

## Filologkongressen IX, Lund

Tisdag 12 maj 11.30–12.30

Session 4: Textutgivningsworkshop med Stephan Borgehammar

### ”Early Thirteenth-Century Sermons from Alvastra Abbey – Editorial Problems”

If it originated in Sweden, the collection of sermons found in Uppsala University Library ms. C 37 is the earliest Swedish example of sermon writing to have survived. It is also the only example of sermons from a Swedish Cistercian environment. From a nationalistic point of view, these facts alone would make an edition of the collection worth publishing. Additionally, the sermons seem to be sufficiently different from those in other contemporary collections to merit attention in their own right.

#### *Description of the manuscript*

The manuscript contains 134 parchment leaves measuring 21x15 cm. It contains three works:

- Fol. 1v–56v Johannes Belethus, *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*.
- Fol. 57r–118r *Expositiones evangeliorum [sermons varii]*
- Fol. 119r–134v *Liber Aseneth* (a story about the wife of the patriarch Joseph, of Jewish origin)

The first work is written in two columns, the rest in a single column. Several scribes have been at work. The catalogue dates the different hands to the first half and middle of the thirteenth century and says that the sermon collection is written by “mehrere Hände (?) (Textualis der ersten Hälfte des 13. Jh.), Überschriften und Inhaltsverzeichnis von anderer Hand”.<sup>1</sup> It does not say anything about the corrections that appear between lines and in the margins of the sermons.

The manuscript belonged to the Cistercian library of Alvastra (fol. 1r: “Liber sancte Marie de alwastro”). Fol. 1r contains writing from the last quarter of the thirteenth century and notes that point to the 1280s, which may indicate that the separate works were bound into a codex at this time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Uppsala*, vol. 1, p. 277.

### *Description of the sermon collection*

The collection originally contained 39 sermons, of which the last one was incomplete. Due to the loss of a quire it now contains 32 complete sermons and three incomplete ones. An index at the end of the collection (fol. 118r) contains the four complete sermons that have been lost, but it skips three sermons that are extant, so that the numbering of the sermons (which also appears in the margins of the collection) runs from 1 to 36 (I–XXXVI):

#### **C 37 contents** (rubric at the beginning of the sermon / rubric in the index, fol. 118r)

I Dominica secunda in aduentu domini, 57r / Dominica secunda in aduentu  
II Dominica iii in aduentu domini, 59r / Dominica iii in aduentu  
<Dominica iv in aduentu>, 60v  
III Sermo in natiuitate domini, 62v / Sermo in natiuitate domini  
IV Item in natiuitate domini sermo secundus, 64v (fragment) / Item in natiuitate domini  
[V — / Dominica infra octauam natiuitatis **missing**]  
[VI — / In circumcissione domini **missing**]  
[VII — / In epyphania domini **missing**]  
[VIII — / Dominica infra octauam epyphanie **missing**]  
IX <In octaua epyphanie>, 65r (saknar början) / Octaua epyphanie  
X Dominica i post octauam epyphanie, 66r / Dominica i post octauam epyphanie  
XI Dominica secunda post epyphaniam, 67v / Dominica secunda post octauam epyphanie  
XII Dominica iii, 70v / Dominica tercia post octauam epyphanie  
XIII Dominica iiii in lxx, 72r / Dominica in lxx  
XIII Dominica in l – quinquagesima, 74r / Dominica in quinquagesima  
XV Dominica in quadragesima, 75v / Dominica in xl  
XVI Dominica secunda xl, 78v / Dominica secunda in xl  
XVII In tercia dominica xl sermo, 80v / Dominica iii in xl  
XVIII Dominica in media quadragesime, 82r / Dominica in media xl  
<Dominica de passione>, 84v  
XIX Dominica palmarum, 85v / Dominica palmarum  
XX In cena domini sermo, 87r / In cena domini  
XXI In octaua pasce, 90r / Octaua pasce  
XXII Dominica i post octauam pasce, 90v / Dominica i post octauam  
<Dominica ii post octauam pasce>, 92r  
XXIII Dominica iii post octauam pasce, 93r / Dominica iii post octauam  
XXIII Dominica iiii post octauam pasce, 93v / Dominica iiii post octauam  
XXV Dominica in sexagesima, 94v / Dominica iii sexagesima  
XXVI De sancto S<t>ephano, 96v / De sancto Stephano  
XXVII De sancto Iohanne euangelista, 98v / De sancto Iohanne  
XXVIII In purificatione sancte Marie, 100r / In purificatione sancte Marie  
XXIX Sermo in dominica palmarum, 103v / Dominica palmarum  
XXX Sermo in sancto paraceue, 107r / In paraceue  
XXXI Sermo in resurreccione domini, 108r / In resurreccione domini  
XXXII Item in resurreccione sermo secundus, 111r / Item in resurreccione  
XXXIII Item sermo tercius, 111v / Item in resurreccione  
XXXIII Sermo in natiuitate sancti Iohannis baptiste, 113r / In natiuitate sancti Iohannis  
XXXV Sermo in festo s. Michaelis, 114r / Sancti Michaelis  
XXXVI In assumpcione s. Marie, 116v / In assumpcione sancte Marie [**incomplete**]

As can be seen, the sermons are for Sundays and major holidays and are primarily ordered according to the liturgical year. The sequence starts with the Second Sunday of Advent and ends with the Fourth Sunday after the Octave of Easter. But there is some disorder. Nine sermons do not appear in their proper place in the sequence, but have been gathered after the sermon for the Fourth Sunday after the Octave of Easter. And after these, there are three sermons for saints' days that belong later in the year: St. John the Baptist (24 June), St. Michael the Archangel (29 September) and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (15 August). The last-mentioned sermon is unfinished, ending in mid-sentence.

#### *Author and purpose of the sermon collection*

No obvious source for the collection has yet been identified. There are quotations and reminiscences from other works, e.g. by St. Gregory the Great, but nothing that points to an obvious origin.

Judging by their character, the sermons were written by a monk but intended for delivery to a lay audience. The provenance of the manuscript as well as themes and procedures in the sermons point to a monastic origin, but the absence of teaching on contemplation and other monastic practices points to an intended lay audience. The following admonition, mentioning confession to "your own priest", is surely directed at lay people, most likely nobles:

Sed quia hac die sacratissima dominica cena celebratur, et ipse Dominus hodie benedixit corpus et sanguinem suum, et tradidit discipulis suis, monemus uos, dilectissimi, ut sicut sancti apostoli hodie acceperunt corpus Domini et sanguinem ab ipso Domino consecrata, sic uos accedatis ad mensam Domini cum lacrimosa penitencia et reuerencia, accusantes uos ante conspectum Domini cum timore et reuerencia, sperantes uos suscipere remissionem peccatorum. Sed si quis se scit pollutum capitalibus crimin[al]ibus, et non penituisse nec confessum fuisse sacerdoti sui, melius est, ut subtra<h>at se a diuino altari, quam presumptuose accedat [...] (fol. 89r)

A very tentative hypothesis is that the sermons were composed in Latin by a monk, perhaps the abbot of Alvastra, and were delivered in Swedish to members of the nobility or to a mixed audience of lay people and monks.

### *The language of the collection*

The Latinity of the collection is good, but the style is uneven: at times quite elegant, at times verbose in an informal sort of way, and at times giving the impression of rather hastily written notes with gaps in the reasoning. It could be that the original was unfinished, or that it was a compilation that never received a literary redaction because the sermons were destined for delivery in the vernacular. In the sermon we are about to discuss – the first sermon in the collection, for the Second Sunday of Advent – there are no evident gaps in the reasoning but there is, e.g., an odd phrase that somebody has tried to correct (footnote 9) and some kind of slip in § 14 (“stars” are first interpreted as miracles, then as saints; in the juncture it seems as if the author or scribe was first about to repeat a Biblical quotation, then abandoned it).

Note that the extant manuscript gives the impression of being a clean copy of the original. Attempts have been made to correct some errors and infelicities. Whether these errors existed in the original or were introduced by the copyist is hard to say. The corrections do not always seem appropriate. In the sermon for the Second Sunday of Advent, I have rejected corrections that seemed to interfere with the original text (footnotes 4 and 32) or unnecessarily to change the word order (footnotes 7, 13, 20, 25).

### *Questions for the seminar*

The question to be answered at the seminar (if possible) is how to edit a text such as this, which seems to derive from an original that was not a finished literary product.

Should one carefully reproduce the original text of the manuscript, relegating the medieval corrections to the notes and leaving it to the modern reader to make sense of the text? Or should one try to construct a polished text that tries to do justice to the intentions of the author? Or is there a middle road between these two?

I have prepared two versions of the first sermon in the collection: one with punctuation and capitalization as in the manuscript and with a minimum of editorial intervention (what “a minimum” is can certainly be discussed); and another one with modernized punctuation and capitalization, more editorial intervention and more identifications of sources. Hopefully, the

two versions will give food for thought and clues as to what might be the best course of editorial action.

I may not have chosen the best sermon for the purpose of our seminar. Others may be more problematic or illustrative. But in this sermon please note, for instance:

- the difficulty of determining which medieval corrections to accept in the text and which to relegate to the apparatus; and
- the occasional lack of clarity in the sermon, together with a certain redundancy that is most likely due to the author having used multiple sources. Examples of redundancy: the phrase “quod nullus audeat se Christianum profiteri” is written twice (§§ 16 and 17); the Biblical verse 2 Thess. 2:4 is quoted both in § 19 and in § 22; the Gospel phrase “sonitus maris et fluctuum” is explained twice, in §§ 20–26 and in § 27, and the verb “arescunt” is also explained twice, in §§ 18 and 28.

These features – the need for corrections, the occasional redundancy and the often somewhat sloppy syntax – suggest that the original text was unfinished, or indeed never intended for publication. Moreover, no thorough editing was performed during the Middle Ages. So what should be the aim of the modern editor?

I include in this little “kit” also a pdf with photos of the relevant pages of ms. C 37. If anyone would like to read the rest of the transcript (which is of uneven quality)<sup>2</sup>, or see more pages of the manuscript, I will be glad to send what I have. Please contact me by e-mail:

[stephan.borgehammar@teol.lu.se](mailto:stephan.borgehammar@teol.lu.se).

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<sup>2</sup> Over half of the sermons were transcribed by Dr. Josef Redfors upon his retirement in or around 1993. I transcribed the rest myself in August 2014. Our procedures differ in some respects and neither of us is faultless. The numbering of paragraphs was introduced by Redfors.