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[Birgitta of Sweden in Northern Germany: Translation, Transmission and Reception.](#)

*In: Andersen, E.A., Lähnemann, H., Simon, A, ed. A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages.*

Leiden: Brill, 2013, pp.205-230.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2011.529703>

Always use the definitive version when citing.

**Further information on publisher website:** <http://www.brill.com/>

**Date deposited:** 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**Version of chapter:** Author pre-print



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Pre-print version from:

[Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages](#), ed. by Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann and Anne Simon (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 44), Leiden 2013, pp. 215–230. ISBN 9789004257931

*With thanks to Brill for their permission to publish the pre-print version online*

## Birgitta of Sweden: Translation, Transmission and Reception in Northern Germany

Elizabeth Andersen

Birgitta of Sweden (1303–73), the most important saint of Northern Europe, exercised a profound influence on the spirituality of the late Middle Ages through the *Revelationes Sanctae Birgittae* which record her prophetic visions.<sup>1</sup> She stands first in a line of late-medieval female prophets, including her near contemporary Catherine of Siena and Joan of Arc. Within the context of this volume Birgitta is a key figure in the transmission of mystical thought. The translation and adaptation of the voluminous *Revelationes* in Northern Germany highlight the central importance of Lübeck as a hub for the dissemination of texts through the new art of printing and reveal the significance of the Hanseatic League (Hanse) as a network for cultural exchange.

This chapter has as its focus two incunables from the Lübeck printing houses, which together epitomize the transformation from the visionary to the devotional, that process which is so central to many of the contributions in this volume: the *Revelationes Sanctae Birgittae*, printed by Bartholomäus Ghotan in 1492, and the Low German *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, printed by the Mohnkopf Press in 1496. Although the interval of time between the printing of these texts is only four years, they represent very different stages in the cult of Birgitta of Sweden. The *Revelationes* is the work of Birgitta's confessors who translated the revelations she wrote and dictated into Latin. The shaping of these revelations by Alfonso of Jaén, as the chief editor, was done with the express purpose of making the case for the canonization of Birgitta, which succeeded in 1391. The *Openbaringe* is a reworking of the *Revelationes* a century later when Birgitta was a well-established saint and her daughter Katarina recently canonized (1484). This hagiographical status is reflected in the abridgement and adaptation done for the print. The manner in which the Mohnkopf adaptor translated, edited and reshaped the *Revelationes* altered the character of the work decisively, accommodating it to the tastes and sentiments of a late fifteenth-century readership. This is immediately evident in the proportions of the *Revelationes* and the *Openbaringe* which are strikingly different: where the *Revelationes* was large folio in format and consisted of 422 leaves, double column, with 46 lines to the page, the *Openbaringe* was quarto in format and had 204 leaves, with 29 lines to the page.

In what follows, the focus will be on the principles which informed the Mohnkopf adaptor's reworking and reshaping of the *Revelationes* and for whom this work was intended. One of the structural principles in the recasting and supplementing of the material was the development of a saint's life. The following thumbnail sketch of the life of Birgitta highlights those elements which resonated with the dominant mood of devotion in the late fifteenth century.

In the *Revelationes* Birgitta emerges as a charismatic and political visionary whose contemplative mysticism was interwoven with social engagement and a commitment to the salvation of the world. This was by no means clear from the outset; it is fitting that she (together with Dorothea of Montau, →Suerbaum) was made the patron saint of widows since it is only after the death of her husband Ulf Gudmarsson in c. 1345 and after she had four sons and four daughters that she moves into the limelight. Before Birgitta received her "calling vision" in which she was directed to be-

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden* (1999); Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy* (2001).

come the *sponsa et canale*, the bride of and channel for Christ, only a few biographical facts are recorded; it can be inferred that she came from a socially privileged and well-connected family since her mother's family was related to the royal Folkung dynasty. The starting point for both her fame and her regular visions is the year 1349 when she was directed by Christ to go to Rome. Accompanied by three of her children, Karl, Birger and Katarina, she spent the rest of her life in Rome, making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land while she was there. She emerges as a new type of saint and a controversial figure who, on the authority of the revelations she received, sought to reform the dissolute court of Stockholm, castigated knights, priests and bishops for their actions, sought to persuade three popes, Clement VI, Urban V and Gregory XI, to restore the papacy to Rome from Avignon and gave advice concerning a peaceful solution to the Hundred Years War between England and France.

Work on the application for Birgitta to be considered for canonization began in the year following her death in 1373. The canonization process, begun in 1379 under Pope Urban VI, was completed with spectacular speed in twelve years in 1391 under Pope Boniface IX, just 18 years after Birgitta's death. The swiftness of the process was in no small part due to the politics of the contemporary papacy.<sup>2</sup>

### From the *Revelationes Sanctae Birgittae* to the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*

The transformation of a personal religious vocation to a model of European relevance was initiated and supported in Sweden by three confessors: Master Mathias Ovidi, canon of Linköping, Prior Petrus Olavi of the Cistercian Abbey of Alvastra and Master Petrus Olavi of Skänninge who translated Birgitta's revelations from Swedish into Latin. Her fourth confessor, Alfonso Pecha, a former bishop of Jaén, whom Birgitta met in Rome in 1367, then edited and shaped the revelations.<sup>3</sup> The Birgittine corpus follows symbolic structures with twelve books in total, of which seven form the 'heavenly book' (*Liber caelestis*) together with book VIII, the *Liber caelestis imperatoris ad reges*; the four supplementary books each address a specific audience: the *Regula Salvatoris*, *Sermo angelicus*, *Quattuor orationes* and *Revelationes extravagantes*. Alfonso ordered some seven hundred revelations into the eight books of the *Revelationes*, providing the chapters with titles. Significantly, he did not compile the *Revelationes* in chronological order. Rather, in the preparation of the revelations to support Birgitta's canonization it was important to foreground the divine inspiration and her prophetic role. Some books still have a time frame as reference, such as Book III which draws on the time she spent in Rome (1349–73). Others have a thematic focus: in Book IV the scope of the visions extends to Europe with a number targeted at high-ranking clergy and secular political leaders. All this culminates in the symbolically numbered Book VII which details the revelations Birgitta received during her stay in the Holy Land (1371–72). These revelations are those with the most enduring visual legacy since they influenced the way in which events from the life of Jesus were depicted, most notably the Birth and Crucifixion.<sup>4</sup> They alone are in more or less chronological order since they emulate the formula of the Gospels – we have here a fifth account of the life of Jesus, retold in visions.

Birgitta's visions range from private devotions to political and public messages; she meditates on the human condition, domestic affairs in Sweden and ecclesiastical matters in Rome; she expresses

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sahlin, *Voice of Prophecy*, 159–168.

<sup>3</sup> *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*. Vol. 1, *Liber Caelestis*, Books I–III, transl. Searby (2006) 11–15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aili / Svanberg, *Imagines Sanctae Birgittae: the earliest illuminated manuscripts and panel paintings related to the revelations of St Birgitta of Sweden* (2003), Vol. 1, 93–101; Vol. 2, 107–123. Cornell, *The Iconography of the Nativity of Christ* (1924), 1–45; Andersson, *Birgitta och det heliga landet* (1973), 107–113.

devotion to the Virgin Mary and praise of the Incarnation. The editorial work in the production of the *Revelationes* proved to be highly successful, as the breadth of the canvas ensured that the work had appeal for different interest groups, providing insight into matters that ranged from politics to the interpretation of biblical scenes. This concept clearly worked; after the establishment of the Birgittine Order in the 1380s, the canonization of Birgitta in 1391 and the spread of the Birgittine cult throughout Europe, interest in the *Revelationes* grew rapidly.<sup>5</sup> The Latin text circulated all over Germany. The translation of extracts from the *Revelationes* into German dates back to the late fourteenth century, although the majority are from the fifteenth century. There is widespread evidence of translation into the vernacular in Southern Germany. However, as is the general pattern for Latin and Low German (→Lähnemann, Schlotheuber), the step into the vernacular happened later in Northern Germany but then became prominent through the printed word.<sup>6</sup>

For Northern Germany, Birgitta was almost a local saint and thus it is not surprising that the *Revelationes* were taken up by the first generation of printers in the Free City of Lübeck. Following Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century, publishing houses were quickly established throughout the German-speaking world. In the North, Lübeck, the "Queen of the Hanse", that economic alliance of trading cities and their merchant guilds that dominated trade along the coast of Northern Europe, led the way with the printing of a Psalter by Lucas Brandis in 1473. Lübeck was a crucial trading and cultural link between Scandinavia and Europe. It was the Lübeck printers who introduced the new art of printing in Scandinavia.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in 1495 Bartholomäus Ghotan assisted the motherhouse of the Birgittine Order at Vadstena with the installation of their own printing press.<sup>8</sup> However, when the printing press was destroyed by fire in the same year, Lübeck resumed its role as the primary disseminator of Birgittine texts in northern Europe.

The motherhouse at Vadstena commissioned the printing of the *editio princeps* of the *Revelationes* from Ghotan's press in Lübeck in 1491. Two men, a priest, Petrus Ingemari, later Confessor General to the convent, and a lay brother, Gerhardus, a German by birth *qui novit sculperere & depingere* [who knows how to engrave and draw], went to Lübeck in September 1491 to see the edition through the presses. The entry in the *diarium vazstenese* on the printing of the *Revelationes* indicates the magnitude and importance of the commission from Ghotan: 800 paper copies of the full nine books and a further sixteen copies on vellum.

However, even before this commission extracts from the *Revelationes* had made it into print. Indeed, Birgitta had become a bestseller for the Lübeck presses. The earliest adaptation of the *Revelationes* into Low German comes from the Lübeck press of Lucas Brandis in c. 1478, extant only in fragments. Two copies survive of a work also entitled the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, printed by Ghotan's press between 1484 and 1494, that is roughly contemporaneous with the printing of the *Revelationes*. Ghotan's *Openbaringe* is a relatively short compilation of extracts, selected for devotional purposes, and combined with pseudo-Birgittine material on Christ's Passion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *The Translation of the Works of St Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernacular*, ed. Morris / O'Mara (2000).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Montag, *Das Werk der heiligen Birgitta von Schweden in oberdeutscher Überlieferung: Texte und Untersuchungen* (1968), 2–3; 197–200. As Montag, *Translation of the Works of St Birgitta*, comments (107), it is impossible to calculate how many manuscripts may have been lost during the dissolution of the monasteries in the Reformation.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Andersen, "Religious Devotion and Business: The Pre-Reformation Enterprise of the Lübeck Presses" (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden*, 169.

<sup>9</sup> For the interrelationship of these two texts with the Mohnkopf *Openbaringe* see Dinges, *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe. Neuauflage des mittelniederdeutschen Frühdruckes von 1496* (1952), XXVI–XXXVIII; Hogg, "Sunte Birgitta Openbaringe" (1990), 156–172.

The Mohnkopf *Openbaringe* is radically different from the earlier adaptations into Low German; rather than an anthology of extracts it is a carefully crafted book. Furthermore, it is a highly independent rendering of the *Revelationes*, while at the same time also a more precise translation of the Latin than the other Low German texts from the presses of Brandis and Ghotan.<sup>10</sup> By the late fifteenth century the political and ecclesiastical landscape was quite different and the contemporary concerns of Birgitta no longer relevant in detail. Thus the Mohnkopf adaptation of 1496, just four years after the *Revelationes* were printed, omits references to contemporary politics, as well as the attacks on and warnings to the Pope and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The anonymous editor also omits speculative and dogmatic discussions. Unlike for the *Revelationes* where we know the identity of the confessors who translated and edited Birgitta's revelations into Latin, the Mohnkopf adaptor leaves no trace of his identity in the *Openbaringe*. Given the significance of the Birgittine foundation at Marienwold – according to the *Openbaringe* more than six hundred miracles attributable to Birgitta were performed there – and its proximity to Lübeck, the adaptor might have been a monk from there.<sup>11</sup> Within the context of the Mohnkopf printing house, however, the anonymity is not surprising. The identity of the owner of this printing press and the authors of the some 30 texts produced there were withheld and have consequently become the source of much scholarly speculation.<sup>12</sup> What is clear from the texts themselves is the devotional programme that infuses them all and that their primary audience is lay. Where in other Lübeck printing houses output in Latin constituted between 65 and 80% of the total production, the majority of the texts printed by the Mohnkopf press between 1487 and 1527 are in Middle Low German.<sup>13</sup>

Where the *Revelationes* has eight books, the Mohnkopf *Openbaringe* has five. The adaptor has not only made a selection, he has also restructured and supplemented the material, drawing on the genre of the *legenda* to create in part a saint's life – twice, once for Birgitta and once for her daughter Katarina. The focus of the book is very clearly stated in the preface (Hogg 14,3–8; Mohnkopf, vi v):

Van welkere twen hilgen. alze van sunte Birgitten unde erer hilgen dochter Katherinen hir na in dessem boeke meyst wert gesecht. Went se sint gelik den eddelen perlen de man weinich vindet mankt velen anderen unnutzen stenen.

Of which two saints, that is of Saint Birgitta and her holy daughter Katarina, most is said in this book. For they are like the noble pearls which one finds rarely amongst many other worthless stones.

In the prologue to the *Revelationes* Master Matthias of Linköping makes an impassioned and detailed defence of the authenticity of Birgitta's revelations: *May those who read these revelations harbour no suspicions about a false inspiration...*<sup>14</sup> By comparison, the recognition of Birgitta and Katarina as saints in the preface to the *Openbaringe* indicates the shift in focus made by the adaptor. Defence and justification are redundant.

One of the key structural principles of the *Openbaringe*, unlike the *Revelationes*, is the ordering of the material chronologically. The lives of Birgitta and Katarina provide the framework for the book. Thus, book I of the *Openbaringe* is an account of Birgitta's early life up to the death of her husband. In the compilation of this book the adaptor drew not only on the so-called *Vita*

<sup>10</sup> Dinges, *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, XXIII.

<sup>11</sup> Book 3, Ch. 29, 164. Marienwold was an important physical link between Scandinavia and Germany; all those going on pilgrimage to Rome from Scandinavia would stay there. When overseeing the printing of the *Revelationes*, the two monks from Vadstena stayed at Marienwold.

<sup>12</sup> Sodmann, "Die Druckerei mit den drei Mohnköpfen" (1990), 343–348. It is now generally assumed that Hans van Ghetelen was the owner of the Mohnkopf Press. Cf. the two articles by Ralf Kötter, "Hans van Ghetelen als Drucker der Mohnkopffoffizin" (1991) and "Das Mohnkopfsiegel des Dominkaners Augustin von Getelen" (1993).

<sup>13</sup> Sodmann, "Die Druckerei mit den drei Mohnköpfen" 351.

<sup>14</sup> *The Revelations*, transl. Searby, Prologue, paragraph 6, 48.

*abbreviata* of Birgitta but also on the *Acta* of the canonization process itself, as well as the *legenda* written by Birger Gregersson, archbishop of Uppsala and a contemporary of Birgitta (d. 1383).<sup>15</sup> The account of Birgitta's biography is continued in book III where it occupies about half of the narrative. Like Book I, Book V is wholly biographical. For the life of Birgitta's daughter, Katarina, the adaptor draws on the *Vita Katherine* compiled by Ulfo Birgersson, Confessor General in Vadstena 1423–26, and first printed in 1483.<sup>16</sup>

The profile of the *Revelationes* is determined by the visionary revelations in which God the Father, Christ, the Virgin Mary, angels and saints speak to Birgitta. In the *Openbaringe* the account of the lives of Birgitta and Katarina and the miracles worked by them constitute half of the total volume of the text. The rest is made up of a selection of Birgitta's visionary experiences, fitted into the overarching chronological framework. These are distributed across Books II, III and IV. In Book II, which draws on Books I and IV of the *Revelationes*, Christ is the dominant voice. He talks about His Incarnation, about true faith. He reveals His nature, instructing Birgitta about what her role is. The dominant theme running through the book is the interrelationship of justice and compassion. The Virgin Mary's voice is heard too, as she depicts her sufferings and those of her Son on account of the contemporary sins of mankind. In Book III Birgitta's visions of the Blessed Trinity and the saints in heaven as well as the iconic visions of the Nativity and the Crucifixion are reported. In Book IV, which draws on Books II, VI and VII of the *Revelationes*, the salient themes are the Last Judgement and justice coupled with mercy.

### Abridgement and adaptation

In the course of the *Openbaringe* the adaptor is transparent about his method of working, about how he has shaped and framed his book, demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the *Revelationes*. Thus, in Book I of the *Openbaringe* he lists the number of chapters each of the nine books of the *Revelationes* contains, commenting (Hogg 18,29–32; Mohnkopf, x v):

Unde alle desse openbaringe scholde men de setten in eyn boek. dat worde eyn sere groet boek. wente de sulven openbaringe dar van synt in deme latine negen boeke.

And were one to record all these revelations in one book that would be a very large book for the same revelations make up nine books in the Latin.

In Book 2 he elaborates further on why he has abridged the *Revelationes*, giving pragmatic reasons, which give us a clue as to the status and the financial power of his intended readership (Hogg 57,26–29; Mohnkopf, xxxviii r–xxxviii v):

...wente scholde men hyr in setten alle de boeke der openbarynge. so worde dyt eyn groet boek ...unde worde vele mynschen vordretlick al ut to lesen. unde to dūr in deme kope ...

...for if one were to include all the books of the revelations it would become a very large book ... and would be too much for many people to read in full and too expensive to buy ...

Although he is writing in the vernacular for a lay audience, the adaptor nonetheless frequently gives precise references to where he has drawn his material from in the *Revelationes*. So, for example, in Book 2 he opens a chapter with a quotation in Latin from the relevant passage in the *Revelationes* Hogg, 89, ll. 6–8; Mohnkopf, lxiii r):

<sup>15</sup> *Eine niederdeutsche Birgitta-Legende aus der Mitte des XV. Jahrhunderts (Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek, Hamburg, Cod. Convent 10)*, ed. Mante (1971).

<sup>16</sup> "Venerabilis et Deo dilecta Katherine nobilis viri domini Ulphonis Gudmarson..." Expl.: "...et temetipsum libera. Obiit venerabilis domina Katherine in monasterio Wastenis...", Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina 1710. Cf. Dinges, *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, LVII–LXI. The *Vita Katherine* appears in all editions of the *Revelationes Sanctae Birgittae* from 1557 to 1680, after the *Vita abbreviata s. Birgittae*, arranged in 20 chapters as in the *Vita abbreviata s. Birgittae* of 1553.

Ego sum creator celi et terre. qui in utero virginis verus deus et verus homo fui. qui mortuus fui et resurrexi et ascendi in celum etc. li. I ca. XXXVIII

I am the Creator of heaven and earth, who was true God and true man in the Virgin's womb, who died and rose again and ascended into heaven etc. Bk. I, chap. 34

Typically, he will then translate the Latin into Low German (Hogg 89,9-11; Mohnkopf, lxiii r):

Ick byn de schepper hemmelrikes unde ertrykes de ick in deme lichamme der iunckfrowen was ware god unde ware minsche de ick starf unde stund wedder up. unde stech up in dem hemmel.

I am the Creator of heaven and earth, who was true God and true man in the Virgin's womb, who died and rose again and ascended into heaven etc.

This habit of precise referencing, unusual for non-biblical material, emphasises the authority of the *Revelationes* as a divinely inspired text. It is also both scholarly and respectful to the reader and is reminiscent of the method used for commentaries and sermons where the text is given first and is then followed by an explanation or amplification. Should they so wish, the reader can look up the relevant passage in the *Revelationes*, verify the accuracy of the translation and see how the adaptor has worked with the material. In other chapters, the adaptor makes clear how he has shortened the original, frequently instructing the reader in the devotional use of the passage. For example (Hogg 87,31-88,2; Mohnkopf, lxiii r):

In desseme sulven capittel sprickt Maria vort van vele erer bedroffenisse. wo se in deme dantze desser werlde was. dath hyr wert vorkortet. men dyt capittel is eyne mylde to reytzinge. dat lydent Cristi to bedencken. unde den wemoed Marien mede betrachten ... unde syck van den unnutzen wertliken dingen entholden.

In this same chapter Mary continues to speak of her afflictions while she was in the dance of the world; this has been shortened here but this chapter is a gentle encouragement to you to contemplate the suffering of Christ and to feel the distress of Mary ... and to refrain from worthless worldly things.

On other occasions he refers the reader to the *Revelationes*, giving a precise reference which would enable them to read further (Hogg 103,12-14; Mohnkopf, lxxiv r):

Item van desser sulven materien machstu meer lesen efte du wult hyr vor in deme ersten boeke in deme XVI. capittel. up dem blade dar alzodan tal steit XXVIII.

You may read more of this same material if you wish in the first book (of the *Revelationes*) in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter, on page 24.

On occasion he will also make cross-references both to the *Revelationes* and to his own text simultaneously. Thus in the 'korte vorrede' [short preface] to Book V, with reference to Katarina, he says (Hogg 232,27-33; Mohnkopf, clxxix r):

Dyt is ock de hylghe persone. dar hyr vor aff steyt in dem dridden boeke. up den bladen CIII unde CIIII etc. ... unde blef doch iunckfrowe alze god sulven van er sprack in deme sestem boeke der hemmelschen openbaringe. in deme CXVIII capittel. unde dat steyt hyr vor in dem dridden boeke up dem blade dar alzodanen tal steit CV...

This is that holy person who is mentioned in book 3 on pages 103 and 104 etc.... and who remained a virgin as God Himself said in the sixth book of the heavenly revelations in Chapter 118 and this is included in the third book of this work on page 105 ...

This kind of reference facilitates the use of the *Openbaringe* as a devotional book, guiding the reader through the material and suggesting where to look for further reading. The intention is enhanced by the provision of a detailed table of contents, in which the adaptor works through the main contents of the five books, facilitating the orientation of the reader by summarizing the salient features of each. In addition, Books I, II and V all open with *eyne korte vorrede* [a short preface], designed to lead the reader into the substance and nature of the book to follow.

Throughout the *Openbaringe*, the adaptor makes clear what his didactic intentions are, supporting these by drawing on the Bible, the Old Testament most frequently and in particular the Psalms, ecclesiastical writers and contemporary authors whom he refers to as *lerer* [teachers]. Thus, for example, the table of contents is followed by a preface which draws on the Bible to enhance the saintliness of Birgitta (Hogg 13,31-14,1; Mohnkopf, vi r):

Eyn gud boem drecht gerne gude vrucht. secht de here in deme hylghen ewangelio Mathei VII. desse worde moghen wol gesproken werden van der eddelen hilgen vrowen sunte Birgitten. wente se is eyn seer gud boem gewest. unde is noch in deme wingarden der hilgen kerken unde heft gode dem heren gebracht gude vrucht eres hilgen levendes. erer lere, unde erer hilgen kindere ...

A good tree readily bears good fruit, says the Lord in the holy gospel of Matthew chapter 7 (Mt 7:17). These words may be said about the noble and holy lady Saint Birgitta because she was a very good tree and is still in the vineyard of the holy church and has brought the Lord good fruit from her holy life, her teaching, and her saintly children.

The preface is followed by an exhortation to read some prayers before embarking on the book, so that the reader might be in the right frame of mind. The prayers are addressed to Mary, to Birgitta and to her daughter Katarina. In the address to Birgitta the adaptor summarizes succinctly the salient characteristics of her persona as they emerge in the course of the work (Hogg 16,17-21; Mohnkopf, vii r):

Eyne soete lerersche des weghe der salicheit. Eyne scharpe straffersche de sunde der menschen... eyne vlitige vorbiddersche der levendighen unde doden. Eyn bilde unde eyn speygel der dede syn in deme elyken echten levende unde ok in deme wedeweliken stathe.

She is a sweet teacher of the way of blessedness. A sharp scold about the sins of mankind... an assiduous petitioner for the living and the dead. An image and a mirror for those in both the state of marriage and widowhood.

After these prayers we finally arrive at the book itself. The preface to Book I tells us of the purpose of the book and how it has been derived from the *Revelationes* (Hogg 18,3-8; Mohnkopf, x r):

God to love unde to eren. unde der iunckfrouwen Marien der moder unses heren Jhesu Cristi. unde der eddelen hylghen vrouwen sunte Birgitten. unde to beteringe unses sundighen levendes so werden hyr ghesettet etlike capittele. ghenomen uth dem boeke der openbaringe sunte Birgitten dat dar heet uppe latyn Revelatio sancte Birgitte.

To the praise and honour of God and of the Virgin Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and the noble holy lady Saint Birgitta and for the improvement of our sinful life, here some chapters are recorded, taken from the book of Saint Birgitta's revelations that is called in Latin Revelatio sancte Birgitte.

Particular reference is made in this preface to Birgitta's visions of the Nativity and the Crucifixion. The centrality of these visions which had made such an impact throughout Europe, not least in visual representation,<sup>17</sup> is reflected in their positioning in the *Openbaringe*. They are narrated right in the centre of the work, in Book 3, the Crucifixion following immediately on the account of the Nativity, and both marked by a woodcut.

### The visionary in the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*

In terms of genre, the *Revelationes* is pre-eminently a visionary work. This visionary profile is modified in the *Openbaringe* where the adaptor introduces additional biographical material to create the framework of a saint's life while also developing the moral and didactic aspects of the *Revelationes*. In this way the *Openbaringe* becomes additionally a book of devotion and an instruction manual in how to lead a good Christian life. Nonetheless, the adaptor does not obscure the

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Andersen, *Das Kind sehen*, 298.

essential visionary nature of the *Revelationes*. On the contrary, he is at pains to ensure that his readers understand the nature of the visions and how they are received, suggesting that he is writing for an audience for whom a visionary culture is not wholly familiar. Thus, early on in the text, in the very first book, there is a sequence of three chapters which describe, explore and define Birgitta's visionary life, giving the reader a quick orientation in a complex subject (Hogg 34,16–41,34; Mohnkopf, xx v–xxvi r).

In Book I, 14, as part of the biographical narrative, we are told how Birgitta went on a pilgrimage with her husband to Santiago de Compostela. On the way back her husband falls ill in France, close to Flanders. God sends St Denis to comfort Birgitta and tells her for what grace she has been chosen. Then, *Na etliken daghen darna, do sach se in eyneme geistliken ghesichte in der sulven stad gar wunderlike dynck* [A few days later she saw in a spiritual vision in the same place wondrous things]. She learns from this vision how she will travel to Jerusalem and Rome. Four years before her husband's death, St Bodwidus, whose bones lie in Sweden, appears to Birgitta telling her how he and other saints have petitioned God that Birgitta might receive visions and then Mary is sent to Birgitta to foretell the grace she will experience. Drawing on *de lerere der hilghen schrift de seggen. dat mennigherleye onderscheet is in den openbaringen* [the teachers of Holy Scripture who say that there are many differences in revelations], the adaptor comments how the revelations of Mary, the Queen of Heaven, were of a nobler and higher order. He then lists a hierarchy of visions, explaining the principles that underlie it. The lowest visions are those where a voice is heard but no figure is seen; above that is the type where a figure who speaks is seen; if a revelation is delivered by an angel rather than a saint then it is of a higher order; revelations delivered by Mary are higher still, as in the hierarchy of Heaven Mary sits above the angels; even higher, however, are those visions in which the figure of Christ appears to deliver the revelation. Birgitta, we are told, experienced all these types of vision. The adaptor returns to the vision in which Mary appears to Birgitta, reporting how Mary tells her that she will reveal to her how Christ was in His humanity and on the Cross and that this is a sign that Birgitta will travel to the places Mary lived. Invoking the traditional topos of the *oculi anime* [eyes of the soul] Birgitta will see Christ *mit dynen geystliken ogen* [with your spiritual eyes].<sup>18</sup>

The title of the chapter that follows, I, 15, indicates how the adaptor will continue with his theme of enlightenment: *Wo er Cristus ersten to sprack in erer cappellen. unde van der warheyt der hemmelschen openbaringen* [How Christ first spoke to her in her chapel and of the truth of the heavenly revelations]. While Birgitta is at her prayers, wondering how she might best fit herself to God's will, *oepende god de ogen erer sele. unde se wart entrucket in dem geiste. do sach se eyne klare unde lichte wolken. unde horde dar eyn stemme ut spreken...* [God opened the eyes of her soul and she was rapt in her spirit. Then she saw a clear and bright cloud and heard a voice speaking from it ...]. Birgitta is alarmed by the experience and seeks advice from her confessor as to the authenticity of what she has seen. Three times she experiences such visions. Finally, Christ tells her *wente du scholt werden myne vrundinne unde brued. unde du schalt werden horende unde seende geystlike dinge. unde myn geyst wert by dy blivende wente in dinen doet* [for you should become my friend and bride and you shall hear and see spiritual things and my spirit will be with you until your death]. The adaptor gives a precise date for this seminal experience: *unde desse openbaringe schach in den iaren do men schref M CCC in deme XXXVIII iare* [and this revelation happened in the year 1338]. He goes on to give a clear explanation of just how the vision occurs, pre-empting any negative interpretation of Birgitta's inspiration: *Aver desse openbaringe enheft se nicht ghehad slapende in droemen. men wakende in ereme ghebede. unde doch nicht alle tyd. Aver wannen dat er god wat wolde openbaren. so*

<sup>18</sup> The topos of the 'eyes of the soul' has a long history stretching back to Augustine and is commonplace in late medieval mystical literature. Cf. Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (1981); Schleusener-Eichholz, *Das Auge im Mittelalter* (1985) and *Sehen und Sichtbarkeit in der Literatur des deutschen Mittelalters*, ed. Bauschke etc. (2011).

*opende he ere geystliken synne. dat se mochte seen unde horen geystlike dynghe. unde sloet up ere vornuft.* [But she did not have these revelations in dreams sleeping but awake in her prayers and not all the time. But whenever God wanted to reveal to her then He opened her spiritual senses that she might see and hear spiritual things and opened up her rational mind].

Following this description of the process of receiving visions, the adaptor then classifies the visions, this time in a more scholarly fashion, using Latin terminology. In the *Revelationes* descriptions of Birgitta's visionary experiences conform to the authoritative classification of visionary experience as set out in Book 12 of Augustine of Hippo's *De Genesi ad litteram* [*Literal Commentary on Genesis*].<sup>19</sup> The Mohnkopf adaptor draws on this tradition, providing his Low German readers with a clear and succinct account of the different types of vision experienced by Birgitta. The first category is *visio vel revelacio ymaginaria* in which Birgitta finds herself taken up into Heaven where she sees God and the angels in the shape and form of living things. The adaptor tells us that these are the kind of visions described in the first three books of the *Revelationes* and at the beginning and end of Book IV, as well as the book containing the *Regula Salvatoris*. The second category, as exemplified in the middle of *Revelationes* Book IV, is the *visio vel revelacio intellectualis* in which God reveals truths and advice *ane alle formen unde liknisse desser lyflichen efte tytliken dinghe* [without form and likeness of anything living or temporal]. The final category is the *visio vel revelacio sensibilis*, illustrated by the *Sermo Angelicus*:

alzo dat se de mynschen mogen horen unde seen myt eren lyflichen ogen. unde in der wyse wart sunte Birgitten dat boek gheopenbart. wente do se to Rome was. do openbarde syk er de engel alze dar se ene sach myt eren liflyken ogen by syk stan unde he sede er to. unde se schref dat boek ut synem munde

so that people may hear and see with their physical eyes and in this way was the book (i.e. *Sermo Angelicus*) revealed to Saint Birgitta when she was in Rome. The angel revealed himself to her so that she saw him with her physical eyes standing by her and he sat beside her and she wrote the book as he dictated

As in I, 14, the adaptor makes clear the hierarchy of these visions:

De erste wyse der openbaringe is hoeger unde eddeler wente desse drydde wyse. Aver de ander wyse is hoeger. unde eddeler unde gheyt boven de anderen beyde. unde wert ock ghenoenmet in der hilghen schryft de drydde hemmel. dar sunte Pawel was in gherucket.

The first manner of revelation is higher and nobler than this third manner. But the second is higher and nobler and is above the other two and in Holy Scripture is named the third heaven into which Saint Paul was taken.

The final chapter, I,16, in the sequence of chapters devoted to the nature and manifestation of the revelations poses the fundamental question of why the revelations occurred: *Nu mochte men vraghen. wat de sake is dar desse openbaringe umme gescheen sint. synt dar doch boke genoch. unde openbaringe der propheten. unde de ewangelia* [Now one might ask why these revelations occurred. Are there not sufficient books and the revelations of the prophets and of the Gospel?]. The answer is that mankind has not heeded the prophets nor the Gospel and God is angry. The Virgin Mary has interceded, asking that Birgitta might be a new messenger, a new conduit. The Lord agrees:

Darumme so heft god umme der bede wyllen syner werden moder der iunckfrowen Marien. unde alle syner hilghen vrowen sunte Birgitten uthgekoren. unde heft se ghesant alze eynen sendeboden myt synen breven in de werlde. dat is myt den hylghen openbaringen dar he den minschen inne lovet syne barmherticheit.

God has chosen Birgitta at the bidding of his mother the Virgin Mary and all the saints and has sent her as a messenger with His letters into the world. That is with the revelations in which He promises His mercy to mankind...

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Sahlin, *Voice of Prophecy*, 60.

The revelations granted to Birgitta offer mankind a chance; if they ignore them then the wrath of God will descend upon them.

This sequence of chapters empowers the lay reader to understand the origins and the significance of the revelations made to Birgitta. At an early stage of the *Openbaringe* they are equipped with orthodox knowledge which allows them to recognize the nature of the visions and to interpret them correctly.

### Woodcuts in the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*

In two prayer books of 1484 and 1485, printed also by Ghotan, Birgitta is listed together with the Evangelists, prophets and approved teachers of Catholic doctrine.<sup>20</sup> That Birgitta was regarded as an authority by the late fifteenth century becomes evident through her visual presentation. The painted glass window in the convent of Lüne (→Schlotheuber) from the first quarter of the fifteenth century depicts her as a saint with her attributes, a pilgrim's staff and an open book starting with the words *Sancta Brigida ora pro nobis* ("Saint Birgitta, pray for us").<sup>21</sup> This authority is reinforced in the woodcuts for the Lübeck prints.

The texts of both Ghotan's *Revelationes* and the Mohnkopf *Openbaringe* are complemented and extended by woodcut illustrations. The *Revelationes* includes fifteen woodcuts, a series of full-page and smaller illustrations. They make a clear link between Birgitta's reception of revelation with the creation and transmission of the printed book. Thus, for example, the woodcut to the *Liber imperatoris celestis ad reges* ("The Book of the Heavenly Emperor to the Kings") illustrates how "Birgitta sits and bestows a book from either hand to a group of kneeling rulers on each side. The three books in the woodcut, the one held by God and the pair extended by the saint, form a triad, with Birgitta as the mediator of God's word to political rulers. But Birgitta has assumed an additional role in this woodcut that is not made explicit in the text: she is not merely the transmitter, like a manuscript copyist, but also the broadcaster, multiplier, and distributor, like the operator of a family press."<sup>22</sup>

The Mohnkopf *Openbaringe* has eleven woodcuts, including the printer's signature marks at the end of the volume. Each book is opened by a woodcut: the same image of Birgitta, with varying captions, is used for the frontispiece and to open the first four books and Katarina opens "her" book. The woodcuts inserted in the text are devotional images: Mary holding the Infant heads the opening prayer, the Nativity and the Crucifixion are inserted in the visions. These are, in keeping with the dimensions of the book, much more modest in scale than the woodcuts of the *Revelationes*. The focus here is on Birgitta as an individual, as an author rather than on her role as a channel for God to address mankind. She sits writing in the conventional pose of the author, familiar from depictions of the Gospel writers and the Church Fathers (Illustration 6). The focus is firmly on the book with Birgitta's eyes trained on it as she writes. The visionary aspect of the work is represented in the depiction of the heads of Christ and Mary, as her most important interlocutors, in the top left-hand and right-hand corners. However, the scale of these two heads reinforces the shift in emphasis that the adaptor made in his abridgement and shaping of the *Revelationes* from a pre-eminently visionary work to one which is in equal measure a work of devotion, a saint's life and a book of revelations.

This shift becomes even clearer if we compare this woodcut image with the one of Birgitta that Ghotan uses in his 1485 *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*. Here Birgitta is sitting writing too, but her

<sup>20</sup> Hogg, *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, 153.

<sup>21</sup> Wehking, *Die Inschriften der Lüneburger Klöster. Ebstorf, Isenhagen, Lüne, Medingen, Walsrode, Wienhausen* (2009), nr. 34.

<sup>22</sup> Green, *Printing and Prophecy. Prognostication and Media Change 1450-1550* (2012), 6.

eyes are not trained on the book but rather on the rays of light that are penetrating the room through the window, signifying the divine communication she is receiving. Ghotan's image, unlike the Mohnkopf's reference to the Evangelists and Church Fathers, draws instead on the imagery of divine inspiration that is so characteristic of the visual images of Hildegard of Bingen. All the woodcuts of Birgitta in the Mohnkopf edition carry a caption in Latin. The one reproduced here reads *Liber Celestis Imperatoris Ad reges* [*The Book of the Heavenly Emperor to the Kings*], that is Book VIII of the *Revelationes*. Although the Mohnkopf adaptor does not draw on this book, concerned as it is with contemporary political figures, its Latin authority is still invoked.

The woodcut image of Katarina indicates a very different type of saint. It is in fact a woodcut recycled from the *Danse macabre* print (1489) where it represents the nun.<sup>23</sup> Taken out of the pairing with Death which in the *Danse macabre* appeared in a separate woodcut on the right-hand side, it becomes a model of saintliness. In the context of the *Openbaringe* the Low German caption *Sunte Katherina van watzsteyn* (Saint Katarina of Vadstena) suggests to the reader that the cross-formed headdress is in fact the habit of the Birgittine Order, of which Katarina was the first abbess. The girdle book, which typically would have contained devotional reading, casts her as a reader, not as an author. Thus, the woodcut offers Katarina to the lay reader as a figure they can identify with. Like Katarina, they read; in their case they read the devotional work of the *Openbaringe*, ensuring the transmission of the revelations as intended by God in His selection of Birgitta as a prophet to communicate His messages.

### Readership of the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*

There are thirteen extant copies of the *Openbaringe*, held mostly in Northern German libraries.<sup>24</sup> Written in Low German, it addresses primarily a lay readership that had neither the necessary education nor indeed time to tackle the original text of the *Revelationes*, to judge from the adaptor's comments quoted above. Perhaps the most likely audience would have been the patrician families of the Free City of Lübeck. The hand-written inscription to the Göttingen copy (Illustration 7), gives us a clue as to the typical owner of the *Openbaringe*:

Dyt bok heft gegheven erer leuen weseken Suster Katherina Gonehagen [!] dat se erer dar by denke vppe dat se got vor se bidde in ereme ingen beede. Requiescant in pace Tybbeken Gronhagen

Sister Katharina Grönhagen gave this book to her beloved auntie that she might remember her by it and pray for her to God in her devout prayer. May they rest in peace. Tybekke Grönhagen.

The Grönhagen family flourished in Lüneburg until 1600.<sup>25</sup> The name Tibbeke (a pet name for Tiburg) is prevalent. Another branch of the family moved in the middle of the fifteenth century to Brunswick where we find a Tibbeke who married Hans the Younger of Brunswick in c. 1465. She died in 1512. In the context of this volume on Northern German mysticism and devotion the inscription provides us with an interesting insight into the dissemination of the *Openbaringe* across Northern Germany as well as into the channels of transmission between the lay world and the world of the cloister. The family in Lüneburg was a rich patrician family that derived its wealth from the salt industry (→Lähnemann). Tibbeke's sister, Anna, married Ludolf Elebeke, a *Sülfmeister* [someone who owned the rights to a salt pan] from Lüneburg; they had four daughters, one of whom married Heinrich Töbing, the burgher master of Lüneburg, while the other three entered the convent of Medingen (→Lähnemann). The nuns in Medingen, highly competent in Latin, were

<sup>23</sup> Sodmann, "Dodendantz, Lübeck 1520" (1993), 349. The same woodcut is also used for the representation of the nun in 'Dat narren schyp' (1497).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Hogg, *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, 140–148.

<sup>25</sup> Witzendorff, *Stammtafeln Lüneburger Patriziergeschlechter* (1952), 46–48.

industrious in the production of prayer books. For their secular sister they made a gift of a prayer book written in Low German that she might receive the same devotional nourishment as themselves. This gift from the enclosed nuns to their secular sister provides us with a model for the readership of the *Openbaringe*. With its methodical system of referencing the *Revelationes* and the quoting of Latin, the book would have had appeal for nuns as much as for laypeople.

Birgitta is a northern saint whose impact was felt throughout Europe. However, in the context of Northern Germany with its close links to and cultural exchange with Sweden fostered by the Hanseatic League, Birgitta is a regional saint. With the advent of printing the *Revelationes* proved to be a bestseller amongst the Lübeck printing houses. No other text, with the exception of the Bible, was as popular. Alongside the major commission from Vadstena for the printing of the *Revelationes*, the extant translations into Low German point to a lively interest in Birgitta and her revelations. In terms of impact, Birgitta may be compared to the twelfth-century Hildegard of Bingen, prophetic visionary and Benedictine abbess, to the fourteenth-century Catherine of Siena, mystic and Dominican tertiary, and to the sixteenth-century Teresa of Ávila, mystic and Carmelite nun. However, unlike these fellow saints Birgitta was a laywoman, a wife, mother and eventually a widow (→Suerbaum). In the context of fifteenth-century Lübeck she provided a different role model for an urban lay readership.<sup>26</sup> A century after the editing of Birgitta's prophetic visions to make the case for her canonization, the author of the Mohnkopf *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe* recognised this in his abridgement and adaptation of the *Revelationes*, accommodating as he did the visionary within the devotional. Traces of any impact the *Openbaringe* may have had have been lost, but in itself this carefully crafted book provides a valuable insight into the reframing of a text to meet the spiritual needs of a lay audience.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Brandenburg, *Heilige Anna, Grote Moeder* (1992), who points to the cult of St Anna in the late fifteenth century as a model with which patrician families could identify.

## Textual Appendix

All excerpts for this chapter are from *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, an anonymous translation and adaptation of the Latin *Revelationes* of Birgitta of Sweden for the Mohnkopf press in Lübeck, published in 1496. The edition follows Dinges, *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe. Neuausgabe des mittelniederdeutschen Frühdruckes von 1496* (1952), reprinted by Hogg, "Sunte Birgitta Openbaringe" (1990) which is quoted with page and line numbers. The text is checked against the Mohnkopf print which is quoted by folio number; translation: Elizabeth Andersen.

### 9a) Editorial Statements in *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*

The preface introduces the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe*, drawing on the authority of the Bible to underline the value and efficacy of Birgitta. The adaptor states that Birgitta and her daughter Katarina are the focus of the book and refers to them as "two pearls". Hogg: 13, 28-14,9 (Mohnkopf, vi r.) and Hogg: 14,30-15,4 (Mohnkopf, vii v – vii r.)

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| EYNE VORREDE MYT EYNER INVORINGE ICHTESWELKER WORDE DES HILGEN EWANGELII OVER DYT BOEK.   | A PREFACE WITH AN INTRODUCTION OF SOME WORDS FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ABOUT THIS BOOK.   |
| Eyn gud boem drecht gerne gude vrucht. secht de here in deme hylghen ewangelio Mathei VII. desse worde moghen wol gesproken werden van der eddelen hilgen vrouwen sunte Birgitten. wente se is eyn seer gud boem gewest. unde is noch in deme wingarden der hilgen kerken unde heft gode dem heren gebracht gude vrucht eres hilgen levendes. erer lere. unde erer hilgen kindere. wente so alse desse boem gud was. unde gud is unde blift. so is ok de vrucht gud. sunderliken de hilge maget Katherina. Van welkere twen hilgen. alze van sunte Birgitten unde erer hilgen dochter Katherinen hir na in dessem boeke meyst wert gesecht. wente se sint gelik den eddelen perlen de men weinich vindet mankt velen anderen unnutten stenen. | A good tree readily bears good fruit, says the Lord in the holy Gospel of Matthew chapter 7 (Mt 7:17). These words may be said about the noble and holy lady Saint Birgitta because she was a very good tree and is still in the vineyard of the holy Church and has brought the Lord good fruit from her holy life, her teaching, and her saintly children, for as this tree was good and is good and will remain so, so the fruit is good, especially the holy woman Katarina. Of which two saints, that is of Saint Birgitta and her holy daughter Katarina, most is said in the book that follows. For they are like the noble pearls which one finds rarely amongst many other worthless stones.            |
| Wo desse twey eddelen perlen in Sweden van gode manckt velen anderen stenen alzus ghevunden. dar van volghet hyr na eyn boek. welkere is ghedelet in vyf boeke efte in vyf parte. In welkereme ersten boeke wert ghesat erst eyne vorrede des ersten capittele. dar ynne werden ghenoot wo vele boeke unde capittelle de hemmelschen openbaringe inhouden. unde wo god und Maria unde vele hylghen myt der hylghen vrouwen sunte Birgitten hebben ghesproken. In deme sulven boeke steyt van eren elderen. van erer ghehort. Wo se wart vortruwet in dat echte. wo se dar ynne vortghinck. Wo vele kindere se teled. unde wat openbaringe se hadde. wo se wart gheloeset  | Of how these two noble pearls in Sweden were found by God amongst many other stones there follows a book which is divided up into five books or five parts. In the first of which there is a preface to the first chapter in which is stated how many books and chapters the heavenly revelations contain and of how God and Mary and many saints have spoken with the holy lady Saint Birgitta. In this same book we are told about her parents and of her birth. How she was given in marriage, how she progressed in it. How many children she gave birth to and what revelations she had, how she was released from the bond of marriage. That book contains 28 chapters, begins on page 10 and ends on page |

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| <p>van dem bande des echtes. Dat boek heft in syk XXVIII capittel. unde beghynnet uppe deme blade dar sodan tal steyt X. Unde endighet syk dar sodan tal steyt XXXVIII.</p>   | <p>38.</p>   |
| <p>Book I, 15 On the truth of the revelations. Although the <i>Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe</i> is structured as a saint's life for devotional purposes, the adaptor does not diminish the visionary aspect of Birgitta's revelations. In the chapter <i>Wo er Cristus ersten to sprack in erer cappellen. Unde van der warheyt der hemmelschen openbaringen</i> ("How Christ spoke to her first in her chapel and of the truth of the heavenly revelations"), he describes the nature of Birgitta's visions and classifies them using Latin terminology, Hogg: 37,32-38,29 (Mohnkopf, xxiii r).</p>   |  |
| <p>Aver wanner dat er god wat wolde openbaren. so opende he ere geystliken synne. dat se mochte seen unde horen geystlike dynghe. unde sloet up ere vornuft. dat neyn boesegeyst don enkan. unde goet in ere vornuft eyn over natürlük licht. dat dar twyerleyge werkynghe in er hadde.</p>   | <p>But whenever God wanted to reveal to her then He opened her spiritual senses that she might see and hear spiritual things and opened up her intellect so that no evil spirit can do anything and poured out a supernatural light into her intellect so that two kinds of thing happened in her.</p>   |
| <p>To deme ersten so gaf yd er de kraft. dat se syck in erer sele mochte vorheven boven syk. alzo dat se mochte seen de dinck. de dar synt boven de nature. wente se sach god unde de engele. unde ok de bösengeyste. aver se sach se in formen unde staltenisse desser lifliken dynghe. unde desse wyse alze geystliken to seende is ghenömet in dem latin <i>visio vel revelacio ymaginaria</i>. unde in desser wyse heft se gehat de openbaringe der ersten dryer boke. unde dat am begyn. unde dat ende des verden boekes. unde ok dat boek dat dar ghenömet is de regel des hilgen salichmakers dat is de regel sunte Birgitten ordens. wente de gaf er god sulven.</p>  | <p>First of all it gave her the strength that she could rise above herself in her soul so that she could see those things that are above nature, for she saw God and the angels and also the evil spirits but she saw them in the shape and likeness of living things and this way of seeing spiritually is called in Latin <i>imaginative vision or revelation</i> and this was the way in which she received the revelations of the first three books and the beginning and end of the fourth book and also that book that is called the Rule of the Holy Saviour that is the rule of the order of Saint Birgitta, for God gave her this Himself.</p>  |
| <p>Aver dat middel des verden boekes heft se ghehad in eyner anderen wyse, de dar ghenömet is in dem latino <i>visio vel revelacio intellectualis</i> unde de wise schüt wanner dat god einen minschen wat openbaret in eyner over natürliken wise ane alle formen unde liknisse desser lyfliken efte tytliken dinge. Aver dat leste boek dat dar ghenömet is de engelsche rede. dat wart er geopenbaret na eyner anderen wise. de dar ghenömet is in deme latino <i>visio vel revelacio sensibilis</i>. unde de schüt in den utwendighen synnen. alze wanner de geyste to syk nemen lyflike staltnisse van der lucht. unde openbaren syk den minschen in sodanen staltnissen. alzo dat se de mynschen mogen horen unde seen myt erem lyflyken ogen. unde in der wyse wart sunte Birgitten dat boek gheopenbart. wente do se to Rome was. do openbarde syk er de engel alze dar se ene sach myt eren liflyken ogen by</p> | <p>But the middle of the fourth book she received in a different manner, which is called in Latin <i>intellectual vision or revelation</i> and this way happens whenever God reveals in a supernatural way without form and likeness of living or temporal things. But the final book that is called the angelic address that was revealed in another way that is called in Latin <i>sensual vision or revelation</i> and that happens in the external senses whenever the spirits take on lifelike shapes from the air and reveal themselves to mankind in such shapes so that mankind may hear and see with their physical eyes and this was the way in which the book was revealed to Saint Birgitta; because when while she was in Rome, the angel revealed himself so that she saw him with her physical eyes standing by her and he spoke to her and she wrote the book out of his mouth. The first manner of revelation is higher and</p> |

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| <p>syk stan. unde he sede er to. unde se schref dat boek ut synem munde. De erste wyse der openbaringe is hōger unde eddeler wente desse drydde wyse. Aver de ander wyse is hōger. unde eddeler unde gheyt boven de anderen beyde. unde wert ock ghenōmet in der hilghen schryft de drydde hemmel. dar sunte Pawel was in gherucket.</p> | <p>nobler than the third manner. But the second is higher and nobler and is above the other two and in Holy Scripture is also named the third heaven into which Saint Paul was taken up.</p> |
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Book II, Preface on Editorial work The adaptor gives pragmatic reasons for abridging the *Revelationes*, while also talking in this passage about the purpose of his efforts, with cross-reference to his own Book I, Hogg: 57,24-58,5 (Mohnkopf, xxxviii r).

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| <p>Merke ock dat in dyt boek wert gheseth nicht alle openbarynge. men etlyke so hyr vor in deme ersten boeke is ghesecht. wente scholde men hyr in setten alle de boeke der openbarynge. so worde dyt eyn groet boek bykant alze eyne byblye. unde worde velen mynschen vordretlick al ut to lesen. unde to dūr in deme kope. alzus is umme desser sake willen genōmen ut alle den hilgen bōken ichteswes unde is mit vlite to hope sammelt unde gheset in dyt yeghenwordyghe boek. umme salicheyt wyllen aller guden mynschen. de hyr inne lesen efte lesen horen. alze ock hir vor ghesecht is in deme ersten boeke in deme ersten capittel. uppe dem blade dar alzodan tal steyt X.</p> | <p>Take note that not all revelations are included in this book but some, as is said above in the first book. For if one were to include all the books of the revelations it would become a very large book about the size of a Bible and would be too much for many people to read fully and too expensive to buy; thus, for this reason something is diligently taken from all the holy books and collected together and set together in this present book for the salvation of all good people who either read or hear it, as is said earlier in the first chapter of the first book on page 10.</p> |
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| <p>Alzus wert hir na mannigher weggen ghenōmet dat boek. alze dat erste boek efte dat ander. dat drydde. verde etc. uth welkem dat is ghenomen dat dar wert ghesproken. des ghelyken de capittle. dar by. Sus is dyt erste capittel. efte dyt erste ghesette dat hyr volghet begynnet unde ghenomen uth deme ersten boeke sunte Birgitten. unde synt de honnichvletende soeten worde unses salichmakers des heren Ihesu Cristi. to syner lefhebberinnen sunte Birgitten. alze dat erste boek der hemmelschen openbaringe wert begynnet in deme ersten ghesette.</p> | <p>Thus the book is named in different ways, that is the first book or the second, the third, the fourth etc., and in the same way the chapters too. Thus the first chapter or the first passage that follows has begun and is taken from the first book of Saint Birgitta and the words are the honey-sweet flowing words of our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ to His beloved Saint Birgitta; thus begins the first book of the heavenly revelations in the first chapter.</p> |
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Book II, 25: Referencing the *Revelationes*. In the chapter *Wo de here allem himmelschen here vraghet. umme eyn recht ordel over den sunder. unde spricket alsus...* ("In which the Lord asks the heavenly host for a just judgement on the sinner and speaks thus..."), Christ calls upon Mary and the Apostles to bear witness to Him and then addresses the *unreynen geysten* ("impure spirits"). The Apostles confirm the scale of contemporary evil. At the end of the passage the adaptor speaks in his own voice, saying that more can be read about this in the *Revelationes*. He gives chapter and verse, concluding by saying that the *Revelationes* are to be understood as *eyn hemmelsch breff* ("a heavenly letter"). (Hogg: 103,12-18 = Mohnkopf, lxxv r.)

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| <p>Item van desser sulven materien machstu meer lesen efte du wult hyr vor in deme ersten boeke in deme XVI. capittel. up dem blade dar</p> | <p>You may read more of this same material if you wish in the sixteenth chapter of the first book on page 24. Also in many following passages.</p> |
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| <p>alzodan tal steit XXIII. Ock mannygher wegghen hyr na. Wo god almechtich is vortornet uppe de werlt. de leyder vul sunde is. Unde uppe dat syck noch mannych mach betheren. so is uns ghesant desse openbarynge alze eyn hemmelsch breff. dar eyn yslick uth neme beteringe so em nutte is.</p> | <p>Of how God almighty is angry with the world which is sadly full of sin. And so that many may improve, these revelations have been sent to us as a letter from heaven from which each may draw improvement as is useful to him.</p> |
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### 9b) Adapting Birgitta's Visions for Print

Book IV, 10: This chapter, *Wo unse here Cristus alle state in der werlde wernet. straffet. unde leret...* ("How our Lord Christ admonishes, chastises and teaches all orders of this world"), illustrates the adaptor's knowledge of the Latin *Revelationes* and of how, while translating closely from the Latin, he may on occasion summarise what he finds there. This chapter is taken from *Revelationes* VII, cap. xxviii to begin with and then draws on *Revelationes* VII, cap. xxx. The adaptor makes a precise reference to the *Revelationes*, giving in part a free translation and in part the exact beginning of *Revelationes* VII, cap. xxx (the translation is taken from Searby, vol. 3, *Liber Caelestis*):

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| <p>[<i>Revelationes</i>, Chapter heading 30] Iudex conqueritur sponse de vniuersis peccatoribus omnium statuum et condicionum, narrans beneficia, que fecit eis, et ingratitude eorum. Comminatur quoque eos cum sententia terribili ire sue, ammonet tamen eos, quod conuertantur ad eum, et suscipiet eos cum misericordia sicut pater.</p>  | <p>The Judge complains to the bride about all sinners in every class and condition, describing the kind deeds He has done for them along with their ingratitude. He threatens them with the terrible sentence of His wrath, but admonishes them to convert to Him, saying that He will welcome them with a father's mercy.</p>  |
| <p>[Chapter 30] Vidi palacium grande simile celo sereno, in quo erat exercitus celestis milicie innumerabilis quasi athomi solis, habens fulgorem sicut radii solis. 2 In palacio vero sedebat in throno mirabili quasi persona quedam hominis, incomprehensibilis pulchritudinis et immense potencie dominus, cuius vestes erant mirabiles et indicibilis claritatis. 3 Et quedam virgo stabat ante sedentem in throno, que erat fulgencior sole. Quam omnes illi assistentes celestis milicie honorabant reuerenter vt reginam celorum. Ille vero, qui sedebat in throno, aperiens os suum dixit: 4 "Audite omnes inimici mei [...]"</p> | <p>I saw a palace, great as the clear skies above. The army of the heavenly host was there, as countless as particles of the sun, with a brilliance like the rays of the sun. 2 On a wonderful throne in the palace there sat a human person, a Lord of incredible beauty and immense power, whose wonderful garments were of an indescribable splendor. 3 Before Him who sat on the throne stood a Virgin who outshone the sun. All the heavenly host standing there paid reverent honor to her as the queen of heaven. He who sat on the throne opened His mouth and said: 4 "Hear ye all my enemies [...]"</p> |

Hogg: 225,9-26 (Mohnkopf, clxxiii r).

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| <p>Merke. In desen negesten twen capittelen hir bevoren werden geleret unde gestraffet de prelaten. de heren geistlik unde wertlik. Men hir kumpt nu de salichmaker unde straffet int gemene alle sunders unde sunderinnen. He leret. he esschet, he straffet. he drauwet. unde ok levet he grot lon den de syk waraftigen to em keren. So he nu ysliken staet bisunderen heft gestraffet. so nomet he</p> | <p>Note. In the previous two chapters the prelates, spiritual and worldly leaders were admonished and punished. But now here comes the Saviour and punishes each and every sinner, men and women alike. He teaches, He demands, He admonishes, He threatens and He also delivers great reward to those who truly turn to Him. Just as He has now punished each estate separately so He also targets each of them individually in the thirtieth chapter</p> |
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| <p>ok isliken bi sunderen in dem seveden boke in deme XXX capittel. in welkereme capittel steit. wo sunte Birgitta sach ein grot pallas. dat was gelyk dem klaren hemmele. se sach dar inne eine untellike schare der hemmelschen ridderschop. alze dat stof in der sunnen. in dem pallaze was ein keiserlyk stoel van wunderliker kostelicheit. uppe desseme stole sach se sytten den alder mechtigesten richter. Unde dat is sere lanck hir to setten. wo Maria unde alle hilgen stunden vor em unde ambededen en. unde dar sulvest sprak de richter unde klagede over de minschen. Sunderlyken heeth he de sunders syne vyende. unde sprickt dar manckt anderen worden alzus.</p> | <p>of the seventh Book, in which chapter it is told how Birgitta saw a large palace that was like the clear sky above; she saw therein the heavenly host as countless as particles in the sun; in the palace there was an imperial throne of wonderful splendour; she saw sitting on this throne the most powerful Judge. And it is too long to set down here how Mary and all the saints stood before Him and worshipped Him and then the Judge Himself spoke and lamented over mankind. In particular He said that the sinners are His enemies and says among other words the following:</p> |
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### 9c) Presenting Birgitta of Sweden and Her Daughter as Saints

Book V, 14: The final chapter of the *Sunte Birgitten Openbaringe, Van etliken wunderwerken unde van erer vorherhevinge. Dat XIII unde dat leste capittel* ("Of various miracles and of their canonisation, the fourteenth and final chapter"), contains a passage in which the "two pearls" of Birgitta and Katarina are brought together again in the context of healing miracles associated with Katarina. The adaptor comments that he cannot be exhaustive and refers to the numerous books written about both Birgitta and Katarina that are to be found in Vadstena, Hogg, 265,1-15 (Mohnkopf, cciii r).

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| <p>Ok was to Watzstene in deme kloster eyn vicarius de hethe her Peter Krake. desse de hadde de wedaghe des hōvedes so groet. so dat he syne kennebacken unde tungen nicht konde rōggen, he enkonde ock syne munt nicht up doen spyse to syk to nemende. unde alle minschlike hülpe hadde en vorlaten unde lach VII daghe ane spyse unde ane drank. Sus lovede he syn lofte to deme grave sunte Katherinen dar sulvest int kloster unde he wart gesunt. unde bracht syn offer dar. unde des nachtes dar bevoren sach he sunte Birgitten unde ere dochter Katherinen. unde Katherina sprak. du schalt gesunt werden van desser kranckheit men see tho dat du bote doest vor dine undult. Alzus geschen dar sulvest unt ellike teken. de men nicht al kan setten in sodan heel boek alze dit is dar to Watzsteyne grote boeke van vul gescreven liggen ghelyk alze van erer hilghen moder. Desse hilgen wil wy anropen. uppe dat se vor uns bidden. Amen. Anno domini M CCCC XCVI Lübeck.</p> | <p>There was also at Vadstena a provost, a man called Peter Krake, who had such pain in his head that he could move neither his jaw nor his tongue, nor could he open his mouth to eat and all human help had failed him and he lay for seven days without food and drink.</p> <p>Thus he vowed his faith at the grave of Saint Katarina there in the convent itself and he was cured and he brought what he had promised; and in the night before he had seen Saint Birgitta and her daughter Katarina and Katarina had said: "You shall be cured of this illness but see to it that you do penance for your impatience". This happened and innumerable other wondrous signs which cannot be included in the compass of such a complete book as this is, signs of which large books at Vadstena are full of reports, as there are also for her saintly mother. We will call on these saints that they might intercede for us.</p> <p>Amen. In the year of Our Lord 1496, Lübeck.</p> |
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