

Continuity and Change

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Messenger Manuscripts and Mechanisms of Change

THE BIRGITTINE MOTHER HOUSE in Vadstena has sometimes been described as a cultural institution of the medieval period, and rightly so, because Vadstena Abbey certainly played roles other than those connected to its being the house of a religious order, with everything that implies. *Diarium Vadstenense*, the detailed memorial book of the brothers at Vadstena, contains many accounts of visiting kings and queens.¹ The same source also shows that the political issues of the day were of interest for the convent members. Thus exposed to the world outside the cloister walls, the male convent served as a channel for influence of various kinds from abroad. To a lesser degree, the lines of influence also worked in the opposite direction. A cultural *translatio* from abroad should not be understood in the sense that everything that originated in other countries was slavishly copied; indeed, it should also be understood in the sense that the brothers, as well as many others, were actually affected by this influence: it came to mean something to them and brought with it a change of manner regarding many things, including the Church and even life.

Many priest brothers had studied abroad before entering the monastery, and even after embracing the religious life several of them were sent on missions to other countries. The large synods of Constance and Basle in the first half of the fifteenth century saw delegates coming from a huge number of ecclesiastical institutions and monasteries in many countries. The delegates took part in the proceedings and sometimes brought books with them back home. Many others were sent out on missions for the order itself, which means that they visited other Birgittine houses throughout Europe, something that gave them excellent opportunities to pick up new ideas and trends, and to learn what was happening out there.

1 See for example Gejrot 2000. *The Diarium Vadstenense* (DV) is edited in Gejrot 1996.

The last few decades have seen a number of studies addressing the issue of cultural import to medieval Vadstena. Some scholars have approached the topic from the point of view of translation.² Others have focused more on literary techniques such as methods for textual composition,³ and still others discuss the travelling of ideas.⁴ The priest brother Thorirus Andreae serves as an example. In 1414 he was sent out to the Council in Konstanz and reported back to his confessor general regarding the contentions and conflicts resulting from the allegedly heretical movements led by well-known thinkers such as Jan Hus, John Wyclif and Jerome of Prague that are so important for the development of thought within Western Christianity. On his way back to Sweden he stopped at two Birgittine houses, one in Germany and the other in Denmark, where he could easily discuss what he had heard and seen with his fellow brothers.⁵ As Monica Hedlund has demonstrated, when Katillus Thorberni returned to Vadstena from Syon Abbey after its foundation, he brought with him books, for example works of the mystic Richard Rolle, and a most interesting theological debate between advocates of Catholicism on the one side and the teachings of the Lollards on the other.⁶

Saying that Vadstena Abbey was not an isolated outpost in the far north, but rather that it formed part of the same theological, philosophical and intellectual milieu as the rest of Europe, would perhaps be a way of stating the obvious. However, when we take a look at the last leaf (306r) of the Uppsala University Library, MS C 220, this all becomes remarkably evident and clear. C 220 is a miscellanea volume that was in the possession of a university student (probably Swedish) in Bohemia in the 1430s.⁷ In this short addition, written after the book had been brought to Sweden, an unknown scribe speaks about the reform movements in Sweden and Vadstena.⁸ We learn, for example, that the Pope was wrong to give properties (*bona*) to churches and monasteries, that there should be no more than two altars in the abbey church in Vadstena, that in other convents there should be only one, that below the altars demons are barking

2 The classic studies are Wollin 1981 and 1983, but the same author has also pursued the theme in a number of more recent studies; see for example Wollin 2007 with further references. See also Carlquist 2007, esp. pp. 95–147.

3 For example Andersson 1998, 2001 and 2015; Hedlund 2006, 2007a, 2008 and 2011.

4 Hedlund 1991, 1996 and 2006; see also several essays collected in Härdelin 1998 and (parts of) Härdelin 2005.

5 Andersson 2001, pp. 199–200.

6 Hedlund 1996.

7 For a description of this manuscript, see MHUU 3 (1990), pp. 72–83.

8 The text has been edited and studied by Toni Schmid (1937).

like dogs (*sub altariis latrant demones sicut canes*) and that the number of parish churches in Sweden should be drastically reduced, because the distance between them should ideally be two miles (*miliaria*). I quote this text only to give an illustration of the fact that Vadstena Abbey was a place where debate took place, and where influences in theological and other matters were channelled. Such an exchange of ideas does not just happen; it needs vehicles and mechanisms. The overall aim of this contribution is to discuss and exemplify a few of these mechanisms.

We have already touched upon one of them, which has to do with the written word, that is, with books. The book I just quoted from (C 220) was brought to Vadstena by a former university student, and besides the quoted addition, this manuscript contains copies of texts that were debated throughout Europe, because central issues of the Catholic faith were at stake. We meet Jean Gerson, Matthew of Crakowia and Jan Milič, but also the most contentious of them all, Jan Hus (his tract *De sanguine Christi*), including a number of documents related to the Hussite controversies in Prague.

Below I will try to investigate further into the role the manuscripts themselves played to enable the change to take place. And that is why I call them *messenger manuscripts*. I will place particular focus on what happens to sermon manuscripts and the texts contained therein after they have been incorporated in the abbey library. How were they used by the priest brothers for their own education or for the benefit of those listening to their sermons? The examples are mostly taken from my own previous research.

KONRAD VON SACHSEN

In my 2001 study of sermons for the eighth Sunday after Trinity I came across Konrad von Sachsen (or Conradus Holtnicker de Sachsonia), who was a well-known Franciscan theologian in the thirteenth century (he died in 1279).⁹ His importance for the diffusion of ascetical mysticism and Marian devotion cannot be overestimated. In particular is he known for his *Speculum beatae Mariae virginis*, which is preserved in hundreds of manuscripts throughout Europe. However, he also wrote sermons, and Vadstena Abbey held several copies of these, as well as of the *Speculum*. Konrad's sermon legacy was used as an important source for several Vadstena priest brothers, but the sermons were not copied

9 Andersson 2001, pp. 88–90. It should be noted that the examples I give here and in the following sections about Franciscus de Abbatibus and the Björkvik homiliary are taken only from my analyses of sermons for the eighth Sunday after Trinity; for details and for other sources besides those mentioned here, see Andersson 1998 and 2001.

slavishly, word for word. Instead, they were adapted in different ways to suit the particular needs of the Swedish preachers. Let me give one example.

The manuscript Uppsala University Library MS C 352, contains such an adaptation.¹⁰ It was written in Vadstena already in the latter part of the fourteenth century, and it testifies to the mode of sermon composition prevalent in these early days in the history of the monastery. Foreign sermon collections were used as source books from which the brothers could gather *materia praedicabilis*. The original authors are normally not regarded as authorities. In fact, their names are only rarely even mentioned. This is also the case with the version of Konrad's sermons in C 352. The medieval preacher left it to modern scholarship to identify the sources he had used. The text is also expanded by means of a great number of quotations from the Revelations of Saint Birgitta. Now, what happened with this manuscript once it had been assigned its proper location in the library – in this case the first book on the first shelf in bookcase E, which contained mainly homiletical writings – was that it was almost immediately picked up by the priest brothers as a reference tool. One of them composed his sermons, now in Uppsala University Library and referenced as MS C 305 (in the preacher's own hand-writing),¹¹ shortly after the writing down of the alleged exemplar (C 352). According to Monica Hedlund,¹² the scribal hand occurs in other Vadstena manuscripts, but remains as yet unidentified. Hedlund argues that it was written at the very beginning of the fifteenth century.

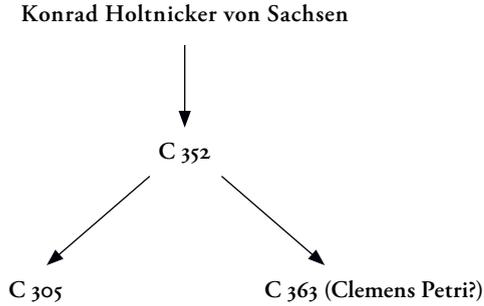
Another preacher using the sermons of Konrad von Sachsen lived much later, and his sermons have come into the possession of Uppsala University Library, referenced as MS C 363. The hand-writing of that manuscript is very similar to that of the Confessor General Clemens Petri,¹³ and if that holds true the sermons were not written until the end of the fifteenth century. What Clemens does (if it was him) is change the structure a bit. However, we can be fairly sure that he used C 352 as his main source. All quotes from Saint Birgitta in this particular sermon in C 352 also find their way into Clemens's own copy, and in exactly the same order. The tradition from Konrad is illustrated in the table overleaf:

¹⁰ MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 356–362.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–33.

¹² Hedlund 1996, p. 85.

¹³ Clemens Petri was confessor general between 1488 and 1499. For condensed biographical information about most of the Vadstena priests mentioned in this article, see the on-line resource *Medieval Nordic Literature in Latin* (MNL).



FRANCISCUS DE ABBATIBUS

Another Franciscan writing in a similar vein to Konrad von Sachsen is Franciscus de Abbatibus, who died before 1350. His sermons belong to a group of foreign sources that were used extensively by the Vadstena preachers.¹⁴ One of these, belonging to the early generation, was the learned Johannes Suenonis senior.¹⁵ He studied first in Prague, then in Bologna, and then eventually came back to Prague. The university in Prague had developed into a kind of centre for new currents in theology, and the term *devotio Bohemica* has been coined to capture at least one of its important characteristics, namely the focus on personal belief and sincere devotion. This was partly in opposition to the hegemony of the priests and the papacy. When Johannes Suenonis studied in Prague, he made a copy of a collection of Sunday sermons composed by Franciscus de Abbatibus. When he entered Vadstena Abbey in 1387 he brought this book, which is now Uppsala University Library MS C 14,¹⁶ with him, and it was soon given its proper location in the reference library of the brothers, and assigned the shelf mark E III 12, that is the twelfth volume on the third bookshelf in bookcase E.

One of those who eventually found it there was the renowned preacher Johannes Giurderi, often called simply Johannes Præst ('Johannes the Priest'). He had a remarkable reputation as a preacher, and was in some quarters known as 'the second Chrysostomos', since he had a 'golden mouth' and knew practically the entire Bible by heart.¹⁷ Johannes Præst used his colleague Johannes

¹⁴ Andersson 2001, pp. 98–102.

¹⁵ Hårdelin 1998, pp. 95–120.

¹⁶ MHUU 1 (1988), pp. 148–151.

¹⁷ Andersson 2001, pp. 26–27 with reference to the sources.

Suenonis's copy as one of several sources when he himself put together his immense sermon collection. This collection has not been preserved in Johannes Præst's own hand, but a nearly contemporary copy is still extant, now in Uppsala University Library (MS C 270).¹⁸

But that is not all. Besides Konrad von Sachsen, the preacher and scribe who wrote C 305 made use of the anonymous copy of Johannes Præst's elaboration of Johannes Suenonis's elaboration of Franciscus de Abbatibus's sermon collection. But, not any more than Johannes Præst copied Johannes Suenonis word by word, did the scribe of C 305 copy his exemplar *verbatim*. Instead, he added substantially, and the most important part of these additions consists of quotations, some of them very long, from the Revelations of Saint Birgitta.

Nevertheless, Johannes Suenonis and his followers were not the only ones to use the sermons of Franciscus de Abbatibus. For example, another popular preacher made good use of this source in one of his sermons intended for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. Stykarius Thyrgilli was formerly a parish priest in Kuddby, not very far from Linköping, and one of the first priests at Vadstena Abbey, where he died in 1416. He was a talented and independent-minded composer of Latin sermons. His sermons are preserved in a paper codex, partially dated to 1379, which is now Uppsala University Library MS C 391.¹⁹ There are good reasons to assume that the exemplar he followed was in fact Johannes Suenonis's own copy in C 14.

As if this was not enough, Stykarius's manuscript C 391 was thoroughly studied by the well-known and important preacher and sermon composer Johannes Borquardi.²⁰ In a sermon on *Attendite a falsis prophetis* (Matthew 7:15), taken from one of his large manuscript sermon books, Uppsala University Library MS C 330, he uses Stykarius' manuscript C 391 as one of his principal sources.²¹

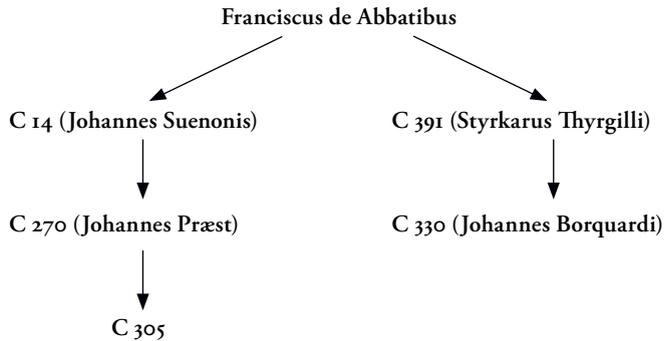
This last chain of textual use, reuse and transmission is summarised in a table overleaf:

18 MHUU 3 (1990), pp. 232–239.

19 MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 592–600.

20 Johannes Borquardi entered Vadstena in 1428 and died on a mission to Finland in 1447.

21 For positive evidence that Johannes Borquardi used C 391, see Andersson 2001, p. 101.



DIFFUSION TO PARISH CHURCHES

Vadstena Abbey was certainly not only a receiver of influence from abroad. In its turn, the monastery made a considerable imprint on the world outside the monastic walls, including the field of preaching. Monica Hedlund has drawn attention to a form for receipts concerning the lending of sermon collections to parish priests found in one Vadstena manuscript.²² Another remarkable example is provided by the so-called Björkvik homiliary, now in Uppsala University Library (MS C 332).²³ On the first leaf of this sermon collection, written in the second half of the fifteenth century and containing a complete set of Sunday model sermons from 1 Advent to the 25th Sunday after Trinity, a short note reads:

This book was lent to the reverend Daniel Hemmingi, vicar in Björkvik in the diocese of Strängnäs, by the brothers of Vadstena monastery.²⁴

It is further stated that after the vicar's death the book should be returned to the abbey. An investigation into the sources of these sermons could therefore give us an idea about the kinds of spirituality and theology that were diffused from the abbey to the secular clergy. The method I used for my preliminary study on one of the sermons, published in 1998,²⁵ was a combination of traditional textual criticism and my own reading of continental collections of model sermons. The

22 Hedlund 1995, esp. pp. 242–246.

23 MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 253–259.

24 'Iste liber concessus est domino Danieli Hemmingi, curato in Birkewik dyocesis Strengensis, a fratribus monasterii Watzstenensis.' C 332, fol. 1v; here quoted from Andersson 1998, p. 186.

25 Ibid.; see also Andersson 2001, pp. 108–110.

information about the sources found in the manuscript catalogue (MHUU) was an indispensable point of departure.

It proved possible to establish a long line of influence, covering a time span of more than two hundred years and a geographical area including several European countries. The sermons that eventually ended up in the parish of Björkvik constitute the end point of a considerable textual development. Its immediate source is a series of sermons written by a Vadstena priest known only by his first name, Henechinus, who entered the abbey in 1440 and died there in 1453.²⁶ In his turn Henechinus has used several different sources. The sermon in question begins with a short exposition of the Gospel text taken mainly from the Bible gloss by Nicolaus de Lyra (from the beginning of the fourteenth century). It thereafter follows a protheme, or an *exordium*, which is ultimately taken from a sermon by the Franciscan friar Nicolaus de Aquaevilla, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century and was possibly of French origin. He is here mediated by an older colleague of Henechinus, the famous Acho Iohannis who was later to become bishop in Västerås. The main part of the sermon is an amalgamation of influences from the well-known Jacobus de Voragine and the highly productive fourteenth-century Augustinian hermit Jordanus de Quedlinburg.²⁷ Henechinus did not, however, quote directly from any of these sources, but in this case resorted to an older colleague, Finvidus Simonis, who belonged to the first generation of preachers and died in 1424.

From this section and from what was said earlier about Konrad von Sachsen and Franciscus de Abbatibus, it seems quite clear that the Vadstena sermon in its peak years, the middle of the fifteenth century, was heavily dependent on not only the collections of model sermons of continental origin but also on the “in-house” homiletical production of older Vadstena priest brothers.

MATHIAS LINCOPENSIS

Surprisingly little is hitherto known about to what degree Mathias Lincopensis's pastoral and homiletical writings influenced the preaching of the priest brothers at Vadstena, once the order was established and the religious life in Vadstena had begun.

It would perhaps be superfluous to remind the reader that Mathias was one of the most important theologians and prolific writers in medieval Sweden and

²⁶ DV 637.

²⁷ On Jacobus, see for example Bertini Guidetti 1998, pp. 31–40; on Jordanus, see the reference in Andersson 2001, p. 87, note 187.

that he had an international reputation.²⁸ This is not contradicted by the scarcity of source material concerning his biography, and some claim that he made translations or adaptations of exegetical works into Old Swedish. We do not know when he was born, but there are fairly good reasons to believe that he died in 1350 in Stockholm.

Mathias was important for the spiritual development of Birgitta and for the success of her Revelations. He wrote the impressive foreword to Book 1, with the *incipit* known as *Stupor et mirabilia*. In the Revelations he is repeatedly mentioned, albeit only rarely by name, as the one who could tell a good spirit from an evil one, i.e. one mastering the art of *discretio spirituum*. He was the theological expert needed to legitimise the prophetic claims of Birgitta and the divine origin of her visions.

Mathias wrote a handbook for preachers, laying out the entire history of mankind and salvation, and the most important elements of Christian faith. In an appendix to this work, the *Homo conditus*, Mathias added a series of sermon sketches, or beginnings of a set of sermons covering the whole of the ecclesiastical year, both for Sundays and for saints' feast days. These short texts were explicitly meant to be used as preaching aids in order to give the preacher a hint regarding which subjects could be of particular interest for the different celebrations throughout the year. Indeed, it would be quite surprising if such a practical tool was not used by the brothers.

In the theology of Master Mathias, as represented in, for example, works such as the *Homo conditus*, we see a clear influence from a rather austere Franciscan spirituality, and an almost programmatic disdain for the hair-splitting refinery of the schools, all this in favour of a theology aimed at personal contrition, repentance and imitation of Christ's life. If the preachers actually used Mathias's work, this would also mean that such particular spiritual approaches were transmitted not only to the monastery itself, but also through the brothers' sermons to everybody who visited the church, from peasants to high ranking nobility.

I recently published a minor pilot investigation, and I will here summarise the most important findings.²⁹ First of all, it is perfectly clear that the abbey library held a copy of *Homo conditus*. Apart from a few extracts and minor pieces, this work has come down to us in two copies: Uppsala University Library MSS C 217 and C 387.³⁰ Only in the latter case do we know that the book in

²⁸ Piltz 1985–1987.

²⁹ Andersson 2015.

³⁰ MHUU 3 (1990), p. 52, and 4 (1991), pp. 562–564.

question belonged to the abbey library. This may have also been the case for the first copy, C 217, but there is no positive evidence for this, apart from its having been written in the diocese of Linköping. C 387 was incorporated into the library in 1404 by its scribe and previous owner, Johannes Johannis. Moreover, the possibility that there are lost manuscripts of *Homo conditus* cannot be ruled out. Thus, it was certainly possible for the Vadstena preachers to quote from Mathias's work. But did they do so?

Yes, they did, and this even to a considerable degree. Throughout the fifteenth century, several of the most renowned priests quoted from *Homo conditus* at the beginning of their sermons and then went on with material collected from other model collections or pieces they developed and composed themselves. The reason why this had not been noticed before is without doubt that the sources are never spelled out in the manuscripts, something that makes it almost impossible to spot them. In the sermons studied I found at least eleven quotations from *Homo conditus*. These are as follows:

Preacher	Occasion in sermon	Homo conditus (HC)	Occasion in HC
<i>Johannes Borquardi</i>			
C 392, fol. 12v	Dom. Quadragesime	Piltz 1984, p. 173	Dom. Quadragesime
C 331, fol. 45r	De angelis	Piltz 1984, p. 201	De angelis
<i>Ericus Simonis</i>			
C 10, fol. 13v	Tercia die pasche	Piltz 1984, p. 178	Die pasche
C 48, fol. 278r–v	St Sigfridus	Piltz 1984, p. 194	St Sigfridus
<i>Jacobus Laurentii</i>			
C 396, fol. 174r	St Laurentius	Piltz 1984, p. 198	St Laurentius
<i>Clemens Petri</i>			
C 321, fol. 341v	Feria 3 ^a pasche	Piltz 1984, p. 178	Easter Day
C 321, fol. 182r	Dom. 2 post pascha	Piltz 1984, p. 180	Dom. 2 post pascha
C 321, fol. 188r	2 ^a die pentecostes	Piltz 1984, p. 183	2a die pentecostes
C 321, fol. 266r	Die 4 ^a pentecostes	Piltz 1984, p. 183	2a die pentecostes
C 308, fol. 247r	St Laurentius	Piltz 1984, p. 199	St Laurentius
<i>Anonymous</i>			
C 312, fol. 11r	Dom. 5 post pasche	Piltz 1984, p. 181	Dom. 5 post pasche

Let me present one of these in more detail. From the discussion above, we are already familiar with Johannes Borquardi. The passage in question is taken from the beginning of a sermon intended for the First Sunday in Lent, the *Dominica Quadragesime*. The manuscript is Uppsala University Library, MS C 392.³¹ In the quoted passage, Mathias tells us that there is a time for healing and a time for sickness. All our time is given to us as a preparation for the eternal bliss, but Mathias, and with him Johannes Borquardi, continues by saying that not even during Lent does man abstain from sin. Johannes Borquardi quotes this almost *verbatim* from *Homo conditus*. After the parallel ends, he returns to the setting of the preaching event, and connects Mathias's words to the Gospel text of the day: Jesus Christ took on penance even though he did not have to, being without sin (*quia peccatum nullum fecit nec inuentus est dolus in ore eius*). By fasting forty days in the desert, as is said in today's Gospel (*ut dicit ewangelium hodiernum*), he gave us an example how to do penance (*ut nobis exemplum penitentiam agendi monstraret*). It all becomes very clear if we put the texts side by side, see p. 35.³²

This is also exactly the way the other preachers using *Homo conditus* proceed. Precisely as was intended by Mathias, they use the sermon sketches for their prothemes. They quote what they find appropriate or fitting to introduce the main topic of the sermon, and then they turn to another model source text or express themselves in a more personal way.

CONCLUSION

Vadstena Abbey imported manuscripts, and book import was one of the main channels for new ideas to make their way into the religious life at Vadstena. Other channels were, for example, journeys abroad or visits from abroad – or at least from the world outside the abbey walls.³³ These manuscript books ('messenger manuscripts') were either bought, copied or used as sources of inspiration for the writings of the brothers, that is, for the texts they produced themselves.

When it comes to the 'mechanisms of change' I would like to view this from a very concrete angle. In order to do so we need to address some questions related to the very conditions for what is usually called the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages. There are a couple of points that I would like to mention concerning conditions that favour a certain susceptibility for – or openness to – new perspectives. When I speak about this susceptibility it is easy to draw parallels to modern times, when ideas travel faster than light due to immense

³¹ MHUU 4 (1991), pp. 601–612.

³² Quoted from Andersson 2015, p. 179.

³³ On Vadstena's book acquisitions, see Walta 2014, pp. 56–110.

Johannes Borquardi. C 392, fol. 12v	<i>Homo conditus</i> , Piltz (ed.) 1984, p. 173
<p>Dominica Inuocauit vel dominica prima quadagesime sermo primus. <i>Ductus est Ihesus in desertum a spiritu vt temptaretur a dyabolo</i> Mt iiij [Matth. 4:1]. Karissimi, Sapiens dicit: <i>tempus est infirmitatis et tempus est medele</i> [cfr Ier. 8:15, Eccl. 18:21]. Sed heu, multi sunt qui totum annum sibi faciunt tempus infirmitatis, non attendentes, quod omne tempus dedit nobis Deus ad procurandum et laborandum nostram perpetuam salutem. Sed nos illud conuertimus nobis in infirmitatem et mortem. Ita quod vix adhuc isto sacro quadagesimali tempore volumus a peccato abstinere et preterita peccata emendare, non aduertentes quod istud tempus specialiter nobis pro salute nostra datum est, sicut dicit apostolus ij ad Cor vj (2 Cor. 6:2): <i>Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis</i>. Vere dies salutis, quos Dominus noster Ihesus Christus, saluator et redemptor noster, suo ieiunio et abstinentia consecrauit et nobis imitandos et seruandos suo exemplo exhibuit et commendauit, si salutis eius participes fieri velimus. Vere dies salutis sunt isti quadagesime dies, in quibus medicamentum eterne salutis quod est penitencia suscipi debet. Penitencia siquidem est salubre medicamentum, quod omnia peccatorum vulnera sanat. Hanc Dominus noster Ihesus Christus sibi assumpsit, licet ea non indiguit, quia peccatum nullum fecit nec inuentus est dolus in ore eius. Assumpsit autem eam, quando isto sacro tempore quadraginta diebus in deserto ieiunauit, vt dicit ewangelium hodiernum, vt nobis exemplum penitenciam agendi monstraret ...</p>	<p>Dominica Quadagesime.</p> <p>Sapiens dicit esse <i>tempus infirmitatis et tempus medele</i>. Heu, quod multi totum annum faciunt sibi esse tempus infirmitatis. Omne siquidem tempus dedit nobis Dominus ad procurandum nostram perpetuam salutem. Nos illud conuertimus nobis in infirmitatem et mortem, et vix adhuc isto sacro Quadagesimali tempore volumus a peccatis abstinere et preterita emendare non aduertentes quod hoc tempus specialiter nobis pro salute nostra datum est, sicut dicit apostolus secunda ad Corinthios sexto dicens:</p> <p><i>Ecce nunc</i>, inquit, <i>dies salutis</i>. Vere dies salutis, quos Saluator ipse suo ieiunio consecrauit et nobis imitandos et seruandos exhibuit, si salutis eius participes fieri velimus.</p> <p>Vere dies salutis, in quibus medicamentum eterne salutis, quod est penitencia, suscipi debet et exhiberi. Penitencia siquidem est salubre medicamentum, quod omnia vulnera sanat. Require quarto capitulo, littera y.</p>

technological development. Today we are constantly exposed to outer stimuli, the medieval Birgittine friars found themselves in a similar situation.

First of all, it seems that literature of the kind I have been discussing seems to travel along somewhat different lines compared to those that literary historians normally address. There is one feature in particular where this becomes clearly visible; not in one single instance do the scribes or the preachers let us know the source of a passage they have quoted. When they quote Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux or Peter the Lombard, they are normally very careful about such

things. However, when it comes to this kind of literature, i.e. quoting from collections of model sermons or preaching aids, the task of identifying the sources is always given to the modern scholar. These writers simply did not enjoy the same authorial prestige, peculiar as this may seem, since their works were so popular all over Europe. If we rephrase this we could say that this literature, or this particular aspect of this literature, was *user-oriented* rather than *work-oriented*. It really did not matter who had written or said something, as long as the quoted text contained what the preacher or sermon composer needed for his own purposes.

A second precondition, related to the first, has more to do with the *compilatory technique* of textual composition. We have been speaking mostly about sermons, a genre with both oral and written dimensions. I think that the orality in itself favours a certain textual fluidity. The technique consists of putting together material from many different sources and changing whatever is needed. This is a technique that makes it possible to collect a large amount of information from many different sources in a very limited space, and then wrap it up in an attractive package that sometimes even makes it look like the preacher's own invention, i.e. something original. This is no doubt something that favours a rapid diffusion of the contents in the texts. A living and dynamic text, not too tied to a specific author or to a specific long-gone time in the past, is an important element of a text being *used*, and by this I mean that it becomes, or could become, a vehicle for a likewise living and dynamic discussion or exchange of ideas. Such a text has, in turn, the capacity and potentiality of being used in the same way afterwards – by others – that is, copied, re-arranged and re-read in new contexts. A remarkable example of how this procedure can work in practice has been studied by Monica Hedlund. The already mentioned Johannes Borquardi sometimes adds short notices about the sources he had used when composing his own sermons, mainly other manuscripts in the brothers' reference library. Johannes sometimes gives the names of the author or uses the shelf mark system, and sometimes he provides a physical description of the book: 'the white thick book', 'Johannes Bernardi's oblong book', 'a small white or yellow book', etc.³⁴

A third precondition is that there are infrastructural means for the storing and retrieving of all this information, and this infrastructure is the abbey library. We have already seen this, and several scholars have investigated it, but there was a remarkably functional system for the storing of the books in the library. In its

34 See further Hedlund 2008.

final form, every book was assigned a three-digit shelf mark.³⁵ The first indicated the book case, the second the shelf, and the third the position of the book in this shelf. For the book cases letters were used, and the books were sorted according to their contents, at least roughly. Sections D and E mainly contained homiletic literature, so one can easily understand that many priest brothers went there to find material for their own sermons. It must also be possible to locate the information within the book once you have found it. Many codices display a broad variety of indexes, both alphabetical and indexes of contents or key concepts.³⁶ Already in medieval monastery libraries, as exemplified here by Vadstena, we see many of the elements of modern systems for information retrieval that would be developed in the following centuries.

An important conclusion is that the exchange of ideas does not just happen. It needs vehicles and channels. The precondition for this was the ability to read and write, combined with a sound curiosity and a wish to let other people know what you feel and think.

35 Hedlund 2007b; Walta 2014, pp. 39–44.

36 For examples from Vadstena manuscripts, see Andersson 2011, pp. 35–36.

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FIG. 1: Queen Philippa, stained-glass window by Reinhold Callmänder, 1895. Vadstena Abbey church. Photo: Mariusz Paździora/creativecommons.org/licenses.