

# “The Most Illustrious and Divine of All the Sibyls.” Saint Birgitta in the Prophetic Visions of Tommaso Campanella and Queen Cristina of Sweden

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

On 23 December 1655, the day before Christmas Eve, a majestic procession entered Porta Flaminia, the current Porta del Popolo, on the northern side of Rome. The newly abdicated Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689) was riding on her white horse and escorted by the governors of Rome and a series of dignitaries. Among this noble group were Cardinal Orsini and Cardinal Costaguti, each sitting on a donkey reenacting Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. On Pope Alexander VII’s commission, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the most celebrated artist of the age, had restored Porta Flaminia with the following inscription: FELICI FAUSTOQUE ORNATA INGRESSUI ANNO DOMINI MDCLV (“adorned for a happy and auspicious entry in the year of the Lord 1655”).<sup>2</sup>

Arriving at the piazza, a complete group of cardinals greeted the queen, and together they solemnly marched down Via del Corso before they took the right towards the Vatican palace across the Tiber River. The performance had been well-prepared. Pope Alexander had through an edict declared this important date in December to be an official feast day for Roman citizens. Accordingly, along the streets the population crowded in to get a glimpse of the spectacle. Then, at the gates of St. Peter’s, the queen descended her horse and kissed the holy cross while she was sprinkled with baptismal water. Her

1 I am most grateful to my dear friend and colleague Anna Wainwright for our rich and joyful collaboration on this volume and research project. I also owe warm thanks to Virginia Cox and Jessica Goethals, who carefully read my chapter and contributed with valuable comments, and finally to the two anonymous readers at Brill for their prudent suggestions.

2 Marie-Louise Rodén has a detailed description of the procession in her rich biography of the queen, *Drottning Christina. En biografi* (Queen Christina. A Biography) (Stockholm: 2008), 173–75. See also Veronica Buckley’s more popular biography, *Christina, Queen of Sweden: The Restless Life of a European Eccentric* (London: 2004). The sources are Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Arm. xv, n. 89. “Relazione del Viaggio, e ricevimento fatto dal N.S. Papa Alessandro VII nello Stato Eccl:co, e in Roma alla Maestà di Cristina Alessandra Regina Suetia.”

entrance into the basilica was accompanied by the antiphon *Ista est speciosa*, followed by the praise *Te Deum*. When she finally reached the pope, who was sitting on his throne, Christina kneeled and piously kissed his hands and feet.

After the tense decades in the wake of the Council of Trent, followed by the Thirty Years' War with its murky religious undertones which split Europe into several conflicting parts, Christina's conversion was celebrated as a true triumph of the Catholic Church – a triumph perpetuated by Bernini's inscription and theatrically staged by the kneeling queen at the pope's feet. Christina, however, who now took the name Christina Alexandra in a seemingly ingratiating gesture to honour the pope, soon revealed that she was far from being an obedient tool for the church. Like her predecessor and fellow citizen, Birgitta Birgersdotter, who probably entered Rome through the very same gate in December 1349, just in time for the inauguration of the Holy Jubilee, Christina came to challenge the church in several ways. Both women were *princesse* from the distant north with ambitions that went far beyond the papacy's plans.

A central question in this chapter is how Queen Christina may have regarded Birgitta, the most important saint from the Nordic kingdoms and the Scandinavian people's main access to papal power for centuries. Since there is no evidence that Christina ever read Birgitta's revelations – Birgitta's name is hardly mentioned in Christina's unfinished autobiography, in her many letters, philosophical maxims, and historical essays – it has been a scholarly tradition to claim that the saint was of lesser importance to her, if any importance at all.<sup>3</sup> In Rome, however, where a fervent veneration of the saint took place in the restored mood of confidence at the turn of the 17th century, the citizens most likely associated the Swedish queen with the powerful and respected Swedish saint. Given Birgitta's unique position in Europe, reflected by the translations

3 In Susanna Åkerman's groundbreaking work, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle. The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: 1991), Birgitta is mentioned briefly only once, and not as a figure of any importance for the queen. In Iiro Kajanto's investigation of the most common images and rhetorical *exempla* of Queen Christina in the panegyric literature of the 16th century, Birgitta's name is not mentioned at all. See Iiro Kajanto, *Christina Heroína. Mythological and Historical Exemplification in the Latin Panegyrics on Christina Queen of Sweden*, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae* (Helsinki: 1993). In a similar way, Birgitta is referred to once, and then only in the connection with Azzolino's oratorio without elaboration or further explanation in Marie-Louise Rodén's book *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome. Cardinal Decio Azzolino, Queen Christina of Sweden, and the Squadrone Volante* (Stockholm: 2000). See also Stefano Fogelberg Rota's brief discussion of the lack of Birgitta in the studies of Christina, in *Poesiens drottning. Christina av Sverige och de italienska akademierna* (The Queen of Poetry. Christina of Sweden and the Italian Academies) (Lund: 2008), 160.

of her *Celestial revelations* into a variety of vernacular languages and by the numerous Birgittine convents spread out on the continent, it is not impossible that the newly converted Christina herself also had her native fellow in mind when she moved to Italy.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as Birgitta had gained an extraordinary reputation as a prophet during the Renaissance and the years prior to Christina's conversion, one may expect that the saint played a vital role in the formation of the queen's own religious and intellectual orientation.

Prophetic literature had indeed been one of Christina's passions a long time before she entered Rome; in particular, one text in her extensive collection of printed books and manuscripts, now part of the Vatican library, seems to be of special importance for her. Even while Christina was still living in Sweden, she was probably well acquainted with *Monarchia del Messia* written by the Italian poet and philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639). The treatise coincides with Christina's political yearnings for universal concord and peace as well as with her profound engagement with millenarian and messianic ideas. Of great interest in this context are the numerous quotations of Birgitta's revelations in Campanella's treatise. Indeed, in *Monarchia del Messia* Birgitta is equated with the foremost prophets in the long millenarian tradition from the Calabrian theologian Joachim of Fiore (c.1135–1202), probably the most important apocalyptic thinker of the whole medieval tradition, to the author's own time.

Another source which links the two Swedish women together is the *Oratorio di S:ta Brigida*, composed by Cardinal Decio Azzolino (1623–1689). Pope Alexander appointed the cardinal to be the Vatican's unofficial envoy at Christina's court the very same winter she entered Rome. Peers in age, the cardinal and the queen developed an intense friendship, and when Christina applied for taking over the guardianship of Casa di Santa Brigida at Piazza Farnese in 1673, three hundred years after Birgitta's death, Azzolino wrote the oratorio in her support.

In the following, I will examine Saint Birgitta's role in these two sources. In Campanella's prophetic vision of a coming Golden Age of happiness and universal peace, Birgitta's voice is crucial. Likewise, in Azzolino's oratorio, a fictive Birgitta prophetically hails Christina as the expected liberator of the world. As I hope my analyses will reveal, Birgitta may have played a far more important part in Christina's political and millenarian preferences than hitherto noticed. Moreover, what Campanella's text uncovers, together with the intense commitment to prophetic ideas among Christina's circle of friends and

4 For further information about the translations of Birgitta's revelations and the Birgittine convents in Europe, see the introduction to this book.

acquaintances, including Cardinal Azzolino, is a most curious embracing of Birgitta's revelations at the threshold of modernity.

### Campanella and the Venetian Controversy

In June 1607, Tommaso Campanella managed to smuggle out a pile of manuscripts from his jail cell in Castel Sant'Elmo in Naples. Among the manuscripts were *Atheismus triumphatus*, *Monarchia di Spagna*, *Discorso a' Principi d'Italia*, *Città del Sole*, *Antiveneti*, and *Monarchia del Messia* – all treatises which came to give Campanella a reputation as one of the most extraordinary voices in early 17th-century Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The reason for Campanella's imprisonment was an upheaval in 1599 in his hometown of Stilo in Calabria in Southern Italy, of which he was the spiritual leader. After entering the Dominican order as a young man, followed by several travels and stays in Naples, Rome, Florence and Padua, where he befriended Galileo Galilei among others, he returned to Stilo in August 1598. Here he soon started to organize a vast conspiracy with the aim of transforming the province into a republic as well as removing it from the tyrannical rule of the king of Spain. Campanella's political vision was supported by his astrological conviction, by celestial signs interpreted as abnormal, and by an eager reading of prophetic literature – all of which developed into an expectation of a fundamental change, or an imminent *rivoluzione*.

The Calabrian conspiracy was not successful. Discovered in August 1599, the Spanish viceroy's armed forces repressed it immediately. The young *stilesese* managed, however, to avoid the death penalty by feigning madness. The punishment was nevertheless rather merciless. For about a quarter of a century Campanella was imprisoned in different Neapolitan fortresses, of which the years in the Castel Sant'Elmo were probably the worst. Against all odds, however, the incarceration was also extraordinarily fecund. With the aim of producing a new foundation for the entire encyclopedia of knowledge, as Germana Ernst has described it, Campanella dedicated himself to a passionate

5 Vittorio Frajese, "Introduzione," in Tommaso Campanella, *La Monarchia del Messia*, ed. Vittorio Frajese (Rome: 1995), 15. For more extensive and systematic investigations of Campanella, see the seminal studies by Germana Ernst and John M. Headley. Germana Ernst, *Tommaso Campanella. Il libro e il corpo della natura* (Rome-Bari: 2002). English trans., *Tommaso Campanella. The Book and the Body of Nature*, trans. David L. Marshall (Dordrecht: 2010); John M. Headley, *Tommaso Campanella and the Transformation of the World* (Princeton, NJ: 1997).

literary activity.<sup>6</sup> Thus, most of Campanella's vast oeuvre was written in the darkness of his cell, and one of the most controversial texts he wrote during this period was the *Monarchia del Messia*.

The immediate motivation for the treatise was the conflict between the papacy in Rome and the Republic of Venice. Venetian legislation had limited the church's acquisition of real property, something that led to a papal interdict of the city from 1605 to 1607.<sup>7</sup> The interdict brought a good deal of interest among European states as it involved broad discussions about papal sovereignty and the Catholic Church's political intervention in other states in order to defend ecclesiastic interests. While curialists, such as Cardinal Cesare Baronio and his fellow Oratorian Tommaso Bozio, fervently argued for the pope's right to strike hard as he possessed "directam potestatem in regna", others reacted far more hostilely to the growing triumphalism of the papacy and the pope's claim to territorial authority.

One of the critics was the Neapolitan theologian Giovanni Marsilio, who in May 1606 published the small treatise *Risposta d'un dottore in teologia ad una lettera scrittagli da un reverendo suo amico*, in which he proposed eight declarations against the papal intervention. Campanella got hold of Marsilio's treatise some few months later, and as a reaction to it, he composed his *Monarchia del Messia*.<sup>8</sup> As Campanella explained in a letter to Cardinal Odoardo Farnese by the end of August, he would compose a book in defence of Pope Paul v. The reason was, as he argued, that:

after so many troubled years, caused by the diversity of principalities and the various laws, it is both natural and convenient for the governor of the world to unite all the people under one single law and under one most happy principedom, heralded by the poets as the Golden Age, described by philosophers as the ultimate republic, still yet to be experienced, and envisioned by prophets in the tranquillity of Jerusalem liberated from the Babylon of heretics and unfaithful.<sup>9</sup>

6 Germana Ernst, *Tommaso Campanella*, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/campanella/>. 2014. Trans. Jill Kraye.

7 Headley, *Tommaso Campanella*, 255. See also Frajese, "Introduzione," 5–14.

8 Frajese, "Introduzione," 12.

9 Tommaso Campanella, *Lettere*, ed. Vincenzo Spampinato (Bari: 1927), 25–26. New edition, edited by Germana Ernst (Florence: 2010). The quotation is taken from Frajese, "Introduzione," 9: "[...] dopo tanti scompigli del mondo avvenuti per la diversità di principati e di leggi varie, è natural e conveniente al governor del mondo unir tutte le genti sotto una sola legge et un principato felicissimo cantata da' poeti per secolo d'oro, da' filosofi descritto per stato d'ottima repubblica ancor non vista, da profeti antevista nella tranquillità di Gerusalem liberate da Babilonia d'eretici e d'infedeli." My translation.

Of special interest in this claim is how Campanella brings together the voices of the classical poets, the philosophers and the Biblical prophets, a unity he came to develop further in his *Monarchia del Messia*.

### The United King-Priest

As a response, thus, to Marsilio's treatise, Campanella wrote his book in which he explains and expands on his pro-papal and messianic program. Against the Thomistic-Aristotelian idea about the division of spiritual and political power, claimed by Marsilio, he spares nothing. According to divine reasoning, Christ, and his vicar, is and ought to be the ultimate power. As Campanella argues, the devil possesses the power to split people, languages, and religions. The good ruler, on the other hand, is the person who does the opposite, that is, the lord who is able to gather the entire human race, regardless of divisions and particularities, under one single law. Consequently, a single ruler is preferable, in which both spiritual and temporal power are united.

The aim of *Monarchia del Messia* is a strong defense of the unity of temporal and religious power. According to Campanella, Christ (and subsequently his earthly vicar) was both king and priest – the titleholder of the royal priesthood of the Biblical Melchizedek, and not simply the spiritual priesthood of Aaron, as thinkers within the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition claimed (such as Giovanni Marsilio). Christ was the awaited Messiah. He was the new David, the shepherd boy from Bethlehem who conquered Goliath and gathered the Israelite people into his splendid kingdom. The perfect ruler is, thus, both a king and a priest, and Campanella's explanation for this claim is that the religion is the *anima republicae* – the soul of the state. "Religion," he writes in *Monarchia del Messia*, "is the soul of the republic, because it is found in all the parts of the republic, [...] and this soul joins those parts with each other and with God in a wondrous bond; it makes that unity extremely strong and most lovable."<sup>10</sup>

As we see from the quotation, Campanella uses the organic metaphor of the body to defend the supremacy of the king-priest. The republic is an animated body whose limbs and internal organs represent different parts of

10 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 54–55: "Anima della repubblica è la religione, perché essa si trova in ogni parte tutta [...] et questa li unisce tra loro, e con Dio di vincolo mirabile, e fa l'unità fortissima, et amabilissima." The English translation of this passage is taken from Ernst, *Tommaso Campanella* (2010), 143. The rest of the translations from *Monarchia del Messia* throughout this chapter are mine.

society and whose head (*il capo*) is the sacred high prince, that is, the pope. Even though the metaphor of the body politic originated in Aristotle's philosophy and was a most common idea in late medieval and early modern political theory, Campanella moved within a dangerous landscape by applying it to papal power.<sup>11</sup> In the shadows of his pro-papal claim lurked nothing but one of the Catholic Church's most infamous declarations, the bull *Unam Sanctam*. Issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1302, the bull proposed a severely hierocratic interpretation of papal power, with no independence for secular rulers: as the successor of Peter, Christ had appointed the pope the single head (*caput*) of Christianity, with full power on earth, both spiritual and temporal.

*Unam Sanctam* stated the most extreme assertion of the pontiff's political and juridical primacy over secular rulers that probably had ever been promulgated, and the reactions were strong and immediate. Although Boniface was forced to draw it back, the bull paved the way to a deep religious and political conflict which would be long-lasting. The crisis of legitimacy which followed in the wake of the Avignon papacy, and which ended with the Great Western Schism of the church, may be understood, as I have previously argued, as an outcome of the papacy's increasing centralization and claim to earthly power in the beginning of 14th century.<sup>12</sup> Since the final truce at the Council of Constance in 1417 and the election of Pope Martin V, the church had therefore been most cautious in presenting such claims again. The papacy grew admittedly once again in power and wealth, as it did in the 14th century. Indeed, as Paolo Prodi has argued, from the Reformation to Campanella's own time, a full fusion and interpenetration took place in Italy within the religious and political spheres, with the consequence that religion was reduced to pure politics.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, despite the church's increasing monarchical structure, the pope refrained from expressing any theocratic pretensions like *Unam Sanctam*. Indeed, the papacy was especially careful in the wake of the turbulent years of the Reformation in which the church was under strong pressure. By the end of the 16th century, Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1542–1621) prudently

11 For a classical study of the organic metaphors in medieval political philosophy, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957; repr. Princeton, NJ: 1997). See also Jacques Le Goff, "Head or Heart? The Political Use of Body Metaphors in the Middle Ages," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: 1989), 3 vols., 1: 12–26.

12 In the book *The Avignon Papacy Contested*, I explored the intellectual debates and the reactions towards the papacy's increasing centralization in the wake of the church politics in the 14th century. See Unn Falkeid, *The Avignon Papacy Contested: An Intellectual History from Dante to Catherine of Siena* (Cambridge, MA: 2017).

13 Paolo Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice* (Bologna: 1982). See also Headley, *Tommaso Campanella*, 247–60.

developed the theory about the church's "indirect power", which the papacy quickly adopted as its endorsed ideology, thus covering its secular ambitions. Although a powerful and wealthy historical institution, the church claimed that officially it did not exercise any worldly power. Campanella, however, strongly refuted Bellarmino. As he argues in *Monarchia del Messia*:

The Catholics disagree, because the theologians partly want the pope to be a lord with direct spiritual power, to create laws and correct those laws that are contrary to the gospel, and to have a law court. But they also claim that his power is indirect *in temporalibus* when it deviates from the spiritual, correcting and adapting the politics to the religion. This is the opinion of Bellarmino, Navarro, Turrecremata [...] They claim that the ecclesiastic exemption and liberty is *de iure divino*, and the spiritual is in no way subjected to temporal power, but that it still is without power and temporal benefits, if not bestowed by the princes.<sup>14</sup>

As this passage makes clear, Campanella's aim was probably to reveal the ambiguous heart of Bellarmino's theory. While Bellarmino and his fellows on one hand stressed the divine origin of the pope's power, on the other hand they presented the power as indirect, which necessarily meant that it was given by earthly princes. Subsequently, Bellarmino's defence of the papacy was lukewarm, according to Campanella, and did not have the power to confront and solve the crisis which the Catholic Church was facing in a war-torn Europe.

### Birgitta's Voice in *Monarchia del Messia*

Birgitta of Sweden plays a central role in Campanella's defence of the pope's supremacy. Campanella even equates her with the main prophets from the Old Testament who, according to the Italian philosopher, all supported his messianic predictions:

14 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 74–75: "Vi sono poscia i cattolici divisi, perché i teologi in parte vogliono che il papa sia signore in spirituale direttamente, e che possa far leggi, e correggere le leggi contrarie al Vangelo, e tenere tribunale; ma solo *indirecteae* esser signore *in temporalibus*, in quanto deviano dallo spiritual, correggendo et drizzando la politica alla religion. Questo sente Bellarmino, Navarro, Turrecremata [...] Ma che l'essentione et libertà ecclesiastica sia *de iure divino*, et non esser soggetto lo spiritual al temporale in cosa alcuna; ma non aver dominio, e beni temporali, se non per donation de prencipi."



Jeremiah, in 30, shows exactly the restored papacy in the heaven, which means Rome. [...]. And then he [the pope] heads the whole world, like Ezekiel, Isaiah, David, and all the prophets quoted above [have explained]. There is no argument left to discuss, because all usurpations, or past permits, are human acts [and] not prophecy, which must be corrected in the way [...] that was promised to Saint Birgitta.<sup>15</sup>

The quotation is complex, as Campanella's ardent language often is. What is clear, however, is that he presents Birgitta as a devotee of the pope's earthly power. Her authority in this question is, according to Campanella, based on her prophetic activity. An irony, though, is that Birgitta herself expressed a profound critique of Pope Boniface VIII's bull *Unam Sanctam* and of what she suspected to be the growing temporal power of the church.

Birgitta argued for a balance between temporal and spiritual power. Indeed, as she carefully proposed in her *speculum regale* to the Swedish king Magnus Eriksson, the king had a divine mission. He was appointed by God, and his duty was, on the one hand, to transfer God's justice to his subjects, and thus, on the other, to help his subjects attain salvation. "I had two excellent servants", Christ explains to her in the vision:

One was a priest, the other a layman. The first was my apostle Peter who had a priestly office. The second was apostle Paul who was, as it were, a layman [...] See what great love I had for these two! I gave the keys of heaven to Peter so that whatever he bound or loosed on earth might be bound or loosed in heaven. I allowed Paul to become like Peter in glory and honor. It should be clear that, as they were equals and partners together on earth, so now they are partners in everlasting glory in heaven and glorified together.<sup>16</sup>

15 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 132–33: "Hieremia, nel 30, mostra propriamente il papato redificato in eccelso, che vuol dir Roma. E poi: *Exit dux ex eo, et princeps de medio eius producetur, et applicabo eum, et accedet ad me. Quis enim est* etc. Dove mostra che il papa è per elezione prodotto, e che Dio lo applica a sé, e lo regge con lo spirito suo, perché l'huomo da se non può a tanto alzarsi, e poi di tutto il mondo lo fa capo, come Ezechiele, et Isaia, et David, et tutti li profeti di sopra citati. Non resta di sciorre argomento alcuno, perché tutte le usurpationo, o permissioni passate sono atti humani non profetia, li quali s'hanno da correggere nel modo, che Constantino, come fu promesso a santa Brigida."

16 Rev. VIII: 1.26–30: "Ego auem habui duos optimos famulos. Vnus eorum erat clericus et alter laicus. Primus erat Petrus apostolus meus clerici officium habens. Secundus fuit apostolus Paulus quasi laicus ... Ecce, qualem caritatem cum istis duobus feci! Nam Petro dedi claves regni celorum, ut quecumque ligaret et solueret in terra ligata et soluta essent in celis. Paulo vero dedi, ut similis Petro fieret in gloria et honore." Birgitta of Sweden, *Revelaciones Books I–VIII*, ed. Hans Aili, Birger Bergh, Ann-Mari Jönsson, and Carl-Gustf

As with a series of other European intellectuals, such as Dante Alighieri, Marsilius of Padua, and William of Ockham, Birgitta reacted strongly against the papacy's increasing temporal power. Indeed, her political revelations, gathered in the two books *Tractatus de summis pontificibus* and *Liber celestis imperatoris ad reges*, must be read within the context of the literary war which took place in the 14th and early 15th century in the wake of Pope Boniface's infamous bull.

Obviously highly conscious of his controversial argument, Campanella is most careful in his allusions to Boniface. The three times he openly refers to him, he describes him as "extravagant".<sup>17</sup> Still, it is no doubt that he recalls and supports the theocratic pretensions expressed in *Unam Sanctam*. This is, for instance, clearly revealed in his critique of Dante. "Dante errs seriously", Campanella argues, "when he says that the pope must not have temporal dominion since the sons of Levi were there of righteousness. He errs because the pope is not a Levitical priest, but a Melchizedek."<sup>18</sup> With this he means that the pope's power is not reduced to the spiritual dominion, as in the tradition of the Levitical priesthood. The pope is a Melchizedek possessing the dual position of king and priest.

When it comes to Birgitta, however, Campanella ignores the fact that the Swedish saint in many ways shared Dante's political view. Campanella simply appropriates Birgitta's philosophy as proof for his own convictions. By repeatedly quoting her revelations, he twists her arguments around:

This Christ declared to Saint Birgitta in book 4, chapter 3, saying that: "the king is not master of the realm but the helmsman." And then: "What is the king if not mediator and savior of the kingdom and of the people?" And in book 7, chapter 16, she complains about the present princes turned into Machiavellians: "Now, kingdoms are no longer kingdoms, but places of immaturity, delusions, and robbery. Just as a robber seeks ways and opportunities of getting inside to make his gain without being noticed, so too kings nowadays seek new ways of promoting their family, pocketing money and cleverly taxing their subjects."<sup>19</sup>

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Undhagen, 8 vols. (Stockholm: 1967–2002). *The Revelations of Birgitta of Sweden*, trans. Denis Searby, with introductions and notes by Bridget Morris, 4 vols. (Oxford: 2006–2015).

17 See Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 98, 113, and 142.

18 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 85: "Erra Dante grassamente, quando dice che il papa non deve havere dominio temporale, perché del rettaggio i figli di Levi furono essenti, perché non è levitico sacerdote il papa, ma melchisedecchio."

19 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 140: "Questo dichiarò Christo a santa Brigida nel 4, in capo 3, dicendo che *Rex non est dominus coronae, sed rector*. E poi: *Non est nisi mediator, et conservator regni, et populi, et defensor*. E nel 7, a c. 16. si lamenta de presenti precipi

Campanella's argument is that temporal power is subjected to the spiritual, thus challenging the medieval principle of the balance between the two swords. Moreover, as we see from the quotation, Birgitta is referred to as an authority in this matter. Birgitta's visions, he claims, work as an antidote to contemporary Machiavellianism. For Campanella, Niccolò Machiavelli, who in his treatise *Il Principe* (1513) reduced religion to a question of political tactic, was the figure who ushered in the ideas of pluralism and atheism which in the 17th century were spreading all over Europe.<sup>20</sup>

### Ideas of *renovatio mundi*

Campanella had in many ways good reason for interpreting Birgitta's revelations in this way. Despite Birgitta's message about the necessary division between religious and political power, there is no doubt that she also was convinced of an imminent change with clear theocratic pretensions. Moreover, during the Renaissance she had gained an undeniable status as a messianic promoter of a coming Angelic Savior.

In a famous revelation (Rev. VI: 67), Birgitta presents her own version of salvation history, in three ages, within the figure of the world as a ship: The first age spans from Adam to the incarnation of Christ, symbolized by the ship's high prow. The low middle part of the ship figures the humility and honesty of the early Christian centuries, while the rise of the pope indicates the final age, which according to Birgitta had just started and which would last until the Day of Judgment. At the end of this age, the Antichrist would be born from an accursed woman pretending to have spiritual wisdom, and from an accursed man, chastising the impious and proud inhabitants of the world.

Birgitta's third *status* is probably not the very same as the Joachimite Age of the Spirit. Birgitta was always eager to defend the church as a historical institution. Still, her clear expectations of the tribulation that the church must suffer, followed by a thorough reform and a period of tranquility, illumination, and

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così fatti alla macchiavellesca: *Nunc regna sunt puerilia et deliramenta, et latrocinia, quia sicut latro quaerit modum, et tempus, quo insidietur, et obtineat lucra, ne notetur; sic reges inquirunt quomodo genus eorum eleuetur, quomodo pecuniae imbursentur, quomodo subditi sapienter onerentur, et libenter faciunt iustitiam propter lucrum temporale, non propter aeternum.*"

20 As Headley has argued in his chapter on Campanella's controversy with Machiavelli, the author of *Il principe* represented the greatest intellectual antagonist of Campanella after Aristotle. He constantly fought his ideas, and most expressively in the treatise *Atheismus triumphatus*. Headley, *Tommaso Campanella*, 180–96.

liberty, reveal a deep awareness of contemporary apocalyptic ideas of *renovatio mundi*. The same may be said, as Marjorie Reeves has convincingly argued, of Birgitta's description of the involuntary agent of God's judgement.<sup>21</sup>

Whether the chastiser would be Christian, heretic or pagan, is unclear. In Rev. IV: 22 Birgitta describes him as *arator* (the plowman), in Rev. VIII: 18 he appears as *venator* (the hunter), and in the Birgittine revelations gathered by Johannes Tortsch of Leipzig in the first half of the 15th century, the so-called *Onus mundi*, the chastiser is labelled *Dux venturus* (the coming Prince).<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Birgitta's portrayal of the future *sanctus papa* who will reside in Rome (Rev. VI: 74), shares similarities with the Joachimite Angelic Pope. Indeed, Birgitta's many visions of the pope's and the emperor's future return to Rome have not only political and moral connotations. They are obviously fundamental aspects of her prophecies of the Last Things, in which the two powers would fulfill their divine missions. In other revelations, such as in Rev. VI: 83, Birgitta explains how those who in the future respond to the call of Christ will be blessed, and how before Antichrist the door of faith will be opened to gentiles – images which all are closely related to the contemporary Joachimites and later picked up by Campanella.

Birgitta was from her earliest visionary career associated with the prophetic tradition in the wake of Joachim of Fiore, even though she never labelled herself a prophet. In several revelations, however, she compares her mission with the undertaking of Moses, the main prophet in the Biblical tradition. In Rev. II: 10 she claims that the voice who is speaking to her is the same as Moses hears in the burning bush: "I who am now speaking with you am that voice heard from the bush. I have heard the misery of my peoples."<sup>23</sup> God's call is clear: as Moses once freed Israel from the land of Pharaoh, Birgitta's mission is to bring the believers through the desert to the promised land of God. While

21 Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism* (1969, repr. Notre Dame: 2011), 338–39. On the same issue, see also Reeves' introduction "The Medieval Heritage," in *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, ed. Marjorie Reeves (Oxford: 1992), 15–16.

22 *Onus mundi*, printed in Rome by Eucharius Silber, 1485. ISTC ib00675000. Chapter 8 is entitled: "De duce venturo qui erit future tribulationis executor," See also the entry to the database *The Legacy of Birgitta of Sweden: Legacy of Birgitta | Onus mundi, alieque reuelationes quarti libri*, impr. Eucharius Silber (Franck). 1485. Rome. (uio.no).

23 Birgitta of Sweden, Rev. II: 10: "Ego sum illa vox de rubo sonans, qui nunc loquor tecum. Miseraia populi mei ascendit in aures meas." For a more systematic investigation of the figure of Moses in Birgitta's *Revelations*, see Claire L. Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy* (Woodbridge: 2001), 74–77; and, more recently, Unn Falkeid, "Stupor et mirabilia! The Ascent of an Early Modern Redeemer," in *Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine*. 34 (66), 15–29.

she was still living in her home country, Master Mathias of Linköping, Birgitta's Swedish confessor, depicts her in his prologue to the *Revelations* not only as the reborn Moses, but also as the threshold figure who inaugurates the age of spiritual renewal, not unlike the Franciscan spirituals configured Saint Francis. Equally, in Alphonso Pecha's prologue to Book VIII of the *Revelations*, entitled "The Hermit's Letter to Kings" (*Epistola solitarii ad reges*), Birgitta is styled as the last figure in the long lineage of Biblical prophets and classical sibyls. After Birgitta's canonization, and in the wake of Mathias' and Alfonso's influential texts, the "true prophetess of God" was one of the fundamental characteristics of her sanctity.

As Brian Richardson has discussed in his significant contribution to this book, and which is explored by other scholars as well, such as Marjorie Reeves, Ottavia Niccoli, Roberto Rusconi, and more recently Michele Lodone, excerpts of Birgitta's revelations circulated both in Latin and Italian after her death.<sup>24</sup> Still, the diffusion of her original texts was rather limited compared to the production and circulation of spurious work. In both traditions, however, Birgitta's name was closely associated with Joachim of Fiore. In the concluding chapters of the *Onus mundi*, Johannes Tortsch clearly links the Swedish saint with Joachim. Likewise, the many Renaissance pseudo-Birgittine prophecies that circulated on the Italian peninsula connect the Swedish saint with the abbot from Calabria. One of these apocryphal prophecies, "Ave Iesu Christo figlioli di Maria", was curiously enough attributed to both Birgitta and Joachim of Fiore, as Richardson has shown.<sup>25</sup>

Other prophetic works, such as the popular *Apocalypsa Nova* attributed to the Franciscan monk Amadeus of Portugal, also called Beatus Amadeus

24 See Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*; Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Princeton, NJ: 1990); Roberto Rusconi, *Profezia e profeti alla fine del Medioevo* (Rome: 1999); Michele Lodone, "Santa Brigida in Toscana. Volgarizzamenti e riscritture profetiche," *Rivista Di Storia Della Chiesa in Italia* LXXIII, no. 1 (2019): 69–84, 79–84; See also Domenico Pezzini, "The Italian Reception of Birgittine Writings," in *The Translation of the Works of St. Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars*, ed. Bridget Morris and Veronica O'Mara (Turnhout: 2000), 186–212; Domenico, Pezzini, "Il primo volgarizzamento italiano delle rivelazioni e degli altri scritti di S. Brigida: il codice I.v. 25/26 della Biblioteca degli intronati si Siena (1399)," in *Santa Brigida, Napoli, l'Italia: atti del convegno di studi italo-svedese, Santa Maria Capua Vetere, 10–11 maggio 2006* ed. Olle Ferm, Alessandra Perriccioli Saggese & Marcello Rotili, (Naples: 2009). 61–73; Silvia Nocentini, "The Transmission of Birgittine and Catherinian Works within the Mystical Tradition: Exchanges, Cross-Readings, Connections," in *Sanctity and Female Authorship. Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, ed. Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid (New York & London: 2020), 93–112.

25 For a further analysis of this poem, see Jessica Goethal's and Anna Wainwright's rich and thought-provoking chapter in this book.

(1420–1482), containing among other things prophecies of an Angelic Pastor who would restore peace and universal concord, Birgitta is frequently quoted alongside Joachim of Fiore.<sup>26</sup> The Bosnian philosopher and theologian Giorgio Benigno Salviati (1444/48–1520), a follower of the rebellious Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, who himself had an uneasy relationship with the Birgittine legacy, revised and extended *Apocalypsa Nova* by adding Birgittine prophecies.<sup>27</sup> In the popular *Pronosticatio* of the German monk and astrologer Johann Lichtenberger (originally 1488, but published later in many different editions), Birgitta is frequently quoted together with the Sibyls, Daniel, Joachim of Fiore and other prophets.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in the *Imminente flagello de Italia* (presumably printed in 1510), Birgitta is mentioned together with a long list of prophets, beginning with Joachim of Fiore.<sup>29</sup> Other important Renaissance admirers of the Swedish diviner were Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, Domenica Narducci, Caterina Cibo, Dionisio Gallo, Antonia Negri, and the Cabbalist Guillaume Postel.<sup>30</sup> Postel underscored the truth of

- 26 Anna Morisi-Guerra, “The *Apocalypsa Nova*. A Plan for reform,” in Reeves, *Prophetic Rome*, 30. On *Apocalypsa Nova*, see also Eduardo Fernández Guerrero, “Profetizar la Reforma. Paolo Angelo y el Apocalypsis nova,” in *Visiones imperiales y profecía. Roma, España, Nuevo Mundo*, ed. Stefania Pastore and Mercedes García-Arenal (Madrid: 2018), 103–26.
- 27 For Salviati’s references to Birgitta, see Cesare Vasoli, “Giorgio Benigno Salviati (Dragišić),” in Reeves, *Prophetic Rome*, 121–156. See also Cesare Vasoli, *Civitas Mundi. Studi sulla cultura del Cinquecento* (Rome: 1996), 101–19. For Savonarola’s conflicting relationship to Birgitta, see Tamar Herzig, *Savonarola’s Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: 2008); Andriana Valerio, “Verso Savonarola: Profezia e Politica in Brigida di Svezia,” in *Verso Savonarola. Misticismo, profezia, empiti riformistici fra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini and Giuseppe Picone (Florence: 1999), 25–34.
- 28 Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, 347–351; Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 3. See also Giancarlo Petrella, *La “Pronosticatio” di Johannes Lichtenberger: un testo profetico nell’Italia del Rinascimento, con edizione anastatica di Johannes Lichtenberger, Pronosticatione in vulgare, Milano, Giovanni Antonio di Farre, 18 luglio 1500* (Udine: 2010), 26–27.
- 29 Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 93.
- 30 For Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola’s and Dionisio Gallo’s celebration of Birgitta, see Marion Leathers Kuntz, *The Anointment of Dionisio: Prophecy and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (University Park, PA: 2001). For Dominca Narducci and Caterina Cibo, see Clara Stella’s contribution to this book (“A Lineage of Apocalyptic Queens: The Portrayal of Birgitta of Sweden in Domenica Narducci’s Sermon to Caterina Cibo (1533)”). See also Adriana Valerio, “Caterina Cibo e la spiritualità savonaroliana attarverso il magistero profetico de Domenica da Paradiso,” in *Munerva Parva. Studi in onore di Boris Ulianich*, ed. G. Luongo (Naples: 2000), 141–54. For Antonia Negri, see Eleonora Cappuccilli, “In the steps of Birgitta of Sweden: the reluctant authority of Paola Antonia Negri (1508–1555),” *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 35. Issue 4 (2021): 583–99. See also Cappuccilli’s contribution to this book (“The Semantics of Obedience. Birgittine Influences on Paola Antonia Negri’s Letters”). See also my study on the connections between Birgitta and Vittoria Colonna

Birgitta's prophecies in his work *Panthenousia* (1547) in which he envisions a universal reform and a restitution of all things.<sup>31</sup>

The list of Renaissance pamphlets, prayers and popular prophecies which echoed the legacy of Joachim of Fiore, and in which Birgitta's name regularly appears, is long. Campanella obviously founded his reading of Birgitta on this tradition. Birgitta represented the chastising voice which predicted the tribulations of a coming Antichrist. Her voice was strengthened by the numerous Renaissance prophecies about an imminent political Messiah, i.e. an Angelic Pastor who would restore the world order and peace. When it comes to Campanella's *Monarchia del Messia*, though, this century-long prophetic tradition, in which Birgitta was endowed with an extraordinary authority, merges with the philosopher's empirical speculations and humanistic studies.

### The Latest Prophet

In several passages throughout the treatise, Campanella refers to specific books and chapters of Birgitta's *Revelations*, which again reveals his rare familiarity with Birgitta's literary corpus. During his imprisonment, he was able to follow political events and even get hold of books. Perhaps he also managed to get a copy of Consalvo Durante's edition of Birgitta's revelations, which was printed in Rome the very same year as he wrote his *Monarchia del Messia* (1606)? We do not know this for sure. Campanella, however, obviously knew Birgitta's words very well from before that time as well, which gives us reason to believe that he might have been in possession of earlier prints, such as Olaus Magnus' complete edition of the *Revelations* from 1557, also printed in Rome.

According to testimonies during Campanella's trial in the wake of his rebellion in 1599, his messianic interests and millenarian prophecies were broad and had affected his thoughts and political actions for several years already. As a certain Giovan Battista Pizzoni witnessed, Campanella had once told him in confidence:

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and the reform movement in Rome in the early 16th century. Unn Falkeid, "Magistra apostolorum: The Virgin Mary in Birgitta of Sweden and Vittoria Colonna," in *Vittoria Colonna. Poetry, Religion, Art, Impact*, ed. Virginia Cox & Shannon McHugh (Amsterdam: 2021). 75–95.

31 Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel: Prophet of the Restitution of All Things* (The Hague: 1981); Aldo Stella, "Esperienze e influssi di Guillaume Postel fra i movimenti eterodossi padovani e veneziani," in *Postello, Venezia e il suo mondo*, ed. Marion Leathers Kuntz (Florence: 1987), 119–36.

I have foreseen and I have many prophecies, as those also prophesied by St. Birgitta, St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Joachim [of Fiore] and Savonarola, that in the year sixteen hundred there will be great rumors, eradications and uprisings of people and mutations of state, and for this reason it will be good to be armed.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to exposing his familiarity with Birgitta's revelations, the quotation strikingly reveals how Campanella locates the Swedish saint within the exclusive lineage of Italian prophets, from Joachim of Fiore to Savonarola, of which he probably regarded himself as the latest offshoot.

Campanella grants, to be sure, the prophets a key role in the establishment of the coming Golden Age. As he depicts them, the prophets are bearers of truth. Despite their destiny as victims, persecuted and even executed as they usually are by false princes, their government will continue, he argues. The reason for this is that prophets are masters by nature, and the most prominent among these masters is, precisely, Birgitta. "The revelations of this saint," he explains, "are every day seen to be verified [...] and the words from the mouth of Christ are to be preferred over all theological speculations in this matter and in any other."<sup>33</sup> The divine words conveyed by Birgitta had, in other words, far more authority than the theologians' learned interpretations, and the words' veracity are continuously experienced.

Birgitta is quoted thoroughly throughout *Monarchia del Messia*. Towards the end, her name appears on almost every page, until the final crescendo in the very last paragraph of the book, in which Birgitta is transformed into the self-same sword, which the philosopher raises against the spokesmen of the ecclesiastic politics of the two powers. The figure he dwells on here is Domingo de Soto (1494–1560), the Spanish friar within Campanella's own order who strongly supported Cardinal Bellarmino's theory of the pope's indirect power.

32 Luigi Amabile, *Fra Tommaso Campanella. La sua congiura, i suoi processi e la sua pazzia* (Morano, Naples: 1882), III, p. 20: "Io ho previsto et ho molte profetie come di s. Brigida, s. Catherina di Siena, del Beato Joachino et del Savonarola hanno prophetato che nell'anno seicento dovevano essere gran romori debellioni et sollevationi di populi et mutationi di stato, et saria bene per che saria armato, per ciò credendosi che queste profetie per lui e per questi stati di Calabria se volea tenir armato." The quotation is taken from Frajese, "Introduzione," 18. My translation.

33 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 129: "Le revelation du questa santa ogni giorno si veggono verificare, e furo approvate da Concilij e gravissimi theologi, e sendo della bocca di Christo si devono preferire a tutti theologi opinanti in questa materia et in ogni altra."



And so, Christ declared to Saint Birgitta, that the Church has its judges, who are the priests, the defenders, who are the princes, the farmers, who are the plebeians, and all these make a body whose soul is the evangelical religion, and not the king, as Soto foolishly says. The opinion which Soto denies is admittedly true, that is, that every domination was introduced by usurped and permissive tyranny. But only the kingdom and the government were natural, and Christ revoked it for this. There is therefore no proper lord in the Christian world, but the king and shepherd, except inasmuch as they confuse their names and take one for the other.<sup>34</sup>

Once again, Birgitta is referred to as the leading expert regarding the supremacy of the shepherd-king, that is, the figure who unites temporal and divine powers. As Campanella argues, in accordance with Augustine's political theology, the establishment of secular rulers was a consequence of the Fall and thus a punishment of human pride. So far, he does agree with Soto. But as he also claims: the intervention of Christ in human history eradicated all forms of old systems and hierarchies by re-establishing divine law, under which the entire human race could come together, transcending earthly divisions and conflicts.

### Birgitta's Presence in Other Works

Birgitta's name also appears in other works by Campanella. In sonnet 58, presumably written in 1603, her name is even part of the title: *Sonetto cavato dall' "Apocalisse" e santa Brigida* (Sonnet taken from the Apocalypse and Saint Birgitta).<sup>35</sup>

Molti secoli son, che l'umana germe,  
vinto dal rio costume, al mondo diede  
genti doppie di sesso e doppia fede,  
pronti agl'inganni, alle virtuti informe.

34 Campanella, *Monarchia del Messia*, 142: "E così dichiarò Christo a Santa Brigida, che la Chiesa ha li giudici, che son i sacerdoti, li difensori, che son li principi, gli agricoltori, che è la plebe, e tutti questi fanno un corpo di cui anima è la religione evangelica, e non il re, come dice stoltamente Soto. È vera quell'opinione che il Soto nega, cioè ogni dominio essere introdotto per tirannide usurpata, e permissive, ma solo essere naturale il regno, et il governo, et a questo ne rivoò Christo. Non ci è dunque propriamente signore nel mondo christiano, ma re e pastore, se non in quanto ci confondon gli nomi, e si piglia l'un per l'altra."

35 *Tutte le opere di Tommaso Campanella*, ed. Luigi Firpo (Milan: 1954), Vol. I, 1331.

In mezzo a tanti mali io per vederme,  
 stavo piangendo, ed ecco ch s'avvede  
 Europa in parte, dove men possiede  
 ambo gli porti di lussuria il verme.

Quel che aspettavan tutti vati insieme,  
 veggo più venti correre a vendetta  
 contra la belva onde natura geme.

Un destrier bianco il suo cammino affretta,  
 di nostra redenzion verace speme:  
 l'adultera il destin, temendo, aspetta.

Many centuries have passed, since the human germ, / overcome by the  
 evil habit, gave to the world / a people double of sex and double of faith, /  
 ready for deceit, for formless virtues. / Finding myself in the midst of so  
 much evil / I was weeping, and this is what happens / a split Europe where  
 both parts are lesser / and both bring you the worm of lust. / What all the  
 prophets were waiting for, / I see winds running for revenge / against the  
 beast whence nature groans. / A white horse hastens his way, / our hope  
 of true redemption: /the adulteress, fearing, awaits the destiny.<sup>36</sup>

The poem, highly apocalyptic in tone, brings to the fore the image of a war-torn Europe, divided in two (Campanella is probably referring to the Lutherans and Catholics). The devil is ruling in both camps. The lyric self, then, recalls the prophets. But he also presents himself as a visionary (“veggo più venti”), who foresees the apocalyptic white horse who will conquer the beasts and bring concord and salvation to humanity (Apoc. vi, 2).

According to Luigi Firpo, the Birgittine passage that Campanella is alluding to in this poem is book IV, chapter 43 of the *Revelations*, in which the Virgin Mary is likening bad pastors to a worm gnawing away the roots of a tree. However, this is only a suggestion. The image of wicked priests is, after all, a subject that runs through the entire *Revelations*, which means that it may be inspired by a series of other revelations as well. The same may be said about Campanella's madrigal 8, vv. 12–16, in which Lina Bolzoni assumes that the expression “muto idolo” (dumb idol) is an image taken from Birgitta's *Revelations* I: 48 and IV: 133, where Moses recalls how he once saved his people:<sup>37</sup>

36 *Tutte le opera di Tommaso Campanella*, Vol. I, 127. My translation.

37 *Opere letterari di Tommaso Campanella*, ed. Lina Bolzoni (Turin: 1977), 269. My translation.

Più prodigi e più grandi  
 il tuo Nume schernito,  
 qual muto idolo, agogna oggi, che quei  
 ch'i mostri han sovvertito  
 di Samaria, d'Egitto e di Caldei.

Today the people long for more prodigious and greater miracles – your Nume mocked, like a mute idol – than those of the monsters that destroyed Samaria, Egypt, and Chaldea

Bolzoni may absolutely be right in tracing the words back to Birgitta. But since the expression is used in none of the indicated passages of Birgitta's revelations, at least not literally, the image might just as easily be taken from other revelations as well. Also, Moses is, as we have seen, a central figure in Birgitta's revelations, and a figure with whom Birgitta even herself associated. Of importance is, regardless, that Birgitta's voice resounds in Campanella's rich and philosophical poems, as it does in other works as well.

Besides *Monarchia del Messia*, Birgitta's name appears most conspicuously in *Articuli prophetales*, a compilation of the defense that Campanella presented during the trial in 1599.<sup>38</sup> To a certain degree, the treatise may be labelled Campanella's most extreme millenarian text, which expands on the legitimacy and the reasons for the author's belief in a great *mutazione* and the coming of a Golden Age. Here, he lists works by saints and prophets, scholars, philosophers, and astrologers, including Birgitta.

Once again, the references to Birgitta are numerous. Indeed, her name appears far more often than other writers or authorities and may only be surpassed by Biblical figures such as David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Moses, or Saint Paul. Birgitta is, for instance, quoted concerning the prophecies of the possible coming desolation of Rome, inflicted by the Turks as God's punishment. She is referred to as a saint, a prophet, a divine seer, and in chapter 8, Campanella calls her “*illustrissima Sybillarum*” (the most illustrious of all the Sibyls). In the same passage, he reveals how Birgitta's political theology coincides with his own visions:

In book 6, ch. 77 of the *Revelations*, the Lord says: “There will come a time when there will be one sheepfold and one shepherd, one faith and one clear knowledge of God” etc., and he promises to give the salvation of all

38 *Articuli prophetales* is published in a modern critical edition, edited by Germana Ernst (Florence: 1977). All translations from this book are mine.

the nations. In *Extravagantes*, ch. 78 he promises a universal reformer after present troubles, so: “The stupid will rule, and the wise will not raise up their heads, honor and truth will be laid low until the coming of the one who will placate my anger and will spare not even his own soul for the love of justice.” I imagine that this is a preview of an angelic pope foreseen by abbot Joachim and predicted by Saint Vincent.<sup>39</sup>

After this passage, the references to and discussions of Birgitta’s revelations continue in length, precision, and depth, over several pages, describing how an epoch will come in which there will be an end to the evils that currently afflict humanity. Wars, pestilence, hunger, and slavery will cease, and a new and wonderful era will arise, bringing happiness and glory to the human race.<sup>40</sup> In this new era, he proclaims, once again with a precise quotation from Birgitta’s *Revelations* (Rev. vi: 83), “there will be so much piety among the gentiles that Christians will be like their servants spiritually. The scriptures will be fulfilled that speak of the people which does not understand, who will glorify me, and of the wasteland that shall be built up. They shall all sing ‘Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit and raise to all his saints.’”<sup>41</sup>

The *Articuli prophetales* is replete with references, quotations, and allusions to Birgitta. What they tell – and what Campanella himself also stated repeatedly – is that the Swedish saint was a most important figure in his own intellectual and personal formation. She was a model in his youth, a spiritual companion in the troubled years of his imprisonment, and an interlocutor his entire life.

39 Campanella, *Articuli prophetales*, 109: “In lib. 6 *Revelatioum* cap. 77 dicit Dominus: ‘Erit tempus quo fiet unum ovile et unus pastor, una fides, una clara cognition Dei’ etc. et promittit salute cunctis nationibus. In *Revel. Extravagant.*, cap. 78, promittit reformatorem universalem post praesentes turbationes, sic: ‘Discordiae abundambunt, stulti dominabuntur, sense et sapientes non levabunt caput, honor et veritas prosternentur, donec veniat qui placabit iram meam, et qui suae animae non parcet pro charitate aequitati’. Hunc ego puto esse Papam angelicum praevisum ab abate Ioachino et prophetatum a sancto Vincentio praedicatorio.”

40 Campanella, *Articuli prophetales*, 110: “unde bella, pestes, fames et servitus sub Turcis et aliis, divinae irae instrumentis, vigent et vigeant, donec omnes principatus christiani ob discordias pereant, ac inde oriatur pulcherrima reformatio postmodum sub uno capite per praedicationem apostolicorum hominum, conversis ad fidem infidelibus, cum summo principe illorum.”

41 Campanella, *Articuli prophetales*, 110–11: “Et in 6 cap. 83: ‘Christiani erunt spiritualiter servi paganorum convertendorum, complebitur sermo: Populus non intelligens glorificabit me. Aedificabuntur deserta et cantabunt omnes Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui sancto.’”

Campanella's profound regard for Birgitta is perhaps most noticeably confirmed in a letter he wrote in 1606, that is, the very same year he composed his *Monarchia del Messia*. As soon as I can leave this jail, he writes, I will travel to Vadstena in order to visit Saint Birgitta's tomb: "It is she who is my love, it is she who reconciled me with Christ, it is she who has prophesied the events of my life; she is the most illustrious and divine of all the sibyls."<sup>42</sup>

### Irenic Visions

Embedded in Campanella's theocratic vision we are confronted, paradoxically enough, by the concept of toleration. In contrast to laws that protected particular groups, such as the Mosaic Law, which celebrated the Israelites as the chosen people of God, the law of Christ aimed at the salvation of all humankind. As Campanella argues, the law of Christ was universal, and as such it liberated people from old yokes and superstitions. While the devil's work is division and the separation of human beings, Christ's *lex libertatis* had the power to invert old hierarchies, even sexual, because no man had absolute power over others, except for Christ and his successors.

The unity of king and priest, envisioned in *Monarchia del Messia*, would allow humanity to return to a single, divine law. Accordingly, in the coming monarchy of the Messiah, all of humankind would be united into a single fold under one shepherd, as predicted by the prophets. This global ambition, underscored by the numerous references to Birgitta, was probably one of the reasons for the success of Campanella's ideas among intellectuals of the 17th century. Philosophers, such as the Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), who promoted irenic visions of an all-embracing church, reconciled on the principle of religion and toleration, were deeply engaged with Campanella's theory.

Grotius glossed his edition of Campanella's *Aforismi politici* – a treatise which also was smuggled out of Campanella's cell together with *Monarchia del Messia* and other texts, and later published in Paris in 1637 – with acute comments and observations. As Luigi Firpo, Germana Ernst, and more recently Jean-Paul de Lucca have discussed, the Protestant Grotius agreed with the Catholic Campanella that it was a Christian duty to seek the unity of

42 Letter 143 in Tommaso Campanella, *Lettere*, ed. V. Spampinato (Bari: 1927): "ipsa est amor meus, ipsa me Christo reconciliavit, ipsa de negotiis vaticana est: ipsa est sybillarum illustrissima et divinissima." The quotation is taken from Lina Bolzoni, "Tommaso Campanella e le donne: fascino e negazione della differenza," *Annali d'Italianistica*, Vol. 7, *Women's Voices in Italian Literature* (1989), 193–216; 213.

the church.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, both philosophers promoted the idea of a universal human law as a precondition for restoring and maintaining peace.

It is uncertain whether the two philosophers ever met, although Grotius was obviously aware of the presence of Campanella in Paris when he returned to the city in March 1635 as Sweden's ambassador. What is of importance in our context, though, is that Grotius is one of the figures who links Queen Christina to Campanella. Grotius' decade-long correspondence with Gérard Vossius, the father of Queen Christina's influential librarian, Isaac Vossius, reveals that Grotius sent him at least two (unspecified) works by Campanella, of which one may have been the Latin translation of *Monarchia del Messia* (1633).<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Grotius' letters to Christina's powerful mentor Axel Oxenstierna make clear that the ambassador was highly engaged with Campanella's work.<sup>45</sup>

The Swedish historian Susanna Åkerman has thoroughly explored the influence of prophetic literature on Christina and her circle of intellectual libertines, and Campanella's name appears frequently.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, as Åkerman argues, even the queen's conversion may be interpreted as inspired by millenarian and messianic convictions, and in particular by Campanella's vision of a political Messiah under which humanity would peacefully assemble. In the years after she signed the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War, Christina had neatly fashioned herself as a new Alexander, an *Agitatrix* of Peace, who worked persistently for concord and toleration. After her arrival in Rome, her ambitions were soon revealed to go far beyond the Vatican's massive propaganda campaign, in which her conversion was configured as the ultimate success of the Catholic Church. Her aim was to undertake the role of the Christian liberator: as she and her supporters discretely shaped her, the newly converted queen was the angelic figure predicted by the long prophetic tradition, whose duty was to gather the world under Christ's *lex libertatis*. Christina, however, needed a kingdom in order to realize this plan.

43 Tommaso Campanella, *Aforismi politici*, ed. Luigi Firpo (Turin: 1941). Ernst, *Tommaso Campanella. The Book and the Body of Nature*, 89; Jean-Paul De Lucca, "Grotius and Campanella: A footnote to Luigi Firpo," *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, Anno XXI, 2015, 1: 25–34.

44 The Latin translation, *Monarchia Messiae*, was printed in Jesi by Gregorio Arnazzini in 1633.

45 De Lucca, "Grotius and Campanella," 29–31.

46 Three of Susanna Åkerman's studies have been of great importance for this chapter. *Fenixelden. Drottning Kristina som alchemist* (The Fire of the Phoenix. Queen Christina as Alchemist) (Möklinta: 2013); *Queen Christina of Sweden and her Circle. The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: 1991); "Queen Christina and Messianic Thought," in *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, ed. David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel (Leiden: 1990), 142–60.

The Swedish queen was received in Rome with splendid Baroque festivities, with processions, fireworks, jousts, operas, panegyrics, and hymns, which were arranged long before her arrival and which continued over several months. Christina, however, had probably already by then entered into a secret agreement with the influential Cardinal Mazarin regarding the French plans of restoring the independent monarchy of Naples. Cardinal Mazarin was a member of the group known as the “Flying Squad” (*Squadrone volante*), led by Cardinal Decio Azzolino, whom Pope Alexander appointed as the queen’s ambassador in Rome.<sup>47</sup> The Squad consisted of a cluster of open-minded clerics who worked for the reform and modernization of the papal administration, putting an end to nepotism, and manoeuvring the papacy into political neutrality. Christina, who was in need of supporters in Rome and allies in her plans to seek another throne, initiated a close collaboration with the Squad, which on its side benefitted from the former queen’s reputation and social legitimacy.

In 1656 Christina was secretly offered the throne of Naples, which recently had reclaimed its independence from Spanish dominion. The plot, though, went wrong. After the rumours reached the papacy about Christina’s brutal murder of Gian Rinaldo Mondaleschi, one of her trusted men who betrayed the plans during her covert negotiations in Paris in 1657, she was for a long time a persona non grata in Rome. However, with the persistent support of Cardinal Decio Azzolino, with whom Christina had entered into an intimate friendship, she slowly managed to restore the bonds with the papacy and establish herself as a leading patron of poets, artists, and intellectuals. Her Palazzo Riario across the Tiber, today the Corsini Palace which houses the famous Accademia dei Lincei, became a cultural centre in Rome with leading figures such as the theologian Athanasius Kircher, the astronomer Domenico Cassini, the composer Arcangelo Corelli, and the artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini.<sup>48</sup>

### The Intellectual Yearnings of a Queen

Stirred already in Sweden, Christina’s irenic pretensions, as well as her deep interest in millenarian and esoteric literature, continued to the end of her life. Her rich library, which she opened for the Roman public and which was later

47 For further information about the collaboration between Christina and the “Flying Squad,” see Marie-Louise Rodén, *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*.

48 In his book *Poesins drottning. Christina av Sverige och de italienske akademierna*, Stefano Fogelberg Rota investigates thoroughly Queen Christina’s collaboration with Italian academies.

included in the Vatican library, contained not only classical literature, humanistic treatises, and natural philosophy. Esoteric literature – Cabbala, astrology, hermetic and platonic studies, prophecies, and above all alchemy – also constituted a substantial part of the collection.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, alchemy was a deep passion which she shared with Decio Azzolino and a series of other intellectuals in Rome, an interest which went back to her youth in Stockholm. When she abdicated, she made her emblem the phoenix – a common alchemic symbol in the 16th and 17th centuries for death and transmutation through fire. The phoenix was sometimes even used on the philosophers' stone itself, that is, the elixir of life, which was alchemy's main goal to produce. In Palazzo Riario, Christina created a laboratory, a *distelleria*, where she gathered her mixed circle of famous friends and fellows, and together they performed a series of experiments in order to distil and purify the philosophers' stone.<sup>50</sup>

The intent to set herself up as ruler of Naples was probably conceived long before Christina entered Rome. According to Åkerman, Mazarin's letters state that the plans were initiated by Christina herself, and not by her French supporters, as previously claimed. Moreover, there were reports about Italian rebels at her court in Sweden; one of these acquaintances, a certain Nicholas Hensenius, had been an eyewitness to the Naples revolt in 1648.<sup>51</sup> Compelling in this context is how Campanella's name was associated with Naples. His plan for a temporal universal monarchy built undeniably upon his experiences from the upheavals he led in Southern Italy at the turn of the century.

Not only the Swedish ambassador Grotius, but also several other figures who came in contact with Christina in the years before and after her conversion, had close connections to Campanella. One of these was Christina's medical adviser Pierre Michon Bourdelot, who would cure the queen from a neurotic disorder in 1652. As Åkerman explains, Bourdelot drew upon a wealth of radical opinions gained from his involvement with Campanella, whose work he knew through his uncle, Jean Bourdelot.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, it was Jean Bourdelot, the learned humanist and *maître des requêtes* (master of requests) of Marie de' Medici, who helped Campanella to escape from Italy and move to Paris in 1634,

49 Åkerman's study, *Fenixelden* (2013) presents a systematic investigation of Christina's esoteric collection of books and manuscripts.

50 A rich study of Christina's alchemic interests is Anna Maria Partini, *Cristina di Svezia e il suo cenacolo alchemico* (Rome: 2010).

51 Åkerman, "Queen Christina of Sweden and Messianic Thought," 159.

52 Åkerman, *Queen Christina and her Circle*, 40–41. For the contact with Campanella and Jean Bourdelot, see also Headley, *Tommaso Campanella*, 147.



and his collection of Campanella's work was later bought by his nephew Pierre and offered to Christina.<sup>53</sup>

Another central figure in Christina's intellectual circle before she entered Rome was the French theologian and libertine Isaac La Peyrère, whose millenarian visions of a coming political Messiah influenced the queen considerably. When Christina was visiting Amsterdam in 1654, he lived in the neighbouring house. They had close contact, and the queen would even economically support the publication of La Peyrère's heretical work *Prae Adamitae* (1655). Once again, of importance in our context, is the presence of Campanella. As Richard H. Popkin has argued, it is possible that La Peyrère met Campanella in Paris, where he was received as a great figure in Marin Marsenne's exclusive circle of intellectuals.<sup>54</sup> La Puyère's own predictions of an earthly ruler, a universal monarch who one day would join the warring factions and prepare the ground for major spiritual changes, testify to his familiarity with the age-old Joachimite tradition, a tradition which now involved Campanella's political theology as well, and in which Birgitta's name had gained such a pivotal significance.

Christina's library contained a good portion of Joachimite literature, according to Åkerman, including prophecies by Joachim da Fiore himself, such as the famous treatise *Vaticinia de summis pontificibus*, Beatus Amadeus' *Apocalypsa Nova*, and Guillaume Postel's *Panthenosia*, just to mention a few. In all these, Birgitta is, as we have seen, referred to as a foremost authority. Likewise, Christina's 1611 edition of Nostradamus contains an introductory summary of Birgitta's revelations aiming to emphasize the significance of the French prophet, which once again underscored Birgitta's centrality. Christina would also have been in possession of numerous works by Campanella, including the Latin translation of *Monarchia del Messia*, and as Åkerman has suggested, few played a more significant role in Christina's political and intellectual formation, than Campanella himself.<sup>55</sup>

Considering all this, the fact that Christina is reported to have been reading Birgitta's revelations herself during her stay in Brussels in 1655, that is, before her arrival to Rome, is quite astonishing.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the ardent book-collector she was, Christina was in possession of a Birgittine manuscript, entitled "S. Birgittae liber celestis Imperatoris ad Regem Revelatus", and two volumes

53 Åkerman, *Fenixelden*, 157–158. See also Headley, *Tommaso Campanella*, 147 and 153n.

54 Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596–1676). His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden: 1987), 65.

55 Åkerman, *Fenixelden*, 157.

56 For these reports, see Åkerman, *Queen Christina and her Circle*, 173.

of Birgitta's revelations, printed in Rome in 1556.<sup>57</sup> The volumes in question are probably *Memoriale effigiatum librorum prophetiarum seu visionum B. Brigidae alias Birgittae, viduae stirpis regiae de regno Svetiae*, printed by their common compatriot Olaus Magnus after settling in the Casa di Santa Brigida at Piazza Farnese in Rome.

These evidences testify to the presence of Birgitta in Christina's political and intellectual yearnings. But why does the queen hardly mention the saint in her own writings? Maybe the eccentric Christina had good reasons for avoiding overt associations with Birgitta, venerated as she was for her piety and ascetic way of life? One thing is sure, though, Christina's irenic visions of a universal peace and of a profound reform of the church persisted despite her failed attempt to achieve the throne of Naples. She shared these millenarian interests with her liberal friend, Cardinal Decio Azzolino, and at a certain moment, he came to her aid by bringing Birgitta once again to the fore.

### *Oratio di S:ta Brigida*

In 1673, exactly 300 years after Birgitta's death, Queen Christina applied to take over the role as the guardian of Casa di Santa Brigida in Rome. The previous guardian, John II Casimir Vasa, king of Poland, had recently passed away, and the current protector was Cardinal Orsini. Decio Azzolino supported the application by writing a *relazione*, in which he defended Christina, as the only Catholic monarch from Sweden, as the legitimate guardian of the house. Sometime later, on the occasion of the solemn celebration of Christina's new role, Azzolino wrote the oratorio. We do not know who composed the music. Marie-Louise Rodén has suggested Giacomo Carissimi (1605–1674), who was one of the most celebrated composers of early Baroque Rome, and a master of the oratorio genre. Indeed, Rodén is one of the few who has studied Azzolino's extraordinary unpublished work, although without any comparative reading or thorough analyses of the text.<sup>58</sup>

The oratorio, now in the Azzolino Archive in the Biblioteca Comunale di Jesi (Le Marche), consists of 14 handwritten pages, and is divided into two parts

57 Åkerman, *Fenixelden*, 189–190, fn. 415. The two printed volumes from 1556 are registered in Ms. Ottob. lat. 2543, 96 and 372, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. For the manuscript, see Ms. Reg. lat. 1334, ff. 91–93, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: "S. Birgittae liber celestis Imperatoris as Regem Revelatus."

58 Marie-Louise Rodén, "Ett helgon, en Drottning och en Kardinal. Oratorio di S:ta Brigida av Decio Azzolino," in *Romhorisont: tidsskrift för Foreningen Svenska Rominstitutets Vänner och Svenska institutet i Rom*, Art. 14, 1987: 14–19.

(*Parte prima* and *Parte seconda*).<sup>59</sup> In the first part, we meet Birgitta when she has just returned from pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela with her husband Ulf Gudmarsson. While Ulf is sleeping, she is tempted by a demon and by a personification of the two vices, Lust ("Diletto") and Ambition ("Ambizione"). The demon calls on the two vices (page 1). Birgitta has just returned from the sacred temple on the Spanish coast, the demon explains, and is thus tired and slothful ("Sú sú compagni fidi, / Horche fatto hà ritorno / Dal sagro tempio degl'Ispan Lidi / Al sui nation soggiorno, / E stanca, e neghittiosa"). Ambition and Lust, then, mock the search for eternal happiness in remote countries and tempt her by reminding her of her wealth, her high rank and her noble origin in Sweden.

Birgitta resists the temptations, and when Ulf wakes up from his sleep, she manages to persuade him of the need to withdraw from the world and seek the pious life of the monastery. After some resistance, Ulf surrenders and in a duet, they announce the promise together (page 4):

V'abandono, vi lascio, v'oblio  
 o tesori, grandezze, e contenti.  
 Siete fango, catene, e tormenti  
 a chi brama di vivere à Dio.  
 Son corone più belle  
 quelle che à i giusti in Ciel  
 danno le Stelle.

I surrender you, I leave you, I forget you, o treasures, prides, and pleasures.  
 You are mud, chains, and torments to those who yearn to live with God.  
 There are more beautiful crowns, those who the righteous in Heaven are  
 offered by the Stars.

Azzolino probably bases his text on Birgitta's *Vita*, written by the two Peters, Magister and Prior Peter, in occasion of the canonization process in 1391. The *Vita* describes how Birgitta and Ulf, after returning from their pilgrimage to Spain, moved to the Cistercians at Alvastra monastery, where soon after Ulf died.

A curious detail in Azzolino's oratorio is the celestial crown offered by the stars ("Son corone più belle / quelle che à i giusti in Ciel / danno le Stelle"), which creates subtle links to John's Apocalypse. In the Apocalypse or the Book of Revelation (Revelation 12: 1, 2 and 5) a triumphal woman appears, clothed

59 Warm thanks to the librarian in Jesi who sent me a copy of the manuscript in a period when it was impossible to travel because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head sits a crown of twelve stars. The crown in Azzolino's text probably reflects images from the Birgittine corpus as well. Indeed, during their journey from Santiago de Compostela, a certain Cistercian named Svennung who accompanied the couple is said to have received a vision in which he saw Birgitta crowned with seven crowns.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, in a vision received by Birgitta in Rome (Rev. IV:124), Saint Agnes places a crown on her head with seven precious stones symbolizing her patience in suffering. In the Renaissance prophetic tradition, Birgitta is also associated with the stars. The Florentine prophet Domenica Narducci, for instance, describes in one of her sermons a vision of Birgitta in a procession with ten queens, modelled on the apocalyptic Mary, wearing a black cloak embroidered with stars and gems.<sup>61</sup>

In the second part of the oratorio, we meet a Birgitta in deep grief after her husband's death, and Saint Agnes who is sent by the Virgin Mary to give her comfort. Among the most remarkable things she says, is how she will resurrect like a phoenix (p. 11):

Soffri, ubedisci, e spera  
nell'Incarnato Verbo,  
che dopo affanno acerbo  
havrai gioia sincera.  
Resta ò Donna felice,  
che hòr hora tu sarai l'alta Fenice,  
a cui Giesù riveli  
gl'arcani impenetrabili de' Cieli.

Suffer, obey, and hope, in the Incarnated Word, that after bitter pain you will have sincere joy. Stay happy Woman, soon you will be the lofty Phoenix, to which Jesus reveals / the impenetrable secrets of the Heavens.

The phoenix, to which I will return, may be read as a foreshadowing figure of Christina, who soon appears in the text. But before the passage in which

60 *Acta et Processus canonizationis b. Birgittae*, ed. Isak Collijn, SFSS. Ser. 2. Latinska skrifter 1 (Uppsala: 1924–1931), 503.

61 *I Sermoni di Domenica da Paradiso. Studi e testo critico*, ed. Rita Librandi and Adriana Valerio (Florence: 1999), 129. For a further reading of this sermon, see Clara Stella's contribution to this book. On Domenica Narducci, see also Isabella Gagliardi, *Sola con Dio. La missione di Domenica da Paradiso nella Firenze del primo Cinquecento* (Florence: 2007), and Adriana Valerio, "Le influenze di Brigida di Svezia nell'esperienza mistica di Domenica da Paradiso (1473–1553)," *Birgittiana* 7 (1999), 3–43.

we meet the queen, Saint John appears, underscoring Agnes' words to Birgitta about the divine secrets that will be revealed to her. "I am John", he says, "who was considered worthy to preach with mystic words the dark secrets of Heaven, both future and past. I uncover everything for you, I will show you everything" (p. 12: "Son Giovanni ... / Che se al mondo fu degno / Con mistiche parole / Di scrivere del Ciel gl'arcani oscuri / E passati, e future, / Tutti à te li discopro, à te l'insegno"). The saint is presented as the evangelist. He has, however, many similarities to John from the biblical Book of Revelation, which gives the oratorio an apocalyptic framework, and which is most fitting for the glimpse into the future that Birgitta now is offered.

The oratorio ends with Birgitta's praise of the Virgin Mary, in which she suddenly breaks out in a prophecy. Of the most wonderful secrets that have been revealed to her, she claims, the greatest is the coming of a royal figure from far north (p. 13):

Mà frà tanti stupor  
 quanto mio Dio nel ravvisar godei  
 che ne i popoli rei  
 della Sueca regione  
 sorgere un dì farai da regia cuna  
 che sprezzando fortuna,  
 regni, scettri, e corone  
 portento di virtù, trofeo di fede  
 verrà di Piero à venerar' la Sede.

But among so many amazements I enjoyed by revelations from my God, the greatest was that among the guilty people in the Swedish region, will rise one day, from a royal cradle, one who despises luck, kingdoms, scepters, and crowns. A preacher of virtues, trophy of faith, will come to Peter to worship the Holy See.

The prophecy is that one day a royal person, presumably Christina, will come to Rome in veneration and support of the papacy. Of great significance in this context is the delicate bonds Azzolino spins between the two Swedish women. Like Birgitta, Christina is of high birth, even royal, and as Birgitta predicts, she will also reject the vanity of the world in order to go to Rome. The last four lines of the prophecy have a clear similarity to the opening of Birgitta's promise which she declared together with Ulf: "V'abandono, vi lascio, v'oblio / o tesori, grandezze, e contenti. / Siete fango, catene, e tormenti / a chi brama di vivere à Dio" ("I surrender, I leave, I forget you, o treasures, prides and pleasures. You are mud, chains, and torments to those who yearn to live with God.").

A more subtle association between the two women is the afore-mentioned phoenix (p. 11). Birgitta was also compared with a phoenix in her *Revelations*. In Rev. 11: 18, to which Azzolino probably is referring, Birgitta is full of doubts. She asks Christ how he could condescend to come as a guest to such a base widow as her, who is poor in every work, weak in understanding, and ridden with sin. Christ comforts her by assuring her that he can make a poor person rich, and a foolish person capable and intelligent. Then he adds:

I am also able to restore an aged person to youth. It is like the phoenix that brings together dried twigs. Among them is the twig of a certain tree that is dry by nature on the outside and warm on the inside. The warmth of the sunbeams comes to it first and kindles it, and then all the twigs are set on fire from it. In the same way you should gather your sins. Among them you should have a piece of wood that is warm on the inside and dry on the outside ... Then the fire of my love will come into the heart first and in that way you will be enkindled with all the virtues. Thoroughly burned by them and purged from sins, you will arise like the rejuvenated bird, having put off the skin of sensuality.<sup>62</sup>

Christ's words to Birgitta are that like the phoenix, which rises from its own ashes, she will be purged and resurrect. The consolation is clearly echoed in Azzolino's oratorio (p. 11): "Resta ò Donna felice, / che hòr hora tu sarai l'alta Fenice" (Stay happy Woman, soon you will be the lofty Phoenix).

The phoenix was a common image of Christ in the Middle Ages. In the context of Azzolino's oratorio, however, the bird also prefigures Christina, whose emblem was also the phoenix. Like a phoenix, risen from a royal cradle, Christina is, in Birgitta's vision and ventriloquizing speech, the expected *Agitatrix* or preacher of peace, virtue and toleration. Christina is nothing but the symbol of the great *mutazione*. The emblem provides Christina's mission as the new guardian of Casa di Santa Brigida with a messianic significance.

62 Birgitta of Sweden, Rev. 11: 18, 12–13: "Ego sufficio eciam antiquum renouare ad iuuentum .Sicut enim Fenix comportat in vallem stipulas siccas, inter quas comportat stipulas unius arboris, que exterius est sicca ex natura et intus calida, in quam primo venit calor radii solis et incenditur, deinde ex ipsa omnes stipule accenduntur, sic oportet te congregare virtutes, quibus a peccatis renouari possis. Inter quas unum lignum habere debes, quod interius est calidum et exterius siccum, idest cor, quod purum sit et siccatum exterius ab omni mundi delectacione et interius plenum omni caritate, ut nichil velis, nichil desideres nisi me. Tunc in hoc primo veniet ignis caritatis mee, et sic incenderis omnibus virtutibus, in quibus concremata et a peccatis purgata resurges quasi auis renouata, deposita pelle delectacionis."

Birgitta, on her side, is through the symbol of the phoenix drawn into the world of alchemy and the ambiguous experimental natural philosophy which flourished in early modern Europe, and especially in Christina's *cenacolo* in Rome.

### Conclusion

The fusion of different cultures of knowledge that characterized Campanella's and Christina's universe, and which is a feature of early modern Europe, proved in many ways to be highly dynamic. Messianic and millenarian expectations of a coming age of universal peace, rooted in centuries-long medieval theological and political traditions, rendered contemporary events, such as Campanella's revolt in Southern Italy or Christina's attempt to become the ruler of Naples, a compelling actuality. Concurrently, the very same expectations paved the way for future-oriented irenic notions about toleration and universal laws under which all of humanity could gather.

In the middle of this melting pot of ideas which epitomized the world of Campanella and Christina – of historical and philological investigations, of religious yearnings, mathematic calculations, astrological observations, and alchemic experiments – we hear the prophetic voice of Birgitta. Birgitta's revelations appealed unexpectedly to new generations of readers who continually revived the rebellious vein of her voice and call to action.