; cf. Sw. “landz thinghin älla radhstofwo daghin” [the provincial lawcourt or the day of the court meeting]; Birgittine-Norwegian “räfstapings time” [the time of the court held by the king or his representative].

wicked until their time comes, so that their wickedness can be made known to others as well. 3 Did I not foretell the rejection of Saul long before it was known to men? I tolerated him for a long time in order that his wickedness might be shown to others. The second reason is that the wicked do perform some good works for which they ought to be rewarded down to the last particular. In this way, not the least little good they have done for me will go unrewarded, and they will accordingly receive their wages here on earth. 4 In the third place, it is in order to manifest God's glory and patience. It was for this reason that I tolerated Pilate, Herod, and Judas, although they were going to be damned. And if anyone asks why I tolerate this or that person, let him call to mind Judas and Pilate.

5 My mercy spares the wicked for a threefold reason as well. First of all, it is because of my enormous love, inasmuch as eternal punishment is long. For that reason, because of my great love, I tolerate them until the last moment in order that their punishment may be delayed by the extended prolongation of time. 6 In the second place, it is in order to allow their nature to be consumed by vices. Insofar as human nature gets consumed by sin,² they would experience temporal death more bitterly if they had a younger constitution. A young constitution dies a more protracted and bitter death. 7 In the third place, it is for the betterment of good people and the conversion of some of the wicked. When good and righteous people are tormented by the wicked, it benefits the good and righteous since it leads them to refrain from sin or to gain greater merit.

8 Likewise, the wicked sometimes have a good effect on certain other wicked persons. When the latter reflect on the fate and evilness of the former, they think to themselves and say: 'What good does it do us to follow them?' And: 'Since the Lord is so patient it is better for us to repent.' 9 In this way they sometimes return to me, because they shudder to do the kinds of things those others do and, moreover, their conscience tells them they should not do those kinds of things. It is said that if a person has been stung by a scorpion, he can be cured by being anointed with the oil in which another reptile has died.³ 10 In like manner, sometimes a wicked person who sees someone else fall may be stung by remorse and be cured by reflecting on the evilness and vanity of the other."

✠ Chapter 26

Spiritual Marriage Is Compared to Human Marriages

DATE: 1340S

The angelic host's words of praise to God, and about how children would have been born if our first parents had not sinned, and about

2. "Insofar . . . sin"; cf. Birgittine-Norwegian, which deviates from the Latin here: "firi þy. At swa sām rudhit nötir järnit, swa gör ok syndhen naturena vanmäktogha" [for just as a rust eats up iron, so also sin makes nature powerless].

3. See note to ch. 23.2.

how God showed miracles to the people through Moses and later through himself to us on his own coming, and about the perversion of bodily matrimony in this age, and about the conditions of spiritual wedlock.

1 The angelic host was seen to be standing before God. The entire host said: "Praise and honor to you, Lord God, you who are and were without end! We are your servants and we offer you threefold praise and honor. First, because you created us to be happy with you and gave us an indescribable light in which to rejoice forever. 2 Second, because all things have been created and are maintained in your goodness and constancy, and all things stand at your pleasure and abide in your word. Third, because you created humankind and took a human nature for their sake. We rejoice greatly for that reason, and also for your most chaste Mother who was found worthy to bear you whom the heavens cannot hold and contain. 3 Therefore, on behalf of the angelic rank that you have so exalted in honor, may your glory and blessing be upon all things! May your everlasting eternity and constancy be upon all things that can be and remain constant! May your love be upon the human race that you created! 4 You alone, Lord, are to be feared for your great power, you alone are to be desired for your great charity, you alone are to be loved for your constancy. Praise be to you without end, unceasingly, forever and ever. Amen!"

5 The Lord answered: "You worthily honor me for all creation. But, tell me, why do you praise me for the human race, which has provoked me to anger more than all creatures? I made them superior to all the lower creatures. For none did I suffer such indignities as for humankind and I redeemed none of them at so great a cost. 6 Or what creature besides the human being does not abide by its natural order? He is greater trouble to me than other creatures. Just as I created you to praise me and give me glory, so I made Adam in order that he would honor me. I gave him a body to be a spiritual temple, and I placed in it a soul like a beautiful angel, for the human soul is of angelic virtue and strength. 7 In that temple, I, his God and Creator, was the third companion.¹ He was meant to enjoy me and find delight in me. Then I made him a similar temple out of his rib.²

8 Now, my bride, for whose sake all this is being enacted, you might ask: 'How would they have had children, if they had not sinned?' I shall tell you: Love's blood would have sown its seed in the woman's body without any shameful lust, through divine love and mutual affection and sexual intercourse in which they both would have been set on fire for each other, and the woman would thus have become fertile. 9 Once the infant was conceived without sin or lustful pleasure, I would have sent a soul into it out of my divinity, and she would have carried the child and given birth to it without pain. The infant

1. "The third companion"; cf. the opening line of Ailred of Rievaulx's *De spirituali amicitia*, "Ecce ego et tu, et spero quod tertius inter nos Christi sit." Ed. Hoste and Talbot, Book I.1.

2. "Out of his rib"; cf. Genesis 2:21.

would forthwith have been born perfect like Adam. But he showed contempt for this privilege by consenting to the devil and coveting a greater glory than I had given to him.

10 After their act of disobedience, my angel came over them and they were ashamed of their nakedness.³ At that very moment they experienced the concupiscence of the flesh and suffered hunger and thirst. They also lost me. Before, when they had me, they did not feel hunger or carnal lust or shame, and I alone was their every good and pleasure and perfect delight. 11 While the devil rejoiced over their perdition and fall, I was moved with pity for them and did not abandon them but showed them a threefold mercy. I clothed their nakedness⁴ and gave them bread from the earth. In return for the sensuality the devil had aroused in them after their act of disobedience, I infused souls in their seed through my divine power. And I turned whatever the devil suggested to them entirely to their good.

12 Then I showed them how to live and how to worship me. I gave them permission to have licit intercourse. I had earlier given them my permission and indications, but they were stricken with fear and afraid to unite sexually. Likewise, when Abel was killed⁵ and they were in mourning for a long time and keeping abstinence, I was moved with compassion and comforted them. Once my will was made known to them, they began again to have intercourse and to procreate children. I promised that I, their Creator, would be born from among their offspring. 13 As the evilness of the children of Adam grew,⁶ I showed justice to sinners but mercy to my elect. With these I was pleased, and I kept them from perdition and raised them up, because they kept my commandments and believed in my promises.

14 When the time of mercy drew near, I let my mighty works be seen through Moses and saved my people according to my promise. I fed them with manna⁷ and went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire.⁸ I gave them my Law⁹ and revealed to them my mysteries and the future through my prophets. 15 After this, I, the Creator of all things, chose for myself a virgin born of a father and mother. From her I took human flesh and condescended to be born of her without coition or sin. Just like those first children would have been born in paradise through the mystery of divine love and out of their parents' mutual love and affection and without any shameful lust, so my divinity took a human nature from a virgin maiden without coition or damaging her virginity.

16 Coming in the flesh, true God and man, I fulfilled the Law and all the scriptures, just as it earlier had been prophesied about me. And I introduced

3. "They were ashamed of their nakedness"; cf. Genesis 3:7–11.

4. "I clothed their nakedness"; cf. Genesis 3:21.

5. "When Abel was killed"; cf. Genesis 4:8.

6. "The evilness of the children of Adam grew"; cf. Genesis 6:5.

7. "I fed them with manna"; cf. Exodus 16:4–15.

8. "A pillar of cloud and fire"; cf. Exodus 13:21–22.

9. "I gave them my Law"; cf. Exodus 31:18.

a New Law, for the old one had been strict and hard to bear and was nothing but a figure of what was to be done in the future. In the Old Law it had been licit for a man to have several wives, so that coming generations would not be left childless or would have to intermarry with the gentiles. 17 In my New Law it is commanded for a husband to have only one wife and forbidden for him during her lifetime to have several wives.¹⁰ Those who unite sexually through divine love and fear for the sake of procreation are a spiritual temple where I wish to dwell as the third companion.

18 However, people of this age join in wedlock for seven reasons.¹¹ First, because of facial beauty; second, because of wealth; third, because of the coarse pleasure and indecent joy they get out of coition; fourth, because of festivities and uncontrolled gluttony; fifth, because it gives rise to pride in dressing and eating and entertainment and other vanities; sixth, in order to bring up their offspring not for God or good works but for wealth and honor; seventh, they join in wedlock on account of lust and the lustful appetite of beasts. 19 These people meet outside the doors of my church¹² with one mind and consent, but their feelings and inner thoughts are completely opposed to me. Instead of my will they prefer their own will, which aims at pleasing the world. If all their thoughts were directed toward me, and if they entrusted their will into my hands and took a spouse in godly fear, then I would give them my assent and would be the third companion with them.

20 But now, although I should be at their head, they do not gain my consent because they have lust rather than my love in their hearts. They go up to my altar and hear there that they should be one heart and one mind, but my heart flees from them because they do not have the warmth of my heart and do not know the taste of my body. 21 They seek a warmth that will perish, and they seek flesh that will be eaten by worms. Accordingly, such people join in wedlock without the bond and union of God the Father and without the Son's love and without the Holy Spirit's consolation.

22 When the couple comes to bed, my Spirit leaves them at once and the spirit of impurity approaches, because they only come together out of lust and do not discuss or think about anything else. But my mercy can still be with them, if they are converted. For I lovingly place a living soul created by my power into their seed. Sometimes I let bad parents give birth from time to time to good children. More often, bad children are born of bad parents, inasmuch as these children imitate the iniquity of their parents as far as they are able and would imitate it even more if my patience permitted them.

23 Such a couple will never get to see my face, unless they repent. For there is no sin so grave that penitence does not wash it away. Accordingly, I will turn to spiritual matrimony, the kind that is appropriate to God to have

10. "It is commanded . . . wives"; cf. Matthew 19:5-9.

11. The social mores of the Swedish aristocratic class are suggested here in the list of reasons for marriage; see further Sjöberg, *Hustru och man*, especially pp. 77-95.

12. "Outside the doors of my church": the marriage took place outside the church doors, and was followed by a bridal mass at the altar; see further KL "bröllop," "ægteskab."

with a chaste body and chaste soul. In it there are seven goods, the opposites of the evils mentioned above. 24 In it there is no desire for fairness of form or beauty of body or pleasant sights but only for the sight and the love of God. Nor is there, second, any desire to possess anything over and above their necessities, what they need to live on, with nothing in excess. Third, they avoid idle and frivolous talk. Fourth, they have no concern about seeing friends or relatives; instead I am the one they love and desire. 25 Fifth, they long to maintain an inner humility in their conscience and an outer one in the way they dress. Sixth, they never have any intention of leading sensuous lives. Seventh, they engender sons and daughters for their God by means of their good behavior and good example and through the preaching of spiritual words.

26 By preserving their faith intact, then, they meet outside the doors of my church where they give me their consent and I give them mine. They go up to my altar and enjoy the spiritual delight of my body and blood. In delighting in it, they wish to be one heart and one body and one will, and I, true God and man, mighty in heaven and on earth, will be the third companion with them and will fill their heart. 27 Those worldly couples let their appetite for marriage begin in lust like beasts, and worse than beasts! These spiritual spouses begin in love and fear of God and seek to please no one but me. The evil spirit fills the former and urges them on to carnal delight where there is nothing but stinking rot. The latter are filled with my Spirit and set ablaze with the fire of my Spirit that will never fail them.

28 I am one God in three persons. I am one in substance with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As it is impossible for the Father to be separated from the Son or for the Holy Spirit to be separated from either, and as it is impossible for heat to be separated from fire, so it is impossible for these spiritual spouses to be separated from me. I am with them as their third companion. My body was wounded once and died in the passion, but it will never more be wounded or die. 29 In the same way, those who are incorporated into me through an upright faith and a perfect will shall never die away from me. Wherever they stand or sit or walk, I am with them as their third companion.”

‡ Chapter 27*

Mary Describes a Dance; and Her Suffering at Witnessing the Passion of Her Son

DATE: 1340S

The Mother’s words to the bride about how there are three things in a dance, and about how this dance symbolizes this world, and about the Mother’s suffering at Christ’s death.

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 472, line 2, through p. 473, line 27, “Maria taladhe . . . ,” “ok fylghe mik.”

1 The Mother of God spoke to the bride, saying: “My daughter, I want you to know that where there is a dance, there are three things: empty joy, loud shouting,¹ and meaningless toil. If someone enters the dance hall sorrowful and sad, then his friend, who finds himself in the midst of the joy of the dance but sees a friend of his entering sad and gloomy, immediately puts aside his joy, leaves the dance, and condoles with his sorrowing friend. 2 This dance is the world that is always caught up in anxiety, which to fools seems like joy. In this world there are three things: empty joy, frivolous speech, and useless toil, because a man must leave behind him everything for which he toils. Would that a person who is in the midst of this worldly dance consider my toil and sorrow and then condole with me—who left behind all worldly joy—and would that he leave the world behind! At my Son’s death I was like a woman who had her heart pierced by five lances.

3 The first lance was his shameful and blameworthy nakedness, for I saw my most chaste² and mighty Son stand naked at the pillar without any covering on him at all. The second lance was the accusation against him, for they accused³ of treason and lying and treachery him whom I knew to be just and true and never to have offended or wished to offend anyone. 4 The third lance was his crown of thorns⁴ that pierced his sacred head so savagely that the blood flowed into his mouth and beard and ears.⁵ The fourth lance was his mournful voice on the cross with which he cried out to the Father, saying: ‘Father, why have you abandoned me?’⁶ It was if to say: ‘Father, there is no one who takes pity on me but you.’ The fifth lance cutting into my heart was his most bitter death.

5 His most precious blood went out of him through as many arteries as the lances that pierced my heart. The arteries of his hands and feet were pierced, and the pain in his pierced sinews went relentlessly to his heart and from his heart back to his sinews, for his heart was vigorous and strong, being knit together of the very best constitution. Life contended thus with death, and his life was more bitterly protracted in the midst of his pain.

6 As his death drew near and his heart was bursting⁷ from the unendurable pain, suddenly his whole body convulsed and his head, which was hanging backward,⁸ straightened itself somewhat. 7 He opened his closed eyes slightly, almost halfway. Likewise he opened his mouth so that his bloodied tongue

1. “Loud shouting” renders Lat. “vox perfusa”; cf. Birgittine-Norwegian “skör röst” [lascivious voice]; Sw. “ropande röst ok skör” [a voice shouting and lascivious]. See further, Odelman, “Rarea aves,” p. 47.

2. “Most chaste”: we follow the editor’s choice here (“castissimum”). Some π manuscripts, as well as Gh, have “carissimum,” which is also the reading in Sw. (“kärasta” [dearest]).

3. “They accused”; cf. Luke 23:2.

4. “Crown of thorns”; cf. Matthew 27:29–30.

5. “Mouth and beard and ears”; cf. Birgittine-Norwegian, “örun, mun, ok öghun. Ok alt hans skäg” [ears, mouth, and eyes, and all his beard].

6. “Why have you abandoned me?” (Psalm 21[22]:2), cf. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

7. “His heart was bursting”; cf. note to ch. 20. 3 above.

8. “His head, which was hanging backward”: this description might suggest that Birgitta has a T-shaped, or tau cross in mind, that did not support Christ’s head; see further Ellis, “The Divine Message.”

could be seen. His fingers and arms, which had been quite contracted, stretched themselves out. As soon as he had given up his spirit, his head sank⁹ toward his chest. His hands drew a little away from the place of the wounds and his feet had to bear more of the weight.

8 Then my hands grew dry. My eyes were covered in darkness and my face became pale as death. My ears could hear nothing. My mouth could not utter a sound. My feet became unsteady, and my body fell to the ground. Getting up from the ground and seeing my Son looking worse than a leper, I submitted my entire will to him, knowing that everything had happened according to his will and could not have happened if he had not permitted it. And I thanked him for everything. 9 A certain joy was mixed with my sadness, because I saw that he who had never sinned had in his great love wanted to suffer all this for sinners. May those who are in the world contemplate what I went through when my Son died, and may they always keep it in mind!"

‡ Chapter 28*

God Is Angry with a Man in Judgment

DATE: 1340S

The Lord's words to the bride describing how someone came to be judged before God's tribunal, and about the awful and terrible sentence passed on him by God and all the saints.

1 The bride saw God looking angry. He was saying: "I am without beginning and without end. There is no change in me¹ either of year or day. Rather, all the time in the world is like a single hour or moment to me. 2 Everyone who sees me sees and understands everything that is in me in an instant, so to speak. However, my bride, since you are in a material body, you cannot perceive and comprehend like a spirit. Therefore, for your sake, I will explain to you what has happened.

3 I was, as it were, seated in judgment, for all judgment has been given to me,² and a certain person came to be judged before the tribunal. The voice of the Father resounded and said to him: 'Woe unto you that ever you were born.' It was not as though God had repented of having created him, but just like anyone would be sorry for another person and feel compassion for him. 4 The voice of the Son came in answer: 'I poured out my blood for you and accepted a harsh punishment for you, but you have alienated yourself entirely from it and will have nothing to do with it.' The voice of the Spirit said: 5 'I searched

9. "Given up his spirit his head sank"; cf. John 19:30.

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 473, line 29, through p. 476, line 19. "Gvdh siälfuir syntis" . . . "til syndanna bättrilsse."

1. "There is no change in me"; cf. James 1:17.

2. "All judgment has been given to me"; cf. John 5:22.

all the corners of his heart to see if I might perhaps find some tenderness and charity in his heart, but he is as cold as ice, as hard as stone. He is none of my concern.'

6 These three voices have not been heard as if there were three gods, but they were made audible for your sake, my bride, because otherwise you would not be able to understand this mystery. The three voices of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit were then immediately transformed into a single voice that thundered and said: 'By no means do you deserve the kingdom of heaven!' 7 The Mother of mercy remained silent and did not open up her mercy, for the defendant was unworthy of it. All the saints cried out in one voice saying: 'It is divine justice for him to be perpetually exiled from your kingdom and from your joy.'

8 All those in purgatory said: 'We have no punishment harsh enough to punish your sins. You must endure greater torments and you will therefore be secluded from us.' Then even the defendant himself cried out in a horrendous voice, saying: 'Alas, alas for the seeds that came together in my mother's womb and from which I was formed!' 9 He cried out a second time and said: 'Accursed be the hour in which my soul was joined to my body and accursed be he who gave me a body and soul!' He cried out a third time: 'Accursed be the hour in which I came forth alive from the belly of my mother!' 10 Then came three horrible voices from hell saying to him: 'Come to us, accursed soul, like liquid copper draining down to perpetual death and life interminable!' They cried out a second time: 'Come, accursed soul, empty for our malice! For there will be none of us who will not fill you with his own pain and malice.' 11 They cried out a third time: 'Come, accursed soul, heavy like a stone that sinks and sinks and never reaches the bottom where it can rest! You will descend deeper into the deep than we, and you will not be brought to a standstill until you have reached the lowest part of the abyss.'

12 Then the Lord said: 'Just like a man with several wives who sees one of them fall and turns away from her, and turns to the others who remain steadfast and rejoices with them, so too I have turned my face and my mercy away from him, and turn to my servants and attendants and rejoice with them. 13 Therefore, now that you have heard of his fall and his wretchedness, serve me with greater sincerity than he did in proportion to the greater mercy I have shown to you! Flee the world and the desire of it! Did I accept so harsh a passion for the sake of worldly glory or because I was unable to get it done more quickly and easily? Of course I was able! 14 However, justice required that, because humanity sinned in each and every limb, satisfaction had to be made in each and every limb. This was why God, in his compassion for humankind and in his ardent love for the Virgin, received from her a human nature through which he could sustain all the punishment mankind was bound to suffer.

15 Since I took your punishment upon me out of love, remain steadfast in true humility, just like my servants, so that you will have nothing to be ashamed of, and fear nothing but me! Guard your mouth in such a way that, if such were my will, you would never speak. Do not be sad about temporal things

that are just passing. I can make whomever I want rich or poor. And so, my bride, place all your hope in me!”

EXPLANATION

16 This man was a nobleman, a canon and subdeacon, who, having obtained a false dispensation, married a rich maiden. However, being surprised by a sudden death, he did not obtain his desire.

‡ Chapter 29

About Two Ladies, Pride and the Virgin Mary

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin’s words to the daughter regarding two ladies, one of whom was called Pride and the other Humility, the latter symbolizing the most sweet Virgin, and about how the Virgin goes to meet those who love her at the hour of their death.

1 The Mother of God spoke to the Son’s bride, saying: “There are two ladies. One of them has no special name, because she does not deserve a name; the other is humility, and she is called Mary. The devil is master of the first lady because he has dominion over her. 2 One of her knights said to this lady: ‘My lady, I am prepared to do whatever I can for you, if only I can copulate with you just once. After all, I am mighty, strong, and brave of heart, I fear nothing and am ready to go to my death for you.’ She answered him: ‘My servant, your love is great. However, I am seated on a high throne and have only the one throne, and there are three gates between us. 3 The first gate is so narrow that whatever a man is wearing on his body gets pulled off and torn if he enters by it. The second is so sharp that it cuts through to the very sinews. The third gate burns with such fire that there is no escaping its heat but, instead, anyone entering through it is quickly melted down like copper. 4 Moreover, I am seated so high up that anyone who wants to sit with me—for I have only this one throne—will fall down into the great depths of chaos beneath me.’ The devil¹ answered her: ‘I will give my life for you, for a fall means nothing to me.’

5 This lady is pride and anyone who wants to come to her will pass, as it were, through three gates. Through the first gate enters the person who gives all he owns to receive human praise for the sake of pride. If he does not own anything, he exerts his whole will so that he can live proudly and win praise. Through the second gate enters the person who devotes all his labor and everything he does, all his time and all his thoughts and all his strength to fulfilling his pride. 6 And even if he has to let his body be wounded for the sake of honor and riches, he does so willingly. Through the third door enters the per-

1. “Devil” renders “diabolus”; cf. Sw. “riddare” [knight].

son who is never still and quiet but burns like fire with the thought of how he can obtain some worldly honor or position of pride. But when he does obtain his desire, he cannot stay for long in the same state but will have a miserable fall. Nonetheless, pride still remains in the world!"

7 "I am," Mary said, "the one who is most humble. I am seated on a spacious throne. Above me there is neither sun nor moon nor stars nor even clouds, but an unimaginably bright and wonderful calm proceeding from the clear beauty of God's majesty. Beneath me there is neither earth nor stone but incomparable rest in God's goodness. Next to me there is neither barrier nor wall but the glorious host of angels and holy souls. 8 Although I am seated on so lofty a throne, I still hear my friends that live on earth, daily pouring forth their sighs and tears to me. I see their struggles and their efficacy, which is greater than that of those who fight for their lady pride. I will therefore visit them and gather them together with me on my throne, for it is spacious and has room for everyone. However, they cannot come and sit with me yet, because there are still two walls between us through which I shall lead them confidently so they can come to my throne.

9 The first wall is the world, and it is narrow. Accordingly, my servants in the world will receive consolation through me. The second wall is death. Therefore, I, their most dear lady and Mother, will go to meet them and come to them at death, so that even in death itself they will be refreshed and consoled. I will gather them together with me on the throne of heavenly joy, so that, in boundless joy, they may rest eternally in the arms of perpetual love and eternal glory."

‡ Chapter 30

On Three Instruments of the Passion; Birgitta Must Have Three Things in Her Heart

DATE: 1340S

The Lord's loving words to the bride about how the number of false Christians is being multiplied to the point of recrucifying Christ and about how he is still ready to accept death once more for the sake of sinners, if this were possible.

1 "I am God. I created all things for the benefit of humanity in order that all things might be of service and instruction to them. But unto their own damnation they misuse all the things I created for their benefit. They care less about God and love him less than created things.

2 The Jews prepared three kinds of punishment for me in my passion: first, the wood on which, after being scourged and crowned, I was hung; second, the iron by which they nailed my hands and feet; third, the gall that they gave me to drink.¹ Moreover, they blasphemed me as being a fool because of

1. "The gall that they gave me to drink"; cf. Psalm 68(69):22; Matthew 27:48; John 19:29.

the death I freely endured, and they called me a liar because of my teachings. 3 The number of such people has now been multiplied in the world and there are few to console me. They hang me on the wood through their desire to sin; they scourge me through their impatience, given that no one can endure a single word for my sake; and they crown me with the thorns of their pride that makes them want to be raised higher than me. They nail my hands and feet with the iron of their hardened hearts, given that they glory in sin and harden themselves so as not to have any fear of me.

4 They offer me distress rather than gall. They call me a liar and a fool because of my passion, which I approached with joy. I am powerful enough to drown them and the entire world for the sake of their sins, if I liked. However, if I did drown them, the ones who remained would serve me out of fear, and that would not be right, because people should serve me out of love. 5 If I personally came among them in a visible shape, their eyes would not be able to bear to look upon me or their ears to hear me. How could a mortal being look upon an immortal? Yet, in fact, I would gladly die for the sake of humanity all over again, if it were possible."

6 Then the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared and the Son said to her: "What do you wish, my Mother, my chosen one?" And she said: "Have mercy on your creation, my Son, for the sake of your love!" He answered: "I will be merciful once again, for your sake." 7 Then the Lord spoke to his bride, saying: "I am your God, the Lord of the angels. I am Lord over life and death. I myself want to dwell in your heart. I love you so very much! 8 The heavens and the earth and everything in them cannot contain me, and yet I want to dwell in your heart, which is nothing but a lump of flesh.² Whom could you fear or what could you be lacking when you have within you God almighty in whom every good thing is to be found?"

9 There should be three things in a heart that is my dwelling: a bed where we may rest,³ a seat where we may sit, and a lamp that gives us light. In your heart, then, let there be a bed for quiet rest, where you can rest from the base thoughts and desires of the world. Always keep in mind the joy of eternity! 10 The seat should be your intention of staying with me, even if you sometimes have to go out. It goes against nature to be always standing. The person who is always standing is the one who always has the intention of being in the world and never comes to sit with me. The light or the lamp should be the faith by which you believe that I am able to do all things and am almighty above all things."

2. "Nothing but a lump of flesh": Birgitta again places vivid emphasis on the heart in the devotion.

3. "A bed where we may rest": on this image, see Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, p. 38.

‡ Chapter 31

John the Baptist Praises the Beauty and Virtues of Mary

DATE: 1340S

About how the bride saw the sweet Virgin Mary furnished with a crown and other adornments of inestimable beauty, and how Saint John the Baptist explained to the bride the meaning of the crown and the other things.

1 The bride saw the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God, wearing a priceless and inestimable crown on her head, with her wonderfully beautiful hair hanging down over her shoulders, a golden tunic gleaming indescribably bright, and a mantle of the color of azure or of a calm sky. 2 While the bride was all full of wonder at this lovely vision and in her wonderment was standing there as if caught up in helpless amazement within herself, just then, Blessed John the Baptist appeared to her and said: 3 “Pay close attention to what all this signifies.¹ The crown signifies that she is the Queen and Lady and Mother of the King of angels. Her hair hanging down signifies that she is a pure and immaculate virgin; the sky-colored mantle that she was dead to temporal things. The golden tunic signifies that she was ardent and burning with the love of God both inwardly and outwardly.

4 Her Son placed seven lilies in the crown, and between the lilies he placed seven gems. The first lily is her humility; the second, fear; the third, obedience; the fourth, patience; the fifth, steadfastness; the sixth, kindness, for she kindly gives to all who ask;² the seventh is mercy in necessities, for in whatever necessity a person may find himself, if he invokes her with all his heart, he will be rescued.

5 In between these resplendent lilies her Son placed seven precious gems. The first gem is her outstanding virtuousness, for there exists no virtue in any other spirit or in any other body, which she does not possess more excellently. 6 The second gem is her perfect purity, for the Queen of Heaven was so pure that not a single stain of sin was ever to be found in her from the beginning when she first entered the world up to the final day of her death. Not all the devils together could find enough impurity in her to fit on the head of a pin. She was truly pure, for it was not fitting for the King of glory to lie in any but the purest, cleanest, and most select vessel among angels and men.

7 The third gem was her beauty, for God is praised constantly by his saints for the beauty of his Mother. Her beauty completes the joy of the holy angels and of all holy souls. 8 The fourth precious gem in the crown is the Virgin Mother’s wisdom, for she was filled with all divine wisdom in God and through

1. “Pay close attention to what all this signifies”: this revelation is discussed as an example of the interaction of divine and human voices in the *Revelationes* by Ellis, “The Divine Message,” pp. 222–24.

2. “For she kindly gives to all who ask”; Sw. adds “mz kärlek ok vilia at bätra sik” [with love and the will to better themselves].

her all wisdom is completed and perfected. 9 The fifth gem is power, for she is so powerful before God that she can crush anything that has been created or made. 10 The sixth gem is her shining clarity, for she shines so clear that she even sheds light on the angels, whose eyes shine more clearly than light, and the demons do not dare to look upon her shining clarity. 11 The seventh gem is the fullness of every delight and spiritual sweetness, since her fullness is such that there is no joy that she does not add to, no delight that is not made fuller and more perfect through her and through the blessed vision of her, for she is filled and replete with grace³ beyond all the saints. She is the pure vessel in which lay the bread of angels⁴ and in which all sweetness and beauty is found.

12 Her Son placed these seven gems in between the seven lilies in her crown. Wherefore, bride of her Son, honor and praise her with all your heart, for she is truly worthy of all praise and honor!”⁵

‡ Chapter 32

About Three Demoniacs, Two Never Cured, and the Third Released through Birgitta's Intercession

DATE: 1340S

About how, after God's admonishment, the bride chose poverty for herself and renounced riches and carnality, and about the truth of the things revealed to her, and about three remarkable things shown to her by Christ.

1 “You ought to be like a person who lets go and like one who gathers. You should let go of riches and gather virtues, let go of what will pass and gather eternal things, let go of visible things and gather invisible. In return for the pleasure of the body, I will give you the exultation of your soul; in return for the merriment of the world, I will give you the merriment of heaven; in return for worldly honor, the honor of the angels; in return for the presence of family, the presence of God; in return for the possession of goods, I will give you myself, the giver and Creator of all things.

2 Answer the three questions I am going to ask you. First, whether you want to be rich in this world or poor.” She answered: “Lord, I would rather be poor, since riches do me no other good than to make me anxious and distract me from serving you.” 3 “Tell me, second, whether you found anything reprehensible to your mind or false in the words that you heard from my mouth?” And she said: “Certainly not, it is all reasonable.” 4 “Third, tell me whether

3. “Grace” renders “gracia”; Sw. adds “miskundh”[mercy]; cf. Gh “gracia et.”

4. “Bread of angels” (Exodus 16; Psalm 78[79]:25), which uses this expression of the manna of heaven. Jesus likened the manna to himself in John 6:30–35; hence medieval authors frequently referred to Jesus as the “bread of angels.”

5. “Praise and honor”; Sw. adds “näst sinom son” [together with her Son].

the sensual pleasure you earlier had delights you more or the spiritual pleasure that you now have?" And she answered: "I feel ashamed in my heart to think of my earlier delight and it seems to me now like poison,¹ all the more bitter in proportion to my earlier fervor in desiring it. I would rather die than ever go back to it; it cannot compare to spiritual delight."

5 "Thus," he said, "you prove to yourself that all the things I have told you are true. What are you afraid of, then, or why are you worried that I am delaying the things I told you would be done? Call to mind the prophets, call to mind the apostles and the holy doctors of the church! Did they find anything in me except the truth? That is why they did not care about the world or the desire for it. 6 Or why did the prophets foretell future events so far in advance unless it was because God wanted them first to make the words known before the deeds came so that the ignorant might be instructed in faith? All the mysteries of my incarnation were made known beforehand to the prophets, even the star that went before the magi.² They believed the words of the prophet and merited to see what they believed in, and they were given certainty as soon as they saw the star. 7 In the same way now, my words should first be announced and then later, when the deeds come, they will be believed on greater evidence.

8 Three things I have shown you. First, the conscience of a man whose sin I made manifest and proved by most evident signs. But why? Could I not destroy him personally? Or could I not plunge him to the depths in a second, if I wanted? Of course I could. 9 However, for the sake of instructing others and in proof of my words showing how just and patient I am and how unhappy this man is whom the devil rules, I endure him still. The devil's power over him has arisen through his intention of remaining in sin and through his delight in it, with the result that neither gentle words nor harsh threats nor the fear of Gehenna can recall him. 10 And quite rightly, too, because, inasmuch as he had the constant intention of sinning, even if he did not put it into practice, he deserves to be handed over to the devil for eternity. The smallest sin is enough to damn anyone delighting in it who does not repent.

11 I showed you two others. The devil tormented the body of one of them but did not get into his soul; he overshadowed the other's conscience through his scheming and yet did not get into his soul or acquire any power over him. 12 But you might perhaps ask: 'Are not conscience and soul the same thing? Is he not in the soul when he is in the conscience?' Of course not. The body has two eyes to see with, but, even if they lose their power of sight, the body can still be healthy. So it is with the soul. Although intellect and conscience are sometimes troubled with confusion as a means of punishment, nevertheless, the soul does not always get harmed in such a way as to incur guilt. Thus, the devil prevailed over the one man's conscience but not over his soul.

13 I will show you a third man whose body and soul are completely subject

1. "My earlier delight . . . seems to me now like poison"; cf. Book V, rev. 11:5, which is a similar, rare, autobiographical reference to Birgitta's married life.

2. "The star that went before the magi"; cf. Matthew 2:9.

to the devil. Unless coerced by my power and by a special grace, he will never be expelled from him or go out of him. The devil goes out of some people willingly and readily, but out of others only reluctantly and under coercion. 14 For, while the devil enters into some people either due to the sin of their parents or due to some hidden judgment of God, as, for example, into children or the witless, he enters into others due to their infidelity or for some other sin. The devil goes out of the latter willingly if he is expelled by people who know conjurations or the art of expelling demons,³ and if they do it not for the sake of vainglory or for some temporal gain, for the devil has the power of entering into the one expelling him or again into the same person he gets expelled from, there being no love of God in either of them.

15 He never goes out of the body and soul of those he possesses completely, except through my power. As vinegar, if mixed with sweet wine, infects all the sweetness of the wine and can never be removed from it, so too the devil will not go out of the soul of anyone whom he possesses, except through my power. 16 What is this wine if not the human soul that was sweeter to me than any other created being and so dear to me that I let my sinews be slashed and my body mangled to the ribs for its sake? Rather than lose it, I even accepted death for it. 17 This wine was conserved in dregs, inasmuch as I placed the soul in a body where it was kept for my pleasure as in a sealed vessel. However, the worst vinegar was mixed with this sweet wine—I refer to the devil, whose evilness is more sour and abominable to me than any vinegar. 18 By my power this vinegar will be removed from the person whose name I will tell you, so that I may reveal my mercy and wisdom through him, but my judgment and justice through the previous man.

EXPLANATION

19 The first man was a highborn and proud cantor who went to Jerusalem without the permission of the pope and was seized by the devil. There is also something about this demoniac in book III chapter 31 and in book IV chapter 115.

20 The second demoniac in the same chapter⁴ was a Cistercian monk. The devil tormented him so much that four men could scarcely hold him down. His elongated tongue looked like a cow's.⁵ The shackles on his hands were invisibly broken in pieces. This man was saved by the words of the Holy Spirit through Lady Birgitta after a month and two days.

21 The third demoniac was a bailiff of Östergötland. When he was admonished to do penance, he said to the one admonishing him:

3. "Conjurations or the art of expelling demons," i.e., exorcism. On demoniacs, see further, for example, Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit."

4. "The same chapter," i.e., the cathedral chapter of Linköping. These exorcisms are cited as evidence of the authenticity of Birgitta's visions in Mathias's Prologue, 42-44.

5. "Tongue . . . like a cow's": in Old Scandinavian lore, and as an element of witchcraft, the tongue possessed an injurious magical power; see KL "tunge, ond."

“Cannot the resident owner of the house sit wherever he likes? The devil has my heart and my tongue. How can I do penance?” Cursing the saints of God, he died that very same night without the sacraments or confession.

‡ Chapter 33

Criticism of the Worldly Wise; Birgitta Should Be Like a Cheese in a Mold

DATE: 1340S

The Lord’s admonishments to the bride regarding true and false wisdom, and about how good angels assist the learned who are good while devils assist the learned who are bad.

1 “Some of my friends are like scholars with three characteristics: first, a discerning intelligence beyond what is natural to the brain; second, wisdom without human aid, inasmuch as I myself teach them inwardly; third, they are full of the sweetness and divine love with which they defeat the devil.

2 But nowadays people go about their studies in a different way. First, they seek knowledge out of arrogance in order to be called good scholars. Second, they seek knowledge in order to keep and obtain riches. Third, they seek knowledge in order to win honors and privileges. 3 Accordingly, when they go to their schools and enter there, I will leave them, since they study because of pride, whereas I taught them humility. They enter out of greed, whereas I had nowhere to lay my head.¹ They enter in order to win privileges, envious that others are more highly placed than themselves, whereas I was sentenced by Pilate and mocked by Herod.² 4 That is why I will leave them, because they are not studying my teachings. However, because I am good and kind,³ I give each one what he asks for. He who asks for bread will get it,⁴ but he who asks for straw will be given straw.

5 My friends ask for bread, because they seek and study the divine wisdom where my love can be found. Others, however, ask for straw,⁵ that is, worldly wisdom. Just as straw is useless and the food of irrational animals, so too there is neither use for the wisdom of the world that they seek nor nourishment for the soul. There is nothing but a small reputation and meaningless toil, for when a man dies, all his wisdom is blotted out of existence and those who used to praise him can no longer see him.

6 I am like a great lord with many servants who, on their lord’s behalf, distribute to the people what they need. In this way the good angels and the

1. “I had nowhere to lay my head”; cf. Matthew 8:20.

2. “Sentenced by Pilate and mocked by Herod”; cf. Luke 23:6–25.

3. “I am good and kind” (Matthew 11:29).

4. “He who asks for bread will get it”; cf. Matthew 7:7–11.

5. “Straw” renders Lat. “stramen”; cf. Sw. “stra”; although “hay” would make more sense in the context (cf. Book IV 12.9: “oves assuescunt comedere fenum”). Birgitta’s emphasis is on something that is worthless.

bad angels stand under my authority. 7 The good angels minister to the people who study my wisdom, I mean those who serve me, nourishing them with consolation and enjoyable work. The bad angels assist the worldly wise. They inspire what they want in them and form them after their will, inspiring speculation⁶ along with a great deal of work. 8 Yet, if they would turn their eyes toward me, I could give them bread they did not have to work for and enough of the world to satisfy them. But they never get enough of the world, since they turn sweet into sour⁷ for themselves.

9 But you, my bride, should be like cheese, and your body like the mold in which the cheese is molded until it has the shape of the mold. In this way, your soul, which is as delightful and good-tasting to me as cheese, must be tried and cleansed in the body long enough for body and soul to reach an accord and for both to maintain the same form of continence, so that the flesh obeys the spirit and the spirit guides the flesh toward every virtue.”

‡ Chapter 34

The Devil Envy's Birgitta's Spiritual Gifts

DATE: 1340S

Christ's instruction to the bride about the way to live. Also about how the devil admits to Christ that the bride loves Christ above all things, and about the question put by the devil to Christ about why he loves her so much, and about the charity that Christ has for the bride as disclosed by the devil.

1 “I am the Creator of heaven and earth, who was true God and true man in the Virgin's womb, who died and rose again and ascended into heaven. 2 You, my new bride, have come to an unknown place. Therefore you must learn four things: first, to get to know the language of the place; second, how to be properly dressed; third, how to organize your days and your time according to the nature of the place; fourth, to get accustomed to new kinds of food.

3 Inasmuch as you have come from the instability of the world unto stability, you must learn a new language, that is, how to abstain from useless words and even from legitimate ones due to the importance of silence and quiet. 4 You should¹ be dressed in interior and exterior humility so that you neither extol yourself inwardly as being holier than others nor are outwardly ashamed of acting humbly in public. 5 Third, your time should be regulated so that, just as you often used to make time for the needs of the body, so now you should only have time for the soul and never want to sin against me. 6

6. “Inspiring speculation” renders Lat. “inspirant cogitacionem.” The passage contrasts with the description of the good angels above, but here the bad angels inspire empty, hair-splitting scholarship that comes from the devil.

7. “Sweet into sour”; cf. Isaiah 5:20.

1. Before “You should,” Sw. adds “Annantidh” [Second].

Fourth, your new food is prudent abstinence from gluttony and from delicacies, as far as your natural constitution can endure it. Acts of abstinence that go beyond the capacity of nature are not to my liking, for I demand rationality and the taming of lusts."

7 Just then the devil appeared. The Lord said to him: "You were created by me and beheld all justice in me. Tell me whether this new bride is legitimately mine by proven right! I allow you to see and understand her heart in order that you may know how to answer me. Does she love anything else as she does me or would she take anything in exchange for me?" 8 The devil answered him: "She loves nothing in the way she loves you. Rather than lose you she would undergo any torment, provided you gave her the virtue of patience. 9 I see a kind of bond of fire descending from you to her that ties her heart so much to you that she thinks of and loves nothing but you."

10 Then the Lord said to the devil: "Tell me what you feel in your heart and how you like this great love I have for her." 11 The devil replied and said: "I have two eyes, one of them corporeal, although I am not corporeal, by means of which I perceive temporal things so clearly that there is none so hidden or so dark that it can hide itself from me. 12 The second eye is a spiritual one with which I see every pain no matter how slight and can understand to which sin it pertains. 13 There is no sin so tenuous and slight that I do not see it, unless it has been purged by penance. However, although there are no organs more sensitive than the eyes, still I would much rather have two burning torches uninterruptedly penetrate my eyes than for her to see with the eyes of her spirit.

14 I also have two ears. One of them is corporeal, and no one speaks so privately that I do not hear and know it with this ear. The second is a spiritual ear, and no thinks of or aims at any sin, be it ever so hidden, that I do not hear it with this ear, unless it has been blotted out by penance.

15 There is a certain punishment in hell that is like a bubbling torrent, streaming out of a terribly hot fire. I would rather suffer this to flow in and out of my ears without cease than that she should hear anything with the ears of her spirit.

16 I also have a spiritual heart. I would let it be ceaselessly cut to pieces and constantly renewed to be punished again just in order for her heart to grow cold in your love. 17 But, now, since you deal straightly, let me ask a question for you to answer me: Tell me, why do you love her so much, and why did you not choose someone holier, richer, and prettier for yourself?" 18 The Lord answered: "Because that is what justice demanded. You were created in me and beheld all justice in me. Tell me, while she is listening, why it was just that you fell so far and what you were thinking when you fell!"

19 The devil answered: "I saw three things in you: I saw your glory and honor above all things, and I thought about my own glory. Hence I was determined in my pride not merely to be equal to you but even greater than you. 20 Second, I saw that you were the most powerful of all. Hence I longed to be more powerful than you. Third, I saw what was to be in the future and, since your glory and honor were without beginning and would be without end, I

envied you and thought that I would gladly be tortured forever with all manner of harsh punishments if only you could die. With such thoughts I fell. And in that way hell was created.”

21 The Lord answered: “You asked me why I love this woman so much. Assuredly, it is because I change all your evil into good. Since you became proud and did not want to have me, your Creator, as an equal, therefore, humiliating myself in every way, I gather sinners to myself and make myself their equal by sharing my glory with them. 22 Second, since you had so base a desire that you wanted to be more powerful than I, therefore I make sinners more powerful than you and sharers in my power. 23 Third, because of your envy toward me, I am so full of love that I offered myself up for everyone.”

24 Then the Lord said: “Now, devil, your heart of darkness has been shown in the light. Tell me, while she is listening, how I love her.” And the devil said: “If it were possible, you would readily suffer in each and every limb the same pain you once suffered on the cross in all your limbs together, rather than lose her.” 25 Then the Lord answered: “If I am so merciful, then, that I do not refuse pardon to anyone asking for it, ask me humbly for mercy yourself, and I will give it to you.” 26 The devil answered him: “That I shall do by no means! At the time of my fall, a punishment was established for every sin, for every worthless thought or word. Every spirit that has fallen will have his punishment. 27 But rather than bend my knee before you, I would rather swallow all the punishments myself, as long as my mouth can open and shut in punishment and be forever renewed to be punished again.”

28 Then the Lord said to his bride: “See how hardened the prince of the world is and how powerful he is against me thanks to my hidden justice! I could certainly destroy him in a second by means of my power, but I do no more harm to him than to a good angel in heaven. When his time comes, and it is now approaching, I shall judge him and his followers. 29 So, my bride, persevere in good works! Love me with your whole heart! May you fear nothing but me! For I am the Lord over the devil and over everything in existence.”

‡ Chapter 35

Mary Identifies with Her Son's Pain at His Passion

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin's words to the bride, explaining her own sorrow at the passion of Christ, and about how the world was sold through Adam and Eve and bought back through Christ and his Virgin Mother.

1 Mary spoke: “Consider, daughter, the passion of my Son. It felt like his limbs were my own limbs and heart.¹ Just as other children are normally car-

1. On the identity of Mary's heart with Christ's heart and her participation in his passion, see Sahlin, “His Heart Was My Heart.”

ried in the womb of their mother, so was he in me. However, he was conceived through the fervent charity of God's love, whereas others are conceived through the concupiscence of the flesh. 2 Thus his cousin John² rightly says: "The Word was made flesh."³ He came and was in me through love. The Word and love created him in me. He was for me like my own heart. 3 This is why, when I gave birth to him, I felt as though half my heart was being born and going out of me. When he was suffering, it felt like my own heart was suffering. 4 When something is half outside and half inside and the part outside gets hurt, the part inside feels a similar pain. In the same way, when my Son was being scourged and wounded, it was as though my own heart was being scourged and wounded.

5 I was the person closest to him at his passion and was never separated from him. I was standing near his cross and, as that which is closest to the heart hurts the worst, so his pain was worse for me than for the others. 6 As he gazed down at me from the cross and I gazed at him, my tears gushed from my eyes like blood from veins. When he saw me overwhelmed by pain, he grew so distressed over my pain that all the pain of his own wounds subsided when he saw the pain in me. 7 I can therefore boldly say that his pain was my pain and his heart my heart. Just as Adam and Eve sold the world for a single apple,⁴ you might say that my Son and I bought the world back with a single heart. And so, my daughter, think of me as I was at the death of my Son, and it will not be hard for you to give up the world."

‡ Chapter 36

Birgitta's Guardian Angel Asks for Mercy for Her, Which Is Granted

DATE: 1340S

The Lord's answer to an angel who was praying that distress in body and soul might be granted to the bride, and about how greater distress is given to more perfect souls.

1 The Lord said to an angel who was praying for his Lord's bride: "You are like a soldier of the Lord who never takes off his helmet out of weariness and who never takes his eyes off the battle out of fear. 2 You are as steadfast as a mountain, you burn like a flame. You are so clean that there is no stain in you. You beg me to have mercy on my bride. Even though you know and see all things in me, tell me, nonetheless, while she is listening, what sort of mercy you are asking for her. 3 After all, mercy is threefold. There is the mercy by

2. "His cousin John," i.e., John the Apostle, who was the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21). In the Middle Ages it was held that "the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (Matthew 27:56) was Salome (Mark 15:40), who was held to have been the sister of the Virgin Mary (John 19:25); thus John and Jesus were supposedly cousins.

3. "Word was made flesh" (John 1:14).

4. "Apple": here again is the popular idea of the apple in the Garden of Eden; see note to ch. 13,3 above.

which the body is punished and the soul is spared, as in the case of my servant Job¹ whose flesh was subjected to all kinds of pain but whose soul was saved. The second kind of mercy is that by which body and soul are spared from punishment, as in the case of the king who lived in all kinds of lust and had no pain either in body or soul while he was in the world. The third kind of mercy is that by which body and soul are punished with the result that they experience both distress in their body and pain in their heart, as in the case of Peter and Paul and other saints.

4 There are three states for human beings in the world. The first state is that of those who fall into sin and get up again. Sometimes I permit these people to experience distress in their bodies in order that they may be saved. 5 The second state is that of those who would live forever in order to sin forever. All their desire is directed toward the world. If they do anything for me from time to time, they do it in the hopes of their temporal advantages growing and prospering. 6 Neither punishment of body nor very much pain of heart is given to these people. Instead, they are allowed to follow their own power and desire, because they will receive their reward here below for the least little good they have done me, for theirs will be an everlasting punishment, inasmuch as their will to sin is everlasting. 7 The third state is that of those who are more afraid of sinning against me and offending my will than they are of any punishment. They would rather be tortured with unbearable punishment in eternity than knowingly provoke me to anger. 8 Distress of body and heart is given to these people, as in the case of Peter and Paul and other saints, so that they might make amends for their transgressions in this world; or else they are chastised for a time either for the sake of their greater glory or as an example to others. I have shown this threefold mercy to three persons in this kingdom whose names are known to you.

9 Now then, my angel and my servant, what kind of mercy do you ask for my bride?" And he said: "Mercy of soul and body, so that she may make amends for her transgressions in this world and so that no sin of hers will come under your judgment." The Lord answered: "Be it done according to your will!"

10 Then he spoke to the bride: "You are mine and I will do with you as I like. Love nothing as much as me! Purify yourself constantly from sin at all times according to the advice of those to whom I have entrusted you. Hide no sin! Let nothing go unexamined! Do not think any sin to be light or negligible! 11 Anything you neglect I will remind you of and judge. No sin of yours will come under my judgment if it has been expiated in this life through your penance. Those sins for which penance has not been made will be purged either in purgatory or by means of some secret judgment of mine, if satisfaction has not yet been made for them here on earth."

1. "My servant Job"; cf. Job 1:8.

‡ Chapter 37

Mary Describes the Will of Those Who Crucified Her Son

DATE: 1340S

The Mother's words to the bride describing the excellence of her Son, and about how Christ is now being crucified more harshly by his enemies, the bad Christians, than he was by the Jews, and about how, as a consequence, such people will receive a harsher and more bitter punishment.

1 The Mother said: "My Son had three good things. The first was that no one ever had so refined a body as he did, since he had two perfect natures, his divine one and his human one; and he was so fair that, just as no blemish can be found in the clearest of eyes, so not a single fault could be found in his body. 2 The second good thing was that he never sinned. Other children sometimes bear the sins of their parents as well as their own. This child never sinned, but, nevertheless, bore the sins of everyone. 3 The third good thing was that, while some people die for the sake of God and their greater reward, he died as much for the sake of his enemies as for the sake of me and his friends.

4 When his enemies crucified him, they did four things to him. First, they crowned him with thorns; second, they nailed his hands and feet; third, they gave him gall to drink; fourth, they pierced his side. 5 But my grievance is that his enemies who are now in the world crucify my Son more harshly than the Jews crucified him. Although you may say that he cannot suffer and die now, still they crucify him through their vices. 6 A man might heap insult and injury on the image of an enemy of his, and, although the image does not feel the damage done to it, nevertheless, the perpetrator should be accused and sentenced on account of his malicious intention to injure. Likewise, the vices by which they crucify my Son in a spiritual sense are more abominable to him and more serious than the vices of those who crucified him in the body.

7 But perhaps you ask: 'How do they crucify him?' Well, first they put him on the cross they have prepared for him. This is when they take no notice of the precepts of their Creator and Lord. Then they dishonor him when he warns them through his servants to serve him, and they despise this and do as they please. 8 They crucify his right hand by mistaking justice for injustice, saying: 'Sin is not so grave and odious to God as it is said nor does God punish anyone forever, but his threats are only to scare us. Why would he redeem us if he wanted us to perish?' They do not consider that the least little sin a person delights in is enough to send him or her to eternal punishment. 9 Since God does not let the least little sin go unpunished nor the least good go unrewarded, they will always have a punishment inasmuch as they have a constant intention of sinning, and my Son, who sees their heart, counts that as an act. For they would carry out their intention, if my Son permitted it.

10 They crucify his left hand by turning virtue into vice. They want to

continue sinning until the end, saying: 'If we say at the end, just once, "God, have mercy on me!" God's mercy is so great that he will pardon us.' 11 This is not virtue, wanting to sin without making amends, wanting to get the prize without having to struggle for it, not unless there is some contrition in the heart, not unless a person really wants to mend his ways, if only he could do so were it not for illness or some other impediment.

12 They crucify his feet by taking pleasure in sinning without once thinking of my Son's bitter punishment or without once thanking him from the bottom of their hearts and saying: 'God, how bitterly you suffered! Praise be to you for your death!' Such words never come from their lips.

13 They crown him with a crown of derision by deriding his servants and think it meaningless to serve him. They give him gall to drink when they rejoice and exult in sin. The thought of how serious and many-layered¹ sin is never strikes their mind. They pierce his side when they have the intention of persevering in sin.

14 I tell you truly, and you can tell this to my friends, that in the sight of my Son such people are more unjust than those who sentenced him, worse enemies than those who crucified him, more shameless than those who sold him. A greater punishment is due to them than to the others. 15 Pilate knew well indeed that my Son had not sinned and did not deserve death. However, because he feared the loss of temporal power and the sedition of the Jews, he reluctantly sentenced my Son to death. 16 What would these people have to fear if they served him? Or what honor or privilege would they lose if they honored him?

17 They will, accordingly, receive a heavier sentence, being worse than Pilate in my Son's sight. Pilate sentenced him due to fear, in accordance with the petition and intention of others. These people sentence him for their own advantage and without any fear, by dishonoring him through sin that they could abstain from, if they wanted.² 18 But they neither abstain from sin nor are they ashamed of their already committed sins, for they do not take into consideration their unworthiness of the kindness of the one whom they do not serve.

19 They are worse than Judas,³ for Judas, after he had betrayed the Lord, recognized that he was God and that he himself had sinned gravely against him. He despaired, however, and hastened his days toward hell, thinking he was not worthy to live. 20 These people recognize their sin and yet they persevere in it with no compunction about it in their hearts. Rather, they want to take the kingdom of heaven by a kind of violence and force,⁴ thinking they can get it not through their deeds but through a vain hope—vain because it will be given to none but the one who works for it and makes some sacrifice for God.

1. "Many-layered" renders Lat. "multiplex"; cf. Sw. "mangfal ok wadhelik" [manifold and awesome]. The idea is that sin all too readily multiplies itself.

2. "Pilate sentenced . . . others"; cf. Luke 23:4-25.

3. "Judas"; cf. Matthew 27:3-5; Acts 1:18.

4. "They want to take the kingdom of heaven by a kind of violence and force"; cf. Matthew 11:12.

21 They are worse than those who crucified him. When the latter saw the good works of my Son, such as raising the dead and making lepers clean, they thought to themselves: 22 ‘He works unheard of and extraordinary wonders, overcoming anyone at will with a word, knowing our thoughts, doing whatever he likes. If he gets his way, we will all have to submit to his power and become his subjects.’ Therefore, instead of submitting to him, they crucified him out of envy. But if they had known that he was the King of glory, they would never have crucified him.⁵

23 These people, on the other hand, see his great works and miracles every day, they take advantage of his kindnesses. They hear about how they ought to serve him and come to him, but they think to themselves: 24 ‘It would be heavy and unbearable to give up all our temporal goods, to have to do his will and not our own.’ 25 Accordingly, they scorn his will, lest it be placed over their own will, and crucify my Son through their obstinacy, piling up sin upon sin against their conscience. 26 They are worse than his crucifiers, inasmuch as the Jews acted out of envy and because they did not know him to be God. These, however, know him to be God and, out of their own wickedness and presumption and greed, they crucify him in a spiritual sense more harshly than the others did in a physical sense, for these people have been redeemed, whereas those others had not yet been redeemed.

27 And so, bride, obey and fear my Son, for, as merciful as he is, he is also just!”

‡ Chapter 38

Birgitta Is Like a Sheep; People Are Lukewarm in Their Love of God

DATE: 1344–49

A pleasant dialogue of God the Father with the Son, and about how the Father gave the Son a new bride, and how the Son took her with pleasure to be his own, and about how the bridegroom teaches the bride about patience and simplicity through a parable.

1 The Father said to the Son: “I came with love to the Virgin and received your true body from her. You are thus in me and I in you. As fire and heat are never separated, so it is impossible to separate your divine from your human nature.” 2 The Son answered: “All glory and honor to you, Father! May your will be done in me and mine in you!” 3 The Father answered him in turn: “See, my Son, I am entrusting this new bride to you like a sheep to be guided and fed. Like a sheep-owner, then, you will get from her cheese to eat and milk to

5. “If they had known that he was the King of glory, they would never have crucified him” (1 Corinthians 2:8).

drink and wool to wear. 4 As for you, bride, you should obey him. You have three duties: you have to be patient, obedient, and willing.”

5 Then the Son said to the Father: “Your will comes with power, your power with humility, your humility with wisdom, your wisdom with mercy. May your will, which is and always will be without beginning or end, be done in me! I shall welcome her to myself into my love, into your power, into the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we being not three gods but one God.”

6 Then the Son said to his bride: “You heard how the Father has entrusted you to me like a sheep. You must therefore be simple and patient like a sheep and produce food and clothing. 7 Three people are in the world. The first is altogether naked, the second is thirsty, the third is hungry. The first stands for the faith of my church, and it is naked because everyone blushes to speak of faith and my commandments. And if some people do speak, they are scorned and called liars. 8 My words, proceeding from my mouth, should clothe this faith like wool. Just as wool grows on the body of a sheep through heat, so too my words enter your heart through the heat of my divine and human nature. They will clothe my holy faith in the testimony of truth and wisdom, and they will prove that what is now regarded as meaningless is true. As a result, the people who up to now have been lukewarm about clothing their faith in deeds of love will be converted when they hear my words of love, and they will be re-enchanted in order to speak with faith and act with courage.

9 The second person stands for those friends of mine who have a thirsting desire to see my honor perfected and are upset at my being dishonored. The sweetness they sense in my words will inebriate them with a greater love for me, and, together with them, others, now dead, will be enchanted in my love, when they hear of the mercy I have shown to sinners.

10 The third stands for those who think in their hearts as follows: ‘If only we knew,’ they say, ‘the will of God and in what way we should live, and if only we were taught about the good way of life, we would gladly do what we could.’ These people are hungry to get to know my way, but there is no one to satisfy them, since nobody shows them exactly what to do. Even if they are shown what to do, no one lives according to it.

11 Therefore, the words seem dead to them, because nobody lives according to them. For that reason I myself will show them what they ought to do and I will fill them with my sweetness. Temporal things, which seem to be sought after by everyone now, cannot satisfy human nature but only spur the desire to seek more and more things. 12 My words and my love, however, do satisfy men and fill them with abundant consolation.

13 And so you, my bride, who are one of my sheep, take care to keep up your patience and obedience. You are mine by right and must therefore follow my will. 14 A person who wants to follow the will of another should do three things: first, have the same mind as the other; second, have similar deeds; third, keep away from the other’s enemies. Who are my enemies if not pride and every sin? You should therefore keep away from them, if you want to follow my will.”

‡ Chapter 39

Advice to People with a Weak Faith

DATE: 1340S

About how faith, hope, and love were found perfectly in Christ at the time of his death and are found deficiently in us wretches.

1 “I had three virtues at my death. First, faith, when I bent my knees and prayed, knowing that the Father was able to snatch me from my suffering. Second, hope, when I persevered resolutely, saying: ‘Not as I will.’ Third, love, when I said: ‘Thy will be done!’

2 I also had physical agony due to the natural fear of suffering, and a sweat of blood¹ left my body. Thus, in order that my friends should not tremble at being abandoned when the moment of trial comes to them, I demonstrated for them in myself that the weak flesh always runs away from pain. 3 But perhaps you ask how my body gave off a sweat of blood. Well, in the same way as the blood of a sick person dries up and gets consumed in his veins, my blood got consumed because of the natural anguish of death.

4 Wanting to show the way by which heaven would be opened and how people could enter it after their exile, the Father lovingly then delivered me over to my passion in order that my body would be gloriously glorified once the passion had been accomplished. For my human nature could not justly enter into its glory without suffering, although I was able to do so through the power of my divine nature. 5 Why then should people with little faith, vain hope, and no love deserve to enter into my glory? If they had faith in eternal joy and in the terrible punishment, they would desire nothing but me. 6 If they really believed that I see and know all things and have power over everything and that I require a judgment for everyone, the world would seem repugnant to them, and they would be afraid of sinning in my presence due to fear of me rather than of human opinion. 7 If they had a firm hope, then all their thought and understanding would be directed toward me. If they had divine love, their minds would at least think about what I did for them, the efforts I made in preaching, how much pain I had in my passion, how much love I had at my death—so much love that I preferred to die rather than lose them. 8 But their faith is weak and wavering, threatening a speedy fall, because they are ready to believe when the impulses of temptation are absent, but they lose confidence when they meet with adversity.

9 Their hope is vain, because they hope that their sin will be forgiven without a trial and without a proper sentence. They are confident they will get the kingdom of heaven for free. They want to receive my mercy untempered by justice. 10 Their love toward me is cold, for they are never on fire in seeking

1. “Bent my knees and prayed . . . Not as I will . . . Thy will be done . . . sweat of blood”; cf. Matthew 26: 39–42; Luke 22:41–44.

me out, unless forced to it by tribulation. How can I grow warm toward people who have neither an upright faith nor a firm hope nor a fervent love for me? 11 Consequently, when they cry out to me and say ‘God, have mercy on me!’ they will not deserve to be heard or to enter into my glory. Since they do not want to accompany their Lord in suffering, they will not accompany him in glory.² 12 No soldier can please his lord and be welcomed back into favor after a lapse, unless he first humbles himself in order to make up for his disdain.”

‡ Chapter 40

About a Wife Dressed Like a Lady and Her Husband Like a Servant

DATE: 1340S

Words in which the Creator puts three gracious questions to the bride: first about the husband’s servitude and the wife’s domination; second about the husband’s work and the wife’s spending; third about the Lord being disdained and the servant honored.

1 “I am your Creator and Lord. Answer me the three questions I am going to ask you. 2 What is the situation in a house where the wife is dressed like a lady and the husband like a servant? Is that right?” 3 She answered inwardly in her conscience: “No, Lord, it is not right.” 4 And the Lord said: “I am the Lord of all things and the King of angels. I dressed my servant, I mean, my human nature, with a view only to usefulness and necessity. 5 I looked for nothing in the world apart from meager food and clothing. You, however, who are my bride, you want to be like a lady, with wealth and honor, being held in honor. 6 What is the good of all that? All things are vanity and all things will have to be given up. Humankind was not created for such superfluity but to have what nature needs. 7 Pride invented superfluity, and now it is held to be and desired as the norm.

8 Second, tell me is it right for the husband to work from morning to evening while his wife wastes in a single hour everything he has amassed?” 9 She answered: “It is not right. Instead, the wife is bound to live and act after the will of her husband.” 10 And the Lord said: “I acted like the man working from morning to evening. I worked from my youth up to the time of my suffering, showing the way to heaven by preaching and by putting my preaching into practice. 11 The wife, I mean, the human soul, who ought to be like my wife, wastes all my labor through luxurious living. As a result, nothing I have done can be of benefit to her nor do I find any virtue in her to delight me.

12 Third, tell me, is it not wrong and detestable for the master of a house-

2. “Since they do not want to accompany their Lord in suffering, they will not accompany him in glory”; cf. 1 Peter 4:13.

hold to be despised and for the servant to be honored?" 13 And she said: "Yes, it surely is." The Lord said: "I am the Lord of all things. My household is the world. All of humanity should rightfully be my servants. However, I, the Lord, am now despised in the world while humanity is honored. You, therefore, whom I have chosen, take care to carry out my will, because everything in the world is nothing but ocean spray and a false dream!"

‡ Chapter 41

A Judgment Scene for Five Categories of People, Including the Pope

DATE: 1340S

The Creator's words, in the presence of the heavenly host and the bride, in which he complains about five men representing the pope and his clergy, the wicked laity, the Jews and the pagans. Also about the help sent to his friends, who stand for all mankind, and about the harsh sentence passed on his enemies.

1 "I am the Creator of all things. I was born from the Father before Lucifer came to be.¹ I exist inseparably in the Father and the Father in me² and one Spirit in both. Accordingly, there is one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and not three gods.

2 I am he who made the promise of an eternal inheritance to Abraham³ and led my people out of Egypt through Moses. I am he who spoke through the prophets. 3 The Father placed me in the womb of the Virgin, without separating himself from me but remaining inseparably with me, in order that mankind, who had abandoned God, might return to God through my love.

4 Now, however, in your presence, heavenly host, although you see and know all things in me, for the sake of the knowledge and instruction of this bride here, who cannot perceive spiritual things except by means of physical ones, I state my grievance before you regarding the five men here present, for they are offensive to me in many ways. 5 In the same way as once I included the whole Israelite nation under the name of Israel⁴ in the Law, so now by these five men I mean everyone in the world.

6 The first man stands for the leader of the church and for his priests, the second for the wicked laity, the third for the Jews, the fourth for the pagans, the fifth for my friends. 7 With regard to you, Jew, I make an exception for all the Jews who are secretly Christians and who serve me in sincere charity and upright faith and perfect works in secret. 8 And with regard to you, Pagan, I

1. "Before Lucifer came to be" seems to refer to the Vulgate translation of Psalm 109(110):3 "ante luciferum genui te" [I begot thee before Lucifer]. In the psalm, however, "Lucifer" "light-bearer" is certainly the morning star, the harbinger of light, and not a name for Satan.

2. "I exist inseparably in the Father and the Father in me" (John 14:10–11).

3. "The promise of an eternal inheritance to Abraham"; cf. Genesis 13:15.

4. "The whole Israelite nation under the name of Israel"; cf. Deuteronomy 6:4.

make an exception for all those who would gladly walk in the way of my commandments,⁵ if only they knew how and if they were instructed, but who try to put into practice as much as they know and are able. These will by no means be sentenced together with you.

9 I now state my grievance about you, head of my church,⁶ you who sit on my seat. I gave this seat to Peter and his successors to sit on with a threefold dignity and authority: first, in order that they might have the power of binding and loosing⁷ souls from sin; second, so that they would open heaven for penitents; third, so that they would close heaven to the damned and to those who scorn me.

10 But you, who should be absolving souls and presenting them to me, you are really a slayer of souls. I set up Peter as shepherd and servant of my sheep.⁸ 11 But you scatter and wound them; you are worse than Lucifer. He was envious of me and longed to kill none but me so that he might rule in my stead. 12 But you are all the worse in that not only do you kill me by cutting me off from yourself through your bad works but you also kill souls through your bad example. 13 I redeemed souls with my blood and entrusted them to you as to a faithful friend. But you hand them back to the enemy from whom I redeemed them. 14 You are more unjust than Pilate. He only sentenced me to death. But you not only sentence me as if I were a worthless lord of nothing, you also sentence the souls of my chosen ones and let the guilty go free. 15 You are more merciless than Judas. He only sold me. But you not only sell me but also the souls of my chosen ones for your own base profit and empty reputation. 16 You are more abominable than the Jews. They only crucified my body. But you crucify and punish the souls of my chosen ones for whom your evil and your transgression are harsher than any sword. 17 And so, since you are like Lucifer and more unjust than Pilate and more merciless than Judas and more abominable than the Jews, my grievance about you is justified.”

18 The Lord said to the second man, that is, to the laity: “I created all things for your use. You gave your consent to me and I to you. You pledged me your faith and promised by your oath that you would serve me. 19 Now, however, you have departed from me like someone who does not know God. You regard my words as a lie, my works as meaningless. You say my will and my commandments are too heavy. 20 You have violated the faith you pledged. You have broken your oath and abandoned my name. You have disassociated yourself from the company of my saints and have joined the company of the devils and become their associate. 21 You do not think anyone is worthy of praise and honor except yourself. You find difficult everything having to do with me and that you are obliged to do for me, while the things you like to do are easy for you. 22 That is why my grievance concerning you is justified, for you have broken the faith you pledged me both in baptism and subsequently. On

5. “The way of my commandments”; cf. Psalm 118(119):32.

6. “Head of my church,” i.e., Pope Clement VI. Cf. ch. 23,18 above.

7. “The power of binding and loosing”; cf. Matthew 16:19.

8. “I set up Peter as shepherd and servant of my sheep”; cf. John 21:15–17.

top of that, you even charge me with lying about the love I have shown you in word and deed. You say I was a fool for suffering.”

23 He said to the third man, that is, to the Jews: “I commenced my love affair with you. I chose you as my people, I led you up from slavery, I gave you my law, I brought you into the land I had promised your fathers and sent you prophets to console you. 24 Then I chose a virgin from among you and took a human nature from her. My grievance concerning you is that you still refuse to believe in me, saying: ‘The Christ has not yet come but has still to come.’”

25 The Lord said to the fourth man, that is, to the Gentile: “I created and redeemed you to be a Christian. I did you every good. But you are like someone out of his senses, because you do not know what you are doing. You are like a blind man, because you do not know where you are headed. 26 You worship the creature instead of the Creator,⁹ the false instead of the true. You bend your knee before things inferior to yourself. That is the cause of my grievance concerning you.”

27 He said to the fifth man: “Come closer, friend!” And he addressed the heavenly host directly: “Dear friends, my friend here stands for many friends. 28 He is like a man closed in among the wicked and harshly held captive. When he speaks the truth, they throw stones at his mouth. When he does something good, they thrust a spear into his breast. 29 Alas, my friends and saints, how can I endure such people and how long shall I put up with such contempt?” 30 Saint John the Baptist answered: “You are like a spotless mirror. We see and know all things in you as in a mirror without any need for words. You are the incomparable sweetness in which we taste every good thing. You are like the sharpest of swords and a fair judge.”

31 The Lord answered him: “My friend, what you said was true. My chosen ones see all goodness and justice in me. Even the evil spirits do so, although not in the light but in their own conscience. 32 Like a man in prison who had earlier learned his letters and still knows them, even though he is in darkness and does not see them, the demons, even though they do not see my justice in the light of my clarity, still know and see it in their conscience. 33 I am like a sword that cuts in two. I give each person what he or she deserves.”¹⁰

34 Then the Lord added, speaking to Blessed Peter: “You are the founder of the faith and of my church. While my army is listening, state the sentence of these five men!” 35 Peter answered: “Praise and honor to you, Lord, for the love you have shown to your earth! May all your host bless you, for you cause us to see and know in you all the things that have been and will be! 36 We see and know all things in you. It is truly just that the first man, the one who sits upon your seat while doing the deeds of Lucifer, should ignominiously surrender the seat he presumed to sit on and become a sharer in the punishment of Lucifer.

9. “You worship the creature instead of the Creator”; cf. Romans 1:25.

10. “I give each person what he or she deserves”; cf. Jeremiah 17:10.

37 The sentence of the second man is that he who has abandoned your faith should descend to hell head down and feet up, for he despised you who should be his head and loved himself. 38 The sentence of the third is that he will not see your face and will be punished for his wickedness and greed, since unbelievers do not deserve to see the sight of you. 39 The sentence of the fourth is that he should be locked up and confined in darkness like a man out of his senses. 40 The sentence of the fifth is that help should be sent to him.”

41 When the Lord heard this, he answered: “I swear by God the Father, whose voice John the Baptist heard at the Jordan, I swear by the body which John baptized, saw, and touched at the Jordan, I swear by the Spirit who appeared in the form of a dove at the Jordan, that I shall do justice to these five.”¹¹

42 Then the Lord added, saying to the first of the five men: “The sword of my severity will go into your body, entering at the top of your head and penetrating so deeply and firmly that it can never be drawn out. 43 Your chair will sink like a weighty stone¹² and not come to rest until it hits the lowest part of the deep. 44 Your fingers, I mean, your advisers, will burn in an inextinguishable and sulphurous fire. Your arms, I mean, your vicars, who should have reached out for the benefit of souls but reached out instead for worldly profit and honor, will be sentenced to the punishment of which David speaks: ‘May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow and may strangers take over his property.’¹³ 45 What does ‘his wife’ mean if not the soul that is left out of the glory of heaven and will be widowed from God? 46 ‘His children,’ that is, the virtues they seemed to possess, and my simple folk, those who were placed under them, will be separated from them. Their rank and property will fall to others, and they will inherit eternal shame instead of their privileged rank. 47 Their headgear will sink into hell’s mud, and they themselves will never get up out of it. Thus, just as through honor and pride they rose above others here on earth, so in hell they will sink so much more deeply than others that it will be impossible for them to rise.

48 Their limbs, I mean, all the fawning priests who followed them, will be cut off from them and taken apart just like a wall that is torn down where stone is not left upon stone¹⁴ and the cement no longer adheres to the stones. Mercy will not come to them, for my love will never warm them nor build them into an eternal mansion in heaven. Instead, stripped of every good, they will be endlessly tormented along with their headmen.¹⁵

49 I say to the second man: Since you do not want to keep the faith promised to me or show love toward me, I will send to you an animal that will come from the impetuous torrent to swallow you. 50 And as a torrent always

11. “Voice . . . Jordan”; cf. Matthew 3:13–17.

12. “Sink like . . . stone”; cf. Exodus 15:5.

13. “May his children . . . take over his property” (Psalm 108[109]:9–11).

14. “Where stone is not left upon stone” (Luke 21:6).

15. “With their headmen” renders Lat. “cum capitibus suis”; cf. Sw. “mz sinom hofdhom ok höuizman-nom” [with their heads and leaders].

runs downward, so the animal will carry you down to the lowest parts of hell. As impossible as it is for you to travel upstream against an impetuous torrent, it will be just as hard for you ever to ascend from hell.

51 I say to the third man: Since you, Jew, do not want to believe that I have come, therefore, when I come for the second judgment, you will see me not in my glory but in your conscience, and you will ascertain that all the things I said to you were true. 52 Then there remains for you to be punished as you deserve.

53 I say to the fourth man: Since you do not care to believe or want to know, your own darkness will be your light, and your heart will be enlightened to understand that my judgments are true, but, however, you will not come to the light.

54 I say to the fifth man: I shall do three things for you. First, I will fill you inwardly with my warmth. Second, I will make your mouth harder and firmer than any stone, so that the stones thrown at you will bounce back. Third, I will arm you with my weapons so that no spear will harm you but everything will give way before you like wax in the face of fire.¹⁶ 55 Be therefore made strong and stand like a man! Like a soldier in war who awaits the help of his lord and fights as long as he still has some fluid in him, so too you, stand firm and fight! The Lord, your God, whom none can withstand, will give you help. 56 And since you are few in number, I will give you honor and make you many.

57 Behold, my friends, you see these things and know them in me, and thus they stand before me. The words I have now spoken will be fulfilled. These men will never enter into my kingdom, as long as I am king, unless they mend their ways. For heaven will be given to none but those who humble themselves and do penance.” 58 Then all the host answered: “Praise be to you, Lord God, who are without beginning or end!”

‡ Chapter 42

The Virgin Mary Tells of Her Virtues

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin’s words of exhortation to the bride concerning how she ought to love her Son above all things, and about how every virtue and grace is contained in the glorious Virgin.

1 The Mother spoke: “I had three virtues by which I pleased my Son. I had such humility that no creature, whether angel or man, was humbler than I. Second, I had obedience by which I strove to obey my Son in all things. Third, I had outstanding charity.

2 For this reason I have received threefold honor from my Son. First, I was given more honor than angels and men, so that there is no virtue in God

16. “Like wax in the face of fire” (Micah 1:4).

that does not shine in me, although he is the source and Creator of all things. 3 But I am the creature to whom he has granted the most grace in comparison with others. 4 Second, in return for my obedience I acquired such power that there is no sinner, however unclean, who will not receive pardon if he turns to me with a purpose of amendment and a contrite heart. 5 Third, in return for my charity, God has drawn so close to me that whoever sees God sees me, and whoever sees me can see the divine and human nature in me and me in God as though in a mirror.

6 For whoever sees God sees three persons in him and whoever sees me sees, as it were, three persons. For God has clasped me in soul and body to himself and has filled me with every virtue, so that there is no virtue in God that does not shine in me, although God is the Father and giver of all virtues. 7 As with two conjoined bodies—the one receives whatever the other receives—so God has done with me. No sweetness exists that is not in me. It is like someone who has a nut and shares a part of it with another person.

8 My soul and body are purer than the sun and cleaner than a mirror. Hence, just as three persons would be seen in a mirror if they stood before it, so too the Father and Son and Holy Spirit can be seen in my purity. 9 Once I had my Son in my womb together with his divine nature. Now he is to be seen in me with both his divine and human natures as in a mirror, for I have been glorified.¹

10 So, bride of my Son, strive to imitate my humility and love nothing but my Son!”

‡ Chapter 43

On Planting a Date-Palm; and on a Ruptured Womb

DATE: 1340S

The Son’s words to the bride about how people rise up from a small good to the perfect good and sink down from a small evil to the greatest punishment.

1 The Son said: “Sometimes a great reward arises out of a little good. The date-palm has a wonderful odor, and in its fruit there is a stone. If this seed is planted in rich soil, it sprouts and blossoms and grows into a tall tree. 2 But if it is planted in barren soil, it dries out. The soil that delights in sin is wholly barren of goodness. If the seed of the virtues is sown there, it does not sprout. 3 Rich is the soil of the mind that knows its sin and laments having sinned. If the date-stone, that is, the thought of my severe judgment and power, is sown there, it strikes three roots in the mind. 4 The first root is the realization that a person can do nothing without my aid. This makes him open his mouth in

1. “For I have been glorified”: Sw. adds “mz vpstandilsinna hedhir ok äro” [with the honor and glory of the resurrection].

petition to me. The second root is to begin giving some small alms for the sake of my name. The third root is to withdraw from one's own affairs in order to serve me. 5 The person then begins to practice abstinence and fasting and self-denial: this is the trunk of the tree.

6 After that, the branches of charity grow as he leads everyone he can toward the good. 7 Then the fruit grows as he instructs others according to his knowledge and piously tries to find ways of giving me greater glory. This kind of fruit is most pleasing to me.

8 In this way, from a small beginning one rises up to perfection. As the seed takes root at first through a little piety, the body grows through abstinence, the branches are multiplied through charity, the fruit grows fat through preaching. 9 In the same manner, a person sinks down from a small evil to the greatest condemnation and punishment.

10 Do you know what the heaviest burden is for growing things? Surely it is the burden of an infant who is about to be born but cannot be delivered and dies inside the womb of the mother, and the mother also ruptures and dies from it, and the father carries her off to the tomb along with the child and buries her with the rotting matter. 11 This is what the devil does to the soul. The immoral soul is like the wife of the devil and follows his will in everything. She conceives a child by the devil by taking pleasure in sin and rejoicing in it. 12 Just as a mother conceives and bears fruit through a little seed that is nothing but rot, so too, by delighting in sin, the soul bears much fruit for the devil.

13 Thereafter the strength and limbs of the body get formed as sin gets added to sin¹ and increases daily. The mother swells up through the increase of sin. She wants to give birth, but she cannot, for her nature is consumed with sin, and life becomes wearisome. She would prefer to go on sinning, but she cannot, and God does not allow it. 14 Fear is then present because she cannot carry out her will. Strength and joy are gone. Worry and sorrow are everywhere. 15 Then her womb ruptures as she despairs of being able to do good. And she dies while blaspheming and blaming God's justice. And so she is led by the father, the devil, down to the tomb of hell where she is buried forever with the rot of her sin and the child of her depraved pleasure. 16 So you see, from small beginnings sin increases and grows unto damnation."

‡ Chapter 44*

The Heedless Are Like Bumblebees

DATE: 1340S

The Creator's words to the bride about how he is now despised and reviled by people who pay no heed to what he did for love by ad-

1. "As sin gets added to sin" (Isaiah 30:1).

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, pp. 471, line 3, through p. 471, line 30. "Ek skapadhe" . . . "känna mina räntuiso," and it is incorporated into ch. 45.

monishing them through the prophets and by his own suffering for their sake, and about how they do not care about the anger he directed against the obstinate by correcting them severely.

1 “I am the Creator and Lord of all things. I made the world and the world shuns me. I hear a sound in the world like that of a bumblebee¹ gathering honey on the earth. 2 When a bumblebee is flying and begins to land, it emits a buzzing sound. I hear a voice like that now buzzing in the world and saying: ‘I do not care what comes after this.’ Nowadays everyone is shouting: ‘I do not care!’² 3 Indeed, humanity does not pay heed to or care about what I did for love by admonishing them through the prophets, by my own preaching and by my suffering for them. They do not care about what I did in my anger by correcting the wicked and disobedient. 4 They see that they are mortal and that they are uncertain about death, but they do not care. They hear and see the justice I inflicted on Pharaoh and on Sodom³ because of sin, and that I inflict on other kings and princes, letting it come about daily through the sword and other woes. But it is as if they were blind to it all.

5 Like bumblebees, they fly wherever they like. Indeed, sometimes they fly as if they were shooting upward, whenever they exalt themselves through pride, but they come back down quickly enough by reverting to their lustfulness and gluttony. 6 They gather earthly honey for themselves by toiling and gathering for the needs of the body rather than for those of the soul, for earthly rather than eternal honor. 7 They turn what is temporal into a punishment for themselves, what is useless into eternal torment. 8 Hence, because of the prayers of my Mother, I will send my clear voice to these bumblebees, excepting my friends who are in the world only in body, and it will preach mercy. If they listen to it, they will be saved.”

‡ Chapter 45*

Various Groups in Dialogue with Christ Witness God’s Power and Glory

DATE: 1340s

The answer of the Mother and the angels, the prophets, the apostles, and the devils to God, in the presence of the bride, testifying to his greatness in creation, incarnation, redemption, and so forth, and about how people now contradict all these things, and about his severe judgment on them.

1. “Bumblebee” renders Lat. “apis maior”; cf. Sw. “humblan,” although Birgitta clearly intends the honeybee. Cf. Book V int. 15.16 where “apis breuis et paruula” is used for “honeybee.”

2. “I do not care!”; Sw. adds “Ey aktar iak hwat som äptir fölghe ok ma iak hafwa min vilia” [I do not care what follows and may I have my will].

3. “On Pharaoh and on Sodom”; cf. Exodus 7–12; Genesis 19.

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 467, line 4, through p. 471, line 2, “Maria taladhe til . . .” “minom munne wtgingo,” and it is incorporated into ch. 44.

1 The Mother said: "Bride of my Son, get dressed and stand firm, for my Son is drawing near to you. 2 His flesh was pressed as in a winepress. Since humanity sinned in every limb, my Son made expiation in each of his limbs. 3 My Son's hair was pulled out, his sinews distended, his joints were dislocated from their sockets, his bones mangled, his hands and feet pierced through. His mind was agitated, his heart afflicted by sorrow, his stomach was sucked in toward his back, all this because humanity had sinned in every limb."

4 Then the Son spoke, as the heavenly host stood by, and he said: "Although you know all things in me, nevertheless I speak because of this my bride who is standing here. 5 Angels, I ask you: Tell me what it is that was without beginning and will be without end? And what is it that created all things and was created by none? State and give your testimony!" 6 As with a single voice the angels answered, saying: "Lord, it is you. We state our testimony about three things: 7 First, that you are the Creator of us and of all things in heaven and on earth. Second, that you are and will be without beginning, your dominion without end, your power eternal. Without you nothing has been made and without you nothing can come to be. 8 Third, we testify that we see all justice in you as well as all things that have been and will be. All things are present to you without beginning or end."

9 Then he said to the prophets and patriarchs: "I ask you: Who led you up from slavery into freedom? Who divided the waters before you? Who gave you the Law? Prophets, who gave you the inspiration to speak?" 10 They answered him: "You, Lord. You led us up from slavery. You gave us the Law. You moved our spirit to speak."

11 Then he said to his Mother: "Give true testimony as to what you know of me!" 12 She answered: "Before the angel whom you sent came to me, I was alone in body and soul. When the angel's word had been spoken, your body was within me in its divine and human natures and I felt your body in my body. 13 I bore you without pain. I delivered you without anguish. I wrapped you in swaddling clothes and I fed you with my milk. I was with you from birth until death."

14 Then the Lord said to the apostles: "Say who it was that you saw, heard, and perceived by your senses?" 15 They answered him: "We heard your words and wrote them down. We heard your wondrous words when you gave us the New Law, when at a word you commanded demons and they went out, when at a word you raised the dead and healed the sick. 16 We saw you in a human body. We saw your miracles in the divine glory of your human nature. We saw you handed over to your enemies and hung upon a cross. We saw you suffer most bitterly and then be buried in a tomb. We perceived you by our senses when you rose again. 17 We touched your hair and your face. We touched your limbs and the place of your wounds. 18 You ate with us and shared your conversation with us. You are truly the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. 19 We also perceived with our senses when you ascended in your human nature to the right hand of the Father where you are without end."

20 Then God said to the unclean spirits: “Although you hide the truth in your conscience, nevertheless I command you to say who it was that diminished your power.” 21 They answered him: “Like thieves who do not tell the truth unless their feet are locked in hard wood, we do not speak the truth unless forced by your divine and awesome power. 22 You are the one who descended into hell in your might. You diminished our power in the world. You took from hell what was yours by right.”¹

23 Then the Lord said: “Behold, all those who have a spirit and are not robed in a body state their testimony to the truth for me. But those who have a spirit and a body, namely human beings, contradict me. Some of them know the truth but do not care. Others do not know it and that is why they do not care but say it is all untrue.”

24 He said to the angels: “They say your testimony is false, that I am not the Creator and that all things are not known in me. Therefore, they love created things more than me.”

25 He said to the prophets: “They contradict you and say that the Law is meaningless, that you gained freedom² through your own courage and skill, that the spirit was false and that you spoke of your own volition.”

26 He said to his Mother: “Some say you were not a virgin, others that I did not take a body from you, others know the truth but do not care.”

27 He said to the apostles: “They contradict you, for they say you are liars, that the New Law is useless and irrational. There are others who believe it to be true but do not care. Now then, I ask you: Who will be their judge?” 28 They all answered him: “You, God, who are without beginning and without end. You, Jesus Christ, who are one with the Father. Judgment has been given to you by the Father, you are their judge.” 29 The Lord answered: “I was their accuser and am now their judge. However, although I know and can do all things, nevertheless give me your judgment upon them!”

30 They answered him: “Just as the entire world perished at the beginning of the world by the waters of the flood, so too now the world deserves to perish by fire,³ since iniquity and injustice are more abundant now than then.” 31 The Lord answered: “Since I am just and merciful and render no judgment without mercy nor mercy without justice, once more I will send my mercy to the world due to the prayers of my Mother and my saints. If they do not want to listen, there will follow a justice that is only so much the more severe.”

1. “By right” renders “tu suscepisti”; cf. Sw. “Thu tokt thin rät ut af häluite thz waro thine vini” [You took from hell what was your right, that was your friends]; Birgittine-Norwegian “þu þokt þin räätt wt af heluitti mz þinne rätuiso. Ok þinom kärleek” [You took from hell what was your right with your justice and your love].

2. “Gained freedom”: Birgittine-Norwegian adds “af egipto lande” [from Egypt].

3. “Just as the entire world perished . . . to perish by fire”; cf. 2 Peter 3:6–7.

‡ Chapter 46*

Christ Complains about Men's Disrespect

DATE: 1340S

Mutual words of praise of the Mother and Son in the bride's presence, and about how people now regard Christ as ignoble, disgraceful, and base, and say him to be so, and about the eternal damnation of such people.

1 Mary spoke to her Son, saying: "May you be blessed, who are without beginning and without end! You had a most noble and handsome body. You were the most valiant and virtuous of men. You were the most worthy of creatures." 2 The Son answered: "The words of your mouth are sweet to me and delight my inmost heart like the sweetest of drinks. For me you are the creature sweetest beyond all others. In the same way as a person may see different faces in a mirror but none pleases him like his own, so too, although I love my saints, I love you with outstanding affection, because I was born from your very flesh. 3 You are like incense whose fragrance wafted up to God and drew him to your body. This same fragrance brought your body and soul up to God, where you live now in body and soul. 4 May you be blessed, for the angels rejoice in your beauty and everyone who invokes you with a sincere heart is set free through your power. All the demons tremble in your light and dare not remain in your splendor, for they always want to be in darkness.

5 You praised me for three things. You said I had a most noble body, then that I was the most valiant of men, and, third, you said I was the most worthy of creatures. 6 These things are at present contradicted only by those who have a body and soul. They say that I have an ignoble body and am a most despicable man and the basest of creatures. 7 What is more ignoble than to induce others to sin? This is what they say about my body: that it leads to sin. They say, namely, that sin is not as repugnant or displeases God as much as is said. 8 'For,' they say, 'nothing exists unless God wants it to and nothing has been created without him. Why, then, should we not get to use created things as we want? Our natural fragility demands it and this is the way everyone has lived before us and still do live.' 9 This is how people now speak to me. My human nature, in which I appeared among men as true God, is in effect regarded by them as ignoble inasmuch as I discouraged mankind from sinning and showed what a serious matter it is, as if I had encouraged them to do something useless and disgraceful. They say, namely, that nothing is noble but sin and whatever pleases their will.

10 They also say that I am the most disgraceful of men. What is more

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 476, line 21, through p. 480, line 6, "Maria taladhe til" . . . "är i himerike."

disgraceful than someone who, when he speaks the truth, gets his mouth bruised by stones thrown at him and gets hit in the face and, on top of that, hears people reproaching him and saying: 'If he were a man, he would revenge himself.' This is what they do to me. 11 I speak to them through the learned doctors and Holy Scripture, but they say that I lie. They bruise my mouth with stones and with their fists by committing adultery, by killing and lying. They say: 'If he were manly, if he were God most powerful, he would revenge himself for such transgressions.' 12 However, I suffer it in my patience, and everyday I hear them claiming that the punishment is neither eternal nor so severe as is said, and my words are judged to be lies.

13 Third, they regard me as the basest of creatures. What is more despicable in the house than a dog or a mouser¹ that someone would be only too happy to exchange for a horse, if he could? 14 But people hold that I am worse than a dog. They would not take me if that meant giving up the dog, and they would rather reject and deny me than go without the dog's hide. Is there anything so trifling to the mind that it is not thought of more fervently and desired more than me? If they held me in higher esteem than other creatures, they would love me more than others. 15 But they own nothing so trifling that they do not love it more than me. They grieve over everything more than me. They grieve for their own losses and those of their friends. They grieve for a single word of injury. They grieve about giving offense to people more highly placed than they, but they do not grieve about giving offense to me, the Creator of all things.

16 What person is there who is so despicable that he is not listened to if he asks a question or is not repaid if he has given something? I am utterly base and despicable in their eyes, in that they do not regard me as being worthy of any good, although it was I who gave them all good things.

17 My Mother, you have tasted more of my wisdom than others, and nothing but the truth has ever left your lips. Nor does anything but the truth ever leave my own lips. In the presence of all the saints I will exculpate myself before the first man, the one who said I had an ignoble body. I shall prove that I have in fact a most noble body without deformity or sin, and that man will fall into eternal reproach for all to see. 18 To the one who said that my words were a lie and that he did not know whether I was God or not, I shall prove myself truly to be God, and he will flow like mud down to hell. 19 And the third, the one who held me to be base, him I shall sentence to eternal damnation so that he may never see my glory and my joy."

20 Then he said to the bride: "Stand firm in my service! You have come to be enclosed by a wall, as it were, from which you cannot flee nor dig through its foundations. Put up with this small tribulation voluntarily, and you will come to experience eternal rest in my arms! 21 You know the will of the Father, you hear the words of the Son, and you know my Spirit. You get delight and

1. "Mouser" renders Lat. "murilegus," i.e., a cat.

consolation in conversation with my Mother and my saints. Therefore, stand firm! Otherwise you will come to know that justice of mine by which you will be compelled to do what I am now gently urging you to do.”

‡ Chapter 47

The Law Is Like Clothing; Christ Is Like Bread; Present-day Priests Are Admonished

DATE: 1340S

The Lord’s words to the bride about the addition of the New Law, and about how that same Law is now rejected and scorned by the world, and about how bad priests are not priests of God but betrayers of God, and about their malediction and damnation.

1 “I am the God who was once called the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.¹ I am the God who gave the Law to Moses. This law was like clothing. As a pregnant mother prepares her infant’s clothing, so too God prepared the Law, which was just the clothing and shadow and sign of things to come. 2 I vested and wrapped myself in the clothing of the Law. As a boy grows up, his old clothes get exchanged for new ones. Likewise, when the clothing of the Old Law was ready to be put aside, I put on the new clothing, that is, the New Law, and gave it to everyone who wanted to have me and my clothing.

3 This clothing is neither too tight fitting nor difficult to wear but is well adjusted on all sides. It does not command people to fast or work too much nor to kill themselves or to do anything beyond the limits of possibility, but is beneficial for the soul and conducive to the moderation and chastisement of the body. 4 For when the body gets too attached to sin, sin consumes the body.

5 Two things can be found in the New Law. First, a prudent temperance and the correct use of all spiritual and physical goods. Second, an easy facility for keeping the Law, in that a person who cannot stay in one state can stay in another. 6 Here one finds that a person who cannot live in celibacy can live in licit matrimony. A person who falls can get up again. However, this Law is now rejected and scorned by the world. 7 People say the Law is too tight, heavy, and unattractive. They call it tight, because the Law commands one to be contented with what is necessary and to flee what is superfluous. But they want to have everything beyond reason and more than the body can bear, just like cattle. That is why it seems too tight or strict to them. 8 Second, they say it is heavy, because the Law says one should indulge the desire for pleasure with reason and at established times. But they want to indulge their pleasure more than is good and beyond what is established. 9 Third, they say it is unattractive, because the Law orders them to love humility and to refer every good to God.

1. “The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6).

They want to be proud and to exalt themselves for the good gifts God has given them. That is why it is unattractive to them. See how they despise the clothes I gave them!

10 I brought the old ways to an end and introduced the new to last until I come in judgment, because the old ways were too difficult. But they have shamefully discarded the clothing with which I covered the soul, that is, an orthodox faith. 11 On top of that, they add sin to sin, for they also want to betray me. Does not David say in the psalm: ‘He who ate of my bread plotted treason against me’?² 12 I want you to note two things in these words. First, he does not say “plots” but “plotted,” as though it were already past. Second, he points to only one man as a betrayer. 13 However, I say that it is those in the present who betray me—not those who have been or who will be, but those who are still alive. I say as well that it is a question of not only one person but of many people.

14 But you may ask me: ‘Are there not two kinds of bread, the one invisible and spiritual, on which angels and saints live, the other belonging to the earth, by which men are fed? But angels and saints do not desire anything unless it is according to your will, and men can do nothing unless you accept it. How, then, can they betray you?’ 15 In the presence of my heavenly host who knows and sees all things in me, I answer for your sake so that you may understand: There are indeed two kinds of bread. 16 One is that of the angels who eat my bread in my kingdom and are filled with my indescribable glory. They do not betray me, because they want nothing but what I want. 17 But those who eat my bread on the altar betray me. I truly am that bread.³ Three things can be perceived in that bread: form, flavor, and roundness.

18 I am indeed the bread, and, like the bread, I have three things in me: flavor, form and roundness. Flavor, because everything whatsoever is tasteless and insubstantial and meaningless without me, just like a meal without bread is tasteless and un nourishing. 19 I have also the form of bread, in that I am of the earth. I am of the Virgin Mother, my Mother is of Adam, Adam is of the earth.⁴ 20 I have also roundness in which there is no end or beginning, because I am without beginning and without end. No one can imagine or find an end or beginning to my wisdom, power, or charity. I am in all things and above all things and beyond all things. 21 Even if one were to fly like an arrow perpetually without stop, he would never find an end or a limit to my power and might.

22 Through these things then, flavor, form, and roundness, I am that bread that seems to be and feels like bread on the altar but is transformed into my body that was crucified. 23 As anything dry and easily inflammable is quickly consumed if it is placed on the fire, and nothing remains of the form of the wood but all of it becomes fire, so too, when these words are said, “This is my

2. “He who ate of my bread plotted treason against me”; cf. Psalm 40(41):10.

3. “I truly am that bread”; cf. John 6:35.

4. “Adam is of the earth”; cf. Genesis 2: 7; 1 Corinthians 15:47.

body,⁵ what before was bread immediately becomes my body. It is set aflame not by fire like wood but by my divinity. Therefore, those who eat my bread betray me.

24 What kind of murder could be more abhorrent than when someone kills himself? Or what betrayal could be worse than when two persons are joined by an indissoluble bond, such as a married couple, and one betrays the other? 25 What does one of the spouses do in order to betray the other? He says to her by way of deception: 'Let us go to such and such a place so I can have my way with you!' She goes with him then in all simplicity, ready for her spouse's every wish. 26 But when he finds the right opportunity and place, he brings against her three treacherous weapons. Either he uses something heavy enough to kill her with one blow, or sharp enough to slice right through her vital organs, or else something to smother and suffocate the spirit of life in her directly. 27 Then, when she has died, the traitor thinks to himself: 'Now I have done wrong. If my crime comes out in the open and becomes public, I will be condemned to death.' Then he goes and puts his wife's body in some hidden place, so his sin will not be discovered.

28 This is the way I am dealt with by the priests who are my betrayers. For they and I are bound by a single bond when they take the bread and, by pronouncing the words, change it into my true body, which I received from the Virgin. None of the angels can do this. I have given that dignity to priests alone and have selected them for the highest orders. 29 But they deal with me like betrayers. They put on a happy and pleasant face for me and lead me to a hidden place where they can betray me. 30 These priests put on a happy face by appearing to be good and simple. They lead me to a hidden chamber by approaching the altar. There I am ready like a bride or bridegroom to carry out all their wishes, and instead they betray me. 31 First they hit me with something heavy, whenever the divine office, which they recite for me, becomes burdensome and heavy to them. They would rather speak a hundred words for the sake of the world than a single one in my honor. They would rather give a hundred pieces of gold for the sake of the world than a single penny for me. They would rather work a hundred times for the sake of their own profit and that of the world than once in my honor. They press down on me with this heavy burden, so that it is as though I am dead in their hearts.

32 Second, they pierce me as with a sharp blade that penetrates the vital organs each time the priest goes up to the altar in the knowledge that he has sinned and repented but is firmly resolved to sin again, once he has carried out his office. He thinks to himself: 'I do indeed repent of my sin, but I will not give up the woman with whom I have sinned so as not to be able to sin any longer.' These pierce me as with the sharpest of blades.

33 Third, it is as though they smother the spirit when they think to themselves thus: 'It is good and delightful to be in the world, it is good to indulge

5. "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26 et al). These are the words uttered at the consecration (see too 47:37).

lusts and I cannot contain myself. I will do what I like in my youth. When I grow old, I will abstain and mend my ways.' And through this wicked thought they smother the spirit of life.

34 But how does this happen? Well, the heart in them grows so cold and tepid toward me and toward every virtue that it can never be warmed up or rise again to my love. 35 Just like ice does not catch fire, even if it is held to the flame, but only melts, so too, even if I give them my grace and they hear words of admonishment, they do not rise up to the way of life, but only grow barren and slack in respect to every virtue. 36 And so they betray me in that they pretend to be simple without being so, and are depressed and upset about giving me glory, instead of enjoying it, and also in that they intend to sin and go on sinning until the end.

37 They also conceal me, so to speak, and put me in a hidden place, whenever they think to themselves thus: 'I know I have sinned. But if I refrain from the sacrifice, I will be put to shame and everyone's going to condemn me.' So they impudently go up to the altar and place me before them and handle me, true God and man. I am as it were in a hidden place with them, since no one knows or realizes how corrupt and shameless they are. I, God, lie there in front of them as it were in concealment, since, even if the priest is the worst of sinners and pronounces the words "This is my body," he still consecrates my true body, and I, true God and man, lie there before him.

38 When he puts me to his mouth, however, I am no longer present to him in the grace of my divine and human natures—only the form and flavor of bread remain for him—not because I am not really and truly present for the wicked as much as for the good due to the institution of the sacrament, but because good and wicked do not receive it with similar effect. 39 Look, these priests are not my priests but really my betrayers! They also sell and betray me like Judas. I look at the pagans and the Jews, but I do not see anyone worse than these priests, since they have fallen into the sin of Lucifer.

40 Now let me tell you their sentence and whom they resemble. Their sentence is condemnation. David condemned those who were disobedient to God,⁶ not out of anger or bad will or impatience, but out of divine justice, because he was a righteous prophet and king. I, too, who am greater than David, condemn these priests, not out of anger or bad will but out of justice. 41 Accursed be everything they take from the earth for their own profit, for they do not praise their God and Creator who gave them these things. Accursed be the food and drink that enters their mouths and fattens their bodies to become food for worms and destines their souls for hell. 42 Accursed be their bodies that will rise again in hell to be burned without end. Accursed be the years of their useless lives. Accursed be their first hour in hell that never will end. 43 Accursed be their eyes that saw the light of heaven. Accursed be their ears that heard my words and remained indifferent. Accursed be their sense

6. "David condemned those who were disobedient to God"; cf. Psalm 108(109).

of taste by which they tasted my gifts. 44 Accursed be their sense of touch by which they handled me. Accursed be their sense of smell by which they smelled delightful things and neglected me, the most delightful of all.

45 Now, how exactly are they accursed? Well, their vision is accursed because they will not see the vision of God in himself but only the shadows and punishments of hell. Their ears are accursed, because they will not hear my words but only the clamor and horrors of hell. 46 Their sense of taste is accursed, because they will not taste my eternal goods and joy but only eternal bitterness. Their sense of touch is accursed, because they will not get to touch me but only perpetual fire. Their sense of smell is accursed, because they will not smell that sweet smell of my kingdom that surpasses every scent, but will only have the stench of hell that is more bitter than bile and worse than sulphur.

47 May they be accursed by earth and sky and every brute creature. These obey and glorify God, whereas they have shunned him. 48 Therefore, I swear by the truth, I who am the Truth,⁷ that if they die like this with such a disposition, neither my love nor my virtue will ever encompass them. Instead, they will be forever damned.”

‡ Chapter 48

The Same Priests Are Compared to Idolaters

DATE: 1340S

About how, in the presence of the heavenly host and of the bride, the divine nature speaks to the human nature against the Christians, just as God spoke to Moses against the people, and about damnable priests who love the world and despise Christ and about their condemnation and damnation.

1 The great host was seen in heaven and God said to it: “Behold, for the sake of this bride of mine present here, I am speaking to you, my friends, who are here listening, you who know, understand, and see all things in me. 2 In the manner of someone speaking to himself, my divine nature will speak to my human nature. Moses was with the Lord on the mountain forty days and nights.¹ When the people saw that he was gone a long time, they took gold and cast it in the fire and fashioned a calf out of it, calling it their god. 3 Then God said to Moses: ‘The people have sinned. I will wipe them out, just like writing is erased from a book.’ 4 Moses answered: ‘Do not, my Lord! Remember how you led them up from the Red Sea and worked wonders for them. If you wipe them out, where is your promise then? Do not do this, I beg you, since then

7. “I who am the Truth” (John 14:6).

1. “Moses was with the Lord on the mountain forty days and nights”; cf. Exodus 24:18; Deuteronomy

your enemies will say: The God of Israel is evil, he led the people up from the sea and killed them in the desert.' And God was appeased² by these words.

5 I am Moses, figuratively speaking. My divine nature speaks to my human one just as it did to Moses, saying: 'Look what your people have done, look how they have despised me! All the Christians will be killed and their faith wiped out.' 6 My human nature answers: 'Do not, Lord. Remember how I led the people through the sea by my blood when I was bruised from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head!³ I promised them eternal life. Have mercy on them for the sake of my passion!' 7 When the divine nature heard this, it appeased him, and he said: 'Thy will be done, for all judgment has been given thee!⁴ See what love, my friends! But now in your presence, my spiritual friends, my angels and saints, and in the presence of my corporeal friends who are in the world yet not in the world except in body, I complain that my people are gathering firewood and kindling a fire and throwing gold into it from which a calf emerges for them to adore as a god. 8 Like a calf it stands on four feet and has a head, a throat, and a tail. When Moses lingered on the mountain, the people said: 'We do not know what may have become of him.'⁵ And they were sorry that he had led them out of captivity, and they said: 'Let us look for another god to go before us!'

9 This is how these damnable priests are treating me now. They say: 'Why are we living a more austere life than others? What is our reward? We would be better off taking it easy and living in lust. Let us, then, love the world we are certain about! After all, we are uncertain about his promise.' 10 So they gather firewood, I mean, they apply all their senses to loving the world. They light a fire when their entire desire is for the world. They burn as their lust grows hot in their mind and results in an act. Later they throw in gold, which means that all the love and respect they should show to me, they show to get the world's respect. 11 Then the calf emerges, I mean, the complete love of the world, with its four feet of sloth, impatience, superfluous mirth, and greediness. These priests who should be mine are slothful in honoring me, impatient in suffering, excessive in mirth, and never content with what they get.

12 This calf also has a head and throat, I mean, a total desire for gluttony that can never be quenched, not even were the whole sea to flow into it. The calf's tail is their malice, for they do not let anyone keep his property, not if they can help it. 13 By their immoral example and their scorn, they hurt and pervert everyone who serves me. Such is the love for the calf that is in their hearts, and in such they rejoice and delight. 14 They think about me in the same way as those others did about Moses: 'He is gone a long time,' they say. 'His words appear meaningless and working for him is a burden. Let us have

2. "When the people saw that he was gone a long time . . . God was appeased"; cf. Exodus 32:1-14.

3. "From the sole of my foot to the crown of my head" (Deuteronomy 28:35; Job 2:7; Isaiah 1:6).

4. "All judgment has been given thee"; cf. John 5:22.

5. "We do not know what may have become of him" (Exodus 32:23).

our will, let our strength and pleasure be our god!’ 15 They are not even content to stop at this and forget me entirely, but, instead, they treat me like an idol.

16 The gentiles used to worship wood and stones and dead people. Among others, an idol by the name of Beelzebub⁶ was worshipped. His priests used to offer him incense and genuflections and shouts of praise. 17 Anything in their sacrificial offering that was useless was dropped on the ground, and the birds and flies ate it. But the priests used to keep whatever was useable for themselves. 18 Then they locked the door on their idol and personally kept the key, so that nobody could get in.

19 This is how priests are treating me in the present time. They offer me incense, I mean, they speak and preach pretty words to the people to gain respect for themselves and temporal profit, but not out of love of me. 20 And just as you cannot lay hold of the aroma of incense, but you can feel it and see it, in the same way their words do not attain any effect on souls so as to take root and be kept in their hearts, but their words are just heard and only seem to please for a while. 21 They offer up prayers, but not at all to my liking. Like people with shouts of praise on their lips but silence in their hearts, they stand next to me, as it were, with prayers on their lips while in their hearts they wander around the world. 22 However, if they were speaking with a person of rank, they would keep their minds on what they say, so as not to make any mistakes that could be remarked upon by others. 23 In my presence, however, the priests are like men in a daze who say one thing with their lips and have another in their hearts. The person hearing their words cannot be certain about them. 24 They bend their knees to me, that is, they promise me humility and obedience. But, really, they are about as humble as Lucifer. They obey their own desires, not me.

25 They also lock me in and personally keep the key. They open up on me⁷ and offer praise when they say: ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!’⁸ 26 But then they lock me in by carrying out their own will, while mine becomes like that of an imprisoned and powerless man because it can neither be seen nor heard. 27 They personally keep the key in the sense that by their example they also lead astray others who want to do my will. And, if they could, they would even like to prevent my will from getting out and being accomplished, except when it accords with their own will.

28 They keep for themselves anything in the sacrificial offering that is necessary and useful to them, and they demand all their rights and privileges. However, they seem to regard as useless people’s bodies that fall to the ground and die and for which they are obliged to offer the most important sacrifice,

6. “Beelzebub”; cf. 4 Kings (2 Kings) 1:2–6; Matthew 10:25; 12:24–27.

7. “They lock me in . . . open up on me” renders Lat. “claudunt super me . . . aperiant super me”; cf. Sw. “The atir lykkia . . . owir mik . . . the atir lykkia . . . owir mik” [they close . . . about me . . . they close . . . about me].

8. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

but leave them for the flies, I mean, the worms.⁹ 29 They do not care or bother about those people's rights or about the salvation of souls.

30 What was it that was said to Moses? 'Kill those who made this idol!' Some were killed but not all. Thus, my words will now come and slay them, some in body and soul by means of eternal damnation, others unto life so that they be converted and live, still others through a swift death as being priests who are altogether odious to me.

31 What shall I liken them to? They are in fact like the fruit of the briar,¹⁰ which is beautiful and red on the outside, but inside is full of impurity and prickles. Likewise, these men come to me as though red with charity, and they seem to be pure to the people, but inside they are all full of filth. 32 If this fruit is placed in the soil, other briar-bushes spring up from it. Likewise, these men hide their sin and malice in their heart as in the soil, and they become so rooted in evil that they do not even blush to go out in public and boast about their sin. 33 Hence other people not only find it an occasion of sin but also get seriously wounded in their souls, thinking thus to themselves: 'If priests do this, it is all the more licit for us.' 34 As it is, they resemble not only the fruit, but also the prickles in the sense that they disdain to be moved by correction and admonition; they think no one is wiser than they themselves and that they can do as they please. 35 Therefore I swear by my divine and human natures, in the hearing of all the angels, that I shall break through the door they have shut on my will. My will shall be fulfilled and their will shall be annihilated and locked in endless punishment. 36 Wherefore, as it was said of old, I shall begin my judgment with my clergy and from my altar."¹¹

‡ Chapter 49

The Same Priests Are Inhospitable to Christ

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about how Christ is figuratively likened to Moses leading the people out of Egypt, and about how the damnable priests, whom he has chosen in place of the prophets as his closest friends, now cry: "Depart from us!"

1 The Son spoke: "Earlier I likened myself figuratively to Moses. When he was leading the people, the water stood like a wall¹ to right and left. 2 I am indeed Moses, figuratively speaking. I led the Christian people, that is, I opened heaven for them and showed them the way. But now I have chosen other

9. "Flies, I mean, the worms" renders "muscis, idest vermibus"; cf. Sw. "kropparna flughumen som äru markana j muldinne" [the bodies of flies, which are worms in the earth].

10. "Briar": Sw. adds "som kallas hiupun" [which is called rosehip]; cf. also Book IV 67. The fruit of the briar, modern Sw. "nypon," continues to be widely used for medicinal and nutritional purposes in Scandinavia.

11. "I shall begin my judgment with my clergy and from my altar"; cf. Ezekiel 9:6.

1. "The water stood like a wall" (Exodus 14:22).

friends for myself, more special and intimate than the prophets, namely, my priests, who not only hear and see my words, when they see me myself, but even touch me with their hands, which none of the prophets or angels could do.

3 These priests, whom I have chosen as friends in place of the prophets, cry out to me, not with desire and love as the prophets did, but they cry out with two opposing voices. 4 For they do not cry out as did the prophets: 'Come, Lord, for you are good!' Instead they cry out: 'Depart from us, for your words are bitter and your works heavy and they are a scandal to us!'

5 Just listen to what these damnable priests say! I stand before them like the meekest of sheep, and they get wool from me for their clothing and milk for their refreshment, and yet they loathe me for loving them so. 6 I stand before them like a visitor saying: 'Friend, supply the basic needs that I lack, and you will receive the greatest reward from God!' 7 But in return for my sheeplike simplicity they drive me away as if I were a wolf lying in wait for the master's sheep. Instead of hospitality they affront me like a traitor unworthy of hospitality and refuse to take me in.

8 But what will the rejected visitor² do? Should he bring out arms against the householder who drives him away? By no means. That would not be just, since the owner can give or deny his property to whomever he wants. 9 What, then, will the visitor do? He should certainly say to the one rejecting him: 'Friend, since you do not want to take me in, I will go to another who will take pity on me.' 10 And, going to another person, he hears from him: 'You are welcome, sir, all that I have is yours. May you be the lord now! I will be your servant and guest.' 11 Those are the kind of lodgings I like to stay in, where I hear such a voice. I am like the visitor rejected by men. Although I can enter any place whatsoever by virtue of my power, still, under the dictates of justice, I only enter where people receive me with a good will as their true Lord, not as a guest, and surrender their own will into my hands."

‡ Chapter 50*

Mary Intercedes with Christ on Behalf of Those in Purgatory and on Earth

DATE: 1340S

The mutual words of blessing and praise of the Mother and the Son, and about the grace conceded by the Son to his Mother for the souls in purgatory and those remaining in this world.

2. "Visitor": there were detailed statutes on the treatment of visitors or guests (Lat. "hospes") in medieval Scandinavia, many of whom were merchants and traders. See KL "gjestevenskap," "gæster," "gästgiveri," and "gästning."

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 461, line 28, through p. 465, line 23, "SAncta maria syntis" . . . "ok þik älska."

1 Mary spoke to her Son saying: “Blessed be your name, my Son, without end and blessed be your divine nature that is without beginning and without end! In your divine nature there are three marvelous attributes of power, wisdom, and virtue. 2 Your power is like the hottest fire in the face of which anything solid and strong is to be reckoned as dry straw in a fire. 3 Your wisdom is like the sea that can never be emptied by reason of its vastness and which covers valleys and mountains when it rises up and flows over. 4 It is equally impossible to comprehend and fathom your wisdom. How wisely you created humankind and established them over all your creation! How wisely you arranged the birds in the air, the beasts on the earth, the fishes in the sea, giving to each its own time and order! 5 How wondrously you give life to all things and take it away! How wisely you give wisdom to the foolish and take it away from the proud! 6 Your virtue is like the sunlight that shines in the sky and fills the earth with its light. Your virtue likewise satisfies high and low and fills all things. So, may you be blessed, my Son, who are my God and my Lord!”

7 The Son answered: “My dear Mother, your words are sweet to me, for they come from your soul. You are like the dawn that advances with serene weather. 8 You outshine the heavens; your light and your serenity surpass all the angels. By your serenity you attracted to yourself the true sun, that is, my divine nature, so much so that the sun of my divinity came to you and settled on you. By its warmth you were warmed in my love beyond all others and by its splendor you were enlightened in my wisdom more than all others. 9 The darkness of the earth was driven away and all the heavens were lit up through you. 10 Upon my truth I say that your purity, more pleasing to me than all the angels, drew my divinity to you so that you were set on fire by the warmth of the Spirit. In it you bore the true God and man hidden in your womb whereby mankind has been enlightened and the angels filled with joy. 11 So, may you be blessed by your blessed Son! And therefore, no petition of yours will ever come to me without being heard. Any who ask for mercy through you and have the intention of mending their ways will win grace. As heat comes from the sun, so too all mercy will be given through you. You are like a free-flowing spring from which mercy flows to the wretched.”

12 In turn the Mother answered the Son: “All power and glory be yours, my Son! You are my God and mercy. Every good that I have comes from you. 13 You are like a seed never sown that still grew and yielded fruit a hundredfold¹ and a thousandfold. All mercy comes from you and, being countless and ineffable, it can indeed be symbolized by the number one hundred, which symbolizes perfection, for everyone is perfected by you and perfection comes from you.”

14 The Son answered the Mother: “Mother, you compared me quite rightly to a seed that was never sown but still grew, since in my divine nature I came

1. “Yielded fruit a hundredfold”; cf. Matthew 13:8.

to you, and my human nature was not sown by intercourse but still grew in you, and mercy flowed out from you to all people. You have spoken rightly. Now, then, since you draw mercy out of me by the sweet words of your lips, ask me what you will, and it shall be given to you."

15 The Mother answered: "My Son, since I have won mercy from you, then I ask you to have mercy on the wretched and help them. After all, there are four places. The first is heaven, where the angels and the souls of the saints need nothing but you whom they have, for they possess every good in you. 16 The second place is hell, and those who live there are filled with evil and are excluded from every mercy. Thus, nothing good can enter into them any more. 17 The third is the place of those being purged.² These need a triple mercy, since they are triply afflicted. They suffer in their hearing, for they hear nothing other than sorrow, pain, and misery. 18 They are afflicted in their sight, for they see nothing but their own misery. 19 They are afflicted in their touch, for they feel only the heat of unbearable fire and of grievous suffering. Grant them your mercy, my Lord and my Son, for the sake of my prayers!"

20 The Son answered: "I will gladly grant them a triple mercy for your sake. First, their hearing will get relief, their sight will be eased, their punishment will be reduced and mitigated. 21 Moreover, from this hour those who find themselves in the greatest punishment of purgatory shall advance to the middle stage. And those who are in the middle stage shall advance to the lightest punishment. Those who find themselves in the lightest punishment shall cross over into rest."

22 The Mother answered: "Praise and honor to you, my Lord!" And she immediately added: "The fourth place is the world. Its inhabitants need three things: first, contrition for their sins; second, reparation; third, the power to do good."

23 The Son answered: "To everyone who invokes my name and has hope in you along with the purpose of amendment for his sins, these three things shall be given as well as the kingdom of heaven. Your words are so sweet to me that I cannot refuse the things you ask, since you want nothing other than what I want. 24 You are like a shining, burning flame by which extinguished torches are re-enchanted, and once enkindled grow in strength. By means of your love, which rose up to my heart and drew me to you, those who are dead through sin will revive and those who are tepid and dark like smoke will grow strong in my love."³

2. "Being purged," i.e., in purgatory.

3. "Those who are dead through sin will revive . . . and those who are tepid and dark like smoke will grow strong in my love" renders Lat. "reuiuiscunt, qui in peccatis sunt mortui, et tepidi, quasi fumus nigri, in caritate mea conualescent"; cf. Birgittine-Norwegian, "Ok þe sām swarte ära sām kul af syndelikom gerningom þe varda firir þina böön skäre sām ein sool mz þy var tu väl signad. Ok säle ära þe a þik kalla ok þik älska" [And those who are black as coal through sinful deeds they become through your prayers pure like a sun; by this you were blessed; and blessed are they who call to you and pray to you].

‡ Chapter 51

Mary Is Like a Tall Flower That Exceeds Five Mountains That Symbolize the Prophets

DATE: 1340S

The Mother's words of blessing to the Son, in the bride's hearing, and about how the Son of glory makes a lovely comparison of his sweet Mother to a flower growing in a valley.

1 The Mother spoke to her Son saying: "Blessed be your name, my Son Jesus Christ! Praise to your human nature surpassing all creation! Glory to your divine nature above all good things! Your divine and human natures are one God."

2 The Son answered: "My Mother, you are like a flower that grew in a valley. Around the valley were five high mountains. The flower itself grew out of three roots, having a straight stem without any knots. 3 This flower had five leaves, lovely in every way. The valley and its flower outgrew the five mountains, and the leaves of the flower spread themselves out over every height in the sky and over all the choirs of angels.

4 You, my beloved Mother, you are that valley by virtue of the great humility you had in comparison with others. It surpassed the five mountains. 5 The first mountain was Moses by virtue of his power. For he held power over my people through the Law, as though it were held tight in his fist. But you held the Lord of all law in your womb and, therefore, you are higher than that mountain. 6 The second mountain was Elijah, who was so holy that he was assumed body and soul into the holy place.¹ You, however, my dear Mother, were assumed in soul to the throne of God above all the choirs of angels, and your most pure body is there together with your soul. You are therefore higher than Elijah. 7 The third mountain was the great strength possessed by Samson in comparison with other men.² Yet the devil defeated him by cheating. But you defeated the devil by your strength. You are therefore stronger than Samson. 8 The fourth mountain was David, a man according to my heart and will, who nevertheless fell into sin.³ But you, my Mother, followed my every will and never sinned. 9 The fifth mountain was Solomon, who was full of wisdom but who nevertheless became a fool.⁴ You, indeed, my Mother, were full of all wisdom but never became foolish or were deceived. You are therefore higher than Solomon.

10 The flower sprang from three roots in the sense that you possessed

1. "The second mountain was Elijah . . . into the holy place"; cf. 4 Kings (2 Kings) 2:11.

2. "Samson"; cf. Judges 13-16.

3. "David, a man according to my heart and will . . . fell into sin"; cf. 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 13:14; Acts 13:22; 2 Kings (2 Samuel) 11.

4. "Solomon, who was full of wisdom . . . nevertheless became a fool"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 3:12; 4:29-34;

three things from your youth on: obedience, charity, and divine understanding. 11 From these three roots grew the straightest of stems with not a single knot, I mean, your will was never inclined to anything but to my wish. 12 The flower also had five leaves growing higher than all the choirs of angels. You, my Mother, are indeed the flower of these five leaves. 13 The first leaf is your nobleness, which is so great that my angels, who are noble in my presence, beholding your nobleness, saw it to be above them and more exalted than their sanctity and nobleness. You are therefore higher than the angels. 14 The second leaf is your mercy, which was so great that, when you saw the misery of souls, you had compassion on them and suffered pain at my death.

15 The angels are full of mercy, yet they never suffer pain. You, however, loving Mother, were merciful to the miserable by experiencing all the pain of my death and, for the sake of mercy, preferring to suffer pain than to be free from it. Thus, your mercy surpassed the mercy of all the angels. 16 The third leaf is your gentle kindness. The angels are kind and gentle, wishing everyone well, but you, my dearest Mother, had a will like an angel's in your soul and body before your death and did good to everyone. And now you refuse no one who rationally prays for his own best. Thus, your kindness is more excellent than the angels.

17 The fourth leaf is your beauty. Each of the angels beholds the beauty of the others and they admire the beauty of all souls and of all bodies. However, they see that the beauty of your soul is above the rest of creation and that the nobleness of your body excels that of all human beings who have been created. Thus your beauty surpassed all the angels and all creation. 18 The fifth flower was your divine joy, for nothing delighted you but God, just as nothing else delights the angels but God. Each of them knows and knew his own joy within himself. But when they saw your joy in God within yourself, it seemed to each of them in his conscience that their joy blazed up in them like a light in God's love. 19 They perceived your joy to be like a great bonfire, burning with the hottest of fires, with flames so tall it came close to my divinity. Therefore, most sweet Mother, your divine joy burned far above all the choirs of angels.

20 This flower, having these five leaves of nobleness and mercy, kindness, beauty and the greatest joy, was lovely in every way. 21 Whoever wants to taste of its sweetness should come close to its sweetness and receive it into himself. This is also what you did, good Mother. For you were so sweet to my Father that he received your entire self into his spirit, and your sweetness pleased him more than anyone. 22 Through the warmth and power of the sun, the flower also bears a seed and from it grows a fruit. Blessed be that sun, that is, my divine nature, which took a human nature from your virginal womb! Just as a seed makes the same flowers sprout wherever it is sown, so too my limbs were like yours in form and appearance, although I was a man and you a virgin woman.

23 This valley with its flower was lifted up above all the mountains when your body together with your most holy soul was lifted up above all the choirs of angels."

‡ Chapter 52*

Birgitta Is to Take Revelations to the Archbishop and the Pope

DATE: 1340S

The Mother's words of blessing and her prayer to the Son that his words might be spread throughout the world and take root in the hearts of his friends, and about how the same Virgin is wonderfully compared to a flower growing in a garden. And about Christ's words conveyed through the bride to the pope and to other prelates of the church.

1 The Blessed Virgin spoke to the Son, saying: "Blessed are you, my Son and my God, Lord of angels and King of glory! I pray that the words that you have spoken may take root in the hearts of your friends and cling to their minds like the pitch with which Noah's ark was plastered,¹ which neither the storms nor the winds could dissolve. 2 May they spread themselves throughout the world like branches and sweet flowers whose scent is spread far and wide. May they also turn into fruit and grow sweet like the date whose sweetness delights the soul beyond measure."

3 The Son answered: "Blessed are you, my dearest Mother! My angel Gabriel said to you: 'Blessed are you, Mary, among women!'² And I bear you witness that you are blessed and most holy above all the choirs of angels. 4 You are like a garden flower that is surrounded by other fragrant flowers, but surpasses them all in fragrance, beauty, and virtue.

5 These flowers represent all the elect from Adam to the end of the world. They were planted in the garden of the world, bloomed and blossomed in various virtues, but among all those who then were and who afterward were to be, you were the most excellent in the fragrance of a good and humble life,³ in the beauty of a pleasing virginity, in the virtue of abstinence. 6 For I bear you witness that you were greater than a martyr at my passion, greater than a confessor in your abstinence, greater than an angel in mercy and good will. 7 For your sake I will enroot my words like the strongest pitch in the hearts of my friends. They will spread themselves like fragrant flowers and bear fruit like the sweetest and most delicious of date-palms."

8 Then the Lord spoke to the bride: "Tell your friend that he should take care to set forth these words in writing to his own father,⁴ whose heart is according to my heart, and he will convey them to the archbishop and later to

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 482, line 31, through p. 483, line 7, "Jhesus christus, taladhe" . . . "bäckias päim änkte," and it is incorporated into ch. 58.

1. "The pitch with which Noah's ark was plastered"; cf. Genesis 6:14.

2. "Blessed are you, Mary, among women"; cf. Luke 1:28.

3. "The fragrance of a good and humble life"; cf. 2 Corinthians 2:15–16.

4. "Father," i.e., Master Mathias of Linköping; "archbishop," i.e., Hemming Nicholai of Uppsala; "third bishop," i.e., Hemming of Turku. These men took the message to Clement VI in Avignon (see p. 41 above).

another bishop. When these have been thoroughly informed, he should send them on to a third bishop. 9 Tell him on my behalf: 'I am your Creator and the Redeemer of souls. I am God, whom you love and honor above all others. Look and consider how the souls that I redeemed with my blood are like the souls of those who do not know God, how they have been made captive by the devil in so dreadful a manner that he punishes them in every limb of their bodies as though in a firmly tightened winepress. 10 Wherefore, if you have any taste for my wounds in your soul, if my scourging and suffering mean anything to you, then show by your deeds how much you love me!

11 Make the words of my mouth publicly known and bring them personally to the head of the church! I shall give you my spirit so that, wherever there be dissension between two persons, you may be able to unite them in my name and through the power given to you, if they but believe. 12 As further evidence of my words, you shall present to the pontiff the testimonies of those people who taste and delight in my words. 13 For my words are like lard that melts more quickly the warmer one is inside. Where there is no warmth, it is rejected and does not reach the inmost parts.

14 My words are like that, since the more a person eats and chews on them with fervent love for me, the more he is fed with the sweetness of heavenly desire and of inner love, and the more he burns for my love. 15 But it is as though those who do not like my words have lard in their mouths. Once they taste it, they spit it out of their mouths and trample it underfoot. Some people despise my words in this way because they have no taste for the sweetness of spiritual things. 16 The lord of the land,⁵ whom I have chosen as one of my members and made truly mine, will aid you manfully and supply you with the necessary provisions for your journey out of properly acquired means.' "

‡ Chapter 53

The Virgin Is Like the Staff, the Manna, and the Tablets of the Ark of the Old Law; Birgitta Is Given Advice on Disseminating Her Revelations

DATE: 1340S

The words of mutual blessing and praise of the Mother and of the Son, and about how the Virgin is likened to the ark where the staff, the manna and the tablets of the Law were kept. Many wonderful details are contained in this image.

1 Mary spoke to the Son: "Blessed are you, my Son, my God and Lord of angels! You are he whose voice the prophets heard, whose body the apostles saw, he whom the Jews and your enemies perceived. 2 With your divinity and humanity and with the Holy Spirit you are one God. For the prophets heard

5. "Lord of the land," i.e., King Magnus Eriksson.

the Spirit, the apostles saw the glory of your divinity, the Jews crucified your humanity. Therefore may you be blessed without beginning and without end!”

3 The Son answered: “Blessed are you, for you are both Virgin and Mother! You are the ark of the Old Law in which there were these three things: the staff, the manna, and the tablets.¹ 4 Three things were done by the staff. First, it was changed into a serpent² without venom. Second, the sea was divided by it.³ Third, water was brought forth from the rock.⁴ 5 This staff is a symbol of me who lay in your belly and assumed a human nature from you. First, I am as frightening to my enemies as the serpent was to Moses. They flee from me as from the sight of a serpent; they are terrified of me and loathe me like a serpent, although I am without the venom of malice and am full of every mercy. 6 I allow myself to be held by them, if they like. I come back to them, if they ask me. I run to them like a mother to a lost and found son, if they call upon me. I show them mercy and forgive their sins, if they cry out. I do this for them, and yet they loathe me like a serpent.

7 Second, the sea was divided by this staff in the sense that the way to heaven, which had been closed through sin, was opened through my blood and pain. The sea was indeed rent and that which had been impassable was made into a path, when the pain in all my limbs reached my heart and my heart was broken from the violence of the pain. 8 Then, when the people had been led through the sea, Moses did not bring them to the promised land straightaway but to the desert, where they might be tested and instructed. 9 Now, too, once people have accepted the faith and my commandment, they are not brought into heaven straightaway, but it is necessary that men be tested in the desert, that is, in the world, as to how they love God. 10 Moreover, the people provoked God by three things in the desert: first, because they made an idol for themselves and worshipped it;⁵ second, because they longed for the fleshpots they had had in Egypt;⁶ third, by pride, when they wanted to go and fight their enemies without God’s approval.⁷

11 People sin against me even now in the world in the same way. First, they worship an idol, in that they love the world and all that is in it more than me, who am Creator of it all. 12 The world is indeed their god, not I. As I said in my gospel: ‘Where a man’s treasure is, there his heart is.’⁸ Thus, their treasure is the world, since they have their heart there and not in me. 13 Therefore, just as those others perished in the desert with a sword through their bodies, so these, too, will fall with the sword of eternal damnation through their soul and in damnation they will live without end. 14 Second, they sinned by longing for fleshpots. I have given humankind everything needed for an

1. “You are the ark of the Old Law . . . the manna and the tablets”; cf. Hebrews 9:4.

2. “Changed into a serpent”; cf. Exodus 4:2–4; 7:8–12.

3. “The sea was divided by it”; cf. Exodus 14:21.

4. “Water was brought forth from the rock”; cf. Exodus 17:6.

5. “They made an idol for themselves and worshipped it”; cf. Exodus 32:1–6.

6. “They longed for the fleshpots they had had in Egypt”; cf. Exodus 16:3.

7. “They wanted to go and fight their enemies without God’s approval”; cf. Numbers 14: 41–45.

8. “Where a man’s treasure is, there his heart is” (Matthew 6:21).

honorable and moderate life, but they want to possess all things without moderation or discretion. 15 For, if their physical constitution could take it, they would be continuously having sex, drinking without restraint, desiring without measure; and, as long as they could sin, they would never desist from sinning. 16 For that reason, the same thing will happen to them as happened to those others in the desert: they will die a sudden death. For, what is the time of this life when compared to eternity if not a single instant? Therefore, because of the brevity of this life, they will die a quick physical death, but they will live in spiritual pain forever.

17 Third, they sinned in the desert through pride, since they wished to go to battle without God's approval. People wish to go to heaven through their own pride. They trust not in me but in themselves, doing their own will and abandoning mine. 18 Therefore, just like those others were killed by their enemies, so these, too, will be killed in their souls by demons, and their torment will be everlasting. This is how they hate me like a serpent, and worship an idol in my place, and love their own pride instead of my humility. 19 Nevertheless, I am still so merciful that, if they turn to me with a contrite heart, I will turn to them like a devoted father and welcome them.

20 In the third place, the rock gave water by means of this staff. This rock is the hard human heart. When it is pierced by my fear and love, there straight-away flow tears of contrition and penance from it. 21 No one is so unworthy, no one so bad that his face will not be flooded in tears and his every limb stirred up to devotion, if he would but turn to me, if he would reflect in his heart upon my passion, if he would pay heed to my power, if he would ponder how my goodness makes the earth and trees bear fruit. 22 In the ark of Moses, second, lay the manna. So, too, in you, my Mother and Virgin, lay the bread of angels and of holy souls and of the righteous here on earth, whom nothing pleases but my sweetness, for whom all the world is dead, who, if it were my will, would gladly go without physical nourishment. 23 In the ark, thirdly, were the tablets of the Law. So, too, in you lay the Lord of all laws. Therefore, may you be blessed above all creatures in heaven and on earth!"

24 Then he spoke to the bride, saying: "Tell my friends three things. When I dwelled physically in the world, I tempered my words in such a way that they made the good stronger and more fervent. Indeed the wicked became better, as was clearly the case with Mary Magdalene, Matthew, and many others. 25 Again, I tempered my words in such a way that my enemies were not able to lessen their force. For that reason, may they to whom my words are sent work with fervor, so that the good grow more ardent in goodness through my words, the wicked repent from wickedness, and may they prevent my enemies from obstructing my words. 26 I do no greater injury to the devil than to the angels in heaven. For, if I wanted to, I could very well utter my words so that the whole world could hear them. 27 I am capable of opening up hell for all to see its punishments. However, that would not be just, since people would then serve me out of fear, when they should be serving me out of love. For only a person who loves shall enter the kingdom of heaven. 28 Moreover, I would be doing injury to the devil, if I took his lawfully purchased thralls from him

without good works. I would also do injury to the angel in heaven, if the spirit of an unclean person were put on the same level as one who is clean and fervently in love. 29 Accordingly, no one will enter heaven, except for those who have been tried like gold in the fire of purgatory or who have proved themselves over time in good works on earth in such a way that there is no stain in them left to be purged away.

30 If you do not know to whom my words ought to be sent, I will tell you. The one who wants to gain merit through good works in order to come to the kingdom of heaven or who already has merited it by good works in the past is worthy of receiving my words. My words are to be disclosed to such as these and to enter into them. 31 Those who have a taste for my words and humbly await the inscription of their names in the book of life¹⁰ keep my words. Those who have no taste for them consider them first and then reject and vomit them out immediately.”

‡ Chapter 54

An Angel Describes Two Spirits and Teaches Birgitta to Distinguish Good and Evil Thoughts; the Virgin Describes the Cities of Heaven and Hell

DATE: 1340S

An angel's words to the bride about whether the spirit of her thoughts is good or bad, and about how there are two spirits, one uncreated and one created, and about their characteristics.

1 An angel spoke to the bride saying: “There are two spirits, one uncreated, one created. The uncreated has three characteristics. In the first place, he is hot, in the second, sweet, in the third, clean. 2 First, he gives off heat not from created things but from himself, since, together with the Father and the Son, he is Creator of all things and almighty. He gives off heat whenever the whole soul burns for the love of God. 3 Second, he is sweet, whenever nothing pleases the soul or delights it but God and the recollection of his works. 4 Third, he is clean and in him can be found no sin, no deformity, no corruption, or mutability. He does not give off heat like material fire or like the visible sun making things melt. His heat is rather the internal love and desire of the soul that fills her and engrosses her in God. 5 He is sweet to the soul, not in the way that choice wine or sensual pleasure or anything in the world is sweet. Rather, the sweetness of the spirit is incomparable to every temporal sweetness and unimaginable to those who have not tasted it. 6 Third, the Spirit is as clean as the rays of the sun in which no blemish can be found.

7 The second, created spirit likewise has three characteristics. He is burning, bitter, and unclean. 8 First, he burns and consumes like fire, inasmuch

9. “Book of life” (Apocalypse 21:27).

as he enkindles the soul he possesses with the fire of lust and depraved desire, so that the soul can neither think nor desire anything other than satisfying this desire, to such an extent that her temporal life is sometimes lost along with all honor and consolation as a result. 9 Second, he is as bitter as bile, inasmuch as he so inflames the soul with his lust that future joys seem like nothing to her and eternal goods but foolishness. Everything that has to do with God and which the soul is bound to do for him turns bitter and is as abominable to her as vomit and bile. 10 Third, he is unclean, since he renders the soul so vile and prone to sin that she does not blush for any sin, and she would not desist from any sin, if she did not have fear being shamed before other people more than before God.

11 That is why this spirit burns like fire, because he burns for iniquity and enkindles others along with itself. That is why this spirit is bitter indeed, because every good is bitter to him and he wants to make the good bitter for others as well as for himself. That is why, again, he is unclean, because he delights in filth and seeks to make others like himself.

12 Now you might ask me and say: 'Are you not also a created spirit such as that one? Why are you not like that?' 13 I answer you: Of course I am created, by that same God who also created the other spirit, since there is only one God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and these are not three gods, but one God. Both of us were well made and created for the good, since God has created nothing but good. 14 But I am like a star, since I have stood fast in the goodness and love of God in which I was created. He is like coal, since he has left the love of God. 15 So then, just as a star has brightness and splendor and coal has blackness, a good angel, who is like a star, has his splendor, that is, the Holy Spirit. 16 For everything he has, he has from God, from the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. He grows hot in the love of God, he shines in his splendor and clings to him and conforms himself to his will without ever wanting anything but what God wants. This is why he burns, this is why he is clean. 17 The devil is like ugly coal and is uglier than any other creature, because, just as he was more beautiful than the others, he had to be made uglier than others, because he opposed his Creator. 18 Just as God's angel shines with God's light and burns incessantly in his love, so the devil is ever burning in the anguish of his malice. His malice is insatiable, just as the grace and goodness of the Holy Spirit is ineffable. For there is no one in the world so rooted in the devil that the good Spirit does not at times visit and move his heart. Likewise, there is no one so good that the devil does not try to touch him with temptation. 19 Many good and just people are tempted by the devil with God's permission. This is not because of wickedness on their part but for their greater glory. 20 The Son of God, one in divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, was tempted¹ in the human nature he had taken. How much more are his elect put to the test for their greater reward! 21 Again, many good people sometimes

1. "The Son of God . . . was tempted"; cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

fall into sin, and their conscience is darkened through the devil's falsehood, but they get back up hardier and stand stronger than before through the power of the Holy Spirit. 22 However, there is nobody who does not realize this in his conscience, whether the suggestion of the devil leads to the deformity of sin or to the good, if he would only think about and examine it carefully.

23 And so, bride of my Lord, you do not have to be in doubt as to whether the spirit of your thoughts is good or bad. For your conscience tells you which things to ignore and which to choose. 24 What should a person who is full of the devil do, since the good spirit cannot enter him inasmuch as he is full of evil? He should do three things. He should make a plain and complete confession of sins, which, even if he cannot be heartily sorry due to his hardened heart, still it benefits him inasmuch as, due to his confession, the devil gives him some respite and gets out of the good spirit's way. 25 Second, let him be humble and resolve to atone for the sins he has committed and do what good he can, and then the devil will begin to leave. 26 Third, in order to get the good spirit back again, he should beseech God in humble prayer and, with true love, be sorry for the sins he has committed, inasmuch as love for God kills the devil. 27 The devil is so envious and malicious that he would rather die a hundred times than see someone do God the least little good out of love."

28 Then the Blessed Virgin spoke to the bride, saying: "New bride of my Son, get dressed, put on your brooch, that is, my Son's passion!" 29 She answered her: "My Lady, put it on me yourself!" And she said: "Of course I will. I also want you to know how my Son was disposed and why the fathers longed for him so much. 30 He stood, as it were, in between two cities. A voice from the first city cried out to him, saying: 'You, there, standing in between the cities, you are a wise man, for you know how to beware of imminent dangers. 31 You are also strong enough to endure overhanging evils. You are courageous as well, since you fear nothing. We have been longing for and awaiting you. 32 Open our gate! Enemies are blocking it so that it cannot be opened!' 33 A voice from the second city was heard saying: 'Kind, strong man, hear our complaint and lament! We sit in darkness and suffer unbearable hunger and thirst. 34 Look upon our misery and our miserable poverty! We are beaten down like grass cut by a scythe. We have withered away² from all goodness and all our strength has left us. 35 Come to us and save us, for you alone are the one we awaited, we hoped for you as our liberator! Come and put an end to our poverty, turn our wailing into joy!³ Be you our help and our salvation! Come, most worthy and blessed body, which proceeded from the pure Virgin!

36 My Son heard these two voices from the two cities, that is, from heaven and hell. Therefore, in his mercy he opened the gates of hell through his bitter passion and the spilling of his blood and rescued his friends there. He opened

2. "We are beaten down like grass. . . We have withered away"; cf. Psalm 101(102):5.

3. "Turn our wailing into joy" (Esther 13:17).

heaven, too, and gave joy to the angels by leading into it the friends he had rescued from hell.⁴ 37 My daughter, think on these things and keep them ever before you!"

‡ Chapter 55*

Parable about Judges, Defenders, and Laborers in a Town Founded by a Lord

DATE: 1340S

About how Christ is likened to a powerful lord who builds a great city and a fine palace, which stand for the world and the church, and about how the judges and defenders and laborers in the church of God have been turned into a useless bow.¹

1 "I am like a powerful lord who built a city and named it after himself. In the city he then constructed a palace in which there were various small rooms for storing necessities. After having constructed the palace and arranging all his affairs, he divided his people into three groups, saying: 2 'I am heading off to remote regions. Stand firm and labor bravely for my glory! I have made arrangements for your food and needs. You have judges to judge you. You have defenders to defend you from your enemies. 3 I have also arranged for laborers to feed you. They shall pay me the tenth part² of their labor, reserving it for my use and in honor of me.'

4 However, after some time had gone by, the name of the city was forgotten. Then the judges said: 'Our lord has traveled to remote regions. Let us judge rightly and do justice so that, when our lord returns, we will not stand accused but gain praise and blessing.' 5 Then the defenders said: 'Our lord trusts us and has delivered the custody of his house to us. Let us therefore abstain from superfluous food and drink, so as not to be unfit for battle! Let us abstain from immoderate sleep, so as not to be trapped unawares! Let us also be well armed and constantly watchful, so as not to be caught off guard by an enemy attack! 6 The honor of our lord and the safety of his people depend very much on us.' 7 Then the laborers said: 'Our lord's glory is great and his reward is glorious. Let us therefore labor mightily and let us give to him not only a tithe of our labor but let us also offer to him whatever gets left over from our living expenses! Our wages will be all the more glorious the greater the love he sees in us.'

4. "The friends he had rescued from hell"; cf. Psalm 29 (30): 4; Daniel 3:88

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 446, line 25, through p. 449, line 25, "Ek ihesus" . . . "säkkir är vptakin," and it is incorporated into ch. 56. See further Bergh, "Ett problem," in which the author discusses several of the variants of the Birgittine-Norwegian text, including problems surrounding the interpretation of the forgotten city.

1. "Turned into a useless bow" (Psalm 77(78):57).

2. "Tenth part," i.e., tithes or tributes in kind, usually a tenth part of the annual produce of agriculture.

8 After this, again some time went by, and the lord of the city and his palace fell into oblivion. Then the judges said to themselves: 'Our lord's delay is long. We do not know whether he will return or not. Let us therefore judge as we like and do what we please!' 9 Next the defenders said: 'We are fools, because we labor and know not for what reward. Let us ally ourselves with our enemies instead and sleep and drink with them! For it is not our concern whose enemies they have been.' 10 After that, the laborers said: 'Why do we save our gold for another? We do not know who will get it after us. It is better, then, that we use and dispose of it as we like. 11 Let us give tithes to the judges, and, having placated them, we can do what we want.'

12 Truly, I am like that powerful lord. I built myself a city, that is, the world, and placed a palace there, that is, the church. The name given to the world was divine wisdom, for the world had this name from the beginning, as it was made in divine wisdom. 13 This name was venerated by everyone, and God was praised for his wisdom and wonderfully proclaimed by his creatures. Now the city's name has been dishonored and changed, and human wisdom is the new name that is used.

14 The judges, who earlier rendered just sentences in the fear of the Lord, have now turned to pride and are the downfall of simple folk. They long to be eloquent in order to win human praise; they speak pleasantly in order to obtain favors. 15 They put up lightly with any words in order to be called good and mild; they allow themselves to be bribed to hand down unjust sentences. They are wise with respect to their own worldly good and their own desires, but they are dumb with regard to my praise. 16 They trample simple folk underfoot and make them keep quiet. They extend their greed to everyone and make right into wrong. This is the wisdom that is loved nowadays, while mine has fallen into oblivion.

17 The defenders of the church, who are the noblemen and knights, see my enemies, the assailers of my church, and they dissimulate. They hear their reproaches and do not care. 18 They know and understand the deeds of those who assail my commandments and nonetheless bear them patiently. They watch them daily perpetrating every kind of mortal sin with impunity and feel no compunction but sleep side by side with them and have dealings with them, binding themselves by oath to their company. 19 The laborers, who represent the entire citizenry, reject my commandments and withhold my gifts and my tithes. They bribe their judges and show them reverence so as to gain their goodwill and favor.

20 I dare say indeed that the sword of fear for me and for my church on earth has been cast aside, and that a sack of money has been accepted in exchange for it."

‡ Chapter 56*

Application of the Previous Parable to Priests, Knights, and Commoners, and Warning Them of Punishments to Follow

DATE: 1340S

Words in which God explains the immediately preceding chapter, and about the sentence handed down against such people, and about how God for a while puts up with the wicked for the sake of the good.

1 “I told you before that the sword of the church had been cast aside and a sack of money was accepted in exchange. This sack is open at one end. At the other end it is so deep that whatever goes in never reaches the bottom and so the sack never gets filled. 2 This sack represents greed. This has exceeded all bounds and measure and has grown so strong that the Lord is scorned and nothing is desired but money and selfishness. 3 However, I am like a lord who is both father and judge. When his son comes to court, the bystanders say: ‘Lord, proceed quickly and render your verdict!’ The Lord answers them: ‘Wait a little until tomorrow, because maybe my son will reform himself in the meantime.’

4 When the following day comes, the people say to him: ‘Proceed and render your verdict, sir! How long are you going to drag out the sentencing and not sentence the guilty?’ 5 The lord answers: ‘Wait a little longer, to see if my son reforms himself! And then, if he does not repent, I will do what is just.’ 6 In this way I patiently bear with people until the last moment, since I am both father and judge. However, because my sentence is incommutable, despite its being a long time in the making, I will either punish sinners who do not reform themselves or show them mercy if they convert.

7 I told you before that I divided the people into three groups: judges, defenders and laborers. What do the judges symbolize if not the priests who have turned divine wisdom into corrupt and empty wisdom? 8 Like learned clerks who take a great many words and recombine them into a few—and those few words say the same thing as the many did—so, too, present-day clerics have taken my ten commandments¹ and recombined them into a single phrase. 9 And what is this single phrase? ‘Put out your hand and give us some money!’² This is their wisdom: to speak handsomely and to act badly, to pretend

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 449, line 25, through p. 454, line 13, “hwad vāntir þu” . . . “nu troo oordomin,” and it is incorporated into ch. 55.

1. “Ten commandments”; cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5.

2. “Put out your hand and give us some money!” renders Lat. “Porrigge manum et da pecuniam!”; cf. Birgittine-Norwegian “rāk handhena. Ok tak pāningin. þz oordhit ālskas firi mit budhord. huilkin man sām gōr mandraap. hoordom ellir adra ogudhlika syndir þz bātras alt mz þāssō ena ordheno. Rāk handhena ok tak pāningin.” [Put out your hand and take the money! This message is loved above my commandment. A man who

they are mine and to act iniquitously against me. 10 In exchange for bribes, they cheerfully put up with sinners in their sins and cause the downfall of simple folk through their example. In addition, they hate those people who follow my ways.

11 Second, the defenders of the church, the knights, are disloyal. They have broken their promise and their oath and willingly tolerate those who sin against the faith and law of my Holy Church.

12 Third, the laborers, or the citizenry, are like untamed bulls, because they do three things. They stamp the ground with their feet; second, they fill themselves to satiety; third, they satisfy their own wishes according to their own desire. 13 The citizenry passionately craves temporal goods now. It sates itself in immoderate gluttony and worldly vanity. It satisfies its carnal delight in an irrational manner. 14 But although my enemies are many, I have still many friends in their midst, albeit hidden. It was said to Elijah who thought none of my friends was left but himself: "I have seven thousand men that have not bowed their knees to Baal."³ In the same way, although the enemies are many, I still have friends hidden among them who weep daily because my enemies have prevailed and because my name is despised.

15 Like a good and charitable king who knows the evil deeds of the city but patiently endures its inhabitants and sends letters to his friends making them aware of their danger, so too, for the sake of their prayers, I send my words to my friends. These are not so obscure as those in the Apocalypse that I revealed to John⁴ beneath a veil of obscurity in order that they might in their time be explained by my spirit whenever it should please me. 16 Nor are they so hidden that they cannot be uttered—as when Paul saw some of my mysteries that he was not allowed to talk about⁵—but they are so patent that everyone, both small and great, can understand them, so easy that anyone who wants to can grasp them. 17 Therefore, let my friends see to it that my words reach my enemies, so that perhaps they may be converted, and let their danger and judgment be made known to them, in order that they may feel sorrow for their deeds!

18 Otherwise the city will be judged and, as with a wall that is torn down without leaving stone upon stone⁶ or even two stones joined to each other in the foundation, so shall it be for the city, that is, for the world. 19 The judges will surely burn in the hottest of fires. There is no fire hotter than one fed with fat. 20 These judges were fat, since they had more occasions of satisfying their

commits manslaughter, fornication, or other ungodly sins, that is all remedied by this one word: put out your hand and take the money!]

3. "It was said to Elijah . . . bowed their knees to Baal"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 19:10, 18.

4. "Apocalypse that I revealed to John": this revelation dates from around the time when Mathias of Linköping was writing his commentary on the book of the Apocalypse (see further General Introduction p. 12 above).

5. "As when Paul saw some of my mysteries that he was not allowed to talk about"; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:

4.

6. "Without leaving stone upon stone" (Luke 21:6).

selfishness than others, surpassed others in honor and worldly plenty, and abounded more than others in malice and iniquity. Therefore, they will fry in the hottest pan.

21 The defenders will be hanged on the highest gibbet. A gibbet consists of two vertical pieces of wood with a third placed on top as a crossbeam. 22 This gibbet with two wooden posts represents their cruel punishment, which is, so to speak, made from two pieces of wood. The first piece means that they did not hope for my eternal reward nor worked to earn it with their deeds. 23 The second piece of wood means that they did not trust in my power and goodness, thinking either I was not able to do all things or did not want to provide for them sufficiently. 24 The wooden crossbeam means their warped conscience—warped, because they well understood what they were doing but did evil and felt no shame about going against their conscience. 25 The rope of the gibbet means everlasting fire that can neither be put out by water nor cut by scissors nor broken and terminated by old age. 26 On this gibbet of cruel punishment and inextinguishable fire, they will hang in shame like traitors. 27 They will feel distress, because they were disloyal. They will hear taunts, because my words were displeasing to them. Cries of woe will be in their throats, because their own praise and glory delighted them.

28 Living crows, that is, devils who never get their fill, will wound them on this gibbet, but, although they get wounded, they will never be consumed: they will live in torment without end and their tormentors will live without end. 29 They will have unending grief and unmitigated wretchedness. It would have been better for them had they never been born, had their life not been prolonged!

30 The laborers' sentence will be the same as for bulls. Bulls have a very thick hide and flesh. Therefore, their sentence is sharp steel. This sharp steel means the death of hell that will torment those who have scorned me and loved their selfish will rather than my commandment.

31 The letter, that is, my words, has thus been written. May my friends⁷ work to make it reach my enemies wisely and discreetly, in the hope that they listen and repent. 32 If, having heard my words, some should say: "Let us wait a little while, the time is not yet coming, it is not yet his time," then, by my divine nature, which cast out Adam from paradise⁸ and sent the ten plagues to Pharaoh,⁹ I swear that I will come to them sooner than they think. 33 By my human nature, which I assumed without sin from the Virgin unto the salvation of men and in which I suffered affliction in my heart, experiencing pain in my body and death for the life of men, and in which I rose again and ascended and am seated at the right hand of the Father, true God and man in one person, I swear that I will carry out my words. 34 By my Spirit, which descended on

7. "My friends": Birgitta frequently uses this phrase to denote devout loyal Christians who are designated to do God's work of salvation in the world (see further Introduction to Book II).

8. "Which cast out Adam from paradise"; cf. Genesis 3:23.

9. "Sent the ten plagues to Pharaoh"; cf. Exodus 7–11.

the apostles on the day of Pentecost¹⁰ and so inflamed them that they spoke in the tongues of all peoples, I swear that, unless they mend their ways and return to me like weak servants, I will take vengeance on them in my wrath.

35 Then they will grieve in body and soul. They will grieve that they came alive into the world and lived in the world. They will grieve that the pleasure they had was small and now is meaningless, but that their torture will be forever. 36 Then they will realize what they now refuse to believe, namely, that my words were words of love. Then they will understand that I admonished them like a father, but that they did not want to listen to me. 37 Truly, if they do not believe in the words of goodwill, they will have to believe in the deeds to come.”

‡ Chapter 57*

Christ Complains about Evil Christians, Whom He Will Abandon in Favor of Devout Heathens

DATE: 1340S

The Lord’s words to the bride about how he is loathsome and despicable nourishment in the souls of Christians while the world is delightful and beloved to them, and about the terrible sentence passed on such people.

1 The Son spoke to the bride: “Christians are now treating me the way the Jews treated me. The Jews threw me out of the temple¹ and were entirely intent on murdering me, but, because my hour had not yet come, I escaped from their hands. 2 Christians treat me like that now. They throw me out of their temple, I mean, out of their soul, which should be my temple, and would soon kill me if they could. 3 In their mouths I am like rotten and stinking meat, and they think I am telling lies, and they do not care about me at all. They turn their backs on me,² but I will turn my face from them, since there is nothing but greed in their mouths and only bestial lust in their flesh. Only conceit delights their eyes, only worldly pleasure delights their eyes. 4 My passion and my love are loathsome to them and my life burdensome.

5 Hence I will act as the animal that had many dens: when hunters chased it into one den, it escaped into another. I will do this, because I am being chased by Christians with their bad works and cast out of the den of their hearts. 6 I will therefore go into pagans in whose mouths I am now bitter and insipid, but I will become sweeter than honey in their mouths.³ However, I am

10. “Spirit . . . descended on the apostles on the day of Pentecost”; cf. Acts 2.

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 454, line 14, through p. 455, line 23, “Swa göra nu” . . . “þe huxa minzt.”

1. “The Jews threw me out of the temple . . . I escaped from their hands”; cf. Luke 4:28–30.

2. “They turn their backs on me”; cf. Jeremiah 2:27; 32:33.

3. “I will become sweeter than honey in their mouths”; cf. Psalm 118(119):103.

still so merciful that I will joyfully welcome anyone who asks for my pardon and says: 'Lord, I know that I have sinned gravely and I freely want to improve my life through your grace. Have mercy on me for the sake of your bitter passion!' 7 However, to those who persist in evil I shall come like a giant that has three characteristics: he is fearsome, strong, and harsh. 8 I will come striking such fear into Christians that they will not dare to lift the least little finger against me. I will also come in such strength that they will be like a midge before me. Third, I will come in such harshness that they will feel grief in the present and will grieve without end."

‡ Chapter 58*

The Virgin Is Sweet; Christ's Passion Is Bitter, Especially for Those Who Follow Their Own Will

DATE: 1340S

The Mother's words to the bride and the sweet words of the Mother and the Son to each other, and about how Christ is bitter, bitterer, most bitter for the wicked, but sweet, sweeter, most sweet for the good.

1 The Mother said to the bride: "Consider, young bride, the passion of my Son. His passion surpassed in bitterness the passion of all the saints. Just as a mother would be most bitterly distraught if she were to see her son being cut in pieces alive, so, too, I was distraught at the passion of my Son when I saw the harshness of it all." 2 Then she said to her Son: "Blessed are you, my Son, for you are holy, as it is sung: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Sabaoth.'¹ Blessed are you, for you are sweet, sweeter, and most sweet! 3 You were holy before the incarnation, holy in the womb, holy after the incarnation. You were sweet before the creation of the world, sweeter than the angels, most sweet to me in your incarnation."

4 The Son answered: "Blessed are you, Mother, above all the angels! Just as I was most sweet for you, as you were saying now, so am I bitter, bitterer, most bitter for the wicked. 5 I am bitter for those who say I created many things without a cause, who blaspheme and say that I created people for death and not for life. What a miserable and senseless idea! 6 Did I, who am most just and virtuous, create the angels without a reason? Would I have endowed human nature with such goodness had I created it for damnation? By no means! 7 I made all things well² and out of my love gave every good to mankind. However, mankind turns all good things into evil for itself. It is not that I made

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text, Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 480, line 8, through p. 482, line 31, "MAria taladhe til" . . . "skapare ok atirlösare," and it is incorporated into ch. 52.

1. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Sabaoth" (Isaiah 6:3).

2. "I made all things well"; cf. Genesis 1:31; Mark 7:37.

anything evil, but they do, by directing their will elsewhere than they otherwise should according to divine law. That is what is evil.

8 I am bitterer for those who say I gave them a free will to sin but not to do good, who say I am unjust because I condemn some people while justifying others, who blame me for their own wickedness because I take my grace away from them. 9 I am most bitter for those who say my law and commandments are too difficult and that no one is able to carry them out, who say my passion is worthless for them, which is why they count it for nothing. 10 Therefore, I swear on my life, as once I swore by the prophets, that I shall plead my case before the angels and all my saints. Those for whom I am bitter shall prove to themselves that I created all things rationally and well and for the usefulness and instruction of mankind, and that not the least little worm exists without a cause. 11 Those who find me bitterer shall prove to themselves that I wisely gave the human person a free will with respect to the good. They will also discover that I am just, giving the eternal kingdom to good people but punishment to the wicked. 12 It would not be fitting for the devil, whom I created good but who fell through his own malice, to keep company with the good. The wicked will also find out that it is not my fault that they are wicked but their own. 13 Indeed, if it were possible, I would gladly take on the same punishment for each and every person that once I accepted on the cross for all persons, so that they might return to their promised inheritance.

14 But humankind is forever opposing their will to mine. I gave them liberty in order to serve me, if they would, and so that they might gain an eternal reward. But if they did not want to, they were to share in the punishment of the devil due to whose malice and its consequences hell was justly created. 15 Because I am full of charity, I did not want humanity to serve me out of fear or be compelled to do so like an irrational animal but out of love for God, because no one who serves me unwillingly or out of the fear of punishment can see my face.

16 Those for whom I am most bitter will realize in their consciences that my law was gentle and my yoke easy. They will be inconsolably sad that they spurned my law and instead loved the world, whose yoke is heavier and far more difficult than mine."

17 Then his Mother answered: "Blessed are you, my Son, my God and my Lord! Since you were my sweet delight, I pray that others may be made partakers in its sweetness." 18 The Son answered: "Blessed are you, my dearest Mother! Your words are sweet and full of love. Therefore, it will go well for anyone who receives your sweetness into his mouth and keeps it perfectly. 19 But anyone who receives it and rejects it will be punished all the more bitterly." Then the Virgin responded: "Blessed be you, my Son, for all your love!"

‡ Chapter 59

Parable about a Savaged Sheep and a Negligent Shepherd

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words, in the bride's presence, containing similes in which Christ is compared to a peasant, good priests to a good shepherd, bad priests to a bad shepherd, and good Christians to a wife. These similes are helpful in many ways.

1 "I am he who has never uttered a falsehood. The world takes me for a peasant whose very name seems contemptible. My words are held to be foolish and my house is considered a lowly shanty. 2 Now, this peasant had a wife who wanted nothing but what he wanted, who possessed everything in common with her husband and accepted him as her master, obeying him in everything as her master. 3 This peasant also had a lot of sheep, and he hired a shepherd to watch over them for five gold pieces and for the provision of his daily needs. 4 This was a good shepherd who made a right use of the gold and the food as his needs required. 5 As time went by, this shepherd was succeeded by another shepherd, an inferior one,¹ who used the gold to buy himself a wife and gave her his food, constantly taking his rest with her and not caring about the wretched sheep that were being chased and scattered about by ferocious beasts.

6 When the peasant saw his sheep scattered, he cried out saying: 'My shepherd is unfaithful to me. My sheep have been scattered and some of them have been devoured fleece and all by ferocious beasts, while others have died but their bodies have been left uneaten.' 7 Then his wife said to her husband the peasant: 'My lord, it is certain that we will not get back the bodies that have been devoured. But, let us carry home and make use of those bodies that remain intact, although there is no breath in them. We will not be able to bear it, if we are to be left with nothing.' 8 Her husband answered her: 'What shall we do? Since the animals had venom in their teeth, the flesh of the sheep has become infected with deadly venom, the hide is ruined, the wool is all matted.' 9 His wife answered: 'If everything has been wasted and everything gone, what, then, shall we live on?' 10 Her husband answered: 'I see there are some sheep still alive in three places. Some of them resemble the dead sheep and dare not breathe out of fright. Others are lying deep in mud and cannot manage to raise themselves up. Still others are in hiding places and dare not come out. 11 Come, wife, let us lift up the sheep that are trying to stand up but cannot do so without help, and let us make use of them!'

12 Behold, I the Lord am that peasant. Men think of me as of an ass raised in its stall according to its nature and habits. My name is the mind of Holy

1. "This was a good shepherd . . . another shepherd, an inferior one"; cf. John 10:11-12.

Church. 13 She is thought of as contemptible, inasmuch as the sacraments of the church, baptism, anointing, unction, penance, and matrimony, are, as it were, received with derision and administered to others with greed. 14 My words are held to be foolish, inasmuch as the words of my mouth, which I spoke in parables, have been converted from spiritual understanding to entertainment for the senses. 15 My house is looked on as contemptible, inasmuch as the things of earth are loved rather than the things of heaven.

16 The first shepherd I had symbolizes my friends, that is, the priests I used to have in the holy church, for by 'one' I mean many. I entrusted them with my sheep, that is, with my most venerable body for them to consecrate, and with the souls of my chosen ones for them to govern and defend. 17 I also gave them five good things, more precious than gold, namely, an understanding insight about all abstruse matters in order for them to distinguish between good and evil,² between truth and falsehood. 18 Second, I gave them insight and wisdom in spiritual matters; this has now been forgotten and human wisdom is loved instead. 19 Third, I gave them chastity; fourth, temperance and abstinence in all things for self-control over their body; fifth, steadfastness in good habits, words, and deeds.

20 After this first shepherd, I mean, after these friends of mine who used to be in my church in former times, other wicked shepherds now entered. They bought a wife for themselves in exchange for the gold, that is, in exchange for chastity and for those five good things they took to themselves the body of a woman, that is, incontinence. My spirit has therefore departed from them. 21 When they are entirely intent on sinning and on satisfying their wife, that is, their lust, according to their good pleasure, my spirit is absent from them, since they do not care about the loss of the sheep, so long as they can follow their self-will. 22 The sheep that were completely devoured represent those whose souls are in hell and whose bodies are buried in tombs and who await the resurrection of eternal damnation.

23 The sheep whose bodies remain but whose spirit has been taken away stand for those people who neither love nor fear me nor feel any devotion or care toward me. 24 My spirit is far from them, since the venomous teeth of the beasts have envenomed their flesh; in other words, their thoughts and spirit, as symbolized by the sheep's innards and flesh, are in every way as disgusting to me and as repulsive a repast as is poisoned meat. 25 Their hide, that is, their body, is barren of any goodness and charity and unfit for service in my kingdom. Instead, it will be delivered to the everlasting fire of hell after the judgment. 26 Their wool, that is, their deeds, are so totally useless that there is nothing in them that might earn them my love and grace.

27 What, then, o wife of mine, that is, o good Christians, whom the wife symbolizes, what can we do? I see there are sheep still alive in three places. Some of them resemble the dead sheep and dare not breathe out of fright. 28

2. "To distinguish between good and evil"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 3:9.

These are those gentiles who would be glad to have the true faith, if only they knew it. However, they dare not breathe, that is, they do not dare to lose the faith they have and they do not dare to accept the true faith.

29 The second group of sheep is those standing in hiding places, who dare not come out. These are the Jews who, so to speak, are behind a veil. They would gladly come out, if they knew for certain that I had been born. 30 They hide themselves beneath a veil,³ inasmuch as their hope for salvation is in the figures and signs that used to symbolize me in the Law but which have been truly fulfilled in me. Because of their empty hope they are afraid to come out to the right faith. 31 In the third place, the sheep standing in the mud are Christians in the state of mortal sin. Because they fear punishment they would gladly get back up, but they are unable to do so due to their grave sins and because they lack charity.

32 Therefore, o my wife, o my good Christians, help me! Just as woman and man are considered to be one flesh⁴ and one limb, so the Christian is my limb⁵ and I am his, since I am in him and he is in me.⁶ 33 So then, my wife, my good Christians, run with me to the sheep that still have some breath left and let us lift them up and revive them! Have compassion on me, because I bought my sheep very dearly! Let us carry them together! You hold the back while I hold the head! 34 I rejoice to carry them in my arms. Once I carried them all on my back when my back was all wounded and fastened to the cross. 35 O my friends, I love these sheep so tenderly that, if it were possible to suffer such a death for any one sheep individually as once I suffered on the cross for all of them, I would rather redeem them in this way than lose them.

36 Hence, with all my heart, I cry out to my friends not to be sparing of toil or goods for my sake. If I was not spared reproaches while I was in the world, then they should not spare themselves in speaking the truth about me. 37 I did not blush to die a contemptible death for them, but stood there just as I had been born, naked before the eyes of my enemies. I was struck in the teeth with their fists; I was dragged by the hair with their fingers; I was scourged by their scourges; I was fastened to the wood with their tools, and hung on the cross together with thieves and robbers.

38 Wherefore, my friends, do not spare your toil for me who endured these things out of love for you! Toil manfully and bring help to all my needy sheep! 39 Upon my human nature, which is in the Father as the Father is in me, and upon my divine nature, which is in my Spirit as the Spirit is in it and as the same Spirit is in me and I in him, these three being one God in three Persons, I swear that I shall go out to meet those toiling to carry my sheep with me and help them as they go along. And I shall give them a precious reward: myself, unto their everlasting joy.”

3. “Behind a veil”; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:13–15.

4. “Woman and man are considered to be one flesh” (Matthew 19:6).

5. “So the Christian is my limb”; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:15; 12:27; and Ephesians 5:30.

6. “I am in him and he is in me”; cf. John 6:56; 15:5; 17:21–23; and 1 John 3:24.

‡ Chapter 60

Master Mathias Is to Promote the Message, Which Is Shown to Be Authentic because Birgitta Has Driven Out Demons

DATE: 1340S

The Son's words to the bride about three kinds of Christians, symbolized by the Jews living in Egypt, and about how these revelations were given to the bride in order to be transmitted and published and preached to ignorant persons by the friends of God.

1 The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "I am the God of Israel, the one who spoke with Moses. When he was sent to my people, Moses asked for a sign,¹ saying, 'The people will not believe me otherwise.' 2 If the people to whom Moses was sent belonged to the Lord, why did he lack confidence? You should know that there were three kinds of people among the Jews. 3 Some of them believed in God and Moses. Others believed in God but lacked confidence in Moses, wondering if, perhaps, he was presuming to say and do these things out of his own invention and presumption. The third kind were those who neither believed in God nor in Moses.

4 Likewise, there are now three kinds of people among Christians as symbolized by the Hebrews. There are some who really believe in God and in my words. There are others who believe in God but lack confidence in my words, because they do not know how to distinguish between a good and a bad spirit. The third are those who neither believe in me nor in you to whom I have spoken my words. 5 But, as I said, although some of the Hebrews lacked confidence in Moses, nevertheless they all crossed the Red Sea with him into the desert where the ones who were lacking in confidence worshipped idols and provoked God to anger,² which is why they also met their end in a miserable death, although only those who had bad faith did so.³

6 For this reason, since the human spirit is slow to believe,⁴ my friend must transmit my words to those who have faith in him. Afterward they will spread them to others who do not know how to distinguish a good from a bad spirit.⁵ 7 If the hearers ask them for a sign, let them show those people a staff, just as Moses did, I mean, have them explain my words to them. The staff of Moses was straight and, due to its transformation into a snake,⁶ frightening as well. In the same way my words are straight and no falsehood is found in them. 8 They are frightening, for they tell a true judgment. Let them explain and declare that, by the words and sound of a single mouth, the devil withdrew

1. "Moses asked for a sign"; cf. Exodus 4:1.

2. "Idols . . . anger"; cf. Exodus 32.

3. "As I said . . . bad faith did so"; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-5.

4. "Slow to believe"; cf. Luke 24:25.

5. "My friend," i.e., Master Mathias.

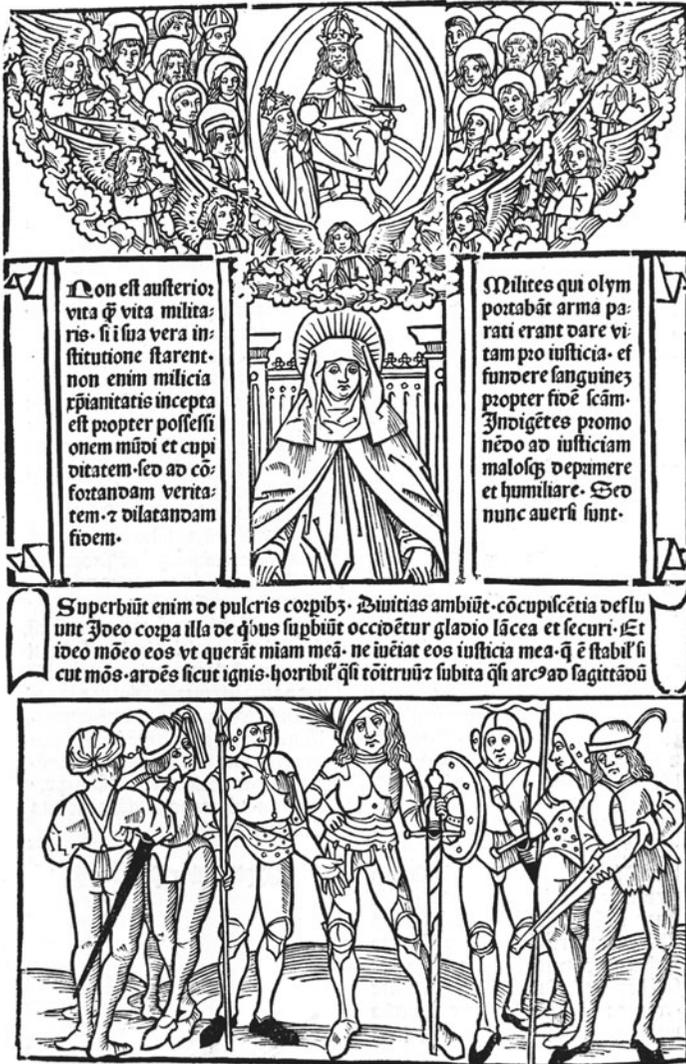
6. "Staff of Moses . . . transformation into a snake"; cf. Exodus 4:3-4.

from God's creature—that same devil who could move mountains,⁷ were he not restrained by my power. 9 What kind of power belonged to him with God's permission when he was made to flee at the sound of a single word?

Accordingly, in the same way as those Hebrews who neither believed in God nor in Moses yet left Egypt for the promised land, being, as it were, forced along together with the others, so too, many Christians will now go out unwillingly together with my chosen ones, not trusting in my power to save them. 10 They do not believe in my words by any means; they have only a false hope in my power. Nevertheless, my words shall be fulfilled without their willing it, and they shall, as it were, be forced along to perfection until they get to where it suits me."

7. "Move mountains"; cf. Matthew 17:19.

Book II



Non est austerior
vita q̄ vita milita-
ris. si i sua vera in-
stitutione starent
non enim militia
xp̄ianitatis incepta
est propter possessi-
onem m̄di et cupi-
ditatem. sed ad cō-
fortandam verita-
tem. ⁊ dilatandam
fidem.

Milites qui olym-
portabāt arma pa-
rati erant dare vi-
tam pro iusticia. et
fundere sanguines
propter fidē scām.
Indigētes promo-
nēdo ad iusticiam
malosq; depamere.
Et humiliare. Sed
nunc averti sunt.

Superbiūt enim de pulcris corpibz. Divitias ambiūt. cōcupiscētia deflu-
unt. Ideo copia illa de q̄bus superbiūt occidētur gladio lācea et securi. Et
ideo mōdo eos vt querāt miam meā. ne iuciat eos iusticia mea. q̄ ē stabilis
cut mōs. ardeōs sicut ignis. horribil' q̄si rōitruūt. subita q̄si arc' ad sagittādū

FIGURE 5. Frontispiece to Book II in the first printed edition at the press of Bartholomaeus Ghotan, Lübeck, 1492.

Introduction

Book II reflects Birgitta's interest in Swedish public affairs during the 1340s, and in particular the role and function of knights and those who perform the public ministry of Christian service, especially those who preach the Christian faith. The Book has a greater internal consistency in subject matter than Book I, and there are several sequences of visions in which a sustained train of thought on a single topic is suggested and individual members of the knightly class are addressed, although their identities are always carefully suppressed.

A few words are in order about knighthood and the spiritual and secular nobility in medieval Sweden.¹ The spiritual nobility enjoyed considerable independence from the state, and, along with the churches and monasteries, had immunity from tax and other duties on its lands. However, the state began to make financial claims on newly acquired land from the thirteenth century onward, which was the cause of much tension. The secular nobility had its origins in the thirteenth century when the military system was restructured in favor of armored horsemen instead of mobilized, seaborne farmers and district-chiefs. The secular nobility arose partly from the old hereditary aristocracy, the original military overclass, and partly from the duty of royal service that began to appear in the thirteenth century. The earliest knights and squires ("milites et armigeri," both terms that were borrowed from feudal contexts abroad), whose positions were entirely based on royal service, were mostly from the class of farmers in Sweden. Initially, the rank of the knight was lower than that of the old noble classes, and the title of knight was not given to the most eminent nobles. But toward the end of the thirteenth century, the act of dubbing young men knights widened

into other social groups. The knight was tied to the king by an oath of allegiance (“homagium”) and his title was an honorary one. The squires, on the other hand, remained outside this newly formed noble class until well into the fourteenth century.

The change in the composition of the nobility from the end of the thirteenth century depended on the fact that royal service had now become the only condition for the privileges granted by the king and crown. Royal service implied mainly service at arms, that is, qualified military service on horseback, and it was controlled by means of annual inspections of weapons. As payment for service, exemption was granted from taxes and dues to the king and crown. Members of the old families were attracted by this means of revenue and, for the new class of nobility they were a quick way of accumulating wealth. Thus the two originally quite distinct and heterogeneous social groups, the old nobility and those who gave royal service, had fused together in Birgitta’s time.

Sweden, with its relatively strong, elective monarchy and large proportion of free landowning farmers, never became a strongly feudal society like other parts of continental Europe, and the nobility remained a small but elite class within a small population. Generally, because of the laws protecting inheritance rights, the knight had a higher social standing than elsewhere in Europe. Yet not all men within the high nobility became knights, nor was the rank of knight hereditary. Further, the knight required a particular military prowess before he could be dubbed. Dubbing ceremonies by the king normally took place in connection with a national event such as a royal wedding or coronation, and the knight, wearing his sword, was touched on the shoulder by the king.

The knight also had cultural, ethical, and religious responsibilities. The knightly ideal reached Sweden in a developed form and with a marked religious dimension. The courtly, chivalric ideal that is traditionally associated with knighthood is probably best reflected in the rhymed chronicle known as the *Erikskrönikan*, which covers the period up to 1320. In the context of a historical and political narrative, it provides an idealized version of the courtly festivities, entertainment, and tournaments, and includes an account of a dubbing ritual.² Other romances and literary works depicting the chivalric ideal were also important for the spread of the culture from the court and into society, as were the examples given by visits to the royal court by foreign knights, such as King Magnus’s German relatives and Queen Blanka’s Flemish brothers, who later became crusaders.³ Influence from the chivalric orders, with whom the Swedes of the day clearly had contact, further enriched the spirituality of the chivalric life.

Birgitta’s background, from some of the oldest, wealthiest, and most influential aristocratic families in Sweden, naturally colored her views and involvement in the role of the knighthood. Her husband, Ulf Gudmarsson, was dubbed sometime between 1320 and 1324, and her two sons were also knighted: Karl Ulfsson was knighted at some point before 1348 and indeed he is given the customary title “dominus” in Book II 13.40, and Birger Ulfsson was made a knight of the Holy Sepulcher during the pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1372.⁴ Chivalric aspirations are glimpsed in a private letter probably

written by Birgitta to Birger, warning him away from the dangers of excessive living and advising him always to think of the love of God: “wherever you are, ask for the house of the poor and help them according to your means . . . when you sit at table, have godly and courteous conversation, and beware of Sweden’s sinful ways. Many seldom leave the table before they have become like grunting pigs in a common house.”⁵ In this letter she also reminds him of his duty to protect the church, implying that she may see him as the “miles christianus,” or the “miles Christi” or “miles cruciferi,” that is, the knight who has a religious calling as part of his knightly duty.

Through her pilgrimages and continental contacts she was also acquainted with the variations and different conditions of European knighthood. The *Revelationes* do not distinguish between different types of nobles and knights and they mainly use the generic term *miles* (plural: *milites*). In Book II 13, she gives a description of a dubbing ritual that is unique in its extent of detail, and may describe Karl’s knighting. She places the ceremony in the church and in the context of a mass, which reflects common practice in Europe at this time; but it has been suggested that the fact that she outlines the ritual in such a prescriptive fashion may mean that it was new in Sweden and that she was advocating the introduction of the European custom there.⁶ The dubbings known of in Sweden from this period took place out of doors, and did not have strongly religious overtones. We cannot be certain, however, when assessing the *Revelationes*, to what extent she was reflecting current practice in Sweden, or how much the transmitted text has been colored and emended by continental practices on knighthood, or indeed to what extent she is depicting an idealized, or plainly metaphorical version of the class of knights. Although she reiterates the traditional spiritual and temporal objectives of knighthood, she always emphasizes—not surprisingly, as the “bride” of Christ—its spiritual role, and her overall view of the knight is first and foremost as a loyal servant of Christ whose spiritual devotion is channeled through his secular ruler, for whom he should be prepared to lay down his life and protect the church and the faith. This, indeed, might be what she implies by another ill-defined term she frequently uses, the “friends of God,” “*amici Dei*,” or simply “friends,” “*amici*” (e.g., Book II 15.29; 24.6; Book III 5.1, 7; 13.13, 27, etc.), to denote in very general, probably metaphorical terms the faithful who take up the reforming battle against those without faith or with a lapsed faith.⁷ However, she is under no illusion as to how hard the occupation of the true knight is. He is instrumental in bringing about Birgitta’s desired reform of society, including areas abroad, and he must make many personal sacrifices to obtain this goal. The qualities the knight should pursue, as they are reflected in Book II, are similar to those necessary for those joining religious orders: humility, obedience, patience, and faith. And Birgitta uses all the standard symbols of the knight’s attire—the helmet, sword, banner, horse, and so forth—as metaphors for the spiritual life. In her view the knight’s duties were ideally and essentially peaceful, but he could become involved in military actions on behalf of his ruler, if such actions were justified morally.⁸ A case of this theory put into practice is seen in the politics of the crusade to the eastern Baltic in 1348.

King Magnus Eriksson had inherited a long-term aggressive policy toward the eastern Baltic region at the beginning of his reign, and in spite of the division of the Karelian provinces in 1323 between Sweden and Novgorod, border skirmishes continued unabated, and the region around the source of the Neva was regarded with equal interest by all of her Baltic neighbors, both commercially and territorially.⁹ The events of the crusade are briefly as follows. Magnus left Sweden in mid-June 1348 and sent envoys to Novgorod to discuss the relative virtues of Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy. The Novgorodians refused to enter into doctrinal arguments, referring him to the patriarch of Constantinople, and said they would only discuss Magnus's grievances regarding border territories. He then invaded the areas north of the city of Novgorod where he carried out mass conversions before taking the town of Orekhov on 6 August 1348. Magnus now effectively held the whole Neva basin and thus had control over the strip of land between Lake Ladoga and the Swedish frontier in the west. He left Orekhov in the hands of a garrison of four hundred and returned to Sweden, but within six months the Novgorodians had recaptured it, in February 1349. On Magnus's second expedition, in 1350—in which Birgitta's brother Israel Birgersson took part (see Book VI 95)—the Novgorodians were well defended and they surrounded Magnus on all sides, so that he was compelled to retreat by sea. Most of his fleet was lost at the mouth of the river Narva in a heavy storm; he himself had meanwhile fled to Estonia and Livonia, where he spent the winter of 1350–51, apparently engaged in commercial ventures there. A cease-fire was agreed to and a treaty signed at Tartu in 1351, and Magnus returned to Sweden in April or possibly June of the same year.

Altogether, across the entire Birgittine corpus there are about twenty visions on the justification for the crusades, and some of them, in Books IV and VI in particular, give specific advice on the practical details. Those in Book II, however, are couched in the very broadest terms. Repeatedly, Birgitta underlines the importance of good intention (II 12.49), of the falling away of the faithful (II 24.5), of the fact that a good pagan is better than a lapsed Christian, of the ingratitude of the faithful, of the noble origins of knighthood (II 8), of knighthood tainted by corruption and worldliness. Her overall claim is that God's message is forgotten, and must be preached anew (e.g., II 6.21).

Birgitta, then, demonstrates her political interests in many of the revelations of Book II, but perhaps nowhere more manifestly than in the last revelation, II 30. The revelation was received in Skara cathedral on the feast of the Purification of the Virgin, 2 February, probably in 1349.¹⁰ The subject of the vision is a man named Brynolf (born c. 1240; d. 1317) who was educated in Paris and became bishop of Skara diocese in 1278. He belonged to the powerful Algotsson dynasty in Västergötland and played a part in national politics that brought him into conflict with King Magnus Birgersson (d. 1290), who is probably the other allegedly holy man referred to in II 30.19, and whose cause was promoted by the Franciscans. Brynolf contributed to the development of clerical education and the introduction of continental liturgical practices. He also was a church legislator, who established the obligation of annual confes-

sion and communion, the announcement of marriage bans, and the church's right to tithes. He was the author of four offices, including two to Swedish saints Helena of Skövde, a widow from Västergötland, and the missionary martyr Eskil, and one in honor of the Crown of Thorns to mark the receipt by Skara cathedral of a thorn relic in 1304. His cult grew in the fourteenth century, possibly in consequence of Birgitta's praise of him in this revelation, although it was not authorized until the 1490s. The acts of Brynolf's canonization process describe the conflict and reconciliation with Magnus Birgersson that is hinted at in this vision.¹¹

Besides the chivalric themes, Book II also reiterates some of the autobiographical subjects that were raised in Book I, with continued confirmation of the authenticity of the visions against the doubts of skeptics (e.g., II 10 and 28). In II 1, her "master" is quoted in passing as having given her good instruction, thus confirming Master Mathias's supporting role of her. In II 16 Christ says she should love all, including those who appear to hate and slander her. As with Book I he advises her to beware of all pride, arrogance, and fleshly desires, to avoid vanity, worldly excesses and pleasures, and hoarding (II 23.29). And he tells her that she will be granted moderation in sleep and food for the well-being of her body (II 14.43). In II 18 she asks why she, "a simple widow," has been chosen and she is compared to the phoenix that rose from the ashes when it had shed the skin of concupiscence. A very autobiographical passage occurs in II 16.10–17, outlining the precepts she is to follow. The words of II 17.48 allude to the writing down of the visions and the fact that they should be also preached; here her role in mediating God's message is underlined, but with a conflation of the public preaching methods by the faithful messengers of the Word of God and her own personal calling as the channel for the message. Further examples of her calling are "by you I mean all the chosen ones in the world" (II 25.46), "in whom I mean all the faithful" (II 26.37), and "by whom I mean all my friends" (II 27.40). In II 6.26, indeed, Christ turns from a third-person address into direct speech to the heathens, thus illustrating the point that the divine message is aimed at the recipient and that Birgitta is simply the medium. In II 20.32 she is told to stand firm and not be troubled by the world. Other personal themes that emerge in this Book concern wisdom (II 22.29; 25.32–33), and the renunciation of worldly wisdom and prestige (II 22.36). At the end of II 23 she is exhorted not to put anyone before herself, or to judge anyone, while II 29.26 emphasizes moderation in her life. On a theological note, at the opening of II 17 Birgitta is asked with uncharacteristic directness whether she believes in the doctrine of transubstantiation.

On the interlocutors, there are several "I am" formulations opening the vision or visions, as in Book I, that enter straight into the monologue or dialogue (e.g., II 9–16). Christ addresses his "bride" in seven revelations, and the Virgin addresses her in four. In two chapters Mary and Christ are heard in conversation, and Christ speaks to his "friends" in one, God to the host in one, John the Baptist in one, and the devil in conversation with Christ and the Virgin in one.

The editing in Book II by Birgitta's confessors appears to be less extensive

than in Book I and the revelations are generally longer and filled with mixed and strange images. For example, the images in II 15 are a dense wood, a receptacle, an ax to a tree, an animal at a spear, and birds moving through a bush. There are revelations with shifts in the interpretation, such as II 2.6 where "the grove" is used first as a negative place and then as the church. Or in II 7.10–11, where it is unclear what Birgitta means by allowing the laity to marry with the passage of time, and especially after she has mentioned the fact that Peter, a priest, was married. Some texts in this Book have undue repetition (in II 2.6, silk is mentioned as being "expensive" four times in the space of the chapter), excessive enumeration (for example II 16.10–14 and II 17 *passim*), or colloquial features "and so forth" (II 14.59); see too II 1.7 ("or something like that"); and II 1.26 ("and things of that kind"). An underlying dialogue structure can sometimes be discerned, for example, II 1.17 ("Do you understand what all this means? I shall tell you"); or II 17.8 ("Do you wonder why I said . . . ?")

In terms of the range of images, many, as we noted above, are raw and singular. Examples include bad thoughts like mustard (II 27.7); marrow as a resting place (II 3); a potter who crushes an object (II 4); a sapphire in mud (II 30); people with "scabby hands" (II 30); and a resting place made out of feathers (II 2). There are further striking images such as Christ as "king of the crown" (II 7), and the sands of the sea or pebbles on the shore as an image of those who fall into hell (II 6). In II 14.24 scales signify the conscience, II 14.68 describes the holes at the bottom of a precipice, and II 19.84 mentions a cloud rising up to heaven preceded by a light breeze. Souls descend into a bottomless pit like snow falling (II 20), and in the same chapter there is an obstinate "ass that lowers its head to the ground and stands on all four feet joined together." The wheel image may be related to the circle image in II 22.6, 26, 29; which in turn may reflect a medieval interest in the attraction of circular motion. Crusaders are like bees at "the borders of Christian lands" (II 19); II 17.6–7 contains a curious comparison of a tittle, an atom, and a spark. In at least two other instances, the meaning of the imagery is vague at best. For example, the text of II 22 shifts from a high mountain, to gold in a promised container and the imagery symbolism in this vision is far from clear. And in another example, Birgitta gives a fanciful account of the benefits of bread to the body in II 25.8.

There are several references to mothers and children in Book II. The text of II 15 recasts the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11–32) with the father replaced by a mother. In II 21 Birgitta describes a mother giving birth who "shakes in every limb of her body after delivery," scarcely able to "breathe due to the pain"; and further, she speaks of a mother's love for her child (II 22). There are also several bird images, in addition to Birgitta being compared to a phoenix in II 8, as was noted above. The birds range from the seagull (in the Swedish text) of II 1; to God being compared to a hen in II 5; to a hen sheltering her chicks in II 9; to the description in II 29 of a magpie and her chicks; and finally, a bird daubed with pitch in II 6.19.

The frontispiece of the Ghotan edition cites the following quotations in summarizing the theme of Book II (see p. 166). They occur in three frames,

one each on the left and right of the central woodcut image of Birgitta, and the third above a woodcut of a group of eight armed knights:

“There is no life more austere than the life of a knight, if he truly follows his calling. While a monk is obliged to wear a cowl, a knight is obliged to wear something heavier, namely, a coat of mail. Christian knighthood was not established out of greed for worldly possessions but in order to defend the truth and spread the true faith. For this reason, the knightly rank and the monastic rank should be thought to correspond to the superlative or comparative rank.” (cf. Book III 27.14, 16)

“The knights who used to bear my arms were ready to lay down their lives for justice and shed their blood for the sake of the holy faith, bringing justice to the needy, putting down and humbling the doers of evil. But hear how they have now been corrupted! Now they would rather die in battle for the sake of pride, greed, and envy at the promptings of the devil instead of living after my commandments and obtaining eternal joy.” (cf. Book II 7.41–42)

“But the people in the kingdom of Sweden are sinning now, just as the devil sinned before them, especially that class of men known as noblemen or knights. They are proud of the beautiful bodies I have given them. They strive for wealth, which I have not given them. They go so far astray in their abominable concupiscence that, if it were possible for them, they would rather kill me than go without their pleasures, or would put up with my terrible sentence that hangs over them for their sins. Because I am just and merciful, I warn the so-called knights that they should seek my mercy, lest my justice find them. My justice is as immovable as a mountain, it burns like fire, it is as frightening as thunder, and as sudden as a bow fitted with an arrow.” (cf. Book I Prologue 35, and Book II 12.31)

NOTES

1. See further on knighthood in Sweden, KL “frälse,” “riddare”; Rosén, “Kring Alsnö stadga”; Löfqvist, *Om riddarväsen och frälse*; and Wasko, *Frömmigkeit und Ritteridee*.
2. Jansson, *Erikskrönikan*. The chronicle was written by an unknown author not long after 1320.
3. For Swedish contacts with the orders of spiritual knighthood, see Maillefer, *Chevaliers et princes allemands*. The Teutonic order had a house in Sweden, Årsta at Södertörn, south of Stockholm, 1262–1467, but it is unclear how influential it was; see KL “Tyska Orden.” The Johannites had a house in Eskilstuna; see KL “Johannitor-den.”
4. Wernstedt, *Äldre svenska frälseläkter* 1:1, pp. 92–95.
5. See Palm, “Ett svenskt Birgittabrev.”
6. See Löfqvist, *Om riddarväsen och frälse*, pp. 107–9. It is worth noting that a

similar ritual is used for the initiation of nuns at Vadstena. See Härdelin, "Guds brud och egendom," p. 207.

7. See further McGuire, "Friendship in Birgitta."

8. See Book IV 74, which is another important vision on knighthood; see also Book III 27.14-17.

9. On the events of the crusades, which are based on Russian as well as Scandinavian sources, see Fennell, *The Emergence of Moscow*; Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, pp. 182-91; Lind, "The Russian Sources."

10. See Ex. 108; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 531 and 628.

11. See further Tysk, *Brynolf Algotsson*; KL "Brynolf"; *Vita Brynolfi*, SRS III:2, pp. 138-85.

‡ Chapter I

A Blind Man Walks toward a Crossroads; on Why People's Paths in Life Are Necessarily Different

DATE: 1340S

The Son's instruction to the bride about the devil; the Son's answer to the bride about why he does not remove evildoers before they fall into sin; and about how the kingdom of heaven is given to baptized persons who die before reaching the age of discretion.

1 The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "When the devil tempts you, tell him these three things: 'The words of God cannot be anything but true.' Second: 'Nothing is impossible for God, because he can do all things.' Third: 'You, devil, could not give me so great a fervor of love as that which God gives me.'" 2 Again the Lord spoke to the bride, saying: "I look at people in three ways: first, their outer body and what condition it is in; second, their inner conscience, what it tends toward and in what way; third, their heart and what it desires. 3 Like a bird¹ that sees a fish in the sea and assesses the depth of the water and also takes note of storm winds, I, too, know and assess the ways of each person and take note of what is due to each, for I am keener of sight and can assess the human situation better than a person knows his own self. 4 Therefore, because I see and know all things, you might ask me why I do not take evildoers away before they fall into the depths of sin. I myself asked the question and I myself will answer it for you: 5 I am the Creator of all things, and all things are foreknown to me. I know and see all that has been and all that will be. But, although I know and can do all things, still, for reasons of justice, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the inclination of the soul. Each human being continues in existence according to the natural constitution of the body such as it is and was from all eternity in my foreknowledge. 6 The fact that one person has a longer life and another a shorter has to do with natural strength or weakness and is related to a person's physical constitution. 7 It is not due to my foreknowledge that one person loses his sight or another becomes lame or something like that, since my foreknowledge of all things is such that no one is the worse for it, nor is it harmful to anyone.

8 Moreover, these things do not occur because of the course and position of the heavenly elements,² but due to some hidden principle of justice in the constitution and conservation of nature. For sin and natural disorder bring about the deformity of the body in many ways. 9 This does not happen because I will it directly, but because I permit it to happen for the sake of justice. Even though I can do all things, still I do not obstruct justice. Accordingly, the length

1. "Bird" renders Lat. "avis"; cf. Sw. "fiskemakan" [the seagull].

2. "Heavenly elements" renders Lat. "elementorum," which here refers to the celestial spheres and/or the signs of the zodiac; it is glossed in Sw. "elementa älla stjärno gangh" [the movement of the elements or stars].

or brevity of a person's life is related to the weakness or strength of his physical constitution such as it was in my foreknowledge that no one can contravene.

10 You can understand this by way of a simile. Imagine that there were two roads with one road leading up to them. There were a great many graves in both roads, crossing and overlapping one another. The end of one of the two roads dropped directly downward; the end of the other tended upward. 11 At the crossroads was written: 'Whoever travels this road begins it in physical pleasure and delight and ends it in great wretchedness and shame. Whoever takes the other road begins it in moderate and endurable exertion but reaches the end in great joy and consolation.' 12 A person walking along on the single road was completely blind. However, when he reached the crossroads, his eyes were opened, and he saw what was written about how the two roads ended.

13 While he was studying the sign and thinking it over to himself, there suddenly appeared next to him two men who were entrusted with guarding the two roads. 14 As they observed the wayfarer at the crossroads, they said to each other: 'Let us carefully observe which road he chooses to take and then he will belong to that one of us whose road he selects.' 15 The wayfarer, however, was considering to himself the ends and advantages of each road. He made the prudent decision of selecting the road whose beginning involved some pain but had joy at the end, rather than the road that began in joy but ended in pain. 16 He decided that it was more sensible and endurable to get tired from a little exertion at the start but rest in safety at the end.

17 Do you understand what all this means? I shall tell you. These two roads are the good and the evil within human reach. It lies within a person's power and free will to choose whatever he or she likes upon reaching the age of discretion.³ 18 A single road leads up to the two roads of the choice between good and evil; in other words, the time of childhood leads up to the age of discretion. The man walking on this first road is like a blind man because he is, as it were, blind from his childhood up until he reaches the age of discretion, not knowing how to distinguish between good and evil, between sin and virtue, between what is commanded and what is forbidden. 19 The man walking on this first road, that is, in the age of boyhood, is like a blind man. However, when he reaches the crossroads, that is, the age of discretion, the eyes of his understanding are opened. He then knows how to decide whether it is better to experience a little pain but eternal joy or a little joy and eternal pain. 20 Whichever road he chooses, he will not lack those who carefully count his steps. 21 There are many graves on these roads, one after the other, one over against the other, because, both in youth and in old age, one person may die earlier, another later, one in youth, another in old age. The end of this life is fittingly symbolized by graves: it will come to everyone, one in this way, another in that, according to each one's natural constitution and exactly as I have foreknown it.

3. "Age of discretion": the age at which, according to canon law and pastoral practice, a person is deemed to become morally responsible, normally the age of seven.

22 If I took anyone away against the body's natural constitution, the devil would have grounds of accusation against me. Accordingly, in order that the devil might not find anything in me that goes against justice in the least, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the constitution of the soul. 23 But consider my goodness and mercy! For, as the teacher⁴ says, I give virtue to those who do not have any virtue. By reason of my great love I give the kingdom of heaven to all of the baptized who die before reaching the age of discretion. As it is written⁵: It has pleased my Father to give the kingdom of heaven to such as these. 24 By reason of my tender love, I even show mercy to the infants of pagans. If any of them die before reaching the age of discretion, given that they cannot come to know me face to face, they go instead to a place that it is not permitted for you to know but where they will live without suffering. 25 Those who have advanced from the one road reach those two roads, that is, the age of discretion between good and evil. It is then in their power to choose what pleases them most. Their reward will follow the inclination of their will, since by that time they know how to read the sign written at the crossroads telling them that it is better to experience a little pain at the start and joy ready and waiting for them than experience joy at the start and pain at the end. 26 Sometimes it does happen that people are taken away earlier than their natural physical constitution would normally allow, for example, through homicide, drunkenness, and things of that kind. This is because the devil's wickedness is such that the sinner in this case would receive an extremely long-lasting punishment if he were to continue in the world for any great length of time. 27 Therefore, some people are taken away earlier than their natural physical condition would allow due to the demands of justice and because of their sins. Their removal has been foreknown to me from all eternity, and it is impossible for anyone to contravene my foreknowledge. 28 Sometimes good people are also taken away earlier than their natural physical constitution would allow. Because of the great love I have toward them, and because of their burning love and their efforts to discipline the body for my sake, justice sometimes requires that they be taken away, as foreknown to me from all eternity. 29 Thus, I no more interfere with the natural constitution of the body than I do with the constitution of the soul."

‡ Chapter 2

A Judgment Scene on a Sinful Priest Who Touched the Holy Sacrament

DATE: 1340S

The Son's indictment of a certain soul who was to be condemned in the presence of the bride, and Christ's answer to the devil about why

4. "Teacher" renders "magister," probably Peter of Lombardy; see *Sententiae* lib. 2 dist. 27: "De virtute quid sit," on justification through prevenient grace (thus Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna*, p. 221).

5. "As it is written"; cf. Matthew 19:14.

he permitted this soul and permits other evildoers to touch and take or receive his own true body.

1 God¹ appeared angry and said: "This work of my hands, whom I destined for great glory, holds me in much contempt. This soul, to whom I offered all my loving care, did three things to me: 2 He averted his eyes from me and turned them toward the enemy. He fixed his will on the world. He put his confidence in himself, because he was free to sin against me. 3 For this reason, because he did not bother to have any regard for me, I brought my sudden justice upon him. Because he had fixed his will against me and put false confidence in himself, I took away from him the object of his desire." 4 Then a devil cried out, saying: "Judge, this soul is mine." The Judge answered: "What grounds do you bring against him?" He answered: "My accusation is the statement in your own indictment that he despised you, his Creator, and because of that his soul has become my handmaid. 5 Besides, since he was suddenly taken away, how could he suddenly begin to please you? For, when he was of sound body and living in the world, he did not serve you with a sincere heart, since he loved created things more fervently, nor did he bear illness patiently or reflect on your works as he ought to have. 6 In the end he was not burning with the fire of charity. He is mine because you have taken him away suddenly." 7 The Judge answered: "A sudden end does not condemn a soul, unless there is inconsistency in her actions. A person's will is not condemned forever without careful deliberation."

8 Then the Mother of God came and said: "My Son, if a lazy servant has a friend who is on intimate terms with his master, should not his intimate friend come to his aid? Should he not be saved, if he asks for it, for the sake of the other?" 9 The Judge answered: "Every act of justice should be accompanied by mercy and wisdom—mercy with respect to remitting severity, wisdom to ensure that equity is maintained. But if the transgression is of such a kind as not to deserve remission, the sentence can still be mitigated for the sake of friendship without infringing justice. 10 Then his Mother said: "My blessed Son, this soul had me constantly in mind and showed me reverence and was often moved to celebrate the great solemnity for my sake,² even though he was cold toward you. So, have mercy on him!" 11 The Son answered: "Blessed Mother, you know and see all things in me. Even though this soul kept you in mind, he did so more for the sake of his temporary than his spiritual welfare. He did not treat my most pure body as he should have. 12 His foul mouth kept him from enjoying my charity.³ Worldly love and disso-

1. "God," i.e., Christ.

2. "The great solemnity for my sake" renders Lat. "pro me solemnitate summam"; cf. Sw. "sina högh-tidh for mina skuld" [his solemnity for my sake]; this probably refers to the celebration of mass at one of the major feasts in honor of the Virgin, but it might be a way of saying that the priest celebrated votive masses in honor of the Virgin. Note that Sw. reflects the π/Gh reading "solemnitatem suam"; it could then refer to some private solemnity, such as the anniversary of his consecration as priest, or simply his daily office.

3. "Enjoying my charity": we are translating according to certain manuscript variants, "caritatis delectationem," and not the variant selected by the editor "dileccionem" [the love of my charity].

lution hid my suffering from him. His taking my pardon too much for granted and not thinking about his end accelerated his death.

13 Although he received me⁴ continuously, it did not improve him much, because he did not prepare himself properly. A person who wishes to receive his noble Lord and guest should not only get the guest room ready but also all the utensils. 14 This man did not do so, since, although he cleaned the house, he did not sweep it reverently with care. He did not strew the floor with the flowers of his virtues or fill the utensils of his limbs with abstinence. 15 Therefore, you see well enough that what must be done to him is what he deserves. Although I may be invulnerable and beyond comprehension and am everywhere by reason of my divinity, my delight is in the pure, even if I enter the good and the damned alike. 16 The good receive my body, which was crucified and ascended into heaven, which was prefigured by the manna and by the widow's flour.⁵ The wicked do so likewise, but, whereas for the good it leads to greater strength and consolation, for the wicked it leads to an even more just condemnation, inasmuch as they, in their unworthiness, are not afraid to approach so worthy a sacrament."

17 The devil answered: "If he approached you unworthily and his sentence was made stricter because of this, why did you permit him to approach you and touch you despite his unworthiness?" 18 The Judge answered: "You are not asking this out of love, since you have none, but my power compels you to ask it for the sake of this bride of mine who is listening. 19 In the same way in which both the good and bad handled me in my human nature in order to prove the reality of my human nature as well as my patient humility, so too good and wicked alike eat me at the altar—the good unto their greater perfection, the bad in order that they may not believe themselves to be already damned and so that, having received my body, they might be converted, provided they decide to reform their intention. 20 What greater love can I show them than that I, the most pure, will enter even the impurest of vessels (although like the material sun I cannot be defiled by anything)? 21 You and your comrades despise this love, for you have hardened yourselves against love."

22 Then the Mother spoke again: "My good Son, whenever he approached you, he was still reverent toward you, though not as he should have been. He also repents of having offended you, though not perfectly. My Son, for my sake, consider this to his advantage." 23 The Son answered: "As the prophet said,⁶ I am the true sun, although I am far better than the material sun. The material sun does not penetrate mountains or minds, but I can do both. 24 A mountain can stand in the way of the material sun with the result that the sunlight does not reach the land nearby, but what can stand in my way except the sinfulness that prevents this soul from being affected by my love? 25 Even if a part of the mountain were removed, the neighboring land would still not receive the warmth of the sun. And if I were to enter into one part of a pure mind, what

4. "He received me," i.e., partook of the holy sacrament.

5. "Prefigured" (Exodus 16:15 "prefigured . . . manna . . . flour"; 3 Kings [1 Kings] 17).

6. "As the prophet said"; cf. Malachi 4:2.

consolation would it be to me if I could smell a stench from another part? 26 Therefore, one should get rid of everything that is dirty, and then sweet enjoyment will follow upon beautiful cleanliness.” 27 His Mother answered: “May your will be done with all mercy!”

EXPLANATION

28 This was a priest who had often received warnings regarding his incontinent behavior and who did not want to listen to reason. One day when he went out to the meadow to groom his horse, there came thunder and lightning that struck and killed him. His whole body was left unscathed except for his private parts, which could be seen to be completely burned. 29 Then the Spirit of God said: “Daughter, those who get themselves entangled in such wretched pleasures deserve to suffer in their souls what this man suffered in his body.”

‡ Chapter 3

A Pilgrim (Christ) Visits Five Houses

DATE: 1340S

Words of amazement from the Mother of God to the bride, and about five houses in the world whose inhabitants represent five states of people, namely unfaithful Christians, obstinate Jews and pagans separately, Jews and Pagans together, and the friends of God. This chapter contains many useful remarks.

1 Mary said: “It is a terrible thing that the Lord of all things and the King of glory is despised. He was like a pilgrim on earth, wandering from place to place, knocking on many doors, like a wayfarer seeking welcome. 2 The world was like an estate that had five houses. When my Son came dressed as a pilgrim¹ to the first house, he knocked on the door and said: 3 ‘Friend, open up and let me enter to rest and stay with you, so that the wild animals do not harm me, so that storm-showers and rain may not fall upon me! 4 Give me some of your clothes to warm me from the cold, to cover me in my nakedness! Give me some of your food to refresh me in my hunger and something to drink to revive me. You will receive a reward from your God!’ 5 The person inside answered: ‘You are far too impatient, so you are unable to live with us peaceably. You are far too tall. For that reason we are unable to clothe you. 6 You are far too greedy and gluttonous, so we are unable to satisfy you, for there is no end to your greedy appetite.’ 7 Christ the pilgrim responded from outside: ‘Friend, let me in cheerfully and voluntarily. I do not need much room. 8 Give

1. The main features of a pilgrim’s garb were a staff and a scrip (not mentioned here) and simple clothing; possibly he was barefoot and without underwear, which might explain the reference to his nakedness here. See further KL “pilgrim.”

me some of your clothes, since there are no clothes in your house so small that they will not be able to offer me at least some warmth! Give me some of your food, since even a tiny morsel can satisfy me and a mere drop of water will refresh and strengthen me.’ 9 The person inside replied: ‘We know you well enough. You are humble in speech but importunate in your requests. You seem easily contented but are in fact insatiable when it comes to having your fill. You are far too cold and hard to clothe. Go away, I will not take you in!’

10 Then he came to the second house and said: ‘Friend, open up and look at me! I will give you what you need. I will defend you from your enemies.’ 11 The person inside answered: ‘My eyes are weak. It would hurt them to look at you. I have plenty of everything and I have no need of anything of yours. I am strong and powerful. Who can harm me?’

12 Coming, then, to the third house, he said: ‘Friend, lend me your ears and hear me! Stretch forth your hands and take hold of me! Open your mouth and taste me!’ 13 The inhabitant of the house answered: ‘Shout louder so I can hear you better! If you are nice, I will draw you to myself. If you are pleasant, I will you let in.’

14 Then he went to the fourth house whose door was about half-open. He said: ‘Friend, if you were to consider that your time has been uselessly spent, you would take me in. 15 If you were to understand and to listen to what I have done for you, you would have compassion on me. If you paid heed to how much you have offended me, you would sigh and beg for forgiveness.’ 16 The man answered: ‘We are nearly dead from waiting and longing for you. Have compassion on our wretchedness and we will be most ready to give ourselves to you. 17 Behold our misery and look on the anguish of our body, and we will be ready for your every wish.’

18 Then he came to the fifth house, which was completely open. He said: ‘Friend, I would gladly enter here, but know that I seek a softer resting-place than that provided by a feather-bed, a greater warmth than can be had from wool, a fresher food than fresh animal meat can offer.’ 19 Those who were inside answered: ‘We have hammers lying here at our feet. We will gladly use them to shatter our feet and legs, and we will give you the marrow flowing from them to be your resting-place. 20 We will gladly open up our inmost parts and entrails for you. Come right in! 21 There is nothing softer than our marrow for you to rest upon, and nothing better than our inmost parts to warm you. 22 Our heart is fresher than the fresh meat of animals.² We shall be happy to cut it up for your food. Just come in! For you are sweet to taste and wonderful to enjoy!’

23 The inhabitants of these five houses represent five different states of people in the world. The first are the unfaithful Christians who call my Son’s sentences unjust, his promises false, and his commandments unbearable. 24

2. “Is fresher than the fresh meat of animals” renders “recencius est inter animalia”; cf. Sw. “är färskare än diwra köt älla ville bradh” [is fresher than animal meat or game]. Cf. also 3,58 where “any meats” (Lat. “omni carne”) is translated in Sw. as “nakot köt älla villebradh” [any meat or game].

These are the ones who in their thoughts and in their minds and in their blasphemy say to my Son's preachers: 'Almighty he may well be, but he is far away and cannot be reached. 25 He is high and wide and cannot be clothed. He is insatiable and cannot be fed. He is most impatient and there is no getting along with him.' 26 They say he is far away because they are weak in good deeds and charity and do not try to rise up to his goodness. 27 They say he is wide, because their own greediness knows no limit: they are always pretending they lack or need something and are always imagining problems before they come. 28 They also charge him with being insatiable, because heaven and earth are not enough for him, but he demands even greater gifts from mankind. They think it foolish to give up everything for the sake of their soul in accordance with the precept, and harmful to give the body less. 29 They say he is impatient, because he hates vice and sends them things against their will. They think nothing is fine and useful except that which the pleasure of the body suggests to them. 30 Of course, my Son is indeed almighty in heaven and on earth, the Creator of all things and created by none, existing prior to everything, after whom no one is to come. 31 He is indeed farthest away and widest and highest, within and without and above all things. 32 Yet although he is so powerful, still in his love he wants to be clothed with human help³—he who has no need of clothing, who clothes all things and is himself clothed eternally and unchangeably in perpetual honor and glory. 33 He, who is the bread of angels and of men, who feeds all things and himself needs nothing, wants to be fed with human love. 34 He who is the restorer and author of peace asks for peace from men. 35 Therefore, whoever wants to welcome him in a cheerful mind can satisfy him with even a morsel of bread, so long as his intention is good. He can clothe him with a single thread, so long as his love is burning. A single drop can still his thirst, provided a person has the right dispositions. So long as a person's devotion is fervent and steadfast, he is capable of welcoming my Son into his heart and speaking with him. 36 God is spirit and, for that reason, he has willed to transform creatures of flesh into spiritual beings and ephemeral beings into eternal ones. 37 He thinks that whatever happens to the members of his body⁴ also happens to himself. He takes into account not only a person's work or abilities, but also the fervor of his will and the intention with which a work is carried out. 38 In truth, the more my Son cries out to these people through hidden inspirations, and the more he admonishes them through his preachers, the more they harden their will against him. They do not listen or open the door of their will to him or let him in by means of charitable acts. 39 Therefore, when their time comes, the falsehood they rely on will be annihilated, truth will be exalted, and the glory of God made manifest.

3. "With human help" renders Lat. "misterio hominis"; cf. Sw. "mz mansins thiänist" [with man's service]. The Latin word "misterium" is here to be taken as synonymous with "ministerium," "officium," i.e., "office," "liturgical service" (cf. Undhagen and Bergh, *Book II*, p. 126).

4. "Members of his body," i.e., the mystical body of Christ, in other words, the church; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:15.

40 The second ones are obstinate Jews. These people seem to themselves to be reasonable in every way and they regard wisdom as being legal justice. They assert their own deeds and hold them to be more honorable than the works of others. 41 If they hear of the things my Son has done, they hold them in contempt. If they hear his words and commandments, they react with scorn. Worse still, they would regard themselves as sinful and unclean if they were but to hear and reflect on anything having to do with my Son and as even more wretched and miserable if they were to imitate his works. 42 But while the winds of worldly fortune still blow upon them, they think themselves most lucky. So long as their physical forces are sound, they believe themselves to be most strong. For that reason, their hopes will come to nothing and their honor will turn into shame.

43 The third ones are the pagans. Some of them cry out in mockery each day: 'Who is this Christ? If he is gracious in giving present goods, we shall gladly receive him. If he is gentle in condoning sins, we shall even more gladly honor him.' 44 But these people have closed the eyes of their mind so as not to perceive the justice and mercy of God. They stop up their ears and do not hear what my Son has done for them and for everyone. 45 They shut their mouths and do not inquire what their future will be like or what is to their advantage. They fold their arms and refuse to make an effort to search out the way in which they might escape lies and find the truth. 46 Therefore, since they do not want to understand or take precautions, although they can and have the time to do so, they and their house will fall and be enveloped by the tempest.

47 The fourth ones are those Jews and pagans who would like to be Christians, if they only knew how and in what way to please my Son and if only they had a helper. 48 They hear from people in neighboring regions everyday, and also know from the appeals of love within themselves, as well as from other signs, how much my Son has done and suffered for everyone. This is why they cry out to him in their conscience and say: 49 'O Lord, we have heard that you promised to give yourself to us. So we are waiting for you. Come and fulfill your promise! 50 We see and understand that there is no divine power in those who are worshipped as gods, no love of souls, no appreciation of chastity. We only find in them carnal motives⁵, a love for the honors of the present world. 51 We know about the Law and hear about the great works⁶ you have performed in mercy and justice. We hear from the sayings of your prophets that they were awaiting you whom they had foretold. 52 So come, kind Lord! We would like to give ourselves to you, because we understand that in

5. "Carnal motives" renders "corporum animacionem," which is an editorial emendation (cf. "animacionem" in ms. y). β has "corporum animancia," which would mean "the animating principles of bodies" in contrast to "divine power" in the previous sentence. δ ! and Gh have "corporum amicism," that is, "friendship for bodies," which could be an emendation but certainly stands in neat contrast to "love of souls" in the previous sentence. See further Undhagen and Bergh, *Book II*, p. 17.

6. "Great works" renders "magnalia," used in the Old Testament specifically about the miracles wrought by God when leading the Israelites out of Egypt; cf. for example, Exodus 14:13; Deuteronomy 10:21; Psalm 70 (71):19; 105(106):21; also used by Luke to allude to the great things done by the apostles in Acts 2:11.

you there is love for souls, the right use of all things, perfect purity, and life everlasting. 53 Come without delay and enlighten us, for we are nearly dead from waiting for you!’ 54 That is how they cry out to my Son. This explains why their door is half-open, because their intention is complete with respect to the good, but they have not yet attained its fulfillment. These are people who deserve to have the grace and consolation of my Son.

55 In the fifth house are the friends of my Son and me. The door of their mind is completely open for my Son. They are glad to hear him calling. They not only open when he knocks but joyfully run to meet him as he comes in. 56 With the hammers of the divine precepts they shatter anything they find distorted in themselves. They prepare a resting-place for my Son, not out of the feathers of birds but out of the harmony of the virtues and the curbing of evil affections, which is the very marrow of all the virtues. 57 They offer my Son a kind of warmth that does not come from wool but from a love so fervent that they not only give their belongings to him but their very selves as well. 58 They also prepare food for him that is fresher than any meat: it is their perfect heart that does not desire or love anything but its God. 59 The Lord of Heaven dwells in their hearts, and God who nourishes all things is sweetly nourished by their charity. They keep their eyes continually on the door lest the enemy enter, they keep their ears turned toward the Lord, and their hands ready for doing battle against the enemy.

60 Imitate them, my daughter, as far as you are able, because their foundation is built on solid rock. The other houses have their foundations in mud, which is why they will be shaken when the wind comes.”

‡ Chapter 4

Christ Compares Himself to Solomon and to a Potter and Explains How He Deals with Christians and Pagans

DATE: 1340S

The words of the Mother of God to her Son on behalf of his bride, and about how Christ is compared to Solomon, and about the severe sentence against false Christians.

1 The Mother of God spoke to her Son, saying: “My Son, look how your bride is crying¹ because you have few friends and many enemies.” 2 The Son answered: “It is written that the sons of the kingdom will be cast out² and will not inherit the kingdom. It is likewise written that a certain queen came from far away to see the riches of Solomon and to hear his wisdom. 3 When she saw it all, she was breathless from sheer amazement.³ The people of his king-

1. “Your bride is crying”: weeping is not normally central to Birgitta’s asceticism, although her *Vita* suggests that she often prayed in tears; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 78.

2. “The sons of the kingdom will be cast out” (Matthew 8:12).

3. “Breathless from sheer amazement” renders Lat. “vix pre admiracione habuit spiritum”; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 10:5, “non habebat ultra spiritum,” [she no longer had any spirit in her].

dom, however, paid no attention to his wisdom nor admired his riches. 4 I am prefigured by Solomon, although I am far richer and wiser⁴ than Solomon was, inasmuch as all wisdom comes from me and anyone who is wise gets his wisdom from me. 5 My riches are eternal life and indescribable glory. I promised and offered these goods to Christians as to my own children, in order that they might possess them forever, if they imitated me and believed in my words. 6 But they pay no attention to my wisdom. They hold my deeds and my promises in scorn and regard my riches as worthless. What shall I do with them then? 7 Surely, if the sons do not want their inheritance, then strangers, that is, pagans will receive it.⁵ Like that foreign queen, whom I take to represent faithful souls, they will come and admire the wealth of my glory and charity, so much so that they will fall away from their spirit of infidelity and be filled with my Spirit. 8 What, then, shall I do with the sons of the kingdom? I will deal with them in the manner of a skillful potter who, when he observes that the first object he has made out of clay is neither beautiful nor useable, throws it to the earth and crushes it.⁶ 9 I will deal with Christians in the same way. Although they ought to be mine, since I formed them in my image and redeemed them with my blood, they have turned out to be pitifully deformed. Therefore, they will be trampled down like earth and thrown into hell.”

‡ Chapter 5

The Three Sons of King David

DATE: 1340S

The Lord’s words in the presence of the bride concerning his own majesty, and a wonderful parable comparing Christ to David, while Jews, bad Christians, and pagans are compared to David’s three sons, and about how the church subsists in the seven sacraments.

1 “I am God, not made of stone or wood¹ nor created by another but the Creator of the universe, abiding without beginning or end. I am he who came into the Virgin and was with the Virgin without losing my divinity. 2 Through my human nature I was in the Virgin while still retaining my divine nature, and I am that same person who, through my divine nature, continued to rule over heaven and earth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. 3 Through my Spirit I set the Virgin on fire—not in the sense that the Spirit that set her on fire was something separate from me, but the Spirit that set her on fire was the same one who was in the Father and in me, the Son, just as the Father and the Son were in him, these three being one God, not three gods.

4 I am like King David who had three sons. One of them was called Ab-

4. “I am far richer and wiser”; cf. Matthew 12:42.

5. “Strangers, that is, pagans will receive it”; cf. Matthew 21:43.

6. “A skillful potter . . . crushes it”; cf. Jeremiah 18:1–6; Romans 9:20–23.

1. “Not made of stone or wood”; cf. Isaiah 37:19.

salom, and he sought the life of his father. The second, Adonijah, sought his father's kingdom. The third son, Solomon, obtained the kingdom.²

5 The first son denotes the Jews. They are the people who sought my life and death and scorned my counsel. Consequently, now that their requital is known, I can say what David said upon the death of his son: 6 'My son, Absalom!'³ that is: O my Jewish children, where is your longing and expectation now? O my children, what will be your end now? 7 I felt compassion for you because you longed for me to come—for me whom you learned from many signs had come—and because you longed for quickly fading glory, all of which now has faded. 8 But I feel greater compassion for you now, like David repeating those first words over and over, because I see that you will end in a wretched death. Therefore, again like David, I say with all my love: 'My son, who will let me die in your stead?' 9 David knew well that he could not bring back his dead son by dying himself, but, in order to show his deep fatherly affection and the eager yearning of his will, even though he knew it was impossible, he was prepared to die in the place of his son. 10 In the same way, I now say: O my Jewish children, although you had ill-will toward me and did as much as you could against me, if it were possible and if my Father allowed it, I would willingly die once again for you, for I take pity on the misery you have brought upon yourselves as required by justice. 11 I told you what was to be done by my words and showed you by my example. I went ahead of you like a hen protecting you with wings of love,⁴ but you spurned it all. 12 Therefore, all the things that you longed for have fled away. Your end is misery and all your labor wasted.

13 Bad Christians are denoted by David's second son who sinned against his father in his old age. He reasoned with himself in this way: 'My father is an old man and failing in strength. 14 If I say anything wrong to him, he does not respond. If I do anything against him, he does not avenge himself. If I assail him, he endures it patiently. Therefore, I will do what I want.' 15 With some of his father David's servants, he went up to a grove of few trees⁵ in order to play the king. But when the wisdom and intention of his father became evident, he changed his plan and those who were with him fell into discredit. 16 This is what Christians are doing to me now. They think to themselves: 'God's signs and decisions are not as manifest now as they were before. We can say what we like, since he is merciful and pays no attention. Let us do as we please, since he gives way easily.' 17 They have no faith in my power, as if I were weaker now in accomplishing my will than I was before. They imagine my love to be less, as if I am no longer as willing to have mercy on them as on their fathers. They also think that my judgment is a thing to be laughed at and that my justice is meaningless. 18 Therefore, they, too, go up to a grove

2. "King David . . . obtained the kingdom"; cf. 2 Kings (2 Samuel) 3; 14–18; 3 Kings (1 Kings) 1.

3. "My son, Absalom" (2 Kings) (2 Samuel) 19:4.

4. "Like a hen protecting you with wings of love"; cf. Matthew 23:37.

5. "A grove of few trees"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings 1:9), which does not, however, specifically mention "a grove"; Birgitta paraphrases the intrigues of Adonijah in this passage.

with some of David's servants in order to play the king with presumption. 19 What does this grove of few trees denote, if not the Holy Church subsisting through the seven sacraments as through just a few trees? 20 They enter into this church along with some of David's servants, that is, with a few good works, in order to gain God's kingdom with presumption. They do a modest number of good works, confident that thereby, no matter what state of sin they are in or whatever sins they have committed, they can still gain the kingdom of heaven as if by hereditary right. 21 David's son wanted to obtain the kingdom against David's will but was driven away in disgrace, inasmuch as both he and his ambition were unjust, and the kingdom was given to a better and wiser man. In the same way, these people will also be driven away from my kingdom. It will be given to those who do the will of David, since only a person who has charity can obtain my kingdom. 22 Only a person who is pure and is led by my heart can approach me who am the most pure of all.

23 Solomon was the third son of David. He represents the pagans. When Bathsheba⁶ heard that someone other than Solomon—whom David had promised would be king after him—had been elected by certain persons, she went to David and said: 24 'My lord, you swore to me that Solomon would be king after you. Now, however, someone else has been elected. If this is the case and it goes on in this way, I will end up being sentenced to the fire as an adulteress and my son will be regarded as illegitimate.' 25 When David heard this, he stood up and said: 'I swear to God that Solomon will sit on my throne and be king after me.' 26 He then ordered his servants to set Solomon on the throne and proclaim as king the man of David's choice. They carried out the orders of their lord and raised up Solomon to great power, and all those who had given their vote to his brother were scattered and reduced to servitude.

27 This Bathsheba, who would have been accounted an adulteress had another king been elected, stands for nothing other than the faith of the pagans. No kind of adultery is worse than selling oneself into prostitution away from God and from the true faith and believing in a god other than the Creator of universe. 28 Just as Bathsheba did, some of the Gentiles come to me with humble and contrite hearts, saying: 'Lord, you promised that in the future we would be Christians. Carry out your promise!' 29 If another king, if another faith other than yours should gain the ascendancy over us, if you remove yourself from us, we will burn in misery and die like an adulteress who has taken an adulterer instead of a lawful husband. 30 Besides, although you live forever, nevertheless, you will die to us and we to you in the sense that you will remove your grace from our hearts and we will set ourselves up against you due to our lack of faith. 31 Therefore, fulfill your promise and strengthen our weakness and enlighten our darkness! If you delay, if you remove yourself from us, we will perish.' 32 Having heard this, I will stand up like David through my grace and mercy. I swear by my divine nature, which is joined to my humanity, and by my human nature, which is in my Spirit, and by my Spirit, which is in my

6. "Bathsheba": David's favorite wife, and mother of Solomon; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 1:15-53.

divine and human natures, these three being not three gods but one God, that I will fulfill my promise. 33 I will send my friends to bring my son Solomon, that is, the pagans, into the grove, that is, into the church, which subsists through the seven sacraments as through seven trees (namely baptism, penance, the anointment of confirmation, the sacrament of the altar and of the priesthood, matrimony, and extreme unction). They will take their rest upon my throne, that is, in the true faith of the Holy Church. 34 Moreover, the bad Christians will become their servants. The former will find their joy in an everlasting heritage and in the sweet nourishment that I will prepare for them. The latter, however, will groan in the misery that will begin for them in the present and last forever. 35 And so, since it is still the time for vigilance, may my friends not fall asleep, may they not grow weary, for a glorious reward awaits their toil!"

‡ Chapter 6*

About a King on a Battlefield, and His Soldiers Whose Helmets Are Back to Front

DATE: 1340S

The Son's words in the presence of the bride concerning a king standing on a battlefield with friends to his right and enemies to his left, and about how the king represents Christ who has Christians to the right and pagans to the left, and about how the Christians are rejected and he sends his preachers to the pagans.

1 The Son said: "I am like a king standing in a battlefield with friends standing to his right and enemies to his left. The voice of someone shouting came to those who stood on the right where everyone was well armed. 2 Their helmets were fastened and their faces were turned to their lord. The voice shouted to them: 'Turn to me and trust me! I have gold to give you.' 3 When they heard this, they turned toward him. The voice spoke a second time to those who had turned around: 'If you want to see the gold, unfasten your helmets, and if you want to keep it, I will fasten your helmets on again as I wish.' 4 When they assented, he fastened their helmets on back to front. The result was that the front part with the apertures to see through was at the back of their heads while the helmets' back part covered their eyes so that they were unable to see. Shouting like this, he led them after him like blind men. 5 When this had been done, some of the king's friends reported to their lord that his enemies had tricked his men. He said to his friends: 6 'Go out among them and cry out: Unfasten your helmets and see how you have been deceived! Turn back to me and I will welcome you in peace!' 7 They did not want to listen, but regarded it as mockery. 8 The servants heard this and reported it to their

* This chapter is duplicated in Book VIII 42.

lord. He said: 'Well then, since they have scorned me, go quickly toward the left-hand side and tell those who stand on the left these three things: The way that leads you to life¹ has been prepared for you. The gate is open. And the lord himself wants to come to meet you with peace. 9 Believe therefore firmly that the way has been prepared! Have a steadfast hope that the gate is open and his words are true! Go to meet the lord with love, and he will welcome you with love and peace and lead you to everlasting peace!' 10 When they heard the messengers' words, they believed in them and were welcomed in peace.

11 I am that king. I had Christians to my right, since I had prepared an eternal reward for them. Their helmets were fastened and their faces were turned toward me so long as they wholly intended to do my will, to obey my commandments, and so long as all their desire aimed at heaven. 12 By and by the devil's voice, that is, pride, sounded in the world and showed them worldly riches and carnal pleasure. They turned toward it by yielding their assent and desires to pride. 13 Because of pride, they took off their helmets by putting their desires into effect and preferring temporal to spiritual goods. 14 Now that they have put aside the helmets of God's will and the weapons of virtue, pride has got such a hold of them and so bound them to itself that they are only too happy to go on sinning right to the end and would be glad to live forever, provided they could sin forever. 15 Pride has so blinded them that the apertures of the helmets through which they should be able to see are at the back of their heads and in front of them is darkness. 16 What do these apertures in the helmets represent if not the consideration of the future and the provident circumspection of present realities? 17 Through the first aperture, they should see the delight of future rewards and the horrors of future punishments as well as the awful sentence of God. 18 Through the second aperture, they should see God's commandments and prohibitions, also how much they may have transgressed God's commandments and how they should improve. 19 But these apertures are at the back of the head where nothing can be seen, which means that the consideration of heavenly realities has fallen into disregard. Their love for God has grown cold, while their love for the world is considered with delight and embraced in such a way that it leads them like a well-oiled wheel whither it will. 20 However, seeing me dishonored and souls falling away and the devil gaining control, my friends cry out daily to me in their prayers for them. 21 Their prayers have reached heaven and come to my hearing. Moved by their prayers, I have daily sent my preachers to these people and shown them signs and increased my graces to them. But, in their scorn for it all, they have piled sin upon sin.

22 Therefore, I shall now say to my servants and I shall put my words most assuredly into effect: My servants, go to the left-hand side, that is, to the pagans, and say: 23 'The Lord of heaven and the Creator of the universe would have the following said to you: The way of heaven is open for you. Have the will to enter it with a firm faith! The gate of heaven stands open for you. Hope

1. "The way that leads you to life"; cf. Matthew 7:14.

firmly and you will enter through it! 24 The King of heaven and the Lord of angels will personally come out to meet you and give you everlasting peace and blessing. Go out to meet him and receive him with the faith he has revealed to you and that has made ready the way to heaven! 25 Receive him with the hope by which you hope, for he himself has the intention of giving you the kingdom. Love him with your whole heart and put your love into practice and you will enter through the gates of God from which those Christians were thrust away who did not want to enter them and who made themselves unworthy by their own deeds.’ 26 By my truth I declare to you that I will put my words into practice and will not forget them. I will receive you as my children and I will be your father, I, whom Christians have held in scornful scorn.

27 You then, my friends, who are in the world, go forth without fear and shout out loud, announce my will to them and help them to carry it out. I will be in your hearts and in your words. I will be your guide in life and your savior in death. 28 I will not abandon you. Go forth boldly—the more the toil, the greater the glory! I can do all things in a single instant and with a single word, but I want your reward to grow through your own efforts and my glory to grow through your bravery. 29 Do not be surprised at what I say. If the wisest man in the world could count up how many souls fall into hell each day, they would outnumber the sands of the sea or the pebbles on the shore. 30 This is a matter of justice, because these souls have separated themselves from their Lord and God. I am saying this so that the devil’s numbers may decrease, and the danger become known, and my army be filled up. If only they would listen and come to their senses!”

‡ Chapter 7*

Peter and Paul Are Compared with the Priesthood and the Laity

DATE: 1340S

Jesus Christ speaks to the bride and compares his divine nature to a crown and uses Peter and Paul to symbolize the clerical and the lay state, and about the ways of dealing with enemies, and about the qualities that knights in the world should have.

1 The Son spoke to the bride, saying: “I am King of the crown. Do you know why I said ‘King of the crown’? 2 Because my divine nature was and will be and is without beginning or end. My divine nature is aptly likened to a crown, because a crown has neither starting-point nor end. 3 Just as a crown is reserved for the future king in a kingdom, so too my divine nature was reserved for my human nature to be its crown.

* Paragraphs 1–11 of this revelation are duplicated in Book VIII 1.24–34; paragraphs 17–37 and 41–45 are duplicated in Book VIII 32.1–32. This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 499, line 2 through p. 503, line 28, “Ek är krononna konungir . . . þe ära bundne til.”

4 I had two servants. One was a priest, the other a layman. The first was Peter who had a priestly office, while Paul was, as it were, a layman. 5 Peter was bound in marriage, but when he saw that his marriage was not consistent with his priestly office, and considering that his upright intention might be endangered by a lack of continence, he separated himself from his wife with regard to sexual intercourse, which, however, would otherwise have been licit for him, and he devoted himself to me wholeheartedly. 6 Paul, however, did observe celibacy and kept himself unstained by the marriage-bed. 7 See what great love I had for these two! I gave the keys of heaven to Peter so that whatever he bound or loosed on earth might be bound or loosed in heaven.¹ 8 I allowed Paul to become like Peter in glory and honor. As they were equals together on earth, so now they are united in everlasting glory in heaven and glorified together. 9 However, although I mentioned these two expressly by name, by and through them I mean to denote other friends of mine as well. In similar fashion, under the earlier Covenant,² I used to speak to Israel as if I were addressing just one person, although I meant to designate the entire people of Israel by that one name. In the same way now, using these two men, I mean to denote the multitude of those whom I have filled with my glory and love.

10 With the passage of time, evils began to multiply and the flesh began to grow weaker and to be more than usually prone to evil. 11 Therefore, I set up norms for each of the two, that is, for the clergy and laity, represented here by Peter and Paul. In my mercy I decided to allow the clergy to own a moderate amount of church property for their bodily needs in order that they might grow more fervent and constant in serving me. I also allowed the laity to join in marriage according to the rites of the church. 12 Among the priests there was a certain good man who thought to himself: 'The flesh drags me toward base pleasure, the world drags me toward harmful sights, while the devil sets various traps to get me to sin. 13 Therefore, in order not to be ensnared by carnal pleasure, I will observe moderation in all my actions. I will be moderate in my rest and recreation. I will dedicate the proper time to work and prayer and restrain my carnal appetites through fasting. 14 Second, in order that the world may not drag me away from the love of God, I will give up all worldly things, for they are all perishable. It is safer to follow Christ in poverty. 15 Third, in order not to be deceived by the devil who is always showing us falsehoods instead of the truth, I will submit myself to the rule and obedience of another; and I will reject all selfishness and show that I am ready to undertake whatever is commanded me by the other person.' 16 This man was the first to establish a monastic rule. He persevered in it in praiseworthy fashion and left his life as an example to be imitated by others.

17 For a time the class of the laity was well organized. Some of them tilled the soil and bravely persevered in working the land. 18 Others sailed on ships and carried merchandise to other regions so that the resources of one region

1. "I gave the keys of heaven . . . loosed in heaven"; cf. Matthew 16:19.

2. "Under the earlier Covenant"; cf. Deuteronomy 6:4.

supplied the needs of another. 19 Others were diligent craftsmen and artisans. Among these were the defenders of my church who are now called knights. They took up arms as avengers of the Holy Church in order to do battle against her enemies. 20 There appeared among them a good man and friend of mine who thought to himself: 21 'I do not till the soil as a farmer. I do not toil on the seas as a merchant. I do not work with my hands as a skilled craftsman. 22 What, then, can I do or with what works can I please my God? I am not energetic enough in the service of the church. 23 My body is too soft and weak to bear physical injuries, my hands lack the force to strike down enemies, and my mind grows uneasy in pondering the things of heaven. What can I do then? 24 I know what I can do. I will go and bind myself by a stable oath to a secular prince, swearing to defend the faith of the Holy Church with my strength and with my blood.' 25 That friend of mine went to the prince and said: 'My lord, I am one of the defenders of the church. 26 My body is all too weak to bear physical injuries, my hands lack the force to strike down others; my mind is unstable when it comes to thinking about and carrying out what is good; my self-will is what pleases me; and my need for rest does not let me take a strong stance for the house of God. 27 I bind myself therefore with a public oath of obedience to the Holy Church and to you, o Prince, swearing to defend her all the days of my life in order that, although my mind and will may be lukewarm with respect to the struggle, I can be held and compelled to toil because of my oath.'

28 The prince answered him: 'I will go with you to the house of the Lord and be a witness to your oath and your promise.' 29 Both of them came up to my altar, and my friend genuflected and said: 'I am too weak of body to bear physical injuries, my self-will is all too pleasing to me, my hands are too lukewarm when it comes to striking blows. 30 Therefore, I now pledge obedience to God and to you, my chief, binding myself by an oath to defend the Holy Church against her enemies, to comfort the friends of God, to do good to widows, orphans, and God's faithful, and never to do anything contrary to God's church or the faith. 31 Moreover, I will submit myself to your correction, if I should happen to err, in order that, bound by obedience, I might fear sin and selfishness all the more and apply myself more fervently and readily to carrying out God's will and your own will, knowing myself to be only the more worthy of condemnation and contempt if I should presume to violate obedience and transgress your commands.'

32 After this profession had been made at my altar, the prince wisely decided that the man should dress differently than other laymen as a sign of his self-renouncement and as a reminder to him that he had a superior to whom he had to submit. 33 The prince also placed a sword in his hand, saying: 'This sword is for you to use to threaten and slay the enemies of God.' 34 He placed a shield on his arm, saying: 'Defend yourself with this shield against the missiles of the enemy and patiently endure whatever is thrown against it. May you sooner see it shattered than run away from battle!' 35 In the presence of my priest who was listening, my friend made the firm promise to observe all of this. When he had made his promise, the priest gave him my body to provide

him strength and fortitude so that, once united with me through my body, my friend might never be separated from me. 36 Such was my friend George³ as well as many others. Such, too, should the knights be. They should get to hold their title as a result of merit and to wear their knightly attire as a result of their actions in defense of the Holy Faith.

37 Hear how my enemies are now going against the earlier deeds of my friends. 38 My friends used to enter the monastery out of their wise reverence and love for God. But those who are in monasteries nowadays go out into the world because of pride and greed, following self-will, fulfilling the pleasure of their bodies. 39 Justice demands that people who die in such a disposition should not experience the joy of heaven but rather obtain the endless punishment of hell. 40 Know, too, that the cloistered monks who are forced against their will to become prelates out of love for God are not to be counted among their number. 41 The knights who used to bear my arms were ready to lay down their lives for justice and shed their blood for the sake of the holy faith, bringing justice to the needy, putting down and humbling the doers of evil. 42 But hear how they have now been corrupted! Now they would rather die in battle for the sake of pride, greed, and envy at the promptings of the devil instead of living after my commandments and obtaining eternal joy. 43 Just wages will therefore be dealt out at the judgment to all the people who die in such a disposition, and their souls will be yoked to the devil forever. 44 But the knights who serve me will receive their due wages in the heavenly host forever.

45 I, Jesus Christ, true God and man, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, have said this.”

‡ Chapter 8*

About a Dissolute Knight Whom Other Knights Follow

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about a certain knight's desertion from the true army, that is, from humility, obedience, patience, faith, etc., to the false one, that is, to the opposing vices, pride, etc., and the description of his condemnation, and about how one can meet with condemnation because of an evil will just as much as because of evil deeds.

1 “I am the true Lord. There is no other lord greater than I. There was no lord before me nor will there be any after me. All lordship comes from me and

3. Saint George, a soldier saint, became popular in the time of the crusades. On St. George in Scandinavian art, see Svanberg and Qvarnström, *Sankt Göran och draken*.

* This chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 503, line 30 through p. 508, line 20, “Ek är sandir herra . . . ok vardhir til ängsins”; it is the only surviving vernacular version.

through me. 2 This is why I am the true Lord and why no one but I alone can truly be called Lord, for all power comes from me.

3 I was telling you earlier¹ that I had two servants, one of whom manfully took up a praiseworthy way of life and kept at it manfully to the end. Countless others followed him in that same way of knightly service. 4 I will now tell you about the first man to desert the profession of knighthood as instituted by my friend.² I will not tell you his name, because you do not know him by name, but I will disclose his purpose and desire.

5 A man who wanted to become a knight came to my sanctuary. When he went in, he heard a voice: 'Three things are necessary if you want to be a knight: 6 First, you must believe that the bread you see on the altar is true God and true man, the Creator of heaven and earth. 7 Second, once you take up your knightly service, you must exercise more self-restraint than you were accustomed to doing before. 8 Third, you should not care about worldly honor. Rather I will give you divine joy and everlasting honor.

9 Hearing this and pondering these three things to himself, he heard an evil voice in his mind making three proposals contrary to the first three. It said: 'If you serve me, I will make you three other proposals. 10 I will let you take what you see, hear what you like, and obtain what you desire.' 11 When he heard this, he thought to himself: 'The first lord bade me to have faith in something I do not see and promised me things unknown to me. He bade me abstain from the delights that I can see, and that I desire, and to hope for things of which I am uncertain. 12 The other lord promised me the worldly honor that I can see and the pleasure that I desire without forbidding me to hear or see the things I like. 13 Surely, it is better for me to follow him and to have what I see and to enjoy the things that are sure rather than to hope for things of which I am uncertain.'

14 With thoughts such as these, this man was the first to commence the desertion from the service of a true knight. He rejected the true profession and broke his promise. 15 He threw down the shield of patience at my feet and let the sword for the defense of the faith drop from his hands and left the sanctuary. 16 The evil voice told him: 'If, as I said, you would be mine, then³ you should walk proudly in the fields and streets. That other Lord commands his men to be constantly humble. Therefore, be sure not to avoid any sign of pride and ostentation! 17 While that other Lord made his entrance in obedience and subjected himself to obedience in every way, you should let no one be your superior. Bend not your neck in humility to another. 18 Take up your sword to shed the blood of your neighbor and brother in order to acquire his property! 19 Strap the shield to your arm and risk your life for the sake of winning renown! 20 Instead of the faith that he holds out, give your love to the temple

1. "Earlier"; see ch. 7.

2. "My friend," i.e., St. George.

3. "Then" renders "tunc" in Gh, whereas the archetype seems to have had the unlikely "num" [surely . . . not].

of your own body without abstaining from any of the pleasures that delight you.'

21 While the man was making up his mind and strengthening his resolve with such thoughts, his prince laid his hand on the man's neck in the appointed place.⁴ 22 No place whatsoever can harm anyone who has a good will or help anyone whose intention is wicked. 23 After the confirmation of his knighthood, the wretch betrayed his knightly service, exercising it only with a view to worldly pride, making light of the fact that he was now under a greater obligation to live an austere life than before. 24 Countless armies of knights imitated and still imitate this knight in his pride, and he has sunk all the deeper into the abyss due to his knightly vows.

25 But, given that there are many people who want to rise in the world and achieve renown but do not manage to do so, you might ask: Are these people to be punished for the wickedness of their intentions as much as those who achieve their desired success? 26 To this I answer you: I assure you that anyone who fully intends to rise in the world and does all he can to do so in order to gain an empty title of worldly honor, although his intention never achieves its effect due to some secret decision of mine, such a man will be punished for the wickedness of his intention just as much as the one who does manage to achieve it, that is, unless he rectifies his intention through penance. 27 Look, I will put to you the example of two persons known well enough to many people. 28 One of them prospered according to his wishes and obtained almost everything he desired. The other had the same intention, but not the same possibilities. 29 The first one obtained worldly renown; he loved the temple of his body in its every lust; he had the power he wanted; everything he put his hand to prospered. 30 The other was identical to him in intention but received less renown. He would willingly have shed his neighbor's blood a hundred times over in order to be able to realize his plans of greed. 31 He did what he could and carried out his will in accordance with his desire. 32 These two were alike in their horrible punishment. Although they did not die at exactly the same time, I can still speak of one soul rather than two, since their condemnation was one and the same. Both had the same thing to say when body and soul were separated and the soul departed. 33 Once having left the body, the soul said to it: "Tell me, where now are the sights to delight my eyes that you promised me, where is the pleasure you showed me, where are the pleasant words that you bade me use?" 34 The devil was there and answered: "The promised sights are no more than dust, the words are but air, the pleasure is but mud and rot. Those things are of no value to you now." 35 The soul exclaimed then: "Alas, alas, I have been wretchedly deceived! I see three things. I see him who was promised to me under the semblance of bread. 36 He is the very King of kings and Lord of lords.⁵ I see what he promised, and it is indescribable and inconceivable. 37 I hear now that the abstinence he recom-

4. That is, the prince dubbed him.

5. "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15; Apocalypse 19:16).

mended was really most useful.' 38 Then, in an even louder voice, the soul cried out 'woe' three times: 'Woe is me that ever I was born! Woe is me that my life on the earth was so long! Woe is me that I shall live in a perpetual and neverending death!'

39 Behold what wretchedness the wretched will have in return for their contempt of God and their fleeting joy! You should therefore thank me, my bride, for having called you away from such wretchedness! 40 Be obedient to my Spirit and to my chosen ones!"

‡ Chapter 9*

Continuation of the Preceding Revelation, on Dissolute Knights

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride giving an explanation of the immediately preceding chapter, and about the devil's attack on the aforementioned knight, and about his terrible and just condemnation.

1 "The entire span of this life is but as a single hour¹ for me. Therefore, what I am telling you now has always been in my foreknowledge. 2 I told you before² about a man who began the true knighthood, and about another who deserted it like a scoundrel. The man who deserted from the ranks of true knights threw down his shield at my feet and his sword at my side by breaking his sacred promises and vows. 3 The shield he threw down symbolizes nothing other than the upright faith by which he was to defend himself against the enemies of the faith and of his soul. 4 The feet, on which I walk toward humanity, symbolize nothing other than the divine delight by which I attract a person to myself and the patience by which I patiently bear with him. 5 He threw this shield down when he entered my sanctuary, thinking to himself: I want to obey the lord who counseled me not to practice abstinence, the one who gives me what I desire and lets me hear things pleasant to my ears. 6 This was how he threw down the shield of my faith by wanting to follow his own selfish desire rather than me, by loving the creature more than the Creator. 7 If he had had an upright faith, if he had believed me to be almighty and a just judge and the giver of eternal glory, he would not have wished for anything but me, he would not have feared anything but me. 8 But he threw down my faith at my feet, despising it and counting it for nothing, because he did not seek to please me and had no regard for my patience. 9 Then he threw down his sword at my side. The sword denotes nothing other than the fear of God, which God's true knight should continuously have in his hands, that is, in his

* This revelation is duplicated in Book VIII 33. It occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 508, line 22 through p. 511, line 29, "Aldir pän time . . . till hans for vtan ända."

1. "A single hour"; cf. Psalm 89(90):4; 2 Peter 3:8.

2. "I told you before": the Birgittine-Norwegian text has "i gaar" [yesterday] instead of "before."

acts. 10 My side symbolizes nothing other than the care and protection with which I shelter and defend my children, like a mother hen sheltering her chicks,³ so that the devil does not harm them and no unendurable trials come upon them. 11 But that man threw away the sword of my fear by not bothering to think about my power and by not having any regard for my love and patience. 12 He threw it down at my side as if to say: 'I neither fear nor care about your defense. I got what I have by my own doing and my noble birth.'

13 He broke the promise he made to me. What is the true promise that a man is bound to vow to God? Surely, it is deeds of love: that whatever a person does, he should do out of love for God. 14 But this he set aside by twisting his love for God toward self-love; he preferred his selfishness to future and eternal delight. 15 In this way he separated himself from me and left the sanctuary of my humility. The body of any Christian ruled by humility is my sanctuary. 16 Those ruled by pride are not my sanctuary but the sanctuary of the devil who steers them toward worldly desire after his own purposes. 17 Having gone out of the temple of my humility, and having rejected the shield of holy faith and the sword of fear, he walked out proudly to the fields, cultivating every selfish lust and desire, scorning to fear me and growing in sin and lust.

18 When he reached the final end of his life and his soul had left the body, the demons charged out to meet him. 19 Three voices from hell could be heard speaking against him. The first said: 20 'Is not this the man who deserted from humility and followed us in pride? If his two feet could take him up even higher in pride so as to surpass us and hold the primacy in pride, he would be quick to do so.' 21 The soul answered him: 'I am the one.' 22 Justice answered him: 'This is the reward of your pride: you will descend handed by one demon down to the next until you reach the lowest part of hell. 23 And given that there was no demon who did not know his own particular punishment and the torment to be inflicted for every useless thought and deed, neither will you escape punishment at the hands of any one of them but share in the malice and evil of them all.' 24 The second voice cried out saying: 'Is not this the man who separated himself from his professed service to God and joined our ranks instead?' 25 The soul answered: 'I am the one.' And Justice said: 'This is your allotted reward: that everyone who imitates your conduct as a knight will add to your punishment and sorrow by his own corruption and pain and will strike you at his coming as though with a deadly wound. 26 You will be like a man afflicted by a severe wound, indeed like one afflicted by wound upon wound until his whole body is full of wounds, who endures intolerable suffering and bewails his fate constantly. Even so, you will experience misery upon misery. 27 At the height of your pain, your pain will be renewed, and your punishment will never end and your woes will never decrease.' 28 The third voice cried out: 'Is not this the man who exchanged his Creator for creatures, the love of his Creator for his own selfishness?' 29 Justice answered: 'It certainly is. Therefore, two holes will be opened in him. 30 Through the first there will

3. "Like a mother hen sheltering her chicks"; cf. Matthew 23:37.

enter into him every punishment earned for his least sin up to his greatest, inasmuch as he exchanged his Creator for his own lust. 31 Through the second there will enter into him every kind of pain and shame, and no divine consolation or charity will ever come to him, inasmuch as he loved himself rather than his Creator. 32 His life will last forever and his punishment will last forever, for all the saints have turned away from him.'

33 My bride, see how miserable those people will be who despise me and how great will be the pain they purchase at the price of so little pleasure!"

‡ Chapter 10*

Concerning Moses, Pharaoh, and the Children of Israel; and on Birgitta's Calling

DATE: 1340S

As God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Christ speaks to the bride about how the devil is symbolized by Pharaoh, present-day knights by the people of Israel, and the Virgin's body by the bush, and about how present-day knights and bishops are, at present, preparing a home for the devil.

1 "It is written in the law of Moses that Moses was watching over the flocks in the desert when he saw a bush that was on fire without being burned up, and he became afraid and covered his face. 2 A voice spoke to him from the bush: 'I have heard of my people's suffering and feel pity for them, for they are oppressed in harsh slavery.'¹ 3 I who am now speaking with you am that voice heard from the bush. I have heard the misery of my people. 4 Who were my people if not Israel? Using this same name I now designate the knights in the world who have taken the vows of my knighthood and who should be mine but are being attacked by the devil. 5 What did Pharaoh do² to my people Israel in Egypt? Three things. 6 First, when they were building his walls,³ they were not to be helped by those gatherers of straw who earlier had helped them in making bricks. Instead, they had to go themselves and gather the straw wherever they could throughout the entire country. 7 Second, the builders did not get any thanks for their labor, despite their producing the number of bricks set them as a goal. 8 Third, the foremen beat them harshly whenever they fell short of their normal production. 9 In the midst of their great affliction, this people of mine built two cities⁴ for Pharaoh.

10 This Pharaoh is none another than the devil who attacks my people,

* The chapter occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 512, line 2 through p. 513, line 14, "Thät standhir scrifuat . . . skuldo byggia sãm þeira herra ok skapare är." It is the only surviving vernacular version.

1. "It is written . . . harsh slavery"; cf. Exodus 3:1-10.

2. "What did Pharaoh do . . .?"; cf. Exodus 1:8-22.

3. "First, when they were building his walls"; cf. Exodus 5:6-23.

4. "Two cities"; cf. Exodus 1:11.

that is, the knights, who ought be my people. 11 Truly I tell you that if the knights had kept the arrangement and rule established by my first friend, they would have been among my dearest friends. 12 Just as Abraham, who was the first to be given the commandment of circumcision⁵ and was obedient to me, became my dearest friend,⁶ and anyone who imitated Abraham's faith and works shared in his love and glory, so too the knights were especially pleasing to me among all the orders, since they promised to shed for me that which they held most dear, their own blood. 13 By this vow they made themselves most pleasing to me, just as Abraham did in the matter of circumcision, and they purified themselves daily by living up to their profession and by taking up the practice of holy charity. 14 These knights are now so oppressed by their wretched slavery under the devil that the devil is wounding them with a lethal wound and throwing them into pain and suffering. 15 The bishops of the church are building two cities for him just like the children of Israel. 16 The first city stands for physical toil and meaningless anxiety over the acquisition of worldly goods. 17 The second city stands for spiritual unrest and distress, inasmuch as they are never allowed to rest from worldly desire. 18 There is toil on the outside and restlessness and anxiety on the inside, rendering spiritual things a burden.

19 Just as Pharaoh did not supply my people with the things necessary for making bricks or give them fields full of grain, or wine and other useful things, but the people had to go and find them for themselves in sorrow and tribulation of heart, so the devil deals likewise with them now. 20 Although they toil for and covet the world with their inmost heart, they are still unable to fulfill their desire and sate the thirst of their greed. 21 They are consumed on the inside with sorrow and on the outside with toil. 22 For that reason, I pity them their sufferings, because my knights, my people, are building homes for the devil and toiling ceaselessly, because they cannot get what they desire, and because they worry themselves over meaningless goods, although the fruit of their anxiety is not a blessing but rather the reward of shame.

23 When Moses was sent to the people, God gave him a miraculous sign⁷ for three reasons. 24 First, it was because each person in Egypt worshipped his own individual god, and because there were innumerable beings who were said to be gods. 25 Therefore it was fitting that there should be a miraculous sign so that, through it and by the power of God, people would believe that there was one God and one Creator of all things because of the signs, and so that all the idols would be proved worthless. 26 Second, a sign was also given to Moses as a symbol prefiguring my future body. 27 What did the burning bush that was not consumed symbolize if not the Virgin who conceived by the Holy Spirit and gave birth without corruption? 28 From this bush I came forth, assuming a human nature from the virginal body of Mary. Similarly, the ser-

5. "The commandment of circumcision"; cf. Genesis 17:9–11.

6. "Friend"; cf. Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23.

7. "When Moses was sent . . . without corruption"; cf. Exodus 3.

pent given as a sign to Moses symbolized my body. 29 In the third place, a sign was given to Moses in order to confirm the truth of coming events and to prefigure the miraculous signs to be done in the future, proving the truth of God to be so much the truer and more certain the more clearly those things signified by the signs were in time fulfilled.

30 I am now sending my words to the children of Israel, that is, to the knights. They need no miraculous signs for three reasons. 31 This is, first of all, because the one God and Creator of all things is already worshipped and known through Holy Scripture as well as through many signs. 32 Second, they are not now waiting for me to be born, because they know that I was truly born and became incarnate without corruption, inasmuch as scripture has been completely fulfilled. 33 And there is no better or more certain faith to be held and believed than the one that has already been preached by me and by my holy preachers.⁸

34 Nevertheless, I have done three things through you by which it may be believed. First, these are my true words and do not differ from the true faith. Second, a demon went out of a possessed man at my word. Third, I gave a certain man⁹ the power to unite mistrustful hearts in mutual charity. 35 Therefore, do not have any doubts about those who will believe in me. Those who believe in me believe also in my words. 36 Those who savor me savor also my words. 37 It is written¹⁰ that Moses covered his face after speaking with God. You, however, do not need to cover your face. 38 I opened your spiritual eyes so that you might see spiritual things. I opened your ears so that you might hear the things that are of the Spirit. 39 I will show you a likeness of my body as it was during and before my passion, and such as it was after the resurrection, as Magdalene and Peter¹¹ and others saw it. 40 You will also hear my voice as it spoke to Moses from within the bush. This same voice is now speaking within your soul.”

‡ Chapter II*

The Rewards of True Knightly Service Are Described by Five Legions of Angels

DATE: 1340S

Christ's delightful words to the bride about the glory and honor of the good and true knight, and about how the angels come out to

8. The third reason appears to be missing, unless it is understood in 10.33.

9. "A certain man": his identity is unknown; Lundén, *Den Heliga Birgitta*, I, p. 219 suggests it is Hemming, bishop of Turku/Åbo, who was involved in the mission to Avignon in the 1340s (see above, p. 41).

10. "It is written"; cf. Exodus 34:33.

11. "Magdalene and Peter" (Luke 24:34; John 20:14–18). Birgitta is being given a promise of revelations to come, including a revelation on the passion (probably Book I 10), suggesting an early date for this vision, which also refers to her calling.

* This revelation is duplicated in Book VIII 37. It occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 513, line 16 through p. 516, line 27, "Ek sagde þik fyrra . . . kär han är mik."

meet him, and about how the glorious Trinity welcomes him affectionately and takes him to a place of indescribable rest as a reward for but a little struggle.

1 “I told you before¹ about the end and punishment of that knight who was the first to desert from the knightly service he had promised me. 2 I will now describe for you by way of metaphors (for otherwise you are unable to understand spiritual things) the glory and honor of him who first manfully took up the true knightly service and manfully kept at it to the end. 3 When this friend of mine came to the end of his life and his soul left his body, five legions of angels² were sent to greet him. 4 Along with them there also came a multitude of demons in order to find out if they could lay any claim to him, for they are full of malice and never rest from malice. 5 A bright clear voice was then heard in heaven, saying: ‘My Lord and Father, is not this the man who bound himself to your will and carried it out to perfection?’ 6 The man himself then answered in his own conscience: ‘Indeed I am.’ 7 Three voices were then heard. The first was that of the divine nature, which said: ‘Did I not create you and give you a body and soul? 8 You are my son and you have done your Father’s will. Come to me, your almighty Creator and dear Father! 9 An eternal inheritance is owed to you, for you are a son. Your Father’s inheritance is owed to you, for you have been obedient to him. 10 So, dear son, come to me then! I will welcome you with joy and honor.’

11 The second voice was that of the human nature, which said: ‘Brother, come to your brother! I offered myself for you in battle and shed my blood for you. 12 You, who obeyed my will, come to me! You, who paid blood for blood and were prepared to offer death for death and life for life, come to me! 13 You, who imitated me in your life, enter now into my life and into my neverending joy! I recognize you as my true brother.’

14 The third voice was that of the Spirit (but the three are one God, not three gods) that said: ‘Come, my knight, you whose interior life was so attractive that I longed to dwell with you! 15 In your exterior conduct you were so manly that you deserved my protection. 16 Enter, then, into rest in return for all your physical troubles! In return for your mental suffering, enter into a consolation beyond description! In return for your charity and your manly struggles, come into me and I will dwell in you and you in me! 17 Come to me, then, my excellent knight, who never yearned for anything but me! Come and you will be filled with holy pleasure!’

18 Afterward five voices were heard from each of the five legions of angels. 19 The first one spoke, saying: ‘Let us march ahead of this excellent knight and carry his weapons ahead of him, that is, let us present to our God the faith he preserved unshaken and defended from the enemies of justice.’ 20 The

1. “Before”: see chs. 8–9.

2. “Legions of angels”: cf. Matthew 26:53.

second voice³ said: 'Let us carry his shield ahead of him, that is, let us show our God that patience of his which, although it is already known to God, will be even more glorious because of our testimony. 21 By his patience he not only bore adversities patiently but also thanked God for those same adversities.' 22 The third voice said: 'Let us march ahead of him and present his sword to God, that is, let us show him the obedience by which he remained obedient in both difficult and easy times in accordance with his pledge.' 23 The fourth voice said: 'Come and let us show our God his horse, that is, let us offer the testimony of his humility. 24 As a horse carries the body of a man, so his humility both preceded and followed him, carrying him forth to the performance of every good work. 25 Pride found nothing of its own in him, which is why he rode in safety.' 26 The fifth voice said: 'Come and let us present his helmet to our God, that is, let us bear witness to the divine yearning he felt for God! 27 He meditated on him in his heart at all times. He had him on his lips, in his works, and yearned for him above all things. 28 Out of his love and veneration he caused himself to die to the world. So, let us present these things to our God, for, in return for a little struggle, this man has deserved eternal rest and joy with his God for whom he yearned so much and so often!'

29 Accompanied by the sounds of these voices and a wonderful choir of angels, my friend was carried to eternal rest. 30 His soul saw it all and said to itself in exultation: 'Happy am I to have been created! Happy am I to have served my God whom I now behold! Happy am I, for I have joy and glory that will never end!' 31 In such a way did my friend come to me and receive such a reward. 32 Although not everyone sheds his blood for the sake of my name, nevertheless, everyone will receive the same reward, provided they have the intention of giving their lives for me if the occasion presents itself and the needs of the faith demand it. 33 See how important a good intention is!"

‡ Chapter 12*

Promise of Reward to Knights if They Convert to a Good Way of Life

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about the unchanging nature and eternal duration of his justice, and about how, after taking a human nature, he revealed his justice through his love in a new light, and about how he tenderly exercises mercy toward the damned and gently teaches his knights mercy.

3. "Voice" renders "vox" (11.20, 22, 23, 26) but cf. Birgittine-Norwegian "annar legio," "Tridhia legio" [second legion, third legion].

* This revelation is duplicated in Book VIII 36; paragraphs 1-4 are duplicated in VIII 2.1-4. It also occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 516, line 28 through p. 519, line 30, "Ek er sandir gudh . . . blod mote mino."

1 “I am the true King. No one deserves to be called king except me, because all honor and power come from me.”¹ 2 I am he who rendered judgment upon the first angel to fall through pride, greed, and envy. 3 I am he who rendered judgment upon Adam and Cain as well as upon the whole world by sending it the flood due to the sins of the human race. 4 I am the same one who allowed the people of Israel to come into captivity and miraculously led it out with miraculous signs. 5 All justice is to be found in me. Justice always was and is in me without beginning or end. It does not at any time grow less in me but remains in me true and unchangeable. 6 Although at the present time my justice seems to be somewhat gentler and God seems to be a more patient judge now, this represents no change in my justice, which never changes, but only shows my love the more. 7 I now judge the world by that same justice and that same true judgment as when I permitted my people to become slaves in Egypt and made them suffer in the desert.

8 My love was hidden prior to my incarnation. I kept it hidden in my justice like light obscured by a cloud. 9 Once I had taken a human nature, although the law that had been given was changed, justice itself was not changed but was all the more clearly visible and was shown in a more abundant light in love through God’s Son. This happened in three ways. 10 First, the law was mitigated, since it had been severe because of disobedient and hardened sinners and it was difficult in order to tame the proud. 11 Second, the Son of God suffered and died. 12 Third, my judgment now appears to be farther away and both seems to be postponed out of mercy and to be gentler toward sinners than before. 13 Indeed, the acts of justice concerning the first parents or the flood or those who died in the desert seem rigid and strict. But that same justice is still with me and ever has been. 14 However, mercy and love are now more apparent. Earlier, for wise reasons, love was hidden in justice and displayed with mercy, albeit in a more hidden manner, because I never carried out and never do carry out justice without mercy or kindness without justice.

15 Now, however, you might ask: if I show mercy in all my justice, in what way am I merciful toward the damned? 16 I will answer you by way of a parable. It is as if a judge were seated in judgment and his brother came along to be sentenced. The judge says to him: 17 ‘You are my brother and I am your judge and, although I sincerely love you, I cannot nor is it right for me to counteract justice. 18 In your conscience you see what is just with respect to what you deserve. It is necessary to sentence you accordingly. 19 If it were possible to go against justice, I would willingly take your sentence upon myself.’

20 I am like that judge. This person is my brother because of my human nature. When he comes to be judged by me, his conscience informs him of his guilt and he understands what his sentence should be. 21 Since I am just, I reply to the soul—figuratively speaking—and tell it: ‘You see all that is just

1. “All honor and power come from me”; cf. Romans 13:1.

for you in your conscience. Tell me what you deserve.' 22 The soul answers² me then: 'My conscience informs me of my sentence. It is the punishment due to me, because I did not obey you.' 23 I answer: 'I, your judge, took on myself all your punishment and made your danger known to you as well as the way to escape punishment. 24 It was simple justice that you could not enter heaven before atoning for your guilt. I took on your atonement, because you were incapable of bearing it yourself. 25 Through the prophets I showed you what would happen to me, and I did not omit a single detail of what the prophets foretold. 26 I showed you all the love I could in order to make you turn to me. However, since you have turned away from me, you deserve to be sentenced, because you scorned mercy. 27 However, I am still so merciful that, if it were possible for me to die again, for your sake I would again endure the same torment I once endured on the cross rather than see you sentenced to such a sentence. 28 Justice, however, says that it is impossible for me to die again, even if mercy tells me to want to die for your sake again, if it were possible.³

29 This is how I am merciful and loving even toward the damned. 30 I loved mankind from the start, even when I seemed to be angry, but nobody cared about or paid any attention to my love.

31 Because I am just and merciful, I warn the so-called knights that they should seek my mercy, lest my justice find them. My justice is as immovable as a mountain, it burns like fire, it is as frightening as thunder, and as sudden as a bow fitted with an arrow. 32 My warning is threefold. First, I warn them as a father does his children, in order to make them turn back to me, because I am their Father and Creator. 33 Let them return, and I will give them the patrimony due to them by right. Let them return, because, although I have been spurned, I will still welcome them with joy and go out to meet them with love.⁴ 34 Second, I ask them like a brother to recall my wounds and my deeds. Let them return, and I will receive them like a brother. 35 Third, as their Lord I ask them to return to the Lord to whom they pledged their faith, to whom they owe their allegiance and to whom they have sworn themselves by oath.

36 Wherefore, o knights, turn back to me, your father, who brought you up with love. Think on me, your brother, who became as one of you for your sakes. 37 Turn back to me, your kind Lord. It is highly dishonest to pledge your faith and allegiance to another lord. 38 You pledged me that you would defend my church and help the needy. 39 See now how you pledge allegiance to my enemy, and throw away my banner and hoist the banner of my enemy!

2. "Answers" translates the reading of Gh and a few of the manuscripts. Most manuscripts have the perfect tense, "answered."

3. The unusual idea that Christ desired to die twice occurs occasionally elsewhere in the *Revelations*, for example, Book III 18:28.

4. "Go out to meet them with love"; cf. Luke 15:20.

40 Wherefore, o knights, come back to me in true humility, since you deserted me through pride. If anything seems hard to suffer for me, consider what I did for you! 41 For your sakes, I went to the cross with my feet bleeding; my hands and feet were pierced for you; I spared not a single limb of mine for you. And yet you ignore all this by running away from me. 42 Come back, and I will give you three kinds of help. First, fortitude, so as to be able to withstand your physical and spiritual enemies. 43 Second, a brave generosity, so that you may fear nothing but me and may deem it a joy to exert yourselves for my sake. 44 Third, I shall give you wisdom to make you understand the true faith and the will of God. 45 Therefore, come back and take your stand like men! For I, who am giving you this warning, am the same one whom the angels serve, the one who freed those forefathers of yours who were obedient but sentenced the disobedient and humbled the proud. 46 I was first in war, first in suffering. Follow me, then, so that you will not be melted like wax by fire. 47 Why are you breaking your promise? Why do you scorn your oath? 48 Am I of less value or more unworthy than some worldly friend of yours to whom, once you pledge your faith, you keep it? To me, however, the giver of life and honor, the preserver of health, you do not render what you have promised.

49 For this reason, good knights, fulfill your promise and, if you are too weak to do so in deeds, at least have the will to do so! I feel pity due to the slavery the devil has imposed on you and so I will accept your intention as a deed. 50 If you come back to me in love, then exert yourselves in the faith of my church, and I will come out to meet you like a kind father together with all my army. I will give you five good things as a reward. 51 First, never-ending praise will always sound in your ears. 52 Second, the face and glory of God will always be before your eyes. 53 Third, the praise of God will never leave your lips.⁵ 54 Fourth, you will have everything your soul can desire, and you will desire nothing more than you have. 55 Fifth, you will never be separated from your God, but your joy will endure without end and you will live your life in joy without end.

56 Such will be your reward, my knights, if you defend my faith and exert yourselves more for the sake of my honor than for your own. 57 If you have any sense, remember that I have been patient with you and that you have insulted me in a way you yourselves would never tolerate. 58 However, although I can do all things by reason of my omnipotence, and although my justice cries out to be revenged upon you, still my mercy, which is in my wisdom and goodness, spares you. 59 Therefore, ask for mercy! In my love I grant that which a person asks me for in humility.”

5. “The praise of God will never leave your lips”; cf. Psalm 33(34):2.

‡ Chapter 13*

A Dubbing Ritual for Knights Is Described

DATE: SEPTEMBER 1348?

Christ's strong words to the bride against present-day knights, and about the proper way of creating knights, and about how God gives and bestows strength and help to them in their actions.

1 "I am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in a trinity of persons. None of the three can be separated or divided from the others, but the Father is in both the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is in both the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is in both. 2 The Divinity sent its Word to the Virgin Mary through the angel Gabriel. Yet the same God, both sending and being sent by himself, was with the angel, and he was in Gabriel, and he was in the Virgin prior to Gabriel.¹ 3 After the angel had delivered his message, the Word was made flesh in the Virgin. I, who speak with you, am that Word. 4 The Father sent me through himself together with the Holy Spirit into the womb of the Virgin, although not in such a way that the angels would be left without the vision and presence of God. Rather, I, the Son, who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the virginal womb, remained the same God in the sight of the angels in heaven together with the Father and the Spirit, ruling and sustaining all things. However, the human nature assumed by the only Son lay in the womb of Mary. 5 I, who am one God in my divine and human natures, do not disdain to speak with you and thus manifest my love and strengthen the holy faith. 6 Although my human form seems to be here before you and to be speaking with you, nonetheless it is truer to say that your soul and your conscience are with me and in me. Nothing in heaven or on earth is impossible or difficult for me.² 7 I am like a powerful king who comes to a city with his troops and takes up the whole place, occupying all of it. In like manner, my grace fills all of your limbs and strengthens them all. 8 I am within you and without you. Although I may be speaking with you, I remain the same in my glory. 9 What could possibly be difficult for me who sustains all things with my power³ and arranges all things in my wisdom, surpassing everything in excellence? 10 I, who am one God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, without beginning or end, who assumed a human nature for the sake of the salvation of humankind, the divine nature remaining intact, who suf-

* This revelation is duplicated in Book VIII 35. It occurs in the Birgittine-Norwegian text; see Klemming, *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser* 4, p. 519, line 31 through p. 522, line 21, "Nu käre ek a riddara . . . audmiukt ok gudlika þolomodh amen."

1. "He was in the Virgin prior to Gabriel": the reference to the indwelling of God in the Virgin is perhaps a reference to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; at any rate, Mary was clearly in a state of grace before the annunciation.

2. "Nothing in heaven or on earth . . . difficult for me"; cf. Genesis 18:14; Luke 1:37.

3. "Sustains all things with my power"; cf. Hebrews 1:3.

ferred, rose again, and ascended into heaven, I am now truly speaking with you.

11 I told you earlier⁴ about the knights who were once most pleasing to me because they were bound to me by the bond of charity. 12 They bound themselves by their oath to offer up their body for my body, their blood for my blood. This is why I gave them my consent, why I joined them to myself in a single bond and a single company. 13 Now, however, my grievance is that these knights, who ought to be mine, have turned away from me. 14 I am their Creator and redeemer as well as their helper. 15 I made a body with all its limbs for them. I made everything in the world for their use. 16 I redeemed them with my blood. I bought an eternal inheritance for them with my passion. 17 I protect them in every danger. 18 Now, however, they have turned away from me. They hold my passion for naught, they neglect my words that should delight and nourish their soul. 19 They despise me, preferring with all their heart and soul to offer up their body and let it be wounded in return for human praise, to shed their blood for the sake of satisfying their greed, happy to die on account of worldly, devilish, empty speech. 20 But still, although they have turned away, my mercy and justice is upon them. I mercifully watch over them so that they may not be handed over to the devil. 21 In justice I bear with them patiently and, if they would turn back again, I would welcome them joyfully and gladly run out to meet them.

22 Tell that man who wants to put his knighthood at my service that he can please me once again through the following ceremony. 23 Anyone who wants to be made a knight should proceed with his horse and armor to the churchyard and leave his horse there, since it was not made for human pride but in order to be useful in life and in defense and in fighting the enemies of God. 24 Then let him put on his cloak, placing its clasp to his forehead, similar to what a deacon does when he puts on his stole as a sign of obedience and holy patience. In like manner, he should put on his cloak and place the clasp to his forehead as a sign both of his military vows and of the obedience undertaken for the defense of Christ's cross. 25 A banner of the secular government should be carried before him, reminding him that he should obey his worldly government in all the things that are not against God. 26 Once he has entered the churchyard, the priests should go out to meet him with the banner of the church. On it the passion and wounds of Christ should be depicted as a sign that he is obliged to defend the church of God and comply with her prelates. 27 When he enters the church, the banner of the temporal government should remain outside the church while the banner of God should go before him into the church as a sign that divine authority precedes secular authority and that one should care more about spiritual things than temporal things. 28 When Mass has been said up to the *Agnus Dei*, the presiding officer, that is, the king or someone else, should go up to the knight at the altar and

4. "I told you earlier"; cf. Book II 10.12.

say: 'Do you want to be made a knight?' 29 When the candidate answers, 'I do,' the other should add the words: 'Promise to God and to me that you will defend the faith of the Holy Church and obey its leaders in all the things pertaining to God!' 30 When the candidate answers 'I do,' the other should place a sword in his hands, saying: 'Behold, I place a sword in your hands so that you may not spare even your own life for the sake of God's church, so that you may crush the enemies of God and protect the friends of God.' 31 Then he should give him the shield and say: 'Behold, I give you a shield so that you may defend yourself against the enemies of God, so that you may offer assistance to widows and orphans, so that you may add to the glory of God in every way.' 32 Then he should place his hand on the other's neck, saying: 'Behold, you are now subject to obedience and to authority. Know, then, that you must carry out in practice what you have bound yourself to by your pledges!' 33 After this, the cloak and its clasps should be fitted on him in order to remind him daily both of his vows to God and that, by his profession before the church, he has bound himself to do more than others to defend the church of God.

34 Once these things are done and the *Agnus Dei* has been said, the priest celebrating the Mass should give him my body in order that he may defend the faith of the Holy Church. 35 I will be in him and he in me.⁵ I will furnish him with help and strength, and I will make him burn with the fire of my love so as to desire nothing but me and to fear nothing but me, his God. 36 If he should happen to be on a campaign when he undertakes this service for my glory and the defense of my faith, it will still benefit him, provided his intention is upright. 37 I am everywhere by virtue of my power, and all people can please me by an upright intention and a good will. 38 I am love, and no one can come to me but a person who has love. Therefore I do not order anyone to do this, since in that case they would be serving me out of fear. 39 But those who want to undertake this form of knightly service can be pleasing to me. It would be fitting for them to show through humility that they want to return to the true exercise of knighthood, inasmuch as desertion from the profession of true knighthood occurs through pride."

EXPLANATION

40 This knight was believed to have been Sir Karl, the son of St. Birgitta.⁶

5. "I will be in him and he in me"; cf. John 6:56.

6. The explanation occurs in Gh only. Karl is first referred to as a knight in a document dated 8 September 1348 (see DS 4362), and he may have been dubbed in connection with the meeting in Örebro immediately prior to the king's departure on the crusade, although it is unknown whether or not he accompanied the king.

‡ Chapter 14

A Goldsmith Must Sell His Gold for Ten Talents

DATE: 1340S

About Christ as symbolized by a goldsmith and the words of God as gold, and about how these words should be transmitted to people with the love of God, an upright conscience, and their five senses under control, and about how the preachers of God should be diligent rather than lazy in selling the gold, that is, in transmitting the word of God.

1 “I am like a skilled goldsmith who sends his servant to sell his gold throughout the land, telling him: ‘You must do three things. 2 First of all, you must not entrust my gold to anyone except those who have calm and clear eyes. 3 Second, do not entrust it to people who have no conscience. 4 Third, put my gold on sale for ten talents weighed twice over! 5 A person who refuses to weigh my gold twice will not get it. 6 You must beware of three weapons my enemy uses against you. 7 First of all, he wants to make you slow to put my gold on display. 8 Second, he wishes to mix inferior metal into my gold so that those who see and test it think my gold is just rotten clay. 9 Third, he instructs his friends to contradict you and to claim constantly that my gold is no good.’

10 I am like that goldsmith. I forged everything in heaven and on earth, not with hammers and tools but by my power and strength. 11 All that is and was and will be is foreknown to me. 12 Not the least little worm or the smallest grain can exist or continue in existence without me. Not the least little thing escapes my foreknowledge, since everything comes from me and is foreknown to me. 13 Among all the things I have made, however, the words I have spoken with my own lips are of the greatest value, just as gold is more valuable than other metals. 14 This is why my servants, whom I dispatch with my gold throughout the world, must do three things. 15 First of all, they are not to entrust my gold to people who do not have calm and clear eyes. 16 You may ask: ‘What does it mean to have clear eyesight?’ 17 Well, a clear-sighted person is one who has divine wisdom along with divine charity. But how are you to know this? 18 It is obvious. That person is clear-sighted and can be entrusted with my gold who lives according to reason, who removes himself from worldly vanity and curiosity, who seeks nothing so much as his God. 19 But that person is blind who has knowledge but does not put the divine charity he understands into practice. He seems to have his eyes on God but he does not, for his eyes are on the world and he has turned his back to God. 20 Second, my gold is not to be entrusted to someone with no conscience. 21 Who has a conscience if not the person who manages his temporal, perishable goods with a view to eternity, who has his soul in heaven and his body on earth, who ponders daily how he is going to depart from earth and answer to God for his deeds? My gold should be entrusted to such a person. 22 Third, he should put my gold

on sale for ten talents weighed two times over. 23 What do the scales with which the gold is weighed symbolize if not conscience? What do the hands that weigh the gold symbolize if not a good will and desire? What are the counterweights to be used if not spiritual and corporal works?

24 A person who wants to buy and keep my gold, that is, my words, should examine himself uprightly on the scales of his conscience and consider how he is to pay for it with ten talents carefully weighed out in accordance with my wishes. 25 The first talent is the person's disciplined eyesight. This makes him consider the difference between corporal and spiritual vision, what use there is in physical beauty and appearance, how much excellence there is in the beauty and glory of the angels and of the heavenly powers that surpass all the stars of the sky in splendor, and what joyful delight a soul possesses in God's commandments and in his glory. 26 This talent, I mean, physical vision and spiritual vision, which is found in God's commandments and in chastity, are not to be measured on the same scale. Spiritual vision counts for more than the corporal kind and weighs more, inasmuch as a person's eyes must be open to what is beneficial for the soul and necessary for the body, but closed to foolishness and indecency.

27 The second talent is good hearing. A person should consider the worth of indecent, silly, and derisive language. Surely, it is worth nothing more than an empty puff of air. 28 This is why a person should hear God's praises and hymns. He should listen to the deeds and sayings of my saints. He should hear what he needs in order to foster his soul and body in virtue. 29 This kind of hearing weighs more on the scales than the hearing of indecency. This good kind of hearing, when it is weighed on the scales against the other kind, will sink the scales all the way down, while the other, empty kind of hearing will get lifted up and weigh nothing at all.

30 The third talent is that of the tongue. A person should weigh the excellence and usefulness of edifying and measured speech on the scales of his conscience. 31 He should also take note of the harmfulness and uselessness of vain and idle speech. He should then put away vain speech and love the good kind.

32 The fourth talent is taste. What is the taste of the world if not misery? Toil at the start of an enterprise, sorrow as it continues, bitterness at the end. 33 Accordingly, a person should carefully weigh spiritual taste against the worldly kind, and the spiritual will outweigh worldly taste. The spiritual taste is never lost, never becomes wearisome, never diminishes. 34 This kind of taste begins in the present through the restraint of lust and through a life of moderation and lasts forever in heaven through the enjoyment and sweet delight of God.

35 The fifth talent is that of the sense of touch. A person should weigh how much care and misery he feels because of the body, all the worldly cares, all the many problems with his neighbor. Then he experiences misery everywhere. 36 Let him also weigh how great the peace of soul and of a well-disciplined mind is, how much good there is in not being worried about vain and superfluous possessions. Then he will experience consolation everywhere.

37 Whoever wants to measure it well should put the spiritual and physical senses of touch on the scales, and the result will be that the spiritual outweighs the corporal. 38 This spiritual sense of touch begins and develops through the patient endurance of setbacks and through perseverance in the commandments of God, and it lasts forever in joy and peaceful rest. 39 A person who gives more weight to physical rest and to worldly feelings and joy than to those of eternity is not worthy to touch my gold or to enjoy my happiness.

40 The sixth talent is human work. A person should carefully weigh in his conscience both spiritual and material work. 41 The former leads to heaven, the latter to the world; the former to an eternal life without suffering, the latter to tremendous pain and suffering. 42 Whoever desires my gold should give more weight to spiritual work, which is done in my love and for my glory, than to material work, since spiritual things endure, while material things will pass away.

43 The seventh talent is the orderly use of time. A person is given certain times to devote to spiritual things alone, other times for bodily functions, without which life is impossible (if these are used reasonably, they are counted as a spiritual use of time), and other times for physically useful activity. 44 Since a person must render an account of his time as well as of his deeds, he should therefore give priority to the spiritual use of time before turning to material labor, and manage his time in such a way that spiritual things are given more priority than temporal things so that no time is allowed to pass without the examination and right balance required by justice.

45 The eighth talent is the just administration of the temporal goods given to one, meaning that a rich person, as far as his means allow, should give to the poor with divine charity. 46 But you might ask: 'What should a poor person who owns nothing give?' 47 He should have the right intention and think the following thoughts: 'If I had anything, I would gladly give it generously.' 48 Such an intention is counted for him as a deed. If the poor man's intention is such that he would like to have temporal possessions like others but only intends to give a small sum and mere trifles to the poor, this intention is reckoned for him as a small deed. 49 Therefore a rich person with possessions should practice charity. A needy person should have the intention of giving, and it will gain him merit. 50 Whoever gives more weight to the temporal than to the spiritual, whoever gives me one shilling and the world a hundred and himself a thousand does not use a fair measuring standard. A person who uses a measuring standard like that does not deserve to have my gold. 51 I, the giver of all things, who can also take all things away, deserve the worthier share. Temporal goods were created for human use and necessity, not for superfluity.

52 The ninth talent is the careful examination of times gone and past. A person should examine his deeds, what sort of deeds they were, their number, how he has corrected them and with what merit. 53 He should also consider whether his good works were fewer than his bad. If he should find his bad works to be more numerous than his good, then he should have a perfect purpose of amendment and be truly contrite for his misdeeds. 54 This intention, if it be true and firm, will weigh more in God's sight than all his sins.

55 The tenth talent is the consideration of and planning for future time. 56 If a person has the intention of not wanting to love anything but the things of God, of not desiring anything but what he knows to be pleasing to God, of willingly and patiently embracing difficulties, even the pains of hell, were that to give God any consolation and were it to be God's will, then this talent excels all the rest. 57 Through this talent all dangers are easily avoided.¹ Whoever pays these ten talents will get my gold.

58 However, as I said, the enemy wants to impede the people delivering my gold in three ways. First he wants to make them slow and lazy. 59 There is both a physical and a spiritual laziness. The physical kind is when the body tires of working, getting up, and so forth. 60 Spiritual laziness is when a spiritually minded person, knowing the sweet delight and grace of my Spirit, prefers to rest in that delight rather than to go out and help others to partake of it with him. 61 Did not Peter and Paul experience the overflowing sweet delight of my Spirit? If it had been my will, they would rather have lain hidden in the lowest part of the earth with the interior delight they had than to go out into the world. 62 However, in order that others might be made participants in their sweet delight and in order to instruct others along with themselves, they preferred to go out for other people's sake as well as for their own greater glory and not to remain by themselves without strengthening others with the grace given them. 63 In like manner my friends, although they would like to be alone and to enjoy that sweet delight they have already, should now go forth so that others might also become participants in their joy. 64 Just as someone with abundant possessions does not use them for himself alone but entrusts them to others, so too my words and my grace should not be kept hidden but should be broadcast to others so that they, too, may be edified.

65 My friends can give aid to three kinds of people.² First, to the damned; second, to sinners, that is, to those who fall into sins and get up again; third, to the good who stand firm. 66 But you may ask: 'How can a person give aid to the damned, seeing that they are unworthy of grace and it is impossible for them to return to grace?' 67 Let me answer you by way of a simile. 68 It is as though there were countless holes at the bottom of a certain precipice and anyone falling into them would necessarily sink to the depths. However, if someone were to block up one of the holes, the person falling would not sink down as deeply as if no hole had been blocked up. This is what happens to the damned. 69 Although by reason of my justice and their own hardened malice they have to be condemned at a definite and foreknown time, still their punishment will be lighter if they are held back by others from doing certain evils and instead urged to do something good. 70 That is how I am merciful even

1. "Through this talent all dangers are easily avoided" translates the reading of Gh and most manuscripts (*Per hoc talentum omnia veniencia facile vitantur*). The editors emend to "all vicissitudes are easily overcome" (*omnia adveniencia facile vincuntur*); see further Undhagen and Bergh, *Book II*, p. 21.

2. "Three kinds of people" follows Gh and the modern editors. Most manuscripts have the less plausible "three generations of people."

toward the damned. Although mercy pleads for leniency, justice and their own wickedness countermand it.

71 In the second place, they can give aid to those who fall down but get back up again by teaching them how to get up, by making them take care not to fall, and by instructing them how to improve and to resist their passions.

72 In the third place, they can be of benefit to the righteous and perfect. Do not they themselves fall as well? 73 Of course they do, but it is for their greater glory and the devil's shame. Just as a soldier lightly wounded in battle gets all the more stirred up because of his wound and becomes that much keener for battle, so too the diabolical temptation of adversity stirs up my chosen ones all the more for the spiritual struggle and for humility, and they make all the more fervent progress toward winning the crown of glory. 74 Therefore my words should not be kept hidden from my friends, for, having heard of my grace, they will get all the more stirred up as to devotion toward me.

75 My enemy's second method is to use deception in order to make my gold look like clay. For this reason, when any of my words are being transcribed, the transcriber should bring two trusty witnesses or one man of proven conscience to certify that he has examined the document. Only then may it be transmitted to whomever he wants, in order not to come uncertified into the hands of enemies who could add something false, which could lead to the words of truth being denigrated among simple folk.

76 My enemy's third method is to make his own friends preach resistance to my gold. My friends should then say to those who contradict them: 77 "The gold of these words contains, as it were, only three teachings. They teach you to fear rightly, to love piously, to desire heaven intelligently. 78 Test the words and see for yourselves, and, if you find anything else there, contradict it!"

‡ Chapter 15

About Two Chambers in an Abyss; Christ's Work on the Overgrown Wilderness of the World

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about how the way to paradise was opened by his coming, and about the ardent love he showed us in bearing so many sufferings for us from his birth to his death, and about how the way to hell has now been made wide and the way to paradise narrow.

1 "You are wondering why I am telling you such things and why I am revealing such marvels to you. Is it for your sake alone? Of course not, it is for the edification and salvation of others. 2 You see, the world was like a kind of wilderness in which there was one road leading down to the great abyss. 3 In the abyss were two chambers. One was so deep that it had no bottom and the people who went down into it never came up again. 4 The second was not so

deep or frightening as the first. Those who went down into it had some hope of help; they experienced longing and delay but not misery, darkness but not torment. 5 The people who lived in this second chamber¹ kept sending their cries daily to a magnificent city nearby that was filled with every good thing and every delight. 6 They cried out hardily, for they knew the way to the city. However, the wild forest was so thick and dense that they were unable to cross it or make any advance because of its density, and they had not the strength to forge a path through it. 7 What was their cry? Their cry was this: 8 ‘O God, come and give us help, show us the way and enlighten us, we are waiting for you! We cannot be saved by anyone but you.’ 9 This cry came to my hearing in heaven and moved me to mercy. Appeased by their crying, I came to the wilderness like a pilgrim.

10 But before I began to work and make my way, a voice spoke out ahead of me, saying: ‘The ax has been laid to the tree.’² 11 This voice was none other than John the Baptist. He was sent before me and cried out in the desert: ‘The ax has been laid to the tree,’ which is to say: 12 ‘Let the human race be ready, for the ax is now ready, and he has come to prepare a way to the city and is uprooting every obstacle.’ 13 When I came, I worked from sunrise to sunset, that is, I devoted myself to the salvation of humankind from the time of my incarnation until my death on the cross. 14 At the start of my undertaking, I took flight into the wilderness away from my enemies, more precisely, from Herod who was pursuing me;³ I was put to the test by the devil and suffered persecution from men. 15 Later, while enduring much toil, I ate and drank and sinlessly complied with other natural needs in order to build up the faith and to show that I had truly taken a human nature. 16 While I prepared the way to the city, that is, to heaven, and uprooted all the obstacles that had sprung up, brambles and thorns scratched my side and harsh nails wounded my hands and feet. 17 My teeth and my cheeks were badly mishandled. I bore it with patience and did not turn back but went ahead all the more zealously, like an animal driven by starvation that, when it sees a man holding a spear against it, charges into the spear in its desire to get at the man. 18 And the more the man thrusts the spear into the entrails of the animal, the more the animal thrusts itself against the spear in its desire to get at the man, until at last its entrails and entire body are pierced through and through. 19 In like manner, I burned with such love for the soul, that, when I beheld and experienced all these harsh torments, the more eager men were to kill me, the more ardent I became to suffer for the salvation of souls.

20 Thus I made my way in the wilderness of this world and prepared a road through my blood and sweat. 21 The world might well be called a wilderness, since it was lacking in every virtue and remained a wilderness of vice.

1. “Chamber” renders Lat. “receptaculum”; cf. Sw. “rwm” [room, place, space].

2. “The ax has been laid to the tree” (Matthew 3:10).

3. “Herod who was pursuing me”; cf. Matthew 2:13–18.

22 It had only one road on which everyone was descending into hell, the damned toward damnation, the good towards darkness. 23 I heard mercifully their longstanding desire for future salvation and came like a pilgrim in order to work. Unknown to them in my divinity and power, I prepared the road that leads to heaven. 24 My friends saw this way and observed the difficulties of my work and my eagerness of heart, and many of them followed me in joy for a long time.

25 But now there has been a change in the voice that used to cry out: 'Be ready!' 26 My road has been altered, and thickets and thorn bushes have grown up, and those who were advancing on it have halted. 27 The way to hell has been opened up. It is broad, and many people travel by it. 28 However, in order not to let my road become altogether forgotten and neglected, my few friends still travel it in their longing for their heavenly homeland, like birds moving from bush to bush, hidden, as it were, and serving me out of fear, since everyone nowadays thinks that to travel by the way of the world leads to happiness and joy.

29 For this reason, because my road has become narrow while the road of the world has been widened,⁴ I am now shouting out to my friends in the wilderness, that is, in the world, that they should remove the thorn bushes and brambles⁵ from the road leading to heaven and recommend my road to those who are making their way. 30 As it is written: 'Blessed are those who have not seen me and have believed'.⁶ Likewise, happy are they who now believe in my words and put them into practice. 31 As you see, I am like a mother who runs out to meet her roving son. She holds out a light for him on the way so that he can see the road. In her love, she goes to meet him on the way and shortens his journey. She goes up to him and embraces and greets him. 32 With love like that I shall run out to meet my friends and all the people returning to me, and I shall give their hearts and souls the light of divine wisdom. 33 I will embrace them with glory and surround them with the heavenly court where there is neither heaven above nor earth below but only the vision of God; where there is neither food nor drink, but only the enjoyment of God.⁷

34 The road to hell is open for the wicked. Once they enter into it, they will never come up again. They will be without glory or bliss and will be filled with misery and everlasting reproach. 35 This is why I speak these words and reveal this love of mine, so that those who have turned away may turn back to me and recognize me, their Creator, whom they have forgotten."

4. "My road has become narrow while the road of the world has been widened"; cf. Matthew 7:13-14.

5. "Thorn bushes and brambles" (Genesis 3:18).

6. "As it is written: Blessed . . . and have believed" (John 20:29).

7. "Neither food nor drink, but only the enjoyment of God"; cf. Romans 14:17.

‡ Chapter 16

The Lord of a Vineyard Tasting a Mediocre Wine: An Allegory for Birgitta's Calling

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about why he speaks with her rather than with others better than she, and about three things commanded, three forbidden, three permitted, and three recommended to the bride by Christ; a most excellent lesson.

1 "Many people wonder why I speak with you and not with others who live a better life and have served me for a longer time. I answer them by way of a parable: 2 A certain lord owns several vineyards in several different regions. The wine of each vineyard has the particular taste of the region where it comes from. 3 Once the wine has been pressed, the owner of the vineyards sometimes drinks the mediocre and weaker wine and not the better kind. 4 If any of those present sees him and asks their lord why he does so, he will answer that this particular wine tasted good and sweet to him at the time. 5 This does not mean that the lord gets rid of the better wines or holds them in disdain, but that he reserves them for his use and privilege on an appropriate occasion, each of them for the occasion for which it is suited. 6 This is the way I deal with you. I have many friends whose life is sweeter to me than honey, more delicious than any wine, brighter in my sight than the sun. 7 However, it pleased me to choose you in my Spirit, not because you are better than they are or equal to them or better qualified, but because I wanted to—I who can make sages out of fools and saints out of sinners. I did not grant you so great a grace because I hold the others in disdain. 8 Rather, I am reserving them for another use and privilege as justice demands. 9 Humble yourself then in every way, and do not let anything trouble you but your sins. Love everyone, even those who seem to hate and slander you, for they are only providing you with a greater opportunity to win your crown!

10 Three things I command you to do. Three things I command you not to do. Three things I permit you to do. Three things I recommend you to do. 11 I command you to do three things, then. First, to desire nothing but your God; second, to cast off all pride and arrogance; third, always to hate the lust of the flesh. 12 Three things I order you not to do. First, neither to love vain, indecent speech nor, second, excessive eating and superfluity in other things, and, third, to flee from worldly merriment and frivolity. 13 I permit you to do three things. First, to sleep moderately for the sake of good health; second, to carry out temperate vigils to train the body; third, to eat moderately for the strength and sustenance of your body. 14 I recommend three things to you. First, to take pains to fast and carry out good works that earn the promise of the kingdom of heaven; second, to dispose of your possessions for the glory of God; third, I counsel you to think on two things continually in your heart. 15 First, think on all that I have done for you by suffering and dying for you.

Such a thought stirs up love for God. Second, consider my justice and the coming judgment. This instills fear in your mind.

16 Finally, there is a fourth thing which I both order and command and recommend and permit. This is to obey as you ought. 17 I order this, inasmuch as I am your God. I command you not to act otherwise, inasmuch as I am your Lord. I permit this to you, inasmuch as I am your bridegroom. I also recommend it, inasmuch as I am your friend.”

‡ Chapter 17

On Salvation History; and on How God Makes His Will Known through Birgitta

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s words to the bride about how God’s divinity can truly be named virtue, and about the manifold downfall of humankind instigated by the devil, and about the manifold remedy to aid humankind that was given and provided for through Christ.

1 The Son of God spoke to the bride saying: “Do you firmly believe that what the priest holds in his hands is the body of God?”¹ 2 She answered: “I firmly believe that, just as the word sent to Mary was made flesh and blood in her womb, so too that which I now see in the hands of the priest I believe to be true God and man.” 3 The Lord answered her: “I am the same who am speaking to you, remaining eternally in the divine nature, having become human in the womb of the Virgin but without losing my divinity. 4 My divinity can rightly be named virtue, since there are two things in it: power most powerful, the source of all power, and wisdom most wise, the source and seat of all wisdom. 5 In this divine nature all things that exist are ordered wisely and rationally. 6 There is not one little tittle in heaven that is not in it and that has not been established and foreseen by it. 7 Not a single atom on earth, not one spark in hell is outside its rule and can hide itself from its foreknowledge.”²

8 Do you wonder why I said ‘not one little tittle in heaven’? Well, a tittle is the final stroke on a glossed word. Indeed God’s word is the final stroke on all things and was ordained for the glorification of all things.³ 9 Why did I say ‘not a single atom on earth,’ if not because all earthly things are transitory?

1. “Do you believe . . . the body of Christ” may allude to the rite of administering viaticum, to strengthen those in likelihood of imminent death on their journey to eternity. Cf., for example, the “Ordo ad visitandum infirmum” in Collijn, *Manuale Upsalense*, p. 54, “Credis, quod hoc, quod in minibus teneo, sit verus deus et verus homo creator et saluator et iudex mundi?” On Birgitta’s comments on the real presence in the Eucharist, see further Fogelqvist, *Apostasy and Reform*, pp. 129–33.

2. “Foreknowledge” translates an emendation found in two manuscripts and Gh, adopted by the modern editors, with reference to the parallel passage in 14.12 (see Undhagen and Bergh, *Book II*, p. 22). Most manuscripts have “presence.”

3. “One little tittle”: the image and its application are difficult to understand; “tittle” is strictly any small stroke of the pen, such as a dot or perhaps a reference mark, but its association may be with something that is small and insignificant, and yet all important.

Not even atoms, however small they are, are outside of God's plan and providence. 10 Why did I say 'not one spark in hell,' if not because there is nothing in hell except envy? 11 Just as a spark comes from fire, so all kinds of evil and envy come from the unclean spirits, with the result that they and their followers always have envy but never love of any kind. 12 Therefore, perfect knowledge and power are in God, which is why each thing is so arranged that nothing is greater than God's power, nor can anything be caused to be made contrary to reason, but all things have been made rationally, suitable to the nature of each thing. 13 The divine nature, then, inasmuch as it can rightly be named virtue, showed its greatest virtue in the creation of the angels. 14 It created them for its own glory and for their delight, so that they might have charity and obedience: charity, by which they love none but God; obedience, by which they obey God in all things. 15 Some of the angels went wickedly astray and wickedly set their will against these two things. They turned their will directly against God, so much so that virtue became odious to them and, therefore, that which was opposed to God became dear to them. 16 Because of this disordered direction of their will, they deserved to fall. It was not that God caused their fall, but they themselves brought it about through the abuse of their own knowledge.

17 When God saw the reduction in the numbers of the heavenly host that had been caused through their sin, he again showed the power of his divinity. 18 For he created human beings in body and soul. He gave them two goods, namely the freedom to do good and the freedom to avoid evil, because, given that no more angels were to be created, it was fitting that human beings should have the freedom of rising, if they wished, to angelic rank. 19 God also gave the human soul two goods, namely a rational mind to order to distinguish opposite from opposite and better from best; and fortitude in order to persevere in the good. 20 When the devil saw this love of God for mankind, he considered thus in his envy: 'So then, God has made a new thing that can rise up to our place and by its own efforts gain that which we lost through neglect! If we can deceive him and cause his downfall, he will cease his efforts, and then he will not rise up to such a rank.' 21 Then, having thought out a plan of deception, they deceived the first man and prevailed over him with my just permission. 22 But how and when was the man defeated? To be sure, when he left off virtue and did what was forbidden, when the serpent's promise pleased him more than obedience to me. 23 Due to this disobedience he could not live in heaven, since he had despised God, and not in hell either, since his soul, using reason, carefully examined what he had done and had contrition for his crime. 24 For that reason, the God of virtue, considering human wretchedness, arranged a kind of imprisonment or place of captivity, where people might come to recognize their weakness and atone for their disobedience until they should deserve to rise to the rank they had lost. 25 The devil, meanwhile, taking this into consideration, wanted to kill the human soul by means of ingratitude. 26 Injecting his filth into the soul, he so darkened her intellect that she had neither the love nor the fear of God. 27 God's justice was forgotten and his judgment scorned. For that reason, God's goodness and gifts were no longer appreciated

but fell into oblivion. 28 Thus God was not loved, and the human conscience was so darkened that humanity was in a wretched state and fell into even greater wretchedness. 29 Although humanity was in such a state, still God's virtue was not lacking; rather, he revealed his mercy and justice. He revealed his mercy when he revealed to Adam and other good people that they would obtain help at a predetermined time. This stirred up their fervor and love for God. 30 He also revealed his justice through the flood in Noah's day, which filled human hearts with the fear of God. 31 Even after that the devil still did not leave off further molesting humankind, but attacked it by means of two other evils. 32 First, he inspired faithlessness in people; second, hopelessness. 33 He inspired faithlessness in order that people might not believe in the word of God but would attribute his wonders to fate. 34 He inspired hopelessness lest they hope to be saved and obtain the glory they had lost.

35 The God of virtue supplied two remedies to fight these two evils. Against hopelessness he offered hope, giving Abram a new name and promising him that from his seed there would be born the one who would lead him and the imitators of his faith back to the lost inheritance. 36 He also appointed prophets to whom he revealed the manner of redemption and the times and places of his suffering. 37 With respect to the second evil of faithlessness, God spoke to Moses and revealed his will and the law to him and backed his words up with portents and deeds. 38 Although all this was done, still the devil did not desist from his evil. Constantly urging humankind on to worse sins, he inspired two other attitudes in the human heart: first, that of regarding the law as unbearable and losing peace of mind over trying to live up to it; 39 second, he inspired the thought that God's decision to die and suffer out of charity was too incredible and far too difficult to believe.

40 Again God provided two further remedies for these two evils. First, he sent his own Son into the womb of the Virgin so that nobody would lose peace of mind over how hard the Law was to fulfill, since, having assumed a human nature, his Son fulfilled⁴ the requirements of the Law and then made it less strict. 41 With respect to the second evil, God displayed the very height of virtue. The Creator died for creation, the righteous one for sinners. Innocent, he suffered to the last drop, as had been foretold by the prophets. 42 Even then the wickedness of the devil did not cease, but again he rose up against humanity, inspiring two further evils. 43 First, he inspired the human heart to hold my words in contempt and, second, to let my deeds fall into oblivion.

44 God's virtue has again begun to indicate two new remedies against these two evils. The first is to return my words to honor and [the second]⁵ to undertake to imitate my deeds. 45 This is why God has led you in his Spirit. He has also revealed his will on earth to his friends through you, for two reasons in particular. 46 The first is in order to reveal God's mercy, so that

4. "Fulfilled"; cf. Matthew 5:17.

5. [The second]: our addition.

people might learn to recall the memory of God's love and suffering. The second is to remind them of God's justice and to make them fear the severity of my judgment.

47 Therefore, tell this man⁶ that, given that my mercy has already come, he should bring it out into the light so that people might learn to seek mercy and to beware of the judgment on themselves. 48 Moreover, tell him that, although my words have been written down, still they must first be preached and put into practice. You can understand this by way of a metaphor. 49 When Moses was about to receive the Law, a staff was made and two stone tablets were hewn. Nevertheless, he did not work miracles with the staff until there was a need for it and the occasion demanded it. 50 When the acceptable time⁷ came, then there was a show of miracles and my words were proved by deeds. 51 Likewise, when the New Law arrived, first my body grew and developed until a suitable time and from then on my words were heard. 52 However, although my words were heard, still they did not have force and strength in themselves until accompanied by my deeds. And they were not fulfilled until I fulfilled all the things that had been foretold about me through my passion. 53 It is the same now. Although my loving words have been written down and should be conveyed to the world, still they cannot have any force until they have been completely brought out into the light."

‡ Chapter 18

The Image of a Phoenix and Dry Twigs Is Used to Signify How Birgitta's Heart Should Be Kindled

DATE: 1340S

About three wonderful things that Christ has done for the bride, and about how the sight of angels is too beautiful and that of devils too ugly for human nature to bear, and about why Christ has condescended to come as a guest to a widow like her.

1 "I have done three wonderful things for you. You see with spiritual eyes. You hear with spiritual ears. With the physical touch of your hand you feel my spirit in your living breast.¹ 2 You do not see the sight you see as it is in fact. For if you saw the spiritual beauty of the angels and of holy souls, your body could not bear to see it but would break like a vessel, broken and decayed due to the soul's joy at the sight. 3 If you saw the demons as they are, you would either go on living in great sorrow or you would die a sudden death at the terrible sight of them. 4 This is why spiritual beings appear to you as if they had bodies. The angels and souls appear to you in the likeness of human beings

6. "This man": he cannot be identified.

7. "The acceptable time"; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:2.

1. On Birgitta's spiritual experience as physical experience, see further Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 65–

who have soul and life, because angels live by their spirit. 5 The demons appear to you in a form that is mortal and belongs to mortality, such as in the form of animals or other creatures. 6 Such creatures have a mortal spirit, since when their body dies, their spirit dies too. However, devils do not die in spirit but are forever dying and live forever. 7 Spiritual words are spoken to you by means of analogies, since you cannot grasp them otherwise. 8 The most wonderful thing of all is that you feel my spirit move in your heart.”

9 Then she replied: “O my Lord, Son of the Virgin, why have you condescended to come as a guest to so base a widow, who is poor in every good work and so weak in understanding and discernment and ridden with sin for so long?” 10 He answered her: “I can do three things. First, I can make a poor person rich and a foolish person of little intelligence capable and intelligent. 11 I am also able to restore an aged person to youth. It is like the phoenix that brings together dried twigs. Among them is the twig of a certain tree that is dry by nature on the outside and warm on the inside. The warmth of the sunbeams comes to it first and kindles it, and then all the twigs are set on fire from it. In the same way you should gather together the virtues by which you can be restored from your sins. 12 Among them you should have a piece of wood that is warm on the inside and dry on the outside; I mean your heart, which should be dry and pure from all worldly sensuality on the outside and so full of love on the inside that you want nothing and yearn for nothing but me. 13 Then the fire of my love will come into the heart first and in that way you will be enkindled with all the virtues. Thoroughly burned by them and purged from sins, you will arise like the rejuvenated bird,² having put off the skin of sensuality.”

‡ Chapter 19

A Parable about a Beekeeper and His Bees

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s words to the bride about how God speaks to his friends through his preachers and through sufferings, and about Christ as symbolized by an owner of bees and the church by a beehive and Christians by bees, and about why bad Christians are allowed to live among good ones.

1 “I am your God. My Spirit has led you to hear and see and feel: to hear my words, to see visions, to feel my Spirit with the joy and devotion of your soul. 2 All mercy is found in me together with justice, and there is mercy in my justice. I am like a man who sees his friends fall away from him, down on to a road where there is a horrible yawning gap out of which it is impossible

2. “Rejuvenated bird,” i.e., the phoenix, which rises from its own ashes, an image that appears in a variety of medieval Scandinavian sources; see further KL “fenix.”

to climb. 3 I speak to these friends through those people who have an understanding of scripture. I speak with a lash, I warn them of their danger. 4 But they just act contrariwise. They head for the impasse and do not care about what I say. I have only one thing to say: 'Sinner, turn back to me! 5 You are headed for danger; there are traps along the way of a kind that are hidden from you due to the darkness of your heart.' 6 They scorn what I say. They ignore my mercy. 7 However, though my mercy is such that I warn sinners, my justice is such that, even if all the angels were to drag them back, they could not be converted unless they themselves direct their own will toward the good. 8 If they turned their will to me and gave me their heart's consent, not all the demons together could hold them back.

9 There is an insect called the bee that is kept by its lord and master. The bees show respect in three ways to their ruler, the queen bee, and derive benefit from her in three ways. 10 First, the bees carry all the nectar they find to their queen. 11 Second, they stay or go at her beck and call, and wherever they fly and wherever they appear, their love and charity is always for the queen. 12 Third, they follow and serve her, sticking steadily close by her side. 13 In return for these three things, the bees receive a threefold benefit from their queen. First, her signal gives them a set time to go out and work. 14 Second, she gives them direction and mutual love. Because of her presence and rule and because of the love she has toward them and they toward her, all the bees are united with one another in love, and each one rejoices over the others and at their advancement. 15 Third, they are made fruitful through their mutual love and the joy of their leader. Just as fish discharge their eggs while playing together in the sea, and their eggs fall into the sea and bear fruit, so bees are also made fruitful through their mutual love and their leader's affection and joy. 16 By my wondrous power, a seemingly lifeless seed comes forth from their love and will receive life through my goodness.

17 The master, that is, the owner of the bees, speaks to his servant in his concern for them: 'My servant,' he says, 'it seems to me that my bees are ill and do not fly at all.' 18 The servant answers: 'I do not understand this illness, but if it is so, I ask you how I can learn about it.' 19 The master answers: 'You can infer their illness or problem by three signs. 20 The first sign is that they are weak and sluggish in flight, which means that they have lost the queen from whom they receive strength and consolation. 21 The second sign is that they go out at random and unplanned hours, which means that they are not getting the signal of their leader's call. 22 The third sign is that they show no love for the beehive, and therefore return home carrying nothing back, sating themselves but not bringing any nectar to live on in the future. 23 Healthy and fit bees are steady and strong in their flight. They keep regular hours for going out and returning, bringing back wax to build their dwellings and honey for their nourishment.' 24 The servant answers the master: 'If they are useless and infirm, why do you allow them to go on anymore and do not do away with them?' 25 The master answers: 'I permit them to live for three reasons, inasmuch as they provide three benefits, although not by their own power. 26 First, because they occupy the dwellings prepared for them, horseflies do not come

and occupy the empty dwellings and disturb the good bees that remain. 27 Second, other bees become more fruitful and diligent at their work due to the badness of the bad bees. 28 The fruitful bees see the bad and unfruitful bees working only to satisfy their own desires, and they become the more diligent in their work of gathering for their queen the more eager the bad bees are seen to be in gathering for their own desires. 29 In the third place, the bad bees are useful to the good bees when it comes to their mutual defense. 30 For there is a flying insect¹ accustomed to eating bees. When the bees perceive this insect coming, all of them hate it in common. Although the bad bees fight and hate it out of envy and self-defense, while the good ones do so out of love and justice, both the good and bad bees work together to attack these insects. 31 If all the bad bees were taken away and only the good ones were left, this insect would quickly prevail over them, since then they would be fewer. That is why,' the master said, 'I put up with the useless bees. 32 However, when autumn comes, I shall provide for the good bees and shall separate them from the bad ones that, if they are left outside the beehive, will die from the cold. 33 But if they remain inside and do not gather, they will be in danger of starvation, inasmuch as they have neglected to gather food when they could.'

34 I am God, the Creator of all things; I am the owner and the lord of the bees. 35 Out of my ardent love and by my blood I founded my beehive, that is, the Holy Church, in which Christians should be gathered and dwell in unity of faith and mutual love. 36 Their dwelling-places are their hearts, and the honey of good thoughts and affections should inhabit it. 37 This honey ought to be brought there through considering my love in creation and my toils in redemption and my patient support and mercy in calling back and restoring. 38 In this beehive, that is, in the Holy Church, there are two kinds of people, just as there were two kinds of bees. 39 The first ones are those bad Christians who do not gather nectar for me but for themselves. They return carrying nothing back and do not recognize their leader. They have a sting instead of honey and lust instead of love. 40 The good bees represent good Christians. They show me respect in three ways. 41 First, they hold me as their leader and lord, offering me sweet honey, that is, works of charity, which are pleasing to me and useful to themselves. 42 Second, they wait upon my will. Their will accords with my will, all their thought is on my passion, all their actions are for my glory. 43 Third, they follow me, that is, they obey me in everything. Wherever they are, whether outside or inside, whether in sorrow or in joy, their heart is always joined to my heart. 44 This is why they derive benefit from me in three ways. 45 First, through the call of virtue and my inspiration, they have fixed and certain times, night at nighttime and daylight at daytime. 46 Indeed, they change night into day, that is, worldly happiness into eternal happiness, and perishable happiness into everlasting stability. 47 They are sensible in every respect, inasmuch as they make use of their present goods for their necessities; they are steadfast in adversity, wary in success, moderate in the

1. "Flying insect" renders Lat. "vermis volans"; cf. Sw. "getungin" [wasp].

care of the body, careful and circumspect in their actions. 48 Second, like the good bees, they have mutual love, in such a way that they are all of one heart toward me, loving their neighbor as themselves but me above all else, even above themselves. 49 Third, they are made fruitful through me. What is it to be fruitful if not to have my Holy Spirit and be filled with him? 50 Whoever does not have him and lacks his honey is unfruitful and useless; he falls down and perishes. 51 However, the Holy Spirit sets the person in whom he dwells on fire with divine love; he opens the senses of his mind; he uproots pride and incontinence; he spurs the soul on to the glory of God and the contempt of the world.

52 The unfruitful bees do not know this Spirit and therefore scorn discipline, fleeing the unity and fellowship of love. 53 They are empty of good works; they change daylight into darkness, consolation into mourning, happiness into sorrow. 54 Nevertheless, I let them live for three reasons. 55 First, so that horseflies, that is, the infidels, do not get into the dwelling-places that have been prepared. If the wicked were removed all at once, there would be too few good Christians left, and, because of their small numbers, the infidels, being greater in number, would come and live side by side with them, causing them much disturbance. 56 Second, they are tolerated in order to test the good Christians, for, as you know, the perseverance of good people is put to the test by the wickedness of the wicked. Adversity reveals how patient a person is, while prosperity makes plain how persevering and temperate he is. 57 Since vices insinuate themselves into good characters from time to time and virtues can often make people proud, the wicked are allowed to live alongside the good in order that good people may not become enervated from too much happiness or fall asleep out of sloth, and also in order that they may frequently fix their gaze on God. 58 Where there is little struggle, there is also little reward. 59 In the third place, they are tolerated for their assistance so that neither the gentiles nor other hostile infidels might harm those seeming to be good Christians, but that they might rather fear them because there are more of them. 60 The good offer resistance to the wicked out of justice and love of God, while the wicked do so only for the sake of self-defense and to avoid God's wrath. 61 In this way, then, the good and wicked help each other, with the result that the wicked are tolerated for the sake of the good and the good receive a higher crown on account of the wickedness of the wicked.

62 The beekeepers are the prelates of the church and the princes of the land, whether good or bad. 63 I speak to the good keepers and I, their God and keeper, admonish them to keep my bees safe. 64 Have them consider the comings and goings of the bees! Let them take note of whether they are sick or healthy! 65 If they happen not to know how to discern this, here are three signs I give them to recognize it. 66 Those bees are useless that are sluggish in flight, erratic in their hours, and contribute nothing to bringing in honey. 67 The ones that are sluggish in flight are those who show greater concern for temporal goods than for eternal ones, who fear the death of the body more

than that of the soul, who say this to themselves: 68 ‘Why should I be full of disquiet, when I can have quiet and peace? Why should I die to myself when I can live?’ These wretches do not reflect on how I, the powerful King of glory, chose to be powerless. 69 I know the greatest quiet and peace and, indeed, I am peace itself, and yet I chose to give up peace and quiet for their sake and freed them through my own death. 70 They are erratic in their hours in that their affections tend toward worldliness, their conversation toward indecency, their labor toward selfishness, and they arrange their time according to the cravings of their bodies. 71 The ones who have no love for the beehive and do not gather nectar are those who do some good works for my sake but only out of fear of punishment. 72 Even though they do perform some works of piety, still they do not give up their selfishness and sin. 73 They want to have God but without giving up the world or enduring any wants or hardship.

74 These bees are the kind that hurry home with empty feet, but their hurry is unwise, since they do not fly with the right sort of love. 75 Accordingly, when autumn comes, that is, when the time of separation comes, the useless bees will be separated from the good ones and they will suffer eternal hunger in return for their selfish love and desires. 76 In return for scorning God and for their disgust at virtue they will be destroyed by excessive cold but without being consumed.

77 However, my friends should be on their guard against three evils from the bad bees. 78 First, against letting their rottenness enter the ears of my friends, since the bad bees are poisonous. Once their honey is gone, there is nothing sweet left in them; instead they are full of poisoned bitterness. 79 Second, they should guard the pupils of their eyes against the wings of the bad bees that are as sharp as needles. 80 Third, they should be careful not to expose their bodies to the tails of the bees, for they have barbs that sting sharply. 81 The learned who study their habits and temperament can explain the meaning of these things. 82 Those who are unable to understand it should be wary of the risks and avoid their company and example. Otherwise, they will learn by experience what they did not know how to learn by listening.”

83 Then his Mother said: “Blessed are you, my Son, you who are and were and always will be!² Your mercy is sweet and your justice great. 84 You seem to remind me, my Son—to speak figuratively—of a cloud rising up to heaven preceded by a light breeze. 85 A dark spot appeared in the cloud, and a person who was out of doors, feeling the light breeze, raised his eyes and saw the dark cloud and thought to himself: 86 ‘This dark cloud seems to me to indicate rain.’ And he prudently hurried into a shelter and hid himself from the rain. 87 Others, however, who were blind or who perhaps did not care, made little of the light breeze and were unafraid of the dark cloud, but they learned by

2. “You who are and were and always will be”; cf. Apocalypse 1:4.

experience what the cloud meant. 88 The cloud, taking over the whole sky, came with violent commotion and so furious and mighty a fire³ that living things were expiring at the very commotion. The fire was consuming all the inner and outer parts of man so that nothing remained.

89 My Son, this cloud is your words, which seem dark and incredible to many people since they have not been heard much and since they have been given to ignorant people and have not been confirmed by portents. 90 These words were preceded by my prayer and by the mercy with which you have mercy on everyone and, like a mother, draw everyone to yourself. 91 This mercy is as light as a light breeze because of your patience and sufferance. It is warm with the love with which you teach mercy to those who provoke you to anger and offer kindness to those who scorn you. 92 Therefore, may all those who hear these words raise their eyes and see and know their source. They should consider whether these words signify mercy and humility. 93 They should reflect on whether the words signify present or future things, truth or falsehood. If they find that the words are true, let them hurry to a shelter, that is, to true humility and love of God. 94 For, when justice comes, the soul will then be separated from the body and engulfed by fire and burn both outwardly and inwardly. 95 It will burn, to be sure, but it will not be consumed. For this reason, I, the Queen of mercy, cry out to the inhabitants of the world: may they raise their eyes and behold mercy! 96 I admonish and beseech like a mother, I counsel like a sovereign lady. 97 When justice comes, it will be impossible to withstand it. Therefore, have a firm faith and be thoughtful, test the truth in your conscience, change your will, and then the one who has shown you words of love will also show the deeds and proof of love!”

98 Then the Son spoke to me,⁴ saying: “Above, regarding the bees, I showed you that they receive three benefits from their queen. I tell you now that those crusaders whom I have placed at the borders of Christian lands should be bees like that. 99 But now they are fighting against me, for they do not care about souls and have no compassion on the bodies of those who have been converted from error to the Catholic faith and to me. 100 They oppress them with hardships and deprive them of their liberties. They do not instruct them in the faith, but deprive them of the sacraments and send them to hell with a greater punishment than if they had stayed in their traditional paganism. 101 Furthermore, they fight only in order to increase their own pride and augment their greed. Therefore, the time is coming for them when their teeth will be ground, their right hand mutilated, their right foot severed, in order that they may live and know themselves.”

3. “With violent commotion and so furious and mighty a fire” renders Lat. “maxima commocione et igne impetuoso tamque forti”; cf. Sw. “mz mestom tordyn ok lyugn eld” [with the greatest thunder and lightning].

4. “To me”: a rare instance in which Birgitta speaks in the first person.

‡ Chapter 20

*The Three Estates Are Exemplified by a Cleric, a Defender,
and a Laborer*

DATE: 1340S

God's grievance concerning three men now going around in the world, and about how from the start God established three estates, namely those of the clergy, the defenders, and the laborers; and about the punishment prepared for the thankless and about the glory given to the thankful.

1 The great host of heaven was seen, and God spoke to it, saying: "Although you know and see all things in me, however, because it is my wish, I will state my complaint before you concerning three things. 2 The first is that those lovely beehives, which were built in heaven from all eternity and from which those worthless bees went out, are empty. 3 The second is that the bottomless pit,¹ against which neither rocks nor trees are of any help, stands ever open. Souls descend into it like snow falling from the sky down to earth. 4 Just as the sun dissolves snow into water, so too souls are dissolved of every good by that terrible torment and are renewed unto every punishment. 5 My third complaint is that few people notice the fall of souls or the empty dwellings from which the bad angels have strayed. I am therefore right to complain.

6 I chose three men from the beginning. By this I am figuratively speaking of the three estates in the world. 7 First, I chose a cleric to proclaim my will in his words and to demonstrate it in his actions. 8 Second, I chose a defender to defend my friends with his own life and to be ready for any undertaking for my sake. 9 Third, I chose a laborer to labor with his hands in order to provide bodily food through his work.

10 The first man, that is, the clergy, has now become leprous and mute. Anyone who looks to see a fine and virtuous character in him shrinks back at the sight and shudders to approach him because of the leprosy of his pride and greed. 11 When he wants to listen to him, the priest is mute about praising me but a chatterbox in praising himself. 12 So, how is the path to be opened that leads the way to great joy, if the one who should be leading the way is so weak? And if the one who should be proclaiming it is mute, how will that heavenly joy be heard of?

13 The second man, the defender, trembles at heart and his hands are idle. He trembles at causing scandal in the world and losing his reputation. 14 His hands are idle in that he does not perform any holy works. Instead, everything he does, he does for the world. 15 Who, then, will defend my people if the one who should be their leader is afraid?

16 The third man is like an ass that lowers its head to the ground and

1. "Bottomless pit" (Lat. "abyssus insaciabilis") may be an echo from ch. 15.2.

stands with its four feet joined together. 17 Sure, indeed, the people are like an ass that longs for nothing but things of the earth, which neglects the things of heaven and goes in search of perishable goods. They have four feet, since they have little faith and their hope is idle; third, they have no good works and, fourth, they are entirely intent upon sinning. 18 This is why their mouth is always open for gluttony and greed. My friends, how can that endless yawning pit be reduced or the honeycomb be filled by people such as these?"

19 God's Mother replied: "May you be blessed, my Son! Your grievance is justified. Your friends and I have only one word of excuse for you to save the human race. 20 It is this: 'Have mercy, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God!' This is my cry and the cry of your friends." 21 The Son replied: "Your words are sweet to my ears, their taste delights my mouth, they enter my heart with love. 22 I do have a cleric, a defender, and a peasant.² 23 The first pleases me like a bride whom an honest bridegroom yearns and longs for with divine love. His voice will be like the voice of clamorous speech that echoes in the woods. 24 The second will be ready to give his life for me and will not fear the reproach of the world. I shall arm him with the weapons of my Holy Spirit. 25 The third will have so firm a faith that he will say: 'I believe as firmly as if I saw what I believe. I hope for all the things God has promised.' 26 He will have the intention of doing good and growing in virtue and avoiding evil.

27 In the first man's mouth I shall put three sayings for him to proclaim. 28 His first proclamation will be: 'Let him who has faith put what he believes into practice!' The second: 'Let him who has a firm hope be steadfast in every good work.' The third: 'Let him who loves perfectly and with charity yearn fervently to see the object of his love!' 29 The second man will work like a strong lion, taking careful precautions against treachery and persevering steadfastly. 30 The third man will be as wise as a serpent that stands on its tail and lifts its head to the skies. 31 These three will carry out my will. Others will follow them. Although I speak of three, by them I mean many."

32 Then he spoke to the bride, saying: "Stand firm! Do not be concerned about the world or about its reproaches, for I, who heard every kind of reproach, am your God and your Lord."

‡ Chapter 21

Mary Describes the Deposition of Christ; on a Virgin and Her Betrothed

DATE: 1340S

The words of the glorious Virgin to her daughter about how Christ was taken down from the cross and about her own bitterness and sweetness at the passion of her Son, and about how the soul is sym-

2. "Peasant" renders Lat. "rusticum"; Sw. "bonda" [peasant, farmer]; but cf. above, 20.9, "laboratorem"; Sw. (plural) "ärwodhis männena" [laborers].

bolized by a virgin and the love of the world and the love of God by two youths, and about the qualities the soul should have as a virgin.

1 Mary spoke: "You should reflect on five things, my daughter. 2 First, how every limb in my Son's body grew stiff and cold at his death and how the blood that flowed from his wounds as he was suffering dried up and clung to each limb. 3 Second, how his heart was pierced so bitterly and mercilessly that the man speared it until the lance hit a rib, and both parts of the heart were on the lance. 4 Third, reflect on how he was taken down from the cross! The two men who took him down from the cross made use of three stepladders: one reached to his feet, the second just below his armpits and arms, the third to the middle of his body. 5 The first man got up and held him by the middle. The second, getting up on another ladder, first pulled a nail out of one arm, then moved the ladder and pulled the nail from the other hand. 6 The nails extended through the crossbeam. 7 The man who had been holding up the weight of the body then went down as slowly and carefully as he could, while the other man got up on the stepladder that went to the feet and pulled out the nails from the feet. 8 When he was lowered to the ground, one of them held the body by the head and the other by the feet. I, his mother, held him about the waist. 9 And so the three of us carried him to a rock that I had covered with a clean sheet and in that we wrapped his body. I did not sew the sheet together, because I knew that he would not decay in the grave.¹

10 After that came Mary Magdalene and the other holy women. Angels, too, as many as the atoms of the sun, were there, showing their allegiance to their Creator. 11 None can tell what sorrow I had at the time. I was like a woman giving birth who shakes in every limb of her body after delivery. 12 Although she can scarcely breathe due to the pain, still she rejoices inwardly as much as she can because she knows that the child she has given birth to will never return to the same painful ordeal he has just left. 13 In the same way, although no sorrow could compare with my sorrow over the death of my Son, still I rejoiced in my soul because I knew my Son would no longer die but would live forever. Thus my sorrow was mixed with a measure of joy. 14 I can truly say that there were two hearts in the one grave where my Son was buried. Is it not said:² 'Where your treasure is, there is your heart as well'? Likewise, my heart and mind were constantly going to my Son's grave."

15 Then the Mother of God went on to say: "I shall describe this man by way of a metaphor, how he was situated and in what kind of state and what his present situation is like. 16 It is as though a virgin was betrothed to a man and two youths were standing before her. One of them, having been addressed

1. Some details of the crucifixion here might reflect contemporary iconography, for instance the cross with three stepladders and the suggestion that there was more than one nail in Christ's feet (cf. note to Book I 10 above). Surviving fourteenth-century wall paintings in Norwegian churches (e.g., Nes, Sogn) may be representative of the types of images Birgitta would have seen in Sweden; see Blindheim, *The Stave Church Paintings*. On Birgitta's devotion to the heart of Mary, see Sahlin, "His Heart." The statement that the Virgin did not sew the sheet together might be an original detail.

2. "Is it not said" (Matthew 6:21; cf. Luke 12:34).

by the virgin, said to her: 17 'I advise you not to trust the man to whom you are betrothed. He is unbending in his actions, tardy in payment, miserly in giving gifts. 18 Rather, put your trust in me and in the words I speak to you, and I shall show you another man who is not hard but gentle in every way, who gives you what you want right away and gives you plenty of pleasant and delightful gifts.' 19 The virgin, hearing this and thinking about it to herself, answered: 'Your words are good to hear. You yourself are gentle and attractive to my eyes. I think I will follow your advice.' 20 When she took off her ring in order to give it to the youth, she saw three sayings inscribed on it. 21 The first was: 'When you come to the top of the tree, beware lest you lay hold of a dry branch of the tree to support yourself and fall!' 22 The second saying was: 'Beware lest you take advice from an enemy!' 23 The third saying was: 'Place not your heart between the teeth of a lion!'³ 24 When the virgin saw these sayings, she pulled her hand back and held onto the ring, thinking to herself: 'These three sayings I see may perhaps mean that this man who wants to have me as his bride is not to be trusted. 25 It seems to me that his words are empty; he is full of hatred and will kill me.' 26 While she was thinking this, she looked again and noticed another inscription that also had three sayings. The first saying was: 'Give to the one who gives to you!' The second saying was: 'Give blood for blood!' The third saying was: 'Take not from the owner what belongs to him!' 27 When the virgin saw and heard this, she thought again to herself: 'The first three sayings inform me how I can escape death, the other three how I can obtain life. Therefore, it is right for me to follow the words of life.' 28 Then the virgin prudently summoned to herself the servant of the man to whom she had first been betrothed. When he came, the man who wanted to deceive her withdrew from them.

29 So it is with the soul of that person who was betrothed to God. 30 The two youths standing before the soul represent the friendship of God and the friendship of the world. The friends of the world have come closer to him up until now. 31 They spoke to him of worldly riches and glory and he almost gave the ring of his love to them and consented to them in every way. 32 But by the aid of my Son's grace he saw an inscription, that is, he heard the words of his mercy and understood three things through them. 33 First, that he should beware lest, the higher he rose and the more he relied on perishable things, the worse would be the fall that threatened him. Second, he understood that there was nothing in the world but sorrow and care. Third, that his reward from the devil would be evil. 34 Then he saw another inscription, I mean, he heard its consoling messages. 35 The first message was that he should give his possessions to God from whom he had received them all. The second was that he should render the service of his own body to the man who had shed his blood for him. The third was that he should not alienate his soul from the God who had created and redeemed it. 36 Now that he has heard and carefully

3. "Teeth of a lion!"; cf. Ecclesiasticus 21:3.

considered these things, God's servants approach him and he is pleased with them, and the servants of the world draw away from him.

37 His soul is now like a virgin who has risen fresh from the arms of her bridegroom and who ought to have three things. 38 First, she should have fine clothes so as not to be laughed at by the royal maidservants, should some defect be noticed in her clothes. 39 Second, she should comply with the will of her bridegroom so as not to cause him any dishonor on her account, should anything dishonorable be discovered in her actions. 40 Third, she should be completely clean lest the bridegroom discover in her any stain because of which he might scorn or repudiate her. 41 Let her also have people to guide her to the bridegroom's suite so as not to lose her way about the precincts or in the elaborate entrance. 42 A guide should have two characteristics: first, the person following him should be able to see him; second, one should be able to hear his directions and where he steps. 43 A person following another who leads the way should have three characteristics. First, he should not be slow and sluggish in following. Second, he should not hide himself from the person leading the way. Third, he should pay close attention and watch the footsteps of his guide and follow him eagerly. 44 Thus, in order that his soul may reach the suite of the bridegroom, it is necessary that it be guided by the kind of guide who can successfully lead it to God his bridegroom."⁴

‡ Chapter 22

Two Teachers and Two Kinds of Wisdom

DATE: 1340S

The glorious Virgin's doctrinal teaching to her daughter about spiritual and temporal wisdom and about which of them one ought to imitate, and about how spiritual wisdom leads a person to everlasting consolation, after a little struggle, while temporal wisdom leads to eternal damnation.

1 Mary spoke: "It is written that 'if you would be wise you should learn wisdom from a wise person.'¹ 2 Accordingly, I give you the figurative example of a man who wanted to learn wisdom and saw two teachers standing before him. He said to them: 3 'I would really like to learn wisdom, if only I knew where it would lead me and of what use and purpose it is.' 4 One of the teachers answered: 'If you would follow my wisdom, it will lead you up a high mountain along a path that is hard and rocky underfoot, steep and difficult to climb. 5 If you struggle for this wisdom you will gain something that is dark on the outside but shining on the inside. If you hold onto it, you will secure your desire. 6

4. On the bridal customs mentioned here, see further Book I 7 above, and Hildebrand, *Sveriges medeltid*, I, pp. 102–04.

1. "If you would be wise you should learn wisdom from a wise person"; cf. Proverbs 13:20.

Like a circle that spins around, it will draw you to itself more and more, sweetly and ever more sweetly, until in time you are imbued with happiness from every side.' 7 The second teacher said: 'If you follow my wisdom, it will lead you to a lush and beautiful valley with the fruits of every land. 8 The path is soft underfoot and the descent is little trouble. 9 If you persevere in this wisdom, you will gain something that is shiny on the outside, but when you want to use it, it will fly away from you. You will also have something that does not last but ends suddenly. 10 A book, too, once you have read it through to the end, ceases to exist along with the act of reading, and you are left idle.'

11 When the man heard this, he thought to himself: 'I hear two amazing things. 12 If I climb up the mountain, my feet get weak and my back grows heavy. Then, if I do obtain the thing that is dark on the outside, what good will it do me? 13 If I struggle for something that has no end, when will there be any consolation for me? 14 The other teacher promises something that is radiant on the outside but does not last, a kind of wisdom that will end with the reading of it. What use do I have of things with no stability?' 15 While he was thinking this in his mind, suddenly another man appeared between the two teachers and said: 16 'Although the mountain is high and difficult to climb, nevertheless there is a bright cloud above the mountain that will give you comfort. 17 If the promised container that is dark on the outside can somehow be broken, you will get the gold that is concealed within and you will be in happy possession of it forever.'

18 These two teachers are two kinds of wisdom, namely the wisdom of the spirit and the wisdom of the flesh. The spiritual kind involves giving up your self-will for God and aspiring to the things of heaven with your every desire and action. 19 It cannot be truly called wisdom if your actions do not accord with your words. 20 This kind of wisdom leads to a blessed life. But it involves a rocky approach and a steep climb, inasmuch as resisting your passions seems a hard and rocky way. 21 It involves a steep climb to spurn habitual pleasures and not to love worldly honors. 22 Although it is difficult, yet for the person who reflects on how little time there is and how the world will end and who fixes his mind constantly on God, above the mountain there will appear a cloud, that is, the consolation of the Holy Spirit. 23 A person worthy of the Holy Spirit's consolation is one who seeks no other consoler but God. How would all the elect have undertaken such hard and arduous tasks, if God's Spirit had not cooperated with their goodwill as with a good instrument? 24 Their good will drew this Spirit to them, and the divine love they had for God invited it, for they struggled with heart and will until they were made strong in works. 25 They won the consolation of the Spirit and also soon obtained the gold of divine delight and love that not only made them able to bear a great many adversities but also made them rejoice in bearing them as they thought of their reward. 26 Such rejoicing seems dark to the lovers of this world, for they love darkness. But to the lovers of God it is brighter than the sun and shines more than gold, for they break through the darkness of their vices and climb the mountain of patience, contemplating the cloud of that consolation that never ends but begins in the present and spins like a circle until it reaches perfection.

27 Worldly wisdom leads to a valley of misery that seems lush in its plenty, beautiful in reputation, soft in luxury. 28 This kind of wisdom will end swiftly and offers no further benefit beyond what it used to see and hear.

29 Therefore, my daughter, seek wisdom from the wise one, I mean, from my Son! He is wisdom itself from whom all wisdom comes. He is the circle that never ends. 30 I entreat you as a mother does her child: love the wisdom that is like gold on the inside but contemptible on the outside, that burns inside with love but requires effort on the outside and bears fruit through its works. 31 If you worry about the burden of it all, God's Spirit will be your consoler. 32 Go and keep on trying like someone who keeps going on until the habit is acquired. Do not turn back until you reach the peak of the mountain! 33 There is nothing so difficult that it does not become easy through steadfast and intelligent perseverance. 34 There is no pursuit so noble at the outset that it does not fall into darkness by not being brought to completion.

35 Advance, then, toward spiritual wisdom! It will lead you to physical toil, to despising the world, to a little pain, and to everlasting consolation. 36 But worldly wisdom is deceitful and conceals a sting. It will lead you to the hoarding of temporary goods and to present prestige but, in the end, to the greatest unhappiness, unless you are wary and take careful precautions."

⚡ Chapter 23

The Virgin's Cloak of Humility Protects from Stormy Weather

DATE: 1340S

The glorious Virgin's words explaining her humility to her daughter, and about how humility is likened to a cloak, and about the characteristics of true humility and its wonderful fruits.

1 "Many people wonder why I speak with you. It is, of course, to show my humility. 2 If a member of the body is sick, the heart is not content until it has regained its health, and once its health is restored the heart is all the more gladdened. In the same way, however much a person may sin, if he turns back to me with all his heart and a true purpose of amendment, I am immediately prepared to welcome him when he comes. 3 Nor do I pay attention to how much he may have sinned but to the intention and purpose he has when he returns. 4 Everyone calls me 'Mother of mercy.' Truly, my daughter, the mercy of my Son has made me merciful and the disclosure of his mercy has made me compassionate. 5 For that reason, that person is miserable who, when she or he is able, does not have recourse to mercy. Come, therefore, my daughter, and hide yourself beneath my cloak!¹ 6 My cloak is contemptible on the outside but very useful on the inside, for three reasons. First, it shelters you from the

1. "Beneath my cloak": Mary as the Lady of the Protecting Mantle is a common motif in medieval art; see further Kirschbaum and Braunfels, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, and Bäumer and Scheffczyk, *Marienlexikon* "Schützmantelmadonna."

stormy winds; second, it protects you from the burning cold; third, it defends you against the rain-showers from the sky.

7 This cloak is my humility. The lovers of the world hold this in contempt and think that imitating it is a silly superstition. 8 What is more contemptible than to be called an idiot and not to get angry or answer in kind? 9 What is more despicable than the giving up of everything and being in every way poor? 10 What seems sorer to worldly souls than to conceal one's own pain and to think and believe oneself unworthier and lowlier than everyone else? 11 Such was my humility, my daughter. This was my joy, this my one desire. I only thought of how to please my Son. 12 This humility of mine was useful for those who followed me in three ways. 13 First, it was useful in pestilent and stormy weather, that is, against human taunts and scorn. A powerful and violent storm wind pounds a person from all directions and makes him freeze. In the same way, taunting easily crushes an impatient person who does not reflect on future realities; it drives the soul away from charity. 14 Anyone carefully studying my humility should consider the kinds of things I, the Queen of the universe, had to hear, and so he should seek my praise and not his own. 15 Let him recall that words are nothing but air and he will soon grow calm. 16 Why are worldly people so unable to put up with verbal taunts, if not because they seek their own praise rather than God's? There is no humility in them, because their eyes are made bleary by sin. 17 Therefore, although the written law says one should not without due cause give one's ear to insulting speech or put up with it, still it is a virtue and a prize to listen patiently to and put up with insults for the sake of God.

18 Second,² my humility is a protection from the burning cold, that is, from carnal friendship. For there is a kind of friendship in which a person is loved for the sake of present commodities, like those who speak in this way: 19 'Feed me for the present and I will feed you, for it is no concern of mine who feeds you after death! Give me respect and I will respect you, for it does not concern me in the least what kind of future respect there is to come.' 20 This is a cold friendship without the warmth of God, as hard³ as frozen snow as regards loving and feeling compassion for one's fellow human being in need, and sterile is its reward. 21 Once a partnership is broken up and the desks are cleared away, the usefulness of that friendship immediately disappears and its profit is lost. 22 Whoever imitates my humility, though, does good to everyone for the sake of God, to enemies and friends alike: 23 to his friends, because they steadily persevere in honoring God; and to his enemies, because they are God's creatures and may become good in the future.

24 In the third place, the contemplation of my humility is a protection

2. "Second" is the reading adopted by the modern editors from two manuscripts and Gh; and cf. Sw. "Annantidh" [Second]. Most manuscripts have "thus."

3. "As hard" translates Gh "dura" adopted by the editors. Most of the manuscripts have "(and) said to be" ([et] dicitur). Cf. Sw. "Thänne vinskäpin är lös som snio ok kallir som frost" [This friendship is as soft as snow and cold as frost].

against rain-showers and the impurities coming from the clouds. 25 Where do clouds come from, if not from the moisture and vapors coming from the earth? When they rise to the skies due to heat, they condense in the upper regions and, in this way, three things are produced: rain, hail, and snow. 26 The cloud symbolizes the human body that comes from impurity. The body brings three things with it just as clouds do. 27 The body brings hearing, seeing, and feeling. Because the body can see, it desires the things it sees. 28 It desires good things and beautiful forms; it desires extensive possessions. 29 What are all these things if not a sort of rain coming from the clouds, staining the soul with a passion for hoarding, unsettling it with worries, distracting it with useless thoughts and upsetting it over the loss of its hoarded goods? 30 Because the body can hear, it would fain hear of its own glory and of the world's friendship. It listens to whatever is pleasant for the body and harmful to the soul. 31 What do all these things resemble if not swiftly melting snow, making the soul grow cold toward God and blear-eyed as to humility? 32 Because the body has feeling, it would fain feel its own pleasure and physical rest. 33 What does this resemble if not hail that is frozen from impure waters and that renders the soul unfruitful in the spiritual life, strong as regards worldly pursuits and soft as regards physical comforts? 34 Therefore, if a person wants protection from this cloud, let him run for safety to my humility and imitate it. 35 Through it, he is protected from the passion for seeing and does not desire illicit things; he is protected from the pleasure of hearing and does not listen to anything that goes against the truth; he is protected from the lust of the flesh and does not succumb to illicit impulses.

36 I assure you: The contemplation of my humility is like a good cloak that warms those wearing it; I mean those who not only wear it in theory but also in practice. 37 A physical cloak does not give any warmth unless it is worn. Likewise, my humility does no good to those who just think about it, unless each one strives to imitate it, each in his own way. 38 Therefore, my daughter, don the cloak of humility with all your strength, since worldly women wear cloaks that are a proud thing on the outside but are of little use on the inside. 39 Avoid such garments altogether, since, if the love of the world does not first become abhorrent to you, if you are not continually thinking of God's mercy toward you and your ingratitude toward him, if you do not always have in mind what he has done and what you do, and the just sentence that awaits you in return, you will not be able to comprehend my humility. 40 Why did I humble myself so much or why did I merit such favor, if not because I considered and knew myself to be nothing and to have nothing in myself? 41 This is also why I did not seek my own glory but only that of my Donor and Creator. 42 Therefore, daughter, take refuge in the cloak of my humility and think of yourself as a sinner beyond all others! For, even if you see others who are wicked, you do not know what their future will be like tomorrow; you do not even know their intention or their awareness of what they are doing, whether they do it out of weakness or deliberately. 43 This is why you should not put yourself ahead of anyone and why you must not judge anyone in your heart."

‡ Chapter 24

Mary Carries a Heavy Load, That Is, Her Son's Suffering; on Three Houses

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin's exhortation to her daughter, complaining about how few her friends are; and about how Christ speaks to the bride and describes his sacred words as flowers and explains who the people are in whom such words are to bear fruit.

1 Mary was speaking: "Imagine a large army somewhere and a person walking alongside it heavily weighed down, carrying a great load on his back and in his arms. With his eyes full of tears, he might look at the army to see if there should be someone to have compassion on him and relieve his burden. That is the way I felt. 2 From the birth of my Son until his death, my life was full of tribulation. I carried a heavy load on my back and persevered steadfastly in God's work and patiently bore everything that happened to me. 3 I endured carrying a most heavy load in my arms, in the sense that I suffered more sorrow of heart and tribulation than any creature. 4 My eyes were full of tears when I contemplated the places in my Son's body destined for the nails as well as his future passion, and when I saw all the prophesies I had heard foretold by the prophets being fulfilled in him. 5 And now I look around at everyone who is in the world to see if there happens to be some who might have compassion on me and be mindful of my sorrow, but I find very few who think about my sorrow and tribulation. 6 This is why, my daughter, although I am forgotten and neglected by many people, you must not forget me! Look at my struggles and imitate them as far as you can! Contemplate my sorrow and tears and be sorry that the friends of God are so few. Stand firm! Look, my Son is coming."

7 He came at once and said: "I who am speaking with you am your God and Lord. My words are like the flowers of a fine tree. Although all the flowers spring up from the tree's one root, not all of them come to fruition. 8 My words are like flowers that spring up from the root of divine charity. Many people take them, but they do not bear fruit in all of them nor reach maturity in them all. 9 Some people take them and keep them for a time but later reject them, for they are ungrateful to my Spirit. 10 Some take and keep them, for they are full of love, and the fruit of devotion and holy conduct is produced in them.

11 You, therefore, my bride, who are mine by divine right, must have three houses. 12 In the first, there should be the necessary nourishment to enter the body; in the second the clothes that clothe the body on the outside; in the third the tools necessary for use in the house. 13 In the first there should be three things: first, bread; then drink; and third, meats.¹ 14 In the second house there

1. "Meats" renders Lat. "edulium"; cf. Sw. "swfwl," i.e., "edibles, food" in the broadest sense, but contrasted with "bread," as here, more likely to suggest something that is put on bread, such as a relish or, as we have translated, "meats." Cf. also II 25.27.

should be three things: first, linen clothing; then woolen; then the kind made by silkworms. 15 In the third house there should also be three things: first tools and vessels to be filled with liquids; second, living instruments, such as horses and asses² and the like, by which bodies can be conveyed; and, third, instruments that are moved by living beings.”³

‡ Chapter 25

More about the Three Houses

DATE: 1340S

Christ’s advice to the bride about the provisions in the three houses, and about how bread stands for a good will, drink for holy forethought, and meats for divine wisdom, and about how there is no divine wisdom in erudition but only in the heart and in a good life.

1 “I who am speaking with you am the Creator of all things, created by none. There was nothing before me and there can be nothing after me, since I always was and always am. 2 I am the Lord whose power none can withstand and from whom all power and sovereignty come. 3 I speak to you as a man speaks to his wife:

4 My wife, we should have three houses. In one of them there should be bread and drink and meats. 5 But you might ask: What does this bread mean? Do I mean the bread that is on the altar? 6 This is indeed bread, prior to the words “This is my body,”¹ but, once the words have been spoken, it is not bread but the body that I took from the Virgin and that was truly crucified on the cross. 7 But here I do not mean that bread. The bread that we should store in our house is a good and sincere will. 8 Physical bread, if it is pure and clean, has two good effects. First, it fortifies and gives strength to all the veins and arteries and muscles. Second, it absorbs any inner impurity, bringing it along for removal as it goes out, and so the person is cleansed. 9 In this way a pure will gives strength. 10 If a person wishes for nothing but the things of God, works for nothing but the glory of God, desires with every desire to leave the world and to be with God, this intention strengthens him in goodness, increases his love for God, makes the world loathsome to him, fortifies his patience and reinforces his hope of inheriting glory to the extent that he cheerfully embraces everything that happens to him. 11 In the second place, a good will removes every impurity. What is the impurity harmful to the soul if not pride,

2. “Asses” suggests tame beasts of burden. There were probably no donkeys in medieval Scandinavia because they could not withstand cold climates, although Olaus Magnus (OM 1.19) reports unsuccessful attempts to introduce them. The donkey was treated as an exotic animal; and it was a princely gift for riding in the Middle Ages. See KL “mula och mulásna,” “ásnor.”

3. Medieval Swedish houses consisted of an enclosure containing a main building and several outbuildings, in general the living quarters, the barn, and the byre; some were locked and others unlocked. See further Hildebrand, *Sveriges medeltid*, 1, pp. 141–44; Myrdal, *Jordbruket*, pp. 31–36.

1. “This is my body” (Matthew 26:26 et al.).

greed, and lust? 12 However, when the impurity of pride or of some other vice enters the mind, it will leave, provided the person reasons in the following way: 13 'Pride is meaningless, since it is not the recipient who should be praised for goods given him, but the giver. 14 Greed is meaningless, since all the things of earth will be left behind. 15 Lust is nothing but filth. Therefore I do not desire these things but want to follow the will of my God whose reward will never come to an end, whose good gifts never grow old.' 16 Then every temptation to pride or greed will leave him and he will persevere in his good intention of doing good.

17 The drink we should have in our houses is holy forethought about everything to be done. 18 Physical drink has two good effects. First, it aids good digestion. 19 When a person proposes to do something good and, before doing it, considers to himself and turns carefully over in his mind what glory will come out of it for God, what benefit to his neighbor, what advantage to his soul, and does not want to do it unless he judges there to be some divine usefulness in his work, then that proposed work will turn out well or be, so to speak, well digested. 20 Then, if any indiscretion occurs in the work he is doing, it is quickly detected. 21 If anything is wrong, it is quickly corrected and his work will be upright and rational and edifying for others. 22 A person who does not show holy forethought in his work and does not seek benefit to souls or the glory of God, even if his work turns out well for a time, nevertheless it will come to nothing in the end. 23 In the second place, drink quenches thirst. What kind of thirst is worse than the sin of base greed and anger? 24 If a person thinks beforehand what usefulness will come of it, how wretchedly it will end, what reward there will be if he makes resistance, then that base thirst is soon quenched through God's grace, zealous love for God and good desires fill him, and joy arises because he has not done what came into his mind. 25 He will examine the occasion and how he can avoid in the future those things by which he was almost tripped up, had he not had forethought, and he will be more careful in the future about avoiding such things. 26 My bride, this is the drink that should be stored in our pantry.

27 Third, there should also be meats there. These have two effects. First, they taste better in the mouth and are better for the body than just bread alone. 28 Second, they make for tenderer skin and better blood than if there were only bread and drink. 29 Spiritual meat has a like effect. What do these meats symbolize? Divine wisdom, of course. 30 Wisdom tastes very good to a person who has a good will and wants nothing but what God wants, showing holy forethought, doing nothing until he knows it to be for God's glory.

31 Now, you might ask: 'What is divine wisdom?' For many people are simple and only know one prayer—the Our Father, and not even that correctly. 32 Others are very erudite and have wide knowledge. Is this divine wisdom? By no means. Divine wisdom is not precisely to be found in erudition, but in the heart and a good life. 33 That person is wise who reflects carefully on the path toward death, on how he will die, and on his judgment after death. 34 That person has the meats of wisdom and the taste of a good will and holy forethought, who detaches himself from the vanity and superfluities of the

world and contents himself with the bare necessities, and struggles in the love of God according to his abilities. 35 When a person reflects on his death and on his nakedness at death, when a person examines God's terrible court of judgment, where nothing is hidden and nothing is remitted without a punishment, when he also reflects on the instability and vanity of the world, will he not then rejoice and sweetly savor in his heart the surrender of his will to God together with his abstinence from sins? 36 Is not his body strengthened and his blood improved, that is, is not every weakness of his soul, such as sloth and moral dissolution, driven away and the blood of divine love rejuvenated? 37 This is because he reasons rightly that an eternal good is to be loved rather than a perishable one.

38 Therefore divine wisdom is not precisely to be found in erudition but in good works, since many are wise in a worldly way and after their own desires but are altogether foolish with regard to God's will and commandments and the disciplining of their body. 39 Such people are not wise but foolish and blind, for they understand perishable things that are useful for the moment, but they despise and forget the things of eternity. 40 Others are foolish with regard to worldly delights and reputation but wise in considering the things that are of God, and they are fervent in his service. 41 Such people are truly wise, for they savor the precepts and will of God. 42 They have truly been enlightened and keep their eyes open in that they are always considering in what way they may reach true life and light. 43 Others, however, walk in darkness, and it seems to them more delightful to be in darkness than to inquire about the way by which they might come to the light.

44 Therefore, my bride, let us store up these three things in our houses, namely a good will, holy forethought, and divine wisdom. 45 These are the things that give us reason to rejoice. 46 Although I speak my advice to you, by you I mean all my chosen ones in the world, since the righteous soul is my bride, for I am her Creator and Redeemer."

‡ Chapter 26

Explanation of the Linen, Leather, and Silk Garments

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin's advice to her daughter about life, and Christ's words to the bride about the clothes that should be kept in the second house, and about how these clothes denote the peace of God and the peace of one's neighbor and works of mercy and pure abstinence, and an excellent explanation of all these things.

1 Mary spoke: "Place the brooch¹ of my Son's passion firmly on yourself, just as St. Lawrence² placed it firmly on himself. 2 Each day he used to reflect

1. On the brooch, see note to Book I 7.2.

2. On St. Lawrence, see also Book I 23.17.

in his mind as follows: 'My God is my Lord, I am his servant. 3 The Lord Jesus Christ was stripped and mocked. How can it be right for me, his servant, to be clothed in finery? 4 He was scourged and fastened to the wood. It is not right, then, that I, who am his servant, if I really am his servant, should have no pain or tribulation.' 5 When he was stretched out over the coals and liquid fat ran down into the fire and his whole body caught fire, he looked up with his eyes toward heaven and said: 6 'Blessed are you, Jesus Christ, my God and Creator! I know I have not lived my days well. I know I have done little for your glory. This is why, seeing that your mercy is great, I ask you to deal with me according to your mercy.' 7 And at this word his soul was separated from his body.

8 Do you see, my daughter? He loved my Son so much and endured such suffering for his glory that he still said he was unworthy of reaching heaven. How then can those people who live by their own desires be worthy? 9 Therefore, keep ever in mind the passion of my Son and of his saints. They did not endure such sufferings for no reason, but in order to give others an example of how to live and to show what a strict payment will be demanded for sins by my Son who does not want there to be the least sin without correction."

10 Then the Son came and spoke to the bride, saying: "I told you earlier³ what should be stored in our houses. 11 Among other things, there should be clothing of three kinds: first, clothing made of linen, which is produced in and grows from the earth; second, that made of leather,⁴ which comes from animals; third, that made of silk, which comes from silkworms. 12 Linen clothing has two good effects. First, it is soft and gentle against the naked body. Second, it does not lose its color, but the more it is washed, the cleaner it becomes. 13 The second kind of clothing, that is, leather, has two effects. First, it covers a person's shame; second, it provides warmth against the cold. 14 The third kind of clothing, that is, silken, also has two effects. First, it can be seen to be very beautiful and fine; second, it is very expensive to buy. 15 The linen clothes that are good for the naked parts of the body symbolize peace and concord. 16 A devout soul should wear this with respect to God, so that she can be at peace with God both by not wanting anything other than what God wants or in a different way than he wants, and by not exacerbating him through sins, since there is no peace between God and the soul unless she stops sinning and controls her concupiscence. 17 She should also be at peace with her neighbor, that is, by not causing him problems, by helping him if he has problems, and by being patient if he sins against her. 18 What is a more unfortunate strain on the soul than always to be longing to sin and never to have enough of it, always to be desiring and never at rest? 19 What stings the soul more sharply than to be angry with her neighbor and to envy his goods? 20 This is why the soul should be at peace with God and with her neighbor, since nothing can be more restful than resting from sin and not being anxious about the world,

3. "I told you earlier"; cf. 24:11-15.

4. "Leather": the second item of clothing in ch. 24 was given as "wool" and not "leather," as here.

nothing gentler than rejoicing in the good of one's neighbor and wishing for him what one wishes for oneself.

21 This linen clothing should be worn over the naked parts of the body, because, more properly and importantly than the other virtues, peace should be lodged closer to⁵ the heart, which is where God wants to take his rest. 22 This is the virtue that God instills and keeps instilled in the heart. 23 Like linen, this peace is born in and grows from the earth, since true peace and patience spring up from the consideration of one's own weakness. 24 A man who is of the earth ought to consider his own weakness, namely that he is quick to anger if offended, quick to feel pain if hurt. And if he reflects in this way he will not do unto another what he himself cannot bear, reflecting to himself that: 25 'Just as I am weak, so too is my neighbor. Just as I do not want to put up with such things, neither does he.' 26 Next, peace does not lose its color, that is, its stability, but stays increasingly constant, since, considering his neighbor's weakness in himself, he becomes more willing to put up with injuries. 27 If a man's peace gets soiled by impatience in any way, it grows ever cleaner and brighter before God the more frequently and quickly it is washed through penance. 28 He also becomes so much the happier and more prudent in toleration, the more often he gets irritated and then gets washed again, since he rejoices in the hope of the reward that he hopes will come to him on account of his inner peace, and he is all the more careful about not letting himself fall due to impatience.

29 The second kind of clothing, namely leather, denotes works of mercy. These leather clothes are made from the skins of dead animals. 30 What do these animals symbolize if not my saints, who were as simple as animals? The soul should be covered with their skins, that is, she should imitate and carry out their works of mercy. 31 These have two effects. First, they cover the shame of the sinful soul and cleanse her so as not to appear stained in my sight. 32 Second, they defend the soul against the cold. What is the cold of the soul if not the soul's hardness with respect to my love? 33 Works of mercy are effective against such coldness, wrapping the soul so that she does not perish from the cold. Through these works God visits the soul, and the soul comes ever closer to God.

34 The third kind of clothing, that made of silk by silkworms, which seems very expensive to buy, denotes the pure habit of abstinence. 35 This is beautiful in the sight of God and the angels and men. It is also expensive to buy, since it seems hard to people to restrain their tongue from idle and excessive talk. 36 It seems hard to restrain the appetite of the flesh from superfluous excess and pleasure. It also seems hard to go against one's own will. But although it may be hard, it is in every way useful and beautiful.

37 This is why, my bride, in whom I mean all the faithful, in our second

5. "Peace should be lodged closer to" renders a reading in the Vadstena redaction and Gh, adopted by the modern editors. Most manuscripts have an awkward reading, which might be translated as "peace from vices should be lodged in"; see Undhagen and Bergh, *Book II*, p. 24.

house we should store up peace toward God and neighbor, works of mercy through compassion on and help for the wretched, and abstinence from concupiscence. 38 Although the latter is more expensive than the rest, it is also so much more beautiful than the other clothes that no other virtue seems beautiful without it. 39 This abstinence should be produced by silkworms, that is, by the consideration of one's excesses against God, by humility, and by my own example of abstinence, for I became like a worm for the sake of humankind. 40 A person should examine in his spirit how and how often he has sinned against me and in what way he has made amends. Then he will discover by himself that no amount of toil and abstinence on his part can make amends for the number of times he has sinned against me. 41 He should also ponder my sufferings and those of my saints as well as the reason why I endured such sufferings. Then he will truly understand that, if I demand such a strict repayment from my saints, who have obeyed me, how much more I will demand in vengeance from those who have not obeyed me. 42 A good soul should therefore readily undertake to practice abstinence, recalling that her sins are evil and surround the soul like worms. Thus, from these low worms she will collect precious silk, that is, the pure habit of abstinence in all her limbs. 43 God and all the host of heaven rejoice in this. Eternal joy will be awarded to the person storing this up who would otherwise have had eternal grief, had abstinence not come to his assistance."

‡ Chapter 27

Further on the Instruments in the Third House

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about the instruments in the third house, and about how such instruments symbolize good thoughts, disciplined senses, and true confession; there is also given an excellent explanation of all these things in general and about the locks of these houses.

1 The Son of God spoke to the bride, saying: "I told you earlier¹ that there should be instruments of three kinds in the third house. 2 First, instruments or vessels into which liquids are poured. 3 Second, instruments with which the land outside is prepared, such as hoes and axes and tools for repairing things that get broken. 4 Third, living instruments, such as asses and horses and the like for conveying both the living and the dead.

5 In the first house, where there are liquids, there should be two kinds of instruments or vessels: first those into which sweet and fluid substances are poured, such as water and oil and wine and the like; second, those into which

1. "I told you earlier"; cf. II 24.15.

pungent or thick substances are poured, such as mustard and flour and the like. 6 Do you understand what these things signify? The liquids refer to the good and bad thoughts of the soul. 7 A good thought is like sweet oil and like delicious wine. A bad thought is like bitter mustard that makes the soul bitter and base. 8 Bad thoughts are like the thick liquids that a person sometimes needs. Although they are not much good for nourishing the body, still they are beneficial for the purgation and curing of both body and brain. 9 Although bad thoughts do not fatten and heal the soul like the oil of good thoughts, still they are good for the purgation of the soul, just as mustard is good for the purgation of the brain. 10 If bad thoughts did not sometimes get in the way, human beings would be angels and not human, and they would think they got everything from themselves. 11 Therefore, in order that a man might understand his weakness, which comes from himself, and the strength that comes from me, it is sometimes necessary that my great mercy allows him to be tempted by bad thoughts. 12 So long as he does not consent to them, they are a purgation for the soul and a protection for his virtues. Although they may be as pungent to take as mustard, still they are very healing for the soul and lead it toward eternal life and toward the kind of health that cannot be gained without some bitterness. 13 Therefore, let the vessels of the soul, where the good thoughts are placed, be carefully prepared and always kept clean, since it is useful that even bad thoughts arise both as a trial and for the sake of gaining greater merit. 14 However, the soul should strive diligently so as not to consent to them or delight in them. Otherwise the sweetness and the development of the soul will be lost and only bitterness will remain.

15 In the second house there should also be instruments of two kinds: first, outdoor instruments, such as the plow and the hoe, to prepare the ground outside for sowing and to root up brambles; second, instruments useful for both indoor and outdoor purposes, such as axes and the like. 16 The instruments for cultivating the soil symbolize the human senses. These should be used for the benefit of one's neighbor just as the plow is used on the soil. 17 Bad people are like the soil of the earth, for they are always thinking in an earthly fashion. They are barren of compunction for their sins, because they think nothing is a sin. 18 They are cold in their love for God, because they seek nothing but their own will. 19 They are heavy and sluggish when it comes to doing good, because they are eager for worldly reputation. 20 This is why a good person should cultivate them through his exterior senses, just as a good farmer cultivates the earth with a plow. 21 First, he should cultivate them with his mouth, by saying things to them that are useful for the soul and by instructing them about the path to life; next, by doing the good deeds he can. His neighbor can be formed in this way by his words and motivated to do good. 22 Next, he should cultivate his neighbor by means of the rest of his body in order that he may bear fruit. He does this through his innocent eyes that do not look on unchaste things, so that his unchaste neighbor may also learn modesty in his whole body. 23 He should cultivate him by means of his ears that do not listen to unsuitable things as well by means of his feet that are

quick to do the work of God. 24 I, God, shall give the rain of my grace to the soil thus cultivated by the work of the cultivator, and the laborer shall rejoice over the fruit of the once barren earth as it begins to put forth shoots.

25 The instruments needed for indoor preparations, such as the ax and similar tools, signify a discerning intention and the holy examination of one's work. 26 Whatever good a person does should not be done for the sake of reputation and human praise but out of love for God and for the sake of an eternal reward. 27 This is why a person should carefully examine his works and with what intention and for what reward he has done them. If he should discover any kind of pride in his works, let him immediately cut it out with the ax of discretion. In this way, just as he cultivates his neighbor who is, as it were, outside the house, that is, outside the company of my friends due to his bad deeds, so too he may bear fruit for himself on the inside through divine love. 28 Just as the work of a farmer will soon come to naught if he has no instruments with which to repair things that have been broken, so too, unless a person examines his work with discernment, and how it may be lightened if it is too burdensome or how it may be improved if it has failed, he will achieve no results. 29 Accordingly, one should not only work effectively outdoors, one must also consider attentively on the inside how and with what intention one works.

30 There should be living instruments in the third house to convey the living and the dead, such as horses and asses and other animals. 31 These instruments signify true confession. This conveys both living and dead. 32 What does living denote if not the soul that has been created by my divinity and lives forever? This soul comes closer and closer to God each day through a true confession. 33 Just as an animal becomes a stronger beast of burden and more beautiful to behold the more often and better it is fed, so too confession—the more often it is used and the more carefully it is made as to both lesser and greater sins—conveys the soul increasingly forward and is so pleasing to God that it leads the soul to God's very heart. 34 What are the dead things conveyed by confession, if not the good works that die through mortal sin? 35 Good works dying through mortal sins are dead in the sight of God, for nothing good can please God unless sin is first corrected either through a perfect intention or in deed. 36 It is not good to combine sweet-smelling and stinking substances in the same vessel. 37 If anyone kills his good works through mortal sins and makes a true confession of his crimes with the intention to improve and to avoid sin in the future, his good works, which earlier were dead, come to life again through confession and the virtue of humility and they gain him merit for eternal salvation. 38 If he dies without making confession, although his good works cannot die or be destroyed but cannot merit eternal life due to mortal sin, still they can merit a lighter punishment for him or contribute to the salvation of others, provided he has done the good works with a holy intention and for the glory of God. 39 However, if he has done the works for the sake of worldly glory and his own benefit, then his works will die when their doer dies, inasmuch as he has received his reward from the world on whose behalf he labored.

40 Therefore, my bride, by whom I mean all my friends, we should store up in our houses those things that give rise to the spiritual delight God wants to have with a holy soul. In the first house, we should store, first, the bread of a sincere will that wants nothing but what God wants; second, the drink of holy forethought by not doing anything unless it is thought to be for God's glory; third, the meats of divine wisdom by always thinking on the life to come and on how the present should be ordered. 41 In the second house, let us store up the peace of not sinning against God and the peace of not quarreling with our neighbor; second, works of mercy through which we may be of practical benefit to our neighbor; third, perfect abstinence by which we restrain those things that tend to disturb our peace. 42 In the third house, we should store up wise and good thoughts in order to decorate our home on the inside; second, temperate, well-disciplined senses to be a light for our neighbors on the outside; third, true confession that helps us to revive, should we grow weak.

43 Though we have the houses, the things stored in them cannot be kept safe without doors, and doors cannot swing without hinges or be locked without locks. 44 This is why, in order that the stored goods be kept safe, the house needs the door of steadfast hope so as not to be broken down by adversity. 45 This hope should have two hinges in order that a person may not despair of achieving glory or of escaping punishment, but always in every adversity have the hope of better things, being confident in the mercy of God. 46 The lock should be divine charity that secures the door against the entrance of the enemy. 47 What good is it to have a door without a lock, or hope without love? 48 If someone hopes for eternal rewards and in the mercy of God, but does not love and fear God, he has a door without a lock through which his mortal enemy can enter whenever he likes and kill him. 49 But true hope is when a person who hopes also does the good deeds he can. Without these good deeds he cannot attain heaven, that is, if he knew and was able to do them but did not want to. 50 If anyone realizes that he has committed a transgression or has not done what he could, he should make the good resolution of doing what good he can. As to what he cannot do, let him hope firmly that he will be able to come to God thanks to his good intention and love for God. 51 So, let the door of hope be secured with divine charity in such a way that, just as a lock has many catches² inside to prevent the enemy from opening it, this charity for God should also entail the concern not to offend God, the loving fear of being separated from him, the fiery zeal to see God loved, and the desire to see him imitated. 52 It should also entail sorrow, for a person is not able to do as much as he would like or knows he is obliged to do, and humility, which makes a person think nothing of all that he accomplishes in comparison to his sins. 53 Let the lock be made strong by these catches, so that the devil cannot easily open the lock of charity and insert his own love.

2. "Catches" renders Lat. "retinacula"; cf. Sw. "mengadda" (see Söderwall "mengadder"), i.e., the moving parts of the lock, or talons, hidden inside the lock itself. For diagrams of the types of lock Birgitta might have had in mind, see Hildebrand, *Sveriges medeltid*, I, p. 145.

54 The key to open and close the lock should be the desire for God alone, along with divine charity and holy works, so that a person does not wish to have anything except God, even if he can get it, and all this because of his great charity. 55 This desire encloses God in the soul and the soul in God, since their wills are one. 56 The wife and husband alone should have this key, that is, God and the soul, so that, as often as God wants to come in and enjoy good things, namely the virtues of the soul, he may have free access with the key of stable desire; as often again as the soul wants to go into the heart of God, she may do so freely, since she desires nothing but God. 57 This key is kept by the vigilance of the soul and the custody of her humility, by which she ascribes every good she has to God. 58 And this key is kept also by the power and charity of God, lest the soul be overturned by the devil.

59 Behold, my bride, what love God has for souls! Stand therefore firm and do my will!"

‡ Chapter 28

On Falsehoods in God's Words and in Their Fulfillment

DATE: 1340S

Christ's words to the bride about his unchanging nature and about how his words are accomplished, even if they are not immediately followed by deeds; and about how our will should be wholly entrusted to God's will.

1 The Son spoke to the bride, saying: "Why are you so upset because that man claimed my words were false? Am I worse off because of his disparagement or would I be better off because of his praise? 2 I am, of course, unchangeable and can become neither greater nor less, and I have no need of praise. A person who praises me does gain a benefit from his praise of me, not for me but for himself. 3 I am truth, and falsehood never proceeds or can proceed from my lips, since everything I have said through the prophets or other friends of mine, whether in spirit or in body, is accomplished as I intended it at the time. 4 My words were not false if I said one thing at one time, another at another time, first something more explicit, then something more obscure. The explanation is that, in order to prove the reliability of my faith as well as the zeal of my friends, I revealed much that could be understood in different ways, both well and badly, by good and bad people according to the different effects of my Spirit, thus giving them the possibility of carrying out different good acts in their different circumstances. 5 Just as I assumed a human nature into one person in my divine nature, so too I have also spoken at times through my human nature as being subject to my divine nature, but at other times through my divine nature as the Creator of my human nature, as is clear from my gospel. 6 And in this way, although ignorant people or detractors might see divergent meanings in them, still they are true words in

agreement with truth. 7 It was also not unreasonable for me to have handed down some things in an obscure manner, since it was right that my plan should in some way be hidden from the wicked, and at the same time that all good people should eagerly hope for my grace and obtain the reward for their hope. Otherwise, if it had been implied that my plan would come about at a specific point in time, then everyone would have given up both their hopes and their charity due to the great length of time.

8 I also promised a number of things that, however, did not occur because of the ingratitude of the people then living. 9 Had they left off their evildoing, I would certainly have given them what I had promised. This is why you ought not be upset over claims that my words are lies. 10 For what seems to be humanly impossible is possible for me.

11 My friends are also surprised that the words are not followed up by deeds. But this, again, is not unreasonable. 12 Was not Moses sent to Pharaoh? Yet signs did not immediately follow. Why? Because, if the signs and portents had immediately followed, neither the hardheartedness of Pharaoh nor the power of God would have been manifested nor would the miracles have been clearly shown. 13 Pharaoh would still have been condemned for his own wickedness, even if Moses had not come, although his hardheartedness would not have been so manifest.¹ 14 This is also what is happening now. So, be brave! The plow, though drawn by oxen, is still steered by the will of the plowman. 15 Likewise, although you may hear and know my words, they do not turn out or get accomplished according to your will, but according to mine. 16 For I know the lay of the land and how it should be cultivated. But you should entrust all your will to me and say: ‘May your will be done!’ ”

⚡ Chapter 29

John the Baptist Describes a Magpie and Her Chicks

DATE: 1340S

John the Baptist admonishes the bride through a parable in which God is symbolized by a magpie, the soul by its chicks, the body by its nest, worldly pleasures by wild animals, pride by birds of prey, worldly mirth by a snare.

1 John the Baptist spoke to the bride, saying: “The Lord Jesus has called you out of darkness into light,¹ from impurity into perfect purity, from a narrow into a broad place. 2 Who is able to explain these gifts or how could you thank him as much as you should for them? Just do all that you can!

1. “Was not Moses . . . so manifest”; cf. Exodus 3–15.

1. “Called you out of darkness into light”; cf. 1 Peter 2:9.

3 There is a kind of bird called a magpie. She loves her chicks, because the eggs from which the chicks came were once in her womb. 4 This bird makes a nest for herself out of old and used things for three purposes. First, as a resting place; second, as a shelter from rain and heavy drought; third, in order to feed her young when they are hatched from the eggs. The bird hatches her young by lovingly settling herself on top of the eggs. 5 When the chicks are born, the mother entices them to fly in three ways. First, by the distribution of food; second, by her solicitous voice; third, by the example of her own flying. 6 Since they love their mother, the chicks, once they have got used to their mother's food, first travel little by little beyond the nest with their mother leading the way. Then they go further away as their strength allows, until they become accomplished in the use and skill of flight.

7 This bird stands for God, who exists eternally and never changes. From the womb of his divinity all rational souls proceed. 8 A nest is prepared for each soul out of used things, inasmuch as the soul is joined to a body of earth through which God nourishes it with the food of good affections, defends it from the birds of evil thoughts, and gives it respite from the rain of bad actions. 9 Each soul is joined to the body in order that it may rule the body and nowise be ruled by it and so that it may spur the body to struggle and provide for it intelligently. Thus, like a good mother, God teaches the soul to advance toward better things, and teaches it to leave its confinement for broader spaces. 10 First, he feeds it by giving it intelligence and reason according to each one's capacity, and by pointing out to the mind what it should choose and what it should avoid. 11 As the magpie first leads its chicks beyond the nest, so too the human person first learns to think thoughts of heaven, and also to think how confined and base the nest of the body is, how bright the heavens and how delightful eternal things are. 12 God also leads the soul out with his voice when he calls: 'He who follows me will have life; he who loves me will not die.' 13 This voice leads toward heaven. Anyone who does not hear it is either deaf or ungrateful for his mother's love. 14 Third, God leads the soul out through his own flying, that is, through the example of his human nature. This glorious human nature had, as it were, two wings. Its first wing was that there was only purity and no defilement in it; its second wing was that he did all things well. 15 Upon these two wings God's human nature flew through the world. For this reason, the soul should follow them as far as it can, and if it cannot do so in deeds, let it at least try to do so in intention.

16 When the young chick is flying, it has to beware of three dangers. 17 The first is wild animals. It must not land next to them on the ground, because the chick is not as strong as they are. 18 Second, it must beware of birds of prey, since the chick does not yet fly as swiftly as those birds do, which is why it is safer to stay in hiding. 19 Third, it should take care not to be lured by a baited snare.

20 The wild animals that I mentioned are worldly pleasures and appetites. The young chick should beware of them, for they seem good to know, fine to own, beautiful to behold. 21 But when you think you have got hold of them, they quickly go away. When you think they give you plea-

sure,² they bite you without mercy. 22 In the second place, the chick should beware of birds of prey. These represent pride and ambition. These are the birds that always want to rise higher and higher and to be ahead of the other birds and hate all those behind them. 23 The chick should beware of them and should want to remain in humble hiding, so that it does not grow proud of the grace it has received or despise those that are behind it and have less grace, and does not think itself better than others. 24 Third, the chick should beware of being lured by a baited snare. This represents worldly mirth. 25 It may seem good to have laughter on one's lips and pleasant sensations in one's body, but there is a barb in these things. 26 Immoderate laughter leads to immoderate mirth, and the pleasure of the body leads to inconstancy of mind, which gives rise to sadness, either at death or earlier, along with distress. 27 You should therefore hurry, my daughter, to leave your nest through the desire for heaven! Beware of the beasts of desire and the birds of pride! Beware of the bait of empty mirth!"

28 Then the Mother spoke to the bride and said: "Beware of the bird that is daubed with pitch, for anyone who touches it gets stained. 29 This represents worldly ambition, unstable as the air, repulsive in its way of seeking favor and keeping bad company. 30 Care nothing for honors, do not bother about favors, pay no attention to praise or reproach! 31 From these things come inconstancy of soul and the lessening of love for God. Be steadfast! God, who has begun to bring you out of the nest, will keep nourishing you until death. 32 After death, however, you will hunger no more. He will also protect you from sorrow and defend you in life, and after death you will have nothing to fear."

‡ Chapter 30

About a Man Who Had Been Regarded as a Saint

DATE: 2 FEBRUARY 1349, SKARA CATHEDRAL

The Mother's entreaty to her Son for his bride and for another holy person, and about how the Mother's entreaty is received by Christ, and about certainty regarding the truth or falsity of a person's holiness in this life.

1 Mary spoke to her Son saying: "My Son, grant your new bride the gift that your most worthy body may take root in her heart, so that she herself may be changed into you and be filled with your delight!" 2 Then she said: "This holy man,¹ when he was living in time, was as steadfast in the holy faith as a mountain unbroken by adversity, undistracted by pleasure. 3 He was as flexible toward your will as the moving air, wherever the force of your Spirit led him. 4 He was as ardent in your love as fire, warming those grown cold and over-

2. "They give you pleasure" renders an emendation by the editors. All manuscripts and Gh have "they are pleased," which looks like a simple error ("delectari" for "delectare").

1. "This holy man," i.e., Bishop Brynolf Algotsson; see p. 170 above.

taking the wicked. 5 Now his soul is with you in glory, but the vessel he used is buried and lies in a more humble place than is fitting. 6 Therefore, my Son, raise his body up to a higher station, do it honor, for it honored you in its own small way, raise it up, for it raised you up on high as much as it could by means of its toil!"

7 The Son answered: "Blessed are you, who overlook nothing in the affairs of your friends. 8 You see, Mother, it is no use for good food to be given to wolves. It is not right to bury in mud the sapphire that keeps all the members healthy and strengthens the weak. It is no use to light a candle for the blind. 9 This man was indeed steadfast in faith and fervent in charity, just as he was ready to do my will with the greatest of continence. 10 Therefore, he tastes to me like good food prepared through patience and tribulation, sweet and good in the goodness of his will and affections, even better in his manly struggles to improve, excellent and most sweet in his praiseworthy way of finishing his works. 11 Therefore it is not right for such food to be lifted up before wolves, whose greed is never sated, whose lust for pleasure flees from the herbs of virtue and thirsts for rotten meat, whose shrewd speech is harmful to everyone. 12 He resembled the sapphire of a ring through the brightness of his life and reputation, proving himself to be a bridegroom of his church, a friend of his Lord, a preserver of the holy faith and a scorner of the world. 13 Therefore, dear Mother, it is not right for such a lover of virtue and so pure a bridegroom to be touched by impure creatures, or for so humble a friend to be handled by lovers of the world. 14 In the third place, by his fulfillment of my commandments and by the teaching of a good life, he was like a lamp on a lampstand.² 15 Through this teaching, he strengthened those who were standing, lest they fall. Through this teaching he raised up those who were falling down. Through it he also offered inspiration to those who would come after him to seek me. 16 They are unworthy to see this light, blinded as they are by their own love. They are unable to perceive this light, for their eyes are sick with pride. People with scabby hands cannot touch this light. 17 This light is hateful to the greedy and to those who love their own will. 18 This is why, before he can be raised up to a higher station, justice requires those who are unclean to be purified and those who are blind to be enlightened.

19 However, regarding that man³ whom the people of the earth are calling a saint, three things show that he was not holy. 20 The first is that he did not imitate the life of the saints before he died; second, that he was not joyfully ready to suffer martyrdom for God's sake; third, that he did not have an ardent and discerning charity like the saints. 21 Three things make someone appear holy to the crowd. 22 The first is the lie of a deceiving and ingratiating man; the second is the easy credulity of the foolish; the third is the cupidity and lukewarmness of prelates and examiners. 23 Whether he is in hell or in purgatory is not given you to know until the time comes for telling it."

2. "A lamp on a lampstand"; cf. Matthew 5:15.

3. "That man," i.e., King Magnus Birgersson; see p. 170 above.

Book III



FIGURE 6. St. Birgitta the pilgrim. Detail from a wall painting in Börje church, Uppland, late fifteenth century. ATA, The National Heritage Board, Stockholm.

Introduction

Book III can be broadly described as a *Speculum episcoporum*, a mirror of bishops, comprising as it does a collection of admonishments to high-ranking bishops and members of the hierarchy of the church in Rome. It teaches the virtues of a good Christian life within the priesthood and provides a program for reform—in true Birgittine style—by juxtaposing specific examples of human frailty against the exemplary ideal to which she believes all men in holy orders should aspire. About half of the revelations date from the 1340s and half from the 1350s, while some remain undated. Birgit Klockars has argued that the Book specifically concerns the period around Birgitta’s departure from Sweden and her earliest years in Rome, that is, the years just before and after 1350.¹ Her theory is built on the later evidence of the relatively detailed chapter headings by Alfonso, and on the additions and explanations after certain chapters, which supply further circumstantial information. Klockars speculates further that chs. 1–22, 27, and 30 may all have been written down by Master Petrus of Skänninge during Birgitta’s journey to Rome and her first years in Italy; Prior Petrus, her main amanuensis, was then still in Sweden and did not arrive until later on.² Several revelations fall into thematic sequences—no doubt the work of the contemporary editors—and some give very specific references to the time of the vision, such as “yesterday” in III 17, or a revelation received “one and a half years” previously in III 14.

In the early part of the Book there are allusions to certain Swedish bishops who belonged to the hierarchy of the national church. At the time, during the 1340s, when King Magnus Eriksson was increasingly making the church into a political tool and—following his Baltic campaign and the mortgage of the province of Skåne (Scania)—

tightening his financial hold around the church's tax-exempt lands and properties, he was also strengthening ecclesiastical links with the papacy in Avignon.³ A large delegation was sent there in 1348, for instance, which won widespread privileges for the church. The archbishop of Uppsala, Hemming Nicholai, who was appointed by Pope Clement VI in 1342, held a leading position in the council of the realm, and was closely involved in political affairs. The bishops under him shared power in what was a very decentralized realm, and frequent disputes are documented in the contemporary sources about episcopal successions and about the local church's relations with the papacy. One of these bishops was Petrus Tyrgilli of Linköping (d. 1366), who is mentioned in III 13. He was the collector of papal annates, and became archbishop of Uppsala in 1351. He was also a supporter of Magnus Eriksson until 1363, when he changed his allegiance at the election of Albrecht of Mecklenburg as king. Two other influential bishops at this time were Hemming of Turku (see Book I Introduction, p. 41) and Thomas Johannis (Malsta family) of Växjö.⁴ The latter may be the man referred to in chapters 1–3 and also in III 12 (as suggested by III 12.26). He became bishop of Växjö diocese in 1344. He was part of the Birgittine circle, and later helped in the construction of Vadstena Abbey, from 1371 until his death in 1376.⁵

Such men, who, without question, played an instrumental role in the spiritual and political background to Birgitta's time, are but shadowy historical figures in the *Revelationes*, even though the political tone of Book III is quite unmistakable. Equally, it is difficult to do more than speculate as to whether a cleric in question is a Swedish or a foreign bishop. For instance, III 4 mentions a bishop and his canon, and in III 12.24, the same canon (presumably) is described as "that canon of Orléans." It is possible, then, that the bishop was Philippus, papal legate and bishop of Orléans (d. 1349). However, two candidates from the Swedish episcopate have also been suggested, namely Bishop Bo of Växjö, and Bishop Petrus Tyrgilli of Linköping.⁶ The next sequence of visions, chs. 5–7, concerns St. Ambrose, one of the four founding church fathers and first bishop of Milan (c. 339–97), who was known as an outstanding preacher and upholder of orthodoxy. His shrine is in Milan, which Birgitta is known to have visited on her way to Rome.⁷ In this group of visions—up to III 9—she draws a comparison between Ambrose and the then Milanese archbishop, Giovanni Visconti, who was elected in 1339, and whom Birgitta may have met in person while in Milan.⁸

Two other high-ranking churchmen are mentioned in chapters 10 and 11. According to the parallel revelation, Book IV 78, the revelation of III 10 was received in the dilapidated church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. The addendum to III 10 states that the revelation in the addendum was directed at the "Cardinal of Albano who was then a prior." This man is thought to have been Angelico Grimoaldi, brother of Pope Urban V, who is referred to as being a prior in France in 1358, bishop of Avignon in 1362, and cardinal bishop of Albano from 1367 to 1388.⁹ The other man is identified in the addendum to III 11.16 as "the cardinal legate during the jubilee year," possibly Annibaldo Ceccano, archbishop of Naples, who became cardinal in 1327, and died on 17

July 1350. Scholars have suggested that Annibaldo Ceccano is the subject of both III 10 and 11, but that the addendum to III 10 is addressed to Angelicus Grimoaldi.

In the middle sections of the Book there are sequences of revelations about the reform of the monastic orders, which is a major theme throughout the *Revelationes*, and which provides a background commentary to Birgitta's desire to found an order of her own. The first group, chs. 14–19, concerns the Dominicans. The worldly, butterfly bishop of III 14 “lectures” on the passion and miracles of the saints, whereas the gadfly bishop of III 15 fails to heed his call to poverty. These two bishops enter into conversation in III 16, and discuss their vow of obedience and poverty, and they are compared with their founding father in III 17, who had succeeded in combining leniency with austerity. Birgitta summarizes the precepts of the Dominican rule “to be able to carry all that you own on your back, to want to own nothing but what the Rule allows, to give up not only superfluous things but even at times to refrain from licit and necessary things on account of the impulses of the flesh.” In III 18 there is speculation on what Dominic might have thought of present-day bishops of his order, and here Birgitta may be implicitly reasoning about plans for her own order, on meat-eating, on clothing, and church-building, and just how austere a monastic rule should be, given the limiting constraints of human frailty. According to the addendum of III 19, the wicked bishop died when a wall fell on him and crushed him, whereas the other bishop suffered a less horrendous death that was commensurate with his sinfulness.

Are these Swedish Dominican bishops? Two candidates have been suggested: the “older bishop” might be Archbishop Petrus Philippi (d. 1341) from Sigtuna, who was the prior of the Scandinavian Dominican Province before becoming archbishop, although his death before Birgitta's visionary calling makes this improbable even though he would have been well known to Birgitta by repute. The “younger bishop” who is introduced in III 15 might be the Dominican Egislaus Birgeri (d. c. 1352), bishop of Västerås, a seemingly ambitious and self-seeking man who was the king's representative in Avignon, and who was involved in a number of financial scandals there.¹⁰ At the same time we cannot be sure that these were not Italian Dominicans. The vision of III 17 might just as easily have been inspired in Bologna, where St. Dominic has close associations (although we do not know for certain that Birgitta visited this city), and the following revelation, which in passing praises St. Augustine, might have an association with Pavia, where his grave is situated and to which Birgitta visited.¹¹

Chapters 20–22 are about the Benedictines. Birgitta is unlikely to have had contact with brethren of this order in Sweden during the 1340s (although there were some houses in Skåne, which was under Swedish rule at this time), but she was certainly acquainted with the Benedictine Rule, to which she specifically refers here. She must have met many Benedictines while in Italy, however, and the protagonist of chs. 20 and 23 might indeed be identified with abbot Arnold of Farfa.¹² In the important vision of III 27, Birgitta sees at firsthand Rome's abandoned churches “physically” and comments on the desolation she

witnesses there; here also she returns to the theme of Christian knighthood that we have seen in Book II. Pointedly, she does not mention the present papacy in III 27, but instead she refers to their predecessors, Popes Celestine V, whom she praises indirectly, and Boniface VIII, whose papacy she associates with the beginnings of the decline of Rome: “countless souls ascended into heaven . . . until Boniface ascended the throne of pride.” In III 30, Birgitta refers to Blessed Agnes who was one of the patron saints of Rome, and who was designated as Birgitta’s mentor in learning Latin grammar.

The final four visions in the Book deal with further worldly leaders and clerics, and probably date from the Sweden period, judging by their content and style. Book III 31 contains a number of folkloristic elements, such as the prevailing north winds and the lack of light, and the man with a rabbit’s heart who “seemed like an ass with a crown” might be King Magnus Eriksson (cf. III 12.27). Book III 33 is about two men (possibly the two prisoners to be beheaded in III 31?), one of them a heretical pilgrim who had been to Jerusalem and thinks he will become the future pope, as his writings testify. The vision has shared similarities with Book VI 67 and 68; and there has been some unresolved discussion as to whether the man described is the Czech priest Jan Milíč (1325–74) who gave advice to Pope Urban V.¹³ Whoever he was, we can here see Birgitta taking a stand on contemporary apocalyptic, prophetic, and potentially heretical voices of reform. The final revelation in the Book is an impersonal message that can be said to summarize the preceding chapters, with the admonition that the purgation of the spirit should be aspired to by all, “so that the words of God can be spread abroad.”

Over half of the visions in Book III are put into the Virgin’s mouth, either as monologues or in dialogue with Birgitta; Christ is less frequently the interlocutor, and others who are included as mouthpieces include St. Ambrose, St. John the Baptist, and St. Agnes. Some revelations expressly mention Birgitta in prayer (III 22), making a petition, or expressing a concern; one describes her weeping (III 4); and another is provoked by the day’s epistle (III 23). There is an interesting mention of a closing formula at the end of a dictation in III 19, and two revelations refer to her Latin grammar exercises. The overall style is more discursive, lengthy, and bland than that of the previous two books, although it is equally rich in imagery. The most memorable images include the following: the infusion of grace described in terms of a mixture of wine, water, and milk (III 1); the sticky pigment of a butterfly’s wings is likened to the falseness of a bishop (III 2); and another bishop is compared to a snail lying in its own filth (III 7.2). God tramples gold underfoot and puts mud into the sun’s rays (III 15); a bishop should be like a shepherd carrying a bouquet of flowers (III 3); and a whale in calve amid waves (III 4). Book III 9 contains an evocative description of the senses in terms of natural catastrophes like an avalanche; III 20 describes “firebrands cast off from the bonfire of St. Benedict,” and III 26 tells of the magnetic power of two droplets of quicksilver. There is a very specific detail on the thumb-width space between grains that are sown, and Rome of old is compared with a tapestry dyed in beautiful colors and woven with noble threads (III 27). Mary is like a tall swordlike flower, and

her mercy is described as “a great width” (III 30). Perhaps the most striking images in the Book are two often-quoted domestic comparisons from III 1, where a bishop is told to aspire to be like “a mother giving milk to her baby (who) anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until she weans the baby from milk and accustoms it to solid foods”; and from III 30, where “God is like a good washing-woman who puts the dirty clothes in the waves to make them cleaner and brighter by the motion of the water, paying close attention to the water currents so that the clothes do not sink beneath the waves.”

Finally, it is worth quoting the theme of the Book as it was perceived by the late medieval editors of the Ghotan edition of 1492, who quote an excerpt from Book VI 53.2–4, 8–9, in their Prologue to Book III, which is framed by a woodcut depicting three bishops flanked by two cardinals:

“The Son of God speaks, saying: ‘If anyone is placed in charge over others, he should not be proud because he is a prelate. He should rather be fearful, seeing that all men are of the same nature and all power is from God. For, if the person placed in charge is good, this is God’s doing for that person’s own salvation and that of others. But if he is a bad person, God permits this for the sake of the improvement of his subordinates and his own greater condemnation. Thus, when anyone either is forced to or wants to be a leader, he should show to his subordinates that he is a desirable candidate in his character and conduct and a worthy one in his uprightness and fairness. He should be on his guard so as not to provide others with either matter or occasion of sinning through his words or example or his abuse of power. Nothing so provokes God to anger or the people to sin as the immorality of prelates. Indeed, if Eli had proven himself a priest like Phinehas or Moses in the strength of his ministry and had spiritually loved his sons, all his descendants would have been saved’ ” (cf. 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 2:12–36; 14:3).

NOTES

1. Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna*, pp. 45–49.
2. See Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 491 and 530.
3. See further on the history of the Swedish church Brilioth, *Svenska kyrkans historia*, Brilioth, *Svensk kyrka, kungadöme*; and Helle, *The Cambridge History*, pp. 653–75.
4. See further Jönsson, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book III*, Introduction, who provides more detailed discussion of the various individuals referred to in Book III.
5. For further references see Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 679.
6. See further Jönsson, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book III*, p. 33; the Swedish translation obscures all the references to Orléans, and makes him look more like a Swedish bishop and his canon.
7. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 14, 97, 309, and 579.
8. On chs. 8–9 see General Introduction above, p. 16.
9. See further Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica*, I, p. 35.

10. See further Brilioth, *Svenska kyrkans historia*, pp. 78–80.

11. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 14.

12. Thus Lundén, *Den heliga Birgitta*, I, p. 324; Prior Petrus tells of the hostile reception Birgitta received when she visited an abbot in Farfa, who has sometimes been identified with this “monk”; but the identity is tenuous, and there is not a great overlap between the two accounts. “*Cumque venisset ibi cum domino Petro confessore et familia sua, tunc a fratribus monachis illius monasterii cum maxima difficultate obtinuit ad inhabitandum vnum vile tugurium allegantibus non esse consuetudinem eis cum mulieribus cohabitare.*” Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 491.

13. See further Jönsson, *Sancta Birgitta. Revelaciones. Book III*, p. 40.

‡ Chapter 1*

Advice to a Bishop about Temperance in His Daily Life

DATE: 1340S

Warnings and instructions to the bishop about how to eat and dress and pray, and about how he should behave before meals, at meals, and after meals, and likewise about his sleep and how he should carry out the office of bishop always and everywhere.

1 “Jesus Christ, God and man, who came to earth in order to take on a human nature and save souls through his blood, who disclosed the true way to heaven and opened its gates, he himself has sent me to all of you. 2 Hear, daughter,¹ you to whom it has been given to hear spiritual truths. If this bishop proposes to walk the narrow path taken by few and to be one of those few, let him first lay aside the burden that besets him and weighs him down—I mean his worldly desires—by using the world only for needs consistent with the modest sustenance of a bishop. 3 This is what that good man Matthew² did when he was called by God. Leaving behind the heavy burden of the world, he found a light burden. In the second place, the bishop should be girded for the journey, to use the words of scripture. Tobias was ready for his journey when he found the angel standing there girded.³ 4 What does it mean to say that the angel was girded? It means that every bishop should be girded with the belt of justice and divine charity, ready to walk the same path as he who said: ‘I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for my sheep.’ He should be ready to speak the truth in his words, ready to perform justice in his actions both regarding himself and regarding others, 5 not neglecting justice due to threats and taunts or false friendships or empty fears. To each bishop thus girded shall Tobias, that is, the righteous,⁴ come and they shall follow on his path.

6 In the third place, he should eat bread and water before he undertakes his journey, just as we read about Elijah, who, aroused from sleep, found bread and water⁵ at his head. What is this bread given to the prophet if not the material and spiritual goods bestowed upon him? 7 For material bread was

* This revelation is duplicated in Book IV 126.36 through chapter 137. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Thomas of Växjö, see Introduction, p. 254 above.

1. The opening sentence may be an introduction to the whole book, since “all of you” translates a plural pronoun “vos” at the opening, or else it is a formal address in a letter to the bishop. In the following sentence there is a shift to the singular form, presumably addressing Birgitta (we have translated the pronoun as “daughter” to make this clear). The interlocutor of this vision is probably the Virgin (cf. ch. 2 and ch. 3 on the same subject matter) though it may be Christ, an uncertainty that is seen in the Swedish text of ch. 2, which puts it in the mouth of Christ.

2. “That good man Matthew”; cf. Matthew 9:9.

3. “Tobias . . . standing” (Tobias 5:4–22). The angel is not mentioned as “girded” in Tobias. However, to be girded may here be taken a symbol of readiness.

4. Translation according to the manuscripts, rather than the emendation (“Tobias, id est [homo iustus, et] homines iusti”) suggested by the editor.

5. “Elijah . . . found bread and water” (3 Kings [1 Kings] 19:5–9).

given to him in the desert as a lesson. Although God could have sustained the prophet without material food, he wanted material bread to be prepared for him so that people might understand it to be God's wish that they make use of God's good gifts in temperate fashion for the solace of the body. 8 Moreover, an infusion of the Spirit inspired the prophet when he went on for forty days in the strength of that food. For, if no interior unction of grace had been inspired in his mind, he would certainly have given up during the toil of those forty days, for in himself he was weak but in God he had the strength to complete such a journey.

9 Therefore, inasmuch as man lives by God's every word, we urge the bishop to take the morsel of bread, that is, to love God above all things. He will find this morsel at his head, in the sense that his own reason tells him that God is to be loved above all things and before all things, both because of creation and redemption and also because of his enduring patience and goodness.

10 We bid him also to drink a little water, that is, to think inwardly on the bitterness of Christ's passion. Who is worthy enough to be able to meditate on the agony of Christ's human nature, which he was suffering at the moment when he prayed for the chalice of the passion to be taken from him and when drops of his blood⁶ were flowing to the ground? 11 The bishop should drink this water together with the bread of charity and he will be strengthened for journeying along the path of Jesus Christ.

12 Once the bishop has set out on the path to salvation, if he wants to make further progress, it is useful for him to give thanks to God with all his heart from the very first hour of the day, considering his own actions carefully and asking God for help to carry out his will. 13 Then, when he is getting dressed, he should pray in this manner: 'Ashes must with ashes be, dust with dust. Yet, since I am bishop by the providence of God, I am putting these clothes made from the dust of the earth on you, my body, not for the sake of beauty or ostentation but as a covering, so that your nakedness might not be seen. 14 Nor do I care whether your clothing is better or worse, but only that the bishop's habit should be acknowledged out of reverence for God, and that through his habit the bishop's authority may be recognized for the correction and instruction of others. And so, kind God, I beg you to give me steadfastness of mind so that I do not take pride in my precious ashes and dust nor foolishly glory in the colors of mere dust. 15 Grant me fortitude so that, just as a bishop's garb is more distinguished and respected than that of others due to his divine authority, the garb of my soul may be acceptable before God, lest I be thrust down all the deeper for having held authority in an undistinguished and unworthy manner or lest I be ignominiously stripped for having foolishly worn my venerable garb to my own damnation.'

16 After that he should read or sing the hours. The higher the rank a

6. "Chalice of the passion to be taken from him . . . drops of his blood" (Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:44).

person rises to, the more glory he or she should render to God. However, a pure heart pleases God just as much in silence as in singing, provided a person is occupied with other righteous and useful tasks. 17 After Mass has been said, the bishop should fulfill his episcopal duties, taking diligent care not to give more attention to material things than to spiritual. When he comes to the dinner table, this should be his thought: 18 'O Lord Jesus Christ, you command that the corruptible body be sustained with material food, help me to give my body what it needs in such a way that the flesh does not grow shamelessly insolent against the soul due to superfluous eating nor sluggish in your service out of imprudent abstinence. Inspire in me a suitable moderation so that when this man of earth nourishes himself with things of the earth, the Lord of the earth may not be provoked to anger by his creature of earth.'⁷ 19 While at table, the bishop is allowed to have the kind of moderate refreshment and conversation in which foolish vanity is avoided and no word is uttered or heard that may offer the hearers an occasion of sin. Rather, it should all be proper and salutary. 20 If bread and wine are missing from the material table, everything loses its taste; in the same way, if good doctrine and exhortation are missing from the episcopal and spiritual table, everything set on it seems tasteless to the soul. 21 And so, in order to avoid any occasion of frivolity, something should be read or recited at table that can be of profit to those seated there. When the meal is ended and the thanksgiving blessing has been prayed to God, the bishop should plan what he has to do or read books that can lead him on toward spiritual perfection. 22 After dinner, though, he may entertain himself with the companions of his household. However, just as a mother giving milk to her baby anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until she weans the baby from milk and accustoms it to solid foods, so too the bishop should bring his companions closer to God through the kind of conversation by which they may come to fear and love God, becoming in this way not only their father through the divine authority in him but also their mother through the spiritual formation he gives them. 23 If he is consciously aware that anyone in his household is in the state of mortal sin and has not repented despite admonishments, then he should separate himself from him. If he retains him out of convenience and temporal consolation, he will have no immunity from the other's sin. 24 When he goes to bed, he should carefully examine the deeds and impressions of the day that has gone, thinking the following thoughts: 'O God, Creator of my body and soul, look on me in your mercy. Grant me your grace, so that I do not grow lukewarm in your service by oversleeping 25 nor grow weak in your service due to disturbed sleep, but grant me for your glory that measure of sleep that you have prescribed for us in order to give the body rest. Give me fortitude so that my enemy, the devil, may not disturb me nor drag me away from your goodness.'

7. This is one of several "independent" short prayers across the entire corpus of *Revelationes*, but it is unlikely to be Birgitta's own. See further Undhagen, *Book I*, p. 154 n5.

26 When he gets up out of bed, he should wash away in confession any lapses that the flesh may have suffered, so that the sleep of the following night might not begin with the sins of the previous.”

‡ Chapter 2*

On the Pitfalls of the Narrow, Thorny, and Rocky Path That the Bishop Must Tread

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin’s words to her daughter about the opportune solution to the difficulties meeting the bishop on the narrow path, and about how patience is symbolized by clothing and the Ten Commandments by ten fingers, and the longing for eternity and the distaste for worldliness by two feet, and about three enemies to the bishop along his way.

1 Again the Mother of God speaks: “Tell the bishop that, if he sets out on this path, he will meet with three difficulties. The first difficulty is that it is a narrow path; the second, that there are sharp thorns on it; the third, that it is a rocky and uneven path. 2 I will give you three pieces of advice in this regard. The first is that the bishop should wear rugged and tightly knit clothes in preparation for the narrow path. The second is that he should hold his ten fingers in front of his eyes and look through them as through bars¹ so as not to be scratched by the thorns. 3 The third is that he should step cautiously and test each and every step he takes to see if his foot gets a firm hold when he sets it down, and he should not hastily set down both feet at the same time without first assuring himself of the condition of the path. 4 This narrow path symbolizes nothing other than the malice of wicked people toward the righteous, the kind of people who deride righteous deeds and pervert the paths and upright warnings of the righteous, who give little weight to anything having to do with humility and piety. 5 In order to confront such people the bishop should clothe himself in the garment of steadfast patience, since patience makes burdens pleasant and joyfully accepts the insults it receives. 6 The thorns symbolize nothing other than the hardships of the world. In order to confront them, the ten fingers of God’s commandments and counsels should be held up so that, when the thorn of hardship and poverty scratches him, he may recall the sufferings and poverty of Christ. 7 When the thorn of anger and envy scratches him, he should recall the love of God that we are

* This revelation is duplicated in Book IV 126.80 through chapter 109. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Thomas of Växjö, see Introduction p. 254 above.

1. “Bars” renders Lat. “cancellus”; cf. Sw. “vindögha stolpa” [bars of a window]; cf. Olaus Magnus, on the subject of windows, “in cities houses have iron gratings and bars at the side because of the narrower streets” (OM 12:3).

commanded to keep. True love does not insist on getting what is its own,² but opens itself up wholly to the glory of God and the benefit of one's neighbor.

That the bishop ought to step cautiously means that he should everywhere have an attitude of intelligent caution. 8 For a good person should have two feet, so to speak. One foot is a longing for eternity. The other is a distaste for the world. His longing for eternity should be circumspect, in the sense that he must not long for eternal things for himself alone as though he were worthy of them; rather, he should place all his longing and desire as well as his reward in the hands of God. 9 His distaste for the world should be cautious and full of fear, in the sense that this distaste must not be the result of his hardships in the world or impatience with life nor should it be for the sake of living a quieter life or being released from carrying out work beneficial to others. Rather, it should only be the result of his abhorrence of sin and his longing for eternity.

10 Once these three difficulties have been overcome, I would warn the bishop about three enemies on his path. You see, the first enemy tries to whistle in the bishop's ears so as to block his hearing. The second stands in front of him in order to scratch out his eyes. 11 The third enemy is at his feet, shouting loudly and holding a noose in order to ensnare his feet when he lifts them off the ground. The first are those people or those impulses that try to draw the bishop away from the right path, saying: 12 'Why do you take so much work on yourself and why are you making your way on so narrow a path? Go off instead to the verdant path where so many people are walking. What does it matter to you how this person or those people behave? Why do you bother to offend or censure those people who could honor and appreciate you?' 13 If they do not offend you and those close to you, what do you care how they live or whether they are offending God? If you yourself are a good man, why do you bother to be judging others? Better to exchange gifts and services! Make use of human friendships in order to win praise and a good reputation during your lifetime.' 14 The second enemy wants to blind you like the Philistines did Samson. This enemy is worldly beauty and possessions, sumptuous clothing, the various trappings of pomp, human privileges and favors. When such things are presented to you and please the eyes, reason is blinded, love for God's commandments grows lukewarm, sin is carried out freely and, once committed, is taken lightly. 15 Therefore, when the bishop has a moderate supply of necessary goods, he should be content. For all too many people nowadays find it more pleasant to stand around with Samson at the millstone³ of desire rather than to love the church with a praiseworthy disposition for pastoral ministry. 16 The third enemy shouts loudly and carries a noose and says: 'Why are you walking with such caution and with your head bowed down? Why do you humble yourself so much, you who should be and could be honored by many

2. "True love does not insist on getting what is its own"; cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5.

3. "To blind you like the Philistine did to Samson . . . at the millstone"; cf. Judges 16:21.

people? Be a priest so as to sit among those of the first rank! Be a bishop so as to be honored by the many! 17 Advance to higher ranks in order to obtain better service and enjoy greater relaxation! Store up a treasure with which you can help yourself as well as others and be comforted by others in return and happy wherever you are!

18 When the heart becomes inclined to such feelings and suggestions, the mind soon steps toward earthly appetites, lifting as it were the foot of base desire, with which it gets so entangled in the trap of worldly care that it can scarcely rise up to the consideration of its own wretchedness or to that of the rewards and punishments of eternity. 19 Nor is this surprising, since scripture says that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task⁴ for the honor of God. Now, however, there are many who want the honors but shirk the task in which is found the eternal salvation of the soul. This is why this bishop should stay in the position that he holds and not seek a higher one, until it pleases God to give him another.”

‡ Chapter 3*

On the Bishop's Miter; on His Reputation As a Bouquet of Flowers

DATE: 1340S

A complete explanation to the bishop from the Virgin about how he should exercise his episcopal office in order to give glory to God, and about the double reward for having held the rank of bishop in a true way and about the double disgrace for having held it in a false way, and about how Jesus Christ and all the saints welcome a true and upright bishop.

1 The Mother of God was speaking: “I wish to explain to the bishop what he should do for God and what will give glory to God. Every bishop must hold his miter carefully in his arms. He must not sell it for money nor give it up to others for the sake of worldly friendship nor lose it through negligence and lukewarmness. 2 The bishop's miter signifies nothing other than the bishop's rank and power to ordain priests, to prepare the chrism, to correct those who go astray, and to encourage the negligent by his example. 3 To hold his miter carefully in his arms means that he should reflect carefully on how and why he received his episcopal power, how he wields it, and what its effects and purpose are. 4 If the bishop would examine how he received his power, he should first examine whether he desired the episcopate for his own sake or for God's. If it was for his own sake, then his desire was no doubt carnal; if it was for God's sake, that is, in order to give glory to God, then his desire was meritorious and spiritual. 5 If the bishop would consider for what purpose he

4. “Scripture says that whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1).

* This revelation is duplicated in Book IV 126.110–37. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Thomas of Växjö, see introduction p. 254 above.

has received the episcopate, then surely it was in order that he might become a father to the poor¹ and a consoler and intercessor for souls, because the bishop's goods are intended for the good of souls. If his means are consumed inefficaciously and wasted in a prodigal manner, then those souls will cry out for revenge on the unjust steward. 6 I will tell you the reward that will come from having held the rank of bishop. It will be a double reward, as Paul says,² both corporal and spiritual. It will be corporal, because he is God's vicar on earth and is therefore accorded divine honor by men as a way of honoring God. 7 In heaven it will be corporal and spiritual because of the glorification of body and soul, because the servant will be there with his Lord, due both to the way he lived as a bishop on earth and to his humble example by which he incited others to the glory of heaven along with himself. 8 Everyone who has the rank and garb of a bishop but flees the episcopal way of life will merit a double disgrace.

That the bishop's power is not to be sold means that the bishop should not knowingly commit simony or exercise his office for the sake of money or human favor or promote men whom he knows to be of bad character because people petition him to do so. 9 That the miter should not be given up to others on account of human friendship means that the bishop should not disguise the sins of the negligent or let those whom he can and should correct go unpunished, or pass over the sins of his friends in silence due to worldly friendship or take the sins of his subordinates on his own back, for the bishop is God's sentinel. 10 That the bishop should not lose his miter through negligence means that the bishop should not delegate to others what he should and can do more profitably himself, that he should not, for the sake of his own physical ease, transfer to others what he himself is more perfectly able to carry out, since the bishop's duty is not to rest but to work. 11 Nor should the bishop be ignorant of the life and conduct of those to whom he delegates his tasks. Instead he should know and review how they observe justice and whether they conduct themselves prudently and without cupidity in their assignments.

12 I want you to know, too, that the bishop, in his role as shepherd, ought to carry a bouquet of flowers under his arms in order to entice sheep both far and near to run gladly after its scent. This bouquet of flowers signifies the bishop's pious preaching. 13 The two arms from which the bouquet of divine preaching hangs are two kinds of works necessary to a bishop, namely, public good works and hidden good works. Thus, the nearby sheep in his diocese, seeing the bishop's charity in his works and hearing it in his words, will give glory to God through the bishop. 14 Likewise, the faraway sheep, hearing of the bishop's reputation, will want to follow him. This is the sweetest bouquet: not to be ashamed of God's truth and humility, to preach good doctrine and to practice as one preaches, to be humble when praised and devout in humiliation. 15 When the bishop has traveled to the end of this path and reaches the

1. "A father to the poor" (Job 29:16).

2. "A double reward, as Paul says": cf. 1 Timothy 5:17.

gate, he must have a gift in his hands to present to the high king. Accordingly, may he have in his hands a vessel precious to him, an empty one, to offer to the high king. 16 The empty vessel to be offered is his own heart. He must struggle night and day in order for it to be empty of all lusts and the desire for fleeting praise. When such a bishop is led into the kingdom of glory, Jesus Christ, true God and man, will come out to meet him together with the whole host of saints. 17 Then he will hear the angels saying: 'Our God, our joy and every good! This bishop was pure in body, manly in his conduct. It is befitting that we should present him to you, for he longed for our company everyday. Satisfy his longing and magnify our joy at his coming!' 18 Then, too, other saints will say: 'O God, our joy is both from you and in you and we need nothing else. Yet, our joy is heightened by the joy of the soul of this bishop who longed for you while he was still able to long. 19 The sweet flowers of his lips³ increased our numbers. The flowers of his works consoled those dwelling far and near. Therefore, let him rejoice with us, and rejoice yourself over him for whom you longed so much when you died for him.' Finally the King of glory shall say to him: 20 'Friend, you have come to present to me the vessel of your heart emptied of your selfish will. Therefore, I will fill you with my delight and glory. My happiness will be yours and your glory in me will never cease.' "

‡ Chapter 4

Parable about a Prudent Canon Who Is Ridiculed by His Slack Bishop; the Humiliation of the Bishop after His Death

DATE: 1340S

The Mother's words to her daughter about the covetousness of bad bishops; she explains in a long parable that many persons through their good intentions attain the spiritual rank that intemperate bishops reject despite having been called to it in a physical sense.

1 The Mother of God speaks to the Son's bride saying: "You are crying because God loves people so much but people love God so little. So it is. Where, indeed, is that ruler or bishop who does not covet his office in order to obtain worldly honors and wealth but, rather, desires it in order to help the poor with his own hands? 2 Since rulers and bishops do not want to come to the wedding feast prepared for everyone in heaven, the poor and weak will come¹ instead, as I will show you by way of an example.

3 In a certain city lived a wise, handsome, and wealthy bishop who was praised for his wisdom and handsome looks, but did not, as he ought to, return

3. "The sweet flowers of his lips," i.e., his preaching.

1. 4.2: "the poor and weak will come"; cf. Luke 14:13-24.

thanks to God who had given him that very wisdom.² 4 He was praised and honored for his wealth, too, and he handed out numerous gifts with a view to worldly favor. He longed for even greater possessions so as to be able to give more gifts and win greater honor. This bishop had a learned priest in his diocese who thought to himself as follows: 5 ‘This bishop,’ he said, ‘loves God less than he should. His whole life tends toward worldliness. Therefore, if it is pleasing to God, I would like to have his episcopate in order to give glory to God. 6 I do not desire it for worldly reasons, seeing that worldly honor is but empty air, nor for the sake of wealth, which is as heavy as the heaviest of burdens, nor for the sake of physical rest and comfort, since I only need a reasonable amount of rest so as to keep my body fit for God’s service. No, I desire it for the sake of God alone. 7 And, although I am unworthy of any honor, still, in order to win more souls for God and to benefit more people by my word and example and to support more people through church revenues, 8 I would gladly take on the burdensome task of being bishop. God knows that I would rather die a painful death or put up with bitter hardships than to have the rank of bishop. I am as susceptible to suffering as the next man, but, still, he who aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. 9 For this reason, I readily desire the honorable title of bishop along with a bishop’s burden, although I do so in the same way as I desire death. I desire the honor as a means to saving more souls. I desire the burden for my own salvation and in order to show my love for God and souls. I desire the office for the sole purpose of being able to distribute the goods of the church to the poor more generously, to instruct souls more outspokenly, to instruct those in error more boldly, to mortify my flesh more completely, to exercise self-control more assiduously as an example to others.’

10 This canon prudently reproved his bishop in private. However, the bishop took it badly and embarrassed the priest in public, imprudently boasting of his own competence and moderation in everything. 11 The canon, however, saddened over the bishop’s improprieties, bore the insults with patience. But the bishop ridiculed the charity and patience of the canon and spoke against him so much that the canon was given the blame and thought to be a lying fool, while the bishop was seen as being just and circumspect.

12 At length, as time went by, both the bishop and the canon passed away and were called to God’s judgment. In his sight and in the presence of the angels, a golden throne appeared with the miter and insignia of a bishop next to it. 13 A large number of demons were following the canon, desirous of finding some fatal fault in him. As to the bishop, they felt as sure about having him as a whale does of the calves that she keeps alive in her belly amid the waves. 14 There were many indictments leveled against the bishop; why and with what intention he undertook the office of bishop, why he grew proud

2. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Philippus of Orléans (d. October 1349), see Introduction p. 254 above; see also ch. 12.24.

about the goods intended for souls, the way he directed the souls entrusted to him, in what way he had responded to the grace God had given him. 15 When the bishop could make no just reply to the charges, the judge replied: 'Put excrement on the bishop's head instead of a miter and pitch on his hands instead of gloves, mud on his feet instead of sandals. Instead of a bishop's shirt and linen garment put the rags of a whore on him. 16 Let him have disgrace instead of honor. Instead of a train of servants, let him have a raging mob of demons.' Then the judge added: 'Put a crown as radiant as the sun on the canon's head, gilded gloves on his hands, place shoes on his feet. Let him don the clothes of a bishop with every honor.' 17 Dressed in his episcopal garb, surrounded by the heavenly host, he was presented to the judge as an honored bishop. The bishop, however, went off like a thief with a rope about his neck. At the sight of him the judge averted his merciful eyes as did all his saints with him.

18 That is the way in which many persons through their good intentions and in a spiritual sense attain the rank of honor scorned by those who were called to it in a physical sense. All these things took place instantaneously before God, although, for your sake, they were acted out in words, for a thousand years are as a single hour before God.³ 19 It happens every day that, inasmuch as bishops and rulers do not want to have the office to which they were called, God chooses for himself poor priests and parish clerks who, living according to their own better conscience, would be glad to be of benefit to souls for the glory of God if they could, and they do what they can. 20 For this reason, they will take the places prepared for the bishops. God is like a man who hangs a golden crown outside the door of his house and cries out to passersby: 'Anyone of any social standing can earn this crown! He who is most nobly clothed in virtue will obtain it.' 21 Know that if bishops and rulers are wise in worldly wisdom, God is wiser than they in a spiritual sense, for he raises up the humble and does not give his approval to the proud. Know, too, that this canon who was praised did not have to groom his horse when he went off to preach or carry out his duties, 22 nor did he have to light the fire when he was about to eat. No, he had the servants and the means he needed to live in a reasonable fashion. He had money, too, although not for his own greedy use, for not even if he had had all the wealth in the world would he have given a single shilling to become bishop. 23 But not for all the world would he have refused to become bishop, if that was God's will. He gave his will to God, ready to be honored for the honor of God and ready to be cast down out of love and fear of God."

3. "for a thousand years are as a single hour before God"; cf. Psalm 89(90):4; 2 Peter 3:8.

‡ Chapter 5

A Helmsman Tosses His People in a Storm; on Birgitta's Calling

DATE: 1349–50, MILAN

Ambrose's words to the bride about the prayer of good persons for the people; rulers of the world and the church are compared to helmsmen, while pride and the rest of the vices are compared to storms, and the passage into truth is compared to a haven; also, about the bride's spiritual calling.

1 "It is written that the friends of God once cried out asking God to rend the heavens and come down¹ to free his people of Israel. In these days, too, God's friends cry out saying: 'Kindest God, we see innumerable people perishing in perilous storms, for their helmsmen are greedy and are always desirous of putting to land in those countries where they think they will get a greater profit. 2 They lead the people toward places where there is a tremendous hurling of the waves, while the people themselves do not know any safe haven. So this countless people is therefore in awful peril and very few of them ever reach their proper haven. 3 We beg you, King of all glory, graciously light up the haven so that your people may escape their danger, not having to obey the wicked helmsmen but being led to the haven by your blessed light.'

4 By these helmsmen I mean all those who wield either material or spiritual power in the world. Many of them love their own will so much that they do not bother themselves about the needs of the souls under them or about the fierce storms of the world, since they are of their own free will caught up in the storms of pride, greed, and impurity. 5 The wretched populace imitates their deeds, thinking that they are on a straight course. In this way the rulers bring themselves and their subjects to perdition by following their every selfish desire. 6 By the haven I mean the passageway to truth. For many people this passageway has grown so dark that when someone describes for them how to get to the haven of their celestial fatherland by way of the sacred gospel of Christ, then they call him a liar and instead follow the ways of those who wallow in each and every sin, rather than trusting in the words of those who preach the gospel truth. 7 By the light requested by the friends of God I mean a divine revelation made in the world in order that God's love might be renewed in human hearts and his justice not be forgotten or neglected. 8 Therefore, because of his mercy and the prayers of his friends, it has pleased God to call you in the Holy Spirit in order that you may spiritually see, hear, and understand so that you may reveal to others that which you hear in the Spirit according to the will of God."

1. "To rend the heavens and come down"; cf. Isaiah 64:1.

‡ Chapter 6

An Allegory about an Adulterous Husband Who Spends Nine Out of Every Ten Hours with His Housemaid Rather Than His Wife

DATE: 1349–50, MILAN

Ambrose's words to the bride offering an allegory about a man, his wife and his housemaid, and about how this adulterer symbolizes a wicked bishop while his wife symbolizes the church and his housemaid the love of this world, and about the harsh sentence on those more attached to the world than to the church.

1 "I am Bishop Ambrose. I am appearing to you and speaking with you in allegory because your heart is unable to receive a spiritual message without some physical comparison. 2 Once there was a man whose lawfully wedded wife was charming and prudent. However, he liked the housemaid better than his wife. This had three consequences. The first is that the words and gestures of the housemaid delighted him more than those of his wife. 3 The second is that he dressed the housemaid up in fine clothes without caring that his wife was dressed in common rags. The third is that he was accustomed to spending nine hours with the housemaid and only the tenth hour with his wife. 4 He spent the first hour at the housemaid's side, enjoying himself in gazing on her beauty. He spent the second hour sleeping in her arms. He spent the third hour cheerfully doing manual labor for the sake of the housemaid's comfort. 5 He spent the fourth hour taking physical rest with her after his physical toil. He spent the fifth hour restless in his mind and worrying about how to provide for her. He spent the sixth hour at rest with her, seeing now that she fully approved of what he had done for her. 6 At the seventh hour the fire of carnal lust entered into him. He spent the eighth hour satisfying his willful lust with her. In the ninth hour he neglected certain tasks that he nevertheless would have liked to carry out. He spent the tenth hour doing some tasks that he did not feel like doing. 7 And only during this hour did he stay with his wife. One of his wife's relatives came to the adulterer and reproached him strongly, saying: 'Turn the affection of your mind toward your lawfully wedded wife. Love her and clothe her as is fitting, and spend nine hours with her and only the tenth hour with the housemaid. If not, beware, because you will die a horrible and sudden death.'

8 By this adulterer I refer to someone who holds the office of bishop for the sake of providing for the church but, in spite of that, leads an adulterous life.¹ He is joined to the holy church in spiritual union so that she should be his dearest bride, but he withdraws his affections from her and loves the servile world much more than his noble lady and bride. 9 Thus, he does three things. First, he rejoices more in the fraudulent adulation of the world than in an

1. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Giovanni Visconti, see Introduction, p. 254 above.

obedient disposition toward the holy church. Second, he loves worldly decorations, but cares little about the lack of material or spiritual decoration of the church. 10 Third, he spends nine hours on the world and only one of ten on the holy church. Accordingly, he spends the first hour in good cheer, gazing on the beauty of the world with delight. He spends the second hour sleeping sweetly in the arms of the world, that is, amid its high fortifications and the vigilance of its armies, happily confident in possessing physical security because of these things. 11 He spends the third hour cheerfully doing manual labor for the sake of worldly advantage in order that he might obtain the physical enjoyment of the world. He spends the fourth hour gladly taking physical rest after his physical toil, now that he has sufficient means. 12 He spends the fifth hour restless in his mind in different ways, worrying about how he can appear to be wise in worldly matters. During the sixth hour he experiences an agreeable restfulness of mind, seeing that worldly people everywhere approve of what he has done. 13 In the seventh hour he hears and sees worldly pleasures and readily opens his lust for them. This causes a fire to burn impatiently and intolerably in his heart. In the eighth hour he carries out in act what before had merely been his burning desire. 14 During the ninth hour he negligently omits certain tasks he had wanted to do for worldly motives, so as not to offend those for whom he has a mere natural affection. In the tenth hour he cheerlessly performs a few good deeds, afraid that he might be held in scorn and gain a bad reputation or receive a harsh sentence if for some reason he wholly neglected to do them. 15 He is accustomed to spending only this tenth hour with the holy church, doing what good he does not out of love but out of fear.² He is, of course, afraid of the punishment of the fires of hell. If he could live forever in physical comfort and with plenty of worldly possessions, he would not care about losing the happiness of heaven. 16 Therefore, I swear by that God who has no beginning and who lives without end, and affirm with certainty that, unless he returns to the holy church soon and spends nine hours with her and only the tenth with the housemaid, that is, with the world—not by loving it but by possessing the wealth and honor of his episcopal office with reluctance, and arranging everything in humility and reasonably for the glory of God—then the spiritual wound in his soul will be as grave as 17—to make a physical comparison—the wound of a man struck so horribly on his head that his whole body is destroyed down to the soles of his feet, with his veins and muscles bursting, and his bones getting shattered and the marrow flowing out terribly in all directions. 18 As harshly tormented as seems the heart in a body struck so violently in its head and the parts of the body closest to the head that the very soles of its feet are in pain, although they are at the farthest remove, equally harshly tortured will that miserable soul closest to the blast of divine justice appear when in its conscience it sees itself being unbearably wounded on every side.”

2. “Not out of love but out of fear”; cf. 1 John 4:18.

‡ Chapter 7

The Same Bishop Is Like a Bellows and a Snail; He Is Compared to St. Ambrose

DATE: 1349–50, MILAN

The Virgin's words to the bride comparing a world-loving bishop to a bellows full of air or to a snail lying in filth, and about the sentence dealt out to such a bishop who is the very opposite of Bishop Ambrose.

1 "Scripture says: 'He who loves his own soul in this world will lose it.'¹ Now this bishop loved his own soul with his every desire, and there were no spiritual inclinations in his heart. 2 He might well be compared to an air-filled bellows next to a forge. Just as there is air left in the bellows once the coals are spent and the red-hot metal is flowing, so too, although this man has given his nature everything it craves, uselessly wasting his time, the same inclinations are still left in him like the air in the bellows. 3 His will is inclined to worldly pride and lust. Because of these vices, he offers an excuse and a sinful example to people with hardened hearts who, wasted in sins, are flushed down to hell. 4 This was not the attitude of the good bishop Ambrose. His heart was filled with God's will. He ate and slept with temperance. He expelled the desire for sin and spent his time usefully and morally. 5 He might well be called a bellows of virtue. He healed the wounds of sin with words of truth. He inflamed those who had grown cold in God's love by the example of his own good works. He cooled those who were burning with sinful desire by the purity of his life. In this way, he helped many people to avoid entering the death of hell, for divine love remained in him as long as he lived.

6 This bishop, on the other hand, is like a snail that reclines in its native filth and drags its head on the ground. In similar fashion, this man reclines and has his delight in sinful abomination, letting his mind be drawn to worldliness rather than to the thought of eternity. 7 I would have him reflect on three things: First, the way in which he has exercised his priestly ministry. Second, the meaning of that gospel phrase: "They have sheep's clothing but are ravenous wolves on the inside."² Third, the reason why his heart burns for temporal things but is cold toward the Creator of all things."

1. "He who loves his own soul in this world will lose it" (John 12:25); cf. Matthew 10:39; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 14:26. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Giovanni Visconti, see Introduction, p. 254 above.

2. "They have sheep's clothing but are ravenous wolves on the inside" (Matthew 7:15).

‡ Chapter 8*

Mary Is Like a Nut; She Can Discern Wisdom; Birgitta Must Ask a Scholar Three Questions

DATE: 1349–50, MILAN

The Virgin's words to the bride about her own perfection and excellence, and about the inordinate desires of modern teachers and about their false reply to the question asked them by the glorious Virgin.

1 The Mother speaks: "I am the woman who has always been in God's love. I was from my infancy entirely in the company of the Holy Spirit. If you want an example, think of how a nut grows. Its outer shell grows and widens, while its inner kernel also widens and grows, so that the nut is always full and there is no room in it for anything extraneous. 2 In the same manner, too, I was full of the Holy Spirit from my infancy. As my body grew and I became older, the Holy Spirit filled me up with such abundance that he left no room in me for any sin to enter. 3 Thus, I am she who never committed either venial or mortal sin. I so burned with love for God that I liked nothing but to carry out God's will, 4 for the fire of divine love blazed in my heart. God, blessed above all forever, who created me through his power and filled me with the power of his Holy Spirit, had an ardent love for me.¹ 5 In the fervor of his love he sent me his messenger² and gave me to understand his decision that I should become the Mother of God.³ When I understood what the will of God was, then, through the fire of love that I bore in my heart towards God, a word of true obedience at once left my lips, and I gave this answer to the messenger, saying: 6 'May it be done to me according to your word.'⁴ At that very instant the Word was made flesh in me. The Son of God became my son. The two of us had one son who is both God and man, as I am both Mother and Virgin. 7 As my Son Jesus Christ, true God and wisest of men, lay in my womb, I received such great wisdom through him that I not only could understand the learning of scholars, I could even discern whether their hearts were true, whether their words proceeded from love for God or from mere scholarly cleverness. 8 Therefore, you who hear my words should tell that scholar that I

* This and the following revelation exist in early versions that pre-date the Latin archetype; see further General Introduction, p. 16 above. See also Jönsson, *Book III*, pp. 235–51. On the identity of the bishop in this vision, possibly Giovanni Visconti, see Introduction, p. 254 above. The early Latin version has the following introduction that is omitted by Alfonso in his later edition; this is an example of how some revelations were first written as letters, and then "decontextualized" by the removal of an introductory greeting. "Master, you should know that I, the woman to whom you spoke, had the following revelation after I saw you. Everything written below was revealed to me in a spiritual way, so help me Jesus Christ, body and soul! The most worthy Virgin Mary appeared to me, unworthy sinner, saying: I am the woman. . . ." Translated from Jönsson, *Book III*, p. 244.

1. "Had an ardent love for me": early Latin version adds "in the power of his divinity."

2. "His messenger," i.e., the angel Gabriel; cf. Luke 1:26.

3. "That I should become the mother of God": early Latin version adds "and give birth to the Son of God."

4. "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

have three questions for him: First, whether he desires to win the favor and friendship of the bishop in a corporal sense more than he desires to present the bishop's soul to God in a spiritual sense. 9 Second, whether his mind rejoices more in owning a great many florins or in owning none. Third, which of the following two choices he prefers: to be called a scholar and take his seat among the honored ranks for the sake of worldly glory or to be called a simple brother and take his seat among the lowly. 10 Let him ponder these three questions carefully. If his love for the bishop is corporal rather than spiritual, then it follows that he tells him things the bishop likes to hear rather than prohibiting him from doing all the sinful things he likes to do. 11 If he is happier about owning a lot of florins rather than none, then he loves riches more than poverty. He then gives the impression of advising his friends to acquire as much as they can rather than to give up gladly what they can do without. 12 If, for the sake of worldly honor, he prefers his scholarly reputation and sitting in a seat of honor, then he loves pride more than humility and, therefore, appears to God more like an ass than a scholar. 13 In that case he is chewing on empty straw, which is the same as scholarly knowledge without charity, and he does not have the fine wheat of charity, since divine charity can never grow strong in a proud heart."

14 After the scholar had excused himself with the excuse that he had a greater desire to present the soul of the bishop to God in a spiritual sense and that he would rather have no florins and, in the third place, that he did not care about the title of scholar,⁵ the Mother said again: 15 "I am she who heard the truth from the lips of Gabriel⁶ and believed without doubting. This is why Truth took for himself flesh and blood from my body and remained in me. 16 I gave birth to that same Truth who was in himself both God and man. Inasmuch as Truth, who is the Son of God, willed to come to me and to dwell in me and to be born from me, I know fully well whether people have truth on their lips or not.⁷ 17 I asked the scholar three questions. I would have approved of his answer, had there been truth in his words. However, there was no truth in them. Therefore, I will give him three warnings.⁸ The first is that there are some things that he loves and desires in this world but which he will not obtain at all. 18 The second is that he will soon lose the thing that he has worldly joy in possessing. The third is that the little ones will enter heaven.⁹ The great ones will be left standing outside, because the gate is narrow."¹⁰

5. Master's reply in the early Latin version: "To the first: I prefer to present my lord's soul to God in a spiritual sense. To the second: I own nothing and I rejoice more in the poverty that I have professed than in all the world's riches. To the third: I prefer to be called a simple brother rather than to be styled master for the sake of vain and worldly glory." Translated from Jönsson, *Book III*, p. 245.

6. "She who heard the truth from the lips of Gabriel"; cf. Luke 1:26–28; and cf. ch. 8.5 above.

7. "Whether men have truth on their lips or not": early Latin version has "whether a man has truth on his lips of not, even before the words leave his lips."

8. "I will give him three warnings": early Latin version has "I now want to give him three warnings, and that which was missing in his replies, namely truth, will definitely follow my words."

9. "The little ones will enter heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

10. "The gate is narrow" (Matthew 7:14).

‡ Chapter 9*

Even for Those with Impaired Senses, Disasters and Avalanches Still Occur

DATE: 1340S

The Virgin's words to the bride about how those who can see and hear and so forth escape dangers by virtue of the sunlight and so forth, but dangers befall those who are blind and deaf and so forth.

1 The Mother speaks: "Although a blind man does not see it, the sun still shines clearly in splendor and beauty even while he is falling down the precipice. Travelers who have clear eyesight are thankful for the clear light that helps them avoid the dangers of their journey. 2 Although the deaf man does not hear it, still the violent avalanche comes crashing down upon him terribly from on high, but he who can hear it coming escapes to safer places. 3 Although a dead man cannot taste it while he lies rotting among worms, a good drink still tastes sweet. A living man can sip it and be glad at heart, feeling himself emboldened for any brave deed."

‡ Chapter 10*

The Church Is Near to Collapse; Mary Is Like a Rainbow; the Addendum Describes Papal Nuncios

DATE: 1350, ROME

The Virgin speaks to her daughter, offering assurance about the words spoken to her; and about the danger and approaching collapse of the church, and about how, unfortunately, the overseers of the church largely devote themselves nowadays to a life of debauchery and greed and waste the goods of the church in their pride, and about how the wrath of God is aroused against such as these.

1 The Mother speaks: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to see, thinking they come from the evil spirit. Just as light and heat accompany the approach of the sun but do not follow after a dark shadow, 2 in the same way two things accompany the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart: ardent love for God and the complete illumination of holy faith. You are experiencing both these things now. These two do not follow upon the devil whom we can liken

* This and the preceding revelation exist in early versions that pre-date the Latin archetype; see further General Introduction, p. 16 above.

* This vision also occurs in Book IV 78,5–24, where it is adapted in epistolary form (see Öberg, *Kring Birgitta*, pp. 3, 7, 12), and where it is said that it was received in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

to a dark shadow. 3 Therefore, send my messenger to the man I mentioned to you.¹ Although I know his heart and how he will respond, and the imminent end of his life, you should still send him the following message.

4 I would have him know that the foundation of the holy church is so heavily deteriorated on its right side that its vaulted roof has many cracks at the top, and that this causes the stones to fall so dangerously that many of those who pass beneath it lose their lives. 5 Several of the columns that should stand erect are almost level with the ground and even the floor is so full of holes that blind people entering there have dangerous falls. Sometimes it even happens that, along with the blind, people with good eyesight have bad falls because of the dangerous holes in the floor. 6 As a result of all this, the Church of God is dangerously tottering, and if she is tottering so badly, what awaits next if not her collapse? I assure you that if she is not helped by repairs, her collapse will be so great that it will be heard throughout all of Christendom.

7 I am the Virgin whose womb the Son of God condescended to enter,² without the least contagious trace of carnal lust. The Son of God was born from my closed womb, giving me solace but no pain at all. 8 I stood next to the cross³ when he victoriously overcame hell through his patient suffering and opened up heaven with the blood of his heart. 9 I was also on the mountain when God's Son, who is also my Son, ascended into heaven. 10 I have the clearest knowledge of the whole of the catholic faith that he preached and taught to everyone who wanted to enter heaven.⁴ I am that same woman, and now I stand over the world in continuous prayer, like a rainbow above the clouds that appears to bend toward the earth and to touch it with both ends. 11 I see myself as a rainbow⁵ bending down toward both the good and the wicked inhabitants of the earth by means of my prayers. I bend down toward good people in order that they may be steadfast in the commandments of the holy church, and I bend down toward bad people in order that they may not add to their wickedness and grow worse. 12 I would have the man I mentioned to you know that foul and horrible clouds are rising up in one direction against the shining rainbow. By these clouds I mean those who lead a life of carnal debauchery, those who are as insatiable as the ocean chasm in their greed for money, 13 and those who arrogantly and irrationally spend their means as wastefully as a torrential stream pours out its water. Many of the overseers of the church are guilty of these three things, and their horrendous sins rise up to heaven in the sight of God, as opposed to my prayers as foul clouds are opposed to the shining rainbow. The men who should be placating the wrath of God along with me are instead provoking God's wrath against themselves. Such men should not be promoted in the church of God. 14 I, the Queen of

1. "The man I mentioned to you": probably Cardinal Annibaldo Ceccano (d. 17 July 1350), legate of Pope Clement VI (cf. Book IV 78 rubric).

2. "The Virgin whose womb the Son of God condescended to enter"; cf. Luke 1:26–38.

3. "I stood next to the cross"; cf. John 19:25.

4. "God's Son . . . ascended into heaven"; cf. Mark 16:19.

5. "A rainbow" (Genesis 9:13).

Heaven, will come to the aid of anyone who, knowing his own insufficiency, is willing to take on the task of making the church's foundation stable and restoring the blessed vineyard that God founded with his blood,⁶ 15 and, together with the angels, I will root up loose roots and throw any trees without fruit into the fire and plant fruitful shoots in their stead. 16 By this vineyard I mean the church of God in which the two virtues of humility and divine charity must be restored."

ADDENDUM

17 The Son of God speaks of the papal nuncios: "You have entered the company of rulers and are going to rise still higher. Worthy is he who works to exalt humility, for pride has already risen far too high. He who has charity for souls will also receive the highest honors, for ambition and simony are now prevalent among many people. 18 Happy is he who tries to root out the vices of the world as far as he can, for vice is now grown abnormally strong. It is also most efficacious to have patience and to pray for it, for, in the days of many who are yet living, the sun will be rent in two, the stars thrown into confusion, wisdom will be made foolish, the humble on earth will groan and the bold will prevail.⁷ 19 The understanding and interpretation of these things belongs to the wise men who know how to make the rough smooth and to provide for the future." 20 The foregoing revelation was for the cardinal of Albano⁸ who was then a prior.

‡ Chapter 11

John the Baptist Describes a Bishop Who Is Like a Monkey; the Addendum Describes a Cardinal Legate

DATE: 1350, ROME

The bride's trusting words to Christ, and about how John the Baptist offers assurance to the bride that Christ speaks to her, and about the happiness of the good rich man, and about how an imprudent bishop is compared to a monkey because of his foolishness and wicked life.

6. "The blessed vineyard . . . blood," i.e., the church, which Christ founded through the sacrifice of his blood.

7. This revelation was interpreted by Birgitta's friend, Magnus Petri, at some time between 1384 and 1391, as a prophesy about the Great Schism: "Nonne toti mundo iam nostris temporibus liquet scisma istud notissimum ecclesie Romane, cui pronunc duo summi pontifices siue pape videntur presidere, quod beate Birgittae diuinitus reuelatum extitit forsan ad viginti annos, antequam contigit, ut patet ex fine decime reuelacionis tercij libri Reuelacionum celestium, ubi sic dicitur: *In diebus multorum, qui nunc viuunt, sol, id est Papa, dimidietur. Stelle, id est cardinales, confundentur. Sapiencia, scilicet infidelium, infatuabitur. Humiles ingemiscent* etcetera, ut ibidem patet." See further Undhagen, "Une source", especially p. 225.

8. "Cardinal of Albano": Angelico Grimoaldi (1320–88), brother of Pope Urban V, prior of Santa Pierre in Diè until 1362. See further Introduction, p. 254 above.

1 The bride spoke to Christ humbly in her prayer saying: "O my Lord Jesus Christ, so firmly do I believe in you that even if the serpent lay in front of my mouth, he should not enter unless you permitted it for my own good."

2 John the Baptist answered: "The one who appears to you is the very Son of God by nature, whom I myself heard the Father bearing witness to when He said: 'This is my Son.'¹ 3 From him proceeds the Holy Spirit² who appeared above him in the form of a dove³ as I was baptizing him. He is the son of the Virgin according to the flesh. I touched his body with my very own hands. Believe firmly in him and enter into his life. He is the one who has shown the true path by which poor and rich can enter heaven. 4 But you might ask, what should the inner disposition of a rich person be if he is to enter heaven, given that God himself has said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven?⁴ To this I answer you: 5 A rich man who is disposed in such a way that he is afraid to have any ill-gotten goods, who is concerned not to spend his means wastefully or contrary to God's will, who holds his possessions and honors with reluctance and would willingly be separated from them, 6 who is disturbed by the loss of souls and the dishonor done to God, and, although he is compelled by the plans of God to own the world to some extent, is vigilant concerning the love of God in his every intention, this is the kind of rich man who bears fruit and is happy and dear to God. 7 This bishop, however, is not rich in that way. He is like a monkey with four distinguishing features. The first is a costume that has been made for him that hangs down and hides his torso but leaves his private parts completely exposed. 8 The second is that he touches stinking things with his fingers and puts them to his mouth. The third is that he has a humanlike face, although the rest of his coloring and appearance is that of a brute animal. 9 The fourth is that, although he has both hands and feet, he tramples on the dirt with his hands and fingers. This foolish bishop is like a monkey, curious about the vanity of the world, too deformed for any action deserving praise. 10 He wears a costume, that is, his episcopal ordination, which is honorable and precious in the sight of God, but his naked private parts are exposed, since the frivolity of his character and his carnal lust are displayed to others and bring ruin to souls. 11 This goes against what that noble knight⁵ says about how a man's more shameful parts are given the greater honor,⁶ meaning by this that the animal urges of priests should be hidden by good works, so that the weak may not be scandalized by their example. A monkey also touches and sniffs at stinking things. 12 What do you do with a finger if not point to something you have seen, just as when I beheld God in his human nature and pointed to him

1. "This is my Son" (Matthew 3:13-17; 17:5; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22).

2. "From him proceeds the Holy Spirit"; cf. John 16:14-15.

3. "Appeared . . . in the form of a dove"; cf. Luke 3:22.

4. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven" (Matthew 19:24).

5. "That noble knight," i.e., St. Paul; cf. ch. 19.29.

6. "A man's more shameful parts are given the greater honor" (1 Corinthians 12:23).

with my finger, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God?'⁷ What are the fingers of a bishop if not his praiseworthy virtues through which he should point to God's justice and charity?⁸ 13 But, instead, this man's actions point to the fact that he is nobleborn and rich, worldly wise and lavish with his money. What is this if not to touch stinking rot with his fingers? Is glorying in the flesh or in a great household anything else than glorying in puffed-up sacks? 14 A monkey has a human face but looks like a brute animal in other respects. This man, too, possesses a soul stamped with the seal of God but deformed through his own greed. 15 In the fourth place, just as a monkey touches and tramples on the dirt with his feet and hands, so too this man covets the things of the earth in his appetites and actions, turning his face away from heaven and lowering it to the earth like an oblivious animal. Does a man like that lessen the wrath of God? No, indeed, he rather provokes God's justice against himself."

ADDENDUM

16 The following revelation was made about a cardinal legate during the jubilee year.⁸ The Son of God speaks: "O proud debater, where is your pomp, where is your equestrian finery now? You did not want to understand while you were being held in honor. This is why you have now fallen into dishonor. Answer my question then, although I know all things, while this new bride is listening." 17 And immediately it was as if an amazingly misshapen person appeared, trembling and naked. The judge said to him: "O soul, you taught that the world and its riches should be spurned. Why then did you follow after them?" 18 The soul answered: "Because their filthy stench smelled better to me than your sweet fragrance." And as soon as he said this, an Ethiopian⁹ poured a vessel of sulphur and poison into the soul. Again the judge spoke: "O soul, you were set up to be a shining lamp for the people, why did you not shine forth by word and example?" 19 The soul answered: "Because your love had been wiped out from my heart. I roamed about like one who had lost his memory and like a vagabond, looking at things in the present and not thinking of the future." When the soul had said this, it was deprived of the light of its eyes. 20 The Ethiopian who was seen to be present said: "O judge, this soul is mine. What shall I do?" The judge said: "Purge and scrutinize it as in a winepress until the council is held at which the allegations of both friends and enemies will be discussed."

7. "I beheld God . . . and pointed to him with my finger . . . the lamb of God"; cf. John 1:29.

8. "Cardinal legate . . . during the jubilee year," possibly Annibaldo Ceccano; cf. note to 10.3 above, and Introduction, p. 254 above.

9. "Ethiopian" stands for a black figure; thus the association with the devil. See, for example, the depiction of a black devil in a wall painting in Tensta church, disturbing Birgitta in her devotions; see Lindgren, *Bilden av Birgitta*, p. 95.

‡ Chapter 12*

Blessed Agnes Discusses a Bishop at a Crossroads; Another Bishop Is Mentioned

DATE: PARTLY SWEDEN 1340S, PARTLY ITALY 1360S

The bride speaks to Christ, pouring forth prayers for the bishop mentioned above, and about the answers that Christ, the Virgin, and Saint Agnes gave to the bride.

1 “O my Lord, I know that no one can enter heaven unless drawn by the Father.¹ Therefore, most kind Father, draw this ailing bishop to you. And you, Son of God, help him if he makes the effort. And you, Holy Spirit, fill this cold and empty bishop with your love.”

2 God the Father answers: “If he who draws something is strong but the thing drawn too heavy, his effort is soon wasted and comes to naught. Besides, if the one drawn is bound up, then he can neither help himself nor the person drawing him. If the one drawn is unclean, then he is loathsome to the one who draws him and comes in contact with him. 3 The attitude of this bishop is like that of a man standing at a fork in the road trying to decide which way to take.”

4 The bride answered: “O my Lord, is it not written that no one stands still in this life but advances either toward that which is better or toward that which is worse?”

5 The Father answered: “Both things could be said here, since this man stands, as it were, between two roads, one of joy and one of sorrow. The horror of eternal punishment upsets him, and he would prefer to obtain the joy of heaven. However, he thinks the road that leads to joy is too rough to tread. But he certainly does start walking when he goes after objects he fervently desires.”

6 Blessed Agnes speaks: “The attitude of this bishop² is like that of a man standing between two roads. He knew one of them was narrow at first but delightful in the end; he knew the other was pleasant for a while but ended in a bottomless pit of anguish. 7 As the traveler thought about these two roads, he was more attracted to the road that was pleasant at the start. However, since he was afraid of the bottomless pit, the following thought occurred to him. He said: ‘There must be a shortcut on the pleasurable road. If I can find it, I can go safely on for a long time and, when I get to the pit at the end, provided I find the shortcut, nothing will harm me.’ 8 So he walked safely on along the road, but when he came to the pit, he took a terrible fall right into it, since he had not found the shortcut he was expecting. Nowadays there are a lot of people with the same idea as this man. They think to themselves as follows. 9 They

* This chapter has similar passages in Book IV 126; compare paragraphs 1–3 with Book IV 126.33–34, and paragraphs 15–17 with Book IV 126. 16–26. See Ellis, “The Divine Message,” p. 231.

1. “No one can enter heaven unless drawn by the Father”; cf. John 6:44.

2. “This bishop”: Thomas Johannis of Växjö, bishop from 1344 to c. 1376; cf. paragraph 24 below.

say: 'It is burdensome to take the narrow path. It is hard to give up our self-will and our privileges.' In this way they place a false and dangerous confidence in themselves. They say: 'The road is long. God's mercy is great. The world is pleasant and was made for pleasure. 10 There is nothing to prevent me from making use of the world for a time as I wish, since I mean to follow God at the end of my life. After all, there is a kind of shortcut from the path of worldliness and that is contrition and confession. If I can manage that, I will be saved.' 11 The thought that a person can keep desiring sin until the end of life and then go to confession is a very weak hope, because they fall into the pit sooner than they expect. At times, too, they undergo such pain and so sudden a death that they are completely incapable of repenting in a fruitful manner. 12 It serves them right. For, when they had the opportunity, they did not want to have any foresight for coming evils, but they arbitrarily set the time for God's mercy by their definition. They made no resolution not to sin so long as they could continue enjoying sin. In the same way, too, this bishop was standing between these two roads. 13 Now, however, he is drawing nearer to the more pleasurable path of the flesh. Let us say that he has three pages set before him to read. He reads the first page over and over with pleasure, but he reads the second page only once in a while and with no pleasure at all, while he reads the third only rarely and does so with sadness. The first page represents the wealth and privileges he delights in. 14 The second is the fear of Gehenna and the future judgment that is upsetting to him. The third is the love and filial fear of God that he rarely peruses. If he would take to heart all that God has done for him or how much he has lavished³ on him, the love of God would never be extinguished in his heart."

15 The bride answered: "O Lady, pray for him." And then Blessed Agnes said: "What is the role of justice if not to judge and what is the role of mercy if not to encourage?" The Mother of God speaks: "The bishop will be told this: Although God can do all things, a man's personal cooperation is still necessary if he is to avoid sin and gain the love of God. 16 There are three means to avoid sin and three means to obtain love. The three by which sin is avoided are: Perfect penance; second, the intention of not wanting to commit the sin again; third, to improve one's life according to the advice of those whom one knows to have given up the world. 17 The three means that work together to obtain love are humility, mercy, and the effort to love. Whoever prays even one Our Father for the sake of gaining God's love will soon experience the effect of God's love drawing close to him.

18 About the other bishop,⁴ about whom I was speaking with you before, I must say in conclusion that the pits appear too wide for him to leap over, the walls too high to climb, the bars too strong to break. 19 I stand here waiting for him, but he turns his head away toward the activities of three groups of

3. "Lavished" renders "impendit" (which could be present or perfect); but cf. Sw. "atir giäldir" [repay]; we take "God" to be the subject of the sentence throughout, but the Swedish text, perhaps through a mistranslation, implies otherwise (how much he [i.e., the bishop] has done for him [i.e., God]).

4. "The other bishop," probably Philippus of Orléans; cf. Book III 4 and paragraph 24 below.

people that he enjoys watching. The first group is a dancing chorus. 20 He tells them: 'I like listening to you, wait up for me!' The second group is engaged in speculation. He tells them: 'I want to see what you see—I enjoy that sort of thing a lot.' The third group is enjoying itself and relaxing in quiet, and he wants to enjoy privilege and quiet with them. To be a dancing chorus in the world means nothing other than to pass from one fleeting delight to another, from one desire for honor to another. 21 To stand and speculate means nothing other than to take the soul away from divine contemplation and to think about the collecting and distributing of temporal goods. To relax in quiet means nothing other than to relax in body. 22 While watching these three crowds, the bishop has climbed up a high mountain but he does not care about the words I have sent to him, nor does he care about the terms of my message that are that, if he keeps his promise, I will also keep mine."

23 The bride answers: "O gentle Mother, do not abandon him!" The Mother says to her: "I will not abandon him until dust returns to dust. More than that, if he breaks through the bars, I will come to meet him like a handmaid and will help him like a mother." 24 And the Mother added: "Are you, daughter, thinking of what would have been the reward of that canon of Orléans, if his bishop had been converted? 25 I will answer you: You see how the earth bears grass and flowers of different species and kinds. In the same way, too, if every person had uprightly remained in their own station from the beginning of the world, then everyone would have received a great reward, inasmuch as everyone who is in God would have gone from one delight to the next, not because of any sense of tediousness in their pleasure, but because their delight grows continuously more delightful and their indescribable joy is continuously made new."

EXPLANATION

26 This was the bishop of Växjö.⁵ When he was in Rome, he was greatly worried about his return. It was heard in the spirit: "Tell the bishop that his delay is more useful than his haste. Those in his company who have gone ahead of him will follow after him. 27 This is why when he returns to his country, he will find my words to be true." This is the way it all turned out. On his return, he found the king in capture⁶ and the whole kingdom in an uproar. 28 Those in his company who had gone ahead of him were impeded for a long time on the way and arrived after him. "Know also that the lady⁷ who is in the

5. "Bishop of Växjö," i.e., Thomas (see Introduction p. 254). See also chs. 1–3, which are probably about the same bishop.

6. "The king in capture": presumably Magnus Eriksson, referring to his imprisonment in 1365 after the battle of Gataskogen.

7. "The lady": possibly Lady Kristina Sigmundsdotter, married to the knight and councillor of state, Ulf Åsbjörnsson (Sparre of Tofta family) (thus Lundén, *Den Heliga Birgitta*, I, p. 303); alternatively, Lady Margareta Sunesdotter Bååt, wife of the same man (thus Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna*, p. 50); cf. Book VI 39.116; 40.7; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 327.

company of the bishop will return safely but will not die in her home country.” And so it turned out, for she went a second time to Rome, and she died and was buried there.

ABOUT THE SAME BISHOP

29 When Lady Birgitta came down from Monte Gargano to the city of Mafredonia in the kingdom of Sicily, the same bishop was in her company. On the mountain it happened that he had such a bad fall from his horse that he broke two ribs. 30 When the lady was about to go out to St. Nicholas of Bari⁸ in the morning, he called her to him saying: “Lady, it is so hard for me to stay here without you. It is also a burden that you should be delayed on my account, especially given the raids going on. 31 I ask you,” he said, “for the love of Jesus Christ, to pray to God for me and touch your hand to my aching side! I hope that my pain will be lessened through the touch of your hands.” With tears in her eyes, she answered in compassion: “Sir, I regard myself as nothing, for I am a great sinner in God’s sight. 32 But let us all pray to God and he will answer your faith.” They prayed, and when she stood up, she touched the bishop’s side, saying: “May the Lord Jesus Christ heal you.” Immediately the pain went away. And the bishop got up and followed her all the way back to Rome.

‡ Chapter 13

On a Treasure Locked Up in a Fortified Castle, Which a Bishop Should Attempt to Penetrate

DATE: 1340S

The Mother’s words to the daughter in which the words and deeds of Christ are explained and wonderfully described as a treasure, his divine nature as a castle, sin as bars, virtues as walls, and the beauty of the world and the delight of friendship as two moats, and about how a bishop ought to behave with respect to the care of souls.

1 The Mother speaks to the bride of her Son, saying: “This bishop prays to me in his love, and, for that reason, he should do what pleases me most. There is a treasure I know of that whoever possesses it will never be poor, 2 whoever sees it will never know distress and death, and whoever desires it will joyfully receive whatever he wishes. The treasure is locked up in a strong castle behind four bars. Outside the castle stand high walls large and thick. 3 Beyond the walls are two wide and deep moats. And so I ask the bishop to jump over

8. “Nicholas of Bari,” bishop Nicholas of Myra, a popular fourth-century saint of the Greek and Latin churches, whose cult grew after the inhabitants of Bari claimed to have acquired some of his relics in 1087. See also Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 74, 309, and 579.

the two moats in a single leap, and climb the walls in a single bound, and break through the bars with a single blow and then to bring me the thing that pleases me most.

I will now tell you the meaning of all this. 4 When you use the word 'treasure,' you refer to something that is rarely used or moved about. In this case, the treasure is my dearest Son's precious words and the deeds he did during and before his passion, 5 along with the miracles he worked when the Word was made flesh¹ in my body and that he continues to do when,² at God's word, the bread on the altar each day is changed into that same flesh. 6 All these things are a precious treasure that has become so neglected and forgotten that there are very few people who recall it or draw any profit from it. However, the glorious body of God my Son is to be found in a fortified castle, that is, in the strength of his divine nature. 7 Just as a castle is a defense against enemies, so the strength of my Son's divine nature is a defense for the body of his human nature, so that no enemy can harm him. The four bars are four sins that exclude many people from the participation in and the goodness of the strength of the body of Christ. 8 The first sin is pride along with the desire for worldly honors. The second is the desire for worldly possessions. The third is the repulsive lust to fill the body up intemperately, and its utterly repulsive satisfaction. 9 The fourth is anger and envy and the neglect of one's own salvation. Many people have an excessive love for these four sins and possess them habitually, which takes them very far away from God. They see and receive the body of God, but their soul is as far from God as thieves are when the way to what they want to steal is blocked by strong bars. 10 This is why I said that he should break through the bars with a single blow. The blow symbolizes the zeal for souls with which a bishop ought to break sinners through deeds of justice done for the love of God in order that, once the bars of vice have been broken, the sinner can reach the precious treasure. 11 Although he cannot strike down every sinner, he should do what he can and ought to do, especially for those who are under his care, sparing neither great nor small, neighbor nor relation, friend nor enemy. 12 This is what Saint Thomas of England³ did. He suffered much for the sake of justice and met with a harsh death in the end, all because he did not refrain from striking bodies with the justice of the church in order that souls might endure less suffering. 13 This bishop should imitate Thomas's way of life, so that everyone who hears him may understand that he hates his own sins as well as other people's sins. The blow of divine zeal will then be heard throughout the heavens before God and his angels. Many people will then be converted and mend their ways, saying: 'He does not hate us but our sins.' They will say: 'Let us repent and we will become friends both of God and of the bishop.'

14 The three walls surrounding the castle are three virtues. The first virtue

1. "The word was made flesh" (John 1:14).

2. "And that he continues to do when": we follow the editor's emended text here "et quod [facit], quando."

3. "St. Thomas," i.e., à Becket (martyr, d. 1170).

is giving up carnal pleasures and doing the will of God. The second is to prefer to suffer reproaches and curses for the sake of truth and justice rather than to obtain worldly honors and possessions by dissimulating the truth. 15 The third is to be ready to forgo both life and possessions for the sake of any Christian's salvation. However, look at what people do nowadays. They think these walls are too high to climb over at all. 16 Accordingly, neither their hearts nor their souls approach the glorious body with any constancy, for they are far from God. This is why I told my friend to climb the walls in a single bound. 17 A bound is what you call it when the feet are held far apart in order for the body to move quickly. A spiritual bound is similar, for, when the body is on earth and the love of the heart is in heaven, 18 then you climb the three walls quickly. When a man meditates on the things of heaven, he is ready to give up his own will, to suffer rejection and persecution for the sake of justice, and to die willingly for the glory of God.

19 The two moats outside the wall represent the beauty of the world and the company and enjoyment of worldly friends. There are many people who are content to take it easy in these moats and never care whether they will see God in heaven. 20 The moats are wide and deep, wide because the wills of such people are far from God, and deep because they confine many souls in the depths of hell. 21 This is why the moats should be jumped over in a single leap. A spiritual leap is nothing other than to detach one's whole heart from things that are empty and to take the leap from earthly goods to the kingdom of heaven.

22 I have shown how to break through the bars and leap over the walls. Now I will show how this bishop should bring me the most precious thing there ever was. God's divine nature was and is from eternity without beginning, since neither beginning nor end can be found in it. 23 But his human nature was in my body and took flesh and blood from me. Therefore, it is the most precious thing there ever was or is. Accordingly, when the righteous soul receives God's body with love and when his body fills the soul, the most precious thing there ever was is there. 24 Although the divine nature exists in three Persons without beginning and without end in itself, when God sent his Son to me with his divine nature and the Holy Spirit, he received his blessed body from me. 25 I will now show the bishop how this precious thing is to be brought before the Lord. Wherever God's friend comes across a sinner whose words show little love for God but much love for the world, that soul is empty with respect to God. 26 Accordingly, God's friend should show his love for God by his sorrow that a soul redeemed by the Creator's blood should be an enemy to God. He should show compassion for the wretched soul by using two voices, as it were, toward it: one in which he entreats God to have pity on the soul, and another in which he shows the soul its own danger. 27 If he can reconcile and unite the two of them, God and the soul, then the hands of his love will offer to God the most precious gift, for the thing most dear to me is when the body of God, which was once inside me, and the human soul, which God has created, come together in friendship. This is hardly surprising. 28 You know well that I was present when my Son, the great knight, went forth

from Jerusalem to fight a battle so brutal and difficult that all the sinews of his arms were strained. His back was bloodied and livid, his feet pierced by nails, his eyes and ears full of blood. 29 His head sank when he gave up his spirit. His heart was sundered by the point of a spear.⁴ He won souls by suffering greatly. He who now dwells in glory stretches out his arms to men, but few there are who bring him his bride. 30 Consequently, a friend of God should spare neither life nor possessions in helping others while he helps himself by bringing them to my Son.

31 Tell this bishop that, given that he prays for my friendship, I will bind myself to him with a bond of faith. The body of God, which was once within me, will welcome his soul with great love. As the Father was in me together with the Son who had my body and soul in himself, and as the Holy Spirit who is in the Father and the Son was everywhere with me and had my Son within him, so too my servant will be bound to the same Spirit. 32 If he loves the sufferings of God and has his precious body in his heart, then he will have God's human nature that has the divine nature within and without it. God will be in him and he in God, just as God is in me and I in him. 33 As my servant and I share one God, we will also share one bond of love and one Holy Spirit who is one God with the Father and the Son.

34 One thing more: If this bishop keeps his promise with me, I will help him during his lifetime. At the end of his life I will help and assist him and bring his soul before God, saying: 'My God, this man served you and obeyed me, and therefore I present his soul to you!'

35 O daughter, what is a person thinking of when he despises his own soul? Would God the Father in his unfathomable divinity have let his own innocent Son suffer so much in his human nature, if he had not an honest desire and longing for souls and for the eternal glory that he has prepared for them?"

36 This revelation was about the bishop of Linköping⁵ who was afterwards made archbishop. There is more on the same bishop in Book 6, chapter 22, beginning: "This prelate."

ADDENDUM ABOUT THE SAME MAN

37 "The bishop for whom you weep came to an easy purgatory. Know for certain that, although in the world he had many who blocked his way, they have now received their sentence, and he shall be glorified due to his faith and purity."

4. A typically Birgittine graphic description of the Crucifixion; note in particular the mention of "nails" in the plural (cf. note to Book I 10.23), and the lancing of the heart. Also the description of Christ as a great knight is characteristically, if not exclusively, Birgittine.

5. "Bishop of Linköping," i.e., Petrus Tyrgilli, archbishop 1351–66; cf. also Book VI 22.36.

‡ Chapter 14

Mary Compares a Bishop to a Butterfly

DATE: 1340S?

The Mother's words to her daughter, using a marvelous comparison to describe a certain bishop, likening the bishop to a butterfly, his humility and pride to its two wings, the three facades covering up the vices of the bishop to the insect's three colors, his deeds to the thickness of its coloring, his double will to the butterfly's two feelers, his greed to its mouth, his puny love to its puny body.

1 The Mother speaks to the bride of her Son, saying: "You are a vessel that the owner fills and the teacher empties. However, it is one and the same person who fills and empties you. A person who can pour wine and milk and water together into a vessel would be called an expert teacher if he could separate each of these liquids blended together and restore each to its own proper nature. 2 This is what I, the Mother and Teacher¹ of all mankind, have done and am doing to you. A year and a half ago,² all sorts of matters were spoken to you, and now they all seem to be blended together in your soul, and it would seem disgusting if they were all poured out together, since their purpose would not be understood. This is why I gradually distinguish them as I see fit.

3 Do you recall that I sent you to a certain bishop whom I called my servant? Let us compare him to a butterfly³ with two wide wings spattered in the colors white, red, and blue. When you touch it, the pigment sticks to your fingers like ashes. 4 This insect has a puny body but a big mouth, two feelers on its forehead, and a hidden place in its belly through which it emits the filth of its belly. The wings of this insect, that is, the bishop's wings, are his humility and pride. 5 Outwardly he appears humble in his words and gestures, humble in his dress and actions, but inwardly there is a pride that makes him great in his own sight, rendering him swollen up with his own reputation, ambitious for people's appreciation, judgmental of others, and arrogant in preferring himself to others. 6 On these two wings he flies before people with the apparent humility that aims at pleasing individuals and being the talk of everyone, as well as with the pride that makes him consider himself to be holier than others. The three colors of the wings represent his three facades that cover up his vices. 7 The color red means that he continually lectures on the sufferings of Christ and the miracles of the saints in order to be called holy, but they are far from his heart indeed, since he has not much liking for them. 8 The color blue means that, on the outside, he does not seem to care about temporal goods, seeming to be dead to the world and

1. "Mother and Teacher": the bishop's role as preacher and teacher is alluded to here, and there is therefore an implicit comparison between the Virgin and the bishop in this description of Mary.

2. "A year and a half ago": unusually, a precise dating of an earlier vision is given here.

3. On the butterfly as a symbol of pride, cf. Book IV 112.

to be all for the things of heaven under his facade of heavenly blue. But this second color makes him no more stable or fruitful before God than the first. 9 The color white implies that he is a religious in his dress and commendable in his ways. However, his third color holds just as much charm and perfection as the first two. 10 As a butterfly's pigment is thick and stays on your fingers, leaving behind nothing but a kind of ashy substance, so too his deeds seem to be admirable, inasmuch as he desires solitude, but they are empty and ineffectual as to their usefulness to him, since he does not sincerely yearn for or love that which is lovable. The two feelers represent his duplicitous will. 11 You see, he wants to lead a life of comfort in this world and to have eternal life after death. He does not want to be cheated out of being held in great esteem on earth while receiving an even more perfect crown in heaven. This bishop is just like a butterfly, thinking he can carry heaven on one feeler and earth on the other, although he cannot put up with the least little difficulty for God's glory. 12 So he relies on God's church and thinks he can benefit it by his word and example, as if the church could not thrive without him. He presumes that his own good deeds will make worldly people bear spiritual fruit. 13 Hence he reasons like a soldier who has already fought the fight. 'Since,' he says, 'I am already called devout and humble, why should I strive after a life of greater austerity? Although I may sin in a few pleasures without which my life would be unhappy, still my greater merits and good deeds will be my excuse. 14 If heaven can be won for a cup of cold water,⁴ what need is there to struggle beyond measure?'

15 A butterfly has a big mouth as well, but its greed is even bigger, so much so that if it could eat up every single fly but one, it would want to eat that one up, too. Likewise, if this man could add a shilling to the many he already has in such a way that it would go unnoticed in secret, he would take it, although the hunger of his greed would not be stilled even then. 16 A butterfly also has a hidden outlet for its impurities. This man, too, gives improper vent to his anger and impatience, displaying his secret impurities to others. And as a butterfly has a little body, this man has little charity, while his lack of charity is made up for only by the width and breadth of his wings."

17 The bride answered: "If he has just one spark of charity, there is always some hope of life and charity and salvation for him." The Mother said: "Did not Judas also have some charity left when he said after he had betrayed his Lord: 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood'? He wanted to make it look as though he had charity, but he had none."⁵

4. "Heaven can be won for a cup of cold water" (Matthew 10:42); cf. also Ex. 65:11.

5. In this final exchange, Mary's judgment is uncompromising against Birgitta's intercession, a point that is further illustrated in 18.16 where she asks the Virgin not to be angry when she asks a question.

‡ Chapter 15

Mary Continues about Another Bishop Who Is Likened to a Gadfly, and Condemns Both Men

DATE: 1340S?

The Mother's words to her daughter in which another such bishop is allegorically described as a gadfly, his wordy eloquence as flying, his two concerns as two wings, his flattery of the world as a sting; and about the Virgin's amazement at the life of these two bishops; also, about preachers.

1 The Mother speaks again to the bride, saying: "I have shown you another bishop whom I called the pastor of the flock. Let us compare him to a gadfly¹ with an earthy color that flies about noisily. Wherever he alights, his bite is terrible and painful. 2 This pastor has an earthy color, for, although he was called to poverty, he would rather be rich than poor, he would rather be in charge than submit, he would rather have his own will than be disciplined through obedience to others. 3 He flies about noisily in the sense that he is full of wordy eloquence in his pious preaching, and lectures about worldly vanities instead of spiritual doctrine, praising and following worldly vanities rather than the holy simplicity of his order. 4 He has two wings as well, that is, two ideas: The first is that he wants to offer people charming and soothing speech so that he may win their esteem. The second is that he wants everyone to yield to him and obey him. 5 The sting of a gadfly is unbearable. Likewise, this man stings souls to damnation. Although he should be a doctor of souls, he does not tell the people who come to him about their danger and infirmity nor does he use a sharp scalpel, but speaks soothingly to them in order to be called meek and so as not to cause anyone to avoid him. 6 These two bishops are quite simply astonishing. One of them makes an appearance of being poor, solitary, and humble in order to be called spiritual. The other one wants to possess the world in order to be called merciful and generous. The one wants to seem to own nothing and yet longs to possess everything secretly. 7 The other openly wants to have many possessions in order to have a lot to give away and thus win the esteem of others. Accordingly, as the proverb goes,² since they serve me in a way I cannot see (because I do not accept it), I shall reward them in a way they will not see. 8 Do you wonder why such men are praised for their preaching? I will tell you: Sometimes a bad man speaks to good people and the good Spirit of God is poured into them, not because of the goodness of the teacher but through the teacher's words in which the good Spirit of God is found for the good of the listeners. 9 Sometimes a good man

1. "Gadfly" renders Lat. "bruco"; cf. Sw. "brims." Cf. Book II 19.26, 55; Ex. 43.5. The earthy brown might allude to the Franciscan habit. Olaus Magnus gives detailed descriptions on these and other similar insects in Scandinavia (OM 22:1-3).

2. "Proverb"; cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, 4, p. 822, no. 28156.

speaks to bad people who are made good by hearing it both because of the good Spirit of God and the goodness of the teacher. 10 Sometimes a cold man speaks to cold people in such a way that these cold hearers recount what they have heard to fervent people who had not been there, rendering their listeners more fervent. So, do not worry about what kind of people you are sent to. Wonderful is God who tramples gold underfoot and places mud amidst the rays of the sun!"

‡ Chapter 16

The Same Two Bishops Enter into Dialogue; One Is Condemned at the End

DATE: 1340S?

The Son's explanation to the bride that the damnation of souls does not please God; also, about the astonishing questions of the younger bishop to the older bishop, and about the answers of the older bishop to the younger one.

1 The Son speaks to the bride, saying: "Why do you think these two men are being shown to you? Is it because God enjoys censuring and condemning them? Of course not. No, it is done in order better to reveal God's patience and glory and also so that those who hear it may fear God's judgment. 2 But now, come and listen to an astonishing conversation. Look there, the younger bishop has asked the older one a question, saying: 'Brother, hear and answer me. Once you had been bound to the yoke of obedience, why did you forsake it? 3 Once you had chosen poverty and the religious state, why did you abandon them? Once you had entered the religious state and made yourself dead to the world, why did you seek the episcopate?' The older man answered: 'The obedience that taught me to be an inferior was a burden to me. 4 That is why I preferred my freedom. The yoke that God says is pleasant¹ was bitter to me. That is why I sought and chose bodily comfort. My humility was pretended. That is why I craved honors. And, since it is better to push than to pull,² I desired the episcopate accordingly.' 5 The younger man asked again: 'Why did you not do honor to your episcopal see by giving it worldly honor? Why did you not acquire riches by means of worldly wisdom? Why did you not spend your possessions according to the demands of worldly honor? Why did you humble yourself outwardly rather than acting in accord with worldly ambition?' 6 The older man answered: 'The reason I did not strew worldly honors upon my see was that I was hoping myself to be honored so much the more by appearing to be humble and spiritual rather than worldly minded. 7 Therefore, in order to be praised by worldly people, I made a show of holding everything

1. "The yoke that God says is pleasant" (Matthew 11:30).

2. "Since it is better to push than pull": this allusion is unclear, but probably suggests that the bishop can "push" from above, in preference to "pulling" from the lowly rank of friar.

in contempt; I appeared humble and devout in order to be held in esteem by spiritual men. 8 The reason I did not acquire riches through worldly wisdom was in order that spiritual men might not notice it and hold me in contempt because of my secularity. The reason I was not liberal in giving gifts was that I preferred to have few rather than many companions for the sake of my own peace and quiet. I preferred having my money-chest full to handing away gifts.'

9 Again the younger man asked: 'Tell me, why did you give a pleasant and sweet drink out of a dirty vessel to an ass? Why did you give the bishop husks from the pigsty? Why did you fling down your crown under your feet? Why did you spit out wheat but chew weeds? 10 Why did you free others from their chains but bind yourself with fetters? Why did you apply medicine to the wounds of others but poison to your own?' The older man answered: 'I gave my ass a sweet drink from a disgusting, dirty vessel in the sense that, although a scholar, I preferred to handle the divine sacraments of the altar for the sake of my worldly reputation rather than to apply myself to everyday cares.'³ 11 Inasmuch as my secrets were unknown to men but known to God, I grew a great deal in presumption and in that way added to the heavy justice of my terrible condemnation. To the second question, I answer that I gave the bishop husks from the pig-sty in the sense that I followed the promptings of nature⁴ through self-indulgence and did not stand firm in self-restraint. 12 As to the third question, I cast my episcopal crown underfoot in the sense that I preferred to do acts of mercy for the sake of human favor rather than acts of justice for the glory and love of God. 13 As to the fourth question, I spat out wheat but chewed straw in the sense that I did not preach God's words out of love for God nor did I like doing the things I told others to do. As to the fifth question, I freed others but bound myself in the sense that I absolved the people who turned to me with contrition, but I myself liked doing the things that they lamented through their penance and rejected through their tears. 14 As to the sixth question, I anointed others with healing ointment but myself with poison in the sense that while I preached about purity of life and made others better, I made myself worse. I laid down precepts for others but was myself unwilling to lift a finger to do those very things. 15 Where I saw others making progress, that is where I failed and wasted away, since I preferred to add a load to my already committed sins than to lessen my load of sins by making reparation.'

16 After this a voice was heard, saying: 'Give thanks to God that you are not among these poisonous vessels that, when they break, return to the poison itself.' Immediately, the death of one of the two was then announced."

3. "Than apply myself to everyday cares": the ending of the sentence is unclear and nonsequential.

4. "I followed the promptings of nature" renders "nature mee incentiua effundendo perficiebam"; possibly there is some sexual connotation here.

‡ Chapter 17

The Virgin Praises Saint Dominic and His Rule

DATE: 1340s?

The Virgin's words to her daughter praising the life and order of St. Dominic, and about how he turned to the Virgin at the hour of his death, and about how in modern times few of his friars live by the sign of Christ's passion given them by Dominic, but many of them live by the mark of incision given them by the devil.

1 Again the Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "Yesterday I told you about two men who belonged to the Rule of St. Dominic. Dominic held my Son as his dear Lord and loved me his Mother more than his own heart. 2 My Son gave this holy man the inspired thought that there are three things in the world that displease my Son: pride, greed, and carnal desire.¹ 3 By his sighs and entreaties, St. Dominic procured help and medicine so as to combat these three evils. God had compassion on his tears and inspired him to set up a codified rule of life in which the holy man opposed three virtues to the three evils of the world. 4 Against the vice of greed he laid it down that one should own nothing without the permission of one's superior. Against pride he prescribed wearing a humble and simple habit. Against the bottomless voracity of the flesh, he prescribed abstinence and times for practicing self-discipline. 5 He placed a superior over his friars in order to preserve peace and protect unity. In his desire to give his friars a spiritual sign, he symbolically impressed a red cross on their left arm near the heart,² I mean through his teaching and fruitful example, when he taught and admonished them continually to recall the suffering of God, to preach God's word more fervently, not for the world's sake but out of love for God and souls. 6 He also taught them to submit rather than to govern, to hate their self-will, to bear insults patiently, to want nothing beyond food and clothing, to love truth in their hearts and to proclaim it with their lips, not to seek their own praise but to have the words of God on their lips and to teach them always, without omitting them out of shame or uttering them in order to win human favor. 7 When the time came for his deliverance,³ which my Son had revealed to him in spirit, he came in tears to me, his Mother, saying: 'O Mary, Queen of Heaven, whom God predestined for himself to unite his divine and human natures, 8 you alone are that virgin and you alone are that most worthy mother. You are the most powerful of women from whom Power itself went forth. Hear me as I pray to you! I know you to be most powerful and therefore I dare to come before you. Take my friars, whom I have reared and nurtured beneath the austerity of my scapular, and protect them

1. "Pride, greed, and carnal desire"; cf. 1 John 2:16.

2. A red cross on the arm is not known to be part of the Dominican habit, but it is a characteristic of the priests of the Birgittine order, who wore a red cross in the left side of their mantle (RS 13:157).

3. "For his deliverance," i.e., his death.

beneath your wide mantle!⁴ 9 Rule them and nurture them anew, so that the ancient enemy may not prevail against them and may not ruin the new vineyard planted by the right hand of your Son! My Lady, by my scapular with its one piece in front and one at the back, I am referring to nothing other than the twofold concern that I have shown for my friars. 10 I was anxious night and day for them and about how they might serve God by practicing temperance in a reasonable and praiseworthy fashion. I prayed for them that they might not desire any worldly thing that could offend God or that might blacken their reputation for humility and piety among their fellows. 11 Now that the time for my reward has come, I entrust my members to you. Teach them as children while you carry them as their mother.’ 12 With these and other words, Dominic was called to the glory of God.

I answered him as follows, using figurative language: ‘O Dominic, my beloved friend, since you love me more than yourself, I shall protect your sons beneath my mantle and rule them, and all those who persevere in your rule shall be saved. 13 My mantle is wide with mercy and I deny mercy to no one who happily asks for it. All those who seek it find protection in the bosom of my mercy.’

14 But, my daughter, what do you think the rule of Dominic consists in? Surely, it consists in humility, continence, and the contempt of the world. All those who make a commitment to these three virtues and lovingly persevere in them will never be condemned. They are the ones who keep the rule of Blessed Dominic. 15 Now hear something truly amazing: Dominic placed his sons beneath my wide mantle, but, look and see, now there are fewer of them beneath my wide mantle than there were in the austerity of his scapular. Yet not even during Dominic’s lifetime did everyone have a true sheepskin or a Dominican character. I can illustrate their character better by way of a parable. 16 If Dominic came down from the heights of heaven where he lives and said to the Thief who was coming back from the valley and had been looking over the sheep with a view to slaughtering and destroying them,⁵ he would say ‘Why are you calling after and leading away the sheep that I know to be mine by evident signs?’ 17 The Thief might answer: ‘Why, Dominic, do you appropriate to yourself what is not your own? It is outrageous pilferage to usurp another’s property for oneself.’ If Dominic tried to reply that he had raised and tamed them and led and taught them, the Thief would say: ‘You may have brought them up and taught them, but I have led them back to their own self-will by gentle coaxing. 18 You may have mixed leniency with austerity for them, but I enticed them more coaxingly and showed them things better to their liking, and, see, more of them are running to my pasture at my call. This is how I know the sheep eagerly following me are mine, given that they are free to choose to follow the one who attracts them more.’ 19 If Dominic should answer in turn that his sheep are marked with a red sign in the heart, the Thief would

4. On the Virgin’s protecting mantle, cf. Book II 23,5-7.

5. “Looking over the sheep with a view to slaughtering and destroying them”; cf. John 10:10.

say: 'My sheep are marked with my sign, a mark of incision on their right ear. Since my sign is more obvious and visible than your sign, I recognize them as my sheep.' 20 The Thief stands for the devil who has incorporated many of Dominic's sheep into himself. They have an incision on the right ear in the sense that they do not listen to the words of life of the one saying: 'The path to heaven is narrow.' They only put into practice those words they like hearing. Dominic's sheep are few, and they have a red sign in their heart in the sense that they lovingly keep in mind God's suffering and lead a happy life in all chastity and poverty, fervently preaching the word of God. 21 For this is the Rule of Dominic as people commonly express it:⁶ 'To be able to carry all that you own on your back, to want to own nothing but what the Rule allows, to give up not only superfluous things but even at times to refrain from licit and necessary things on account of the impulses of the flesh.' "

‡ Chapter 18

Contemporary Dominican Friars Have Relaxed the Precepts of Their Rule

DATE: 1340S

The Mother's words to her daughter about how friars would now listen and in fact do listen¹ sooner to the devil's voice than to that of their father Dominic, about how few of them follow in his footsteps now, about how those seeking the episcopate for worldly honor and for their own comfort and freedom do not belong to the rule of St. Dominic, about the terrible condemnation of such men, and about the condemnation experienced for one such episcopate.

1 The Mother speaks to the bride, saying: "I told you that all those who belong to the Rule of Dominic are beneath my mantle. Now you are going to hear just how many they are. 2 If Dominic were to come down from the place of delights where he has true happiness and were to cry out as follows: 'My dear brothers, you my followers, there are four good things in reserve for you: honor in return for humility, everlasting riches in return for poverty, satisfaction without boredom in return for continence, eternal life in return for the contempt of the world,' they would scarcely listen to him. 3 On the contrary, if the devil suddenly came up from his hollow and proclaimed four different things, and said: 'Dominic promised you four things. Look here, I have what you want in my hand. 4 I offer honors, I hold wealth in my hand, instant gratification is there, the world will be delicious to enjoy. Take what I offer you, then! Use these things that are certain! Lead a life of joy so that after death you may rejoice together!' 5 If these two voices were now to sound in the world,

6. "As people commonly express it"; cf. Walther, *Proverbia*, 3, p. 608, no. 20001b. Cf. also Book VI 30.35.

1. "Would now listen and in fact do listen" is translated according to the manuscripts ("audirent et audiunt"), and not according to the editor's emendation (who deletes "audirent et").

more people would run to the voice of the robber and devil than to the voice of Dominic, my great good friend. What shall I say of the friars of Dominic? 6 Those who are in his rule are indeed few, fewer still those who follow in his footsteps by imitating him. For not everyone listens to the one voice, because not everyone is of one and the same sort—not in the sense that not everyone comes from God or that not everyone can be saved, if they want, but in the sense that not everyone listens to the voice of the Son of God saying: ‘Come to me and I will refresh you, by giving you myself!’²

7 But what shall I say of those friars who seek the episcopate for worldly reasons? Do they really belong to the rule of Dominic? Certainly not. Or are those who accept the episcopate for a good reason excluded from the Rule of Dominic? 8 Of course not. Blessed Augustine³ lived by a Rule before he became a bishop, but when he was bishop he did not give up his rule of life, although he attained the highest honors. 9 For he accepted the honor⁴ with reluctance, and they did not bring more comfort to him but more work, because, when he saw he could do good to souls, he gladly gave up his own desires and physical comfort for God’s sake in order to win more souls for God. 10 Accordingly, those men who aspire to and accept the episcopate in order to be of greater benefit to souls do belong to the Rule of Dominic. Their reward will be twofold, both because of the noble order that they had to leave and of the burden of the episcopal office to which they were called.

11 I swear by that God by whom the prophets swore, who did not swear their oath in impatience but because they took God as a witness to their words. Likewise, by the same God I declare and swear that to those friars who have scorned the rule of Dominic there will come a mighty hunter with ferocious hounds. It is as if a servant were to say to his master: 12 ‘There have come into your garden many sheep whose meat is poisoned, whose fleeces are matted with filth, whose milk is useless, and who are very insolent in their lusts. 13 Command them to be slaughtered, so that there will be no shortage of pasture for the profitable sheep and so that the good sheep will not be confused by the insolence of the bad.’ The master would answer him: ‘Shut the entrances so that only such sheep as approved by me can get in, such sheep as it is right to foster and nourish, such as are upright and peaceful.’ 14 I tell you that some of the entrances will be shut at first, but not all of them. Later the hunter will come with his hounds and he will spare neither their fleeces from arrows nor their bodies from wounds until their life has been put to an end. 15 Then guards will come and carefully inspect and examine the kind of sheep that get admitted to the pasture of the Lord.”

16 The bride said in reply: “My Lady, do not be angry if I ask a question. Given that the pope relaxed the austerity of the rule for them, should they be

2. “Come to me and I will refresh you, by giving you myself”; cf. Matthew 11:28.

3. “Augustine”; bishop of Hippo (354–430), one of the doctors of the church, author of a Rule for his clerical community. The “Regula Augustini” was adopted by several medieval orders, including the Birgittine order.

4. “Honor,” i.e., of becoming bishop.

censured for eating meat⁵ or anything else set before them?” 17 The Mother answered: “The pope, taking into consideration the weakness and inadequacy of human nature, as put forward by some, reasonably allowed them to eat meat so that they might be more able to work and more fervent in preaching, not that they might appear lazy and lax. For this reason, we excuse the pope for permitting it.” 18 Then the bride said: “Dominic arranged for a habit made not of the best nor the worst cloth, but something in between. Should they be censured for wearing finer clothing?” 19 The Mother answered: “Dominic, who dictated his rule inspired by the Spirit of my Son, prescribed that they should not have clothing made from better or more expensive materials so as not to be criticized and branded for wearing a fine and expensive habit and become proud because of it. 20 He also arranged that they should not have clothing made of the poorest or roughest material so as not to be bothered too much by the roughness of their clothing when they rested after work. Instead, he arranged for them to have clothing of moderate and adequate quality that they would not grow proud over or feel vain about, but that would keep out the cold and safeguard their continual progress in a life of virtue. 21 Therefore, we commend Dominic for his arrangements but rebuke those friars of his who make changes in their habit for the sake of vanity rather than usefulness.”

22 Again the bride said: “Should those friars who build tall and sumptuous churches for your Son be rebuked? Or are they to be censured and criticized if they ask for a lot of donations in order to construct such buildings?” The Mother answered: “When a church is wide enough to hold all the people coming into it, 23 when its walls are tall enough that the people going into it are not crowded together, when its walls are thick and strong enough to withstand any wind, when its roof is tight and firm enough that it does not leak, then they have built it sufficiently. 24 A humble heart in a humble church is more pleasing to God than high walls in which there are bodies inside but hearts outside. Accordingly, they have no need to fill their chests with gold and silver for works of construction, for it did not do Solomon any good to have built such sumptuous buildings⁶ when he neglected to love God for whom they were being built.”

25 As soon as these things had been both said and heard, the older bishop, who above was said to have died, shouted out saying: “O! O! O! My miter is gone! That which was hidden beneath it can now be seen. Where is the honorable bishop now? Where is the venerable priest? Where is the poor friar? 26 Gone is the bishop who was anointed with oil for his apostolic office and a life of purity. Left behind is the slave of dung stained with grease. Gone is the priest who was consecrated by holy words so as to be able to transform inanimate lifeless bread into the living God. 27 Left behind is the deceitful traitor that greedily sold him who redeemed all men in his love. Gone is the poor

5. “Censured for eating meat”: Pope John XXII on 21 August 1326 issued a dispensation to Dominican brethren in Scandinavia allowing them to eat meat when they were away from their house, on monastic business. See Fogelqvist, *Apostasy and Reform*, p. 229.

6. “It did not do Solomon any good to have built such sumptuous buildings”; cf. 3 Kings [1 Kings] 3:5–7, 11.

friar who renounced the world through his vow. Now I stand condemned by my pride and ostentation. 28 Yet am I compelled to say the truth: He who condemned me is a just judge. He would rather have set me free through as bitter a death as that which he suffered when he hung on the wood of the cross than that I should receive such a condemnation as I now experience—but his justice, which he cannot contravene, spoke against it.⁷

‡ Chapter 19

Reassurance for Birgitta on Why the Above Dominican Bishop Was Called but Not Chosen

DATE: 1340S

The bride's reply to Christ about how she is afflicted by various useless thoughts, and about how she cannot get rid of them, and Christ's reply to the bride about why God permits this, and about the usefulness of such thoughts and fears with respect to her reward, provided she detests the thoughts and has a prudent fear of God, and about how she should not make light of venial sin lest it lead to mortal sin.

1 The Son speaks to the bride: "What are you worried and anxious about?" She answered: "I am afflicted by various useless thoughts that I cannot get rid of, and hearing about your terrible judgment upsets me." The Son answered: "This is truly just. 2 Earlier you found pleasure in worldly desires against my will, but now different thoughts are allowed to come to you against your will. But have a prudent fear of God, and put great trust in me, your God, knowing for certain that when your mind does not take pleasure in sinful thoughts but struggles against them by detesting them, then they become a purgation and a crown for the soul. 3 But if you take pleasure in committing even a slight sin, which you know to be a sin, and you do so trusting to your own abstinence and presuming on grace, without doing penance and reparation for it, know that it can become a mortal sin. Accordingly, if some sinful pleasure of any kind comes into your mind, you should right away think about where it is heading and repent. After human nature was weakened, sin has frequently arisen out of human infirmity. 4 There is no one who does not sin¹ at least venially, but God has in his mercy given mankind the remedy of feeling sorrow for each sin as well as anxiety about not having made sufficient reparation for the sins for which one has made reparation. 5 God hates nothing so much as when you know you have sinned but do not care, trusting to your other meritorious actions, as if, because of them, God would put up with your sin, as if he could not be glorified without you, or as if he would let you do something

7. We are translating according to the manuscripts ("taliter") and not according to the editor's emendation ("aliter"); see Jönsson, *Book III*, pp. 78–80.

1. "There is no one who does not sin" (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:10); cf. Proverbs 24:16.

evil with his permission, seeing all the good deeds you have done, since, even if you did a hundred good deeds for each wicked one, you still would not be able to pay God back for his goodness and love. 6 So, then, maintain a rational fear of God and, even if you cannot prevent these thoughts, then at least bear them patiently and use your will to struggle against them. You will not be condemned because of their entering your head, unless you take pleasure in them, since it is not within your power to prevent them. 7 Again, maintain your fear of God in order not to fall through pride, even though you do not consent to the thoughts. Anyone who stands firm stands by the power of God alone. Thus fear of God is like the gateway into heaven. 8 Many there are who have fallen headlong to their deaths, because they cast off the fear of God and were then ashamed to make a confession before men, although they had not been ashamed to sin before God. Therefore, I shall refuse to absolve the sin of a person who has not cared enough to ask my pardon for a small sin. 9 In this manner, sins are increased through habitual practice, and a venial sin that could have been pardoned through contrition becomes a serious one through a person's negligence and scorn, as you can deduce from the case of this soul who has already been condemned.

10 After having committed a venial and pardonable sin, he augmented it through habitual practice, trusting to his other good works, without thinking that I might take lesser sins into account. 11 Caught in a net of habitual and inordinate pleasure, his soul neither corrected nor curbed his sinful intention, until the time for his sentencing stood at the gates and his final moment was approaching. 12 This is why, as the end approached, his conscience was suddenly agitated and painfully afflicted because he was soon to die and he was afraid to lose the little, temporary good he had loved. Up until a sinner's final moment God abides him, waiting to see if he is going to direct his free will away from his attachment to sin. 13 However, if a soul's will is not corrected, that soul is then confined by an end without end. What happens is that the devil, knowing that each person will be judged according to his conscience and intention, labors mightily at the end of life to distract the soul and turn it away from rectitude of intention, and God allows it to happen, since the soul refused to remain vigilant when it ought to have.

14 Furthermore, do not grow overconfident and presumptuous, if I call anyone my friend or servant as I once called this man. I also called Judas a friend² and Nebuchadnezzar a servant. 15 I myself said: 'You are my friends if you carry out my commandments.' In the same way, I now say: 'The people who imitate me are my friends; those who persecute me by scorning my commandments are my enemies.' 16 After it had been said that I had found a man after my own heart,³ did not David commit the sin of murder?⁴ Solomon, who received such wonderful gifts and promises, sinned against goodness and, due to his ingratitude, the promise was fulfilled not in him but in me, the Son of

2. "I also called Judas a friend" (Matthew 26:50).

3. "A man after my own heart"; cf. 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 13:14; Acts 13:22; Psalm 89(90):21. Cf. Book I 51.8.

4. "Sin of murder"; cf. 2 Kings (2 Samuel) 11-12.

God.⁵ 17 Accordingly, just as when you dictate you add a closing formula at the end,⁶ I will also add this closing formula to my locution: 18 If anyone does my will and gives up his own, he will receive the inheritance of eternal life. He who hears my will but does not persevere in doing it, will end up like the worthless and ungrateful servant. 19 However, you should not lose hope, if I call anyone an enemy, since as soon as an enemy changes his will for the better he will be a friend of God. Was not Judas together with the twelve when I said: ‘You, my friends, who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones.’ 20 At the time Judas was indeed following me, but he will not sit with the twelve. In what way, then, have the words of God been fulfilled? I answer: God, who sees people’s hearts and wills, judges and rewards according as he sees. 21 A human being judges according to what she or he sees on the surface.⁷ Therefore, in order that no good person should grow proud or any bad person should lose hope, God has called both good and bad to the apostolate, just as every day he calls both good and bad to higher rank so that everyone whose way of life accords with his office will be glorified in eternity. 22 He who assumes the honor but not the burden is glorified in time and perishes in eternity. Because Judas did not follow me with a perfect heart,⁸ the words ‘you who have followed me’ did not apply to him, inasmuch as he did not persevere to the point of reward. However, the words did apply to those persons who were to persevere both then and in the time to come, 23 for the Lord, for whom all things are present, sometimes says things in present time that apply to the future, and sometimes speaks about things that are going to be accomplished as if they have already been accomplished. Sometimes, too, he mixes past and future⁹ and uses the past for the future, so that no one may presume to analyze the immutable purpose of the Trinity.

24 Hear one thing more: ‘Many are called, but few are chosen.’¹⁰ This man was called to the episcopate but he was not chosen, for he proved ungrateful to the grace of God. Hence, he is a bishop in name but is unworthy of his service and is numbered among those who go down but do not come up again.

ADDENDUM

25 The Son of God speaks: “Daughter, you are wondering why the one bishop died peacefully, but the other one died a horrible death when the wall fell and utterly crushed him, and he survived for a short while but with a great deal of pain. 26 I answer you: Scripture says—no rather, I myself have said it—that the righteous person, no matter

5. Birgitta appears to suggest here that the promise of salvation would have been fulfilled in Solomon had he not been such a disappointment—an unusual claim to make.

6. “A closing formula at the end”; see note to Book I 10.37.

7. “A human being judges according to what she or he sees on the surface” (1 Kings [1 Samuel] 16:7).

8. “Judas did not follow me with a perfect heart”; cf. Matthew 26:47–56.

9. “He mixes past and future”; cf. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 86; see further Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*,

p. 39.

10. “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).

what kind of death he dies, is in the hands of God,¹¹ but worldly people consider a person righteous only if his departure is peaceful and without pain or shame. 27 God, however, recognizes as righteous the one who has been proved by longstanding temperance or who suffered for the sake of righteousness. The friends of God suffer in this world in order to receive a lesser punishment in the future or to win a greater crown in heaven. 28 Peter and Paul¹² died for the sake of righteousness, although Peter died a more painful death than Paul, for he loved the flesh more than Paul; he also had to be more conformed to me through his painful death since he held the primacy of my church. 29 Paul, however, inasmuch as he had a greater love of continence and because he had worked harder, died by the sword¹³ like a noble knight, for I arrange all things according to merit and measure. 30 So, in God's judgment it is not how people end their lives or their horrible death that leads to their reward or condemnation, but their intention and will. The case is similar concerning these two bishops. 31 One of them suffered more painfully and died a more terrible death. This reduced his punishment, although it did not gain him the reward of glory, because he did not suffer with a right intention. The other bishop died in glory, but this was due to my hidden justice and did not gain an eternal reward for him, because he did not rectify his intention while he was alive."

‡ Chapter 20

How St. Benedict Was Filled with the Holy Spirit in Creating His Rule

DATE: 1350, ITALY

The Mother's words to the daughter about how the talent represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and about how St. Benedict added to the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to him, and about how the Holy Spirit or the demonic spirit enters the human soul.

1 The Mother speaks: "Daughter, it is written that the man who received five talents earned another five.¹ What does a talent signify if not a gift of the Holy Spirit? Some receive knowledge, others wealth, others wealthy contacts. However, everyone should yield double profits to the Lord, for example, as regards knowledge, by living usefully for themselves and instructing others, 2 as regards wealth and other gifts, by using them rationally and charitably help-

11. "The righteous person, no matter what kind of death he died, is in the hands of God" (Wisdom 3:1-9).

12. "Peter and Paul" (Matthew 19:28).

13. "The sword"; cf. Ephesians 6:7.

1. "The man who received five talents earned another five" (Matthew 25:20).

ing others. In this way the good abbot Benedict² added to the gift of grace he had received by scorning the goods that are fleeting, by forcing his body to serve his soul, by putting nothing ahead of charity. ³ Anxious not to let his ears be corrupted by empty talk or his eyes by seeing pleasurable sights, he fled to the desert in imitation of that man³ who, when he had not yet been born, recognized the coming of his dear Savior and leaped for joy in the womb of his mother. ⁴ Benedict would have gained heaven without the desert, inasmuch as the world was dead to him and his heart was completely full of God. However, it pleased God to call Benedict to the mountain so that many would come to know him and many would be inspired by his example to seek a life of perfection. ⁵ This blessed man's body was like a sack of earth⁴ that enclosed the fire of the Holy Spirit and shut out the fire of the devil from his heart. Physical fire is enkindled by both air and a man's breath. Similarly, the Holy Spirit enters the human soul, either through personal inspiration or by lifting the mind up to God through some human action or divine locution. ⁶ The spirit of the devil likewise visits its own people. However, the two spirits differ immeasurably, for the Holy Spirit makes the soul hot in her search for God but does not make her burn in her body. ⁷ He shines his light in purity and modesty but does not darken the mind with evil. The evil Spirit, on the other hand, causes the mind to burn with carnal desires and makes it terribly embittered. He darkens the soul by making her unreflective and pushes her remorselessly toward the things of the earth. ⁸ In order that the good fire that was in Benedict might ignite many people, God called him to the mountain⁵ and, after many other flames had been called together along with him, Benedict made a great bonfire of them by the Spirit of God. He composed a rule of life for them through the Spirit of God. Through this rule many people have attained the same perfection as he. ⁹ Now, however, there are many firebrands cast off from the bonfire of St. Benedict and they lie spread out everywhere, having coldness instead of heat, darkness instead of light. If they were gathered together in the fire, they would surely give off fire and heat."

‡ Chapter 21

More on St. Benedict, with the Images of Three Fires and Three Sparks

DATE: 1350, ITALY

The Mother's words to her daughter, showing the greatness and perfection of the life of St. Benedict by means of a comparison; also,

2. "The good abbot Benedict," i.e., St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 547), author of the Rule of St. Benedict.

3. "In imitation of that man," i.e., John the Baptist (Luke 1:41). Both Benedict and John (cf. Mark 1:4–6) spent time in the desert, which further underlines the comparison here.

4. "Sack of earth" renders "saccus terrae"; a curious image, in that it is intended to carry the "live coals" of the Holy Spirit.

5. "Called him to the mountain," i.e., to Mount Subiaco, where he lived as a hermit for three years; alternatively, it refers to his monastic foundation at Monte Cassino.

the soul that bears worldly fruit is represented as a fruitless tree, the pride of mind as flint, and the cold soul as crystal; and about three noteworthy sparks arising from these three things, i.e., from the crystal, the flint, and the tree.

1 The Mother speaks: "I told you before that the body of blessed Benedict was like a sack that was disciplined and ruled but did not rule. His soul was like an angel, giving off a lot of heat and flame. I will show you this by means of a comparison. It is as though there were three fires. The first of them was lit with myrrh and produced a sweet odor. 2 The second was lit with dry kindle. It produced hot embers and a splendid blaze. The third was lit with olive oil. It produced flames, light, and heat. These three fires refer to three persons, and the three persons refer to three states in the world.

3 The first was the state of those who reflected on God's love and surrendered their wills into the hands of others. They accepted poverty and humility in place of worldly vanity and pride, and loved continence and purity in place of intemperance. 4 Theirs was the fire of myrrh, for, just as myrrh is pungent but keeps demons away and quenches thirst, so too their abstinence was pungent to the body yet quenched their inordinate desires and drained away all the power of the demons.

5 The second state was that of those who had the following thought: 'Why do we love worldly honors? They are nothing but the air that brushes past our ears. Why do we love gold? It is nothing but yellow dirt. What is the end of the body if not rot and ashes? 6 How does it help us to desire earthly goods? All things are vanity.¹ Therefore, we shall live and work for one purpose alone, that God may be glorified in us and that others may burn with love for God through our word and example.' 7 The fire of such people was that of the dry kindle, inasmuch as they were dead to the love of the world and all of them produced hot embers of justice and the blaze of holy evangelization.

The third state was that of those with a fervent love for the passion of Christ who longed with all their hearts to die for Christ. 8 Theirs was the fire of olive oil. The olive contains oil that gives off a scorching heat when it is burned. In the same way, these people were drenched in the oil of divine grace. Through it they produced the light of divine knowledge, the heat of fervent charity, the strength of upright conduct.

9 These three fires spread far and wide. The first of them was lit in hermits and religious, as described by Jerome² who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, found their lives wonderful and exemplary. 10 The second fire was lit in the confessors and doctors of the church, while the third was in the martyrs who despised their own flesh for God's sake, and others who would have despised it had they obtained help from God. Blessed Benedict was sent to people belonging to these three states or fires. He fused the three fires together in such a way that

1. "All things are vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

2. "Jerome": saint (c. 342–420), biblical scholar, and church father. His life, and that of several of the other church fathers in these chapters, is described in the *Vitae patrum*, a work Birgitta probably read.

the unwise were enlightened, the cold-hearted were inflamed, the fervent became more fervent still. 11 Thus, with these fires began the Benedictine order that guided each person according to his disposition and intellectual capacity along the way of salvation and eternal happiness.

12 From the sack of Blessed Benedict blew the sweetness of the Holy Spirit through which many monasteries were started. However, now the Holy Spirit has left the sack of many of his brothers, for the heat of the ashes has been extinguished and the firebrands lie scattered about, giving off neither heat nor light but the smoke of impurity and greed. 13 However, God has given me three sparks so as to bring consolation to many people. The three stand for many sparks. The first spark was obtained with a crystal from the heat and light of the sun and has already settled on the dry kindle in order that a great fire may be made from it. 14 The second spark was obtained with hard flint. The third spark came from a fruitless tree whose roots were growing and that was spreading its foliage. 15 The crystal, that cold and fragile stone, represents the soul who, while she may be cold in her love for God, still seeks perfection in her heart and will and prays for God's help. 16 Her intention thus leads her to God and earns for her an increase of trials that makes her grow cold toward base temptations, until God enlightens the heart and settles in the soul now emptied of desire, so that she no longer wants to live for anything but the glory of God. 17 Flint represents pride. What is harder than the intellectual pride of a person who wants to be praised by everyone, yet longs to be called humble and to seem devout? 18 What is more loathsome than a soul that places herself ahead of everyone else in her thoughts and cannot put up with being rebuked or taught by anyone? Nevertheless, many proud persons pray humbly to God that pride and ambition be removed from their hearts. 19 God, therefore, with the cooperation of their good will, presents adversities to their hearts and at times consolations³ that draw them away from worldly things and spur them on toward heavenly. 20 The fruitless tree represents the soul that is fed on pride and bears worldly fruit and desires to have the world and all its privileges. However, because this soul has a fear of eternal death, she uproots many of the saplings of sins she would otherwise commit if she had no such fear. 21 Because of her fear, God draws near to the soul and inspires his grace in her so that the useless tree might become fruitful. By means of such sparks of fire, the order of Blessed Benedict, which now seems abject and abandoned to many people, should be renewed."

3. "Presents adversities to their hearts and at times consolations": the translation follows several groups of manuscripts ("ammouet cordibus eorum contraria et quandoque mollia") rather than the emendation proposed by the editor.

‡ Chapter 22

About a Benedictine Abbot Who Is Attracted to Harlots

DATE: 1350, ITALY

The Mother's words to her daughter about a monk with a harlot's heart in his breast, and about how he apostatized from God through his own will and greed and his desertion of the angelic life.

1 The Mother speaks to the bride again: "What do you see that is blame-worthy in this man here?" She answered: "That he rarely says Mass." The Mother said to her: "It is not for that reason that he is to be sentenced. There are many men who, mindful of their deeds, refrain from saying Mass but are no less acceptable to me. What else do you see in him?" 2 And she said: "That he does not wear the habit established by blessed Benedict." The Mother replied: "It often happens that a custom gets started, and those who know it to be a bad custom but still follow it deserve blame. However, those who do not know the correct traditions and would even prefer a simpler habit, had it not been for the long-standing custom, are not to be so easily and thoughtlessly condemned. 3 Listen, however, and I will tell you three reasons why he should be blamed. First, because his heart, in which God should rest, is in the breast of harlots. Second, because he has given up the little he possessed but longs for the greater possessions of others; having promised to deny himself, he completely follows his own will and whim. 4 Third, because God made his soul as beautiful as an angel and for that reason he should be leading an angelic life, but now his soul instead bears the image of that angel who apostatized from God through pride. 5 People account him a great man, but God knows what sort he is before God. God is like a person who closes his fist about something and keeps it hidden from others until he opens his fist. God chooses weak creatures and keeps their crowns hidden in the present life until he rewards each person according to his deeds."

EXPLANATION

6 This man was a very worldly minded abbot¹ who cared nothing for souls and who died suddenly without the sacraments. The Holy Spirit said about him: "O soul, you loved the earth and now the earth has received you. 7 You were dead in your life and now you will not have my life nor be a sharer with me, since you loved the company of him who apostatized from me through pride and despised true humility."

1. The man is described as a "monk" in the vision, but as an "abbot" in the explanation. Cf. Book VI 45; Ex. 97; 105; Collijn, *Acta et processus*, pp. 491, and 525.

‡ Chapter 23

A Deliberation on the Day's Epistle about the Trinity

UNDATED

The answer of God the Father to the bride's prayers for sinners, and about three witnesses on earth and three in heaven, and about how the whole Trinity bears witness to the bride, and about how she is his bride through faith, like all those who follow the orthodox faith of the holy church.

1 "O my most sweet God, I pray for sinners, to whose company I belong, that you deign to have mercy on them." God the Father answered: "I hear and know your intention, your loving entreaty will therefore be fulfilled. As John says in today's epistle, or, rather, as I say through John: 2 'There are three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and three in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,'¹ and these three are your witnesses. The Spirit, who protected you in the womb of your mother, bears witness concerning your soul that you belong to God through the baptismal faith that your parents professed in your stead. 3 The baptismal water bears witness that you are the daughter of Christ's human nature² through regeneration and the healing of original sin. The blood of Jesus Christ that redeemed you bears witness that you are the daughter of God and removed from the power of the devil by the sacraments of the church. 4 The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three Persons but one in substance and power, we bear witness that you are ours through faith, just as are all those who follow the orthodox faith of the holy church. 5 And so that you give witness that you want to do our will, go and receive the body and blood of Christ's human nature from the hand of the priest in order that the Son may bear witness that you belong to him whose body you receive to strengthen your soul. 6 The Father, who is in the Son, bears witness that you belong to the Father and to the Son. The Holy Spirit, who is in the Father and the Son, the Spirit being in both, bears witness that, through true faith and love, you belong to the Three Persons and One God."

1. "There are three witnesses . . . the Holy Spirit"; cf. 1 John 5:7–8.

2. "You are the daughter of Christ's human nature": an awkward interpretation of the rite of baptism is expressed here.

‡ Chapter 24*

Allegory of a Maiden and Her Nine Brothers and the Love of the King's Sons for the Maiden

UNDATED

To the prayers of the bride for infidels, Jesus Christ replies that God is glorified through the evil of evil men, although not by their own power and volition; he illustrates this for her by means of an allegory in which a maiden represents the church or the soul and her nine brothers represent the nine orders of angels, the king represents Christ, while his three sons represent the three states of mankind.

1 "O my Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that your faith may be spread among the infidels, and that good people may be set even more aflame with your love and that wicked people may convert." The Son answered: "You are grieved because little honor is given to God and with all your heart you wish that God's honor were perfected. 2 I will offer you an allegory that will help you to understand that honor is given to God even through the evil of evil men, although not by their own power and volition. Once there was a wise and beautiful, rich and virtuous maiden. She had nine brothers, each of whom loved her as his very heart, and you might say that each one's heart was in her. 3 In the kingdom where the maiden lived, there was a law that said that whoever showed honor would be honored, whoever robbed would be robbed, whoever committed rape would be beheaded. 4 The king of the realm had three sons. The first son loved the maiden and offered her golden shoes and a golden belt, a ring for her hand and a crown for her head. The second son coveted the property of the maiden and robbed her. The third son coveted her maidenhood and sought to rape her. 5 The king's three sons were captured by the maiden's nine brothers and presented to the king. Her brothers told him: 'Your sons desired our sister. The first honored and loved her with his whole heart. The second one despoiled her. The third was ready to risk his life just to rape her. 6 They were seized at the very moment when they were fully intent on carrying out what we have said.' Once the king heard this, he answered them, saying: 'They are all my sons, and I love all of them equally. However, I neither can nor wish to go against justice. Instead I intend to judge my sons as I would my servants. 7 You, my son, who wanted to honor the maiden, come and receive honor and the crown along with your father! You, my son, who coveted the maiden's property and snatched it away, you shall go to prison until the stolen goods have been restored. 8 Indeed, I have heard evidence concerning you that you were sorry for your crime and would have returned the stolen goods, but were

* This chapter has been discussed with reference to its possible priority in the Swedish text version; for further discussion, see Jönsson, *Book III*, pp. 223–25 (who does not favor the argument).

prevented from doing so by your sudden and unexpected arrest. For this reason you will remain incarcerated until the last farthing¹ is restored. But you, my son, who made every attempt to rape this maiden, are not sorry for your crime. 9 Therefore, your punishment will be multiplied by the number of ways in which you attempted to deflower the maiden.' All the brothers of the maiden answered: 'May you, the judge, be praised for your justice! For you would never have issued such a judgment had there not been virtue in you and fairness in your justice and mercy in your fairness.'

10 The maiden symbolizes the holy church. She is by nature outstanding by reason of her faith, beautiful by reason of the seven sacraments, laudable by reason of her conduct and virtue, lovable by reason of her fruits, for she reveals the true way to eternity. 11 The holy church has three sons, so to speak, and these three stand for many. The first are those who love God with their whole heart. The second are those who love temporal goods for their own honor. The third are those who put their own will ahead of God. The maidenhood of the church represents human souls created solely by divine power. 12 Accordingly, the first son offers golden shoes by having contrition for his misdeeds, omissions, and sins. He offers clothes by following the precepts of the law and keeping the evangelical counsels as far as possible. 13 He puts together a belt by firmly resolving to persevere in continence and chastity. He places a ring on her hand by firmly believing in what the catholic church teaches about the future judgment and life everlasting. 14 The gem of the ring is hope, steadfastly hoping that no sin is so abominable that it cannot be wiped away through penance and the resolution to improve. He puts a crown on her head by having true charity. Just as a crown has various jewels, so too charity has various virtues. 15 And the head of the soul or, rather, of the church is my Body.² Whoever loves and reverences it is rightly called a son of God.

16 A person who loves the holy church and his own soul in such a way has nine brothers, that is, the nine orders of angels, for he will be their companion and fellow in eternal life. 17 The angels embrace the holy church with all their love, as if she were in the heart of each one of them. It is not stones and walls that make up the holy church but the souls of the righteous, and, for this reason, the angels rejoice over their honor and progress as though over their own.

18 The second brother or, rather, son, represents those who reject the authority of the holy church and live for worldly honor and the love of the flesh, who deform the beauty of virtue and live after their own desires, but repent toward the end and are sorry for their evil deeds. 19 They must go to purgatory until they can be reconciled to God through the works and prayers of the church. The third son represents those who are a scandal to their own soul, not caring whether they perish forever, as long as they can carry out their

1. "The last farthing" (Matthew 5:26).

2. "The head of the soul, or rather, of the church is my Body"; cf. Ephesians 1:22–23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18–24.

desires. 20 The nine orders of angels seek justice because of these people, inasmuch as they refuse to be converted through penance. Thus, when God delivers his sentence, the angels praise him for his unbending fairness. 21 When God's honor is thus perfected, they rejoice over his might, because even the evil of evil men serves to give him honor. This is why, when you see immoral persons, you should have compassion on them and rejoice over the eternal honor of God. 22 God does not will anything evil, for he is the Creator of all things and the only being truly good in himself, but, as a most just judge, he still permits many things to be done in regard to which he is honored in heaven and on earth on account of his fairness and his hidden goodness."

✠ Chapter 25

Mary Speaks of the World's Neglect of Her Little Son

UNDATED

The Mother's lament to her daughter that the most innocent lamb, Jesus Christ, is neglected by his creatures in modern times.

1 The Mother speaks: "My lament is that on this day the most innocent lamb was carried who best knew how to walk. On this day,¹ that little boy was silent who best knew how to speak. 2 On this day, the most innocent little boy who never sinned was circumcised. This is why, although I cannot be angry, still I seem to be angry because the supreme Lord who became a little boy is forgotten and neglected by his creatures."

✠ Chapter 26

On the Mystery of the Trinity

UNDATED

Christ's explanation to the bride of the ineffable mystery of the Trinity, and about how diabolical sinners obtain God's mercy through contrition and a will to improve, and his response as to how he has mercy on everyone, both Jews and others, and about the double judgment, that is, the sentence for those who are to be condemned and for those who are to be saved.

1 The Son speaks: "I am the Creator of heaven and earth, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, true God. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, not three gods but one God. 2 Now you might ask, if there

1. "On this day, the most innocent little boy who never sinned was circumcised" (Luke 2:21). There is a probability that the vision took place on the Feast of the Circumcision, 1 January, and that Birgitta is referring to what she has heard in the liturgy for the day.

are three Persons, why are there not three gods? My answer is that God is nothing other than power itself, wisdom itself, goodness itself, from which come all power¹ beneath or above the heavens, all conceivable wisdom and the kindness. 3 Thus, God is triune and one, triune in Persons, one in nature. The power and the wisdom is the Father, from whom all things come and who is prior to all, deriving his power from nowhere else but himself for all eternity. 4 The power and wisdom are also the Son, equal to the Father, deriving his power not from himself but as begotten ineffably from the Father, the beginning from the beginning, never separated from the Father. 5 The power and wisdom are also the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, eternal with the Father and the Son, equal in majesty and might. Thus, one God and three Persons. The three have the same nature, the same operation and will, the same glory and might. God is thus one in essence, but the Persons are distinct in the proper quality of each. 6 The Father is wholly in the Son and Spirit, and the Son is wholly in the Father and Spirit, and the Spirit is wholly in both, in one divine nature, not as prior and posterior but in an ineffable way. In God there is neither prior nor posterior, nothing greater or less than another, but the Trinity is wholly and ineffably equal.² Well has it been written that God is great and greatly to be praised.³

7 However, now I can complain that I am little praised and unknown to many people, because everyone is following his own will but few follow mine. 8 Be you steadfast and humble, and do not exalt yourself in your mind if I show you other people's trials, and do not betray their names unless you are instructed to do so. Their trials are not shown to you to shame them but in order that they may be converted and come to know God's justice and mercy. 9 Nor should you shun them as condemned, for even if I should say today that a certain person is wicked, should he call on me tomorrow with contrition and a will to improve, I am prepared to forgive him. 10 And that person whom I yesterday called wicked, today, due to his contrition, I declare him to be so dear a friend of mine that if his contrition remains steadfast, I forgive him not only his sin but even remit the punishment of sin. You might understand this with a metaphor. It is as though there were two drops of quicksilver and both were heading toward each other in haste. 11 If nothing but a single atom remained to keep them from joining, still God would be powerful enough to prevent them from coming together. Likewise, if any sinner were so rooted in diabolical deeds that he was standing at the very brink of destruction, he could still obtain forgiveness and mercy, if he called upon God with contrition and a will to improve. 12 Now, given that I am so merciful, you might ask why I am not merciful toward pagans and Jews, some of whom, if they were instructed in the true faith, would be ready to lay down their lives for God. My response is that I

1. "From which come all power"; cf. Romans 13:1.

2. This passage, with its explanation of the Trinity, builds directly on the Athanasian Creed.

3. "God is great and greatly to be praised" (Psalm 95(96):4).

have mercy on everyone, on pagans as well as Jews, nor is any creature beyond my mercy. 13 With leniency and mercy I will judge both those people who, learning that their faith is not the true one, fervently long for the true faith, as well as those people who believe the faith they profess to be the best one, because no other faith has ever been preached to them, and who wholeheartedly do what they can. 14 You see, there is a double judgment, namely the one for those to be condemned and the one for those to be saved. The sentence of condemnation for Christians will have no mercy in it. To them will belong eternal punishment and shadows and a will hardened against God. 15 The sentence for those Christians to be saved will be the vision of God and glorification in God and goodwill toward God. Excluded from these rewards are pagans and Jews as well as bad and false Christians. Although they did not have the right faith, they did have conscience as their judge and believed that the one whom they worshipped and offended was God. 16 But the ones whose intention and actions were and are for justice and against sin will, along with the less bad Christians, share a punishment of mercy in the midst of sufferings due to their love of justice and their hatred of sin. However, they will not have consolation in the service of glory and of the vision of God. 17 They will not behold him due to their lack of baptism, because some temporal circumstance or some hidden decision of God made them draw back from profitably seeking and obtaining salvation. 18 If there was nothing that held them back from seeking the true God and being baptized, neither fear nor the effort required nor loss of goods or privileges, but only some impediment that overcame their human weakness, then I, who saw Cornelius⁴ and the centurion⁵ while they were still not baptized, know how to give them a higher and more perfect reward in accordance with their faith. 19 One thing is the ignorance of sinners, another that of those who are pious but impeded. Likewise, too, one thing is the baptism of water, another that of blood, another that of wholehearted desire. God, who knows the hearts of all people, knows how to take all of these circumstances into account. I am begotten without beginning, begotten eternally from the beginning. I was born in time at the end of times. From the commencement I have known how to give individual persons the rewards they deserve and I give to each according as he deserves. 20 Not the least little good done for the glory of God will go without its reward. This is why you should give many thanks to God that you were born of Christian parents in the age of salvation, for many people have longed to obtain and see that which is offered to Christians and yet have not obtained it."

4. "Cornelius" (Acts 10).

5. "Centurion" (Luke 7:1-10).

‡ Chapter 27*

On the State of the City of Rome Using a Grammatical Analogy; A Vision of Some Gardens on Earth

DATE: C. 1350, ROME

The bride's prayer to the Lord for Rome, and about the vast multitude of holy martyrs resting in Rome, and about the three degrees of Christian perfection, and about a vision of hers and how Christ appears to her and expounds and explains the vision to her.

1 "O Mary, I have been unkind, but still I call you to my aid. I pray to you that you may graciously pray for the excellent and holy city of Rome. I can physically see that some of the churches are abandoned where the bones of the saints lie in rest. Some of them are inhabited, but the heart and conduct of their rectors are far from God. 2 Procure mercy for them, for I have heard it is written that there are seven thousand martyrs¹ for any day in the year at Rome. Although their souls do not receive less honor in heaven because their bones are held in contempt here on earth, nevertheless I ask you that greater honor may be given to your saints and to the relics of your saints here on earth and that the devotion of the people may be stirred up in this way."

3 The Mother answered: "If you measured out a plot of land a hundred feet in length and as much in width and sowed it so full of pure grains of wheat that the grains were so close together that there was just the space of a thumb left between them, 4 and even if each grain gave fruit a hundredfold, there would still be more Roman martyrs and confessors from the time when Peter came to Rome in humility until Celestine left from the throne of pride and returned to his solitary life. 5 But I am referring to those martyrs and confessors who against infidelity preached true fidelity and against pride preached humility and who died or were ready in intention to die for the truth of the faith. 6 Peter and many others were so wise and zealous in spreading the word of God that they would readily have died for each and every person if they had been able. However, they were also concerned lest they be taken suddenly from the presence of those people whom they nourished with their words of consolation and preaching, for they desired to save souls more than to save their own lives and reputation. 7 They were also prudent and hence went to work in secret during times of persecution in order to win and gather together a greater number of souls. Between these two, I mean, between Peter and Celestine,² not everyone has been good, but not everyone has been bad

* This chapter has been discussed with reference to its possible priority in the Swedish text version, which contains some variant readings; see Jönsson, *Book III*, pp. 227–33 (who does not favor the argument of priority).

1. "It is written that there are seven thousand martyrs": the reference is not biblical; cf. Collijn, *Acta et processus*, p. 94 which alludes to the streets of Rome being rubricated by the blood of the martyrs.

2. "Peter and Celestine": St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, founder of the Church of Rome and of its episcopal succession. Celestine (c. 1215–96) was pope for only a few months in 1294 before his abdication; an ascetic man with links to the Spiritual Franciscans, he was canonized by Boniface VIII in 1313.

either. 8 Now let us set up three degrees or ranks, as you yourself were doing:³ positive, comparative, and superlative, or good, better, and best. To the first rank belong those whose thoughts were the following: 9 ‘We believe whatever the holy church teaches. We do not want to defraud anyone but to give back whatever has been fraudulently taken, and we want to serve God with all our heart.’ There were people like that in the time of Romulus, the founder of Rome, and, after their own beliefs, they thought as follows: 10 ‘We understand and recognize through creatures that God is the Creator of all things and therefore we want to love him above all else.’ There were also many who thought like this: ‘We have heard from the Hebrews that the true God has revealed himself through manifest miracles. 11 So, if we only knew where to place our trust, we would place it there.’ We can say that all of these belonged to the first rank. At the appointed time, Peter arrived in Rome. He raised some people to the positive rank, others to the comparative rank, and still others to the superlative. To the positive rank belonged those who accepted the true faith and lived in matrimony or in another honorable state. 12 To the comparative rank belonged those who gave up their possessions out of love for God, and set others the example of a good life in words and example and deed and did not put anything ahead of Christ. 13 To the superlative rank belonged those who offered their physical lives out of love for God. But let us make a search of these ranks to find out where there is now a more fervent love of God. Let us search among the knights and the learned. 14 Let us search among the religious and those who have scorned the world. These people would be thought to belong to the comparative and superlative ranks. Yet, indeed, very few are found.

There is no life more austere than the life of a knight, if he truly follows his calling. While a monk is obliged to wear a cowl, a knight is obliged to wear something heavier, namely, a coat of mail. 15 While it is hard for a monk to fight against the will of the flesh, it is harder for a knight to go forth among armed enemies. While a monk must sleep on a hard bed, it is harder still for the knight to sleep with his weapons. While a monk finds abstinence a burden and trouble, it is harder for the knight to be constantly burdened by fear for his life. 16 Christian knighthood was not established out of greed for worldly possessions but in order to defend the truth and spread the true faith. For this reason, the knightly rank and the monastic rank should be thought to correspond to the superlative or comparative rank.

17 However, those in every rank have deserted their honorable calling, since the love for God has been perverted into worldly greed. If but a single florin were offered them, most of them in all three ranks would keep silent about the truth rather than lose the florin and speak the truth.”

18 The bride speaks again: “I also saw⁴ what looked like many gardens on

3. “As you yourself were doing”: in her efforts to learn Latin Birgitta had apparently been practicing the comparison of adjectives.

4. Note that Birgitta specifically “sees” rather than “hears” the images described here.

earth. I saw roses and lilies in the gardens. In one spacious plot of land I saw a field a hundred feet in length and as much in width. 19 In each foot of land there were seven grains of wheat sown and each grain gave fruit a hundredfold. Then I heard a voice saying: 'O Rome, Rome, your walls have crumbled. Your city gates are therefore unguarded. Your vessels are being sold. 20 Your altars have therefore been abandoned. The living sacrifice along⁵ with the incense of matins is burned in the portico. The sweet and holy fragrance does not come from the holy of holies.' ⁶

21 At once the Son of God appeared and said to the bride: "I will tell you the meaning of the things you have seen. The land you saw represents the entire territory where the Christian faith is now. The gardens represent those places where God's saints received their crowns. 22 However, in paganism, that is, in Jerusalem and in other places, there were many of God's elect, but their places have not been shown to you now. The field that is a hundred paces in length and as much in width stands for Rome. 23 If all the gardens of the whole world were to be brought alongside Rome, Rome would certainly be as great as to the number of martyrs (I am speaking materially), because it is the place chosen for the love of God. 24 The wheat you saw in each foot of land represents those who have entered heaven through mortification of the flesh, contrition, and innocence of life. The few roses represent the martyrs who are red from the blood they shed in different regions. 25 The lilies are the confessors who preached and confirmed the holy faith by word and deed. Today I can say of Rome what the prophet said of Jerusalem: 'Once righteousness lodged in her and her princes were princes of peace. Now she has turned to dross and her princes have become murderers.' 26 O Rome, if you knew your days, you would surely weep and not rejoice. Rome was in olden days like a tapestry dyed in beautiful colors and woven with noble threads. Its soil was dyed in red, that is, in the blood of martyrs, and woven, that is, mixed with the bones of the saints. 27 Now her gates are abandoned, in that their defenders and guardians have turned to avarice. Her walls are thrown down and left unguarded, in that no one cares that souls are being lost. Rather, the clergy and the people, who are the walls of God, have scattered away to work for carnal advantage. 28 The sacred vessels are sold with scorn, in that God's sacraments are administered for money and worldly favors. The altars are abandoned, in that the priest who celebrates with the vessels has hands empty as to love for God but keeps his eyes on the collection; although he has God in his hands, his heart is empty of God, for it is full of the vain things of the world. 29 The holy of holies, where the highest sacrifice used to be consumed, represents the desire to see and enjoy God. From this desire, there should rise up love for God and neighbor and the fragrance of temperance and virtue. 30 However,

5. "The living sacrifice" renders "vivum sacrificium"; cf. Sw. "vinit ok offrit" [the wine and the sacrifice], which reflects the erroneous Latin variants "vinum sacrificium"; see Jönsson, *Book III*, pp. 231–32. The reference might be to the biblical image of the fire of the old holocaust in Isaiah 64.

6. "From the holy of holies": we are following the manuscript variant "de sancto sanctorum," and not the adopted reading "de sancta sanctorum"; cf. also 27.29.

the sacrifice is now consumed in the portico, that is, in the world, in that the love for God has completely turned into worldly vanity and lack of temperance.

Such is Rome, as you have seen it physically. Many altars are abandoned, 31 the collection is spent in taverns, and the people who give to it have more time for the world than for God. But you should know that countless souls ascended into heaven from the time of humble Peter until Boniface⁷ ascended the throne of pride. 32 Yet Rome is still not without friends of God. If they were given some help, they would cry out to the Lord and he would have mercy on them.”

‡ Chapter 28

The Virgin Describes Four Cities Where Four Types of Love Are to Be Found

DATE: C. 1350, ROME

The Virgin instructs the bride about knowing how to love and about four cities where four loves are found and about which of these is properly called perfect love.

1 The Mother speaks to the bride, saying: “Daughter, do you love me?” She answers: “My Lady, teach me to love, for my soul is defiled with false love, seduced by a deadly poison, and cannot understand true love.” The Mother says: “I will teach you. 2 There are four cities where there are four kinds of love, that is, if we are to call each of them love, given that no love can properly be found except where God and the soul are united in the true union of the virtues. 3 The first city is the city of trial. This is the world. A man is placed there to be tested as to whether he loves God or not. This is in order that he may come to know his own weakness and acquire the virtues by which he may return to glory,¹ so that, having been cleansed on earth, he may receive a glorious crown in heaven. 4 One finds disordered love in this city, because the body is loved more than the soul, because there is a more fervent desire for temporal than spiritual good, because vice is honored and virtue despised, because travels abroad are more appreciated than one’s home country, because a little mortal being gets more respect and honor than God whose reign is everlasting. 5 The second city is the city of cleansing where the dirt of the soul is washed away. God has willed to set up places where a person who has become proud in the negligent use of his freedom yet without losing his fear of God

7. “Boniface,” i.e., Pope Boniface VIII (pope from 1294; d. 1303), one of the great upholders of the absolute power of the papacy, who issued the bull “Unam Sanctam,” in which he claimed both political and spiritual supremacy for the papacy. Among his achievements was the embellishment of the Roman churches, which Birgitta may have had in mind here. He was harshly condemned by his contemporaries such as Dante (e.g., “Inferno” XIX 52–57; XXVII [line 97 mentions his pride]; “Paradiso” XXVII 22–24 [Peter accuses him of having usurped his chair]).

1. “Return to glory” renders “redeat ad gloriam”; the reference to glory here is obscure, unless it is to the glory that was lost in Eden.

may be cleansed before receiving his crown. 6 One finds imperfect love in this city, inasmuch as God is loved because of a person's hope of being released from captivity but not out of an ardent affection. This is due to weariness and bitterness in atoning one's guilt. 7 The third city is the city of sorrow. This is hell. Here one finds a love for every kind of evil and impurity, a love for every kind of envy and obstinacy. God governs this city as well. This he does by means of balanced justice, the due moderation of punishments, the restraint of evil, and the fairness of the sentences that takes each sinner's merits into account. 8 Some of the condemned are greater sinners, others lesser. The conditions for their punishment and retribution are set up accordingly. Although all the condemned are enclosed in darkness, not all of them experience it in one and the same way. 9 Darkness differs from darkness, horror from horror, hell-fire from hell-fire. God's rule is one of justice and mercy everywhere, even in hell. Thus, those who have sinned deliberately have their particular punishment, those who have sinned out of weakness have a different one, those who are being held only because of the damage done by original sin have a different one again. While the torment of these latter consists in the lack of the beatific vision² and of the light of the elect, 10 still they come close to mercy and joy in the sense that they do not experience horrible punishments, since they bear no effects of any evil deeds of their own doing. Otherwise, if God did not ordain the number and limit of the punishments, the devil would never show any limits in tormenting them. 11 The fourth city is the city of glory. Here one finds perfect love and the ordered charity that desires nothing but God or but for the sake of God. Hence, if you would reach the perfection of this city, your love needs four qualities: it must be ordered, pure, true, and perfect. 12 Your love is ordered when you love the body only for the sake of sustaining yourself, when you love the world without superfluities, your neighbor for God's sake, your friend for the sake of purity of life, and your enemy for the sake of the reward. Love is pure when sin is not loved alongside virtue, when bad habits are scorned, when sin is not taken lightly. 13 Love is true when you love God with all your heart and affections, when you take the glory and fear of God into prior consideration in all your actions, when you commit not the least little sin while trusting to your good deeds, when you practice temperance prudently without growing weak from too much fervor, when you do not have an inclination to sin out of cowardice or ignorance of temptations. 14 Love is perfect when nothing is as enjoyable to a person as God. This kind of love begins in the present but is consummated in heaven.³ Love, then, this perfect and true kind of love! Everyone who does not have it shall be cleansed, no matter whether he is faithful or fervent or a child or baptized. Otherwise he will go to the city of horror. 15 Just as God is one, so too there is one faith, one baptism, one perfection of glory and reward in the church of Peter. Accordingly, anyone who longs to reach the one God must have one and the same

2. "Beatific vision," i.e., the vision of God, which is the reward for the redeemed in heaven.

3. "Love begins in the present but is consummated in heaven"; cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

love and will as the one God. 16 Miserable are those who say: 'It is enough for me to be the least in heaven. I do not want to be perfect.' What a senseless thought! How can someone who is imperfect be there where everyone is perfect either through innocence of life or the innocence of childhood or by cleansing or by faith and goodwill?"

‡ Chapter 29*

Mary Is Like the Temple of Solomon

DATE: EARLY 1350S, IN A ROMAN CHURCH?

The bride's praise for the Virgin containing an allegory about Solomon's temple and the unexplainable truth of the unity of the divine and human natures, and about how the temples of priests are painted with vanity.

1 "Blessed are you, Mary, Mother of God. You are Solomon's temple whose walls were of gold,¹ whose roof shone brightly, whose floor was paved with precious gems, whose whole array was shining, whose whole interior was fragrant and delightful to behold. 2 In every way you are like the temple of Solomon where the true Solomon walked and sat and where he placed the ark of glory and the bright lamp.² 3 You, Blessed Virgin, are the temple of that Solomon who made peace between God and man, who reconciled sinners, who gave life to the dead and freed the poor from their oppressor. 4 Your body and soul became the temple of the Godhead. They were a roof for God's love, beneath which the Son of God lived with you in joy after having proceeded from the Father. 5 The floor of the temple was your life arrayed in the careful practice of the virtues. No privilege was lacking to you, but everything you had was stable, humble, devout, and perfect. 6 The walls of the temple were four-square, for you were not troubled by any shame, you were not proud about any of your privileges, no impatience disturbed you, you aimed at nothing but the glory and love of God. 7 The paintings of your temple were the constant inspirations of the Holy Spirit that raised your soul so high that there is no virtue in any other creature that is not more fully and perfectly in you. 8 God walked in this temple when he poured his sweet presence into your limbs. He rested in you when the divine and human natures became joined.

Blessed are you, Virgin most blessed! In you God almighty became a little boy, the Lord most ancient became a tiny child, God the eternal and invisible Creator became a visible creature. 9 I beg you, therefore, since you are the kindest and most powerful Lady, look upon me and have mercy on me! You are indeed the Mother of Solomon, although not of him who was the son of

* Birgitta's song of praise in this chapter is reminiscent of the praise formulas contained in the *Quattuor Orationes*.

1. "Solomon's temple whose walls were of gold"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 6:20–22.

2. "Where he placed the ark of glory and the bright lamp"; cf. 3 Kings (1 Kings) 7:49; 8: 1–13.

David but of him who is the Father of David and the Lord of that Solomon who built the wonderful temple that truly prefigured you. 10 A son will listen to his Mother, especially to so great a Mother as you. Your son Solomon was, as it were, once asleep in you. Entreat him, then, that he may be wakeful and watch over me so that no sinful pleasure may sting me, so that my contrition for sins may be lasting, so that I may be dead to the love of the world, patient in perseverance, fruitful in penance. 11 There is no virtue in me but there is this prayer: 'Have mercy, Mary!' My temple is completely the opposite of yours. It is dark with vice, muddied with lust, ruined by the worms of desire, unsteady due to pride, ready to fall due to worldly vanity."

12 The Mother answered: "Blessed be God who has inspired your heart to offer this greeting to me so that you may understand how much goodness and sweetness there is in God. But why do you compare me to Solomon and to the temple of Solomon, when I am the Mother of him whose lineage has neither beginning nor end,³ of him who is said to have neither father nor mother, that is, of Melchisedech? 13 He is said to have been a priest⁴ and it is to priests that the temple of God is entrusted, which is why I am Virgin and Mother of the high priest. And yet, I tell you that I am both the mother of King Solomon and the Mother of the peace-making priest, for the Son of God, who is also my Son, is both priest and King of kings.

14 It was indeed in my temple that he dressed himself spiritually in the priestly garb in which he offered a sacrifice for the world. In the royal city he was crowned with a royal but cruel crown. Outside the city, like a mighty warrior, he held the field and kept the war away.⁵ 15 My grievance is that this same Son of mine is now forgotten and neglected by priests and kings. The kings pride themselves on their palaces, their armies, their worldly successes and honors. The priests grow proud of the goods and possessions that belong to souls. 16 You said the temple was painted in gold. But the temples of priests are painted in worldly vanity and curiosity, since simony rules at the highest levels.⁶ The ark of the covenant has been taken away, the lamp of the virtues extinguished, the table of devotion abandoned."

17 The bride answered: "O Mother of mercy, have mercy on them and pray for them!" The Mother said to her: "From the beginning God so loved his own that not only are they heard when they pray for themselves, but others also experience the effects of their prayers thanks to them. 18 Two things are necessary if prayers for others are to be heard, namely the intention of giving up sin and the intention of making progress in virtue. My prayers will benefit anyone who has both of these."

3. "Whose lineage has neither beginning nor end"; cf. Hebrews 7:3.

4. "He is said to have been a priest"; cf. Genesis 14:18.

5. "He held the field and kept the war away": the crucifixion as a battle is a motif that occurs in Venantius Fortunatus's (c. 530–c. 600) famous hymn "Pange, lingua," which Birgitta is likely to have known.

6. "At the highest levels" renders "in capite," literally "at the head," possibly the pope, or those in highest authority within the church.

‡ Chapter 30

Blessed Agnes Encourages Birgitta in Her Studies

UNDATED

Saint Agnes's words to the bride about the love the bride should have for the Virgin, using the metaphor of flowers, and the glorious Virgin's description of God's boundless and everlasting kindness as compared to our lack of kindness and ingratitude, and about how the friends of God should not lose their peace in the midst of hardship.

1 Blessed Agnes speaks to the bride, saying: "My daughter, love the Mother of mercy. She is like the flower or reed shaped like a sword.¹ This flower has two sharp extremities and a graceful tip. In height and width it excels all other flowers. 2 Similarly, Mary is the flower of flowers, a flower that grew in a valley and extended over all the mountains. A flower, I say, that was raised in Nazareth and spread itself on Mount Lebanon.² This flower had, first of all, height, in the sense that the blessed Queen of heaven excels every creature in dignity and power. 3 Mary also had two sharp edges or leaves, that is, the sorrow in her heart over her Son's passion along with her steadfast resistance to the attacks of the devil by never consenting to sin. 4 The old man prophesied truly when he said: 'A sword shall pierce your soul.'³ In a spiritual sense she received as many sword-strokes as the number of wounds and sores she saw her Son receive and that she also had already foreseen. Mary had also a great width,⁴ I mean, her mercy. 5 She is and was so kind and merciful that she preferred to suffer any hardship rather than let souls be lost. United now with her Son, she has not forgotten her native goodness but, rather, extends her mercy to all, even to the worst of men. Just as the sun brightens and sets ablaze the heavens and earth, so too there is no one who does not experience Mary's sweet kindness, if he asks for it. 6 Mary also had a graceful tip, I mean, her humility. Her humility made her pleasing to the angel when she called herself the Lord's handmaid, although she was being chosen to be his Lady. She conceived the Son of God in humility, not wanting to please the proud. 7 She ascended the highest throne through humility, loving nothing but God himself. Come forward, then, Conduit,⁵ and greet the Mother of mercy, for she has now arrived!"

1. "The flower or reed that is shaped like a sword" renders "flori siue cirpo cuius figura consimilis est gladio"; cf. Sw. "blomster älla säff som kallas swårdon" [flower or reed that is called "swårdon"]. Söderwall identifies this as the *iris pseudacorus*, modern Sw. "svårdslijja," which suggests an iris or gladiolus (which literally means "little sword"). The whole chapter is reminiscent of Song of Solomon 2.

2. "Spread on Mount Lebanon": Mary is often likened to a cedar on Mount Lebanon in ecclesiastical texts; for Mary as a flower in this connection, see, for example, the anonymous sermon in PL 177, col. 1061B.

3. "A sword shall pierce your soul" (Luke 2:35).

4. "Mary also had a great width" refers, in a rather crude depiction of the Virgin's mercy, to the swordlike plant in 30.1.

5. "Conduit" renders "canalis," an important term for Birgitta as the channel of God's word; see further on this term Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden*, pp. 34–77. The first occurrence of it in the Swedish text in paragraph 7

8 Then Mary appeared and replied: "Agnes, you used a noun, add an adjective, too!" Agnes said to her: "I might say 'most beautiful' or 'most virtuous,' for that belongs rightfully to no one but you, the Mother of everyone's salvation." The Mother of God answered Blessed Agnes: "You speak truthfully, for I am the most powerful of all. Therefore, I myself will add an adjective and a noun, namely 'Conduit' of the Holy Spirit. 9 Come, Conduit, and listen to me! You are sad because this saying is bandied about among men: 'Let us live as we like, since God is easily pleased. Let us make use of the world and its honor while we can, since the world was made for the sake of mankind.' 10 Indeed, my daughter, a saying like that does not come from love of God nor does it tend or lead toward the love of God. However, God does not forget his love because of it but in every hour displays his kindness in return for human ingratitude. 11 He is like a craftsman crafting some great work. At times he heats up the iron, at times he lets it cool. God is the supreme craftsman who made the world out of nothing and has shown his love to Adam and his posterity. 12 But the human race cooled down to such an extent that they committed enormous crimes and almost regarded God as nothing. For that reason, God had mercy and gave a benevolent warning first, but then revealed his justice by means of the flood.⁶ 13 After the flood, God made his pact with Abraham,⁷ showing him signs of affection, and led his children by means of great signs and wonders. He gave the law to his people from his own lips, confirming his words and precepts by the most evident of signs. 14 As time went by, again the people grew cold and fell into such insanity that they started to worship idols. Wanting to heat up the cold-hearted once more, God in his kindness sent his own Son into the world. He taught the true way to heaven and gave an example of true humility to imitate. 15 Although many have now quite forgotten him in their neglect, he still displays and reveals his merciful words. However, things will not be accomplished all at once, no more now than before. Prior to the coming of the flood, the people were warned first and were given time for repentance. 16 Similarly, before Israel entered the promised land, the people were first tested and the promise was delayed for a time. God could have led the people for forty days without delaying for forty years, but his justice demanded that the ingratitude of the people should become apparent and that God's mercy should be made manifest so as to render his future people so much the more humble.⁸ 17 It would be great audacity to ask why God made his people suffer so much or why there can be eternal punishment, given that a life in sin cannot last forever. It would be as great audacity as to try to reason out and comprehend the eternity of God. 18 God is eternal and incomprehensible. His justice and recompensation is eternal, his mercy

is omitted altogether, and in paragraph 8–9 it is glossed as "som är thes hálgha anda j lätis kar som kallas trumba" [which is the pouring vessel of the Holy Spirit that is called a pipe]. The passage alludes to Birgitta's study of Latin; cf. ch. 27.8.

6. "Revealed his justice by means of the flood" (Genesis 6:13–22).

7. "God made his pact with Abraham"; cf. Genesis 7–8.

8. "God could have led the people for forty days . . . humble"; cf. Deuteronomy 8:2–5.

is beyond understanding. If God had not already shown justice to the first angels, how would we know of his justice and his fair judgment of everything? 19 If, again, he had not had mercy on humanity by creating it and then freeing it through innumerable miracles, how would we know that his goodness was so great or his love so immense and so perfect? Because God is eternal, his justice is eternal and there is neither increase nor decrease in it. 20 It is as when someone plans ahead to do his work in such a way and on such a day. When God exercises his justice or mercy, he manifests it by accomplishing it, since present, past, and future are known to him from eternity. 21 God's friends should persevere patiently in the love of God and not lose their peace, even though they may see worldly men and women prospering. God is like a good washing-woman who puts the dirty clothes in the waves to make them cleaner and brighter by the motion of the water, paying close attention to the water currents so that the clothes do not sink beneath the waves. 22 Likewise, God places his friends in the waves of poverty and hardship in the present time in order to cleanse them for eternal life, while keeping close watch so that they are not plunged into excessive sorrow or unbearable hardship."

‡ Chapter 31*

On a Doctor, a King, and Two Imprisoned Men

UNDATED

Christ's words to the bride offering the admirable allegory of a doctor and king, and about how the doctor symbolizes Christ, and about how those whom people think will be condemned are frequently saved while those whom people or worldly opinion think will be saved are condemned.

1 The Son speaks to the bride, saying: "A doctor came to a distant and unknown realm in which the king did not rule but was ruled, because he had the heart of a hare.¹ Seated on his throne, he seemed like an ass with a crown. 2 His people devoted themselves to gluttony, forgetting honesty and justice, and hating everyone who spoke to them about the good that awaited in the future. When the doctor presented himself to the king, saying he was from a lovely country and affirming that he had come because of his knowledge of human infirmities, the king, in wonder at the man and his words, answered: 3 'I have two prisoners to be beheaded tomorrow. One of them can scarcely

* This revelation is duplicated in Book VIII 24. Swedish priority has been suggested for the Swedish text; see further Jönsson, *Book III*, pp. 233–34, who does not favor the argument.

1. "The heart of a hare" seems to suggest extreme shyness or cowardice, which would accord with Birgitta's negative view of King Magnus Eriksson by the end of the 1340s, as does the next phrase, "an ass with a crown." See further KL "harar," which also quotes Peder Månsson's use of the same phrase to denote a man who is unsuited to military service. See also on the hare and hare-lore in medieval Scandinavia, OM 18:10–11.

breathe, but the other is more robust and stouter now than when he entered prison. Go to them, look at their faces and see which of them is in better health.’

4 After the doctor had gone and examined them, he said to the king: ‘The man whom you say is robust is almost a corpse and will not survive. As for the other, however, there is good hope.’ The king asked him: ‘How do you know that?’

5 The doctor said: ‘Because the first man is full of harmful humors and vapor and cannot be cured. The other man, who is exhausted, can easily be saved with some fresh air.’ Then the king said: ‘I shall call together my noblemen and counselors so that they may see your wisdom and skill and you will win honor in their sight.’

6 The doctor said to him: ‘No, do that by no means. You know your people are jealous of honor. If they cannot persecute a man with their actions, they destroy him with talk. Wait and I will make my wisdom known to you alone in private. This is how I have been taught. I have learned to display more wisdom in private than in public.’

7 I do not seek to win glory in your land of darkness, but I glory in the light of my fatherland. Besides, the healing time will not come until the south wind begins to blow and the sun appears at the meridian.’

The king to him: ‘How can that happen in my country?’

8 The sun rarely rises here, since we are beyond the climates,² and the north wind always prevails among us. What good to me is your wisdom or such a long delay for healing? I see that you are full of talk.’

9 The doctor answered: ‘The wise man must not be hasty. However, in order that I may not seem to you to be unreliable and unfriendly, let me take charge of these two men. I will take them to the borders of your kingdom where the air is more suitable, and then you will see how much actions are worth and how much talk is worth.’

10 The king said to him: ‘We are occupied with greater and more useful matters. Why do you distract us? Or what benefit does your teaching confer on us? We have our delight in present goods, in the things we see and own. We do not aspire to future and uncertain rewards.’

11 But, take the men, as you request. If you manage to show us something great and wonderful through them, we ourselves will proclaim you glorious and have you proclaimed glorious.’

12 So he took the men and led them off to a temperate clime. One of them passed away and died, but the other, refreshed by the gentle air, recuperated.

13 I am that doctor who sent my words to the world in my longing to cure souls. Although I see the infirmities of many people, I only showed you two through whom you might admire my justice and mercy.

14 I showed you one person whom the devil secretly possessed³ and who was to receive an eternal punishment. However, to people his works seemed to be righteous and were praised as such. I showed you a second person whom the devil openly controlled, but whom I said was to be healed in his time, although not in a way

2. “Beyond the climates”: the king seems to be describing a typically northern climate; on climate theory and change in medieval Scandinavia, see further KL “klimat.”

3. This demonic is alluded to in the explanation to Book I 32.

open for men to see, as you were thinking. 15 It was divine justice that the evil spirit began to control him by degrees, but the same justice also demanded that it should leave him by degrees, as in fact it did leave him up until the soul had been released from the body. Then the devil accompanied the soul to her judgment. The judge said to him: 'You have chastised and sifted her like wheat.'⁴ 16 Now it belongs to me to crown her with a double crown because of her confession. Go away from the soul whom you chastised for so long.' And he said: 'Come, happy soul, perceive my glory and joy with the senses of your spirit!' 17 To the other soul he said: 'Since you did not have the true faith and yet were honored and praised as being one of the faithful, and since you did not have the perfect deeds of the righteous, you will not have the wages of the faithful. During your lifetime you wondered why I would die for you and why I humbled myself for you. 18 Now I answer you that the faith of the holy church is true and leads souls upward, while my passion and blood allows them to enter heaven. Therefore, your faithlessness and your false love will press you down into nothingness, and you will be nothing with respect to eternal spiritual goods. 19 As to why the devil did not go out of that other man in the sight of everyone, I answer: 'This world is like a lowly hovel compared to the tabernacle that God inhabits, and the people provoke God to anger. This is why he went out by degrees just as he had entered him.' "

‡ Chapter 32

Mary Is Like a Magnet

UNDATED

The Virgin's words to the bride that show in an allegory how God the Father chose her from among the saints to be his mother and the port of salvation.

1 The Mother speaks to the bride saying: "A certain person searching for precious stones came upon a magnet.¹ He took it in his hand and kept it in his treasury. With its help he led his ship to a safe port. 2 Likewise, my Son searched among the many precious stones that are the saints, but he chose me especially as his mother in order that by my help humanity might be led to the port of heaven. 3 As a magnet attracts iron to itself, so too I attract hard hearts to God. This is why you should not be troubled if your heart sometimes feels hard, because this is for your greater reward."

4. The editor's punctuation has been emended in this paragraph.

1. On magnets see OM 2:26. For further discussion on Birgitta's use of technical imagery, see Götling, "Ok at thw skuli."

‡ Chapter 33

About Two Men, One Like a Square-set Stone, the Other Like a Pilgrim to Jerusalem

UNDATED

The Son's words to the bride showing through the example of two men how he judges by the interior and not by the exterior.

1 The Son of God speaks to the bride: "You are wondering about two men, one of whom was like a square-set stone,¹ the other like a pilgrim to Jerusalem. However, neither of them achieved what you expected. The first man to whom you were sent was like a square-set stone, firm in his convictions but, like Thomas, piously doubting.² 2 Accordingly, since it was not yet the time when wicked deeds were fulfilled,³ he tasted the wine but did not drink it. Regarding the second man, I said that he would be a fellow traveler to Jerusalem. This happened so that you might learn the true state of the man who was reputed to be righteous and holy. 3 He is a religious in his habit and a monk in his profession but an apostate in his ways, a priest by his rank but a slave to sin, a pilgrim by reputation but a vagabond in intention, rumored to be bound for Jerusalem but really headed for Babylon. Moreover, he left in disobedience and against the apostolic rules.⁴ 4 Also, he is so infected with heresy that he believes and says that he will become pope in the future and bring about a complete restoration. His books give evidence of this as well. 5 This is why he will die a sudden death and, if he does not beware, he will join the company of the father of lies.⁵ Thus, you should not be troubled if certain things are said in an obscure way or if predictions do not turn out as you expect, since God's words can be understood in various ways. Whenever this happens I will point out the truth. 6 But I am God, the true pilgrim bound for Jerusalem. I myself will be your fellow traveler."

EXPLANATION

7 The Spirit of God speaks: "You have heard that the man I told you was like a square-set stone and a pious doubter has died. May you know that he will not be in the number of those who tempted God in the desert nor with those who sought a sign like that of the

1. "Square-set stone" renders "lapis quadratum"; cf. Sw. "fyra slindir steen"; the same image is used in Book IV 125:14, 33; cf. Psalm 117(118):22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6; cf. also OM (12:1) who describes how stone from Alvastra abbey is quarried and used in local buildings "in that monastery of Alvastra, in the city of Linköping . . . well squared and polished in olden days."

2. "Thomas, piously doubting," i.e., the disciple Thomas (John 20:24-29).

3. "The time when wicked deeds were fulfilled" renders "tempus, quo complete sunt malicie"; cf. Sw. "än timin j hulkom ilzskan war fulkomnath" [the time in which wickedness was fulfilled]; the sense is obscure.

4. "Apostolic rules" renders "apostolica statuta"; cf. Sw. "kirkionna skipan" [the ordinance of the church]. It is unclear what exactly is implied here.

5. "The father of lies" (John 8:44).

prophet Jonah,⁶ 8 nor with those who stirred up persecution against me. No, he will be with those who had zeal and charity although not yet perfectly.”

‡ Chapter 34

About a Ring That Is Too Tight, and an Unclean Filter for a Drink

UNDATED

The Mother’s words to her daughter symbolizing the soul by a ring and the body by a cloth, and about how the soul should be purified through discretion and the body should be cleansed but not killed by abstinence.

1 The Mother speaks: “A ring is given to someone but it is too tight for his finger. So he asks advice of an enemy as to what should be done. The enemy answers him: ‘Cut the finger off so the ring will fit on it.’ A friend says to him: ‘Certainly not! Instead, make the ring wider with a hammer.’ 2 Someone wants to filter and strain a drink for a powerful lord by using an unclean cloth and asks advice of an enemy. He answers: ‘Cut everything that is unclean from the cloth and use the clean parts you find to filter your lord’s drink.’ 3 A friend tells him: ‘By no means do that! Instead, the cloth should be washed and cleansed first and then the drink should be filtered!’ The same thing applies even in spiritual matters. The ring represents the soul, the cloth represents the body. 4 The soul, which should be placed on God’s finger, should be made wider with the hammer of discretion and purification. The body should not be killed but cleansed through abstinence so that the words of God can be spread abroad by means of it.”

6. “Tempted . . . that of the prophet”; cf. Numbers 14:22–23; Psalm 105(106):14; Matthew 12:38.

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Note: Scandinavian characters (which occur at the end of the alphabet in the Scandinavian languages) are listed as follows: â=aa, ä=ae, ö, ø=oe.

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