

Library of Medieval Women

Saint Bride and her Book

Birgitta of Sweden's *Revelations*





Queen Joan of Naples, Catherine and Birgitta of Sweden,
Madonna Lapa Acciaiuoli Buondelmonte.
Andrea da Firenze, *Via Veritatis*, Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria
Novella, Florence, 1366–67. Fratelli Alinari

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Birgitta of Sweden's *Revelations*

**Translated from Middle English
with Introduction, Notes and Interpretive Essay**

Julia Bolton Holloway

D.S. BREWER

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In Memory of Fioretta Mazzei

Preface



Saint Birgitta's Life, her *vita*, and her Book, the *Revelations*, exist in countless documents and manuscripts, in many languages. In this book's chronology, map, and texts, we see her in time and space, attaining authority and influence. St. Birgitta wrote of herself as Christ's bride, his *sponsa*. Medieval English writers therefore often called her 'Saint Bride', as well as 'Byrgitt' or, more rarely, 'Bridget', among these Margery Kempe using the punning form of her name, 'Saint Bride'.

During her lifetime Bride was already famous. The Frontispiece to this book shows Queen Joan of Naples, with golden hair and golden crown, Catherine of Sweden, dressed simply in coif and pilgrim garb, her mother, Birgitta of Sweden, humbly kneeling in the background as a widow, while in the foreground is their friend Lapa Acciaiuoli Buondelmonte. These four women appear in a Florentine fresco painted in 1366-1368 because they were together in Naples, all of them associated with Nicholas Acciaiuolo, who built La Certosa in Florence and who died in 1366. Their story, their sacred and sometimes profane conversation, will unfold in the pages of this book.

Because Birgitta and her daughter Catherine, following their deaths, were considered for canonization as saints within their own century, careful written accounts were compiled about both women. Paradoxically, when a saint is canonized by the Church, that individual, though dead, undergoes a *processus*, a trial, much in the same manner as does a living person about to be convicted or acquitted of a crime. The canonization process likewise consists of the telling of tales by witnesses; indeed the *Acta et Processus*, the 'Deeds and Trial', becomes a collection of biographical stories, out of sequence, but compellingly narrated, as authenticating anecdotes and examples of sanctity, as if they were *The Ring and the Book* in reverse. These powerful and persuasive documents survive. A *vita* was also created, both for the canonization and using these canonization documents.

The documents concerning the life of Saint Bride largely survive because Birgitta herself had already written books and letters setting forth her visions from Christ, the Virgin, and Saints to Popes, Emperors, and Kings. These books included her eight-volume *Revelations*, her *Rule* for her Order of the Holy Saviour and Saint Birgitta, her *Sermo Angelicus*, the 'Word of the Angel', dictated to her by an angel, and the *Cantus Sororum*, the 'Sisters' Songs', giving the Offices for her nuns and monks to sing. This book in your

hands attempts to present, edit, and translate some of these writings.

Besides such texts are her wonder-working relics, parts of her body, and also her garments and possessions, such as her patchwork quilt of a mantle cobbled together from a wornout dress. These objects are treasured in the double monasteries founded as daughter houses throughout Europe from her mother house, the Abbey in Vadstena, Sweden, in the same places as were her manuscripts to be found. It is possible to patch together again the 'Book of Saint Bride', as if it were a cloak fashioned from a robe, through using her own words from the autobiographical *Revelations*, and from others' accounts of her in the trial for canonization. It was, indeed, in that manner that books by her and about her were written in the Middle Ages. We also even have an example of her own writing, preserved in Stockholm, where she has penned Swedish words upon Italian paper, sewing two sheets together in order not to waste them.

This volume consists of an introduction giving the life—the *vita*—of Saint Birgitta from a Latin document preserved in Florence, Italy, but written out in Vadstena, Sweden, by Johannes Johannis of Kalmar, in 1397, soon after her canonization. Then the text of Princeton University's Garrett Collection 146 Manuscript of her *Revelations* follows. I chose to translate this particular version of the extant *Revelations* because it stresses the prophetic visionary quality of her writings, because it presents her *Revelations* in an already appropriately edited medieval version, because its second part is focused on women, and because it is today in America. The manuscript is likely written out by two English Brigittine monastics, one, perhaps, male, the other possibly a nun, who translate and digest into Middle English Saint Birgitta's far lengthier eight-volume work recorded in Latin by male priests, the Swedish Master Mathias, the two Peter Olavis, of Alvastra and of Skenninge, and the Spanish Alfonso of Jaen, her appointed confessors. Last in the volume is given an interpretative essay discussing Bride's use of textuality as a woman in order to gain access to authority and to influence the rulers of Christendom, in the manner of the Sibyls and the Prophets, and the adoption of that textuality by other women both within and outside her monastic communities. Throughout, the texts generated by Bride's community are themselves presented as evidence for this book's arguments. The footnotes to the Text are for the use of undergraduate readers; but the endnotes to the Introduction and the Interpretative Essay document the research carried out in Sweden, Italy, Germany and England amongst manuscripts and books usually not in English and are for scholars in the field (it is suggested that the undergraduate student not read these); the bibliography, as Suggestions for Further Reading, lists those works about Birgitta of Sweden, studies on women, monasticism and pilgrimage related to this book, the Brigittine presence in England, and works on Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, whom Birgitta of Sweden

influenced, that would be accessible and useful to undergraduate students.

In the translation and in the essays, Birgitta is either called such or given the form 'Bride', as she is called in some Middle English manuscripts, such as British Library MS Claudius BI, MS Julius FII, and the *Book of Margery Kempe*, MS Additional 61,823 in obvious reference to Christ speaking of her as his *sponsa*, his Bride. In the Princeton, Garrett 145, manuscript translated here she is 'seynte Byrgette' or 'saynt Birgytt', that spelling being more correct and true to the Swedish form of her name. This book avoids the Irish form, 'Bridget', italianized as 'Brigida'. The Garrett manuscript text uses 'ghost', not 'Spirit', 'maker', not 'Creator', 'ayan-byer' ('again-buyer'), not 'Redeemer', 'righteousness', not 'Justice', and so forth, forms of words which are closer to their original meaning in English but for which today's customary usage is in alienating Latin. Medieval texts used little capitalization in connection with God. Some, but not all, of the modern printing conventions in this area are adopted, generally nouns only being capitalized. Roman and arabic numbers in square brackets following the manuscript's rubrics (parts emphasized by being written in red, here in bold), refer to book and chapter divisions in *Revelationes Sanctae Brigittae* (Rome: Grignani, 1628). It is recommended that the student reading the text visualize the manuscript with its rubrication. A facsimile edition for scholarly use is greatly needed of the fine Lübeck 1492 *editio princeps*, or first edition, including its engravings made from the illuminated manuscript brought by the monks from Vadstena.

One section of this Middle English manuscript, on the 'Doom of Kings', was previously translated into Modern English by Patrick O'Moore and published in 1982 in an edition limited to 40 copies. A translation of *Revelations V and VII* and other materials from the Latin texts, in *Birgitta of Sweden: Life and Selected Writings*, was edited by Marguerite Tjader Harris, Albert Ryle Kezel, and Tore Nyberg, and published by the Paulist Press in 1990. Several books have been written in English about Saint Birgitta of Sweden. But there is still a great need to position Birgitta in the gallery of portraits of major women writers. She had been placed in the canon of saints in 1391, the Emperor Charles of Bohemia, Chaucer's Queen Anne of Bohemia's father, several Popes, Queens Joan of Naples, Eleanor of Cyprus, and Margaret of Sweden and even the uncle of the Grand Inquisitor, Torquemada, vouching for her sanctity. In 1492, celebrating the centenary of her canonization, her *Revelations* was printed, instead of handwritten, for the first time. It was fitting that the first edition of this book appeared, six centuries after her canonization, in 1991. Similarly, this second edition is prepared, again in Italy, on the Eve of the Jubilee of 2000, recalling Birgitta's prophecies concerning the Jubilee of 1350.

Much of this book's material I learned from my colleagues, Professors John Fleming, Gail McMurray Gibson, Julian Jaynes, William Jordan, Jean

Preston, of Princeton University, Jeanne Krochalis, Pennsylvania State University, David Anderson, University of Tübingen (who noted Vauchez' work on canonization materials as a mode for conveying history), Clifford and Audrey Davidson, University of Western Michigan, Anthony Luttrell, Bath, Amy Vandersall, University of Colorado, Boulder, and Judson Boyce Allen, all of whom have taught me to love medieval justice, medieval manuscripts and medieval archives. Also greatly deserving of thanks is Professor Jane Chance of Rice University who commissioned this book, and who has stimulated and supported the work of fellow women scholars, so that they may in turn shape a generation of women readers believing in ourselves, a major example being this series, the Library of Medieval Women. My sister-in-law, Maria Antonia Bandres y Bolton, will remember our visit together to the monastery of Farfa because my brother, Richard Rothwell Bolton, had found in its library our father's book on Pope John XXIII. Princeton University allowed me to teach a seminar on Medieval Pilgrimage and Literature, where I first really encountered this tiny, intrepid woman saint and pilgrim. My student, John Wheaton, then pilgrimaged to Sweden. Next, Joan Bechtold incorporated Birgitta of Sweden into her Master's Thesis, along with Matilda of Tuscany and Catherine of Siena, on the three women who dialogued with Popes and Emperors. John Wheaton became a journalist, Joan Bechtold a lawyer. As an undergraduate student, Lancia Chadwick carefully read this book's manuscript and made suggestions for similar readers.

A separate book on the Life of Saint Birgitta, translated from the complete text by Birger Gregersson and, perhaps, Thomas Gascoigne, and which gives a more complete bibliography, is published by Peregrina Publishing, Toronto, Canada. An article, 'Bride, Julian, Margery and Alice: Birgitta of Sweden's Textual Community in Medieval England', appeared in *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, edited by Sandra J. McEntire, and published by Garland Press, New York, 1992 and it also appeared in *Jerusalem: Essays on Pilgrimage and Literature*, there listing as well Brigittine, Julian and Margery manuscripts and incunabula, published by AMS Press, New York, 1998. The Latin text of the Florentine Paradiso document was published in connection with the 1991 Brigittine Congress in Rome.

Thanks are due to the Graduate Committee on Research and Creative Work of the University of Colorado at Boulder and the College of Arts and Sciences for travel grants enabling me to visit libraries in Sweden, England, France, Italy and the Vatican on a pilgrimage quest amidst Brigittine manuscripts and books, as well as to the Interlibrary Loan Service of the University of Colorado's Norlin Library. I thank Father Leonard Boyle at the Vatican Library, and likewise Florentine librarians, at the Biblioteca Nazionale, the Laurentian and the Riccardian, and the archivists at the Archivio di Stato; also librarians and scholars in England, especially the Bodleian and the British

Library, Bavaria, Paris, and Sweden, including Birger Bergh, Esbjörne Belfrage and Arne Jönsson of Lund University. I am grateful to Father Michael Maclean of Norwich Cathedral for his information about Julian and Margery and Father John E. Halborg for reading this book in manuscript. Thanks are due too to Christopher de Hamel of Sothebys, London, and to Julian Plante of the Hill Monastic Library, for information on the whereabouts of several Syon and Brigittine manuscripts. I also wish to thank those who gave hospitality to this pilgrim writer, the Community of the Holy Family, Ingrid de Hevesy Rådman, Diana Leap, Giorgio Nencetti, Jeremy DuQuesnay Adams and Bonnie Wheeler. The woodblocks in this book are taken from Andreas Lindblom, *Den Heliga Birgitta bildverk i skulptur och måleri från sveriges medeltid* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1918), who in turn reproduced them from the first edition of Birgitta's *Revelations*, her *Life and Writings*, printed in Lübeck in 1492. The engravings, as much as does the text, stress the importance of Saint Bride and her Book. Above all, I wish to thank the Lady Abbess of Syon, the Prioress and Father Bachbauer of Altomünster, and Sister Patricia of Vadstena, for their great kindness. I had not expected, when I started this quest, to find that women throughout Europe can still live the Rule Birgitta wrote. Nor had I expected to find such a wealth of medieval manuscripts written by, for and about women.

Last, and most, of all, I wish to thank Saint Bride and her Book for shaping this mirroring textuality and even my life of flesh and blood with her words and books these many centuries later. The concluding verse was written in 1374 by Bishop Nicholas Hermansson of Linköping, who had been Birgitta's sons' Latin teacher.

*Rosa, rorans bonitatem,
Stella, stillans claritatem,
Birgitta, vas gratiae*

Rose, bedewed with goodness,
Star, shining with clearness,
Birgitta, vessel of grace.

St. Bride's Day, 1990
Paradiso, Florence
Annunciation, 1999
Montebeni, Fiesole

Chronology of Saint Bride's Life, Times and Influence

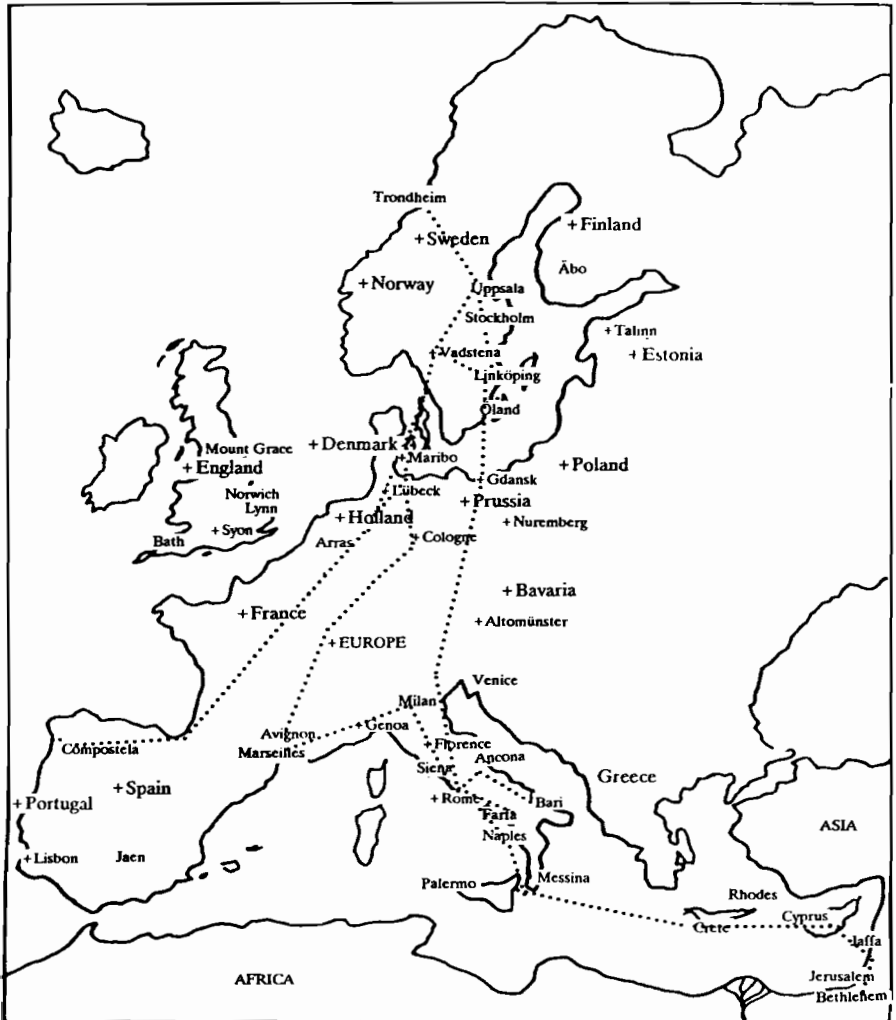
- 1296** King Birger Magnusson asks Birger Persson to emend laws.
- 1303** Ingeborg, pregnant with Birgitta, shipwrecked, saved by Duke Eric. Birgitta born, Finsta.
- 1310** Ingeborg's death. Birgitta raised by Aunt Catherine of Apenäs.
- 1311** Birgitta's first Revelation. Virgin crowns Birgitta.
- 1316** Birgitta marries Ulf Gudmarson.
- 1330** Ulf, Lawman of Närke, or Nericia. Birgitta taught Latin with her sons by Nicholas Hermansson, later Bishop of Linköping. Birger Persson, Gudmar Ulfsson die. Ingeborg Ulfsdotter enters convent.
- 1332** Catherine Ulfsdotter born. Master Peter Olavi, Birgitta's tutor.
- 1335** King Magnus marries Blanche of Namur, Birgitta her governess.
- 1341** Virgin tells Birgitta she will see Christ in Jerusalem.
- 1342** Ulf and Birgitta make pilgrimage to Compostela. Ulf's illness in Arras. Nicholas Acciaiuoli founds Carthusian Certosa, Florence. Queen Joan of Naples, at 16, marries Andrew of Hungary.
- 1343** Julian of Norwich born.
- 1344** Ulf's death, burial at Alvastra. God makes Birgitta his Bride. Master Mathias her adviser.
- 1344-46** Rule of Order of Holy Saviour composed.
- 1345** Master Mathias, at Bride's request, translates Pentateuch into Swedish. Queen Joan has her husband, Andrew of Hungary, killed.
- 1346** Christ tells Bride to go to Rome. King Magnus gives Bride Vadstena.
- 1346-1349** Bishop Hemming of Åbo and Cistercian Prior Peter Olavi take Birgitta's *Revelations*, with Preface by Master Mathias, and *Rule* to Kings Edward III of England, Philip VI of France and Pope Clement VI.
- 1347** Bride prophesies of Christ as Ploughman bringing Black Death. Queen Joan marries Louis of Taranto, at instigation of Nicholas Acciaiuoli. Cola di Rienzo, Whitsunday, establishes Rome as Kingdom of the Holy Spirit.
- 1349** Bride leaves Sweden. Black Death outbreak, prophesied to King Magnus by Bride.
- 1350** Magister Mathias' death. Bride makes pilgrimage to Rome in Jubilee Year. Lodges in Cardinal's palace by Saint Lawrence in Damaso. Travels to Farfa. Catherine, her daughter, leaves for Rome.
- 1351** Bride tells Pope Clement VI to leave Avignon for Rome. Catherine prepares to return to Sweden. Eggert, her husband, dies. She decides to stay with Bride.
- 1352** Whitsunday, Coronation of Joan and Louis of Naples. 2 December, lightning strikes bells of St. Peters' and melts them. Christ had told

- Bride this would be sign of Pope Clement VI's death. He dies, 6 December. Bride starts writing *Sermo Angelicus* ['Word of the Angel'].
- 1354** Bride's household evicted from Cardinal's palace, moves to Francesca Papazuri's palace, which becomes Casa di Santa Brigida.
- 1355** Bride tells Emperor Charles of Bohemia to reform the Empire. April 2, he comes to Rome as pilgrim, April 5, is crowned in St. Peter's. 15 October, Pope Innocent VI sends Birger and Catherine 400 gold florins.
- 1358-1360** King Magnus of Sweden under papal interdict.
- 1360** Cecilia Ulfssdotter abducted by brother Charles from convent of St. Ingrid in Skenninge and married to knight.
- 1363** Israel Birgersson, Bride's brother, refuses crown of Sweden, dies on crusade in Riga.
- 1364** King Magnus captured in war, imprisoned. Albert elected king. Cecilia Ulfssdotter marries a second time.
- 1365-1367** Bride in Naples. She cures Lapa Acciaiuoli Buondelmonte's son, Esau, from terminal tuberculosis, crippling.
- 1366** Bride orders Pope Urban V and Emperor Charles to improve their rule. Birger Ulfsson builds Vadstena Abbey. Bride and Queen Joan of Naples meet. Bride at Nicholas Acciaiuoli's deathbed, as she predicted.
- 1367** Tax imposed on every Swedish citizen of 'Our Lady's Penny' to build Vadstena Abbey. 30 April, Pope Urban V leaves Avignon for Rome. Bride raises Roman nobleman's son from the dead, Gentile Orsini, by placing her cloak over his corpse. Andrea da Firenze finishes fresco.
- 1368** 21 October, Pope and Emperor in Rome. Alfonso of Jaén resigns bishopric, becomes Hieronymite hermit. Crucifix speaks to Bride at St. Paul's Outside the Walls, Rome. Julian of Norwich writes early *Showing of Love*?
- 1369** Bride predicts Pope's death if he returns to Avignon. 16 June, passport issued to Bride's family to travel to Bari.
- 1370** 4 August, Montefiascone, Pope Urban V's Bull grants Augustinian Rule, Rule of the Holy Saviour as supplement, no indulgence for Vadstena. Urban dies, 19 December. Thomas Stubbs, Richard Lavenham at Oxford, acquire *Revelations*, lecturing on the text.
- 1371** Bride asks the new Pope, Gregory XI, to come to Rome.
- 1372** Bride begins pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Charles Ulfsson dying in Naples. 11 March, Naples, 14 March, sails to Messina from Naples, reaching Messina, 19 March, Cyprus, 26 March, Cephalonia, 30 March, in great tempest going to Cos, 1-4 April, greeted by Master of the Order of St John Hospitaller, 8 April, Cyprus, Paphos, then, with a good wind, Famagusta. Birger Ulfsson dubbed a knight in Holy Sepulchre. Bride receives many Revelations on Calvary and in Bethlehem as she had been promised by the Virgin when in Sweden.

- 1373 13 May, Julian of Norwich's Revelation. 23 July, Bride dies in Papazuri house near Campo dei Fiori, body brought to Saint Lawrence in Panisperna and laid in marble sarcophagus. Francesca Papazuri places painting of Crucifixion in room of Bride's death.
- 1374 Bones of right arm left in Panisperna. 4 July, Catherine and Birger bring Bride's remains to Vadstena. Catherine, Abbess, of nuns, Petrus Olavi, Confessor General, of monks. *Revelations* and other writings edited and published as fine illuminated manuscripts. King Magnus' death at sea. Catherine of Siena examined by the Dominican Chapter General, Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria Novella. Pope sends her Bishop Hermit Alfonso of Jaén as director.
- 1375 Pope Gregory XI returns to Rome. Catherine, at the King of Sweden's request, comes to Rome to negotiate Bride's canonization.
- 1376 Pope Gregory XI proposes Bride's canonization to Cardinals. Cardinal Adam Easton, Norwich Benedictine, appointed to read documents.
- 1377 Pope Gregory XI's death.
- 1378 Pope Urban VI unwilling to canonize Bride. Codex Saint Lawrence in Panisperna.
- 1379 Catherine stops Tiber from flooding Rome. 3 December, Pope Urban VI establishes Brigittine Rule, canonization process begun.
- 1380 Catherine receives Bull from Pope permitting Bride's remains to be enshrined, returns to Sweden.
- 1381 Master Peter Olavi's and Catherine's deaths. Peasants' Revolt, Wyclif's first complete Bible. Richard Rolle's canonization proposed.
- 1383 Cardinal Adam Easton, Norwich Benedictine, appointed as one of three Cardinals to study Birgitta's writings. 8 December, Francesca Papazuri's Deed of Gift of Casa di Santa Brigida to Vadstena.
- 1384 23 October, 21 monks, 46 nuns enclosed at Vadstena by Bishop Nicholas Hermansson.
- 1385 Three Vadstena monks in Rome for canonization process.
- 1386 Adam Easton tortured and imprisoned in dungeon, vows to work for Bride's canonization if he is saved from execution for conspiracy against Pope Urban VI. Five other Cardinals die.
- 1388 Vadstena rebuilt in stone after fire.
- 1389 Cardinal Adam Easton freed by Pope Boniface IX, has his books shipped to Norwich, where he likely writes *Defensorium Sanctae Birgittae*.
- 1391 Birger Ulfsson dies, 26 August. Cecilia Ulfsdotter dies. Bride canonized, 7 October. Boniface IX's bull, 9 October, canonization, indulgence. Nuns of Saint Lawrence in Panisperna enshrine relic.
- 1392 Julian of Norwich completes Long Text, *Showing of Love*.
- 1406 Philippa, daughter of Henry IV of England, marries Eric of Sweden.
- 1411-12 Hoccleve quotes Bride's *Revelations* in *Regement of Princes*.

- 1413** Date given in Julian of Norwich's Short Text, *Showing of Love*. Margery Kempe visits Casa di Santa Brigida in Rome, meets Bride's maidservant, Katherine of Flanders.
- 1415** Henry V lays foundation stone of Brigittine Syon Abbey. Vadstena nuns and monks arrive at Lynn, travel to Syon Abbey.
- 1418** Birgitta Karlsdotter, Bride's great granddaughter, when dying has vision of Bride and wild strawberries, buried at Vadstena.
- 1419** April, Pope Martin V confirms Bride's canonization, approves Rule for Brigittine Rule for Syon Abbey at instigation of Henry V.
- 1434** Margery Kempe visits Sheen, Syon Abbey.
- 1436** *Book of Margery Kempe*.

Map of Saint Bride's Pilgrimages and Brigittine Convents



Introduction: Saint Bride: Flesh and Blood Made Word and Book



Birgitta of Sweden, commonly known as Brigida in Italy, Bride or Bridget in England, a noblewoman of that northernmost country who lived from 1303 to 1373, was a mother of eight children, traveled as a pilgrim throughout Europe and to Jerusalem, and spoke and wrote as an equal to Popes and Emperors. She was acknowledged by almost all as God's Ambassador, his Bride and his *canale* or channel of communication (pp. 31-33).¹

In the fourteenth century, Europe was shifting from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. But Bride's own northern kingdom of Sweden would remain stylistically in the Middle Ages for centuries and had only recently with great fervor shifted from paganism to Christianity, its people filled with the desire to perform arduous pilgrimages, journeys to distant, sacred shrines generally situated in Romance and Mediterranean regions, Compostela, Rome and Jerusalem. Bride herself would travel from the north to the west, the south, and the east upon such pilgrimages, crisscrossing all of continental Europe and reaching Jerusalem in Asia.

Medieval Europe was supposedly governed by the Pope and the Emperor but in actual fact feudal kingdoms, dukedoms, and counties allowed for much autonomy. Bride would go to the top, communicating with the Pope, the Emperor and the Kings of Europe, not realizing the initial inefficacy of her action. Medieval Europe saw itself as divided into categories, such as Knight, Monk and Ploughman for men, Virgin, Bride and Widow for women. It forgot about the new presence of the Merchant.² When Bride would speak about a merchant he would symbolize for her the temptations of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and especially of her desire to remain with her children, rather than enter the monastic life of abnegation.³

Medieval Europe believed when calamities occurred, such as the Black Death following in the wake of malnutrition brought about by climate changes and crop failures, that God was punishing man for his sinfulness.⁴ Medieval Europe was bound to a code and economy of interdependence formulated upon religious and philosophical ethics.⁵ Bride used this pseudo-causal perception, as prophecy, to achieve political and religious respect and she largely

succeeded because she and those to whom she spoke and wrote believed in such concepts.

This is the story of a woman and her book. Women, even more so than do men, die unnamed and unknown. Because of women's almost universal apartheid from education and power, which excluded us also from textuality and its monuments, our names are generally not inscribed on brass, stone, parchment or paper. But Saint Bride left to us tangible monuments and relics of herself, parts of her body in her shrine at Vadstena and its daughter houses throughout Europe,⁶ and even the artifacts and relics of the pilgrim staff and wooden bowl inscribed with Latin words in Cyrillic letters; the board upon which she wrote her books, upon which she ate, and upon which, according to the tradition, she may have even died; the hair shirt; and the ancient patched mantle in which she begged for the keep of her household.⁷ Likewise to be found throughout Europe are precious manuscript books which were first written by her and her amanuenses,⁸ then copied out by others, including the nuns in her convents, as well as copies of the process or trial for canonization as a saint. André Vauchez has ably argued for the need to study such archival documents as a means to historical study.⁹ In this book about her book we shall use these monuments, especially manuscripts, some of which in turn were written by medieval English men and perhaps women, one of these even reaching America, to tell her tale.

Her success came about because, as the daughter of one Lawman, Birger Persson, and the wife of another, Ulf Gudmarsson, Bride saw how to use the power of the written word.¹⁰ Therefore, let us first begin with Birgitta's family, and then of her childhood. Birgitta's father, Birger Persson, became Lawman, *legifer*, of Uppland, rewriting, in collaboration with others, the new law to replace the old heathen one. He began it with a preface speaking of Moses as 'the first Lawman', stating further, 'the Law shall be the honour of the just and wise, but shall chastise the wrong-doers and the unwise', 'If all men were just no Law would be needed'.¹¹ Iceland preserved this form of parliament, the All Thing, and the office of the Lawman, who recited orally to the assembled group the formulae of the Law.¹² Birger Persson's work is divided into sections, on inheritance, 'May God so let us divide the inheritance, that we may inherit the kingdom of heaven'; on land, 'The land shall be built upon the Law and not upon violence, for the state of a land is best when the Law is followed', 'God lets us so desire land that we may obtain heaven'; on peace, 'This is said of peace. May God give peace to all who come hither with the will to peace, to be here and to fare forth from here. Peace be to our king, our land and Lawman, and to all those who have listened to the saying of the Law'.¹³ Birger Persson's Uppland Law was confirmed by King Birger Magnusson in 1296, a few years before the birth of Birger's daughter, Birgitta.¹⁴

I. Bride as Virgin

For the narration of Bride's life, beginning with her childhood, let us use a document in Florence once kept in a former Brigittine abbey there, the Paradiso, and which had been written out in Sweden in 1397 by Johannes Johannis of Kalmar, a son of a goldsmith, who later became a Brigittine brother.¹⁵ Its text is based in turn upon the Latin text authorized by the Swedish Archbishop of Uppsala, Birger Gregersson, in 1376, three years following Bride's death, from material compiled and written by Bishop Alfonso of Jaén, Petrus Olavi, and Bishop Nicholas Hermansson of Linköping, and which is often used to preface Saint Bride's own writings, the *Revelations*.¹⁶ It presents to us an official and authorized life of Bride as a Saint, though, as legend, it is not entirely to be trusted. It is patched together much like her mantle, from the canonization materials, giving anecdotes and stories told by her friends, associates and relatives, and from her own autobiographical *Revelations*, or *Showings*, as Julian of Norwich would title her *Revelations* written in imitation of those of Bride. In narrating Bride's life, the *Acta Sanctorum (Acts of the Saints)* in turn speaks of her first as Virgin, then as Wife, lastly as Widow, categories she herself stressed in her visions. Each of these texts, her own autobiographical *Revelations*, the legal testimonies of the canonization trial, and this *vita* created from these other two texts, deals with a woman of flesh and blood, while each imposes expectations from doctrine and from saints' legends, allowing fiction to embroider fact.



Truly, this glorious woman through her father Birger and her mother Ingeborg¹⁷ was born of the royal stock and lineage of the kings of Sweden, noted for their religious faith and constancy in virtue, whose nobility was clear from the beginning. Her mother while pregnant when crossing the sea was shipwrecked in a storm in which many, both men and women, died, but she came safely to shore and

the next night in a vision a person stood by her, dressed in marvelous shining clothes and concerning the greatly venerated widow said without pronouncing outwardly, 'You are saved because of the goodness that is in your womb. Therefore, nurture it with the love of God for it is a gift given to you from God'.¹⁸

When the girl Birgitta was just born, the priest in the nearby parish church, noted for his perfect life, while resting from praying in the night, saw in a vision the Virgin sitting in a shining cloud, having a book in her hand, saying to him, 'A daughter is born to Birger, whose voice will be heard throughout the world with admiration'.¹⁹

But from her birth until she was three years old, it was as if she was mute. Then, against the nature of children, she did not stammer or make gestures but she was heard and seen to speak in complete and shaped sentences.²⁰

During her childhood her devotion was noted, she prayed and fasted and performed other good works.

III. Bride as Wife

Inexorably, however, the family insisted upon a new chapter in her life, that of Bride as Wife. Bride sought to reconcile sainthood and marriage. She especially loved the story of Saint Cecilia's chaste marriage to Valerianus,²¹ and, when she was wed to Ulf Gudmarsson, she made him make a similar vow of chastity.²²

She wished to serve God in the state of virginity, but her parents compelled her to marry Ulf Gudmarson,²³ a most noble and Christian prince of Nericia. And when it was fitting they were wed, the husband being eighteen and his wife thirteen; yet they chose to live a whole year in abstinence, imitating the young Thobias and Sarah, daughter of Raguel, humbly praying to God, and when they loved, it was without sin and in order for God to grant them progeny to serve him. And when they did come together in fear of God and trembling, it was not lust but in order to have children. During this time the devout wife fasted and prayed and carried out other pious and customary works. And she was especially devoted to the Virgin, so that one time when she was in childbirth and the midwives and women with her despaired of her life, an imperious, unknown woman dressed in white silk garments was seen to enter her room and assist by the bed, touching each of her limbs. Then the woman disappeared and immediately she gave birth without more pain and completely recovered. And with this the said couple being still young and recently married, the husband was persuaded by the admonitions of his happy sainted wife. For the courage of a man does not need to be stripped when he returns good and not evil all the days of his life, the wife speaking to him often that they should observe chastity, and no young couple were more devout being always most fervent in the fear of God, and the love of their neighbour. They made a vow of pilgrimage to visit the shrine of blessed James the Apostle in Compostela.²⁴ And on returning, by common consent, both entered different monasteries, the said prince in that resolve dying in the Lord.²⁵

Medieval society—in the world of time—was rigidly hierarchical and structured, representing the Three Orders, Monk, Knight and Ploughman. But in eternity, in religion and on pilgrimage, instead all could theologically be equal. Women, for this reason, especially made use of pilgrimages in

particular and religion in general in order to attain access to equality normally denied to us by male legal encoding. In Bride's own day the legal and religious abolition of thralldom, serfdom or slavery was an important issue. As well as law, her family's background stressed religion, monasticism and pilgrimage. Birger Persson's first wife, Kristina (†1295), was related to Ingrid Elof's daughter, who, in 1270, had founded the convent for nuns at Skenninge, near Vadstena, upon her return from pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Many of Bride's relatives had made pilgrimages,²⁶ participating in that liberating and liminal state outside of hierarchies.²⁷

Contextually, beside marriage and parenting and the making of pilgrimages to St. Olav's shrine at Trondheim and St. James' shrine at Compostela, Bride had assumed grave responsibilities at court. The young King Magnus Smek ('Caress') of Sweden, was married to Blanche, or Blanka, de Namur in 1335, the same year that he had extended the Uppland law forbidding the buying and selling of thralls to other sections of Sweden, 'To the glory of God and the Virgin Mary, for in as much as God delivered us from heathendom he has made us all free'.²⁸ Birger Persson wrote that law. Birger Persson's daughter Birgitta was entrusted with the education of the very young queen and king, at one time rescuing the relics of Saint Louis, King Louis IX of France, in their ivory casket which Blanka had carelessly left lying about in a castle corridor.²⁹ Bride took her educational materials from Franciscan materials, from Saint Louis's Testament to his son³⁰ and from the Norwegian *Mirror for Kings*, creating of these eventually her own *Liber Coelestis Imperatoris ad Reges*, or *Book of the Heavenly Emperor to the Kings of the Earth*, to be culled from her writings by Alfonso of Jaén and containing Ten Commandments. St. Francis had written to Brother Leo, '*Scribo tibi sicut mater*', 'I write to you as would a mother'. So did Bride, who was only three years older than he, write to Magnus. She had earlier taught her husband to read and use the Franciscan Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Now she taught these to the royal couple.³¹ Later, she would have horrific visions warning King Magnus against his excesses (pp. 34-35, 61-90).

III. Bride as Widow

This section of the *vita*, in all its versions, muddles together the categories of wife and widow, in its quest to present Bride as a head of a household, stressing her religiosity as wife and as widow, discussing her behavior both in Sweden and in Rome.

The holy widow who had dedicated her life to God from her youth fasted and prayed. Like a chartered ship carrying its bread a great distance, she was told by the Holy Spirit, on leaving her country and knowing she was going to Germany, that she would come to Jerusalem to the actual places where our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, was announced,

born, educated, baptized, where he preached, performed miracles, was crucified and buried, and ascended into heaven, seeing these with great devotion and veneration. Whether in Rome when she returned there or before or in her own country and the parts around it or in Germany or in Spain or in Italy or in other lands around the sea or holy places or saints' relics beyond the sea, on hearing of relics she would rest little but they would be hastily and personally visited by the said holy widow, quickly traveling to the shrines in each town.

But after her husband's death, out of reverence for the holy Trinity, she tightly tied around her naked flesh a hemp rope fastening it with many knots. And she tied it similarly around each shin and knee. And even when she was ill, she used no linen except on her head, dressing in a hair shirt next to her flesh, above it wearing clothes not according to the condition of her person, but which were very humble and abject. And she observed not only those vigils and fasts which holy mother Church stipulated, she even added many others beyond those ordered by mother Church, four weekly fasts and similarly four in the weeks while her husband still lived; and after his death continually until a few years before her happy passing, she slept in her clothes on a carpet without a straw mattress or feather pillow or anything else like that placed on the earth or floor, holding her body in prayer, abstinence and for divine work, and restoring herself with little sleep. Each Friday, in the memory of the most sacred passion of our lord Jesus Christ, she contented herself with fasting on bread and water, and many other days in memory of diverse saints she similarly passed in abstinence. And whether she abstained from fasting or sat at table, she always rose from that meal most soberly, not satiated, but refreshed.³² And each Friday she took a burning candle of wax letting it drop while it burned on her nude flesh so that the wounds continually remained. And she always kept gentian which is a most bitter herb or root in her mouth.³³

Coming to Rome, neither caring about the harshness and rigor of the cold nor the heat of summer nor the impediment of muddy roads, nor rain, nor snow, nor hail, she visited all the various stations ordained by holy Church and other holy saints' churches, and though she could have used a horse for making it easier for herself, she greatly taxed her body by going on foot each day. She kneeled for so long that her knees became as hard, it could be said, as a camel's. She was of such admirable and splendid meekness that often she sat unknown with destitute pilgrims at the Poor Clare monastery of Saint Lawrence in Panisperna in the city of Rome and there took alms with them and kissed them in thanks. And frequently with her own hands and out of reverence for God she repaired the beggars' clothing. She tenaciously observed obedience to her priests

and superiors and confessors, such that she dared not lift up her eyes from the ground even if she had leave of the spiritual father. While her husband was alive she made her confession every Friday, and after his death she made a true confession even each day with great contrition and with such bitterness as if from the most grave sins, yet there was nothing in her words, habits, thoughts or deeds that could have been considered blameworthy. The words of God said by preachers which men ignored, she adhered to assiduously and intently. Each Sunday and feast day she received the venerated sacramental body of Christ with devotion and tears. The path to her house was not the bread of idleness, her hands being open to work and her palms extended to the poor, her works of charity being inexhaustible to the sick, infirm and lowly persons in her unwearied exercising of the revering of God. Now while her husband was alive, each day she fed twelve paupers, conserving in her own house what was appropriate and necessary to feed them. And every Thursday in memory of our Lord's Supper, with her own hands she washed their feet. Out of her own resources she repaired many ruined hospitals in her region and piously, kindly, mercifully, and diligently ministered to the patients, with pity visiting them and handling, washing, binding and warming their sores without horror or distaste.³⁴

And in Vadstena in the Diocese of Linköping out of her own resources she had the venerated canonical monastery built, for sixty nuns living in an enclosed cloister and twenty-five brothers of the Order of Saint Augustine, called the Holy Saviour, for which nuns and brothers the holy widow wrote certain constitutions herself and later had them approved by the Apostolic See to be held and observed, endowing the monastery sufficiently that no one need support it.

Admirable patience flourished in her that she tolerated most patiently, even when infirm in her own body, or with the shocks of the deaths of her husband and her son Charles, and other adversities, without murmuring, without complaining, with humble submissiveness blessing God, being always restrained, constant in faith, superior in hope, true in charity, daring in justice, delighting above all in equity. She despised carnal lusts and vain alluring depravity and arrogance, pomp and inane glorying and great curiosity. Of her singular continence and modesty enough has been said above. But what was found was that she was most prudent with the best discretion from her youth until her last hour, laying down human fragility, hesitating to judge, not saying good was evil, nor evil good, not holding light to be shadows nor shadows, light. Whatever sacred works, without ceasing, this generous widow brought about, many of them being thoughts and intimate affections and most secret acts made manifest and her visions and various revelations seen and heard and

spiritual prophecy preached by her to many, of which not all were completely effected, but are described here and there in her many volumes of revelations.

The end of her life was foretold five days beforehand. And this came about in her seventieth year. And not until then were her son Birger and her daughter Catherine summoned in fear and strongly urged above all in fear of God and love of neighbour and the saints, to persevere in her works. She made her last confession, as she ought, receiving the last Rites and supreme Unction, then just as her soul was leaving her, while her mind was still intact, having received communion and after adoring the body of Christ, her eyes raised to the heavens, saying 'Into your hands, I commend my spirit', that blessed soul returned to its Creator.

For it was as Widow that Bride could truly enter her vocation as Writer and Prophet. From other sources than this official life we learn of her great labours during this period of her life. Two years following Ulf's death, in 1346, King Magnus and Queen Blanka were persuaded to donate their castle of Vadstena to Bride for her monastery of the Order of the Holy Saviour. Bride herself, reacting against the corruption in the realm wrought by a homosexual, childless king, sought to achieve rights for women and salvation for Sweden through counselling Popes and Emperors, through visions and pilgrimages, through the writing of books, and through founding a religious order, '*Per mulieres primum et principaliter*', 'for women, first and foremost', at Vadstena, to be paid for by the tax throughout the realm of 'Our Lady's Penny'.³⁵ Stephan Grundy tells me of a similar tax paid in pagan times to the priestess at Uppsala. It is quite possible that Bride made use of Norse paradigms in which women had been priests and prophets for Christianity.

Birgitta took her father's and husband's legalism to the highest spheres, harnessing writing to the services of religion and theology. The biography stresses her self-punishing asceticism, which is behaviour used by those who lack power.³⁶ This official and male text does not note the visual elements of her visions, her revelations, relying instead on words rather than images, and especially on the oral testimony of witnesses written down during the curial process or legal trial for her canonization as saint and which were used to establish her official sanctity in the eyes of the Church. But even her own book comes to us through the filter of her male confessors, Master Mathias,³⁷ the two Peter Olavis, one of them the Prior of Alvastra, and later, Alfonso of Jaén, a bishop become hermit from Spain, who all oversaw her writings and her visions. Then that book, in turn, was to be translated and written out by her Brigittine monks and nuns in England and elsewhere in the fifteenth century, giving to themselves paradigms of a severe and sweet freedom.

Bride's tutor, Master Mathias, had had himself an excellent and difficult education in theology, which he imparted to her. He had studied the Bible in

Paris, where Nicholas Lyra, a Jewish convert knowing Hebrew, lectured upon these gathered texts of the Vulgate and its commentaries, both Jewish and Christian. On his return to Sweden, Master Mathias continued these studies, giving to Birgitta a Pentateuch translated from Hebrew into Swedish as well as reading saints' legends and lives to her. He was often tortured with religious doubts, Bride praying for him. He even had serious doubts about Bride herself, speaking of these as being similar to those of Simon the Pharisee towards Mary Magdalen. Once, 'it seemed to Mathias as if all the heretics stood before him and said, as if with one mouth: "We are the truth!"' He laboured with the commentary on the Bible, and a commentary on the Apocalypse influenced by that of Nicholas of Lyra and in turn influencing Saint Bernardino of Siena. His Bible has Genesis begin: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth, not of Himself as the Father begot the Son, not of another matter as a smith makes an axe. The earth was then still void, empty and dark; void, because nothing grew upon it; empty, because neither man nor beast had been created; dark, because there were neither sun nor stars'. His relationship to Birgitta was consciously like that of Cardinal Jerome, Doctor of the Church, to Holy Paula in Rome and in Bethlehem, as they laboured on translating the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible together into the Latin Vulgate; it was also consciously like that of Cardinal Jacques de Vitry's support for the Liège beguine, Marie d'Oignies.³⁸ Master Mathias then wrote the Prologue to the *Revelations*, which begins, 'Stupor et mirabilia audita sunt in terra nostra' [Stupendous and marvelous things are heard in our land], which was, in fact, the letter of credence taken to the Pope in Avignon in 1346-1349 by Bride's emissaries.³⁹

Birgitta's book, the *Revelations*, commenced in Sweden and continued throughout the remainder of her life in Italy, opens with God's words, '*Ego sum Creator omnium*', 'I am the Creator of all', mirroring those of St. John in the Gospel and the Apocalypse. It mirrors the Bible, as rewritten for medieval Europe and as written by a woman prophet. It quarries male theology for women's use. It describes Birgitta's visions, written down by the two Peter Olavis,⁴⁰ concerning Mary and Christ, in which the Virgin is not unlike the vision in the *Seventh Seal* experienced by Jof the juggler and who epitomizes Gothic courtliness. The Virgin and Christ together encourage Bride with the concept of the religious Order she desired to found for women—*per mulieres primum et principaliter*, 'For women first and principally'—and its Rule, Christ telling her to have Peter Olavi (or Olavsson) of Alvastra write it out without adding to or subtracting anything from the spirit of those words spoken by him to Bride.⁴¹

Such convents, where women lived together, having made vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, were common in the Middle Ages—though not as successful as were the abbeys and priories founded by and for men. Early

monasticism had been shaped by sixth-century St. Benedict and his Rule, then reformed by twelfth-century St. Bernard, these two Orders being of the black-garbed Benedictine and the white-garbed Cistercian monks. Then St. Francis and St. Dominic in the thirteenth century founded their Orders of wandering, begging and preaching friars, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. It was also possible for women to be Benedictine, Cistercian, Franciscan (Poor Clares or Clarissans after St. Clare, friend of St. Francis), Dominican, Augustinian or Carmelite nuns.

Bride's convent, her Rule states, is to be governed by an Abbess, who in her turn represents the Virgin, the Queen of the Apostles, all her nuns being as Brides of Christ, who is their Bridegroom.⁴² In the Rule, Christ spoke to Bride saying, 'I am like a most powerful king, who plants his vines and makes the best wine', and telling her that with her he would be planting a 'New Vine'.⁴³ Bride envisioned the convent at Vadstena both allegorically and physically, as having four walls, of justice, wisdom, protection and mercy, and a door for pilgrims, called the forgiveness of sins.⁴⁴ It was so built. Its north wall facing the convent has apertures by means of which the nuns made their confession and received communion, including the chalice of water and wine along with the consecrated bread.⁴⁵

Nuns, as brides of Christ, were widows, their bridegroom being dead. In this manner they were free from sexuality, being a Christian version of the Amazon state. For Bride's nuns were severely sequestered and cloistered from the outside world by their own choice. Within the convent a grave was always open at which they prayed the *De profundis*, 'Out of the depths', Psalm 130's prayer for the dead, daily, and at the door from the convent to the church a bier with a little earth upon it was placed—to remind the nuns of their own deaths.⁴⁶ In several chapters Bride described the nuns' garb, emphasizing the headdress as a white wimple, or head covering, covered with a black veil, fastened with three pins, then a crown of white linen placed over the black veil on which are 'sewn five small pieces of red cloth like five drops of blood—the first over the forehead, the second at the back of the neck, the third and fourth by the ears, the fifth on the top of the head, as on the middle of a cross', signifying the Crown of Thorns and the Five Wounds of Christ.⁴⁷

The Rule, the *Regula Sancti Salvatoris*, the *Rule of the Holy Saviour*, contains twenty-eight chapters carefully legislating the details of Brigittine monasticism. It stresses the Franciscan, Poor Clare-like, poverty of the Brigittine nuns, who could not even possess a thimble of their own. At times Bride used the Franciscan term of 'Brother Ass' for the body.⁴⁸ The Rule also incorporates Benedictine and Cistercian liturgical practices, centering these upon the Virgin.⁴⁹ The chapters of the Rule would be read in Chapter each Thursday by the nuns. Bride dictated these to Master Mathias and Petrus Olavi of Alvastra between the years 1344-1346.⁵⁰ In 1346-1349, Bishop Hemming

of Åbo in Finland and Prior Petrus of Alvastra took the Rule to Avignon to have it approved by Pope Clement VI—and failed.⁵¹ King Magnus had already given to Bride the royal castle at Vadstena for her convent. Later—capriciously—he would have that edifice torn down. What remained was the royal banqueting hall, the former scene of drunken orgies, above which are built the nuns' cells.

The *Liber Celestis* or *Heavenly Book*, another title for the *Revelations*, like a child in the womb, was constantly shifting and growing. Its first, second, and fifth of the eight books were written in Sweden, between 1344 to 1349. The fifth book deals with Master Mathias' religious doubts in the setting of a vision of a monk on a ladder discoursing with Christ and the Virgin. The third book deals with visions concerning ecclesiasts, the fourth book, the visions in Italy, the sixth being an appendix to the rest, the seventh, a travel diary of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the eighth, Alfonso de Jaén's compilation from Bride's political writings, the *Liber coelestis Imperatores ad Reges* or *Book of the Celestial Emperor to the Kings*. With these were also the *Sermo Angelicus* or *Conversation with the Angel*, the Brigittine Office⁵² and finally a supplement, compiled by Prior Petrus from his notes, especially including the material left behind in Sweden, called the *Extravagantes* or *Appendices*. By 1378, at the time of Bride's canonization as a saint, Alfonso de Jaén could write to Archbishop Birger of Uppsala, the compiler of the *vita* or biography of Saint Bride mentioned in this Introduction, noting that the Brigittine books (*libri celestes*) were being read in Spain, in the two Sicilies and Italy.⁵³

Bride entered the arena of international affairs. She had already sent Bishop Hemming of Åbo to Pope Clement VI and to the kings of France and England, strongly advocating that there be peace between King Philip VI of France and King Edward III of England in the Pope's name, espousing the concept of the *Respublica Christiana*, in her attempt to avert what would become the Hundred Years' War.⁵⁴ Now she heard a voice telling her to go to Rome for the Jubilee year of 1350 and bring together the Pope and the Emperor in that city where the streets are paved with gold and the purple blood of martyrs.⁵⁵ Her dream was to have the Pope and the Emperor both present in that ancient, ruined city to which the great aqueducts were now broken and where malaria held sway. But Pope Clement VI did not choose to leave Avignon for Rome, even for the Jubilee he had proclaimed for Christendom.⁵⁶ Bride wrote to the Emperor Charles IV, assuming a *persona* or voice of power, the voice of God, 'The Emperor Christ writes to the Emperor of Germany':

I am speaking words of justice and truth to a woman. Receive therefore the words which she has received from my lips and written in her books. . . And you, who are the lord of the empire, must therefore know that I, the Creator of all things, have dictated a Rule for nuns and have given this Rule to the woman who writes to you. Read the Rule therefore and

speak to the Pope about this Rule which I have dictated with my own lips, and which I have approved.⁵⁷

Both in Italy and in Sweden—and indeed throughout all Europe—the plague of the mid-century was to be utterly devastating. On Bride's journey to Italy she met with the Black Death, the outbreak of bubonic plague, transmitted by fleas from rats, which ravaged Europe from 1348 to 1350, and which soon also reached her own Sweden, King Magnus Eriksson writing of this

. . . terrible news, that every Christian man and woman must sorely fear, for God, because of the sins of men, has sent a great plague upon the whole world, so that the greater part of the people who live in the lands lying to the west of our land, have died a swift death, and now this flying sickness is all over Norway . . . and will soon be here, and it takes such a hold that before they are sick people fall down and die without the sacraments, and wherever it comes there are not so many people left that they can bury the dead.⁵⁸

People bitterly recalled Bride's prophecy made two years earlier, as Christ's channel, to King Magnus (pp. 34-35):

Thus says the Son of God: I will visit this kingdom with wrath. I will rise up in all my power and will not spare either young or old, rich or poor, just or unjust. I will come with my plough and pull up the trees by the roots, so that where there before were a thousand people only a hundred will be left, and their houses shall stand empty.⁵⁹

Pilgrimage and plague were closely associated in the Middle Ages. In Birgitta's Uppland only a sixth of the population was left alive after the 1350 plague there, King Magnus summoning the clergy and ordering them to decree to the people that they enact their penitence through giving to the poor, dressing in woolen garments and walking barefoot, like pilgrims.⁶⁰ So had Bride herself traveled. To this day, her simple wooden pilgrim staff of juniper and bowl of maple can be seen at Altomünster, outside Munich in Bavaria, given to the Brigittine house founded there later, but associated with the places Bride had visited on her journeys.⁶¹ On their journeying Birgitta's entourage also visited Cologne in Germany with its shrine of the Three Kings⁶² and the Sainte Baume in southern France, the place sacred to Mary Magdalen, her sister, Martha, and her brother, the leper, Lazarus. Bride liked to write about Mary Magdalen and Martha, having named one of her own daughters, Martha, Merita.

Bride reached Rome, lodging in a cardinal's palace by Saint Lawrence in Damaso, and took up her career again as writer. She customarily did her writing in a small chapel off its church.⁶³ An angel dictated to her the text that became the *Word of the Angel*.⁶⁴ Also Peter came, saying,

Oh, my daughter, this city of Rome was in times past a city in which dwelt the warriors of Christ, its streets were strewn as if with gold and

silver. But now all its precious sapphires are lying in the mire
Toads and vipers build here.⁶⁵

Politics, apocalypse and religion were inextricably intertwined in the fourteenth century. Usually such chiliastic politics, believing in the end of the world, were only in the male domain. Bride made politics also be woman's work. At Pentecost, in 1184 at Casamaris, the Abbot Joachim da Fiore had contemplated upon the Book of the Apocalypse, especially concerning the Woman Clothed with the Sun.⁶⁶ At Pentecost, similarly, in 1347, Cola di Rienzo had assumed the government of the City of Rome, as the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, becoming Senator. Later, he returned from exile first at the Emperor's court at Prague, then the Pope's prison at Avignon, and proclaimed, 'Romans, I bring you peace, freedom, justice',⁶⁷ but would meet with resistance and eventually be brutally murdered by the Roman crowd. Similarly, had the first Roman Jubilee been proclaimed for the year 1300 in that pattern of apocalyptic chiliasm, the Hebrew Jubilee having been when all debts were to be forgiven, all slaves freed, and the land to lie fallow, the Christian one allowing for the forgiveness of sins if one journeyed to Rome, Dante setting his *Commedia* in that Jubilee year of 1300.⁶⁸ However, though Pope Clement proclaimed this second 1350 Jubilee, he remained in Avignon, in Bride's view, thereby obviating its efficacy.⁶⁹ She was bitterly disappointed in him.

During Cola's Senatorship of Rome, Bride visited the shrine of Saint Agnes, erected by Constantine's daughter, Constantia. Bride was seeking models who were women, rather than men, upon whom she could pattern her life—and who could teach her the purest Latin that she so much needed to learn. St. Agnes in visions taught Bride her Latin, the Virgin having ordered her to learn that universal language of power.⁷⁰ Agnes, like Cecilia, was an early Christian martyr, who had remained chaste despite a marriage proposal, who had refused to sacrifice to idols, and who had been sent to a brothel, *juxta theatrum*, by the theatre, and then burnt at the stake. Her parents saw her in a vision with many other maidens, where she held a lamb. Agnes' *vita* or biography ends with the author's colophon: 'But I, Ambrose, the servant of God, could not suffer that this should not be put into writing, and in her honour who was so dear a martyr, I have written of her deeds'.⁷¹ St. Agnes one day presented Bride a crown set with seven precious stones, jasper, sapphire, emerald, pearl, topaz, diamond, carbuncle, one for each great insult Bride had had to endure, the first of which had been given 'by him who said that you would do better to stay at home and spin like other women than to dispute about the Holy Scriptures'.⁷²

Already, Bride's accurate prediction of the Black Death to King Magnus had made her prophetic powers awesome. Then, on 2 December 1352, lightning struck the bells of St. Peter's and melted them. Christ had already told Bride this would be the sign of Pope Clement's death.⁷³ Clement died 6 December

1352. Next, from Rome, Bride visited the great—and corrupt—monastery of Farfa, staying outside of it in a shed.⁷⁴ Vision followed vision, Master Peter having to write these down all night long. Christ spoke by Bride to Farfa's Abbot, chiding him who ought to be a mirror to his monks of perfection but who was instead lecherous and covetous, only giving to the already rich and never to the poor.⁷⁵ The Virgin asked Bride what faults she really saw, Bride answering that his dress was not that of a monk. Fulfilling her prediction, the Abbot was to die suddenly, without being confessed of his sins.

Bride's pilgrimage had torn apart her family, separating her from Catherine, Charles and Birger. Peter Olavi returned to Rome, driven by inexplicable anxiety, to find Lady Catherine, Bride's daughter, there, meeting her by chance in the basilica of St. Peter's.⁷⁶ She had come to join her mother, leaving her chaste young husband, Eggert. At first her brother Charles had forbidden her pilgrimage, but she had insisted.⁷⁷ There was the very real fear of rape because of her great beauty, St. Agnes sensibly noting, 'If this happened against her will, it cannot be accounted as a sin to her. The young girl must shake it off, as a swan shakes the water off its wings'. Catherine had been depressed in Sweden. She was also depressed in Rome, wanting to mutilate the beauty of her face. When she was about to do so a stone fell on her, rendering her unconscious. She pleaded that Master Petrus beat her with olive branches—until finally she recognized that was enough, and her joy returned.⁷⁸ As Bride chose Saint Agnes, so did Catherine choose Saint Sebastian to guard her virginity, and we learn of her reading saints' legends and the Bible.⁷⁹ When one travels to Altomünster one sees there the image of Saint Catherine on the convent wall, a deer crouched at the beautiful woman's feet, from the legend that a deer hunted by her husband took refuge with her in this manner.

Paradoxically, another of Bride's daughters, Cecilia, unlike her namesake saint,⁸⁰ ran away, aided by her brother Charles, from the convent St. Ingrid founded at Skenninge on returning from Jerusalem. Cecilia would marry several times, her mother understanding this. A daughter of hers named Birgitta in turn was to become a nun at Vadstena. News had reached Bride of this running away in Rome, along with the information of the deaths of Catherine's Eggert, Master Mathias, Bride's daughter Ingeborg, her brother Israel Birgersson (who had almost been King of Sweden), and Archbishop Hemming of Uppsala.⁸¹ Meanwhile Bride gained important contacts in Rome, especially with the princes of the Orsini family, one of whom, with his Humanist training, rewrote Bride's Rule in more scholarly Latin and later participated in the commencement of the canonization.⁸²

Bride's household never had enough money. One day when Catherine was praying at St. Peter's, a Norwegian woman pilgrim in white robe, black cloak, a girdle around her waist and a white kerchief (the garb Bride herself is shown

to have worn in Scandinavian paintings of her), asked Catherine to pray for the Lady Gisla, her brother Charles' wife, and then vanished. Soon news reached them of Gisla's death in Sweden and of her gift to them of her richly jewelled wedding crown.⁸³ Yet again, when funds were low, a Swedish tailor, on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, visited them—and gave them all his savings for the journey, returning to Sweden to get his loan repaid by her son Charles, then journeying forth once more, this time reaching Jerusalem, and upon his return home becoming an industrious lay brother at Vadstena.⁸⁴ But that money ran out too.

In despair, Bride wondered whether she should borrow. The Virgin instead told her to beg. Which she did, standing amongst the church beggars outside Saint Lawrence in Panisperna, in the mornings, spending the rest of the day visiting the seven churches of the pilgrimage stations and indulgences, learning Latin grammar, saying prayers, and writing.⁸⁵ Thus she supported her entourage, who came to include her two sons, Birger and Charles, her daughter Catherine, several friends, several servants, the two Peter Olavis, one a Master from Skenninge, the other a Cistercian Prior from Alvastra, and eventually even the Bishop turned Hieronymite hermit, Alfonso de Jaén. In 1354, she had to move from the grand Cardinal's palace and live instead with a noble widow, Francesca Papazuri, in the Piazza Farnese, near the Campo de' Fiori.⁸⁶ Thus the Swedish noblewoman, whom the Italians spoke of as a *principessa*, a princess,⁸⁷ became a beggar. The theatricality of the act helped rather than hindered Bride.

Bride continued to write. Of the two men named Peter Olavi, it was Prior Peter of Alvastra who was best suited to writing down Bride's Swedish visions in Latin for the *Revelations*, Master Peter of Skenninge who could compose the hymns for the Brigittine Office, the *Cantus Sororum*, or *Sisters' Songs*, in a liturgy centered upon the Virgin Mary.⁸⁸ Every day she worked at these lessons to be read to the nuns. Finally the work was finished. 'The robe for the Queen of Heaven is now cut out', said the angel, in an intensely feminine image, combining text and textile, 'it is for you now to make it up'.⁸⁹ (We remember that Bride's own beggar's cloak was patched together from a woman's robe. Later, in the *Revelations*, Bride will speak of Mary's cloak of mercy being similarly humble in its appearance (pp. 90-93).⁹⁰)

Bride combined poverty and royalty. Finally, in 1355, the Emperor Charles came from Prague, having been prepared for this event by Cola di Rienzo's mysticism. But Cola had just been killed by the savage Roman populace. The Emperor came dressed humbly as a pilgrim, then was crowned in St. Peter's on Easter Day by the Pope's delegate, the Pope being still in Avignon, and as hurriedly left, soon after issuing the 'Golden Bull' of 1356, making Emperor and Pope independent of each other.⁹¹ Next Bride visited Naples and its beautiful, lascivious Queen Joan. Joan's grandfather had been King Robert the

Wise, who had collected seven thousand manuscripts and at whose court had lived Petrarch, Boccaccio and Acciaiuoli, Nicholas Acciaiuoli continuing on at the court and coming to know Bride who would be present at his deathbed in 1366.⁹² Bride had a vision of him she gave to his wife in which he lamented that he had ever known Joan and Lewis (pp. 50-57). Out of his great guilt Acciaiuoli had constructed the massive Charterhouse, La Certosa, outside Florence, from his ill-gotten gains as Seneschal of Naples. He is buried there in its crypt. Likewise is his sister, Birgitta's great friend, Lapa Acciaiuoli Buondelmonte. Joan is said to have murdered her first husband, Andrew of Hungary, then married Lewis of Taranto, with Acciaiuoli's complicity. She was later to fall in love with Bride's son, Charles, shortly before his death. The Emperor Charles and Queen Joan would strongly support Bride's canonization after her death.

Bride's dream of the coming of the Pope and the Emperor to Rome was furthered when, in 1367, Pope Urban V came to Rome. But Bride was concerned more for Vadstena than she was even for Rome. She wrote to him, as she had with previous Popes, at Christ's command, enclosing the copy of the Rule and begging for the papal indulgence for the convent at Vadstena, modeled on that which St. Francis requested for the Portiuncula. However, as with Saint Francis, Christ told her 'If you cannot get the Pope's letter and seal for this indulgence, let my blessing suffice. I will confirm and establish my words and all the saints shall be my witnesses. My Mother be to you a seal, my Father a surety, and the Holy Spirit shall comfort those who come to your convent', and in 1369 the cloister at Vadstena was commenced in earnest.⁹³ When the church was finished the Brigittine nuns placed these words, inscribed upon stone, at its door.⁹⁴ Later, Popes would grant to Vadstena the Saint Peter in Chains indulgence of the Portiuncula.⁹⁵

In 1368, the Emperor Charles with his fourth wife came to Rome to be crowned by Pope Urban V, the Pope and the Emperor meeting each other at the Castel Sant'Angelo on 21 October, Bride likewise giving them a letter reminding them that Christ had approved of her Rule for an order of nuns.⁹⁶ Bride was a major architect of their historic encounter. In her voluntary poverty she had embodied the state of Rome as widowed of its Pope and Emperor, resonant with the lines from Jeremiah's Lamentations on Jerusalem, 'How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How she is become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, How she is become tributary!' But now she had joined together the scattered parts of Christendom, headed by Pope and by Emperor, in the sacred city of Rome.

Bride and Catherine met with Pope Urban V at Montefiascone, 12 June 1369. Then Birger and Charles, her two sons, joined Bride in Rome, the Pope writing for them a passport, for 'the lady Birgitta and her children Charles of

Ulfasa, Birger and Catherine, who are travelling from Rome to St. Nicholas in Bari and to Sant' Angelo on Monte Gargano'.⁹⁷ Bride journeyed as a poor pilgrim to Monte Gargano, sacred to St. Michael, and Bari, sacred to St. Nicholas, having already been to Compostela, sacred to St. James, thus beginning to fulfill the threefold pilgrimages of the Middle Ages of *Deus*, 'God' (the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem); *Homo*, 'Man' (the tombs of the Apostles in Rome and Compostela); *Angelus*, 'Angel' (the shrine of St. Michael).⁹⁸ Songs are still sung in that region by women of St. Bride as the patron of those who are dying, in which the Saint is described as contemplating the crucifix, on her head a crown of thorns, in one hand a candle, the other holding the ever present book she reads and writes.⁹⁹ With them was also Alfonso of Jaén, who in 1368 had resigned his bishopric to become a hermit with the Order his brother Peter founded, named the Hieronymites after St. Jerome.¹⁰⁰ Bride chose Alfonso to cast the final version of her *Revelations* into good Latin.

Pope Urban V on August 5, 1370, at Montefiascone, refused to approve the Rule in its own right, allowing it only to be a supplement to the Augustinian Rule which he deemed as the most appropriate for her Order.¹⁰¹ Incidentally, Augustine's Rule, used by Austin Canons—such as Chaucer's Pardoner—and claimed by them to predate Benedict's Rule, was originally written by Augustine in a letter addressed to his sister's convent.¹⁰² Pope Urban did permit Bride to build the convent which she was never to see, but did not grant her the Portiuncula and Saint Peter in Chains indulgence she requested. This indulgence granting pilgrims remission from purgatorial punishment after their deaths for visiting Vadstena, would have given the convent power, prestige and wealth. To punish Urban V, Bride had a vision in which the Virgin chided him for his sins.¹⁰³

Bride's pilgrimages already had crisscrossed Europe. She had journeyed as a pilgrim to Assisi when St. Francis in a vision in a church in Trastevere told her to 'Come to my chamber and eat and drink with me', only to find when she got there, that he meant the invitation spiritually, not physically.¹⁰⁴ We recall her earlier pilgrimages to Trondheim and Compostela, her others to Bari and Monte Gargano and elsewhere. In 1371, she set off for Jerusalem, in Asia, in her seventieth year, her son Charles becoming ill, likely with tuberculosis, and Queen Joan's lover, before his death,¹⁰⁵ her other son, Birger, being knighted in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁰⁶ She was joined in the pilgrimage by William Williamson, an English knight, and a Franciscan, Martin of Aragon, who heard her preach of her intent on Cyprus.¹⁰⁷ This pilgrimage had been promised to Bride in vision after vision, year after year.¹⁰⁸

A thousand years previously, Jerome had journeyed from Rome to Bethlehem, Paula, a great Roman lady, and her daughter, Eustochium, joining

him there. Paula traveled about the Holy Land, intensely participating, mentally, in reenactments of the events on Calvary and at Bethlehem. As had Jerome's Paula before her,¹⁰⁹ Bride now in turn deeply experienced the events of the Crucifixion upon Golgotha, speaking of the bleeding from his head and his body, and of his Mother and John at his side, the Virgin and herself both pierced with the sword of grief. Then, after His death, 'He was wounded all over and stained entirely with blood. His sorrowful Mother dried His whole body and all His wounds with a linen cloth and then they bore Him away in great grief and much weeping and laid Him in the grave'. Pilgrims were bookish, even if they were illiterate, believing that their journey upon God's World recreated his Word, the Bible, and so sought to record or have their pilgrimage be recorded. Bride immediately went to the pilgrim hostel, asked for pen and ink, and wrote down these words, describing her vision of the crucified Christ.¹¹⁰ It was in Jerusalem, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, that Bride also had a marvelous vision of the Judgement of her now dead son Charles (pp. 104-109). It was in Jerusalem, too, that she wrote down Christ's words, '*Ego sum quasi aquila, que providens in aere volentes*', 'I am like the eagle who soaring in the air foresees the future', that would be copied out again and again in Florentine manuscripts of prophecies.¹¹¹

After Golgotha, Bride visited Bethlehem and Jordan, again deeply experiencing herself the events that once had taken place. Her relationship with Mary and Christ in these visions is that of daughter-in-law and bride to a mother-in-law and fellow spouse and she uses the words 'Sponsa . . . astat', 'the bride stood'.¹¹² Her description of her vision would profoundly influence Renaissance paintings. Johannes Jørgensen describes, in Denmark, in an old pilgrimage church, the scene of the birth of Christ, one of the participants being a woman pilgrim, with a staff in her hand and a bag over her shoulder. It is Bride as a pilgrim in the year 1372, revisioning the event, and the Virgin is as she described, kneeling before the Child who is placed upon her cloak upon the ground before her.¹¹³ The same scene, in Florentine style, is to be found in Santa Maria Novella, just inside the great west door. In completing this pilgrimage Bride mirrored those of Saints Elin of Skövde and Ingrid of Skenninge, of Sigurd Jorsalafar ('Jerusalem journeyer'), and the Kings Canute of Denmark and Olav of Norway.¹¹⁴

Deeply concerned about the scandalous behavior she saw everywhere Bride fulminated in her texts, whether they were recorded visions or preached sermons. On her way back to Rome she had to preach in Naples, beginning her text there as she had her first Revelation, '*Ego sum Creator omnium*', 'I am the Creator of all'.¹¹⁵ She preached as well on Cyprus and warned Famagusta of its impending conquest by Genoa.¹¹⁶ She likewise prophesied to Queen Eleanor of Cyprus, widow of King Peter of Cyprus¹¹⁷ and daughter of King Peter of Aragon, and the Prince of Antioch concerning the capture of

Constantinople by the Turks to take place in 1453.¹¹⁸ Alfonso of Jaén also gave vent, but more privately, to these concerns. Amongst his unpublished papers at his death was a bitter parodic Mass in honour of 'Our Lady of Simony'.¹¹⁹ Bride sent Alfonso to Avignon to persuade Gregory XI to return to Rome. She died before that occurred. Queen Joan, in her own attempt to reform, had purchased and freed a slave woman, sending her to Bride too late, the woman next coming to Vadstena, dying there as Sister Catherine Magnus' daughter.¹²⁰

Bride died a failure. She immediately became a success.

IV. Bride as Saint

Excited by the death of the venerated widow, a great rumor went about the city, a crowd of people running together with great devotion and reverence to see the holy corpse, unanimously glorifying and praising God. At the abovesaid monastery of Saint Lawrence as she had arranged, her funeral procession came to be accompanied by such a crowd of people that for two days they were not able to bury her, and only then could they take her, praising God, to be interred.

Her body had not yet been carried to her sepulchre when a certain woman named Agnes de Comtessa in Rome, known from birth to have a huge and deformed goiter, ran with the others to venerate the body, and laid her own belt on the hand of Bride with devotion, making it touch that belt, then with similar devotion placed it around her own neck and shortly after the goiter shrank and was reduced to normal size owing to the divine miracle. Truly, Francesca de Sabella, a nun of the said monastery of Saint Lawrence, who for two years had been weakened and afflicted by a stomach disorder lying always ill in bed in her room, honouring the widow whose friend she was, now dragged her body with great difficulty through the cloister, coming to the iron grill and lying there all night praying to God that by the merit and prayers of the widow whose body lay there, she might have such healing of her long illness that she could be with her sisters at divine office and that she might when necessary go about the cloister without help from anyone, and she remained there until her health returned to her body and what she had prayed for was attained.¹²¹

Truly, blessed God showed the great merit of this beloved widow when Elsebi Snara, a women of the said Diocese of Linköping, gave birth with great pain to a dead infant and when she came to herself she prayed to God humbly that through the merits of the so-celebrated widow, the child might come to life. She prayed that if the baby would revive, she would visit the tomb of the holy widow with a wax image, and immediately the

baby became warm and began to breathe, becoming full of life. The woman, full of devotion and joy, went to fulfill her vow.¹²²

But what was remembered by most was that by the merits of this widow's soul, with God's omnipotence, deaf ears were opened, mute tongues untied, paralytic limbs had control restored to them, curved spines were straightened and invalids freed from their contractions, the blind had their sight restored, women in childbirth were freed from danger, and the incurably ill were healed. She led those labouring in shipwrecks and stormy waters safely to port. But the votive images and statues at the abovesaid monastery in Vadstena, to which the venerated body of the widow was translated, give ample testimony to the truth.

We find Francesca Papazuri, in 1374, writing to Lapa Acciaiuoli asking for permission to place paintings in the room where Bride had died of the Crucifixion and Saints John, James, Catherine of Alexandria, Mary Magdalene, Peter, Paul, Agnes, and John the Baptist.¹²³ Immediately a European-wide movement began in support of Bride's canonization as a saint and for the indulgence for Vadstena. Advocates were the Emperor Charles of Bohemia, father to Chaucer's Queen Anne of Bohemia, Queen Margaret of Norway, Queen Joan of Naples, Queen Eleanor of Cyprus, and later even the uncle of the Grand Inquisitor, Torquemada. However, while Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, revered her, strangely enough Christine de Pizan's supporter, Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, attacked her validity.¹²⁴ In 1391, the tiny and intrepid prophet, princess and pilgrim, who had married and had had eight children, and who had bullied kings and emperors and bishops and popes, officially became Saint Bride. She was the only woman to be canonized in her century.¹²⁵ Likewise the indulgence for Vadstena would come to be granted. It was also granted to Syon Abbey, Vadstena's daughter foundation in England.

Not all of Bride's remains had gone to Vadstena. An arm bone was given as relic to Poor Clare nuns of Saint Lawrence in Panisperna. Another would later be given to Altomünster. Another came to Syon, from whence most of that would be acquired by Thomas Gascoigne for the Oseney Abbey of Chaucer's Miller's Tale. Another came to Finland. What would be left in the Vadstena shrine would be her skull and Catherine's and a few other bones, the rest being replaced with the bones of other saints, among them one labeled '*de sto sigfrido*', 'of St. Sigfrid'. Thus Bride's body came to embrace all Europe.¹²⁶ Similarly did her texts proliferate throughout Christendom. And the Brigittine monasteries came to include numerous daughter houses spreading out from her mother house at Vadstena in Sweden.

Already, Bride had crisscrossed the map of Europe and beyond on her pilgrimages. Now the Abbey of Vadstena and the Casa di Santa Brigida, the little house on the Piazza Farnese where she had finished writing her

Conversation with the Angel and the *Revelations*, became the two major connecting pivots between the Romance and Germanic language divisions of Europe. Rapidly other houses were established, for instance, along the route upon which Catherine and Birger had brought her relics and also in such places as Florence, Pisa, Genoa and London. Already, Nicholas Acciaiuoli (1310-1365), the Florentine Seneschal for King Robert of Naples, had founded Certosa, a Carthusian abbey outside Florence, in 1364, and had had it richly endowed with treasures, amongst the relics being a letter written by Bride to his family.¹²⁷

Next, Antonio degli Alberti (1356-1428) gave his land at Paradiso, near Certosa, for the Brigittines, the early nuns including his daughters, one of them even named Brigida.¹²⁸ Others came from all the distinguished families of Renaissance Florence and we find in the documents the names of Bardi, Benci, Antenori, Acciaiuoli, Benincasa, Corsini, Frescobaldi, Guicciardini, Medici, Macchiavelli, Neri, Ricasoli, Rucellai, Soderini.¹²⁹ In Pisa we find the Dominican Chiara Gambacorta associated with Alfonso de Jaén in her *vita* or biography.¹³⁰ In Genoa, a daughter house was founded from Paradiso, called Scala Coelis.¹³¹

In Siena, St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380, canonized 1461), to whom the Pope appointed Alfonso de Jaén as advisor following St. Bride's death, began to copy Bride's life in a far-reaching *imitatio Brigidae*, or imitation of Bride. She sought to outdo Bride. So not only did she become mystically married to Christ as his spouse, as his bride, but she even had the wedding ring be of Christ's foreskin, not a detail likely to have been conceived by Bride of Sweden. Also, she, as had Bride with Urban V, brought her Pope in turn back from the so-called Babylonian Captivity in France, causing Gregory XI, on 13 September 1376, to leave Avignon for Rome.¹³² Catherine of Siena attempted to work with Catherine of Sweden to gain Queen Joan's influence. However, the Swedish Catherine, remembering the circumstances of her brother Charles' death, refused. Then, following Catherine of Siena's death, we find her secretary, Christopher Di Ganno, writing out a magnificent two volume manuscript of Birgitta's *Revelations* in Italian, still in Siena's city library.¹³³

Daughter houses came to be founded as well in England, Bavaria, Prussia, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Finland as in Italy and Sweden from the mother house at Vadstena (1384-1595, and present). They, likewise, were given the most beautiful names, Syon, England (1415-presently in Devon, after exile in Lisbon); Paradiso, Florence (1394-17th century), Misericordia and Scala Coeli, Genoa, Italy; Mariental, Tallin, Estonia; Munkaliv, Bergen, Norway; Marienbrunn, Gdansk (1396-1833),¹³⁴ and Stephanus Triumphans, Krakov, Poland; Triumphus Mariae, Lublin, Marienwold, Lübeck (1415-1558), Marienfrucht, Kaldenkirch (1625-1802), Marienkron, Stralsund, and Marienmay, Maihingen (1472-1580),¹³⁵ Germany; Marienthron, Flanders;

Mariensterre, Gouda, Marie Refugie, Uden (present), and Maria Hart, Weert (present), Holland; Marienbo, Låland, Denmark (1416-1556); several houses in France and Brussels dating from the seventeenth century, suppressed with the Revolution,¹³⁶ perhaps even Angelopolis, Mexico, and many others.¹³⁷ In these monasteries manuscripts were being written out of Bride's Book, her *Revelations*, her *Conversation with the Angel*, the *Sisters' Songs*, and a multitude of other texts. Our manuscript, translated here, was likely written out in Syon Abbey at Richmond. These abbeys flourished until the Reformation. The Brigittine double monasteries were, in fact, encouraged by Popes to counter the Schism, the split between Catholicism and Protestantism at the Reformation, which both Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena predicted would occur. In 1381, Pope Urban VI wrote to Bishop Nicholas Hermansson of Linköping, saying that the proposed canonization of Bride would counter schismatics and heretics, including John Wyclif.¹³⁸ Half of the surviving Brigittine manuscripts, generally those in the vernacular languages rather than in Latin, were written by women.

As a coda to this tale, Queen Christina of Sweden (1626-1689), who was raised a Lutheran, but who converted to Catholicism and abdicated her throne, in 1655 established her learned salon amidst her library of books, later to become part of the Vatican Library, in the Farnese Palace, adjacent to St. Bride's Church in Rome. Then Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), son of a Lutheran minister, wrote his *Revelations*, which would influence William Blake (1757-1827) and his *Lyrics and Prophecies*, and also Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) and her *Aurora Leigh*. In Swedish Swedenborg's *Revelations* are titled *Uppenbarelser*, the same title as is given to the Swedish text of Birgitta's *Revelations*. One finds copies of the two books side by side in Scandinavian bookshops. Birgitta of Sweden functioned in her day as Prophet and as Sibyl of the Roman Jubilee, the widowed Bride of the Apocalypse; she assumed classical and medieval paradigms of freedom and empowerment for women and men, queens and commoners, to follow. We can turn to her maternal wisdom for our own Jubilee.

Notes

¹Birger Gregersson, *Officium Sancte Birgittae*, ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1960), p. 209, 'tu eris sponsa mea et canale meum, et audies et videbis spiritualia, et spiritus meus remanebit tecum usque ad mortem', 'you will be my bride and my channel, and will hear and see spiritually, and my spirit will remain with you until death'.

²Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

³Johannes Jørgensen, *Saint Bridget of Sweden*, trans. Ingeborg Lund (London: Longmans Green and Co.: 1954) 1:222; *Revelations* 2:24; *Extrav.* 95.

⁴William J. Brandt, *The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

⁵We see this in the great fresco cycle in the Town Hall of Siena, depicting Good and Bad Government, where on the south and east sides allegorical figures of the Virtues preside over peace and prosperity in the city and its hinterlands, while allegorical Vices preside on the north and west sides where the city and its surroundings are subjected to pillage, rape, battle, murder and sudden death in the midst of mercenary armies and general crop failure and famine. See Quentin Skinner, 'Ambrogio Lorenzetti: The Artist as Political Philosopher', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 19 February, 1986, pp. 1-56.

⁶A. Bygdén, N.-G. Gejvall and C.-H. Hjortsjö, *Les reliques de Sainte Brigitte de Suède: Examen médico-anthropologique et historique* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954).

⁷Thomas Gascoigne, Oxford, Bodleian MS Digby 172B, fol. 37, Bride dying on the miserable board of poverty, covered by her ancient and mended mantle, '*coperta de super antiquo et emendato mantello*'; Aron Andersson and Anne Marie Franzén, *Birgittareliker* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1975), pp. 18-29,33-44; Jørgensen 2:311; mantle is today kept at Saint Lucy in Selci in Rome, being brought there by the Poor Clare nuns from Saint Lawrence in Panisperna when they gave up that convent.

⁸*Amanuensis*, one who takes down a text in writing that is dictated to him, '*a manu*', 'by hand'.

⁹André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age: d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, Palais Farnese, 1981).

¹⁰Birgit Klockars, *Birgitta och Böckerna* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1966), notes that Birgitta's grandfather uncle, father, brother and sons were all Lawmen, p. 358.

¹¹Jørgensen 1:15.

¹²*Njal's Saga*, trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Paulsson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p. 64.

¹³Jørgensen 1:15-16. Slavery was abolished out reverence for the mercy of Christ who was sold by Judas.

¹⁴*Acta Sanctorum*, Octobr. IV (henceforth ASS Oct 4) 4:377C, notes document in king's hand to Birger in King's Archives, Stockholm.

¹⁵Archivio di Stato, Florence (henceforth ASF), Monastero di Santa Brigida detto del Paradiso 79; Johannes Johannis Kalmarnensis, a Vadstena brother, 1362-1446, was in Reval, Estonia, in 1407 to help in establishing the Brigittine house of Mariendal; in London, England, 1416, to help in establishing the Brigittine abbey of Syon; he copied out major Brigittine manuscripts of the *Revelations* and spoke of the *Revelations* as equivalent to the Bible, Edmund Colledge, 'Epistola solitarii ad reges: Alphonse of Pecha as Organizer of Brigittine and Urbanist Propaganda', *Mediaeval Studies*, 18 (1956), pp. 46-47; Knut B. Westmann, *Birgitta Studien* (Uppsala: Akademica Boktryckeriet, 1911), p. 267.

¹⁶Bibliotheca Uppsaliensis MS. 17, fols. 50-51; ASS Oct 4; 'Vita S. Birgittae', in *Scriptores*

rerum svevicarum medii aevi (henceforth *SRSMA*) (Uppsala: Edvardus Berling, 1876) 3:186-206; *Birgerus Gregorii Legenda S. Birgittae*, ed. Isak Collijn (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1946).

¹⁷The canonization materials and this text all give her mother's name as Sighrid. It has become customary to say her mother's name was Ingeborg; Magnus O. Celsius, *Monasterium Sko in Uplandia* (Stockholm: Wernerianis, 1728), p. 14; *ASS*, 50, Oct. 4, p. 377.

¹⁸*SRSMA*, 189,190; *ASS* Oct 4:381C; on the island of Öland a stone cross still stands, said to have been raised by Bride in memory of this event.

¹⁹*SRSMA*, 190,227; the Virgin with the Book indicates the sense women had of their loss of learning and their desire for access to the Word. Bishop Hemming of Åbo (Turku) in Finland was later to be associated with Bride, serving as her envoy to the Pope, but is mistakenly identified with this priest.

²⁰*SRSMA*, 190.

²¹Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Longmans, Green, 1941) Nov. 22, pp. 689-695; Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, Second Nun's Tale. British Library Add MS 37790, Amherst Manuscript, combines Bride, Julian, gives 'Saynte Cecylle', at fol. 97^v; was annotated by James Grenchalgh, Sheen Carthusian associate of Brigittine Abbey of Syon, Michael Sargent, *James Grenchalgh as Textual Critic* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik, 1984, 2 vols.)

²²Jørgensen 1:48-49.

²³This text, as do others, has Ulf Ulfsson.

²⁴*SRSMA*, 192-193: on this pilgrimage the Cistercian monk Svenung had a vision of Bride as crowned with seven crowns representing the seven gifts of the Spirit whose light obscured the sun, the sun representing King Magnus: *ASS* Oct 4:398E,514; Plate 21 in Andreas Lindblom. Bride and her husband also went on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Olav in Trondheim, Norway, *ASS* Oct 4:398A; repeating what had been done by Birger Persson and by his father, grandfather and great-grandfather: Jørgensen 1:99.

²⁵Her husband placed his wedding ring on her finger while he lay dying, but she shortly removed it from her finger, saying her love died with him and she wished now to dedicate herself to God: *SRSMA*, 227; Jørgensen 1:129-130.

²⁶*SRSMA*, 188; Scandinavians were great pilgrims, Sigurd Jorsalafa, 1108-1130, journeying to Myklegaard, Constantinople, as well as to the Holy Land: Paul Riant, *Expeditions et Pelèrinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte* (Paris: Lainé et Harvard, 1865).

²⁷Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); liminality, from *limen*, threshold, means the state in between, where there is freedom from structure.

²⁸Jørgensen 1:71; *Libellus de Magno Erici rege et Commentarii historici super nonnullis Revelationibus S. Birgittae de Magno Erici rege et successoribus ejus*, pp. 12-20.

²⁹Jørgensen 1:158; *ASS* Oct 4:400C,D.

³⁰Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. M.R.B. Shaw (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 347-349.

³¹Jørgensen 1:82-83.

³²*SRSMA*, 204-205; Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

³³*SRSMA*, 204-205; gentian has a blue flower, of medicinal use.

³⁴Catherine and Peter Olavi, at Bride's process for sainthood, remembered her work visiting the sick, feeding the poor, washing the feet of travelers, providing dowries for young girls who wished to marry or enter convents, rescuing harlots from their trade, and caring for the dying: *ASS* Oct 4:392F, 393AB; Jørgensen 1:54-55.

³⁵Jørgensen I.171-72.

³⁶Sheila Delany, 'Sexual Economics: Chaucer's Wife of Bath and *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Minnesota Review*, 5 (1975), 104-115, p. 114, quotes Marx: 'Religious distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people'.

³⁷Magister Mathias, Canon of Linköping, ASS Oct 4:374F, 405A, 406A; Westmann, *Birgitta-Studien*, pp. 272-276, noting Master Mathias and Nicholas Lyra commentary 'super totam Biblia' manuscripts in Prague, Krakow, Genoa, Cologne, Berlin, Florence, Munich, Uppsala; Marguerite Tjader Harris, Albert Ryle Kezel, and Tore Nyberg, *Birgitta of Sweden: Life and Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 17-28.

³⁸Magister Matthias, *Copia exemplorum*, ed. Lars Wählin and Margarete Andersson-Schmitt (Uppsala, 1990), pp. 13, 21, 95; Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 52, 116, 147-151, notes Marie d'Oignies' confessor, the canon Jacques de Vitry's conscious imitation of the *Vitae Patrum* and of St Clare for his twelfth-century charge in Liège, for which he gains a Cardinal's hat; Margery Kempe's priest amanuensis similarly compares her to Marie d'Oignies, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, Early English Text Society 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 153, 322-323.

³⁹ASS Oct 4:374F-375, 390C, D, 404C, 405A, 406A; he is mentioned in *Revelationes*, 1.3, 52, V, VI.75, 89, and elsewhere; Thomas Gascoigne makes copious marginal notes on Master Mathias in Digby 172B, noting that he was Bride's spiritual director, leaving in 1346 on crusade, and that he is buried in Stockholm in the Dominican house, 'Iste doctor sepultus est in Stockholm in domo fratrum predicatorum', fol 48; Jørgensen 1:56-57; Colledge, 'Epistola solitarii', p. 22, fn. 17.

⁴⁰Jørgensen 1:285, Lindblom, Plate 10.

⁴¹ASS Oct 4:419E.

⁴²See *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 109, 119, 137, 159-271.

⁴³Sancta Birgitta, *Opera Minora I: Regula Salvatoris*, ed. Sten Eklund (Stockholm: Alquist and Wiksells, 1975), pp. 102-103; Roger Ellis, *Syon Abbey: The Spirituality of the English Brigittines* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984), pp. 19-26.

⁴⁴Compare with Mechthild von Magdebourg's allegorical convent, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), VIII.36, pp. 305-307.

⁴⁵For controversy in the Church concerning whether women could receive consecrated wine, see Bynum, *Holy Feast*, pp. 48-69.

⁴⁶*Regula Salvatoris*, pp. 132, 171-172; Jørgensen 1:180-181.

⁴⁷Jørgensen 1:174-175; medieval English texts became obsessed with the cult of the Five Wounds, and with Bride and Syon's motto '*Amor meus crucifixus est*', 'My love is crucified'. Connected to this is the outcry against Henry IV's 1405, Whit Monday, execution of Archbishop of York Richard le Scrope, who had stated the Five Wounds of Christ were analogous to those which the sword would inflict upon his neck: Bodleian Library MS Lat. lit. f.2=Arch f.F.11, fols. 4, 143^v; Thomas Gascoigne, MS. Auct. D.4.5; John Fletcher, vol 3 of unpublished notebooks on Syon, University of Exeter.

⁴⁸Jørgensen 1:176, 2:104. Bride spoke of the two kinds of Franciscans, those who lived according to the Rule Christ revealed to Francis, versus those which the devil taught Brother Adversarius (her name for Elias of Cortona), 2:251.

⁴⁹ASS Oct 4:419F, observing parallel of Rule to those of Benedict and Francis. See also Roger Ellis, *Syon Abbey: The Spirituality of the English Brigittines*, pp. 19-26.

⁵⁰ASS Oct 4:419E.

⁵¹Jørgensen 1:200-201.

⁵²Sancta Birgitta, *Opera Minora II: Sermo Angelicus*, ed. Sten Eklund (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1972). The monastic offices were the services carried out by monks and nuns in praise of God, the *Opus dei*, the work of God, and were generally chanted, sung. Books of Hours were similarly produced for the laity for their more private reading.

⁵³Jørgensen 1:301.

⁵⁴ASS Oct 4:426C, 427D, 428A; *SRSMA*, 197. The letter takes the form of Christ telling Bride to write to Pope Clement VI these words: 'Scribe, ex parte mea Papae Clementi haec verba: Ego exaltavi te, et ascendere te feci super omnes gradus honoris. Surge igitur ad faciendum pacem inter reges Franciae et Angliae, qui sunt periculosae hostiae, animarum proditores', 'I will raise you up and place you in the highest grade of honour. Rise therefore and make peace between the kings of France and England, who have become dangerous enemies, with treacherous hearts'.

⁵⁵ASS Oct 4:423A; ed. Cummings, p. xxiv: 'Christus loquitur Sponsae existenti in Monasterio Alvastris, dicens: Vade Romam, et manebis ibi, donec videas Papam, et Imperatorem, et illis loqueris ex parte mea verba, quae tibi dicturus sum. . .', 'Christ spoke to his Bride residing in the monastery of Alvastra, saying "Go to Rome and remain there until you see the Pope and the Emperor, and speak to them of my words which I will say to you."'

⁵⁶ASS Oct 4:428B.

⁵⁷ASS Oct 4:420A,B; Jørgensen 1:255, 2:74.

⁵⁸Jørgensen 2:4. Christ appearing to Bride used the image of the Mediterranean vineyard for the Rule; he used that of the northern ploughman for the plague.

⁵⁹Jørgensen 2:5; ASS Oct 4:397D; Alphonse de Jaén, *Revelaciones Extravagantes*, ed. Lennart Hollman (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1956), 'Arabo terram istam in iudicio et tribulatione, donec inhabitantes addiscant petere misericordiam Dei', 'I will plough this land in judgement and punishment, so that the inhabitants will be brought to seek God's mercy'.

⁶⁰Jørgensen 2:6.

⁶¹Jørgensen 2:311. I visited the cloister at Altomünster, which is unchanged from the fifteenth century, its later 1773 church being carefully fitted out according to Brigittine requirements except that it is not 'humble, simple, strong'. The Lady Prioress handed me the staff and bowl through the grille, and many manuscripts, then invited me inside.

⁶²ASS Oct 4:398A.

⁶³She was accompanied by the two Peter Olavis, 'ad Romam peregrinando devenit . . . habens semper secum . . . duos seniores antiquos et maturos, virtuosos et expertos patres spirituales qui usque ad mortem ei secuti sunt', 'She came to Rome on pilgrimage, having always with her two older, mature, virtuous and skilled spiritual fathers who remained with her until her death', Jørgensen, II. 311.

⁶⁴ASS Oct 4:443E, 'praeparabat se quotidie in eadem camera ad scribendum cum pugillari et carta et penna in manibus', 'every day she was ready in her chamber with mallets and paper and pen in hand'.

⁶⁵Jørgensen 1:22. Earlier, Christ had told Bride to go to Rome where the streets are gold and 'rubricated' with the blood of the saints, ASS Oct 4:423A.

⁶⁶*Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola*, trans. Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁶⁷Jørgensen 2:102; Petrarch, *The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo*, ed. Mario Emilio Cosenza and Ronald G. Musto (New York: Italica, 1986).

⁶⁸Leviticus 25. 8-7.

⁶⁹ASS Oct 4:428B.

⁷⁰ASS Oct 4:435E,F, 437F; *SRSMA*, 202.

- 71 Jørgensen 2:36-37; ASS Oct 4:426A, on Bride's veneration of St. Ambrose's Milan relics.
- 72 Jørgensen 2:43; ed. Roger Ellis, pp. 355-356.
- 73 ASS Oct 4:427F, citing Matteo Villani, *Cronica*, 3:42-43.
- 74 Christ had told her, '*Vade, quia camera pro te parata est*', 'Go, to where there is a chamber prepared for you'. ASS Oct 4:432E; SRSMA, 228.
- 75 ASS Oct 4:432D,E.
- 76 ASS Oct 4:424C; SRSMA, 248.
- 77 ASS Mar 3:507D,E.
- 78 ASS Mar 3:508C.
- 79 ASS Mar 3:509B,C,D; SRSMA, 250-252; Jørgensen 2:70-77. Margaret Clausdotter, later the Abbess of Vadstena, was to say that she never heard Catherine say a cross word: ASS Mar 3:512D.
- 80 Voragine, *Golden Legend*, pp. 689-695; *Christine of Markyate*, ed. C.H. Talbot (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959); Chaucer, Second Nun's Tale.
- 81 Jørgensen 2:74-75.
- 82 Jørgensen 2:85; 'Liber de Miraculis Beate Brigide de Suecia', Codex S. Laurentii de Panisperna in Roma, 1374, fols. 20-21, and passim.
- 83 ASS Mar 3:512A; ASS Oct 4:437 C,D; SRSMA, 253; Jørgensen 2:103.
- 84 Jørgensen 2:210.
- 85 Jørgensen 2:104.
- 86 Codex Saint Lawrence in Panisperna, fol. 15^v. The Cardinal was Hugues Roger, Pope Clement VI's brother: A.J. Collins, *The Brigittine Breviary of Syon Abbey* (Worcester: Stanbrook Abbey Press, 1969), p. xvii.
- 87 Her title, *princessa Nericie*, of Nericia or Närke, came from her husband's as *legifer Nericie*. Her brother Israel was almost King of Sweden.
- 88 Jørgensen 2:105.
- 89 Jørgensen 2:106.
- 90 p. 000.
- 91 Jørgensen 2:72-73, 113. Emperor Charles of Bohemia was scholarly and liberal, protecting Jews in his kingdom from the virulent anti-semitism that flourished during the Black Death. His daughter, Anne, Richard II's queen, similarly protected the learned reformist Wyclif and his followers.
- 92 Jørgensen 2:119-120; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Magl. II.II.90, fol. 47. Boccaccio had dedicated *De mulieribus claris*, 'On Famous Women', to Andrea Acciaiuolo, Isak Collijn, *Birgittinska Gestalt: Forskeninger i italienska arkiv och bibliotek* (Stockholm: Gillet, 1929), p. 6. Bride healed an Acciaiuolo child named Esau, ASS Oct 4:514F-515A.
- 93 ASS Oct 4:447D. The account notes that the lake beside the convent is so clear that a coin thrown into it can be easily seen.
- 94 Jørgensen 2:208; relevant passage from *Rev. Extravag.* 44, giving Christ's words, endorsed by the Virgin, God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, is chiseled in Swedish upon the wall of Vadstena's Blue Church; Francis, likewise, believed the indulgence was given to him by Christ rather than by the Pope.
- 95 Popes Gregory XI, 1377, Urban VI, 1379, both upheld the decision not to grant the indulgence; Bride had requested the indulgence granted to Francis' church of the Portiuncula; after her death, in 1391, the indulgence, same as that for the Chains of Peter in Rome, was granted to Vadstena: ASS Oct 4:445E,F, 446A-447A; England's Brigittine Syon Abbey had the same indulgence, called the Pardon of Syon.
- 96 ASS Oct 4:445B; SRSMA, 223; Jørgensen 2:211.
- 97 Celsius, pp. 131-132; Jørgensen 2:217.
- 98 Jørgensen 2:159.

⁹⁹Jørgensen 2:171,322-323, '*Una corona di spine in testa la teneva, con una mano il libro leggeva . . . prima di morire, Santa Brigida ci viene a visitare*', 'A crown of thorns she wears on her head, in her hand the book she reads . . . before dying, St. Birgitta will come to visit us'.

¹⁰⁰Colledge, 'Epistola Solitarii', pp. 19-49; Arne Jönsson, *Alfonso of Jaén: His Life and Works with Critical Editions of the Epistola Solitarii, the Informaciones and the Epistola Servi Christi* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1989). Philip II's Escorial belonged to Hieronymite Order: Jørgensen 2:218; owning Hieronymus (or Jerome) Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Likewise, Sor Juana de la Cruz, Mexico City, was also of this now extinct Order.

¹⁰¹Celsius, pp. 132.

¹⁰²Augustine, Letter 211, *Letters*, trans. Sr. Wilfrid Parsons (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1956), vol. 32. The Dominicans, unlike the Franciscans, not being allowed a Rule of their own, observe the Augustinian one.

¹⁰³Jørgensen 2:221-222.

¹⁰⁴ASS Oct 4:438A.

¹⁰⁵The *Processus, SRSMA*, 227, describes Joan as weeping copiously, Bride as immobile, a column of patience, at his death. See also ASS Oct 4:449F, 454C. On her return Bride gave Joan a little gold cross which Joan later used to heal a child, writing to Catherine of that miracle, Jørgensen 2.234.

¹⁰⁶Jørgensen 2:270-273.

¹⁰⁷Aron Andersson, *St. Birgitta and the Holy Land* (Stockholm: Museum of National Antiquities, 1973), trans. Laurie Setterwall, pp. 20-87; Sabino de Sandoli, *Viaggio di Santa Brigida de Svezia da Roma a Gerusalemme, 1372* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1991), p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ASS Oct 4:449C.

¹⁰⁹Jerome's and Paula's Letters, *Epistolae*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1854), 22; *The Letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella about the Holy Places (365 A.D.)*, trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1896); *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. F.A. Wright (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963) Loeb Classical Library, 262. Because Alfonso de Jaén's brother Peter founded the Order of Hieronymites (hermit followers of Jerome), there are strong associations with Paula and Jerome in Brigittine writings, as in Lambeth Palace MS 432. The Hieronymite Hermits of Fiesole commissioned Francesco Botticini, circa 1446, to paint Saints Eusebius, Damasus, Jerome, Paula and Eustochium, the latter two being modelled on Birgitta and Catherine of Sweden, a painting now in the London National Gallery.

¹¹⁰Jørgensen 2:249-250.

¹¹¹Biblioteca Nazionale, Magl. II.I.249, fols. ccx-ccxi^v, II.X.57, fols. 55-64; Biblioteca Riccardiana 1258, fols. 53^v-58, 1731, fols. 145^v-154^v, etc.

¹¹²See Middle English *Pearl*.

¹¹³Jørgensen 2:332; Meiss, *Painting in Florence*, pp. 106, 150.

¹¹⁴Portraits of King Canute of Denmark and King Olav of Norway, both pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, were painted on two columns in the Bethlehem Basilica with the attributes, 'SCS CHNVTUS REX DANORUM; SCS OLAVUS REX NORWAGIE', Jørgensen 2:258,331; de Sandoli, between pp. 60-65.

¹¹⁵Jørgensen 2:278.

¹¹⁶ASS Oct 4:453B.

¹¹⁷He figures in Chaucer's Monk's Tale and in the Santa Maria Novella, Spanish Chapel, *Via Veritatis*, fresco as the dark ruler, second to the left of the Emperor, to whose left are the figures of Queen Joan of Naples, Catherine and Birgitta of Sweden, and Lapa Acciaiuoli.

¹¹⁸ASS Oct 4:436B, 452A,B.

¹¹⁹Jørgensen 2:284.

¹²⁰Jørgensen 2:287, who says she was Turkish; Albert Ryle Kezel, *Birgitta of Sweden: Life and Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 246, says she was Black and from India.

¹²¹As Francesca di Panisperna she would be a witness at the process: Codex Saint Lawrence in Panisperna, fol. 23^v, Vatican MS Ottob. lat. 90, fol. 1^v; Jørgensen 2:303. The iron grill of this story can still be seen in the church of Saint Lawrence in Panisperna in Rome: Isak Collijn, Plate V. The healing from a stomach disorder mirror reverses Bride's terminal illness from a stomach disorder.

¹²²*The Myroure of oure Ladye*, ed. John Henry Blunt, EETS, ES 19 (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1981), pp. lviii-lviii, gives these last three stories from the 1516 Pynson *Life of St. Bridget*; trans. Julia Bolton Holloway, *The Life of Saint Birgitta* (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing Co., 1991), pp. 30-31.

¹²³ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie prima, CCCLII. e. 4, 352; Vatican MS Ottob. lat. 90, fol. 99.

¹²⁴Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Desclée, 1973) 9:179, 'De Probatione Spiritum'.

¹²⁵Bridget Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999).

¹²⁶Bygdén et al., *Les reliques de sainte Brigitte de Suède, passim*.

¹²⁷Giovanni Lami, *Sanctae Ecclesiae Monumenta* (Florence: Angelo Salutati, 1758) 1:204-205. The original letter was found in the late Renaissance and carefully transcribed, then sealed and placed in the library's reliquary, marked with a cross of gold, then lost.

¹²⁸Lami 2:1381; Domenico Moreni, *Notizie Storiche dei Contorni di Firenze* 5 (Florence, 1794):127-168; ASF, Carte Stroziane; *Il Paradiso degli Alberti*, ed. Alessandro Wesselofsky (Bologna: Romagnoli, 1867), Scelta di Curiosità Letterarie Inedite o Rare dal Secolo XIII al XVII, 86, 2:195-6.

¹²⁹ASF Monastero di Santa Brigida detto del Paradiso, 322. One is 'Camilla Alberti, figlia illegitt^a'. We see portraits of these nuns in the illuminated leaf now in America and exhibited at the Pierpont Morgan, 1991. My thanks to Christopher de Hamel for this information.

¹³⁰ASS April II, 'De Beata Clara Gambacorta ordinis S. Dominicis Pisis in Hetruria,' 519, noting that, through the influence of Alfonso of Jaén and the Hermits of St. Jerome in Fiesole, she imitated St. Bride; Ann M. Roberts, 'Chiara Gambacorta of Pisa as Patroness of the Arts', *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. E. Ann Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 120-154.

¹³¹ASS Mar 3:503-531.

¹³²ASS Oct 4:430C

¹³³Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, MS G. XI. 20, on Bride, written out the year of her death, perhaps under Alfonso of Jaén, could have been known to Catherine of Siena; MS I.V.25/26 is Christopher Di Ganno's rendition of Birgitta's texts.

¹³⁴Tore Nyberg, 'Klaster Brygidek w Gdansk u jego najwczesniejsze kontakty z krajami skandynawskimi na przełomie XIV i XV wieku', *Zapiski Historyczne* 20 (1962), 53-77.

¹³⁵Document in ASF, Archivio diplomatico di S. Bonifazio, May 14, 1425, is request from Catherine, Duchess of Bavaria (sister-in-law of Philippa who aided founding of Syon), that three or two members of Paradiso be sent to instruct youth of new monastery of Gnadenberg, near Nuremberg.

¹³⁶Tore Nyberg, *Birgittinische Klostergründungen des Mittelalters* (Leiden: Gleerup, 1965); *SRSMA*, 297-298; Uppsala University Library, MS C77, fols. 161-199; MS C153, fols. 123^v-125^v. There were about twelve Brigittine convents in Poland.

¹³⁷Syon Abbey MS 7, fol. 52^v, gives '1587 Angelopoli in Provincia Mexicana'. My colleague, Professor John Hoag, showed me a slide of a fine portrait of a Mexican Brigittine nun.

¹³⁸ASS Oct 4:467D.



Filius tu loquit. Audite omnes inimici mei in mltis videtes. qd ad amicos meos nō loquor
 Audite oēs dērici. Archiepi. Epi. et oēs inferioris p̄dus ecd̄e. Audite oēs religiosi cuiuscūq;
 qd ordinis d̄tis. Audite reges et p̄ncipes et iudices tre et oēs tenientes. Audite mulieres. re-
 gle. et p̄ncipisse. ac oēs d̄ric et anall. et oēs cuiuscūq; condūdit et gradus d̄tis. magni et parui
 qd h̄itaris orbē. v̄ba hec qd ego ip̄e qd creauit vos. nūc loquor ad vos. Ego cōquorū qd recessis-
 sis me. et tradidit dyabolo. voluntate. et obtinuit suggestōibz. et. Verūm qd ego sanguis meos re-
 tēi vos. et nichil d̄ro nisi aias v̄as. Itro redit ad me et h̄ilitate. et vt filios sukplā vos.



The Book of Saint Bride

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells Saint Bride why he chooses her to be his spouse, and how as a bride she ought to array herself and be ready for him. [Book I, Chapter 2]



'I am the Creator of Heaven and earth and sea and of all the things that are in them. I am one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, not as gods of stone or gold, as was sometimes proclaimed, nor as many gods, as used to be the custom; but one God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one in substance, Creator of all things and made of none, unchangeable and almighty, enduring without beginning and without end.¹ I am he who was born of

the Virgin, not leaving the Godhead but knitting it to the manhood, so that I should be in one person the very Son of God and the Son of the Virgin. I am he who hung upon the cross and died and was buried, the Godhead remaining unhurt. For though the manhood and body which I, the Son, alone took upon myself, was dead, yet in the Godhead, in which I was one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, I lived eternally. I am also the same who rose from death and ascended into heaven who now speaks with you through my Spirit. I have chosen and taken you to myself to be my bride to reveal to you my secret counsels, for this so pleases me. And also you are mine by all manner of right, when in the death of your husband you gave your will into my hands, and also after his death, when you thought and prayed how you might become poor for me and for me abandon all things.² And therefore by right you are mine and for so much charity it is right for me to prepare for you; therefore I take you

¹See p. 9 on Magister Mathias' translation of Genesis into Swedish.

²See Edward Cutts, 'Consecrated Widows of the Middle Ages', *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages* (London: Vertue, 1902), pp. 152-156; Elizabeth M. Makowski, 'Canon Law and Medieval Conjugal Rights', *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977): 99-114.

as my Bride and for my own proper delight, such as seems good to have with a chaste soul.³

'To the Bride therefore it is right to be ready when her husband will make his wedding, that she be beautifully arrayed and clean. Then are you well cleansed, if your thought is always about your sins; how I cleansed you from the sin of Adam in your baptism and how often I have permitted you and supported you when you have fallen into sin. The Bride also ought to have tokens of her husband on her breast;⁴ that is, to take heed of the benefits and works which I have done for you; that is to say, how nobly I made you, giving you a body and a soul, and how nobly I have endowed you, giving you health and temporal goods, and how sweetly I redeemed you when I died for you and restored you to your heritage, if you would have it. The Bride ought also to do the will of her husband. What is my will, but that you will love me above all things and to desire no other thing but me? I have made all things for man, and all of them subject to him; but he loves all things except me, and truly hates nothing but me. I redeemed for him his heritage which he had lost. But he is so alienated and turned away from reason that he prefers this transitory praise that is but like sea spume, which suddenly rises up like a mountain and as soon falls down to nothing, than everlasting worship in which there is endless good.

'But you, my Bride, if you desire nothing but me, if you despise all things for me, not only your children and kindred, but also respect and riches, I shall give you the most precious and sweetest reward, not gold and silver, but myself, to be your husband and endless reward, who am the king of bliss. And if you are ashamed of being poor and despised, see that I, your God, go before you, whom servants and friends abandoned on earth; for I looked not for earthly friends, but heavenly ones. And if you fear and dread the burden of labour and sickness, consider how grievous it is to burn in the fire which you would have deserved, if you had offended a temporal lord as you have offended me. For though I love you with all my heart, yet I shall not go against justice in the least point, but according to how you have transgressed in all your members unless in all that you have performed satisfaction. Nevertheless, if you have a good will and purpose to amend, I change justice into mercy, forgiving grievous torments for a little amending. Therefore, take

³Bridget is influenced by Bernard on the Song of Songs from her residence at Cistercian Alvastra, as well as Apocalypse's Bride of the Lamb. The topos, or convention, was used, for instance, in writings to anchoresses; Elizabeth Robertson, 'An Anchorhold of Her Own: Female Anchoritic Literature in Thirteenth-Century England', *Equally in God's Image*, pp. 170-183. See *Ordo* for Consecration of Nuns, derived in turn from Roman marriage rites.

⁴Compare with Mechthild von Magdebourg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* II.4, on the Golden Penny of the Mass offering with the Deposition of the Cross on one side, the whole Court of Heaven on the other.

upon yourself gladly a little labour, so that you may the sooner be made clean and come to a great reward. For it is right for the Bride to work with her husband until she is weary, so that she afterwards may more surely and trustingly take her rest with him'.

Our Lord Jesus Christ stirs Saint Bride not to be afraid of his speaking with her, teaching her the difference between the good Spirit and the evil one. [I.4]

'I am Creator of all things and Redeemer: why do you dread my words and why did you think of what Spirit they were, whether of the good or the evil? Tell me what you found in my words that your own conscience told you not to do? Or ordered you anything against reason?'

The spouse, Saint Bride, answered: 'Nothing, Lord, but all that you said is true and I erred sinfully'.

Then said our Lord: 'I told you of three things by which you may know a good Spirit. First, I told you to worship your God who made you and gave you all that you have, and this your own reason teaches you, to worship him above all things. Second, I told you to keep and hold the right faith; that is, to believe that nothing is done nor may be done without God. The third, I told you to love all things with reasonable temperance and continence; for the world is made for man and he should use it according to his need.

'So also are there three things contrary to these. You may know the unclean spirit because he stirs you to seek your own worship and praise and to be proud of the gifts that God gave you; and he stirs you to intemperance in all your members and of all other things, and to these he inflames your heart. He deceives also sometimes under the appearance of what is good; and therefore I have asked you to examine your conscience and open it to spiritual wise men. Therefore do not doubt that the good Spirit of God is then with you when you desire nothing but God, and of him you are all inflamed. For that I alone may do and it is impossible for the fiend to come near to you.⁵ Nor may he come near to any evil man, unless he is permitted by me, other than because of his sins or for some secret judgment known to me. For the fiend is my creature⁶ as are all other things; and of me he was well made, but by his own malice he is evil, and therefore I am Lord over him. And therefore they who say that they who serve me with great devotion go mad or have a fiend in them, they blame me incorrectly. For they make me as though like a man who had a chaste wife who trusted her husband greatly, and he put her to an adulterer. Such a one

⁵Compare with Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, Short Text, Amherst Manuscript (dated in manuscript, 1413), conclusion, and her discussion with Margery Kempe, reported in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and which occurred at the same date.

⁶That is, a thing created by God. See Job and Julian, *Showing of Love*.

should I be, if I suffered a rightful man who had a loving heart towards me to be taken to the fiend. But because I am trusty and true, the fiend shall never have lordship over any soul which devoutly serves me. For though my friends seem sometimes as if mad, yet that is not for passion of the fiend, nor because they serve with fervent devotion, but for default of their brain or for some other privy cause which is to them the cause of more humility. It may also be sometimes that the fiend takes power from me upon the bodies of good men to the increase of their reward, and upon him who darkens his conscience; but in the souls of those who have faith and delight in me he may never have lordship or power’.

Here our Lord Jesus Christ informs Saint Bride how the world stands in relation to him in all states and degrees under the likeness of five men, where comfort and help is promised to the good and hard sentence is given against evil. [I.41. The body of the chapter is omitted here. It describes Christ speaking as Judge within a law court, after commencing with the following address:]

‘I am Creator of all things. I am born of the Father before Lucifer. And I am inseparable in the Father and the Father in me, and one Spirit in both. Therefore there is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and not three gods. I am he who promised to Abraham an endless inheritance, and who through Moses brought my people out of Egypt. I am also the same who spoke through the Prophets. The Father sent me into the Virgin’s womb, not separating himself from me, but abiding inseparably with me, that man who was gone from God should by my charity turn again to God.

‘But now before you, my heavenly law court,⁷ though you see and know all things in me, yet for knowledge and instruction of this my Bride, who is present and may not perceive spiritual things, I make a complaint against these five men who stand before me, that they offend me in many ways.⁸

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells Saint Bride of the harsh sentence of judgment that he will do against all mankind if they do not amend themselves. [IV.37]

The Son of God asks of Saint Bride and says: ‘Daughter, how stands the world now?’

She answered: ‘It stands as an open sack to whom all run, and as a man running who does not heed what will happen’.⁹

⁷Latin text has *exercitu*, army.

⁸Bridget’s ‘theater of devotion’ (Gail McMurray Gibson’s term), is also that of the law courts, from her father’s profession as *legifer*, Lawman, as well as being religious and liturgical.

⁹Latin has, punningly. ‘*sicut homo curens, non curans, quid sequitur*’, Jørgensen 1:369.

Then said our Lord: 'Therefore it is just that I go with my plough upon all the earth and world, both heathen and Christian.¹⁰ I shall neither spare the old nor the young, neither the poor nor the rich. But each shall be judged according to justice and each shall die in his sin; and their houses shall be left without inhabitants; and yet I shall not make an end of the world'.

Saint Bride said: 'O Lord, do not be displeased though I speak. Send some of your friends to warn them and admonish them beforehand of their peril'.

Our Lord answered: 'It is written that the rich man in Hell, despairing of his own health, asked that one might be sent to warn his brothers so that they would not perish in the same way. And it was answered to him, "That shall not be, for they have Moses and the Prophets, by whom they may be taught". So I say to you: They have the Gospel and sayings of Prophets; they have parables and the writings of the Church Fathers; they have reason and understanding. If they use these they shall be saved. For if I send you, you may not cry loud enough to be heard; and if I send my friends, they are but few; and if they cry, it is not enough for them to be heard. Nevertheless I shall send my friends to those as I approve and they shall prepare a way to God'.¹¹

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches Saint Bride the difference between good death and evil death, and how God's servants ought not to despair though they are in this life. [IV.40]

The Son of God speaks to Saint Bride thus: 'Daughter, do not be afraid; this woman who is sick shall not die, for her work pleases me'. And when the woman was dead, the Son of God said again to Saint Bride: 'So, daughter, it is true what I said, this woman is not dead, for her bliss is great. For the separation of body and soul of just men is only a sleep, for they awake in endless life. But it is truly to be called death when the soul, separated from the body, lives in death everlasting. There are many who take no heed of things to come, desiring to die in Christian death. But what is Christian death, but to die as I died, innocently, willingly and patiently? Am I therefore to be despised, because my death was despicable and harsh? Or are my chosen therefore fools, because they suffered despicable torments? Or does it come because of Fortune, or was it wrought by the course of planets and of stars? No, but therefore I and my chosen suffered great passion to show in word and by

¹⁰Two years following this prophecy Bride made to her King Magnus, the Black Death hit Sweden. She was then traveling as a pilgrim to Rome. Magnus ordered his kingdom to carry out penance, giving their wealth to the poor. There may be a connection between this prophecy and the later use of the theme of the Ploughman by William Langland, *Piers Ploughman*; Johannes von Tepl, *Der Ackerman* (in which the Ploughman, Death and God dialogue), ed. Willy Krogmann (Wiesbaden: F.A. Brockhaus, 1964); Holbein's engraving of *Death and the Ploughman*.

¹¹Luke 16.19-31.

example that the way to Heaven is hard, and that it should be intensely borne in mind how much need the wicked have to be cleansed since the innocent and chosen suffered such poignant things. Therefore you are well aware that he dies despicably and evilly who, living dissolutely, dies in the state of sin, and likewise he who goes out into the world desiring to live longer and not thanking God; but he who loves God with all his heart and is troubled innocently with despicable death or weighed down with longer sickness, he lives and dies blessedly. For a poignant death lessens sin and the punishment for sin, and increases the reward in Heaven.

'So, I bring two men to your mind who after men's judgment died in bitter and contemptible death, who, unless they had obtained such deaths by my great mercy, should never have been saved. But because God does not punish twice those who are contrite in heart, therefore they gained the crown of endless reward. Therefore the friends of God¹² ought not to despair, though they have their temporal tribulation or though they die a bitter death. For it is most blessed to sorrow here for a time and to be troubled in this world, that they do not come to more grievous Purgatory, where there is no fleeing nor time of labouring'.

Of the tribulation and sorrow that our Lady suffered and of the fruit of our Lord's words. And of three houses that Christ and man's soul ought to have together. [II.24]

Our blessed Lady speaks to Saint Bride and says: 'It is as if there were a great host of men, and one, who had a great and heavy burden on his back and in his arms and his eyes full of tears, went up to them, and looked to see if any of them would have pity on him and help him with his burden; just so was I; for from the birth of my Son to his death I was full of tribulation. I bore a very great burden on my back, for I heeded continually the labour of God's service, and I suffered patiently all that ever came to me. In my arms I bore the most heavy burden, for I suffered tribulation and sorrow of heart more than did any other creature. I had my eyes full of tears when I beheld in the members of my Son the place of the nails, and his Passion that was to come, and when I saw fulfilled in him all that I had heard before prophesied by the Prophets. But now I look to all who are in the world, that I might find any who had pity and compassion on me and would think on my sorrow. And I found only a few who think on my sorrow and tribulation. Therefore, my daughter, if I am forgotten and counted little, yet do not you forget me, but see my sorrow and follow it as much as you may. Behold my sorrow and tears and be sorry; for

¹²A term frequently used in Bride's writings, and which was taken by the medieval group of contemplatives, the Friends of God, in Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium.

the friends of God are but few. And now stand firmly, for, see, my Son comes to you'.

[The rest of this chapter and some of the next is omitted here. They discuss the relationship of the Christian spouse in terms of allegorical house-keeping, a metaphor appropriate to Bride as the noblewoman in charge of large households.]

Mark how in the first house ought to be bread of goodwill, drink of goodly premeditation, and food of goodly wisdom. [II.25]

'I who speak with you am the Creator of all things and made of none. Before me there was nothing, nor after me may anything be; for I was and am always. I am also the Lord whose power none may withstand, and from whom comes all power and lordship. I speak to you as a man speaks to his wife. My wife, we must have three houses. In one must be bread and drink and food. But you may ask what this bread signifies, whether I mean the bread that is on the altar. Truly that is bread before the words, "*Hoc est enim corpus meum*", are said.¹³ But the words said by the priest, 'It is not bread but my blessed body that I took of the Virgin and was crucified on the cross,' this bread I do not mean here; but the bread that we must gather into one house is a good and clean will. Bodily bread, if it be clean and pure, is useful for two things. First, it comforts and gives strength to all the veins and sinews of the body. Second, it gathers to it all inward filth, and with it is purged from men, and so men are cleansed. It is the same with a clean will. First, it comforts; for if a man wills nothing but what God wills, nor works nothing but to God's worship, and desires with all his heart to be out of the world and to be with God, this will comforts a man in God and increases the worship of God and makes the world vile and foul. It strengthens patience and makes strong the hope of obtaining bliss, so much that he takes and suffers gladly all that falls to him. Second, a good will draws out all filth that harms the soul, such as pride, covetousness, and lechery. But when the filth of pride or of any other sin comes to mind, than it goes away if the man thinks thus: "Pride is vanity, for it is not correct for him to be praised who takes gifts; but the giver is to be praised. Covetousness is vanity, for all earthly things shall be left, and lechery is but stink. Therefore I do not want these; but I will follow the will of my God, whose reward shall never have end, nor his goods become old".

Mark how Saint Lawrence followed the patience and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in life and death.¹⁴ And how in the second house must

¹³See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 113-149.

¹⁴St. Bride in Rome was associated with several churches dedicated to St. Lawrence, Saint Lawrence in Panisperna, Saint Lawrence in Damaso, Saint Lawrence Outside the Walls. See Voragine, *Golden Legend*, August 10, pp. 437-445.

be linen cloth of peace and patience, and woolen cloth of deeds of mercy, and silken, of abstinence from evil.¹⁵ [II.26. The body of this chapter is omitted here.]

Of the instruments of the third house, that are good thoughts, virtues, manners, and true confession. And of the sparing of all three houses. [II.27. The body of this chapter is omitted here.]

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches Saint Bride how active life and contemplative ought to be kept through the example of Mary and Martha; and first, of contemplative life. [VI.65]

The Son of God says: 'Bride, there are two lives which are compared to Mary and Martha; which lives, if a man or a woman would follow he must first make clean confession of all his sins, being himself truly sorry for them, having the desire never to sin again.¹⁶ The first life, as the Lord bears witness, Mary chose; and it leads to the contemplation of heavenly things; and this is the best part and day's journey to everlasting health. Therefore every man and woman who desires to take and hold to the life of Mary, it is enough for him to have two things that are necessary to the body; that is, clothing without vanity or showing of pride, and food and drink in scarceness and not in superfluity. He must also have charity without any evil delight, and reasonable fasting after the rules of holy Church. And in his fasting he must take heed that he not become ill from unreasonable abstinence, unless by such sickness his prayers or preaching or other good deeds thereby are lessened, by which he might profit both his neighbour and himself. He must also carefully examine himself, that by his fasting he is neither made dull nor hasty to the rigor of justice or slow to the works of pity, to punish those who are rebellious, and to make unfaithful men subject to the yoke of faith, It is necessary to have bodily strength as well as spiritual. Therefore anyone who is sick or feeble, who would rather fast to my praise than eat, he shall have as great reward for his good will as does he who fasts reasonably for charity. And in the same way he who eats out of holy obedience, willing rather to fast than to eat, shall have the same reward as he who fasts.

¹⁵Ancient and medieval thought carefully differentiated between the moral meanings of linen, from vegetable matter, and wool, from animals, pilgrims first wearing wool, then changing to linen upon reaching their shrine, the first signifying mortality, the second, eternity: J. Quasten, 'The Garment of Immortality', *Miscellanea liturgica in onore di sua eminenza il cardinale Giacomo Lercaro* (Rome: Desclée, 1966-67), 1:391-401.

¹⁶The androgynous Middle English grammar of this section is powerful, where the female Mary Magdalen and Martha are to be enacted by the male, as well as female, readers of Saint Bride's text, and referred to as 'he' and 'him'. In Latin this effect does not occur, though it would have in the original Swedish. Bride visited the Sainte Baume, the region legendarily associated with Mary Magdalen, and had named one of her daughters, Martha. Mary Magdalen was considered by the medieval world to be the first monk.

'Second, Mary ought not to delight in the praise of the world nor of its prosperity; nor ought he to sorrow at its adversity, except in that he ought to delight when wicked men are made devout and that lovers of the world are made lovers of God, and when good men profit in goodness and, by labouring in the service of God, are made more devout. Of this also ought he who is Mary to sorrow; that sinners fall into worse sin, and that God is not loved by his creature, and that God's commandments are despised and not kept.

'Third, Mary ought not to be idle any more than is Martha; but after he takes his necessary sleep, he ought to rise, and with inward attentiveness of heart thank God who of his charity and love made everything from nothing; and of that same charity, taking the body of man, he made all things again; showing by his Passion and death his love for man, more than you who might not be. Mary must also thank God for all those who are saved; and for all who are in Purgatory, and for them who are in the world, praying God humbly that he suffered them not to be tempted beyond their strength. Mary must also be discreet in prayer, and orderly in the praising of God, for if he has the necessities of life without business, he ought to make longer prayers. And if he grows bored with praying, and temptations grow upon him, then he may labour with his hands at some honest and profitable work, either to his own profit if he have need, or else to the profit of others. And if he is weary and bored both in prayer and in labour, then he may have some honest occupation, or hear words of others' edification with all seriousness, and without dissolution and vanity, until the body and soul be made more able and quick to the service of God. If he who is Mary be such that he has not bodily sustenance but of his own labour, then he must make his prayer shorter for such needful work; and that same labour shall be profiting and increasing of prayer. If Mary can not work, or may not, then be not too ashamed or despairing about begging, but rather joyful; for then he follows me, the Son of God; for I made myself poor that man should become rich.¹⁷ And if he who is Mary be subject to obedience, he should live in obedience to his prelate, and the crown of reward shall be double the more than he was at his own liberty.

'Fourth, Mary ought not to be covetous, no more than was Martha. But he ought to be truly generous; for Martha gives temporal goods for God, so ought Mary to give spiritual goods. And therefore, if Mary has loved God entirely in his heart, he should be careful of that word that many have in their mouths, saying: "It is nothing to me, if I may help my own soul, What do I care about the works of my neighbours?" Or this: "I am good: why should I care about

¹⁷Saint Bride herself, when in Rome, during which time this portion of the *Revelations* was being written, was forced to beg for her sustenance outside the Clarissans' Saint Lawrence in Panisperna.

how other men live?" O daughter, they who say and think such words, if they see their friend troubled or dishonestly treated, they should risk their deaths to deliver their friend from tribulation. So must Mary do; he ought to sorrow that his God is offended, and that his brother, or his neighbour, is hurt; or if any fall into sin, Mary ought to labour as much as he may that he be delivered—nevertheless, with discretion. And if for that Mary is persecuted, he must seek another more secure place. For I myself who am God have said so: "*Si vos persecuti fuerint in una civitate fugite in aliam*"; that is, if they persecute you in one city, flee to another. And so did Paul, for it became necessary at one time; and therefore he was let down over the wall in a basket.¹⁸

'Therefore, that Mary be generous and merciful, five things are necessary to her: first, a house in which guests can sleep; second, clothes to clothe the naked; third, food to feed the hungry; fourth, fire to make the cold hot and warm; fifth, medicine for the sick.

'The house of Mary is his heart, whose wicked guests are all the things that come to him and trouble his heart, such as anger, despair, sloth, greed, pride, and many others, which enter in by the five senses. Therefore all these vices, when they come, ought to lie as guests who sleep at rest. For as an innkeeper receives guests both good and bad with patience, so ought Mary to suffer all things for God by the virtue of patience, and not consent to sin nor delight in it, but remove it from his heart as much as he may little by little with the help of God's grace; and if he may not remove them and put them away, let him endure them patiently against his will, as guests knowing certainly that they will reap him more rewards, and in no ways to damnation.

'Second, Mary ought to have clothes to clothe his guests, that is, humility, inward and outward, and compassion of heart for the disease of one's fellow Christian.¹⁹ And if Mary is despised by men, then he should think how I, God, was despised, taunted and suffered it patiently: how I was judged and spoke not; how I was scourged and crowned with thorns, and did not complain. Mary must also take heed that he show no tokens of wrath or impatience to them who taunt him or despise him; but he ought to bless them who persecute him, so that they who see it may bless God, whom Mary follows; and God himself shall return blessings for curses. Mary also must beware that he neither backbite nor criticize those who burden him or trouble him. For it is damnable to backbite and to hear a backbiter and to criticize his neighbour impatiently; and therefore, that Mary may have the gift of meekness perfectly, he must study to admonish and to warn them of the perils for

¹⁸2 Corinthians 11.33.

¹⁹The Middle English, in this text and in others, is one's '*eyn cristen*', one's 'even Christian', one's 'equal Christian', which has no equivalent democratic term in modern English usage.

backbiting others, exhorting them with charity by speech and example to true humility. Also the cloth of Mary ought to be compassion; for if he sees his fellow Christian sin, he ought to have compassion on him, and to pray to God to have mercy on him. And if he sees his neighbour suffer wrong or harm or be taunted, he ought to be sorry for that, and to help him with his prayers and other help and actions. Yes, against the great men of the world; for true compassion seeks not what he wants for himself, but for his fellow Christian. But if Mary is such who is not heard amongst princes and great men and leaving his cell gains nothing, then he should pray to God carefully for those who are in pain; and God, beholder of the heart, shall for the charity of him who prays turn the hearts of men to peace which are diseased. And either he shall be delivered of his tribulation, or else God shall give him patience, so that his reward in heaven shall be doubled. Therefore such a cloth of humility or of compassion ought to be in Mary's heart. For there is nothing which draws God so into a soul as humility and compassion for his fellow Christian.

'Third, Mary must have food and drink for guests. For grievous guests are lodged in Mary's heart, when the heart is ravished out of itself and desires to see delectable things in this world and to have temporal possessions; when his ear desires to hear his own praises; when the flesh seeks to delight in fleshly things; when the spirit pretends to be frail and excuses sin; when there is tardiness to do good and forgetfulness of things that are to come; when good deeds are considered to be many and the evil thought to be few and forgotten. Against such guests Mary has need of counsel, that he dissemble not nor fall asleep. Therefore Mary, heartened with faith, must rise firmly and answer thus to these guests: "I will not have any temporal things, except those which are necessary to sustain the body. I will not spend the best hour or time, except to praise God. Nor will I take heed of fair or foul, nor what is profitable or unprofitable to the flesh, nor what is savory or unsavory to the taste, except only the pleasure of God and profitable to the soul; for I do not wish to live hour by hour, except to praise God". Such a will is food to guests who may come, and such an answer quenches inordinate delights.

'Fourth, Mary must have a fire to make her guests warm, and to give them light. This fire is the heat of the Holy Spirit; for it is impossible for any man to forsake his own will or the carnal affection of his friends or the love of riches, but by the working inspiration and heat of the Holy Spirit. Neither may Mary himself, be he never so perfect, begin nor continue any good life without sweetness and information of the same Holy Spirit. Therefore, that Mary illumines and lights the guests that come first, he must think thus: "God made me for that skill that I should praise him, love him and dread him above all things; and he was born of a Virgin to teach the way to heaven, which I should follow with humility. And after, with his death, he opened heaven, that by

desiring and advancing I should haste there". Mary must also examine all his works and thoughts and desires, and how he has offended God, and how patiently God suffered man, and how in many ways God calls man to him. For such thoughts and others like them are the guests of Mary, which are all in darkness; but if they are lightened with the fire of the Holy Spirit, which fire comes to the heart when Mary thinks it is reasonable to serve God, and when he would rather suffer all pain than wittingly provoke God to anger, by whose goodness his soul is made and bought again with his blessed blood. The heart also is lit by this good fire, when reason thinks and discerns by what intent each guest, that is, each thought, comes, when the heart examines if the thought goes to everlasting joy or to transitory joy; if it leave no thought undiscussed, none unpunished, none without dread. Therefore, that this fire may be got, and kept when it is obtained, it is necessary for Mary to gather together dry wood, by which this fire is fed; that is, that he be concerned about the stirrings of the flesh, that the flesh begin not to be wanton; and that he put to all diligence, that the works of pity and devout prayer be enlarged and increased, in which the Holy Spirit delights. But above all it is to know and see that where fire is kindled in a close vessel and has no ash, the fire is soon quenched and the container becomes cold. And so is it with Mary; for if Mary desires to live only to praise God, then it is necessary for him that his mouth be opened and the fame of his charity to go out. Then is the mouth opened, when by speaking in fervent charity he gets spiritual sons for God.

'But Mary must be very careful that he open the mouth of his preaching when they who are good may be made more fervent, and they who are wicked may be amended, where righteousness may be increased and evil habits removed. For my Apostle Paul would sometimes have spoken; but he was forbidden by my Spirit, and therefore at the right time he was still, and at the convenient time he spoke; and sometimes he used soft words, and sometimes sharp; and all his words and deeds were to the praise of God and to strengthen faith. But if Mary may not preach,²⁰ and has the desire and the knowledge how to preach, he must do so as a fox that goes about seeking many places with his feet; and when he finds the best and most suitable places, there he makes a den to rest in. So Mary must with words, examples, and prayers try

²⁰Bride is remembering that Paul forbade women to preach, I Corinthians 7.3-6. Mary Magdalen preached, according to the *Golden Legend*, 'And when Mary Magdalen saw the pagans going into their temple to offer sacrifice to their gods, she arose with calm mien and prudent tongue, and began to draw them away from the worship of the idols and to preach Christ to them. And all wondered at her, not only for her beauty but for her eloquence, which eloquence was not indeed a matter of surprise on lips that had touched the Lord's feet', p. 357. Bride is also playing positively with the negative *topos* of the 'preaching fox'. Chaucer's Nuns' Priest's Tale uses that *topos*. Is Bride talking about herself?

the hearts of many; and when he finds hearts more able to receive the word of God, there must he stay and rest, admonishing and stirring whom he may. Mary must also work that a fitting show be given to his flame of fire: for the greater the flame is, the more people are illumined and enflamed by it. The flame has then a fitting show, where Mary neither dreads criticism nor shame, nor seeks his own praise, when he dreads neither contrarious things, nor delights in wealth and prosperity. And then it is more acceptable to God that Mary do his good deeds in the open rather than in private, to that extent that they who see them may praise and worship God.

'Also, Mary ought to give out two flames, one in private, another openly: that is, to have double humility; the first in the heart, inwardly, the other outwardly. The first is that Mary thinks himself unworthy and unprofitable in all goodness, and that he prefers not nor exalts himself in his own conceit above any person; and that he does not desire to be seen and praised, but that he flees from all pride and haughtiness, desiring God above all things and following his words. If Mary send out such a flame in his deeds, then shall his heart be lit with charity, and all contrary things that come to him shall be overcome and easily endured. The second flame must be in the open; for if true humility is in the heart, it ought to appear in clothing and to be heard in the mouth and to be fulfilled in deeds. True humility is in the clothing when Mary chooses cloth of less price, from which he may gain warmth and profit, rather than cloth of more value, of which he might be proud and show off. For cloth which is cheap and is called by men vile and abject is truly fair to God because it provokes humility.²¹ But that cloth which is bought with great price and is called fair is foul to God; for it takes away the fairness of angels, which is humility. Nevertheless, if Mary is compelled by any reasonable cause to have better clothing than he would want, be not troubled therefore; for by that shall his reward be greater.

'Also Mary ought to be meek in mouth, speaking humble words; fleeing from vain words and such as cause laughter; being careful of much speech; not using subtle nor pretty words; nor professing his own will or words before the comprehension and feeling of those who are better. And if Mary is praised for any good deed, he should not be exalted thereby with pride, but should answer thus: "*Laus sit deo qui dedit omnia*", that is, praising God who gave all goodness.²² For what am I but dust before the face of the wind; or what good comes of me, earth without water? And if he is criticized, he should not be downcast but answer thus: "It is appropriate; for I have so often offended in

²¹We recall Bride's shabby, patched mantle in which she begged at Saint Lawrence in Panisperna.

²²The end of the first part of the manuscript repeats this as, '*Assint laudes deo*', p. 90.

the sight of God and not done penance for which I should earn greater torment. Therefore pray for me that by enduring temporal reprimands, I may escape everlasting ones". If Mary is provoked by wrath to any misjudgment of his fellow Christian, he must be prudently careful of any indiscreet answer; for pride is often associated with wrath, and therefore it is wholesome advice that when wrath and pride come about, that he hold his lips tightly together until he can ask for help from God for endurance and patience; and until he may be advised what and how to answer; or until he may overcome himself. For then wrath is quenched in the heart and men may answer wisely to those who are unwise.

'You know also that the devil is greatly envious of Mary; and therefore if he may not stop him by breaking God's commandments, then he stirs him to be easily moved with great wrath, or else to the dissoluteness of vain mirth, or else to dissolute and playful words. Therefore Mary must ask for help from God that all his words and deeds may be governed by God and addressed to God. Also Mary must have meekness in his actions, that he does the right not because of earthly praise; that he attempt nothing new, that he be not ashamed of being humble; that he flee singularity in his works, that he respect all; and that in all things he consider himself unworthy. Also Mary ought rather to sit with the poor than with the rich; rather he should obey than be obeyed; rather to be silent than to speak; rather to be alone solitary than be constantly amongst the great of the world and among his worldly friends. Mary must hate his own will and think always on his death. Mary ought not to be idle, nor complain, nor be forgetful of the justice of God and of his own affections. Mary must be fervent in confession, careful concerning temptations, desiring to live for the right and for nothing else but the praise of God and that the health of souls be increased and enlarged.

'Therefore, if Mary, who is thus disposed as I have now said, be chosen by Martha, and obeying, for the love of God takes the rule of many souls, there shall be given to him a double crown of reward, as I show you in a parable. There was a certain lord of great power who had a ship filled with precious merchandise, and said to his servants: "Go to such a harbour, and you shall gain much for me, and glorious fruit. If the wind rises against you, work hard and do not become weary; for your reward shall be great". Then the servants sailed away. And the wind became strong, and tempests arose, and the ship was grievously battered. Because of this the ship's captain was exhausted and all despaired of their lives. And then they agreed to come to any harbour that the wind could blow them to, and not to the haven that the lord had assigned to them. When one of the servants who was more loyal than the others heard this, he wailed and out of fervent love and zeal that he had for his lord, he violently seized hold of the steering board of the ship and with great strength he brought

the ship to the harbour the lord desired. Therefore this man who thus manfully brought the ship to the harbour is to be rewarded with more singular rewards than any other.

'It is the same with a good priest who for love of God and salvation of souls takes charge of the steering, not paying heed to fame, for he shall be doubly rewarded: first, because he shall be partner of all the good deeds of those whom he has brought to the haven; second, because his joy and bliss shall be increased without end. And so shall it be against those who desire fame and responsibility; for they shall be partner to all the pains and sins of those that they have chosen to govern. Second, for their confusion shall be without end. For the priests who desire fame are more like whores than priests. For they deceive souls with their evil words and examples; and they are unworthy to be called either Mary or Martha, unless they make amends with penance. Fifth, Mary ought to give his guests medicine; that is, delight and comfort them with God's words. For to all things that ever happen to him, whether they be joyful or burdensome, he ought to say: "I will this; whatever God wills, I will do; and to his will I am readily obedient; though I should go to Hell". For such a will is medicine against evil things that occur to the heart, and this will is delight in tribulation and a good restraint in prosperity. But because Mary has many enemies he must therefore make his confession frequently. For as long as he remains in a state of sin and could have confessed and is negligent and takes no heed, then is he rather to be called an apostate before God than Mary'.

Of the deeds of the active life which are understood by Martha. Chapter 11. [VI.65 continued]

'You must know also that though the part of Mary is best, yet the part of Martha is not evil, but praiseworthy and very pleasing to God. Therefore I shall tell you how Martha ought to be governed. For he ought to have five good things as well as Mary. First, the right faith regarding God's Church. Second, to know the commandments of the Godhead and the counsels of the truth of the Gospel; and these he ought perfectly to keep in thought and deed. Third, he ought to keep his tongue from evil words that are against God and his neighbour, and his hand from all dishonest and unlawful actions, and his heart from too much greed and pleasure. He ought also to be content with the goods God has given him, and not to desire superfluous things. Fourth, he ought to fulfill the deeds of mercy reasonably and modestly, that in doing those deeds he offends in no way. Fifth, he ought to love God above all things and more than himself. So did Martha, for he gave joyfully of himself, following my words and deeds; and after she gave all her goods for my love. And therefore she loathed temporal things, and sought heavenly things, and suffered heavenly things patiently, and took heed and care of others as of herself. And therefore she thought always on my charity and Passion; and she

was glad in tribulation and loved all as a mother. The same Martha also followed me every day, desiring nothing but to hear words of life. She had compassion on those who were grieving; she comforted the sick; she neither cursed nor said evil to any. But she did not imitate the pushiness of her neighbour and prayed for all. Therefore every man who desires charity actively ought to follow Martha in loving his neighbour, to bring him to heaven, but not in favoring and nourishing his vices and sins. He ought also to flee his own vanity, pride and doubleness. Also he ought not to use wrath or envy.

‘But mark well that Martha, praying for her brother Lazarus when he was dead, came first to me. But her brother was not yet raised until Mary came after, when she was called. And then for both sisters their brother was raised from the dead to life.²³ So in spiritual life he who perfectly desires to be Mary must first be Martha, labouring physically to my praise. And he ought first to learn how to withstand the desires of the flesh and the temptation of the fiend and afterwards he may with deliberation ascend up the height of Mary. For he who is unproved and tempted, and he who has not overcome the lusts of his flesh, how may he continually heed and choose heavenly things? Who is the dead brother of Mary and Martha, but an unperfect work? For often a good work is done with an indiscreet intent and with an ill advised heart, and therefore it is done dully and slowly. But for the working of good deeds to be acceptable to me, it must be raised and quickened by Martha and Mary; that is, when the neighbour is clearly loved for God and to God, and God alone is desired above all things. And then every good work of man is pleasing to God. Therefore I said in the Gospel that Mary chose the better part; for then the part of Martha is also good, when he grieves for the sins of his fellow Christians; and then is the part of Martha better, when he labours that men may continue in the good life wisely and honestly, and that only for the love of God.

‘But the part of Mary is best when he beholds only heavenly things and the profit of souls. And the Lord enters into the house of Martha and Mary when the heart is fulfilled with good affections; and at peace away from the noise of worldly things; and thinking of God as always present; and not only contemplating and meditating on his love, but labouring in that day and night’.

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells Saint Bride of his blessed Incarnation; and how man offends God and breaks his baptismal promise; and of the mercy that is for them who make amends; and of the harsh judgment to them

²³John 11.1-24; see, for instance, the liturgical drama, the *Resuscitatio Lazari*, the Raising of Lazarus, from Orléans MS 201, published in Fletcher Collins, Jr., *Medieval Church Music Dramas: A Repertory of Complete Plays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976), pp. 189-239.

who do not repent; and how sweetly he calls stalwart souls to his bliss. [I.1. The body of this chapter is omitted here.]

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells Saint Bride of the sin and of the uncleanness of Christian people; and how they may have mercy if they will repent; and otherwise how hard they shall be punished. Chapter 13. [I.57. the body of this chapter is omitted here.]

Our Lord²⁴ tells Saint Bride by example that nothing pleases God so much as that he be loved above all things. [VI.50]

The Mother of God speaks to the spouse of Christ, Saint Bride, and says: 'Nothing pleases God so much as that man love him above all things. See, I shall tell you by the example of a heathen woman who knew nothing of the Christian faith; but she thought thus to herself: "I know", she says, "of what matter I am, and how I came to be in my mother's womb. I believe also that it is impossible for me to have a body, joints, bowels, and senses, unless someone had given these to me. And therefore there is some creator and maker who made me so fair a person of mankind, and would not make me as foul as worms and serpents. Therefore it seems to me that though I had many husbands, if they all called me, I should rather go at one call from my maker than at the calling of them all. I have also many sons and daughters, yet if I see them with food in their hands and I know that my maker was hungry, truly I would take away the food from my children's hands and gladly give it to my maker. I have also many possessions which I dispose of at my own will. Yet if I knew the will of my maker, I would most desire to leave my own will and dispose of them according to his praise".

'But see, daughter, what God did with this heathen woman. Truly, he sent his friend to her, who informed her in the holy faith. And God himself visited her heart, and you may well understand by the woman's words, for when that man of God preached to her that there was one God without beginning and end who is the Creator of all things, she answered: "It is well to be believed, that he who made me and all things has no maker above him. And it is likely true that his life is everlasting who could give me life".

'When this woman heard that the same Creator took mankind of a Virgin and preached with his own mouth, she answered: "It is well to believe all virtuous works are of God. But, Friend of God,²⁵ tell me what are the words

²⁴Error for 'Our Lady'.

²⁵This term, 'Friend of God', frequently used in Bride's writings, may refer to the Dominican circle of mystics known as the 'Friends of God'. Master Mathias may have been a part of this circle for, though an Augustinian Canon he was buried amongst Dominicans in Stockholm, and he had already studied the Hebrew Bible under the Dominican Jewish convert, Nicholas Lyra, in Paris.

