



HAL
open science

The Immaculate Conception in Late Medieval Sweden

Camille Bataille

► **To cite this version:**

Camille Bataille. The Immaculate Conception in Late Medieval Sweden. *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift*, 2016, 116, pp.15-40. hal-02541331

HAL Id: hal-02541331

<https://normandie-univ.hal.science/hal-02541331>

Submitted on 21 Apr 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

CAMILLE BATAILLE

The Immaculate Conception in Late Medieval Sweden

Introduction

On 28 April 1311, the Archbishop of Uppsala, Nils Ketilsson (1308–1314), inaugurates the altar for the chapel of the Virgin Mary in his cathedral.¹ He offers forty days of indulgence for the “well penitent and confessed” who visit the chapel on the feast days of the Virgin Mary.² As is usual with many grants of indulgences, the Archbishop enumerates the feasts: “the Assumption, the Annunciation, the Nativity of the Virgin, and the Purification, and indeed [*necnon*] the Conception”. The Latin adverb *necnon* stresses this last feast, which is quite understandable in view of the fact that this charter is the very first Swedish document to mention the Conception of the Virgin³. The Feast

of the Conception should not be confused with the idea of the Immaculate Conception, which was made a dogma of the Catholic Church in 1854,⁴ but was a topic of harsh debates in the Middle Ages.⁵

The Immaculate Conception is the theory according to which the Virgin Mary has never been touched by original sin, and has never sinned. It has nothing to do with the Virgin Birth (a virgin that has a child), a confusion still too often met with.⁶ The historical origin of the theory can be traced back to apocryphal tales, such as the *Pseudo-Matthew* or the *Liber de Nativitate Mariae*, in which a depiction of the circumstances of the generation of Mary is made available.⁷ The first clear indication of a liturgical celebration of the conception of Mary comes from England, in

1 SDHK 2416 (DS 1792). See Sven Helander, *Den medeltida Uppsalaliturgin*, Lund, 2001, p. 161.

2 *Omnibus vere penitentibus et confessis qui ad dictam beate Marie virginis capellam in ipsius festiuitatibus. videlicet assumptionis, annunciacionis, natiuitatis. et purificationis. necnon et conceptionis eiusdem, deuote accesserint, quadraginta dies de iniuncta sibi penitencia misericorditer in domino relaxamus* (SDHK 2416).

3 Sven Helander, op. cit., p. 161, rightfully acknowledged the document as being the first to mention the Feast of the Conception of Mary, but he mistook the letter for being from Archbishop Nils Allesson (1292–1305), instead of his successor Archbishop Nils Ketilsson (1308–1314). Previously, several documents have erroneously been considered as the oldest tracks of this feast: see for example Gustaf Lindberg, *Die schwedischen Missalen des Mittelalters*, Uppsala, 1923, p. 182, who wrongly mentioned a letter to the Dominicans in Sigtuna (SDHK 2434), which does not contain any

mention of the feast; Toni Schmid, “Franziskanische Elemente im mittelalterlichen Kult Schwedens. Teil II”, *Franziskanische Studien*, 25:1 (1938), p. 137, gives the correct reference.

4 See Pius IX’s bull “*Ineffabilis Deus*” of 8 December 1854.

5 The important study of Marielle Lamy, *L’immaculée conception. Etapes et enjeux d’une controverse*, Paris, 2000, offers a detailed presentation of the issue.

6 See for example Julia Kristeva, “*Stabat mater*”, in J. Kristeva, *Histoires d’amour*, Paris, 1983, pp. 227–228, where the psychoanalyst obviously mistakes the Virgin Birth for the Immaculate Conception.

7 Jan Gijssels (ed.), *Liber de Nativitate Mariae. Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium. Textus et commentarius*, Turnhout, 1997, CCSA 9; Rita Beyers (ed.), *Liber de Nativitate Mariae. Libellus de Nativitate Sanctae Mariae. Textus et commentarius*, Turnhout, 1997, CCSA 10.

the 1120s.⁸ Its promoters were men such as Eadmer of Canterbury (c. 1060–c. 1124), Osbert of Clare († c. 1158), or Anselm of San Saba († 1148),⁹ who adopted an immaculist position in their defence of the feast of the Conception. When the feast spread on the continent, the theory attached to it started to be questioned. In his letter no. 174, Bernard of Clairvaux sought to halt the propagation of a feast (and consequently a doctrine) that he considered illegitimate.¹⁰ His opinion is important, for it would influence many thinkers thereafter. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the debate for and against the Immaculate Conception involved the best spirits of the time. One of the most important elements in the debate involved medieval ideas about the development of fetuses. In the medieval view, the body was created first, then God infused a soul into it. The process was called “animation”. The controversy concerned at what moment the Virgin was freed from original sin: before she was conceived, at the instant of her bodily conception, before the animation, at the instant of the animation, or after the animation. On the maculist side, for example, Anselm of Canterbury and Peter Lombard thought that the sanctification of Mary happened during the Annunciation; Albert the Great and Saint Bonaventure thought the sanctification happened at the instant of animation; Richard of Saint-Laurent and the Ps-Peter Damian (Nicholas of Clairvaux) believed in the sanctification *in utero*. For the immaculist side, Eadmer of Canterbury and Osbert of Clare thought the Virgin was perfect and holy right when she was conceived; Ramon Llull and Peter Pascual thought she had been sanctified before she had been conceived; Peter John Olivi and William of Ware believed a

purification happened before the animation, that is, at the instant of the procreation.¹¹

During this period, the feast was detached from the maculist/immaculist question: it continued to spread independently of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Up to the middle of the fourteenth century, the maculist position was dominant.¹² The question became a thorn in the side of the Church, which sought to reduce dissent in order to preserve unity. The controversy flared up anew sporadically during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but it should be noted that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was endorsed by the Council of Basel (17 Sept. 1439).¹³ Not everyone accepted this decision. Pope Sixtus IV ultimately authorized the celebration of the Feast of the Conception (1476)¹⁴ and a few years later (1482–83) forbade the members of either party to accuse the other of heresy, which in practice slowed the discussions about the doctrinal aspects but could not quench them for good.¹⁵ In the late fifteenth century, we can see that the feast and the doctrine were reunited again.

In this article I would like to shed light on the Swedish treatment of the question of the Immaculate Conception. The issue has been addressed by former scholars, but in my opinion inadequately. The subtleties of the high theological debate have sometimes been overlooked, or misinterpreted, which has led to some very questionable statements. To soften my criticisms somewhat, I should add that there are very few Swedish sources that address the issue of the Immaculate Conception. Most of our material concerns the concep-

8 See Lamy, op. cit., pp. 35–39.

9 On Eadmer, see André Carassut, “Eadmer”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4:1 (1960), cols. 1–5; on Osbert, see Michael O’Carroll, “Osbert of Clare”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 11 (1982), cols. 1011–1012; on Anselm of San Saba, also named Anselm of Bury, see David Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke & Vera C. M. London (eds.), *The Heads of Religious Houses. England and Wales*, vol. 1: 940–1216, Cambridge, 2004 (2001), p. 32.

10 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 174 (“Ad canonicos Lugdunenses”), in Jean Leclercq & Henri Rochais (eds.), *S. Bernardi Opera*, Rome, 1974, vol. 7, pp. 388–392.

11 On the arguments and authors, see Lamy, op. cit., *passim*. See also the table that summarizes the arguments (appendix).

12 Lamy, op. cit., p. 383.

13 Decree of the thirty-sixth Session, 17 Sept. 1439; see Ernst von Birk & Frantisek Palacky (eds.), *Monumenta conciliorum generalium, Seculi decimi quinti. Conciliorum Basileense scriptorum*, Vienna, 1886, vol. 3:1, pp. 364–365.

14 Sixtus IV’s bull “Cum praeexcelsa”, 1476. See Cherubinus Sericoli, *Immaculata B. M. Virginis conceptio iuxta Xysti IV constitutiones*, Rome, 1945, pp. 34–35, 149 ff.

15 Sixtus IV, Constitution “Grave nimis”, 4 Sept. 1483, ed. Cherubinus Sericoli, op. cit., pp. 40–52, 155 ff.

tion of Mary in a more general sense. This is why I would here like to present a detailed overview and analysis of the Swedish sources that deal with Mary's conception, with close attention paid to how former scholarship has presented them and sometimes related them to the question of the Immaculate Conception. Although there exists some relevant Old Swedish material, I shall confine myself to sources in Latin.¹⁶ My aim is not merely to present sources and previous scholarship but to show the dynamics at work as the cult of a major saint such as the Virgin Mary develops. The relations between devotion, hierarchy and dogma will be seen to be of prime importance.

Sources for the Feast of the Conception in Late Medieval Sweden

A. CHARTERS

After the first mention of the Feast of the Conception in Sweden, in 1311, we observe a steady propagation of it. In 1316, Nils Jonsson and his wife Kristina, from Rickeby, gave some lands to the church in Vidbo in their will, asking among other things that the Feast of the Conception be celebrated annually, with an octave.¹⁷ It is one of the rare occasions when there is mention of an octave for the Conception in Sweden. This practice did not leave any tracks in liturgical sources. In 1328, the runic calendar from Gotland has the feast in black ink, indicating a feast accepted but of less importance than other Marian feasts.¹⁸ In 1329, indulgences for the church of Funbo mention the feast in a list of ordinary Marian celebrations.¹⁹

In 1338, a testimony of *Lagman* Magnus Jonsson of Östergötland is dated by the Day of the Conception.²⁰ The feast must have become relatively common by 1344, when it is used as an indicator of time in a royal charter.²¹ Nevertheless, that same year the register for the cathedral of Uppsala does not include it in the list of indulgenced feasts, and marks it with black ink in the calendar.²² At some point, the feast is added in several calendars, now preserved as fragments, such as in MPO Fr. 2547, a calendar for Uppsala covering the months of November and December and dating from the second half of the twelfth century, or MPO Fr. 25599, first used by the Dominican Order and adapted to the use of Linköping, dating from the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fourteenth. The Conception was in both cases probably added at the end of the fourteenth century.²³

The first pope to mention the Feast of the Conception in a letter sent to Sweden is Boniface IX (1389–1404), for the church of Lödöse in March 1401.²⁴ He is also the first pope to mention the Feast of the Visitation in a document addressed to Sweden. The mention of the newest Marian feasts, such as the Conception, in documents written for the pope is not invariable: a concession of indulgences for the St. Mary Chapel in the cathedral of Strängnäs, postdating the previous letter by two months, only refers to four Marian feasts.²⁵ It is possible that the papal chancellery adapted itself to the uses of different dioceses when conceding indulgences. In Strängnäs, the feast has a proper formulary in a breviary dating from the 1380s, but an isolated witness cannot determine by itself the use of a whole diocese.²⁶ In December 1401, a third

16 I would like to thank Stephan Borgehammar for his references to relevant Old Swedish sources and indications of literature. See for example Christer Pahlmblad, "Marias år – Maria i liturgin", in J. Lockman-Lundgren (ed.), *Gud är inte tyst*, Oskarshamn, 1997, p. 127–139.

17 SDHK 2715 (DS 2045). Vidbo church is located in Seminghundra härad, and part of Sigtuna kommun, in Uppland.

18 Nils Lithberg & Elias Wessén, *Den gotländska runkalendern 1328*, Stockholm, 1938–1939, p. 13.

19 Uppsala, UB, E 169, fol. 417r. Funbo church is in Rasbo härad, and part of Uppsala kommun.

20 SDHK 4463 (DS 3402): *Scriptum ... die conceptionis beate virginis*.

21 SDHK 5079 (DS 3866).

22 SDHK 5059 (DS 3849). On the *Registrum ecclesie Upsalensis* of 1344, see Göran Dahlbäck, *Uppsala domkyrkas godsinnhav. Med särskild hänsyn till perioden 1344–1527*, Stockholm, 1977, pp. 6 ff.

23 Sven Helander, *Ordinariarius Lincopensis*, Lund, 1957, p. 40.

24 SDHK 15587 (SD 2856).

25 SDHK 15632 (SD 2872).

26 Uppsala, UB, C 416, fol. 18 ff.

Conceptio BMV	Song, prayer or lesson	Alternatives	Reference
Introit	Gaudeamus ... de cuius conceptione		Cantus 501004
Ps.	Conceptione tua		
Oratio/Collecta	Deus qui beate Marie virginis conceptionem angelico vaticinio ... venerata.		CO II: 1373
Lectio	Dominus possedit me	Egredietur virga	Prov. 8:22; Isa. 11:1
Graduale	Propter veritatem	Benedicta et venerabilis; Dilexisti	Cantus 505006; Cantus 505002; no Cantus number
Versus alleluia	Conceptio gloriose	Diffusa est gracia	
Euangelium	Liber generationis		Matth. 1:1
Offertorium	Aue Maria	Offerentur; Felix namque	
Secreta	Sanctificata quesumus Domine muneris oblate ... concede.	Deus qui filium tuum; Veneratus omnipotens deus; Salutarem hostiam tibi omnipotentis Pater ymmolantes	CO II:343; the others are not in the <i>Corpus orationum</i>
Communio	Diffusa est	Beata viscera	Ps. 44:3
Complenda	Repleti vitalibus alimoniis ... gaudiis ciuium supernorum.	Sumpsimus quesumus domine; Celestis alimonie vegetati	CO VIII:5074b; the others are not in the <i>Corpus orationum</i>

Table 1: Most common formulary for the mass of the Conception in Swedish witnesses

concession of indulgences is given to the church of the Dominicans of Stockholm, and in accordance with the uses of the Order, the Conception is not mentioned among the indulgenced feasts.²⁷

Judging by the evidence of the charters (indulgences and wills) and of the calendars, the feast is established at the end of the fourteenth century. But what, more precisely, is the content of the celebration? What formularies are used for this feast? One could also ask if the issue of the Immaculate Conception is present or not.

B. LITURGY

In the mass liturgy, the Swedish formularies for the Feast of the Conception vary but little. This is not a Swedish peculiarity.²⁸ Just as in the example of Lyon, studied by Pascal Collomb, the witnesses are

few.²⁹ For Sweden, we have for the whole period 1350–1530 four printed missals, the formularies given by the *Breviarium Scarense*, the printed gradual of Västerås, three manuscript missals, two ordinaries, a compilation of masses and seventeen fragments of missals, plus eight or nine fragments of graduals.³⁰ Table I contains a synthesis of their contents.

²⁹ Pascal Collomb, “L’inscription liturgique de la *Conceptio beate Marie* dans le calendrier diocésain – Le cas lyonnais (xii^e–xvi^e siècle)”, *L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 10 (2012) [http://acr.h.revues.org/4355].

³⁰ The manuscript missals are: Stockholm, KB, A 50a; Stockholm, KB, A 97; Uppsala, UB, C 420. We must add the ordinaries of Linköping: Stockholm RA, Skokl. saml., Avd I, no. 2, edited by Sven Helander, *Ordinarius Lincopensis*, op. cit., pp. 285 ff.; Uppsala, UB, C 428, which includes a formulary for the Conception written by the first hand on fols. 62v–63; and the compilation of masses in Uppsala, UB, C 439, which has a mass for the Conception on fol. 21. The fragments of missals are: MPO Fr 735, Fr 3828, Fr 4044, Fr 4572, Fr 4800, Fr 7115, Fr 7470, Fr 8611, Fr 8623, Fr 8743, Fr 8873, Fr 10114, Fr 26221, Fr 26440, Fr 26689, Fr 26954, Fr 28592. The fragments of graduals are: MPO Fr 701, Fr 903, Fr 1114, Fr 10302, Fr 11712, Fr 25070, Fr 25249,

²⁷ SDHK 15746 (SD 2896).

²⁸ See Cornelius A. Bouman, “The Immaculate Conception in the liturgy”, in E. D. O’Connor (ed.), *The dogma of the Immaculate Conception. History and significance*, Notre Dame (Indiana), 1958, pp. 113–160.

The introit of this formulary is very common for Marian feasts. It has a high plasticity due to the ease with which a feast name can be changed. Therefore, it can be used for the Assumption as well as for the Nativity of the Virgin, or the Conception. In Swedish printed and manuscript missals, it is used also for the Nativity of the Virgin.³¹ In this respect the Swedish dioceses do not follow the Roman tradition, which prefers *Salve sancta parens*.³² On the other hand, the high plasticity of this introit can be a hindrance too: it does not specify anything about the Conception on the dogmatic level. It is a characteristic that is also observable for the other chants, lessons and prayers. The mass lessons do not vary much: the *epistola* comes either from Proverbs 8:22 or Isaiah 11:1.³³ The *evangelium* is always, just as in the seventh lesson for the Conception and the Nativity of the Virgin in the breviaries, *Liber generationis* (Matth. 1:1). The songs are borrowed from generalist formularies, such as the Common of Virgins or the masses *de BMV*. All the books give the same gradual: *Propter veritatem*, with the exception of the printed *Graduale Arosiense* (*GAr*), which gives *Dilexisti*.³⁴ *Propter veritatem* is also used for the Nativity of the Virgin in all the Swedish books. A fragment uses *Benedicta et venerabilis*, following perhaps a Roman tradition, since this song is used in the Nativity of the Virgin formulary.³⁵ The Alleluia verse is always *Conceptio gloriose* in the Swedish tradition, except in the *GAr*. The offertory

is distributed between *Ave Maria* (Strängnäs, some fragments)³⁶, *Felix namque* (Uppsala)³⁷ and *Offerentur* (only in the *GAr*). The last song in a *proper* mass formulary, the *communio*, uses either *Diffusa est* (Ps 44:3)³⁸ or *Beata viscera*, originally a song for *Nativitas Domini*.³⁹

For the prayers, the general impression is slightly different. If the first prayer (*collecta*) is commonly used for this feast, it stresses that an angel warned Mary's parents of her conception, a topic clearly drawn from apocrypha.⁴⁰ It is present in one of the oldest formularies for the Conception, the one added to the so-called Leofric Missal in the eleventh century.⁴¹ This formulary is, as Marie-Bénédicte Dary puts it, "d'une composition originale qui ne reprend aucune des prières du sacramentaire grégorien".⁴² The *secreta* follows three traditions: *Sanctificata quesumus Domine muneris oblate ... concede*, used in Strängnäs and Linköping and present in some fragments,⁴³ *Deus qui filium tuum*, used in Uppsala,⁴⁴ and *Veneratus omnipotens Deus*, used in Skara.⁴⁵ Finally, the *postcommunio* mirrors the distribution of the *secreta*: *Repleti vitalibus* also comes

Fr 28549. The fragment MPO Fr 25488 could not be seen; the photographs in the MPO database for this fragment do not correspond: they show an antiphony and not a gradual.

- 31 As for example in the *Missale Upsalense vetus* 1484 (hereafter MUV), *Missale Strengnense* 1487 (hereafter MSt), *Missale Aboense* 1488, *Graduale Arosiense* 1493 (hereafter GAR), *Missale Upsalense novus* 1513 (hereafter MUN), and in Stockholm, KB, A 97 (*missale Lincopensis*).
- 32 Robert Lippe (ed.), *Missale romanum mediolani*, 1474, Vol. I: *Text*, London, 1899, p. 377.
- 33 *Egredietur virga* (Is 11:1) in the missals from Uppsala: see MUV and MUN, and MPO Fr 4044; *Dominus possedit me* (Prov 8:22) in all the others.
- 34 Toni Schmid (ed.), *Graduale arosiense impressum*, Lund, 1959–1965, p. 192.
- 35 MPO Fr 4800; R. Lippe (ed.), *Missale romanum*, op. cit., p. 378.

36 As in the MSt, MPO Fr 4800, Fr 8623, Fr 1114, Fr 25070, but also in the *Missale Lundense* 1514.

37 Also in MPO Fr 11712, Fr 4044.

38 In the MSt, GAR, *Missale Lundense*, and MPO Fr 8623, Fr 1114, Fr 7115, Fr 25070.

39 In MU and MPO Fr 4800, Fr 10302, Fr 11712, Fr 4044.

40 Eugène Moeller, Jean-Marie Clément & Bertrand Coppeters 't Wallant (eds.), *Corpus orationum*, vol. 2, Turnhout, 1993, CCL 160A, no. 1373.

41 Frederik E. Warren, *The Leofric missal*, Oxford, 1883. The edition is made from Oxford, Bodley, Ms. 579, fol. 374. See also Richard Pfaff, *The liturgy in medieval England. A history*, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 72 ff.

42 Marie-Bénédicte Dary, "Aux origines de la 'Fête aux Normands'. La liturgie de la fête de la Conception de la Vierge Marie en France (XII^e–XIII^e s.)", in F. Thelamon (ed.), *Marie et la "Fête aux Normands"*, Rouen/Le Havre, 2011, pp. 85–98, esp. p. 86.

43 As in MPO Fr 4800, Fr 8611, Fr 8623, Fr 7470. This prayer is not referenced in the *Corpus orationum*.

44 Pierre Bruylants, *Les oraisons du missel romain. Texte et histoire*, vol. 2, Louvain, 1952, no. 343. This prayer is also present in MPO Fr 4044 and in the *Missale Lundense*.

45 This prayer is not referenced in the *Corpus orationum*. One fragment (MPO Fr 7115) contains yet another prayer: *Salutarem hostiam tibi omnipotens Pater ymmolantes*.

from the Leofric missal and is used in Strängnäs and Linköping,⁴⁶ while *Sumpsimus quesumus domine* is used in Uppsala.⁴⁷ MPO Fragment 7115 has another prayer, which is not found elsewhere in the Swedish material.⁴⁸

Nowhere in these mass formularies can any indication favourable or hostile to the Immaculate Conception be found. All the formulations are devout but vague, and the only element that might point toward a deeper involvement in the controversy is the use of the *collecta* found in the Leofric missal, with its reference to the apocryphal texts.

The tendency is fairly similar in the formularies for the breviaries.⁴⁹ In most cases, the whole formulary is not written out in the book: many rubrics require the texts to be taken from the Nativity of the Virgin.⁵⁰ The lessons for matins, and sometimes the collect, are the only elements given in full. Two main traditions were in use. First, the practice of using the *Introduxit* office for the Nativity of the Virgin, changing only the word “Nativity” into “Conception”. This very widespread practice is the solution chosen by the Swedish dioceses of Uppsala, Linköping, and Strängnäs.⁵¹ The second tradition, also widespread, is the use of *Gaude mater ecclesia*, as in the dioceses of Skara and Västerås.⁵² Both traditions are symptomatic of

the neutrality and distance from polemic that we can observe in liturgy in general.

Already here we can note that the offices composed especially for the Immaculate Conception by Leonardo Nogarolo (end of the fifteenth century) and Bernardino de Bustis (1450–1513) after the intervention of Sixtus IV are nowhere to be found in the Swedish documents. The office by Nogarolo for the Immaculate Conception was printed right after its approval by Pope Sixtus IV. It was relatively widespread, judging by the diffusion of incunabula containing the formulary.⁵³ The office in itself, without musical notation, is based on the Song of Songs and a compilation of authors favourable to the Immaculate Conception.⁵⁴ The office by Bernardino de Bustis for the Immaculate Conception was approved by the pope in 1480.⁵⁵ Printed in 1492 in Rome, with the *Mariale* of this author, the office is less widespread than the one by Nogarolo.⁵⁶ The choice not to use those offices is by itself a doctrinal positioning. The Swedish bishops and canons decided to use other masses and offices than the ones promoted by the Franciscan pope.

The most likely *locus* to find the doctrinal inclination of a feast is in the lessons of matins. Table II contains a synthesis of the texts used in the printed Swedish breviaries for the lessons of matins at the Feast of the Conception.

46 The fragments also correspond. See note 30. The prayer is referenced in the *Corpus orationum*, vol. 8, 1996, CCSL, no. 160G, no. 5074b.

47 The prayer is the same as the one used in the *Missale Lundense* and is present also in MPO Fr 4044.

48 MPO Fr 7115: *Celestis alimonie vegetati*.

49 The witnesses are, first, the printed breviaries: *Breviarium Lincopense*, Nuremberg, 1493 (hereafter BLi); *Breviarium Strengnense*, Stockholm, 1495 (hereafter BSt); *Breviarium Upsalense*, Stockholm, 1496 (hereafter BU); *Breviarium Scarense*, Nuremberg, 1498; *Breviarium Arosiense*, Båle, 1513 (hereafter BArl). There are relatively few manuscript breviaries for medieval Sweden that contain offices of the Conception with lessons: the breviaries Stockholm, KB, A 50, A 99, A 100; Uppsala, UB, C 354, C 416, C 435, C 463, C 507; the compilation of offices Uppsala, UB, C 446; and the fragments MPO Fr 25645 and Fr 8126.

50 For example: *habeatur hystoria que dicitur in natiuitate*, as in Stockholm, KB, A 100, a breviary for Uppsala.

51 It is also found in the following codices and fragments: Stockholm, KB, A 50, A 100, and probably A 99; Uppsala, UB, C 463; MPO Fr 21728 and Fr 20061.

52 This office is also to be found in Uppsala, UB, C 416, a

14th-c. ms. from Strängnäs, and in MPO Fr 20339, Fr 2237. On *Gaude mater ecclesia* (AH 5:12), see Solange Corbin, “Miracula beatae Mariae semper virginis”, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 39–40 (1967), pp. 409–433.

53 Leonardus Nogarolus, *Officium Immaculatae Conceptionis*, Rome, 1477, ISTC 1000051300, GW M27651. The book is reedited several times, for example in 1478 and 1485.

54 Camilla Cavicchi, “Osservazioni in margine sulla musica per l’immacolato concepimento della Vergine, al tempo di Sisto IV”, *L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 10 (2012) [http://acr.revues.org/4386].

55 Ibid. On Bernardino de Bustis, see Antonio Alecci, “Busti, Bernardino”, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Rome, 1972, vol. 15, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardino-busti_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/.

56 Bernardino de Bustis, *Mariale*, Milan, 1492, ISTC 101332500, GW 5803. The book was reedited the following year, still in Milan, then in 1496 and in 1498 in Strasbourg.

	BLi 1493	BSt 1495	BU 1496	BSc 1498	BAr 1513
Lectio 1–3	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Lib. Nat. BMV, CCSA 10	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV
Lectio 4	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	BnF lat. 18168; CUL li. 4.20	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV
Lectio 5–6	Poncelet 1713; PL 159:320	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	BnF lat. 18168; CUL li. 4.20	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV
Lectio 7–9	Poncelet 832; PL 159:321	vt in Nat. [Hieron., CCSL 77, CPL 590]	BnF lat. 18168; CUL li. 4.20	vt in Nat. [Hieron., CCSL 77, CPL 590]	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV

Table 2. Texts used as lessons for the matins of *Conceptio BMV* in the Swedish printed breviaries.

The lessons used in Sweden for the Feast of the Conception are, at the end of the Middle Ages, fixed according to the texts chosen for the printed breviaries. In Linköping and Strängnäs, the miracle of Elsin provides the readings for the lessons 1 to 4 (6 in Strängnäs).⁵⁷ The miracle tells the story of an English abbot that is sent to Denmark and whose ship is battered by a storm on its way back. Elsin the abbot prays to the Virgin in order to escape a potential shipwreck and is saved, but must in return celebrate the Feast of the Conception. The text in the Swedish printed breviaries is very close to the one edited in the *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum*.⁵⁸ In Linköping, the lessons 5–6 use another miracle commonly presented as argument in favour of the feast: the Hungarian cleric who married the Virgin.⁵⁹ This miracle often follows the miracle of Elsin, just as the one used for lessons 7–9: a fornicating cleric from Rouen is saved from drowning by the Virgin.⁶⁰ Even though those miracles are often used in a liturgical context as lessons for this feast, Solange Corbin did not find a witness with all three miracles in the list of manuscripts for the Conception that she made.⁶¹ In Strängnäs, the last three lessons are “as in the Nativity of the Virgin”, that is, an extract from

Jerome.⁶² The three miracles aim at spreading the Feast of the Conception by basing it on gratitude for the protection of the Virgin Mary. But none of them expresses anything resembling the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The Breviarium Upsalense contains extracts from the beginning of the *Liber de Nativitate Mariae* in lessons 1–3.⁶³ In the *Liber de Nativitate Mariae*, Mary is “blessed, from the lineage of David”,⁶⁴ her parents are named (Anna and Joachim) and said to lead “a rightful and simple life”.⁶⁵ The third lesson exemplifies this by explaining how Joachim divided his wealth in three parts: one for the temple, one for the poor, and one for his family.⁶⁶ Though apocryphal, those lessons carry no weight in terms of dogma. It is possible to see a Dominican influence at work in the liturgy of Uppsala, since the *Liber de Nativitate Mariae* is included in the lectionary of Humbert of Romans as one of the texts for the Nativity of the Virgin.⁶⁷

57 In Poncelet’s repertory of Marian miracles, this tale has no. 1698. Albert Poncelet, “Index Miraculorum B. V. Mariae quae latine sunt conscripta”, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 21 (1902), pp. 242–360 (hereafter: Poncelet).

58 Jacobus Langebeck (ed.), *Scriptores rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi*, vol. 3, Copenhagen, 1774, pp. 254–255.

59 Poncelet, no. 1713.

60 Poncelet no. 832.

61 Solange Corbin, op. cit.

62 *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera*, Pars I: *Opera Exegetica*, vol. 7: *Commentariorum in Matheum Libri IV*, ed. Marc Adriaen & David Hurst, Turnhout, 1969, CCSL 77, pp. 7 ff.; CPL 590.

63 Rita Beyers (ed.), *Liber de Nativitate Mariae. Libellus de Nativitate Sanctae Mariae. Textus et commentarius*, Turnhout, 1997, CCSA 10, pp. 277 ff.

64 *Beata Maria ex regia stirpe et familia David*, BU lectio 1.

65 *Vita eorum erat simplex et ante Dominum et recta: apud homines irreprehensibilis et pia*, BU lectio 2.

66 *Nam omnem substantiam suam trifarie dividerunt. unam partem templo et templi servitoribus aliam peregrinis et pauperibus erogabant. terciam sibi et familie sue usibus reservabant*, BU lectio 3.

67 Edited by Anne-Élisabeth Urfels-Capot, *Le sanctoral de l’office dominicain (1254–1256). Édition et étude d’après le ms Rome, Sainte-Sabine XIV L1*, Ecclesi-

Of course, the Friars Preachers did not celebrate the Feast of the Conception, but many formularies for this feast were, as we have seen, borrowed from the Nativity of the Virgin. Then, until lesson 9, the text used in the BU is one that we find in the oldest document containing lessons for the Feast of the Conception: a *libellus* from the twelfth century added to an eleventh-century lectionary from Saint-Martin-des-Champs.⁶⁸ This choice of text is peculiar, since no other traces of it are known in Sweden, including in the fragments. Uppsala breviaries from the fifteenth century do not use this text, as we shall see further below. Lesson 4 briefly mentions the Conception of Mary as the object of celebration.⁶⁹ Afterward, lessons 5–9 reflect no further interest in the Conception, but rather evoke the Incarnation, the authenticity of the celebration, and the powerful intercession of the Virgin.

The third text, used in Skara and Västerås, is the *Sermo de conceptione BMV* by Osbert of Clare.⁷⁰ The sermon is an early composition containing immaculist elements.⁷¹ Indeed, the flesh of the Virgin Mary is said to be blessed thanks to the flesh of the patriarchs,⁷² and another passage indicates that “from these clean and chaste entrails the Word of God (...) clothed itself in immaculate

flesh”.⁷³ Finally, at the end of the sermon, the Virgin is qualified as *virgo inviolata, mater immaculata*, although without any comment on how she could be immaculate.⁷⁴ Osbert makes statements about the immaculate nature of the Virgin and, particularly, of her flesh. In the whole sermon he provides only one argument to explain this status: that the flesh of the Virgin is special, coming from the lineage of the patriarchs, who benefited from a special relation to God and, therefore, to original sin. The argument prefigures the argument of the Special Seed, making the Virgin stem from a preserved seed coming directly from Adam before the Fall. Hugh of St. Victor, the Pseudo-John of Mandeville, the Pseudo-Peter Comestor and the Anonymus of Heiligenkreuz developed this theory not long after Osbert wrote his sermon.⁷⁵ So, even if the sermon does contain immaculist elements, they are scarce. Moreover, none of those elements are to be found in the Skara and Västerås lessons for the Conception. The texts have been shaped to suit liturgical needs but also, as I argue, to reject potentially dubious or arguable elements. In the BAR, however, a tricky passage could be read in an immaculist way: in lesson 3, several references are made to the “extinction of concupiscence”, which is an often used pro-Immaculate Conception argument.⁷⁶ The problem is that in the sermon it refers to the Incarnation and Virgin birth of Christ, not to the Conception of the Virgin. The choice of cutting the phrase off from the reference to the Incarnation (which is made in the previous lesson) is interesting, but in no case sufficient to prove a will to transform the phrase into an immaculist argument. In both breviaries, the lessons have been carefully selected. Lesson 6 is composed mostly of a passage that is not kept in the Thurston & Slater edition of the sermon. The purpose of this manipulation could be to smooth the content of the

asticum officium secundum ordinem fratrum praedicatorum, Paris, 2004, p. 348.

68 Paris, BnF, lat. 18168, fols. 105v–110v. See Solange Corbin, op. cit., and Kati Ihnat, *Mary and the Jews in Anglo-Norman monastic culture*, London, University of Queen Mary, 2011, p. 62, note 138, p. 101, and the edition of the office p. 222. Kati Ihnat adds to the list of manuscripts containing this text the ms. Cambridge, Univ. Lib., li. 4.20. The database *In Principio* lists yet another manuscript with the same incipit: Leipzig, UB, Ms. 618, according to the *Bibliographie annuelle du Moyen Âge tardif*, t. XIII, Paris–Turnhout, 2003, no. 4108.

69 *Beata ergo dei Genitricem Mariam cujus annua conceptionis festa veneramus*, BU lectio 4.

70 The *Sermo de conceptione BMV* of Osbert of Clare is edited under the name of Eadmer in Herbert Thurston & Thomas Slater (eds.), *Eadmeri monachii Cantuariensis. Tractatus de conceptione sanctae Mariae*, Freiburg i. Br., 1904, pp. 65–83.

71 See Marielle Lamy, op. cit., for a presentation of Osbert’s ideas, for example pp. 166, 176, etc.

72 *significavit quod in carne patriarchae carnem beatae virginis Mariae benediceret*, Thurston & Slater (eds.), op. cit., p. 68.

73 *ex cuius castis mundisque visceribus dei verbum [...] immaculata se carne vestitit*, ibid., pp. 79–80.

74 Ibid., p. 83.

75 Marielle Lamy, op. cit., p. 131.

76 *Que virginitate Deo sacrificata, concupiscentiam carnis extinxit, in humilitatis arce collocata paupertatem spiritus amplectens concupiscentiam mentis funditus extirpavit*, Thurston & Slater (eds.), op. cit., p. 67.

	KB A50, A100, UUB C507	UUB C446, C463	UUB C416	UUB C354, C435	UUB C21	KB A99	UUB C84, C292
Lectio 1–3	Lib. Nat. BMV, CCSA 10	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Bernerus abbas Humo- lariensis, S in Nat BMV <i>aptatus</i>	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV	Munich, BSB, CIm 27129 [Anon. Ottobeu- ren] <i>aptatus</i>	Venice, Marciana LAT. Z 356 (= 1609)
Lectio 4–6	Lib. Nat. BMV, CCSA 10	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Poncelet 1698; Poncelet 1713, PL 159:320	Bernerus abbas Humo- lariensis, S in Nat BMV <i>aptatus</i>	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV	CIm 27129 [Anon. Otto- beuren] <i>aptatus</i> ; Bernerus abbas Humolariensis, S in Nat BMV <i>aptatus</i>	Venice, Marciana LAT. Z 356 (= 1609)
Lectio 7–9	Lib. Nat. BMV, CCSA 10	Poncelet 1698, SRD III	Poncelet 832, PL 159:321	Ut in Nat. [Hieron., CCSL 77, CPL 590]	Osbertus de Clara, S de Con BMV	<i>incognitus</i>	MPO Fr 25724, Fr 11173

Table 3. Texts used as lessons for matins for the Conception in Swedish manuscripts (breviaries and lectionaries for the divine office)

sermon in order to make it suitable for liturgical use. This overall quest for neutrality in the celebration of the liturgy is the key to understanding why immaculist concepts have not circulated very far outside the schools and high theology.

In the manuscripts, the same trends are apparent. Uppsala seems to have used the *Liber de Nativitate Mariae* for some time before the breviary was printed.⁷⁷ The legend of Elsin is in favour both in Linköping and Strängnäs.⁷⁸ The sermon of Osbert of Clare is present in a manuscript from Vadstena – Uppsala, UB, C 21 – which contains also another set of lessons for the Conception, this one proper (and unique) to the manuscript. In addition, texts not kept in the printed breviaries are displayed in the manuscripts. In Linköping, an adaptation from a sermon for the Nativity of the Virgin written by Bernerus, abbot of Sainte-Marie-d’Homblière is present in two manuscript breviaries.⁷⁹ A breviary

for Uppsala, kept in Stockholm, KB (A 99), uses the Anonymus of Ottobeuren, a text attached to “an active propaganda in favour of the feast of the Conception”.⁸⁰ Finally, two lectionaries for the divine office and some fragments of the same type of document provide lessons that I believe to be closely related to the Franciscan Order, because of several Franciscan breviaries that I found containing them.⁸¹

There is one last office that must be examined. Ingmar Milveden argued in his contribution to the volume *Maria i Sverige under tusen år* that the *historia Stella Maria maris parvis* has been used for the Feast of the Conception.⁸² He adduced

77 As in Stockholm, KB, A 50, A 100, Uppsala, UB, C 507.

78 As in Uppsala, UB, C 416, C 446, C 463.

79 Uppsala, UB, C 354 and C 435. The sermon has been published under the name of Fulbert of Chartres by J. M. Canal in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 30 (1963), pp. 72–83, corrected by H. Barré. “Pro Fulberto”, *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 31 (1964), pp. 324–330.

80 Marielle Lamy, op. cit., pp. 58–63. The sermon has been edited by Henri Barré, “Deux sermons du XII^e siècle pour la fête de la Conception”, *Sciences ecclésiastiques*, 10 (1958), pp. 353–356.

81 Uppsala, UB, C 84 and C 292. The other manuscripts containing the lessons are MPO Fr 25645, probably Fr 25724, and Fr 11173; Paris, BnF, lat. 13236 and lat. 1037; Venice, Marciana, LAT. Z 356 (= 1609); Vatican, BAV, Barb. Lat. 380 and Chigi. C V 136. The oldest witness for the text is the manuscript from Venice: the homily is an addition to a *legendarium*, written by the same hand as the *legenda maior* of St. Francis (St. Bonaventure’s version).

82 Ingmar Milveden, “*Stella Maria maris parvis* expers.

a fragment in support of this argument: CCM Ant 189, that is MPO Fr 20441, a Swedish antiphony with a partial formulary for *Stella Maria maris*, followed by a formulary for Anna. Milveden concludes that since this office was not used in Uppsala for the Conception, the antiphony must belong to a “regular tradition (...) and must come from the Franciscans”.⁸³ Obviously, this is a mistake: Franciscans used a secular tradition. I would have taken it to be an error of formulation, but Milveden’s further demonstration of a supposed Franciscan influence is also dubious: on page 207, he argues for a “Franciscan-immaculist influence” due to an extract from the fourth lesson of the office: Maria is said to be *sola generali maledictione libera*. Milveden concludes that this is an argument in favour of the immaculist position and, thus, documents a Franciscan influence on the office. However, I believe this interpretation to be hasty: when examining the whole of lesson 4, we read:

O Beata Maria sola inter mulieres benedicta / sola generali maledictione libera / et dolores parturientis aliena. (“O Saint Mary, alone among women are you blessed / the only one free from the universal curse / and stranger to the pangs of childbirth.”)

It is very clear to me that there is absolutely no immaculist argument here, only a reference to Mary’s privilege of not suffering during childbirth. Therefore, I disagree with Milveden’s hypothesis of a Franciscan influence in this office, but do agree that *Stella Maria maris* could have been used as a Conception office.

To summarize this overview of the liturgy used for the feast: 1. Both in mass formularies and in the liturgy of the hours, neutral texts were used for the Conception, texts that do not make any explicit reference in favour of the Immaculate Conception. 2. The feast was spread efficiently and strong reasons were provided for regarding it as acceptable. 3. Liturgy was not the place to express

dogmatic ideas of dubious orthodoxy, which in turn means that in the fifteenth century, a new theological idea had to reach official acceptance before it could be used and propagated in worship. The publication of *libelli* with immaculist material was not sufficient, as it had been in the twelfth century, to influence the dogmatic content of the liturgy; a decision from the hierarchy was also required.

II.

The Immaculate Conception in St. Birgitta’s writings and in the sermons of the Birgittines

A. ST. BIRGITTA

When searching for the presence of the immaculist position in Sweden, scholars have followed two major tracks: church art and the writings of St. Birgitta. I will be very brief on church art, since most of the representations that were thought to be typical of the Immaculate Conception have recently been challenged and reattributed. For example, the *Madonna in sole* inspired by Chapter 12 in the Book of Revelations, or the Meeting of Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate, have been re-examined and denied any link with the Immaculate Conception.⁸⁴ As for Birgitta, however, much has been said and much is yet to say. Following Birgit Klockars’ studies, a “classic” list has been drawn up of passages in Birgitta’s writings tagged as “potentially immaculist”.⁸⁵ Opinions vary between a clear affirmation of Birgitta’s immaculist position

⁸⁴ See the online contributions to *L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* 10 (2012) [<http://acrh.revues.org/4244>] of Éléonore Fournié and Séverine Lepape, “Dévotions et représentations de l’Immaculée Conception dans les cours royales et princières du Nord de l’Europe (1380–1420)”; Réjane Gay-Canton, “La Rencontre à la Porte dorée. Image, texte et contexte”; and also Jean Wirth, *L’image à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Paris, 2011, pp. 176–184.

⁸⁵ As given by Birgit Klockars, *Birgitta och böckerna. En undersökning av den Heliga Birgittas källor*, Lund, 1966, and recently used in Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), *The revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 2, *Liber Caelestis, Books IV–V*, New York, 2010, p. 269, note 15, although omitting Lib. V, Rev. 13. The list goes: Lib. I 9; Lib. III 8; Lib. IV 19; Lib. IV 108;

Om och kring Pseudo-Brynolfs Mariahystoria”, in S.-E. Brodd & A. Hårdelin (eds.), *Maria i Sverige under tusen år*, vol. 1, Skellefteå, 1996, pp. 200–201.

⁸³ “Sökandet måste därför inriktas på ett regulärt liturgiskt skikt inom stiftet. Till slut låter sig detta bestämmas som franciskanskt”, Milveden, op. cit., p. 201.

(Anna Nilsén, Kari E. Børresen, Bridget Morris) to a much more cautious position (Virginia Nixon, Marielle Lamy).⁸⁶ Personally I incline towards the second position. Let us examine the passages. First of all, Lib. IV 19, Lib. VI 56 and Extrav. 94 do not concern the conception of the Virgin but her nativity. Klockars' index entry is for *Avvelse & födelse*, i.e. for the conception *and* birth of the Virgin, and several scholars have not taken that into account.

Bridget Morris introduces Chapter 9 of Book I by entitling it, a bit hastily, “On the Marriage of the Virgin’s Parents, on Her Immaculate Conception, and Her Assumption into Heaven” [my emphasis].⁸⁷ The original rubric is then correctly translated: “... and about how the Mother of Christ was conceived in a chaste marriage and sanctified in the womb”.⁸⁸ Three paragraphs of the revelation are to be examined: § 2, which concerns the chaste marriage of Anna and Joachim, § 3, which stresses that lust had died in them and that their physical union was in obedience to God’s will, and § 4, which is about the creation of the body and soul of the Virgin. The English translator, Denis Searby, has chosen to translate the central words of § 4 as “the soul was immediately sanctified with the body”. Anna Nilsén says exactly the same.⁸⁹ However, the Latin text says: *et mox anima cum*

corpore sanctificata est. ‘Mox’ can be translated by ‘soon, next, then’, as well as by ‘immediately’.⁹⁰ The distinction matters a lot, since “immediately sanctified” indeed affirms the Immaculate Conception by negating the existence of a time-frame in which Mary could have been under the influence of original sin, while “soon sanctified” or “then sanctified” implies at least a fragment of time in which original sin stained the soul of the Virgin. The first position, immaculist, is that of the Franciscans, and the other position is that of the Dominicans. Anna Nilsén rightfully describes it as a Dominican position, even though her general demonstration implied the contrary!⁹¹ Kari E. Børresen uses §§ 3–4 to argue that this revelation is an argument favourable to the Immaculate Conception.⁹² She perceived well that the sanctification occurs after the animation (the infusion of the soul into the body), but unfortunately she did not take into consideration the vocabulary used: *sanctificata* rather than *concepta*. *Sanctificata* is definitely a term that was used by opponents of the Imma-

Lib. V, Rev. 13; Lib. VI 49; Lib. VI 55; Lib. VI 56; *Sermo Angelicus* 10–12; *Quattuor Oraciones* I; Extrav. 94.

86 Anna Nilsén, “Marie obefläckade avvelse i kult och konst”, *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art history*, 56:1 (1987), pp. 6–15; Kari E. Børresen, “Birgitta’s God-language: Exemplary intention, inapplicable content”, in T. Nyberg (ed.), *Birgitta, hendes vaerk og hendes klostre i Norden*, Odense, 1991, pp. 21–72; Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), *The revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4 vols., New York, 2006–2015; Virginia Nixon, *Mary’s mother. Saint Anne in late medieval Europe*, University Park, 1999; Lamy, op. cit.

87 Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), *The revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 1: *Liber Caelestis, Books I–III*, New York, 2006, p. 64.

88 *et qualiter ex coniugio castissimo Christi mater fuerit concepta et in utero sanctificata*, Sancta Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Book I*, ed. C.-G. Undhagen, Uppsala, 1978, Cap. 9, rubric (p. 260).

89 “I en annan uppenbarelse (1:9) framförs den i sammanhanget inte ovanliga uppfattningen att Maria avlats utan lust och att Gud sekundärt infogat själen i hennes kropp och i samma ögonblick helgat båda” (italics added), Anna Nilsén, op. cit., p. 7.

90 See for example “Mox” in Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, Turnhout, 1954–1967 (rev. 2005). The entry suggests several meanings, such as “aussitôt, à l’instant, tout de suite” (“right now, instantly, at once”), which convey the idea of immediacy, but also “aussitôt que” (“as soon as”), which contradicts immediacy. The primary sense seems to be an action that follows immediately after another one. The same sense is chosen in another dictionary: Félix Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire latin-français*, Paris, 2001 (1934): “Bientôt, dans peu de temps” (“Soon, in a few moments”) or “Bientôt après” (“right after”). Medieval dictionaries, such as the one of Firmin le Ver, suggests “maintenant, tantost”, showing well the ambiguity of the word; see Firminus Verris, *Dictionarius. Dictionnaire latin-français*, ed. B. Merrilees & W. Edwards, Turnhout, 1994. English dictionaries share the orientations of the French ones and emphasize the ambiguity of “mox”; see the entry in the *Database of Latin Dictionaries*.

91 This puzzling argumentation explains why Virginia Nixon, op. cit., p. 75, correctly identifies the revelation as maculist, but wrongly attributes the information to Nilsén: “For as Anna Nilsén points out, in referring to God’s sanctifying Mary’s body after her conception at the time of the insertion of her soul, Birgitta is actually describing a maculate, not an immaculate, conception” whereas Nilsén only says: “... Mary was conceived without lust and [...] God subsequently inserted the soul in her body and at the same instant sanctified both. This version comes closer to the Dominican perception.”

92 Børresen, op. cit., p. 47.

culate Conception.⁹³ It is the term long retained by the Dominicans for their version of the feast of 8 December: the Feast of the Sanctification of the Virgin, as in the Dominican breviaries.⁹⁴ Concerning §§ 2 and 3, which concern the chaste marriage of Anna and Joachim and the absence of lust in their union, it would again be hasty to see immaculist arguments in them. Theologians discussing the point noted that other couples than Mary's parents benefited from a union without lust, and yet did not conceive immaculately. Therefore, there must be a special privilege that preserved Mary from that common state: the chastity of her parents was not enough to make her conception immaculate.⁹⁵ This revelation, then, is not a clue that points to St. Birgitta as an immaculist.

The next revelation is from Book III, Chapter 8. In § 3, Mary affirms: "Thus, I am she who never committed either venial or mortal sin".⁹⁶ This affirmation has nothing to do with the conception of Mary, for in the discussion all protagonists agree on the fact that she, in her lifetime, never sinned. This revelation should thus also be excluded from the list.

Then, from Book IV, Chapter 108: a comment in the English translation informs us that the expression "no stain in her", in the first paragraph, is a reference to the Immaculate Conception.⁹⁷ The comment refers to an article by Børresen but without indicating a specific page in that article. The Latin text says: *Mater igitur mea, quando et postquam nata fuit, sic erat pulchra, quod nulla erat in ea macula*. The translation proposes: "My Mother, both at and before her birth, was so beautiful that there was no stain in her". But the meaning of *postquam* is "after", not "before". Moreover, this revelation concerns Mary's birth,

and not Mary's conception. The rest of the revelation is about the unwavering virtue of the Virgin, which is not at all a consideration of the Conception, but concerns the absence of sin in the Virgin Mary and her intact virtue. Therefore, this revelation, too, should be excluded from the 'proof-texts' demonstrating an immaculist Birgitta.

In Book V, the very last Revelation (number 13) is one that has been frequently commented upon. Kari E. Børresen used it to affirm Birgitta's immaculist position.⁹⁸ The paragraphs 4, 11, 13, 16 and 17 are interesting.⁹⁹ First, § 4 presents the image of a vessel, which is explained in the subsequent paragraphs. § 11 concerns the sins that Mary could have committed if she had not been filled with a special grace that enabled her to resist temptation; it is not about original sin, which has an automatic character. § 13 develops the same idea, dwelling on Mary's virtues (also dependent on her will) and not on original sin. § 16, which begins by calling Mary *tota pulchra*, "all beautiful" – a reference to the Song of Songs 4:7 – is even more subtle: saying that "there was not so much uncleanness in her as to fit on the point of a needle" is not quite the

98 Børresen, op. cit., p. 45.

99 The quotation in English is from Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), op. cit., vol. 2, p. 323, and in Latin from Sancta Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Book VI*, B. ed. Bergh, Stockholm, 1991, Cap. 13, § 4: "Vessel close and not close, clean and unclean" (*vas vacuum et non vacuum, vas mundum et non mundum*); § 11: "But he [the devil] was never able to incline her spirit to the least little sin, for she was closed for his temptation" (*sed numquam ad aliquod quantumcumque minimum peccatum valuit inclinare animum eius, quia clausum erat contra temptationes eius*); § 13: "Third, Mary was a vessel empty and not empty: empty of every lust and sin, not empty but full of heavenly sweetness and goodness" (*Tercio fuit Maria vas vacuum et non vacuum: vacuum ab omni voluptate et peccato, non vacuum sed plenum celesti dulcedine et omni bonitate*); § 16: "Fifth, Mary was a vessel clean and not clean: truly clean because she is all beautiful, and there was not so much uncleanness in her as to fit on the point of a needle" (*Quinto Maria fuit vas mundum et non mundum: mundum vero fuit quia tota pulchra, et tanta immundicia non inueniebatur in ea, ubi cuspidis acus infingeretur*); § 17: "But the vessel was not clean in the sense that she came from the race of Adam and was born of sinners, though she herself was conceived without sin in order that my Son might be born of her without sin" (*sed non mundum fuit, quia de radice Ade processit et de peccatoribus nata est, licet sine peccato concepta, ut filius meus de ea sine peccato nasceretur*).

93 The term is explained for example by Bernard of Clairvaux, see Lamy, op. cit., p. 44.

94 For example, the *Breviarium Ordo Praedicatorum*, Basel, Jakob von Pforzshheim, 1492, uses *Sanctificatio BMV* for 8 December.

95 On reflexions about the chastity of the Virgin's parents, see Marielle Lamy, op. cit., pp. 113–114.

96 Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), op. cit., vol. 1, p. 172.

97 Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), op. cit., vol. 2, p. 192, note 1.

same as saying that nothing in her was polluted. On a purely logical point of view, it could suggest that there was some uncleanness (“very little”), even though it might also be a circumlocution for complete absence (“none at all”). In any case, *tota pulchra* is not necessarily an argument in favour of the Immaculate Conception.¹⁰⁰ Finally, though, § 17 would seem to affirm it: “conceived without sin” according to the translators. Børresen also uses this passage. However, one must be extremely cautious about the use of the word *concepta*. *Conceptio* can signify either the sinful act of the parents (active conception) or the sinless act of the creation and infusion of a new soul, performed by God (passive conception).¹⁰¹ In other words, “conceived without sin” could refer to the fact that the union of Joachim and Anna was sinless, as Birgitta affirms elsewhere (e.g. Book VI, Chs. 49 and 55). Knowing this, it is adventurous to affirm that Birgitta meant the passive conception here, especially since the other expressions in this revelation are so subtle. The affirmations of Børresen (and her followers) are much too rigid to be convincing, especially since the question is only briefly dealt with in her argumentation. Birgitta could indeed be expressing an immaculist position here, but if so, she does it in an extremely cautious way, and never crosses the line. I think it is worth stressing this, given the similar tendencies observable in other types of documents, liturgical for example.

Nevertheless, there are some immaculist statements in Birgitta’s writings, namely in Book VI, Chapters 49 and 55. The rubric of Chapter 49 reveals it clearly: “Gods Mother makes known with certainty that she was conceived by her parents out of obedience to a divine commandment

with no stain of original sin”.¹⁰² § 2 is also very explicit in negating the presence of original sin in the Virgin.¹⁰³ The overall argument here in favour of the Immaculate Conception is that there is no evidence of any sinful motive in the act and effects of Mary’s conception, since her parents acted in complete obedience to God. This idea has been nuanced by later thinkers. Still, Birgitta’s position in this instance is clearly immaculist. In Book VI, Chapter 55, the rubric and the first paragraph keep at bay the idea of *infectio carnis*, but do not affirm anything more than that.¹⁰⁴ The second paragraph is about “the moment of [the Virgin’s] conception”, but also without further precision. § 3 develops an idea often present in liturgy (see for example Osbert’s sermon), namely that the conception of the Virgin is the start of the redemption of mankind. It is a positive clue in favour of the immaculist position. Finally, § 4 explains that the doubts about the conception of the Virgin are a part of God’s plan, and implies that at the right moment the Immaculate Conception will be revealed. This revelation, then, is a second one that explicitly professes an immaculist position. Moreover, it presents an original argument: the prophecy of a future revelation of the doctrine.

The followers of Birgitta interpreted the revelation in Chapter 55 of Book VI as an affirmation of the Immaculate Conception. The English Cardinal Adam Easton, who authored a defence of Birgitta directed against a pamphlet that questioned the orthodoxy of her writings, clearly adopted an immaculist position in article no. 23 of his *Defensorium S. Birgittae*.¹⁰⁵ Adam replies to a declara-

100 Marielle Lamy, op. cit., p. 78, gives an example of the use of Cant. 4:7 in a maculist way, in her commentary on the attribution of a *sermo de conceptione* to Richard of St. Victor. On page 291, another example is given: Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, understands the Biblical text as a proof of sanctification *in utero*.

101 The passive conception can be understood as the fact that Mary conceived Jesus: This signification is used in the *Ordines Romani* nos. 16 and 17, in which the Annunciation is called “*Conceptio Mariae*”. See Michel Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Âge*, vol. 3, Louvain, 1951 and Pierre-Marie Guy, “Liturgies occidentales”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 9 (1976), cols. 899–912.

102 Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), op. cit., vol. 3, 2012, p. 102. The Latin text is from *Sancta Birgitta, Revelaciones. Book VI*, ed. B. Bergh, Stockholm, 1991, Cap. 49: *Mater Dei notificat certitudinem, qualiter ipsa concepta fuit ex precepto diuine obediencie a parentibus sine aliquo peccato originali*.

103 “The union of my parents that resulted in my conception took place in a similar fashion. Consequently, the truth is that I was conceived without original sin and not in a state of sin” (*Per similem modum coniunctio parentum meorum fuit, quando ego concepta fui, et ideo veritas est, quod ego concepta fui sine peccato originali et non in peccato*).

104 Bridget Morris & Denis Searby (eds.), op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 116–117.

105 James A. Schmidtke, *Adam Easton’s Defence of St.*

tion against the sanctification of the Virgin Mary that she was indeed never sanctified, for neither original nor actual sin existed in her. In his demonstration, he mentions the miracle of Elsin to defend the legitimacy of the feast, but he goes beyond that in mentioning Pierre Auriol, an ardent defender of the immaculist position.¹⁰⁶ Adam Easton uses the revelation in Book VI, Chapter 55, to make his point. In another article (no. 18), the cardinal again expounds on the idea of the immaculate conception when commenting on the lesson for Sunday in the *Sermo Angelicus*.¹⁰⁷

Other sets of Birgitta's writings have been said to contain immaculist ideas, notably the lesson of *Sermo Angelicus* for Wednesday, Chapters 10–12,¹⁰⁸ and the first *Oratio*.¹⁰⁹ Chapter 10 of the *Sermo Angelicus*, § 7 is about the chaste marriage of Anna and Joachim,¹¹⁰ and a position in favour of the feast, not the doctrine, is found in § 19.¹¹¹ The mention of the "conception" of Mary in this paragraph is developed in the first paragraph of chapter 11, where we learn that the word signifies the creation of Mary's body, since Birgitta mentions its animation (the infusion of the soul into the body).¹¹² Finally, in Chapter 12, hints of predestination can be found in § 6, but nothing in the context is about the conception of the Virgin.¹¹³

Birgitta from Bodleian Ms. Hamilton 7, Oxford University, Duke University, PhD in History, 1971, pp. 222 ff.

106 On Peter Auriol's ideas about the Immaculate Conception, see Marielle Lamy, op. cit., p. 389.

107 Ibid., pp. 207 ff.

108 Sancta Birgitta, *Opera minora II. Sermo angelicus*, ed. S. Eklund, Uppsala, 1972, pp. 38 ff.

109 Sancta Birgitta, *Opera minora III. Quattuor Oraciones*, ed. S. Eklund, Stockholm, 1991.

110 *nullum simile Ioachim et Anne coniugio in omni diuina caritate et honestate preuidit*, Sancta Birgitta, *Opera minora II*, op. cit., p. 103.

111 *Quapropter bene esset conueniens et dignum, quod dies illa ab omnibus in magna reuerencia haberetur qua materia illa in Anne utero concepta et collecta fuit*, ibid., p. 104.

112 *Deinde postquam illa benedicta materia congruo tempore formatum corpus habuit in aluo matris, sicut eam decuit, tunc auxit thesaurum suum rex omnis glorie, scilicet infundendo ei viuentem animam*, ibid., p. 105.

113 *secundum eternam Dei preordinationem venire non poterat, antequam Maria esset genita*, ibid., p. 108.

The word *immaculata* is used in § 9, but only to qualify the perpetual virginity of the Virgin;¹¹⁴ it has nothing to do with the Immaculate Conception. In the end, there is no element of the *Sermo Angelicus* directly in favour of the Immaculate Conception.

In the first of the *Quattuor Oraciones*, § 6 is also the rubric of the prayer. It uses the expression *de sancta conceptione*, which is not by itself a doctrinal positioning.¹¹⁵ § 8 develops once again the theme of the chaste marriage.¹¹⁶ We may note that it makes a distinction between *concepta* and *genita*. *Concepta* refers here either to the creation of the body of the foetus or to its animation, whereas *genita* refers to Mary's birth.¹¹⁷ Nothing here refers explicitly to the Immaculate Conception.

So, to conclude this investigation of Birgitta's writings: there are only two revelations that actually contain immaculist statements: they are in Book VI, Chapters 49 and 55. Most of the other revelations, when relevant, are too vague to express the doctrine clearly. The great caution and sometimes very delicate subtlety of Birgitta's writings must be acknowledged. Taken as a whole, the evidence does indicate that she was an immaculist. Unfortunately, scholarly literature on the subject too often lumps the above-mentioned texts together in its treatment of the question, which has sometimes led to misinterpretation or a peculiar choice of example that contradicts the very argument.

114 *Prima quippe flamma Marie coram Deo satis lucide resplenduit, quando ad Dei honorem virginitatem immaculatam usque ad mortem firmiter seruare promisit*, ibid.

115 *In ista oracione a Deo reuelata beate Birgitte deuote et pulcre laudatur gloriosa Virgo Maria de sancta conceptione et infancia sua ...*, Sancta Birgitta, *Opera minora III*, op. cit., p. 66.

116 *ab eodem eciam tu patri et matri tue nunciata fuisti et de eorum coniugio honestissimo concepta et genita exististi*, ibid.

117 On the difference between generation and conception, see Marielle Lamy, op. cit., p. 120.

B. THE SERMONS OF THE BIRGITTINES
FOR THE CONCEPTION

About fifty sermons for the feast of the Conception of the Virgin are kept in Uppsala University Library.¹¹⁸ Their ‘themes’ (i.e. the short Biblical quotations used as point of departure) often come from the same passages of Scripture. Six of the sermons have for their theme *Candor est lucis eterne* (Sap. 7:26)¹¹⁹ and as many have *Tota pulchra es amica mea* (Cant. 4:7).¹²⁰ Those extracts, when applied to the Virgin, have in common the glorification of her purity and her beauty.

Of the six occurrences of the extract from the Book of Wisdom, four refer to the same sermon.¹²¹ The oldest manuscript kept in Sweden that contains it comes from Prague and is dated 1417–1418.¹²² The other manuscripts appear to be later copies taken from this document, indicating a certain interest in the sermon on the part of the Birgittine preachers. Another extract from the same verse in the Book of Wisdom is also much used: *Est speculum sine macula*, with four occurrences.¹²³

The extract from the Song of Songs is used only three times, for the same sermon.¹²⁴ The manuscripts that contain it are both from the first half of the fifteenth century. The sermon has for a long time been erroneously attributed to Jean Gerson (1363–1429), but it is more probably the work of Gilles Charlier, dean of the cathedral chapter of Cambrai (1431–1472).¹²⁵ The sermon explicitly

uses the term “immaculate”, which is not a detail coming from a disciple of Jean Gerson and Pierre d’Ailly († 1420).¹²⁶

Another theme for the sermons on the Conception of Mary frequently used in the Uppsala manuscripts comes from Psalms: *Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum* (Ps. 45:5), present in four sermons, all different.¹²⁷ The Book of Isaiah, with *Egredietur virga* (Isa. 11:1), is the source of inspiration for one sermon used four times, plus one *reportatio*.¹²⁸ However, this sermon also follows a different theme: *Germinet terra herbam virentem* (Gen. 1:10).¹²⁹ Finally, other themes are used, coming from the Gospel of Luke, the Book of Genesis or other books of Scripture. The themes for the sermons on the Feast of the Conception tend to show an interest in dogmatic questions, since copying a sermon with a distinctly immaculist tone is a choice that marks a position in the debate.

Were those fifty sermons composed in Vadstena? The possibility is high. One sermon, apparently much appreciated since it has been found extant in five manuscripts,¹³⁰ is probably the work of Acho Iohannis († 1453), brother in Vadstena since 1416, then bishop of Västerås in 1442.¹³¹ His sermon,

118 Margarete Andersson-Schmitt & Monica Hedlund (eds.), *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Uppsala*, op. cit., 1989, vol. 8, p. 29.

119 This theme is used in Uppsala, UB, C 15, fol. 19v; C 16, fol. 189; C 48, fol. 140; C 287, fol. 13; C 331, fol. 289; C 338, fol. 37v.

120 This extract from the Song of Songs is used in Uppsala, UB, C 160, fol. 259v; C 181, fol. 298; C 326, fol. 314; C 331, fol. 157v; C 390, fol. 129; C 392, fol. 160.

121 Its incipit is *Sic Deus creavit*, see Uppsala, UB, C 16, C 48, C 287, C 331.

122 Uppsala, UB, C 287.

123 Uppsala, UB, C 319, fol. 246v; C 337, fol. 282; C 343, fol. 201; C 350, fol. 114.

124 Uppsala, UB, C 15, C 326 and C 392. The incipit of the sermon is: *Karissimi quid de immaculate virginis Dei genitricis conceptione dignum dicam*.

125 On Gilles Charlier, see the review by Henri Platelle of the Hervé Martin’s book, *Le métier de prédicateur à la fin du Moyen Âge (1350–1520)*, Paris, 1988: Henri

Platelle, “Review: Martin (Hervé), *Le métier de prédicateur à la fin du Moyen Âge*”, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, 68:2 (1990), pp. 479–483.

126 Pierre d’Ailly pronounces himself in favour of the Immaculate Conception. He is one of the main opponents of the Dominican Jean de Monzon, the originator of a new episode in the controversy. See Marielle Lamy, *L’immaculée conception*, op. cit., pp. 564, 569–571; Éléonore Fournié & Séverine Lepape, “Dévotions et représentations de l’Immaculée Conception dans les cours royales et princières du Nord de l’Europe (1380–1420)”, *L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 10 (2012) [http://acrh.revues.org/4259].

127 Uppsala, UB, C 295, fol. 287v; C 331, fol. 226; C 351, fol. 192; C 383, fol. 213v.

128 Uppsala, UB, C 306, fols. 383–385v; C 337, fols. 296v; C 350, fols. 171–179v. The *reportatio* is in C 392, fol. 270rv, and one last manuscript containing the sermon is C 326, fols. 120–122v.

129 Uppsala, UB, C 326.

130 See note 127.

131 On Acho Iohannis, see Carl Silfverstolpe, *Klosterfolket i Vadstena. Personhistoriska anteckningar*, Stockholm, 1898, pp. 125–127 (no. 57), Gunnar Ekström, *Västerås stifts herdaminne* I:1, Falun, 1939, pp. 152–162, and Roger Andersson, *De birgittinska*

as we have seen, circulated under two themes: the extract from Isaiah and an extract from Genesis. The version examined in this paper, thanks to a transcription made by Håkan Hallberg, is the one based on the Book of Genesis.¹³²

The sermon starts with an original *exemplum*: just as a turtledove builds its nest for its offspring with earth and other material, but takes care to keep the inside of the nest absolutely clean in order not to soil its chicks, so God assumed flesh on Earth in the clean “nest” of the Virgin.¹³³ The author ends the *exemplum* with an *Ave Maria*, which is evidence of its Birgittine origin.¹³⁴ Then the theme of the sermon is recalled: *Let the earth sprout vegetation* (Gen. 1:10) and the author explains that, in Scripture, the Virgin is said to have been miraculously conceived from sterile parents, Anna and Joachim, and that the words of the Book of Genesis apply well to the situation.¹³⁵ The “earth” stands for Anna, and the “vegetation” is the Virgin.¹³⁶ She is called “green and beautiful” (*virens et pulcra*), and this can be explained, according to Acho Iohannis, in the light of three considerations: the Virgin is green and beautiful in her conception, in

her manner of life on earth, and in her departure from this world.¹³⁷ Her conception is exempt from original sin.¹³⁸ In order to strengthen this affirmation, Acho Iohannis quotes Augustine, in a passage which is probably not from the African bishop, then Albert the Great and Anselm. Among those quotations, an important argument compares the conception of the Virgin without sin to the work of a prudent, wise and powerful physician who knows how to eradicate not only illness itself but even the cause of illness. Christ is such a physician. He certainly did preserve the Virgin from diseases and from all actual sins. It therefore seems proper that he should have done so by preserving her from original sin, which is the cause of all sins; for, as St. Thomas Aquinas has explained, all actual sins exist virtually in original sin.¹³⁹

The second way in which the Virgin can be compared to a perennial plant is through her role in the history of salvation and her relationship to the main prophets. The Virgin is connected to seven branches which are: Jeremiah, Jonathan, Moses, Ahasuerus, Aaron and Zachariah (who stands for two).¹⁴⁰ Those illustrious men all predicted

ordensprästererna som traditionsförmedlare och folkfostrare, Stockholm, 2001, pp. 202–205.

132 Uppsala, UB, C 326, fols. 120–122v.

133 Ibid., fol. 120: *Karissimi. Scriptum reperimus, quod turtur volens pullum suum educare facit domum sibi et nidum, ubi reponat pullum suum. Et iste nidus, licet sit de terra, lignis et paleis, tamen semper intus ponit aliquid delicatum et molle, ne pullus pungatur, inquietetur vel maculetur. Sic fecit Deus pater. Cum non haberet nisi unicum filium, volens ipsum in hunc mundum mittere et in natura nostre humanitatis paruulum enutrire et educare, domum et nidum specialem prius sibi construxit, et hic nidus fuit virgo beatissima Maria, quam ix mensibus Dei filius inhabitauit.*

134 See Alf Hårdelin, “I Kristi och hans moders spår. Om Stationsandakter i Vadstena”, in A. Hårdelin (ed.), *I Kristi och hans moders spår. Om Stationsandakter i Vadstena*, Stockholm, 2003, pp. 9–67, esp. p. 21.

135 Uppsala, UB, C 326, fol. 120v: *Karissimi. Sicut sepius audistis ex Scriptura gloriosa virgo Maria ex Ioachim et Anna infecundis parentibus per annunciationem angeli exstitit miraculose concepta et genita, propter quod verba proposita bene possunt figuraliter exprimi de hac benedicta virgine.*

136 Ibid.: *Protulit enim terra id est beata Anna, tunc temporis secundum cursum nature arida et infecunda, herbam virentem id est beatam Virginem, virore virtutum et gratiarum resplendentem.*

137 Ibid.: *Ipsa enim fuit virens et pulcra in ingressu sue conceptionis, in progressu sue conversacionis et in egressu sue peregrinacionis.*

138 Ibid.: *Primo fuit hec gloriosa virgo virens et pulcra in ingressu sue conceptionis, quia sine originali peccato concepta.*

139 Ibid., fol. 121r: *Eam non esse conceptam in originali peccato persuaderi potest racione, quia prudens, sapiens et potens medicus pocius debet preseruare quem diligit a causa morbi quam ab ipso morbo, quia sublata causa morbi aufertur omnino morbus. Sed dominus noster Iesus Christus fuit medicus prudentissimus, qui languores nostros tulit. <Fuit sapientissimus, quia> eius oculis omnia sunt nuda et aperta. Fuit potentissimus, quia non est impossibile apud ipsum omne verbum. Cum igitur constet, quod ipse preseruauerit (?) matrem suam gloriosissimam a multis morbis et effectibus peccati originalis, quia ab omnibus peccatis actualibus ergo ut videtur pocius decuit, ut ipsam preseruasset a peccato originali, quod fuit quodammodo causa et principium omnium peccatorum. Nam, ut dicit sanctus Thomas de Aquino, In peccato originali virtualiter existunt omnia peccata actualia, sicut in quodam principio omnium peccatorum”. The quotation is from *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, 89, 2 ad 1.*

140 Ibid.: *Secundo modo fuit hec herba scilicet beata Virgo virens et pulcra in progressu sue conversacionis, quia hec herba excreuit et dilatauit se in vii virgas virorum illustrium, que ipsam in Scriptura mystice*

the coming of the Virgin and she represents the blooming of the branches (*virgae*) that they started to grow, as we see when examining the example of Moses:

The third branch is that of Moses, and this is the branch of division. Among other things that it did, the branch of Moses divided the sea, which choked the Egyptians as is said in Ex. 14[:15–31], and without doubt the holy Virgin is the branch that divides the fluctuations of our temptations and chokes the demons that want to destroy us.¹⁴¹

The third way to compare the Virgin to a beautiful plant is to consider her departure from this world. By her, the beauty of the human and angelic natures is perfected since she is the beauty of heaven, the crown of glory of all the saints.¹⁴² The sermon ends on this note, glorifying the three persons of the Trinity.

The reference to the Immaculate Conception is mainly contained in the *exemplum* of the turtle-dove. The sermon in itself is thus mainly destined to praise the Virgin and her virtues. Relatively short and written in a very dynamic language, endowed with a striking *exemplum* and driven by an argumentation easy to remember, this sermon must have been much appreciated by the preachers of Vadstena, who copied it five times. We thus also have an indication that at least some Birgittine preachers were favourable to the idea of the Immaculate Conception.

In the same manuscript, we find the above-mentioned sermon whose author was probably Gilles Charlier.¹⁴³ Based on the theme *Tota pulchra es*

figurabant. Prima virga fuit Ieremie, secunda Ionate, tertia Moysi, quarta Assueri, quinta Aaron, sexta et septima fuerunt virge Zacharie.

141 Ibid.: *Tercia virga est virga Moysi et ista est virga diuisionis. Virga enim Moysi inter alia, que fecit, mare diuisit, quod Egepcios suffocauit, ut dicitur Exo xiiii. Et sine dubio beata Virgo est virga diuidens fluctuaciones temptacionum nostrarum et suffocans demones nos perdere volentes.*

142 Ibid.: *Tercio fuit hec herba scilicet beata Virgo virens et pulcra in suo egressu ab hoc erumpnali seculo. Per ipsam enim natura angelica et humana decorem et perfectionem consumatam accepit. Nam secundum Bernardum: Eius est tanta glorie pulcritudo, ut non solum mundum, sed et illuminet paradysum. Ipsa est enim pulcritudo celi, corona et gloria sanctorum omnium.*

143 Cf. above, note 125. The sermon is edited in Jean Gerson, *Œuvres Complètes*, P. Glorieux (ed.), Paris/Tournai/Rome/New York, 1963, vol. 5, p. xvii.

(Cant. 4:7), we find the incipit of this sermon three times in the Birgittine manuscripts.¹⁴⁴ Outside the province of Uppsala, this sermon was widely spread after the Council of Basel. We find it for example copied in a printed *libellus* made by Johann Guldenschaff in Cologne c. 1480.¹⁴⁵ In Acho Iohannis' book, written well before the printing of the *libellus*, the sermon is slightly different than in the printed version. The text has been simplified, for example in deleting many repetitions. When the printed sermon explains that there are four sorts ("articles") of arguments to defend the Marian privilege, then repeats the same idea to say that each one of those four arguments will be a part of the sermon, the handwritten version of Acho Iohannis goes to the crux of the matter: he details the four articles, then simply says that he will explain "the first (article) first, the second (article) then, etc."¹⁴⁶ In other sections, some fragments have been added. For example, the introduction to the first argument in Acho Iohannis' version mentions some Biblical figures that are not in the printed *libellus*, such as the burning bush or Solomon's throne.¹⁴⁷ However, those additions are minor adaptations that do not deeply modify the argumentation.

The sermon is introduced by a direct question: "What about the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God?"¹⁴⁸ The introduction explains that all men are sinners and infected by original sin except the Virgin, whom the angel saluted as "full of grace". The plan of the sermon is then indicated: the argument will be divided into four "articles". The first one will present a list of Biblical figures (*ex figuris Scripturarum*) that can be interpreted

144 Uppsala, UB, C 15, fols. 1–13v; C 326, fols. 314–327; and one *reportatio* in C 392, fols. 160v–161r.

145 Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione virginis Marie*, Cologne, Johann Guldenschaff, c. 1480 (ISTC ig00201000). The copy examined is the one in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ink. G 198.

146 Uppsala, UB, C 326, fol. 314: *in quatuor articulos presente diuisa sermone ita primo agantur de prima via, ita secundo de secunda, ita tertio de tertia, ita quarto de quarta.*

147 Ibid., fol. 314v.

148 Ibid., fol. 314 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 1: *quid de immaculate virginis Dei genitricis conceptione?*

as defences of the Marian privilege, the second article will suggest a list of authorities (*ex auctoritatibus*), the third will examine the arguments of the doctors (*ex rationibus doctorum*), and the last article will draw its proofs from miracles (*ex evidentia miraculorum*). Since those “articles” are listed without a true argumentation, the sermon, especially in its printed version, looks like a catalogue of arguments more than a sermon ready to be preached. On the contrary, the version of Acho Iohannis is with its adaptations a sermon aptly transformed to be recited.

The first argument examines a list of twelve figures from the Scriptures that can be linked to the Immaculate Conception. Some are often used in other sermons on the subject, such as Gen. 3:15, in which a woman crushes the head of a serpent. The Book of Ecclesiastes is much quoted since it supplies seven figures: life, the palm, the arch, the cedar, the cypress, the myrrh and the rose.¹⁴⁹ Then two figures come from the Song of Songs: the lily and the dawn.¹⁵⁰ The last ones are the day and the star of the sea, extracted respectively from the Book of Psalms and from the First Book of Kings.¹⁵¹ We may note the frequent use of plant metaphors, especially of durable or aromatic plants to symbolize the Immaculate Conception. Some other figures, quite common in other sermons, do not appear, such as the burning bush. It might be the reason why Acho Iohannis chose to add it in the introduction.

The second article gives a list of fourteen authorities that supposedly defended the Immaculate Conception: Ildefonse, Ambrose, two extracts from Augustine, four attributed to Anselm, one attributed to Richard of St. Victor, one to Bernard of Clairvaux, one to Jerome, one to Cyril of Alexandria and most peculiarly, a quote that is supposed to be from the Quran. The section of the Quran to which the author refers is in the third sura (*Al-Imran*), verse 36:

But when she [Anne, the wife of Imran, that is to say Joachim] delivered her [child], she said, “My Lord, I have delivered a

female.” And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered, “And the male is not like the female. And I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge for her in You [Allah] and [for] her descendants from Satan, the expelled [from the mercy of Allah].”

The next verse mentions an episode present in the apocryphal tales about the childhood of the Virgin, explaining that Mary was miraculously nourished in the Temple.¹⁵² Actually, the sermon does not really quote the Quran, but a Hadith, that is to say a quote of Muhammad considered by tradition to be authentic. The quotation drawn from the Hadith is in the printed version of the sermon and also in the version of Acho Iohannis.¹⁵³ Before him, other Christian theologians employed the Quran or the Islamic tradition in their argumentation, such as the Franciscan Nicolaus de Lyra († c. 1349), but it is the Franciscan Marquard of Lindau († 1392) who used it for the first time with an immaculist goal.¹⁵⁴ The hadith, called by Réjane Gay-Canton the “Hadith of the preservation”, explains that all the children born in this world are touched by the Demon, except Mary and her son.¹⁵⁵ In our sermon this text is attributed to the Quran, “an authentic book among the Saracen”, and is quoted after Nicholas of Lyra¹⁵⁶.

152 *Le saint Coran, et la traduction en langue française de ses versets*, s.l., s.d., p. 54, Sura 3, verses 36 and 37.

153 *Ibid.*, fol. 322.

154 Réjane Gay-Canton, *Entre dévotion et théologie scolastique*, op. cit., pp. 286–288. On Marquard von Lindau, see also Stephen Mossman, *Marquard von Lindau and the challenges of religious life in Late Medieval Germany. The Passion, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary*, Oxford, 2010. On the use of Islamic theology in the controversy of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages, see also Réjane Gay-Canton, “Lorsque Muhammad orne les autels. Sur l’utilisation de la théologie islamique dans la controverse autour de l’immaculée conception de la fin du XIV^e au début du XVIII^e siècle”, *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 94:2 (2010), pp. 201–248.

155 “According to Abou-Horaïra, the Prophet said: “No child has been born without having been, at the time of his birth, touched by the Demon [...] Mary and her son were the only ones to be exempted from the touch [...]”, here quoted after Réjane Gay-Canton, “Lorsque Muhammad orne les autels”, op. cit., p. 203.

156 Uppsala, UB, C 326, fol. 322 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 9v: *sicut refert magister Nycolaus de Lyra in libro que dicitur Alchoranus qui est authenticus apud Sarracenos.*

149 Uppsala, UB, C 326, fols. 314v–317v.

150 *Ibid.*, fol. 318.

151 *Ibid.*, fols. 318–320v.

The use of Islamic theology in the controversy of the Immaculate Conception is uncommon but not isolated. It is interesting to note that the argument also appears in another sermon used in Sweden: in a sermon of Francisco de Arimino copied by the Franciscan Kanutus Iohannis.¹⁵⁷

The third “article” examines the “arguments of the doctors”. Those arguments show different stages of the controversy and are thus of uneven quality. For example, the argument that Jeremiah and John the Baptist were sanctified *in utero*, used in the fourth position, is not sufficient to prove the Immaculate Conception.¹⁵⁸ Classical arguments, such as the one of the seemliness of the preservation, are also used. Other arguments are more typical of the debate in the early fifteenth century, such as the Virgin being said to be predestined,¹⁵⁹ or the quotation of the “subtle doctor”, John Duns Scotus, about preservative redemption.¹⁶⁰

Finally, the fourth “article” examines the miracles that are supposed to support the idea of the Immaculate Conception. Some are very common, such as the three miracles often transmitted with the feast: the ones of Elsin, of the Hungarian cleric and of the canon of Rouen.¹⁶¹ Others are less often copied, such as a miracle extracted from a sermon of “Master Alexander, doctor in Oxford” (*de magistro Alexandro doctori Oxonie*) or of Henry of Langenstein (*Henricus de Hassia*).¹⁶² The sermon ends by an affirmation that the feast is celebrated in the whole Christian world and has been authorized by the popes and by general councils.¹⁶³

Clearly in favour of the Immaculate Conception, quoting recent authorities in the controversy, this sermon shows a real interest for the topic. The fact that it has been simplified and adapted in order

to prepare it for an effective delivery shows that brother Acho Iohannis really wished to preach in favour of the Marian privilege. The sermon of the Pseudo-Gerson is very different in tone from the other sermon of Acho, the one which started with the *exemplum* of the turtledoves. The presence of those two sermons in the manuscript Uppsala, UB, C 326, shows that the Birgittines were well aware of the controversy around the middle of the fifteenth century, and that some of them did preach the Immaculate Conception.

III.

Other Documents Related to the Controversy

The participation of Swedish prelates at the great councils of the early fifteenth century could have been another important source for the presence of the Immaculate Conception debate in Sweden. And indeed, some documents kept in Uppsala, UB and Stockholm, KB were produced in relation to the Councils. However, most are disappointing with regard to the debate. One must note that documents likely to mention the controversy are difficult to track down: some mentions of the Immaculate Conception may appear in sermons for the Conception but also in sermons for other Marian feasts.¹⁶⁴ Some sermons connected to the Immaculate Conception are stand-alones, and not connected to Basel or Vadstena. The best example is Uppsala, UB, C 215, a Franciscan manuscript.¹⁶⁵ The sermon it contains was composed by Francisco de Arimino († after 1463).¹⁶⁶ It is clearly immaculist. It has been chosen deliberately for this reason, but its simple form and its lyrical accents also made it interesting for a preacher such as Kanutus Iohannis. The existence of this sermon among the

157 Uppsala, UB, C 215.

158 Uppsala, UB, C 326, fol. 325 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 13.

159 Ibid., fols. 324v–325 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 13.

160 Ibid., fol. 325 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 13v.

161 See notes 57, 59 and 60.

162 Ibid., fol. 326 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 15.

163 Ibid., fol. 327 or Pseudo-Jean Gerson, *Sermo de conceptione*, op. cit., fol. 16.

164 See the examples concerning Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl given by Réjane Gay-Canton, *Entre dévotion et théologie scolastique*, op. cit., p. 327.

165 See Margarete Andersson-Schmitt & Monica Hedlund (eds.), *Mittelalterliche Handschriften ...*, op. cit., vol. 3, 1990, pp. 43 ff.

166 See Franciscus de Arimino, *Sermo ad clerum de conceptione beate virginis Marie*, in A. Emmen & C. Piana (eds.), *Tractatus quatuor de immaculata conceptione*, Quarrachi, 1954, pp. 337–391.

Franciscans of Stockholm is enough to show that the Birgittines were not the only ones to maintain a vivid interest in the controversy in Sweden at the end of the Middle Ages.

Aside from this Franciscan sermon, there exist three manuscripts concerning the controversy that contain neither liturgies nor sermons, and are not connected with Birgitta.¹⁶⁷ Some of the texts are easily identifiable, others have a more obscure origin. The first one is a theological collection written in Germany, dating from the fifteenth century.¹⁶⁸ Composed of many different sections, it contains two texts concerning the controversy: the *Letter to the canons of Lyon* by Bernard of Clairvaux,¹⁶⁹ and a “Note on the opinion of Master Richard of England on the Conception of the Virgin”.¹⁷⁰ Harald Lindkvist suggested in 1917 that this “Richard of England” may have been the hermit Richard Rolle, but the anchorite never wrote anything about the Conception.¹⁷¹ Marielle Lamy noted in her synthesis of the controversy that pseudographs circulated widely, and that many of them were attributed to Richard of Saint-Victor.¹⁷² However, the Swedish text does not correspond to any text attributed to this author, nor to any of the works of English medieval writers named Richard and interested in the controversy, such as Richard de Mediavilla († 1308).¹⁷³ The text of the Uppsala manuscript shares some arguments with Richard de Mediavilla but does not present them in the same terms.¹⁷⁴ The other “Richards”,

such as Richard Fitzralph († 1360), archbishop of Armagh (Ireland), or Richard of Bromwych, a monk of Worcester in the early fourteenth century, do not match either.¹⁷⁵ The author of the text is also not Richard de Saint-Laurent, canon in Rouen c. 1239–1245.¹⁷⁶ The identity of “Master Richard of England” is, then, unknown.

The content of his *Opinio* tends to put him among the immaculists. He explains, for example, that for some scholars, the Virgin preserved from original sin does not need the sacrifice of Christ in order to be saved and thus, if she does not need redemption, she cannot be saved, that is, she is damned.¹⁷⁷ This, naturally, is an incongruity since the Virgin cannot be damned. This question of universal redemption had been examined by Albert the Great, then by Thomas Aquinas.¹⁷⁸ At the end of the sermon, the author replies to this argument by explaining that there is enough grace in the Son for him to preserve his mother, and that she knew redemption not according to the common law but according to a special law.¹⁷⁹ This argument is not yet the one of John Duns Scotus, often named as the one of the “perfect mediator”, and suggests a redemption of the Virgin by anticipation.¹⁸⁰ The

uteris matrum. The comparison between Jeremiah, John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary occurs in several of the medieval authorities quoted in Pedro de Alva y Astorga, *Radii solis zeli seraphici coeli veritatis pro Immaculatae Conceptionis mysterio Virginis Mariae ...*, Louvain, 1666.

167 Uppsala, UB, C 176, fols. 90–92v et 92v–95; C 193, fols. 3–16, 9v, 10v–12, 16v, 21–31v; C 349, fols. 26v.

168 Uppsala, UB, C 176.

169 Ibid., fols. 90–92v. The *Letter* is edited: Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 174* (“Ad canonicos Lugdunenses”), in J. Leclercq & H. Rochais (eds.), *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. 7, Rome, 1974, pp. 388–392.

170 Ibid., fol. 92v–95: *Nota opinionem magistri Richardi de Anglia de conceptione Beate Virginis*.

171 Harald Lindkvist, *Richard Rolle's Meditatio de Passione Domini according to Ms Uppsala C 494*, Uppsala, 1917, p. 22.

172 Marielle Lamy, *L'immaculée conception*, op. cit., pp. 63–80.

173 On Richard de Mediavilla, see É. Amann, “Richard de Mediavilla”, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 13:2 (1939), cols. 2669–2675.

174 E.g. Uppsala, UB, C 176, fol. 94v: *et tunc constat Jeremiam et Johannem baptistam sanctificatos in*

175 Marielle Lamy, *L'immaculée conception*, op. cit., p. 395. On Richard Fitzralph, see also Michael O'Carroll, “Richard Fitzralph”, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 13 (1986), cols. 565–568.

176 On Richard de Saint-Laurent, see Aimé Solignac, “Richard de Saint-Laurent”, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 13 (1986), cols. 590–593.

177 Uppsala, UB, C 176, fol. 94: *Item exchidentes eam a peccato originali eam dampnant quem si non fuit peccator non indignit redemptione et si non indignit redemptione non fuit redempta nec salvata, igitur dampnata*.

178 Réjane Gay-Canton, *Entre dévotion et théologie scolastique*, op. cit., p. 189.

179 Ibid., fol. 95: *satis apte redempta a peccato, non quia habuit, sed quia secundum legem communem habuisset, nisi preter legem fuisset specialiter preservata*.

180 Réjane Gay-Canton summarizes this complex argument in a very clear way, see *Entre dévotion et théologie scolastique*, op. cit., p. 183.

Nota of “Richard of England” is placed in the manuscript to contradict the opinion of Bernard of Clairvaux, a fierce opponent of the Marian privilege. It is, however, representative of an early stage of the controversy, which does not yet know the argumentation of the theologians of the early fourteenth century.

Another manuscript containing texts related to the controversy is dated to the fifteenth century. A collection of Marian texts forms the first part of the book, while the *Speculum Humane Salvationis* forms the second part.¹⁸¹ In the Marian part, several texts are about the Immaculate Conception and are gathered together.¹⁸² The first text is a sermon for the Conception presented as the work of a “Richard”.¹⁸³ The gathering of texts on the controversy also contains an extract from the *Defensorium* of Adam Easton, in particular Chapter 23, which is especially about the Immaculate Conception. Then come several common *exempla* on the feast of the Conception.¹⁸⁴ Built on the theme *Necdum errant abyssi et ego iam concepta eram* (Prov. 8:24), the incipit of the sermon according to the catalogue of the C Collection would be: *Secundum opinionem illorum que dicunt virginem sine originali [peccato] conceptam*, which does not help in identifying it. However, right after those words the true start of the sermon appears: *Conceptionem beate Marie virginis, corde et voce simul totus consonet et congaudeat orbis*. This allows us to identify the sermon as the work of the Pseudo-Peter Comestor.¹⁸⁵ It is here presented under the name of Richard of St. Victor, which is a very common mistake. This sermon uses arguments that are typical from an early stage of the controversy. Its presence in a fifteenth-century manuscript is curious, since the arguments it refers to are obsolete with regard to the evolution of the

debate. However, the sermon is included in a set of texts that includes a “Defence” of Birgitta, which may indicate that it has been selected in order to strengthen Birgitta’s arguments about the Immaculate Conception. And indeed, Birgitta’s arguments are quite archaic. An older sermon has the advantage of fitting better with the spirit of the Swedish prophethood than the newest developments of the controversy.

Finally, a third manuscript refers to the Immaculate Conception. Composed by Michael Sunonis, canon of Västerås, then brother in Vadstena (1441–1469), the manuscript contains a short note attributed to yet another “Richard”.¹⁸⁶ It also contains two sermons for the Conception. The text of “Richard” is supposed to be by Richard of St. Victor according to the rubric, but the text is not immediately recognizable by the incipit given in the catalogue of the C Collection.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the identification is even more difficult due to a mix-up of the folios between fol. 26 and fol. 42. Thanks to the incipit however, it can be said that the text is an extract from the *Sermo de conceptione* of the Ps.-Petrus Comestor.¹⁸⁸ Since the version copied by Michael Sunonis is only a short extract, we may assume that it was copied from the preceding manuscript.

In those three manuscripts, an immaculist content is patent. Are there more witnesses about the controversy when we look at a Birgittine context?¹⁸⁹ The examination of the manuscripts shows an interest in the question of the Immaculate Conception, but this interest seems to dwell in individuals rather than to be a specific strategy developed by the Order of the Saviour. The devotion to the Immaculate Conception, then, is known and favourably received in Vadstena, but its defence cannot be considered systematic.

In two other manuscripts from Vadstena,

181 Uppsala, UB, C 193.

182 Ibid., fols. 3–16v.

183 Ibid., fol. 3: *De conceptione beate virginis secundum Ricardum*.

184 Ibid., fols. 10–12.

185 The sermon is edited in Pedro de Alva y Astorga, *Radii solis*, op. cit., cols. 614–621. On this sermon, see Marielle Lamy, *L'immaculée conception*, op. cit., pp. 76–80.

186 Uppsala, UB, C 349, fol. 26v.

187 Ibid.: *Absurdum videtur dicere carnem verbi aliquando subiacuisse peccato ...*

188 Pedro de Alva y Astorga, *Radii solis*, op. cit., col. 616.

189 For an example of Birgittine practices, see Jonas Carlquist, *Vadstenasystrarnas textvärld: Studier i systrarnas skriftbrukskompetens, lärdom och textförståelse*, Uppsala, 2007, pp. 49–50.

Uppsala, UB, C 15 and C 302, the decree of the thirty-sixth session of the Council of Basel about the Immaculate Conception is reproduced, and sermons are jointly proposed. In UUB C 15, the *Sermones de Conceptione* seem to be originals produced in Vadstena.¹⁹⁰ One of the sermons in this manuscript has been presented earlier in this paper: it is the sermon of the Ps.-Gerson. Strongly linked to the Council of Constance, this sermon has been copied during the Council of Basel. Since the thirty-sixth session of this council pronounced favourably on the question of the Immaculate Conception, what would be the point of reproducing an older sermon with older arguments? Reproducing older documents is a common thing in the history of the controversy, since the debates tend to use more and more references to authorities. An older text was perceived as perfectly apt in order to defend a current point of view. The decision to reproduce a text linked to the Council of Constance would then be of no particular consequence, except for the fact that the manuscript also contains texts directly connected to Birgitta. UUB C 15 contains a short original *Vita* of Birgitta, which gives us hints on the importance of establishing a biography of Birgitta when the manuscript was composed.¹⁹¹ The Council of Basel aggressively put the orthodoxy of Birgitta into question. I believe that a conflict of interest between the defence of the Immaculate Conception and the defence of Birgitta's orthodoxy could have been a reason for the choice of copying the *Sermo de Conceptione* rather than a newer sermon.

Johannes de Turrecremata (c. 1388–1468) was one of the main defenders of Birgitta, but also a fervent opponent of the Immaculate Concep-

tion.¹⁹² The orthodoxy of Birgitta's writings was confirmed by the Council of Basel in 1436, notably thanks to the efforts of Johannes de Turrecremata. It is possible that the redactor of C 15 chose not to weaken this decision by going against Johannes's anti-immaculist position. Therefore, instead of copying the defence of the Immaculate Conception composed at Basel by Juan de Segovia (end of the fourteenth century–1458?), the redactor of C 15 chose to copy an older text, potentially less dangerous to Birgitta's fame.¹⁹³ The conflict of interests between the orthodoxy of Birgitta, a fundamental question for the survival of the Order of the Saviour, and the question of the Immaculate Conception, which in the end might only have led to minor spiritual changes within the Order, since the feast was already being celebrated, is a possible cause for this cautious selection. In this regard, I find it interesting that the *Tractatus de veritate conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis*¹⁹⁴ of Johannes de Turrecremata does not exist in any Swedish archive, especially since several other texts from the theologian have been preserved.¹⁹⁵

The second manuscript containing the decree of Basel, written near 1476, was copied by Nils Ragvaldsson of Vadstena.¹⁹⁶ The decree of the Council of Basel in favour of the Immaculate Conception is reproduced among sermons that drew a lot from Birgitta, and especially the revelations pertaining to the Immaculate Conception. A *Nota aliqua de conceptione beate virginis*, on fol. 518v, is clearly designed as a defence of the Immaculate Conception, for it quotes Chapters 49 and 55 of

192 See Lamy, op. cit., pp. 393, 595.

193 For a summary of the discussions in Basel, see Cándido Pozo, "Culto mariano y definición de la Inmaculada en el Concilio de Basilea", in *De cultu mariano saeculis XII–XV*, vol. 2, Rome, 1981, pp. 67–98.

194 John of Torquemada, *Tractatus de veritate conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis*, London, 1869 (1547).

195 For example, we find the *Quaestiones evangeliorum*, Basel, 1484 and the *Expositio super psalterio*, s.l., s.d. kept in Uppsala. See Isak Collijn, *Katalog der Inkunabeln der Schwedischen Öffentlichen Bibliotheken*, II: *Katalog der Inkunabeln der Kgl. Universitäts-Bibliothek zu Uppsala*, Uppsala, 1907.

196 On Nils Ragvaldsson, see Carl Silfverstolpe, *Klosterfolket i Vadstena. Personhistoriska anteckningar*, Stockholm, 1898, pp. 94–95.

190 For example, the sermon on fols. 19v–21v *Candor est lucis eterne ...* [Sap. 7:26] *De hodierna festivitate conceptionis virginis Marie aliquantulum loquturus timeo...* contains on fol. 21r a quotation from Birgitta.

191 See Tore Nyberg, "Introduction", in Marguerite Tjader Harris (ed.), *Birgitta of Sweden. Life and selected revelations*, New York, 1990, p. 15; Ansgar Frenken, "The Canonization of St. Birgitta of Sweden – Problems of a Canonization in the time of the Great Western Schism and the Reformation Councils," *Kyrklig rätt och kyrklig orätt – kyrkorättsliga perspektiv. Festskrift till professor Bertil Nilsson*, Skellefteå, 2016, pp. 445–468.

Book VI, among others. It seems that when the Birgittines were exposed to the controversy of the Immaculate Conception, they tried to take cover behind Birgitta's opinions. The *auctoritas* of the foundress of their Order was well established when the manuscript was composed. However, it is peculiar that Nils Ragvaldsson preferred to copy the decree of the Council of Basel, not universally acknowledged, rather than the most recent decisions regarding the Immaculate Conception made by Pope Sixtus IV.

UUB C 302 was composed during a new recurrence of the debate, which led to the intervention of Sixtus IV. In a context of opposition by the Thomists of the Dominican Observance, the choice of a Confessor General of Vadstena to support the Franciscan pope is to be noted. The quarrels that flared anew in the 1480s–1500s about the Immaculate Conception, such as Vincent Bandelli's affairs, or the affairs of Wigand Wirt, do not seem to have touched Sweden, but were limited to Italy and Germany.¹⁹⁷ It could be that attending the local university, Uppsala, instead of going to Leipzig, which was a hotspot of the debate (1489, 1494, 1501–1503), had the effect of cutting Swedish clerics off from the controversy.¹⁹⁸ It is interesting also to note that Vadstena seems to have had no

text from the maculist and immaculist theologians at the end of the fifteenth century. Considering the very high position of the Virgin Mary in Birgittine devotion, this is peculiar. The authorities selected in Vadstena to evoke the conception of the Virgin are Richard of St. Victor, Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux ..., that is, prestigious authors whose opinions did not reflect the current development of the controversy. Bernard of Clairvaux or Richard of St. Victor, or the works attributed to them, were traditional authorities in the controversy. The mode of argumentation used in this case was heavily dependent on the *auctoritates*. Moreover, those authors often expressed ideas about the feast and not about the doctrinal problem. Such an absence of the fifteenth-century actors in the debate in the library of Vadstena may be explained by the non-involvement of the Order in the debate, and also by the pastoral goals of the “practical theology” in favour at Vadstena.

Conclusion

To conclude, the tracks of the Immaculate Conception controversy are uneven in late medieval Sweden. The liturgical formularies are extremely cautious, and mostly show concern for the Feast of the Conception, not for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. A similar caution is to be noted in Birgitta's writings and legacy. Only two revelations in a corpus of approximately 700 are explicitly immaculist. Birgittine preachers did show a real interest in the Immaculate Conception, several being explicitly in favour of the privilege, such as Acho Iohannis and Nils Ragvaldsson. The sermons they composed or copied were either very common or absolutely original. Since some sermons were revised so that they could be effectively preached, it is possible to say that a transmission of immaculist themes in Sweden was made via the preaching at Vadstena. However, there was no particular enthusiasm for the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin in the Swedish monastery. Vadstena was far from being a strong centre of immaculist propaganda, such as the monastery of Sponheim, for example, where the abbot Johannes Trithemius led an aggres-

197 On Bandelli's affair, see Xavier Le Bachelet, “Immaculée Conception”, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 7:1 (1930), cols. 1119–1125; Martina Wehrli-Johns, “L'Immaculée Conception après le concile de Bâle dans les provinces dominicaines et franciscaines de Teutonie et de Saxe: débats et iconographie”, *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 10 (2012) [<http://acrh.revues.org/4280>]. On Wigand Wirt's affair, see *ibid.* and Clément Schmitt, “La controverse allemande de l'Immaculée Conception. L'intervention et le procès de Wigand Wirt, O.P. (1494–1513)”, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 45 (1952), pp. 397–450.

198 On the foundation of the university of Uppsala, see Élisabeth Mornet, “À la périphérie du réseau universitaire médiéval: la fondation des universités d'Uppsala et de Copenhague, entre imitation et spécificité”, *Revue d'histoire nordique*, 5 (2007), pp. 207–224. On the frequentation of the University of Leipzig by Swedes, see Georg Erler (ed.), *Die Matrikel der Universität Leipzig*, Leipzig, 1895, vol. 1. The most recent book on the subject, edited by Olle Ferm and Sara Risberg, could not be thoroughly investigated at the time of the redaction of this article; see Olle Ferm and Sara Risberg, *Swedish Students at the University of Leipzig*, Stockholm, 2014.

sive campaign in favour of the Marian privilege. In Vadstena, it is more probably loyalty toward tradition, that is, toward Birgitta, which explains the interest in the Immaculate Conception, rather than the doctrinal content by itself. Apart from the Birgittines and the liturgy, few traces of the controversy have been preserved. Only one other manuscript, of Franciscan origin, mentions it. It is impossible to know if the sermon it contains was preached or not. However, its very existence suggests that, aside from liturgy and Vadstena, a third chain of transmission of immaculist ideas may have existed in Sweden.

List of abbreviations

- AH: Clemens Blume & Guido M. Dreves (ed.), *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, 55 vols. + index, Leipzig, 1886–1922 (repr. Frankfurt 1961; index 1978).
- aptatus: adapted (for the Feast of the Conception)
- BAr: *Breviarium Arosiense*, Basel, Jakob von Pforzheim, 1513.
- BLi: Knut Peters (ed.), *Breviarium Lincopense*, 4 vols., Lund, Laurentius Petri Sällskapet, 1950–1955, Laurentius Petri sällskapetets urkundsserie 5:1–4 ; *Breviarium Lincopense*, Nuremberg, Georg Stuchs, 1493.
- BMV: *Beatae Mariae Virginis*
- BnF: *Bibliothèque nationale de France*
- BSc: Christer Pahlmblad (ed.), *Breviarium Scarense* (1498). *Faksimil efter exemplaret i Uppsala universitetsbibliotek*, Skara, Stiftelsen Skaramissalet, 2011; *Breviarium Scarense*, Nuremberg, Georg Stuchs, 1498.
- BSt: *Breviarium Strengnense*, Stockholm, Johannes Fabri Smedh, 1495.
- BU: *Breviarium Upsalense*, Stockholm, Johannes et Anna Fabri Smedh, 1496.
- Cantus: Waterloo (CA), University of Waterloo [Online: <http://cantusdatabase.org/>].
- CCSA: *Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum*
- CCSL: *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
- CO: Eugène Moeller, Jean-Marie Clément, Bertrand Coppieters & Wallant (ed.), *Corpus orationum*, 12 vols., Turnhout, 1992–2003, CCSL 160, 160A, 160B, 160C, 160D, 160E, 160F, 160G, 160H, 160I, 160J, 160K.
- CPL: Eligius Dekkers & Aemilius Gaar (eds.), *Clavis patrum latinorum*, Steenbrugge, Abbatia Sancti Petri, 1995 (3rd ed.)
- CUL: *Cambridge University Library*
- DS: *Diplomatarium Suecanum*
- GAr: Toni Schmid (ed.), *Graduale arosiense impressum*, Lund, Berlingska, 1959–1965, Laurentius Petri sällskapetets urkundsserie 7:1.
- GW: *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz [Online: <http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/>].
- ISTC: *Incunabula Short Title Catalog*, London, British Library [Online: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/>].
- KB: *Kungliga Biblioteket*
- MAB: *Missale Aboense*, Lübeck, Bartholomeus Ghotan, 1488.
- MSt: *Missale Strengnense*, Stockholm, Bartholomeus Ghotan, 1487.
- MUV: *Missale Upsalense vetus*, Stockholm, Johann Snell, 1484.
- MUN: *Missale Upsalense novus*, Basel, Jakob von Pforzheim, 1513.
- PL: Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Latina*, 221 vols., 1844–1879.
- SDHK: *Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek*, Stockholm, Riksarkivet (v. 2013) [Online: <http://www.nad.riksarkivet.se/SDHK>].
- SRD: Jacobus Langebek (ed.), *Scriptores rerum Danicarum Medii Aevi*, 9 vols., Copenhagen, 1772–1878
- UB: *Universitetsbibliotek*

Abstract

In this paper I discuss the documents related to the debate about the Immaculate Conception in late medieval Sweden or, more precisely, the scarcity of sources about the controversy. The complex relation between the doctrinal controversy and the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin Mary is examined, especially through liturgical sources. A detailed medieval commentary on the texts and songs used for this feast is examined, as well as hypotheses concerning the absence of a connection between the liturgy for the feast and the doctrinal idea of the Immaculate Conception. In a second part of the paper, I examine writings of St. Birgitta that have been presented in previous scholarship as evidence for her immaculist position, an argument that I would like to nuance. Following the analysis of Birgitta's writings comes an investigation of sermons produced or used by the Birgittines. Finally, several manuscripts from the C Collection at Uppsala University Library that contain tracks of immaculist ideas are reviewed and commented on in relation to the general controversy.

Appendix

Arguments Used in the Controversy about the Immaculate Conception (7th–14th c.)

Table made after Marielle Lamy, *L'Immaculée Conception. Étapes et enjeux d'une controverse (XII^e–XV^e s.)*, Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000.

MACULISM			IMMACULISM	
Perfection of the Son	Mary, conceived according to the common law	Formal arguments	No proof of a “reason for affliction” in sexual intercourse	If there is affliction, the overabundance of grace compensates it
(12th c.) The privilege of Mary can't exceed the privilege of the Son (argument of the dignity of the Universal Redeemer)	(7th c.) Sanctification at the moment of the Annunciation	(12th c.) No tradition for the feast	(12th c.) Sexuality before the Fall was bereft of passion or concupiscence	(12th c.) The unity of the Mother and the Son in one flesh means that the start of the existence of Mary is also the start of the Incarnation.
	(12th c.) It is improper to celebrate an act of sin	(12th c.) No approbation by the head of the Church	(12th c.) New attitude, more positive, toward matrimony	(14th c.) The predestination of Mary to be the mother of the divine excludes original sin (= preventative sanctification)
	(12th c.) It is improper to celebrate the Virgin when she is only unformed matter rather than human	(12th c.) No justification for the feast: the Nativity of the Virgin is enough (if she had not been born, she would not have been conceived)	(12th c.) The sin of the parents (if there is one) does not necessarily affect the child	(14th c.) Theory of the Preservative Redemption and argument of the Perfect Mediator
	(12th c.) Sanctification <i>in utero</i>	(12th c.) Celebrating the Conception is against the dogma of original sin	(12th c.) Distinction between generation and conception	(14th c.) Suitability argument: God could (<i>potuit</i>), it was suitable (<i>deciuit</i>) and so he did it (<i>fecit</i>)
	(13th c.) The exception is improper, since it troubles the order of the law and hierarchies	(12th c.) The Virgin does not care about false honours	(12th c.) Theory of the Special Inalterable Seed, from Adam	(14th c.) Mary could not have been exposed to original sin, since this attracts the hatred of God and it is not conceivable that God hates Mary

MACULISM			IMMACULISM	
Perfection of the Son	Mary, conceived according to the common law	Formal arguments	No proof of a “reason for affliction” in sexual intercourse	If there is affliction, the overabundance of grace compensates it
	(13th c.) Sanctification happens before or at the instant of animation	(12th c.) Vocabulary: Spiritual Conception only means Spiritual Birth (Baptism)	(12th c.) Difference between carnal conception and animation	(14th c.) Theory of Privileges, influenced by law: the privilege granted exalts the power of the King, who can modify the law because he is the source of the law
	(14th c.) Perfect mediation means preservation from all actual sin, but not from original sin	(13th c.) Vocabulary: the conception means only the animation		
	(14th c.) Impropriety of the preservation from sin, even if this is probable	(13th c.) The feast of the Conception must not be the celebration of the sanctification of the Virgin, but the Nativity of the Virgin must		
	(14th c.) Being exempt from original sin is not necessarily the highest honour	(14th c.) There is a contradiction between the immaculist doctrine and Scripture: this goes against the authority of the Church. Immaculism is therefore unacceptable		