

INGRID, SAINT OF OBLIVION

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PART II

THE CANONIZATION PROCESS



HE MEMORY of Bl. Ingrid was fostered not only among the nuns of her monastery, but also among the people of Skänninge and of the diocese of Linköping. Her life of virtue and charity toward the poor and the miracles¹⁸ worked through her intercession soon spread her fame throughout Sweden, so that pilgrims flocked to her tomb to pay her honor and to present their petitions to her.

Though Ingrid enjoyed such remarkable popularity among the faithful, the first record of any steps toward her canonization occurs one hundred and twenty-five years after her death. No doubt the unsettled state of the Church during the Western Schism prevented any action prior to this. The first mention of her cult is in the canonization process of Bishop Nicholas of Linköping, dating from 1405.¹⁹

The next evidence is a letter four years later written by the cathedral Chapter of Linköping. Money was being raised for the joint canonization of Nichols and Ingrid, which was being sought simultaneously by the diocese, the nuns of Skänninge, and the Dominicans, but unfortunately the tenor of the letter shows that there was friction among the parties concerned.

The joint cause of Ingrid and Nicholas may indicate that the action was a diocesan project and that the first initiative had come from the bishop and chapter rather than from the Dominicans. As the cause of Saint Bridget had been concluded in 1391, it may have served to stir up the people of Skänninge and Linköping to obtain similar honors for their own local saints. No doubt canonization of their holy foundress had been uppermost in the minds of the nuns ever since her death, but of themselves they were incapable of under-

¹⁸ "... ipsa beata Ingridis... propter cuius merita Dominus Jhesus Christus multa operatur miracula . . .," *Archives du Royaume de Suede*, cited by Gallen, "Les Causes de Sainte Ingrid et des Saints Suedois au Temps de la Reforme," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, VII, 37.

¹⁹ Bishop Nicholas lived from 1326-1391. He was a friend of Saint Bridget and instructor of her two children.

taking the cause. Thus they welcomed the combined efforts of the diocese and the Dominicans, even though it might entail more difficulties and hindrances than if Ingrid's cause had been introduced singly.

However slow the cause of Ingrid had progressed, it received new impetus at the General Council of the Church convened at Constance, when the Swedish delegation presented for consideration the cause of Ingrid, Nicholas and Bishop Brynolph of Skara. On March 16, 1414, Bishop Knut and the cathedral chapter of Linköping wrote to the Pope and cardinals requesting the canonization of Ingrid and Nicholas.²⁰ In the next few days most of the Scandinavian hierarchy followed suit in a united effort. Finally on April 1 King Eric himself, representing the three nations of the North, sent a request to the Council and appointed a procurator at the Curia to expedite the matter. Besides the above mentioned petitions, many others were presented by chapters, convents, monasteries, cities and towns, and dignitaries of the people throughout Sweden.

The supplications of the Swedes received a favorable response by the Council which set up a commission to examine the case.²¹ Accordingly, permission was granted two years later, April 27, 1416, to open the process in Sweden under the presidency of the bishops of Oslo, Abo, and Växjö.

The juridical process of Blessed Ingrid now began and a canonical inquiry into her life, virtue and miracles was held from April 21 to July 29, 1417.²² The provost of the cathedral of Linköping confirmed the salient facts of her life and her widespread fame throughout Sweden and the neighboring lands.²³ Witnesses testified to many miracles, such as safety at sea, recovery of sight, and even the restoration of life to a boy who had been drowned.

²⁰ This letter and other documents concerning the canonization of Blessed Ingrid are reprinted by Gallen, *ibid.*, pp. 27-40.

²¹ This commission included Cardinal Peter d'Ailly, Cardinal Odo Colonna, who became Pope Martin V in 1417, John Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris, and several noted theologians.

²² The fragments of the acts of this inquiry have been preserved, having been discovered in a book binding at Copenhagen. The acts of the process of Blessed Nicholas were recently recovered at Florence, while those of Blessed Brynolph are also intact.

²³ Thus a certain Dane in order to make atonement for a murder undertook a pilgrimage to the shrines of Saint Olaf in Scania, Saint Enevald at Sölverborg, Saint Bridget at Vadstena, Saint Ingrid and Saint Nicholas at Skänninge, of Our Lady at Aix-la-Chappelle, and of the Precious Blood at Wilsnach. Gallen, *ibid.*, p. 21.

In spite of such a favorable beginning the cause soon lagged and became dormant. Lack of money to further canonical processes had always been a hindrance to the less wealthy peoples of the North. Political disturbances in Sweden now also militated against a continuance of the causes of the Swedish blessededs. At the end of the fourteenth century Denmark had forced a union upon Sweden²⁴ and by 1412 had reduced it to a vassal state. The Danes began to exploit the Swedes, and money was drained out of the country by taxes and imposts. The internal life of the nation was disrupted by continual troubles, unrest, and rebellions.

Even in all these disturbances and conditions unsympathetic toward any canonical action the cult of Ingrid continued as strong as ever. Though the Danish hierarchy imposed on the Swedes by the king could have little interest in the Swedish blessededs, and though the canonization process was halted, Ingrid retained her place in the hearts of the people. It was during these times that the monastery of Skänninge became known under the double title of Saint Martin and Saint Ingrid.

By the end of the century comparative peace in the land and a restored Swedish hierarchy enabled the cause to be reopened. On July 16, 1497, Pope Alexander VI authorized the translation of the relics of Blessed Ingrid to a place of honor in the monastery church of Skänninge, there to be honored until the formal canonization. In 1499 the Swedish hierarchy together with the Regent and other nobles once more petitioned that Ingrid and the other blessededs be enrolled in the catalogue of saints. Meanwhile, however, the Pope had repeated his authorization of translation and directed that the new saints should be honored with piety, reverence and solemnity until their canonization, "which we have in view."²⁵ Unfortunately, the Pope died without carrying out his intention.

Once again progress in the cause was halted by a recurrent war with Denmark, a renewal of national troubles, and another dearth of funds, though enough money was gathered together to defray the expenses of the translations of the three Swedish blessededs. These were carried out with great solemnity, the new saints were inserted into the Calendar of the country and the invoking of their intercession was permitted.

²⁴ The Union of Kalmar, 1397-1523, which united all Scandinavia under one monarch.

²⁵ "... ut debitis pietate et reuerencia Sine scrupulo conscientie aut labe ydolatrie omni solempnitate honorentur . . ." Gallen, *ibid.*, p. 38.

"Donec ad canonizacionem ipsam, ut in nobis est" *ibid.*

TRANSLATION OF BLESSED INGRID

The translation of the relics of Ingrid took place at Skänninge on the feast of Saint Olaf, 1507, ten years after the first authorization. This feast was always marked with a great fair and much festivity,²⁶ consequently an ideal day for the ceremony. The remains of Ingrid had probably been buried in the monastery cemetery. Now that the Church had deemed her worthy of special veneration her body had been disinterred awaiting transferral to the place of honor prepared in the monastery church. We can imagine the great solemnity of the translation. Present for the occasion were many lords and ladies, high officials of the town and kingdom, the Governor of Sweden, and most of the Swedish hierarchy clothed in their purple robes and headed by their metropolitan, the Archbishop of Upsala. We can picture the procession as it made its way to the church, composed of the dignitaries, hierarchy, and clergy, perhaps some clients of Blessed Ingrid, some pilgrims who had come from afar for this day, the nuns of Saint Martin's and the friars of Saint Olaf's. Perhaps the relics of the blessed were born aloft on the shoulders of some of the Dominicans, so as to be seen by the great concourse of the faithful. In the monastery church the sacred remains were enclosed in the new tomb prepared for the beloved saint. Without doubt, the function concluded with the *Te Deum*, in thanksgiving to God for having raised up a saint in their midst and for the many miracles already worked through her intercession. It was the moment of Ingrid's greatest glory and the last noteworthy event in the history of the Dominicans in Scandinavia.

An Office was composed in honor of Saint Ingrid for the Dominicans and the diocese of Linköping. Of this there remains only the Sequence, "In festo sancte Ingridis ordinis predicatorum," preserved in a Book of Sequences dating from 1517. The place of the Sequence in the codex indicates that the feast was celebrated between July 31st and August 5th, the feasts of Saint Helen of Skövde and Saint Dominic respectively.²⁷ It appears that the Office was never adopted by the Dominicans as there is no trace of it in the Order's liturgical books nor any mention of it in the Acts of the General

²⁶ July 29th is the feast of Saint Olaf of Norway, king and martyr, July 30th that of Saint Olaf of Sweden, king and martyr, the first Catholic king of that country. As the day of the Translation was a day of great celebration, it seems most likely that the people were commemorating the feast of their own Saint Olaf, hence July 30th may be the more probable date.

²⁷ Gallen gives August 4th as the feast of Saint Dominic, but it must be remembered that the feast was not transferred to the 4th until 1558.

Chapters between 1501 and 1553. Moreover, the existence of a Sequence does not necessarily argue for the existence of a complete liturgy, as sequences were frequently composed as independent entities. It may have been written to commemorate the Translation of Blessed Ingrid and so placed in the Book of Sequences between July 31st and August 5th. However, since a complete Office of Blessed Nicholas of Linköping remains to this day, we may concede as being most likely that a similar Office had been prepared for Blessed Ingrid, either for a commemorative purpose or in view of her eventual canonization.

OBLIVION

Though the cause for canonization of Ingrid had so far progressed that it seemed she would be raised to the honors of the altar within a few years, Providence had decreed otherwise. Within two decades from the year of her Translation, the Protestant Revolt spread to Scandinavia, overwhelming the true Faith and erasing all memory of Ingrid from the minds of the Swedish people.

In the North the Revolt did not take on the violent character that it did in other countries. In 1523 the Lutheran noble, Gustavus Vasa, cast off the Danish yoke and became king of Sweden. With him Lutheranism was given a foothold in the land. Four years later at the Diet of Västerås he broke with the Holy See and established a National Church. From the first he taxed the Church to defray the expenses of liberation, and she complied as long as he did not tamper with doctrine. As the people were attached to the Faith, the king proceeded cautiously and moderately in the change. The Mass, Sacraments, hierarchy and exterior forms of worship were retained. Monasteries and convents were tolerated, but soon became so overburdened with restrictions and so impoverished by the looting of the heretical and avaricious nobility that religious life and observance was almost impossible. The Faith was slowly strangled and by the end of the century disappeared entirely.

Just as the cause of Ingrid's canonization was finally disrupted, so the monastery of Skänninge fell victim to the fury of the heretics. In 1523 Gustavus Vasa taxed the monastery heavily for the needs of the Crown, and two years later forced it to billet soldiers. In 1527 the nuns were forbidden to accept new candidates. The monastery was destroyed by fire in 1531 and the king attempted to persuade the nuns to join the Brigittines at Vadstena, but they preferred instead to dwell among the villagers of Skänninge. The king in 1544 ordered

the relics of Blessed Ingrid to be transferred to Vadstena and made another attempt to coerce the nuns to the monastery of some other religious body. As the nuns remained obdurate, the exasperated monarch suppressed the monastery in that or the following year. The fact that the nuns remained in Skänninge and that the relics were preserved may indicate that the fire of 1531 was not totally destructive. One author states that the monastery was finally demolished in 1600, thus completely effacing all remembrance of the life work of Blessed Ingrid. But there was glory even in disaster. The monastery of Skänninge, true to the heritage of Dominican antipathy to heresy, was one of the first to succumb. Other convents by compromising or yielding were able to survive in their precarious existence until the latter years of the century.

It is most probable that Ingrid's relics disappeared or were dispersed when the monastery of Vadstena was destroyed in 1599. There is a tradition that the Catholic king Sigismund, who ruled briefly from 1595 to 1598, transferred the relics of Blessed Ingrid, Saint Bridget, and Saint Catherine of Sweden to Poland, but there is no knowledge of their existence anywhere. Thus today, except for a few fragmentary documents, all trace of Ingrid has vanished. She who had promised to be one of the fairest jewels in the crown of sanctity in the Church, she who was so revered among the faithful as to merit the title of "Saint," she who was so close to the Swedish people as to be considered one of the national patrons, receded into the cloud of obscurity, into the silence of neglect.

RESURRECTION FROM OBLIVION

Just as Saint Albert the Great and Saint Margaret of Hungary succeeded in shaking off the forgetfulness of men, so Ingrid, following the examples of her two contemporaries, has begun to rise above the mist that has enveloped her for so long. The Catholic Church has returned to Scandinavia, the Dominicans have reappeared in the North, settling at the sites of their former priories—Oslo, Stockholm, Lund. Interest has reawakened in the history of the ancient Faith, and the life and deeds of Ingrid have been restored to the knowledge of men. Once again her canonization is under consideration.²⁸ Ingrid has returned to the modern world.

²⁸ The Postulator General of the Order of Preachers in his report to the General Chapter in 1946 states: "Many other causes of the confirmation of cult have already been begun—and so ought to be concluded—or should be begun; two especially . . . : that of Blessed John of Fièssole, called "Blessed Angelico" [Fra Angelico, the famous painter], and that of Blessed Ingrid of

"My spirit that is in thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed from henceforth and forever." May the modern mission of Ingrid, seed of Dominic, be the preaching of another sermon. May Ingrid, daughter of the Order dedicated to the preservation of the Faith and the extirpation of heresy, now take up again the Torch of Truth and reenkindle in the Scandinavian people the fires of the lost Faith, warning once more the hearts chilled by heresy. May her mission be the conversion of Scandinavia. May she triumph over Protestantism by prayer, as by violence Protestantism once triumphed over her.

Sweden . . . concerning whom many documents are preserved in the Archives of Postulation not only about her life and virtues but also about her cult . . . which, nevertheless, remain incomplete because of the war." *Analecta Ordinis Praedicatorum*, XXVII, 238.

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