Åbo Akademi

OPEN ACCESS

This is an electronic reprint of the original article. This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

A Lamentable Affair: The Excommunication, Network and Indulgences of the Stralsund Birgittines in 1514–1515

Hägglund, Anna-Stina

Published in:
Zapiski Historyczne

DOI:
10.15762/ZH.2025.16

Published: 27/06/2025

Document Version
Final published version

Document License
CC BY

Link to publication

Please cite the original version:
Hägglund, A.-S. (2025). A Lamentable Affair: The Excommunication, Network and Indulgences of the Stralsund Birgittines in 1514–1515. *Zapiski Historyczne*, *90*(2), 125-146. https://doi.org/10.15762/ZH.2025.16

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

This document is downloaded from the Research Information Portal of ÅAU: 23. Nov. 2026

Zapiski Historyczne t. 90, 2025, z. 2, s. 125–146
ISSN 0044-1791
http://dx.doi.org/10.15762/ZH.2025.16

*ANNA-STINA HÄGGLUND**
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3629-2469

A Lamentable Affair

The Excommunication, Network and Indulgences of the Stralsund Birgittines in 1514–1515

Abstract

This article examines the events surrounding the excommunication of the Birgittine monastery Marienkrone in Stralsund by the bishop of Schwerin between 1514 and 1515. It explores the turn of events from the perspective of the Birgittine connections to secular rulers and the Papal Curia. The discussion focuses on the dynamics of the excommunication in connection with the Birgittine indulgences as the primary cause for the punitive action. The article aims to discuss how a monastery and a religious order, on the eve of the Reformation, organised an international campaign to resolve a local conflict. It also demonstrates the vulnerability of religious houses in a changing religious and political climate and Marienkrone's dependency on its patrons to give financial aid to pay fees for curial procedures in Rome. The core of the conflict between the Birgittines and the secular clergy of Stralsund was the far-reaching indulgences of the Birgittine Order that spurred competition between the religious institutions about visitors and incomes. Indulgences are here discussed as the core of the conflict and the article traces it back to the long tradition of the Birgittine Order to issue indulgences, which practice at the time of the conflict had become increasingly questioned from within the Church, which also were at the core of the Lutheran Reformation that begun in 1517, just three years after the conflict in Stralsund.

Keywords: Birgittine Order, Marienkrone Monastery, Vadstena Abbey, Stralsund, bishopric of Schwerin, Papal Curia, Baltic Sea region, excommunication, indulgences, medieval monasticism

* Department of Cultural History, Turku Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, University of Turku
anna-stina.hagglund@utu.fi

Received 13.09.2024; Received in revised form 1.04.2025; Accepted 11.04.2025

On 11 September 1514, the diary of Vadstena Abbey reported the arrival of two Birgittine brothers from the monastery Marienkrone in Stralsund. The brothers were lamenting and brought with them distressing news that their monastery had been excommunicated by Bishop Peter Walckow of Schwerin (r. 1508–1516)[1], their diocesan bishop. They explained that the reason for the excommunication was their monastery's proclamation of indulgences in defiance of his prohibition against them. From remaining sources, it becomes evident that the conflict had its origin in a struggle about the Birgittine indulgences between the monastery and the clergy of Stralsund and Bishop Peter thus sided with the clergy, which questioned the validity of Marienkrone's indulgences[2]. The Stralsund Birgittines sought help from Vadstena, which pledged to assist in securing absolution. Vadstena Abbey agreed to send two brothers, Nils Amundsson and Erland Sigvardsson, to Stralsund to meddle with the bishop[3].

This is the earliest account of the conflict. The *Vadstena Diary* (Lat. *Diarium Vadstenense*) was a memorial book kept by the brethren of Vadstena Abbey. It contains brief notes on events both within and beyond the monastery, such as the arrival of important visitors. The exact date when the conflict between Marienkrone and its diocesan bishop began is unknown, but surviving records provide some insight into the monastery's efforts to navigate a challenging situation that disrupted its daily life and threatened the monastery's existence[4].

[1] For more on Bishop Peter Walckow of Schwerin, see Johann C. Dähnert, *Kurze Nachricht von dem ehemaligen Bischofe zu Schwerin Peter Walckow, einem gebohrnen Colberger*, [in:] *Pommersche Bibliothek*, Bd. 5, hrsg. v. idem, Greifswald 1756, pp. 81–86; Theodor Pyl, *Wardenberg, Zutfeld*, [in:] *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Bd. 41, Leipzig 1896, pp. 166–167.

[2] Riksarkivet, Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbreven, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/SDHK [accessed online 27 November 2023] (hereinafter cited as SDHK), no. 37624; Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie (hereinafter cited as APS), Herzoglich Wolgaster Archiv (hereinafter cited as HWA), archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 32r–34r.

[3] *Diarium Vadstenense: The Memorial Book of Vadstena Abbey*, ed. Claes Gejrot (Studia Latina Stockholmiensia, vol. 33), Stockholm 1988 (hereinafter cited as DV), no. 1030, 1031, 1034; SDHK, no. 37624.

[4] The excommunication has only been discussed briefly in previous studies, see Johann C. Dähnert, *Excerpta ex Diario Wadstenensi de antiquo monstaerio Birgittino prope Sundium, quod Marienkron, item de Sundis dictum fuit*, [in:] *Pommersche Bibliothek*, Bd. 4, hrsg. v. idem, Greifswald 1755, pp. 300–303; Christian von Nettelbla, *Vorläufige und kurzgefaßte Nachricht von einigen Klöstern der H. Schwedischen Birgitte auserhalb Schweden besonders in Teutschland*, Frankfurt–Ulm 1764, pp. 37–52; Johann A. Dinnies, *Nachricht von dem vormahls vor der Stadt Stralsund belegenen Kloster Birgittenordens Mariakron genannt*, [in:] *Pommersche Sammlungen*, Bd. 1, hrsg. v. Thomas H. Gadebusch, Greifswald 1783, pp. 147–195; Hermann Hoogeweg, *Die Stifter und Klöster der Provinz Pommern*, Bd. 2, Stettin 1925, pp. 732–757.

The remaining documents of the affair reveal a monastic crisis, competition between the Birgittines and the Stralsund clergy, threats from the bishop, and the Birgittines using their network to seek help from secular rulers and at the Papal Curia. The entire future of Marienkrone hung in the balance, with the threat of dispersal persisting if the excommunication was not revoked. The present article aims to undertake a close examination of a local conflict that serves as an illuminating case study of the ways in which a monastic community could operate in Northern Europe on the eve of the Protestant Reformation, within a shifting religious landscape[5]. What were the conditions of the excommunication? What role did the Birgittine network play in securing absolution? Additionally, why did the clergy in the diocese view the indulgences with suspicion? The article begins by analysing the conflict itself, before situating it within the broader context of Birgittine indulgence practices.

Marienkrone's Excommunication

Before turning to the excommunication, it is important to provide a brief overview of the structure of the Birgittine monasteries and the origins of the order, as this context is essential for understanding the conflict. Vadstena Abbey, founded around 1370, was the first Birgittine monastery, established after Pope Urban V (r. 1362–1370) confirmed St Birgitta's (1303–1373) monastic rule, the *Regula Sanctissimi Salvatoris*, as an addition to the Rule of St Augustine[6]. Following her death in 1373 and canonisation in 1391, the Birgittine Order expanded rapidly, with 27 filial foundations emerging in the fifteenth century[7]. As the order grew, Vadstena maintained its position as the order's main centre, and other monasteries sought its assistance for papal privileges and conflict resolution, as seen in the case of the Stralsund Birgittines seeking help in their conflict with Bishop Peter in 1514[8].

[5] Natalie Krantz, *The Making of the Reformation: The Early Urban Reformation Between Continuity and Change*, Reformation & Renaissance Review, vol. 19: 2017, no. 1, pp. 30–49; Robert W. Schribner, *Perceptions of the Sacred in Germany at the End of the Middle Ages*, [in:] *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400–1800)*, ed. Lyndal Roper (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, vol. 81), Leiden 2001, pp. 85–103; *Gottes Nähe unmittelbar erfahren. Mystik im Mittelalter und bei Martin Luther*, hrsg. v. Brendt Hamm, Volker Leppin (Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation, Bd. 36), Tübingen 2007.

[6] Torvald Höjer, *Studier i Vadstena klosters och Birgittinordens historia intill midten av 1400-talet*, Uppsala 1905, pp. 29–78; Tore Nyberg, *Birgittinische Klostergründungen des Mittelalters* (Bibliotheca historica Lundensis, vol. 15), Lund 1965, pp. 23–42.

[7] Anna-Stina Hägglund, *Birgittine Landscapes: Three Monasteries in Their Local and Regional Environment across the Baltic Sea Region, c. 1410–1530*, Åbo 2022, pp. 56–72.

[8] For Vadstena Abbey's position within the Birgittine Order, see Hans Cnattingius, *Studies in the Order of St. Bridget of Sweden*, vol. 1: *The Crisis in the 1420s* (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in History, vol. 7), Stockholm 1963.

St Birgitta structured her monastery containing two separate convents for men and women respectively, as a solution to the problems associated with securing the nuns' liturgical needs and dependency on external confessors[9]. The larger convent, housing 60 members, was thus for women, and the smaller convent accommodated 25 men. The abbess held the highest authority, followed by the general confessor, who was the spiritual leader of the male convent. The Birgittine monasteries are accordingly to be considered primarily as female foundations[10]. According to the Birgittine Rule, the monasteries of the order fell under the bishop's supervision in their respective dioceses, which implied that the bishop performed regular visitations, consecrated new members, and played a crucial role in overseeing the activities of the Birgittine foundation within his jurisdiction[11]. However, these visitations could also be the cause of tensions between a Birgittine community and its bishop when the two parties had different views on them, as when Nådendal Abbey denied its bishop entry into the convent upon his visitation in 1502[12].

Marienkrone was founded on the initiative of the Stralsund town council in 1421, just outside the town walls. The dukes of Pomerania also gave their approval to the foundation and took the monastery under their protection as it was located within their jurisdiction[13]. Over the years, the monastery main-

[9] For research on the position of female monastic communities, see Nancy B. Warren, *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England* (The Middle Ages Series), Philadelphia 2001; Christina Andenna, *Female Religious Life in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison I. Beach, Isabelle Cochelin, Cambridge 2020, pp. 1039–1056; *Medieval Women Religious, c. 800 – c. 1500: New Perspectives*, ed. Kimm Curran, Janet E. Burton (Studies in the History of Medieval Religion, vol. 52), Woodbridge 2023.

[10] Tore Nyberg, *Birgittinsk festgåva. Studier om Heliga Birgitta och Birgittinorden* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska kyrkohistoriska föreningen. Ny följd, vol. 46), Uppsala 1991, pp. 111–130; idem, *Der Birgittenorden*, [in:] *Geist und Gestalt. Monastische Raumkonzepte als Ausdrucksformen religiöser Leitideen im Mittelalter*, hrsg. v. Jörg Sonntag, unter Mitwirkung v. Petrus Bsteh, Brigitte Proksch, Gert Melville (Vita regularis. Abhandlungen, Bd. 69), Berlin–Münster 2016, pp. 179–195; Birgitta Fritz, *The History and Spiritual Life of Vadstena Abbey*, [in:] *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Maria H. Oen (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 89), Leiden 2019, pp. 132–158.

[11] St Birgitta, *Opera minora*, vol. 1: *Regvla Salvatoris*, ed. Sten Eklund (Samlingar utg. av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, ser. 2, vol. 8:1), Stockholm 1975, pp. 170–171.

[12] Tristan Sharp, *Bishops, Canon Law, and the Religious, c. 1140–1350*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison I. Beach, Isabelle Cochelin, Cambridge 2020, pp. 1093–1108; T. Höjer, op.cit., pp. 150–156, 323–328; Birgit Klockars, *I Nådens dal. Klosterfolk och andra c. 1440–1590* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, vol. 486), Helsingfors 1979, pp. 135–136.

[13] H. Hoogeweg, op.cit., pp. 732–757; Norbert Rauer, Entstehungs- und Frühgeschichte des Stralsunder Klosters Marienkrone (Master's thesis, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald), Greifswald 1974.

tained close ties with the town council and Stralsund burghers, often receiving bequests in wills. The limited number of sources, primarily wills and property-related charters, makes it challenging to precisely determine the monastery's role in Stralsund's sacred topography, but it is evident that it held a significant position among the most prominent ecclesiastical institutions, situated a mere 200 metres beyond the town gates. This location outside the town, yet in its vicinity, can also explain the tension between the Birgittines and the secular clergy of Stralsund[14]. The monastery was established for nearly a century by 1514, when it faced excommunication, which posed a severe threat to its future existence.

Birgittine monasteries, known for being local pilgrimage sites with extensive confessional privileges, attracted pilgrims on days when indulgences were announced[15]. This practice sometimes led to tensions with the secular clergy, as, for example, during the conflict that broke out in the 1420s between Marienkrone's mother house, Marienwohlde, and the clergy of the nearby city of Lübeck due to the announcement of indulgences by Marienwohlde Monastery[16]. Marienkrone's excommunication presents another example of such tensions. According to the two entries in the *Vadstena Diary* from September and October 1514, Marienkrone faced excommunication for ignoring the bishop's warning against announcing indulgences to visitors. Additional records mention that the secular clergy at the Parish Church of St Nicholas in Stralsund had raised concerns with the bishop about these indulgences. Clearly, the Birgittines and the Stralsund clergy held conflicting views on the legitimacy of the indulgences, starting the quarrel[17].

[14] A.-S. Hägglund, *Birgittine Landscapes*, passim; eadem, *Birgittine Circles in the Baltic Sea Region: Intercessory Prayers and Gifts for Friendship*, [in:] *Birgittine Circles: People and Saints in the Medieval World*, ed. Elin Andersson, Ingela Hedström, Mia Åkestam (Konferenser Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, vol. 110), Stockholm 2023, pp. 97–119; Ralf Lusiardi, *Stiftung und Städtische Gesellschaft. Religiöse und soziale Aspekte des Stiftungsverhaltens im spätmittelalterlichen Stralsund* (Stiftungsgeschichten, Bd. 2), Berlin 2000, passim. See also Tore Nyberg, *Das Birgittenkloster von Stralsund im Zuge ordensinterner Reformbewegungen*, Baltische Studien. Neue Folge, Bd. 59: 1973, pp. 7–16.

[15] Tore Nyberg, *Vadstena klosters biktprivilegier 1446*, Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift, årg. 71: 1971, pp. 1–44; Roger Andersson, *A Newly Discovered Old Swedish Sermon on Indulgences at Vadstena*, [in:] *Birgittine Circles: People and Saints in the Medieval World*, ed. Elin Andersson, Ingela Hedström, Mia Åkestam (Konferenser Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, vol. 110), Stockholm 2023, pp. 121–135.

[16] Heinrich Dormeier, *Marienwohlde. Birgittinerinnen und Birgittiner*, [in:] *Klosterbuch Schleswig-Holstein und Hamburg. Verzeichnis der Klöster, Stifte und Konvente nördlich der Elbe von den Anfängen bis zur Reformation*, Bd. 2, hrsg. v. Oliver Auge, Katja Hillebrand, Regensburg 2019, p. 217; T. Höjer, op.cit., p. 184.

[17] SDHK, no. 37624; APS, HWA, archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 32r–34r.

Excommunication and interdict were the harshest sanctions employed by the Roman Church. The latter involves suspension from sacraments and spiritual benefits, while the former entails social exclusion and eternal damnation for excommunicates who died unrepentant. However, the interdict is more intricate in definition and encompasses various scenarios where religious rites ceased and churches closed in a designated area. Typically imposed on rulers, interdicts also affected innocent residents, making it a collective punishment. Both sanctions aimed to compel the correction of perceived errant or sinful behaviour[18].

In the context of monastic communities, excommunication typically meant the suspension of religious rites within the monastery and the cessation of visits from laypeople. This often resulted in significant financial losses and threatened the livelihood of the community. Therefore, excommunication functioned as both a spiritual and a material sanction. The scope of the penalty could vary: in some cases, only individual members were treated as excommunicates, while in others, the sanction applied to the entire institution. Additionally, a bishop could impose an interdict or excommunication only on institutions within his own diocese[19].

The sources concerning Marienkrone's punishment suggest that its individual members were all considered guilty and were subsequently excommunicated. However, it is difficult to assess if the punishment was an interdict or excommunication as the legal documents concerning the case did not survive. Both punishments would suspend rites and could target both individual members and the collective[20]. To evaluate the conditions of the sanctions, it is thus important to examine how the situation is described in preserved sources. The *Vadstena Diary* uses the term 'excommunication' when describing Bishop Peter's actions in the entry describing the arrival of the two monks from Marienkrone: '[…] Who had excommunicated them and had inflicted the greatest tribulations on them on account of certain indulgences which the brothers themselves had pronounced against the penalty of the aforementioned warnings of the bishop of Schwerin'[21].

[18] Elisabeth Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages*, Berkeley 1986; Peter D. Clarke, *The Interdict in the Thirteenth Century: A Question of Collective Guilt*, Oxford 2007, pp. 59–85; idem, *Excommunication and Interdict*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Medieval Canon Law*, ed. Anders Winroth, John C. Wei, Cambridge 2022, pp. 550–570; Elizabeth Walgenbach, *Excommunication and Outlawry in the Legal World of Medieval Iceland* (The Northern World, vol. 92), Leiden 2021, pp. 5–37.

[19] P. D. Clarke, *Excommunication and Interdict*, pp. 550–570.

[20] Ibid., pp. 550–551.

[21] '[…] Qui eos excommunicavit et maxima tribulaciones eis intulerat occasione quarundam indulgenciarum quas indulgencias ipsi fratres pronunicaverunt contra penale monitorum premencionati episcopi Zwerinensis'; DV, no. 1030.

A long letter to Vadstena, written by Nils Amundsson, one of the two brothers sent out to assist Marienkrone, describes the suspension of religious rites, but also mentions that no one dared to visit the monastery, which suggests that visitors risked some form of punishment as they were in contact with excommunicates[22]. Another letter from the heads of Vadstena Abbey to Duke Bogislaw X of Pomerania (1454–1523) described that the sanction extended across the entire diocese, not merely locally in Stralsund[23].

The letters thus describe a sanction that suspended religious rites, prohibited visitors from entering the Birgittine church, and encompassed the entire diocese of Schwerin. They also mention how the excommunication was directed towards the members of the monastic community as well as the monastery as a whole[24]. Thus, the excommunication posed a serious threat to the entire community at Marienkrone, endangering the monastery's future[25].

Limited information exists on the previous relations between the Stralsund Birgittines and their bishop, except a mention in Johann Berckmann's mid-sixteenth-century Stralsund chronicle. Berckmann noted Bishop Peter's visit to Stralsund and Marienkrone in 1508, where he consecrated new members without indicating any conflict. Frictions between the Birgittines and the bishop surfaced only in 1514[26]. Berckmann was a Protestant theologian and tendentious against Catholics, which is important to bear in mind when reading his chronicle[27]. In his chronicle, he attributed the discord to the Birgittines refusing a visitation. However, this seems an unlikely sole reason for the excommunication. Contemporary sources primarily cite indulgences as the key issue. While a refusal of visitation could be a factor, the indulgences likely played a more pivotal role. However, the Birgittines could potentially have refused the bishop to make a visitation in that year because of the growing tensions concerning the indulgences[28].

[22] SDHK, no. 37669.

[23] APS, HWA, archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 33r.

[24] SDHK, no. 37669.

[25] DV, no. 1030; SDHK, no. 37669.

[26] *Johan Berckmanns Stralsundische Chronik und die noch vorhandenen Auszüge aus alten verloren gegangenen Stralsundischen Chroniken nebst einem Anhange, urkundliche Beiträge zur Kirchen- und Schulgeschichte Stralsunds enthaltend*, hrsg. v. Gottlieb Ch. F. Mohnike, Ernst H. Zober (Stralsunder Chroniken, Tl. 1), Stralsund 1833 (hereinafter cited as *Johan Berckmanns Stralsundische Chronik*), p. 216.

[27] Adolf Häckermann, *Berckmann, Johann*, [in:] *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Bd. 2, Leipzig 1875, pp. 353–355.

[28] H. Hoogeweg, op.cit., p. 737. See also J. A. Dinnies, op.cit., p. 167.

The Birgittine Network and the Situation at Marienkrone

When Vadstena Abbey learned about the excommunication, Abbess Anna Fickesdotter Bülow (r. 1501–1519), and General Confessor Sven Tordsson (r. 1506–1518) wrote letters to Marienkrone, King Christian II of Denmark (1481–1559) and his mother Christina (1461–1521), Duke Henry V of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1479–1552), and Duke Bogislaw X of Pomerania[29]. In these letters, they attempted to persuade the secular rulers to intervene in the conflict and convince Bishop Peter to revoke the excommunication. The letter that they sent to Duke Bogislaw still survives as a seventeenth-century copy in Latin, along with two letters in German sent to him by the Danish regents after they received the two Vadstena brothers on their way to Stralsund[30]. According to this letter, the conflict began when the clergy in Stralsund, led by Provost Reimar Hahn, was annoyed by the indulgences that the Birgittines read at their monastery. Reimar alerted the bishop about them, subsequently agitating other members of the clergy against the Birgittines and convincing the bishop to sanction the monastic community[31].

In the letter dated 27 September 1514, which the abbess and the general confessor wrote to Marienkrone, they expressed their sorrow over the suppression of privileges imposed upon it and affirmed their commitment to do everything possible to provide assistance in its time of great need[32]. Unfortunately, they explained, Vadstena Abbey had suffered significant losses and expenses in recent years, exceeding a value of 5,000 Stralsund marks, due to the recovery of St Birgitta's house in Rome for the Birgittine Order[33].

Consequently, Vadstena Abbey claimed not to have the financial assets to help resolve the conflict, but the monastery assisted Marienkrone by reaching out to secular rulers who could potentially use their influence to persuade the bishop to lift the excommunication[34]. In late September and early October 1514, the two brothers Nils and Erland set out for Stralsund. They travelled through Denmark, delivered Vadstena's appeal for help to the Danish regents, and procured their letters to the dukes of Mecklenburg and Pomerania and Bishop Peter. The journey lasted two months, and they arrived in Stralsund in early December[35].

---

[29] DV, no. 1031. See also Ch. von Nettelbla, op.cit., pp. 45–46.

[30] DV, no. 1031.

[31] APS, HWA, archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 32r–32v.

[32] SDHK, no. 37624.

[33] The Piazza Farnese house, donated to St Birgitta in the 1350s, passed to the Birgittine Order after she died in 1373, see DV, no. 981, 984, 989, 998, 1019.

[34] Beata Losman, *Norden och reformkonsilierna 1408–1449* (Studia historica Gothoburgensia, vol. 11), Göteborg 1970, pp. 35–49, 244–255; T. Höjer, op.cit., p. 178.

[35] DV, no. 1030.

www.zapiskihistoryczne.pl

On 13 January 1515, Nils wrote his aforementioned letter to inform Vadstena about the situation at Marienkrone: the male convent was dispersed, with only two priest brothers and three lay brothers remaining, one priest brother had been incarcerated, another senior brother had left to appeal to the bishop, the general confessor and a younger brother had left to Rome, and two younger priest brothers had been sent to seek help in Marienforst, Marienkrone's filial foundation located near Cologne, but since they received no help there, they continued their journey to England to Syon Abbey. Nils did not think that the English Birgittines would send any help, though. The two brothers sent to Vadstena had not yet returned, and their whereabouts were unknown. Nils further described that the female convent had 53 sisters and ten kitchen maids, and their education in the rite of the sisters, the *Cantus Sororum*, was insufficient – to further underline the poor state of the monastery[36].

The excommunication was undeniably a distressing experience for Marienkrone's inhabitants. Nils describes the monastery's financial struggles and food shortages. Clearly, the lack of visitors caused financial losses to the monastery, and maybe it also suffered problems in collecting revenues from pertaining estates. He described that the lay brothers eagerly awaited the lifting of the excommunication so that they would be free to join a newly established monastery in Lübeck. Nils' account attests that the excommunication served its intended purpose as a punitive measure to coerce the Birgittines to follow the bishop's command and stop reading their indulgences. Except for the fact that the Birgittines did not heed their bishop's sentence and continued to hold their daily rites in the monastery[37].

Nils further reported that the senior brother who had been sent out to seek an audience with Bishop Peter returned to Marienkrone two days after he and Erland arrived there. The bishop refused to listen to his appeals and urged him and his convent to: '[…] Go home and be silent until after Christmas and pretend that you are ill and unable to neither read nor sing, and not to hold masses, after that there will be some decision, etc. This senior who heard this denied and came home, and since then we have both read and sung even more than before […]'[38].

The Birgittines thus actively defied their ban and acted against the bishop's excommunication. This excerpt and other sections in the letter suggest that the bishop intended to re-evaluate the excommunication after Christmas.

[36] SDHK, no. 37624.

[37] P. D. Clarke, *The Interdict*, pp. 57–58.

[38] '[…] ffaren heem och hollen silencium til epter iulen och lothen som j ären siwke och förmogen hwarke läsa eller sionga och ey mäsa och sidan mo vel finas raad etc. Tessen senior som thette hörde nekade och kom heem til closters och sidan haffwom vi baade läst och siongit mere sidan än för […]'; SDHK, no. 37624.

Nils mentions that the date set by the bishop was 14 days after Candlemass, in the middle of February. He was, though, pessimistic that anything would change, and he writes that he and Erland prepared to return to Vadstena soon, as they could do nothing more in Stralsund.

Nils further gives an account of the audiences he and Erland made upon reaching Marienkrone. They too visited the bishop's residence to deliver the letters from Vadstena and the Danish regents. However, the bishop did not accept the appeals of reaching a concord and only responded that the Birgittines owed him money for their insults: 'We assess the injuries and insults inflicted upon us beyond three thousand ducats, etc.'[39], which, of course, was a sum that Marienkrone could not pay, and likely was not willing to do it either. Reaching an agreement was accordingly impossible, and the two brothers returned to Marienkrone. What the bishop meant by insults is not further explained in the letter, but probably he meant Marienkrone's transgressions against his ban, such as continuing their daily liturgical celebrations.

Nils makes another important remark in his letter regarding the actions of Duke Bogislaw X of Pomerania, whom he described as equally unwilling to assist the Birgittines[40]. They had received an audience with the duke, during which they presented him with the letter from Vadstena and the letters from the Danish regents. However, he declined to take a mediating position in the conflict. Nils explains that the previous summer, Bogislaw had actively tried to help Marienkrone by sending words and letters to the bishop. Unfortunately, Bishop Peter had conveyed some negative remarks about the Birgittines to the duke, leading to his unwillingness to provide any further assistance[41].

The letter Vadstena Abbey sent to the duke is quite lengthy. In it, the abbess and general confessor reminded him of his forefathers' central role in founding the monastery and urged him to exercise his rights as a patron to shield the monastic community from further harm by Provost Reimar Hahn and the clergy of Stralsund[42]. They also expressed the hope that he would provide substantial financial aid and even consider annexing the parish of St Nicholas to the monastery after the provost's death. As a token of appreciation, they offered him and his family membership in Vadstena's spiritual confraternity[43]. According to Nils, the duke appreciated the letter and inclusion in the confraternity

[39] '[…] Quibus litteris episcopo per fratrem Nicolaum Amundi presentatis noluit contentari, sed dixit: Nos ponderamus iniurias et contumelias nobis illatas ultra trium millium ducatorum etc.'; DV, no. 1031.

[40] Oliver Auge, *Landesherrschaft und Kirche in Pommern vor der Reformation*, Przegląd Zachodniopomorski, t. 33: 2018, z. 4, pp. 141–159.

[41] SDHK, no. 37624.

[42] Stadtarchiv Stralsund, Urkunden Kloster Marienkrone, no. 39, 57.

[43] APS, HWA, archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 32r–34r; H. Hoogeweg, op.cit., p. 737.

but did not take further measures to assist Marienkrone[44]. The letters from the Danish regents, probably handed over on the same occasion, are concise, reiterating the Birgittines' appeals. Both regents made friendly requests for Bogislaw to write to the bishop and persuade him to withdraw the excommunication[45]. According to the *Vadstena Diary*, the Birgittines ultimately succeeded in revoking their excommunication[46]. This occurred in Rome sometime in spring or summer 1515. After visiting Marienkrone, the two Vadstena brothers, Nils and Erland, did not return home to Vadstena, but continued to Rome to further assist Marienkrone's general confessor there. They likely departed from Stralsund for Rome soon after Nils wrote his letter. The Birgittines had their representative in Rome, Peder Månsson, whom Nils had already asked to assist Marienkrone's general confessor on-site at the Papal Curia[47]. Nils and Erland probably brought additional documents to Rome to present in the case. Since neither Vadstena nor Marienkrone allegedly had the finances to cover the curial procedures, they must have received financial assistance from another party. Curial procedures were known to be costly. However, surviving price lists exist only for appeals to the Papal Penitentiary, and none have been preserved from the Sacra Romana Rota tribunal, where Marienkrone's case was likely examined, based on the available sources[48]. According to Berckmann's chronicle, the Roman proctor of Duke Henry V of Mecklenburg, Doctor Zutfeld Wardenberg, paid 300 florins to the papal chancery to cover the fees for lifting the excommunication. Although the chronicle is not the most reliable source, it is nonetheless informative, suggesting that Duke Henry V responded to the Birgittines' appeal to help resolve the conflict[49].

Zutfeld Wardenberg originated from a Stralsund burgher family and held a doctorate in canon law[50]. Around 1510, he was sent to Rome, where he served

[44] SDHK, no. 37624.

[45] APS, HWA, archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 36r–37v.

[46] DV, no. 1031.

[47] SDHK, no. 37624.

[48] Wolfgang Müller, *The Price of Papal Pardon: New Fifteenth-Century Evidence*, [in:] *Päpste, Pilger, und Pönitentiarie. Festschrift für Ludwig Schmugge zum 65. Geburtstag*, hrsg. v. Andreas Meyer, Constanze Rendtel, Maria Wittmer-Butsch, Tübingen 2004, pp. 457–481; Kirsi Salonen, *The Curia: The Apostolic Penitentiary*, [in:] *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy* (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 70), ed. Keith Sisson, Atria A. Larson, Leiden 2016, pp. 274–275; Bruce Brasington, *"Time and Money": Regulating Appeals to the Roman Curia in the Second Half of the Twelfth Century*, [in:] *A Companion to the History of the Roman Curia*, ed. Donald S. Prudlo (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 107), Leiden 2025, pp. 95–108.

[49] '[…] Do thogenn [se] then tho Rome vnnd docter Zifelt Wardenberch nam 300 fl. vann en vnnd hulp en daruth, vnde kregen mehr aflates alss se thouhorne nicht hetten […]'; *Johan Berckmanns Stralsundische Chronik*, p. 22.

[50] Bernhard Stasiewski, *Magnus*, [in:] *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Bd. 15, Berlin 1987, pp. 669–670; Oliver Auge, *Handlungsspielräume fürstlicher Politik im Mittelalter. Der südliche*

as a papal protonotary and chaplain. In Rome, he handled various legal matters on behalf of the dukes of Mecklenburg, Emperor Maximilian I, and acted as a proctor also for the Danish King Christian II[51]. The Birgittines no doubt knew that King Christian and Duke Henry had an envoy in Rome who could assist in processing their errand and promote the lifting of the ban[52].

In the diary entry that Nils wrote upon his and Erland's return to Vadstena in 1515, he mentions that they had spent time in Rome the previous summer and there, together with the Birgittine representative, Peder Månsson, tried to achieve papal absolution to lift the excommunication and litigated against Bishop Peter. There is no mention of Zutfeld Wardenberg, which does not imply that he was not involved. Nils specifies in the *Vadstena Diary* entry that he had brought detailed scriptures on the errand from Rome, but does not give any further account of the content of these documents. He only concludes that they were too lengthy to repeat in the diary, and those who wished to learn the details could read the documents that were stored in the monastery's letter case. These documents are unfortunately now lost[53]. As Kirsi Salonen has shown, parties would bring home the acts of a concluded case in the papal tribunal of the Sacra Romana Rota, which gives reason to believe that these were the documents to which Nils referred in his entry in the *Vadstena Diary*[54].

As a proctor active at the Curia, Zutfeld Wardenberg would have been a competent litigant on behalf of Marienkrone[55]. Thus, the Stralsund Birgittines obtained a papal verdict on the excommunication through their connections. Furthermore, according to the *Vadstena Diary*, the Birgittines succeeded in summoning Bishop Peter and Reimar Hahn to the papal tribunal. The issued sentence is said to have prohibited them from further obstructing or attempting to harm the Birgittines of Marienkrone, under the threat of a penalty set at 4,000 ducats in gold to the papal treasury and major excommunication[56].

Ostseeraum von der Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts bis in die frühe Reformationszeit (Mittelalter-Forschungen, Bd. 28), Ostfildern 2009, pp. 112–115.

[51] T. Pyl, op.cit., pp. 166–167; Per Ingesman, *Den danske kongens repræsentanter ved renæssancepaverenes hof*, [in:] *Danmark og Europa i senmiddelalderen*, red. idem, Bjørn Poulsen, Århus 2000, pp. 166–167.

[52] For the envoys of the northern German dukes at the Papal Curia, see O. Auge, *Handlungsspielräume fürstlicher Politik im Mittelalter*, p. 113.

[53] SDHK, no. 37624.

[54] Kirsi Salonen, *The Curia: The Sacra Romana Rota*, [in:] *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy*, ed. Keith Sisson, Atria A. Larson (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 70), Leiden 2016, p. 281.

[55] Eadem, *Papal Justice in the Middle Ages: The Sacra Romana Rota* (Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West), Abingdon 2016, pp. 171–179.

[56] DV, no. 1031.

In June 1514, the same year that he excommunicated Marienkrone, Bishop Peter also excommunicated the Augustinian hermits in Sternberg. Although these two instances of excommunication are from the same year, they are not directly linked. However, there are similarities in the strategies employed by the Augustinians and the Birgittines to secure absolution. Both groups appealed to Duke Henry V of Mecklenburg, initiated legal processes at the papal tribunal in Rome, and saw their excommunications overturned. The Augustinians appealed to the Papal Curia, citing the special privileges of their order, which specified that only the Apostolic authority, not the bishop, could judge their convent. Bishop Peter rejected these privileges, asserting his jurisdiction over the convent[57]. It is possible that the Birgittines presented similar claims at the Papal Curia, as they were granted the same privileges as the Augustinians.

Secular rulers thus played an active role in resolving both cases[58]. Duke Henry V likely asserted his authority towards the bishop of Schwerin, as they were concurrently involved in power struggles. In 1514, these struggles culminated in a protective treaty, resulting in the diocese losing its imperial status and autonomy from the duchy[59]. Thus, the duke also had a political interest in litigating against the bishop on behalf of the two monasteries, which would explain his involvement.

The History of the Birgittine Indulgences and Their Role in the Conflict of 1514

The conflict between Marienkrone and Bishop Peter primarily arose from the Birgittine indulgences. Only a brief discussion of Birgittine indulgence privileges can be offered here, but it is essential to explore the background of the papal indulgence privileges granted to the order in the late fourteenth century to fully grasp the discord over the indulgences at Marienkrone.

Indulgences were granted from the inexhaustible treasury of merit formed out of Christ's passion and the suffering of martyrs and saints. This treasury was administered by the Church to alleviate sinners from the burden of their

[57] Ingo Ulpts, *Die Bettelorden in Mecklenburg. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Franziskaner, Klarissen, Dominikaner und Augustiner-Eremiten im Mittelalter* (Saxonia Franciscana. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sächsischen Franziskanerprovinz, Bd. 6), Werl 1995, pp. 299–301; Brian A. Pavlac, *The Curse of Cusanus: Excommunication in Fifteenth Century Germany*, [in:] *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age: Intellect and Spirituality*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki, Christopher M. Bellitto (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, vol. 105), Leiden 2002, pp. 199–213.

[58] O. Auge, *Handlungsspielräume fürstlicher Politik im Mittelalter*, p. 114; I. Ulpts, op.cit., pp. 302–303.

[59] I. Ulpts, op.cit., pp. 299–301; Clemens Brodkorb, *Bistum Schwerin*, [in:] *Die Bistümer des Heiligen Römischen Reiches von ihren Anfängen bis zur Säkularisation*, hrsg. v. Erwin Gatz, unter Mitwirkung v. Clemens Brodkorb, Helmut Flachenecker, Freiburg i. Br. 2003, p. 673; SDHK, no. 37624.

culpa – their guilt of sin. Robert N. Swanson compares the indulgences collected during one's lifetime to a credit, added to other merits from terrestrial good works. This credit could be transferred at the moment of death to absolve its corresponding value, offering a shortened posthumous *pena* – the atonement for sin that the soul would endure in Purgatory[60]. Scholars across various contexts agree that ecclesiastics employed indulgences to emphasise acts of penance, to promote saints' feast days, and to raise funds for religious foundations. The importance of indulgences is evident in the case of the Birgittines, particularly in the establishment of the order and their participation in each other's papal graces[61].

From the outset, the Birgittines successfully secured papal support, obtaining three crucial indulgences of the type *indulgentie ad instar*, that is, indulgences which granted visitors at a certain location the same spiritual benefits as those granted to another religious site[62]. On 30 July 1378, Pope Urban VI (r. 1378–1389) granted Vadstena Abbey the St Peter ad Vincula indulgence, providing visitors with the same privileges as those at the Church of St Peter ad Vincula in Rome on the feast day of St Peter in Chains (1 August). This granted remission for half of their sins on the feast day and 50 years of remission for visits during the octave[63]. Urban VI also conferred upon Vadstena the indulgences of the Augustinian Order, aligning with the confirmation of the Birgittine *Regula Sanctissimi Salvatoris* as an addition to the Rule of St Augustine. This privilege allowed the order to claim the generous indulgences proclaimed at the Augustinian Church Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, valued at 7,000 days of remission from sin for visits on specific feast days[64]. The third indulgence, the renowned Portiuncula indulgence, was granted to the Birgittines at Marienbrunn Monastery in Danzig (Pol. Gdańsk) by Pope Boniface IX

[60] Robert N. Swanson, *Praying for Pardon: Devotional Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, [in:] *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. idem (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 5), Leiden 2006, pp. 215–240; idem, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 8–22; Robert W. Shaffern, *The Medieval Theology of Indulgences*, [in:] *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Robert N. Swanson (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 5), Leiden 2006, pp. 11–36; idem, *The Penitents' Treasury: Indulgences in Latin Christendom, 1175–1375*, Scranton 2007.

[61] T. Höjer, op.cit., pp. 147–148.

[62] Nikolaus Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, Bd. 3, Paderborn 1923, pp. 150–153; *Documents on the Papal Plenary Indulgences 1300–1517 Preached in the Regnum Teutonicum*, ed. Stuart Jenks (Later Medieval Europe, vol. 16), Leiden 2018, pp. 15, 25–27; Reima Välimäki, Kirsi Salonen, *The Materiality of Turku Cathedral's Spiritual Treasury: Indulgences*, Material Religion, vol. 18: 2022, no. 5, p. 536.

[63] SDHK, no. 11279.

[64] SDHK, no. 11278; N. Paulus, op.cit., pp. 268, 270–271.

(r. 1389–1404) in 1397. Visitors to the church on Laetare Sunday received a plenary indulgence, remitting all time in Purgatory for sins committed until the point of the visit[65]. In 1403, Boniface IX granted all Birgittine monasteries participation in each other's privileges[66].

All of the most generous indulgence privileges were granted to the order during the Western Schism (1378–1417). The status of these indulgences became precarious due to their connection with fluctuating papal politics[67]. To the Birgittines, problems surrounding these indulgences arose almost immediately, as Pope Boniface IX himself withdrew all previously granted plenary and *ad instar* indulgences in 1402[68]. In turn, in 1409, Pope Alexander V (r. 1409–1410) reinstated all former indulgences, including the *ad instar* indulgences, granted to the Birgittines[69].

The *ad vincula* indulgence effectively promoted Vadstena as a pilgrimage site, with its significance to the Birgittines, as it originated from St Birgitta's revelations. In this particular vision, Christ exhorted her to appeal to the pontiff to grant the indulgence to her future monastery[70]. Despite challenges to the Birgittine claim, the *ad vincula* indulgence played a vital role. This indulgence held special significance compared to their other major indulgences, aligning with the pilgrimage ethos inspired by St Birgitta. It encouraged acts of penance, such as confession of sins and pilgrimage to Birgittine churches and hearing sermons preached on that day[71].

The councils at Constance (1414–1418) and Basel (1431–1449) delivered a significant blow to the Birgittines as the status of the *Regula Sanctissimi Salvatoris*, St Birgitta's revelations and her canonisation were questioned and their

[65] SDHK, no. 14886, 14888.

[66] SDHK, no. 16085.

[67] Thomas M. Izbicki, *Indulgences in Fifteenth-Century Polemics and Canon Law*, [in:] *Ablasskampagnen des Spätmittelalters. Luthers Thesen von 1517 im Kontext*, hrsg. v. Andreas Rehberg (Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom, Bd. 132), Berlin 2017, pp. 79–104.

[68] SDHK, no. 15982.

[69] SDHK, no. 17352; T. Höjer, op.cit., pp. 145–150.

[70] St Birgitta, *Revelaciones*, lib. 4, ed. Hans Aili (Samlingar utg. av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, ser. 2, vol. 7:4), Stockholm 1992, pp. 385–386.

[71] Katharina Hallqvist, *Growing for Paradise: Birgittine Guidance for the Mind's Eye in some Ad Vincula Sermons*, [in:] *Birgittine Circles: People and Saints in the Medieval World*, ed. Elin Andersson, Ingela Hedström, Mia Åkestam (Konferenser Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, vol. 110), Stockholm 2023, pp. 139–140; Diana Webb, *Pardons and Pilgrims*, [in:] *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Robert N. Swanson (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 5), Leiden 2006, pp. 241–276; Stephan Borgehammar, *Preaching to Pilgrims: Ad vincula Sermons at Vadstena Abbey*, [in:] *A Catalogue and Its Users: A Symposium on the Uppsala C Collection of Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Monica Hedlund (Acta Bibliothecae R. Universitatis Upsaliensis, vol. 34), Uppsala 1995, pp. 91–101.

indulgences scrutinised. While Birgitta's sanctity and the divine origin of her revelations were confirmed, the council did not acknowledge the *ad instar* indulgences granted to the order. The discussions at Constance resulted in the annulment of all such indulgences issued since the beginning of the schism. The Council of Basel issued a decree in 1436 against Birgittine *ad instar* indulgences, which seems to have put an end to their efforts to reinstate them[72].

After 1436, it appears that individual Birgittine monasteries sought indulgences specifically for their own establishments, although these were less comprehensive than their former *ad instar* indulgences. On 18 April 1465, eight cardinals granted 100 days of indulgence for genuine penitents of both sexes who visited Marienkrone's church on the feast days of St Peter in Chains (1 August), St Mary Magdalene (22 July), and St Birgitta (7 October). The inclusion of the Feast of St Peter in Chains indicates the Birgittines' unsuccessful attempts to reinstate the indulgence, yet it remained an important feast day celebrated at the monastery. Penitents were also expected to contribute to the *fabrica*, that is, the church's construction fund, for the enhancement of the divine cult[73]. This particular indulgence was likely acquired to raise funds for financing the ongoing construction works at the church, which was one of the primary functions of indulgences. According to a contemporary Stralsund chronicle, the church was completed in 1474, aligning well with the date of the indulgence letter if it was intended to raise construction funds[74].

Marienkrone's indulgence letter has been transcribed into a copy book at Vadstena Abbey, where letters detailing papal privileges and indulgences granted to the entire order and individual monasteries were copied. In this manner, the Birgittines kept meticulous records of the status of their privileges[75]. Consequently, when the Stralsund Birgittines needed information about privileges granted to a monastery within the order, they would correspond with Vadstena. A surviving letter from 1473 reveals that the male convent at Marienkrone requested copies of indulgence letters granted to Syon Abbey for the Feast of St Peter in Chains, along with copies of the bulls revoking the indulgence at the Council of Basel. Although the letter does not provide a reason for the request, it is possible that Marienkrone was preparing a supplication for new indulgences at the Papal Curia and needed copies of previous grants as templates for the request[76].

[72] T. Höjer, op.cit., pp. 186, 202–223.

[73] Riksarkivet, Codices A 19, fol. 126v–127r; SDHK, no. 28406.

[74] *Zwei Stralsundische Chroniken des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, hrsg. v. Rudolf Baier, Stralsund 1893, pp. 37, 41, 43.

[75] Riksarkivet, Codices A 19, fol. 126v–127r; SDHK, no. 28406.

[76] SDHK, no. 29613.

Now, turning to the conflict over Marienkrone's indulgences in 1514, it is evident that it was part of the long history of the debate over the Birgittine indulgences. According to the letter that the heads of Vadstena Abbey wrote to Duke Bogislaw X, it seems that the most recent renewal of Marienkrone's indulgences was made by Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513). The heads of Vadstena Abbey emphasised the longevity of the Birgittine indulgences granted to the order by the Apostolic See, likely as a rhetorical attempt to convince the duke of their importance. They also underscored that the validity of the papal confirmation of the indulgences was beyond doubt and asserted that the announcement of the indulgences was advantageous to all inhabitants of the duchy[77].

One of the major challenges in studying indulgences is that, at least in theory, their validity lasted only as long as the grantor remained in office and expired upon the grantor's death. Although it is unclear to what extent this principle was enforced in practice, it created an opportunity to question the legitimacy of indulgences granted by earlier popes, which would explain the need for the Birgittine monasteries to supplicate for a renewal of their indulgences when a new pope entered his office[78]. Accordingly, this could explain why the Birgittines considered that they could continue to announce their indulgences even after the grantor died. Julius II died in February 1513, the year before the conflict over Marienkrone's indulgences broke out. Perhaps the fact that the pontiff who had granted the indulgences was no longer in office was an argument used by the clergy of Stralsund to question and undermine the rights of the Birgittines to announce their indulgences. This could explain the timing of the conflict.

The conflict between the Stralsund Birgittines and the Stralsund clergy, leading to the excommunication by the bishop, occurred merely three years prior to the initiation of the Lutheran Reformation in 1517 and ten years before the arrival of the Reformation in Stralsund[79]. Indulgences were always criticised from within the Roman Church due to the obvious risks of their misuse. However, this criticism became louder towards the end of the Middle Ages, and the conflict in Stralsund can probably also be considered as a manifestation of this growing mistrust from within the Church against the indulgences that ultimately led to the vehement criticism against them, which was at the core of the Lutheran Reformation[80].

[77] APS, HWA, archival ref. no. 65/3/0/64/1772, fol. 32r.

[78] R. Välimäki, K. Salonen, op.cit., p. 537.

[79] Hellmuth Heyden, *Kirchengeschichte Pommerns*, Bd. 1: *Von den Anfängen des Christentums bis zur Reformationszeit*, Köln–Braunsfeld 1957, pp. 210–215.

[80] David Bagchi, *Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Contemporary Criticism of Indulgences*, [in:] *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Robert N. Swanson (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vol. 5), Leiden 2006, pp. 331–356;

Conclusions

Despite being excommunicated, the Birgittines at Marienkrone insisted on their right to announce indulgences and continued church services, escalating tensions with the Stralsund clergy. Contacting Vadstena Abbey, the leading centre for the order, they sought assistance through letters appealing to secular rulers. The outcomes of the Birgittines' appeals to rulers varied. The Danish regents sent letters to their peers among the dukes, trying to persuade them to help Marienkrone. Duke Bogislaw X showed reluctance to intervene. The direct involvement of Duke Henry V of Mecklenburg is uncertain, but his proctor in Rome, Doctor Zutfeld Wardenberg, seems to have assisted the Birgittines in their process at the Papal Curia. The entire matter was resolved in Rome sometime in spring or summer 1515, when the Birgittines secured Marienkrone's absolution. The bishop and his companions were threatened with excommunication and fines if they persisted.

This affair underscores the importance of Birgittine co-operation and their international connections with secular rulers. Clearly, Marienkrone drew advantages from the internationality of the Birgittine Order. The indulgences were a thorn in the side of the clergy of Stralsund, as they purportedly put Marienkrone in a favourable position, likely attracting many visitors who attended services in the Birgittine church on certain feast days. Vadstena's reference to indulgence ratifications by Pope Julius II suggests that the Stralsund clerics may have viewed them as invalid following his death and the likely absence of renewed approval from his successor. The clerics of Stralsund may have seen an opportunity to strike against the Birgittine indulgences at a moment when their status may have been weakened.

This local conflict had immediate consequences for this particular monastery, whose very existence was at stake. However, it also posed a wider threat to the entire Birgittine Order, as the dispute over indulgences risked becoming a statutory precedent that could spread to other locations and affect other Birgittine foundations if left unresolved. For this reason, Vadstena Abbey was determined to support its daughter house in every possible way. The conflict highlights the intense economic competition between the secular clergy and religious houses, a phenomenon not unique to Stralsund. It also illustrates how individual monastic communities relied on their networks and access to financial resources to cover the substantial costs associated with legal proceedings at the Papal Curia. As such, the case offers a revealing example of how the local and international dimensions of the late medieval Church were deeply interconnected.

Robert N. Swanson, *The Challenges of Indulgences in the Reformation Church*, [in:] *Ablasskampagnen des Spätmittelalters. Luthers Thesen von 1517 im Kontext*, hrsg. v. Andreas Rehberg (Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom, Bd. 132), Berlin 2017, pp. 3–18.

Bibliography

Andenna, Christina. "Female Religious Life in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, edited by Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin, 1039–1056. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Andersson, Roger. "A Newly Discovered Old Swedish Sermon on Indulgences at Vadstena." In *Birgittine Circles: People and Saints in the Medieval World*, edited by Elin Andersson, Ingela Hedström, and Mia Åkestam, 120–135. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2023.

Auge, Oliver. *Handlungsspielräume fürstlicher Politik im Mittelalter. Der südliche Ostseeraum von der Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts bis in die frühe Reformationszeit*. Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2009.

Auge, Oliver. "Landesherrschaft und Kirche in Pommern vor der Reformation." *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 33/4 (2018): 141–159.

Bagchi, David. "Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Contemporary Criticism of Indulgences." In *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, edited by Robert N. Swanson, 331–356. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Baier, Rudolf, ed. *Zwei Stralsundische Chroniken des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Stralsund: Druck der Königlichen Regierungs-Buchdruckerei, 1893.

Borgehammar, Stephan. "Preaching to Pilgrims: Ad vincula Sermons at Vadstena Abbey." In *A Catalogue and Its Users: A Symposium on the Uppsala C Collection of Medieval Manuscripts*, edited by Monica Hedlund, 91–101. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1995.

Brasington, Bruce. "'Time and Money': Regulating Appeals to the Roman Curia in the Second Half of the Twelfth Century." In *A Companion to the History of the Roman Curia*, edited by Donald S. Prudlo, 95–108. Leiden: Brill, 2025.

Brodkorb, Clemens. "Bistum Schwerin." In *Die Bistümer des Heiligen Römischen Reiches von ihren Anfängen bis zur Säkularisation*, edited by Erwin Gatz, Clemens Brodkorb, and Helmut Flachenecker, 670–675. Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2003.

Clarke, Peter D. "Excommunication and Interdict." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Canon Law*, edited by Anders Winroth and John C. Wei, 550–570. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Clarke, Peter D. *The Interdict in the Thirteenth Century: A Question of Collective Guilt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Cnattingius, Hans. *Studies in the Order of St. Bridget of Sweden*, vol. 1: *The Crisis in the 1420s*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1963.

Curran, Kimm, and Janet E. Burton, eds. *Medieval Women Religious, c. 800 – c. 1500: New Perspectives*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2023.

Dormeier, Heinrich. "Marienwohlde. Birgittinerinnen und Birgittiner." In *Klosterbuch Schleswig-Holstein und Hamburg. Verzeichnis der Klöster, Stifte und Konvente nördlich der Elbe von den Anfängen bis zur Reformation*, vol. 2, edited by Oliver Auge and Katja Hillebrand, 215–252. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2019.

Fritz, Birgitta. "The History and Spiritual Life of Vadstena Abbey." In *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages*, edited by Maria H. Oen, 132–158. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Gejrot, Claes, ed. *Diarium Vadstenense: The Memorial Book of Vadstena Abbey*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988.

Hägglund, Anna-Stina. "Birgittine Circles in the Baltic Sea Region: Intercessory Prayers and Gifts for Friendship." In *Birgittine Circles: People and Saints in the Medieval World*, edited by Elin Andersson, Ingela Hedström, and Mia Åkestam, 97–119. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2023.

Hägglund, Anna-Stina. *Birgittine Landscapes: Three Monasteries in Their Local and Regional Environment across the Baltic Sea Region, c. 1410–1530*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag, 2022.

Hamm, Brendt, and Volker Leppin, eds. *Gottes Nähe unmittelbar erfahren. Mystik im Mittelalter und bei Martin Luther*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007.

Hallqvist, Katharina. "Growing for Paradise: Birgittine Guidance for the Mind's Eye in some Ad Vincula Sermons." In *Birgittine Circles: People and Saints in the Medieval World*, edited by Elin Andersson, Ingela Hedström, and Mia Åkestam, 136–158. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2023.

Heyden, Hellmuth. *Kirchengeschichte Pommerns*, vol. 1: *Von den Anfängen des Christentums bis zur Reformationszeit*. Köln, Braunsfeld: Verlagsgesellschaft Rudolf Müller, 1957.

Höjer, Torvald. *Studier i Vadstena klosters och Birgittinordens historia intill midten av 1400-talet*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1905.

Hoogeweg, Hermann. *Die Stifter und Klöster der Provinz Pommern*, vol. 2. Stettin: Leon Sauniers Buchhandlung, 1925.

Häckermann, Adolf. "Berckmann, Johann." In *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 2, 353–355. Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt, 1875.

Ingesman, Per. "Den danske kongens repræsentanter ved renæssancepaverenes hof." In *Danmark og Europa i senmiddelalderen*, edited by Per Ingesman and Bjørn Poulsen, 160–182. Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2000.

Izbicki, Thomas M. "Indulgences in Fifteenth-Century Polemics and Canon Law." In *Ablasskampagnen des Spätmittelalters. Luthers Thesen von 1517 im Kontext*, edited by Andreas Rehberg, 79–104. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.

Jenks, Stuart, ed. *Documents on the Papal Plenary Indulgences 1300–1517 Preached in the Regnum Teutonicum*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Klockars, Birgit. *I Nådens dal. Klosterfolk och andra c. 1440–1590*. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1979.

Krentz, Natalie. "The Making of the Reformation: The Early Urban Reformation Between Continuity and Change." *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 19/1 (2017): 30–49.

Losman, Beata. *Norden och reformkonsilierna 1408–1449*. Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1970.

Lusiardi, Ralf. *Stiftung und städtische Gesellschaft. Religiöse und soziale Aspekte des Stiftungsverhaltens im spätmittelalterlichen Stralsund*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000.

Mohnike, Gottlieb Ch. F., and Ernst H. Zober, eds. *Johan Berckmanns Stralsundische Chronik und die noch vorhandenen Auszüge aus alten verloren gegangenen Stralsundischen Chroniken nebst einem Anhange, urkundliche Beiträge zur Kirchen- und Schulgeschichte Stralsunds enthaltend*. Stralsund: Löffler, 1833.

Müller, Wolfgang. "The Price of Papal Pardon: New Fifteenth-Century Evidence." In *Päpste, Pilger, und Pönitentiarie. Festschrift für Ludwig Schmugge zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Andreas Meyer, Constanze Rendtel, and Maria Wittmer-Butsch, 457–481. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004.

Nyberg, Tore. *Birgittinische Klostergründungen des Mittelalters*. Lund: Gleerup, 1965.

Nyberg, Tore. *Birgittinsk festgåva. Studier om Heliga Birgitta och Birgittinorden*. Uppsala: Svenska kyrkohistoriska föreningen, 1991.

Nyberg, Tore. "Das Birgittenkloster von Stralsund im Zuge ordensinterner Reformbewegungen." *Baltische Studien. Neue Folge* 59 (1973): 7–16.

Nyberg, Tore. "Der Birgittenorden." In *Geist und Gestalt. Monastische Raumkonzepte als Ausdrucksformen religiöser Leitideen im Mittelalter*, edited by Jörg Sonntag, Petrus Bsteh, Brigitte Proksch, and Gert Melville, 179–195. Berlin, Münster: LIT, 2016.

Nyberg, Tore. "Vadstena klosters biktprivilegier 1446." *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift* 71 (1971): 1–44.

Paulus, Nikolaus. *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, vol. 3. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1923.

Pavlac, Brian A. "The Curse of Cusanus: Excommunication in Fifteenth Century Germany." In *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age: Intellect and Spirituality*, edited by Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellitto, 199–213. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Pyl, Theodor. "Wardenberg, Zutfeld." In *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 41, 166–167. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1896.

Rauer, Norbert. "Entstehungs- und Frühgeschichte des Stralsunder Klosters Marienkrone." Master's thesis, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald, 1974.

Salonen, Kirsi. *Papal Justice in the Middle Ages: The Sacra Romana Rota*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Salonen, Kirsi. "The Curia: The Apostolic Penitentiary." In *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy*, edited by Keith Sisson and Atria A. Larson, 259–275. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Salonen, Kirsi. "The Curia: The Sacra Romana Rota." In *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy*, edited by Keith Sisson and Atria A. Larson, 276–290. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Schribner, Robert W. "Perceptions of the Sacred in Germany at the End of the Middle Ages." In *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400–1800)*, edited by Lyndal Roper, 85–103. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Shaffern, Robert W. "The Medieval Theology of Indulgences." In *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, edited by Robert N. Swanson, 11–36. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Shaffern, Robert W. *The Penitents' Treasury: Indulgences in Latin Christendom, 1175–1375*. Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2007.

Sharp, Tristan. "Bishops, Canon Law, and the Religious, c. 1140–1350." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, edited by Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin, 1093–1108. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

St Birgitta. *Opera minora*, vol. 1: *Regvla Salvatoris*. Edited by Sten Eklund. Stockholm: Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, 1975.

St Birgitta. *Revelaciones*, vol. 4. Edited by Hans Aili. Stockholm: Svenska fornskriftsällskapet, 1992.

Stasiewski, Bernhard. "Magnus." In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 15, 669–670. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987.

Swanson, Robert N. *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Swanson, Robert N. "Praying for Pardon: Devotional Indulgences in Late Medieval England." In *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, edited by Robert N. Swanson, 215–240. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Swanson, Robert N. "The Challenges of Indulgences in the Reformation Church." In *Ablasskampagnen des Spätmittelalters. Luthers Thesen von 1517 im Kontext*, edited by Andreas Rehberg, 3–18. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.

Ulpts, Ingo. *Die Bettelorden in Mecklenburg. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Franziskaner, Klarissen, Dominikaner und Augustiner-Eremiten im Mittelalter*. Werl: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag, 1995.

Vodola, Elisabeth. *Excommunication in the Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Välimäki, Reima, and Kirsi Salonen. "The Materiality of Turku Cathedral's Spiritual Treasury: Indulgences." *Material Religion* 18/5 (2022): 533–547.

Walgenbach, Elizabeth. *Excommunication and Outlawry in the Legal World of Medieval Iceland*. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

Warren, Nancy B. *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Webb, Diana. "Pardons and Pilgrims." In *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, edited by Robert N. Swanson, 241–276. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

TNT