



Confessional Provinces: Church or Not?



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Resumé:

In this paper, the Mission Province in Sweden is analyzed from a number of perspectives. Initially, the Constantinian problem, which belonged to the context when the Lutheran Reformation appeared, is described. A related (military) element is also discussed, here called “Carolingian” (labelled after the emperor Charles the Great), which often is neglected, but present in the Reformation period. Another section deals with a number of historical perspectives related to Christian Churches in general / the Lutheran Churches / the Church of Sweden (CoS). It is shown that the Mission Province in Sweden came into existence as a result of major changes which have taken place within the CoS in the latest centuries and decades. That a conflict came between the liberal majority and a Confessional minority is not surprising, but rather the *actions* of the minority. A number of pastors and laymen chose neither to leave CoS nor to adjust themselves to the Church’s new, theological positions. Instead, the Mission Province was organized as a free and non-territorial diocese within the “Church of Sweden tradition.” Referring back to the Reformers and Lutheran Confessions, especially to Melanchthon, the minority started to ordain bishops and pastors, gathering Christians in independent congregations, organized within a free and non-territorial diocese.

Keywords:

Evangelical-Lutheran – Constantinian – “Carolingian” – Reformation – Martin Luther – Philipp Melanchthon – Church of Sweden – Lutheran Confessions – Mission Province – Bo Giertz – Arne Olsson – a free diocese – non-territorial – “Church of Sweden tradition”.



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This paper emanates from a lecture given in Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, in *the Symposium on Lutheran Confessions* in Jan. 2020. I have since then re-written the manuscript a couple of times.

I am grateful to the Seminary for the assignment to speak on this topic.

When people talk of Lutheranism, or **the** Lutheran church, or **the** Lutheran tradition, I often ask myself mentally: **which Lutheranism are you talking about?** In my understanding, the *first* Lutheranism (“Lutheranism 1.0”) was contemporary with Luther and the European Reformation and is only found in Europe – the *second* (2.0) we find mostly in North America, in some countries in South America, and in Australia – the *third* Lutheranism (3.0) is mainly found in the “third world:” Africa, some parts of Asia, also Latin America. These days you can also find a *fourth* kind of Lutheranism (4.0); it refers to the Mission Province in Sweden, and to some related and similar Church bodies. Another problem which we will meet is how these “Lutheranisms” interact with each other.

1. The Constantinian issue – and the Carolingian

In order to understand the issue of the “four Lutheranisms,” it is necessary to go back in Church history to the *Constantinian era* and to the *Carolingian* element of the Christian Church. Why? Because Lutheranism, especially the first one (1.0, which in fact can be divided into 1.1-1.4), cannot be understood without these elements.

Some years ago, I read a famous book by Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, and for me the reading experience became a shock.¹ As a Church historian, I am accustomed to talking about the *Constantinian synthesis*, the fact that Christianity, especially since the time of Emperor Constantine (d. 337), has had to struggle with its calling as a Church: living in the world, without getting the “world” into the Church.² But now I began to understand it could also be necessary to consider another element in Church history, a more political-military one, which I here will label the *Carolingian* element.

The *Constantinian synthesis*, or the *Constantinian problem*, deals with the general *interaction between the Church and the State*. Up to the time of Constantine, this interaction consisted of a number of conflicts (persecutions), with other periods being more like a truce. For the early Church, this confrontation was no surprise, and in fact a number of Bible passages elaborate on this problem (e.g. Matt 24, Luke 21, Acts 7, 1 Peter). The situation completely changed with the *Constantinian edict of Milan* in 313. From then on, the Church and State needed to find new ways to *co-exist*, and even *co-operate*.

From the very beginning, the Church has tried to follow the statement of Jesus: *Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.* (Matt. 22:21, ESV) This

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia – and How It Died* (San Francisco and New York: HarperOne, 2008).

² A modern way of expressing this problem is: “The boat should be in the water, not the water in the boat.” Jesus himself dealt with this issue in his final evening together with his disciples, John 17:6,11,14-16,18.



creates a principal dichotomy between Church and State.³ From an historical perspective we can note that this Constantinian synthesis has existed in a variety of ways from the very beginning, and the Church has had to struggle with this problem with more or less success.⁴ Unfortunately, it seems that *less success* often has been more common than *more*, and we can note that the problem started to appear immediately, within a matter of years.⁵

Reading Jenkins, I was shocked to realize that the Church is not only forced to deal with the Constantinian issue, but that there also seems to be another element in church history, a *Carolingian aspect*, which is related to the *survival of Christianity*. While reading Jenkins's book, I drew a number of conclusions relevant for our main topic:

1. To start with, *almost all existing Christian churches in the world* (with a few exceptions, mainly in Asia) *have a connection back to the Church in Constantinian times*: Most of them, even the Protestant Free Churches, have roots going back to Churches or Church provinces which existed in the Roman empire,⁶ whether they are “first generation Constantinian” (the Roman Catholic Church and the ancient Orthodox Patriarchates), “second generation” (the European National Churches, which broke with the Pope in the Reformation period) or “third” or “fourth generation Constantinian” (a number of later Protestant churches).

2. A majority of these existing churches, besides having a “Constantinian connection,” also have *an historical connection to the Catholic Church existing within the Carolingian realm*. The two most famous members were *Charles Martel* (the victor of the battle of Poitiers in 732, when an Arab / Muslim invasion of central Europe was stopped) and his grandson *Charles the Great / Charlemagne*, the first emperor of the Frankish Empire (r. 768/800-814). For example, the five modern National [Lutheran] Churches in Northern Europe have a clear connection with the Church which existed within the Carolingian realm or had existed there. To start with, all of them emanate from the three Roman Catholic Church provinces in Northern Europe.⁷ The first Archbishop of Uppsala in Sweden, Stefan, was a monk belonging to the French Cistercian order, and he was consecrated 1164 by the

³ This Christian *dichotomy*, by the way, is one of the major differences between Christianity and Islam. Traditional Islam abhors such a distinction, wanting, instead, to have a *theocracy*; See Norman Anderson, *Islam in the Modern World: A Christian Perspective* (Leicester, England: Apollon, 1990), 35-40.

⁴ Biblical passages that are relevant when dealing with these issues are, e.g., Matt 22:15-22, Acts 5:29, Rom 13:7, 1 John 2:15.

⁵ The panegyric praise of Emperor Constantine, and especially of Bishop Paulinus, in the last sections of Eusebius's *Church History*, can today be quite painful to read.

⁶ The Persian kingdom, which for a long time existed under different names side by side with the Roman Empire, was very suspicious of Christianity, and from the time of Constantine the suspicion increased. Gradually the Persians / Sassanians began to favor those Christian leaders and dioceses that came into conflict with the Roman Empire, e. g., the Nestorians, because they did not consider such Christians to be secret supporters of the Roman Empire; Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 56-57. This Sassanian (Neo-Persian) Empire was wiped out through the early Muslim / Arab conquests in the 630s.

⁷ The Roman Catholic Church in the late Middle Ages had a number of Church provinces in Europe, normally led by an archbishop assisted by a number of bishops. In the Nordic countries the archbishop of Denmark resided in Lund (the seat established 1103-4), the archbishop of Norway in Trondheim (est. 1153) and the archbishop of Sweden in Uppsala (est. 1164).



Danish Archbishop – in France.⁸ Furthermore, all these three Church provinces had originated in the 820s with the mission work of St. Ansgar, another French monk. He was first sent to the Danes and then to the Swedes by Emperor Louis the Pious, son of Charles the Great.⁹

3. The Orthodox Patriarchates show a similar “Carolingian” pattern, where a Christian population is defended by a national, Christian government. A majority of them have survived, humanly speaking, mainly because of their connection with and protection by the Empire of Byzantium (up to 1453) and / or the Russian Empire (up to 1917). In the case of Byzantium we often talk of caesaropapism, a special Orthodox version of the Constantinian synthesis.

4. Of course, historically a great number of churches have existed with no connection going back to the Catholic Church in the Carolingian period (or the Eastern Orthodox Church). The fact is, however, that *almost all of them* – and they were mainly located in Asia and Africa – *have been destroyed*, especially by Arab, Mongolian, or Turkish rulers. As Jenkins states:

For most of its history, Christianity was a tricontinental religion, with powerful representation in Europe, Africa, and Asia, and this was true into the fourteenth century. Christianity became predominantly European not because this continent had any obvious affinity for that faith, but by default: *Europe was the continent where it was not destroyed*.¹⁰

2. *Where have all the churches gone? Some geographical perspectives*

As we have seen, most of the Christians living today belong either to the old, pre-Constantinian churches that originally were using liturgies in Greek or Latin, or to their “daughter churches” or to their “granddaughter churches.” This means that one of the three major original Christian languages, Syriac, is now almost gone. Today it is used only by tiny Christian minorities and understood only by a small number of scholars.¹¹

⁸ Bertil Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 1. Missionstid och tidig medeltid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1998), 142-143. In the preceding chapter, pp. 132-141, Nilsson describes the interaction between the Church and the civil, political authorities. Constantine once again! Beside this Frankish – German mission influence on the Nordic countries, there was also an English one (Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 1*, 54-63.)

⁹ The early mission work to the Nordic countries is described in Rimbert’s *Vita Anskarii*, a classic medieval text existing in several editions.

¹⁰ Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 3; *italics* by me. Rodney Stark confirms Jenkin’s statements: “Christianity became a predominantly European faith ‘by default’ when it was destroyed in Asia and North Africa. The destruction began in the seventh and early eighth century when these areas were overrun by Islam [- - -] However, following the initial Muslim conquests, for centuries Christians persisted as a large, if repressed, majority. Then, in the fourteenth century came a relentless and violent Muslim campaign of extermination and forced conversions. After centuries of gradual decline, the number of Christians in the East and North Africa suddenly was reduced to less than 2 percent of the population by 1400.” Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement became the World’s Largest Religion* (San Francisco and New York: HarperOne, 2011), 200. He refers to Jenkins on p. 211.

¹¹ For details, follow the index in Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 314 (“Syriac Christians”). See also writings by Svante Lundgren. He is a Finnish-Swedish scholar (b. 1960) who has written extensively on the destroying, even in our days, of a number of the earliest Christian communities in the Middle East.



At the time of Augustine (c. AD 400), Christianity was basically an Asian and North African religion with a number of Christians scattered over southern Europe. By AD 800 more Christians lived east of Damascus than west of the city.¹²

Since then, most of the Eastern / Nestorian / Monophysite churches have disappeared, some of them with hardly a trace remaining (e.g. the national Nubian church), or remain only as tiny minorities.¹³ Some few of them have managed to survive up to today as national churches or as substantial minorities (e.g. in Armenia, Georgia, Egypt, and Ethiopia). Jenkins has stressed that very few churches died out. Instead, almost all of them that disappeared were in fact *wiped out* through wars and persecutions, especially by Persian, Muslim, and Mongolian rulers.¹⁴

Consequently, Churches which were not supported or defended by a capable civilian government (the “Carolingian” element, combined with a Constantinian ideology, co-operation between Church and State), were sooner or later wiped out. This seldom happened for theological reasons, but rather because of lack of military capacity for defending the national borders and also, to a certain extent, for demographical reasons.¹⁵

- In modern *Turkey*, created out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, only a few Orthodox dioceses and monasteries remain after the ethnic cleansing in the 1920s.¹⁶
- In *Northern Africa* all Churches are gone, the “Coptic Church” in Egypt being the major exception.¹⁷
- In the *Middle East at large*, most of the different branches of the Church have disappeared or, at least, diminished greatly.

¹² Oskar Skarsaune, “Evangeliet fra Jerusalem til jordens ender: Kirkehistorien i misjonshistorisk lys”, in: Jan-Martin Berentsen, Tormod Engelsen & Knud Jørgensen, eds.: *Missiologi i dag*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget 2001), 85. For more details on early Christianity, see Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 4-30. (“Much of what we today call the Islamic world was once Christian. [- -] As late as the eleventh century, Asia was still home to at least a third of the world’s Christians, and perhaps a tenth of all Christians still lived in Africa”, 4.)

¹³ Concerning these “labels” of Christian Churches, see Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, ix-xi. He also states (p. xi): “We must never think of these churches as fringe sects rather than the Christian mainstream in large portions of the world.”

¹⁴ Cf. Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 57 and ch. 4, “The Great Tribulation”, 97-138; and Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*, esp. chapter 12: “Islam and the Destruction of Eastern and North African Christianity,” 199-211.

¹⁵ Statistics given by Stark indicate that in the early Muslim conquests of Christian territories, it normally took some 250 years for the victorious Muslims to become a majority population. Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*, 206. In a few cases Christianity has managed to survive as a rather strong Christian minority (e. g. in Egypt), but often (e.g. in North Africa / Algeria, Tunisia) an active, lively church disappeared without leaving almost any traces, except as archaeological remnants.

¹⁶ Figures given by Jenkins concerning the Ottoman empire (Turkey) are disturbing. They prove that a genocide, directed against Christians, took place after World War I. Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 148-164. (“Even in 1900, Muslims made up just half the empire’s overall population; Christians comprised 46 percent; Jews 3 percent.” Jenkins, 149.)

¹⁷ In this case, however, the theological perspectives might be important. In fact, I suspect that the Church in North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia) disappeared not *despite* the contributions made by St. Augustine and other important theologians but rather *because* of certain flaws in their theology, e. g., a lack of missionary zeal directed towards the original population. A comparison between Christianity in North Africa and Egypt is very revealing. In fact, it is not so surprising that that Christianity in North Africa disappeared quite rapidly, while it still survives in Egypt. See Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 228-232. (“[W]ithin fifty years of the completion of the Arab conquest in 698, local Muslim rulers were apologizing to the caliphs that they could no longer supply Christian slaves, since Christians were now so scarce.” Jenkins, 228.)



- In *Persia / Asia at large* – a majority of these Christian churches / congregations, many of them the oldest in the world, are gone or have become small minorities.¹⁸
- Most of the branches of the “*Nestorian Church*” have disappeared.
- The *Syriac language*, one of the original languages of Christianity, has managed to survive up to today, but is now barely surviving as a spoken language (while Greek was the main language within the Roman empire, Syraic / Aramaic dominated with the Persian realm).¹⁹

At the time of the Reformation (c. AD 1520), Christianity had become almost totally a European / Western religion, consisting of a Roman Catholic majority and a substantial Orthodox minority. Almost all countries in Europe (with a few exceptions in the southeast) were, at least nominally, Christian, while the Churches outside of Europe in most cases had become quite small.

At the time of the Napoleonic wars (c. AD 1800), Christianity was still a Western religion, which had also reached South, Central, and North America, but by this time a mission revival, which still is influential and important, had started to reach Africa and some parts of Asia.

Today (AD 2024), the tables have turned. Because of a huge process of secularization and the growth of liberal theology, the churches in Europe and North America have diminished in numbers and importance. At the same time, as a result of the Christian mission revival, which globally also has influenced the Lutheran Churches,²⁰ a substantial and growing majority of the Christians in the world now lives in the Global South, especially in Africa and South America.

3. *A basic problem: Which “Lutheranism” are we talking about?*

Now, finally, we have come to the Lutheran Churches!

When we talk about “Lutheran churches” – which kind of Lutheranism are we talking about?

In my understanding, we have to distinguish between about at least four different *types* of Lutheran churches, and these types are to a large extent connected with the historical eras when they appeared. Let us start with these eras:

1. The original *Lutheranism*, Lutheranism 1.0, appeared in Europe in a **Constantinian setting**, but in four different shapes (1.1 – 1.4):

- 1.1. A *mixed setting*, in “Germany”: Some German principalities became Lutheran, others remained Roman Catholic, some later became Reformed. Consequently, the Lutherans were a large group within “Germany” but not a clear majority.²¹

¹⁸ See <https://www.ui.se/utrikesmagasinet/analyser/2016/november/oviss-framtid-for-mellanosterns-kristna/> (accessed April 11, 2024).

¹⁹ Cf. previous note; also Skarsaune, “Evangeliet fra Jerusalem til jordens ender”, 82-85 and Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity*, 221-222.

²⁰ Concerning the early Lutheran mission work, see Ingemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther’s Bible Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007); also Rune Imberg, “Luther, de lutherska kyrkorna och missionen”, in Rune Imberg & Torbjörn Johansson, eds., *Den mångfacetterade reformationen* (Göteborg: Församlingsförlaget, 2019), 245-258.

²¹ See important political perspectives given by Michael J. Halvorsen on the Reformation period Germany under the entry “Holy Roman Empire” in Timothy J. Wengert ed., *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions* (Grand Rapids,



- 1.2. *Three National, majority churches* in northern Europe: The Roman Catholic Church provinces of Denmark-Norway (incl. Iceland) and Sweden (incl. modern Finland and parts of the Baltic region) became Lutheran, each country in its own pace.
- 1.3 *Minority churches*: Some groups of Lutheran congregations came into existence, especially in central Europe (e. g. in Poland),²² but also in other areas. One of the earliest Lutheran Reformation processes, in the early 1520s, took place in the city of Riga, in modern Latvia – but mainly among the *Germans*.²³
- 1.4 *Lutheran theology* appeared also in other settings: Within the Anglican Church (England), some influences within Eastern Orthodox churches, but especially within European Protestantism (certain elements in Reformed theology, e.g.).²⁴

2. *Migrant churches* – Lutheranism 2.0, *post-Constantinian*; these appeared especially in the 18th/19th cent. They are mainly found in North America, later in South America and Australia, and in a number of countries connected with European colonialism from the 16th century. A number of them (most of them?) have a Pietistic background.²⁵ These Churches can be described as post-Constantinian because they were not State Churches, nor did they have to compete with such Churches, but they had to establish a post-Constantinian Lutheran identity (and they were often, to a certain extent, influenced by Congregationalistic elements). Some of them were very critical of the State Church they had left,²⁶ others kept a close and continuing connection with the Church where they (or their ancestors) had been baptized.²⁷

MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 334-338. (This empire started with Carolingian and Ottonian expansion, c. 800-1000, and was dissolved by Napoleon in 1806.) Another entry in this *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions* deals with the later development of the Lutheran Churches in Germany, written by Dorothea Wendebourg, "Germany since 1870," 289-292. However, many major elements of the history of Lutheranism in Germany are missing in this encyclopedia, especially concerning the period from 1806-1870. For example, the enforced Church unions between Lutherans and Reformed Christians, to a certain extent caused by the Reformation jubilee in 1817, are hardly mentioned at all. This enforced unification process was one of the reasons why a number of conservative Lutherans from Saxony in Germany emigrated to the United States. Out of this emigration community came the later formation of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), cf. Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 447-448, 776.

²² Maciej Ptaszynski, "Poland," in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 603-605.

²³ Livonia (part of modern Latvia), including the city of Riga, was the first area outside of Germany to accept the Lutheran reformation; cf. Guntis Kalme, "Livonia," in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 432-433. The German Lutherans, however, seem to have made the same mistake as St. Augustine and others in North Africa (cf. note 17 above), in this case neglecting the Latvian-speaking population; see Kalme, "Livonia," "Courland (Kurland)," "Latvia," in Wengert, 432-434, 171-172, 410-411, esp. 433. Robert Kolb ("Estonia," in Wengert, 233-234) attributes the lasting Lutheran identity in the Baltic area to the arrival of the Moravian Brethren in 1729!

²⁴ Cf. a number of entries in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, e.g. "England", 218-221, "Eastern Orthodoxy," 196-199, and "John Calvin," 115-118.

²⁵ Just an example from North America: The Augustana Synod had a clear Swedish / Norwegian Pietistic background (Mark A. Granquist in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 56-57), while LCMS on the other hand, at least from a Swedish perspective, is confessional, (ritually) rather High Church and, in general, anti-Pietistic. Concerning the LCMS, see note 21 above.

²⁶ Cf. the statement on National churches made by Stark in *The Triumph of Christianity*, 377: "These close links between church and state have many consequences. First of all, they create lazy churches."

²⁷ Once more a comparison can be made between the LCMS and the Augustana Synod.



3. *Missionary based churches* – Lutheranism 3.0, **non-Constantinian**; these came into existence in the 20th century and have their roots in the mission revival in the 19th or 20th century. Basically they are found in Africa, parts of Asia, and some of them in Latin America. In most cases they go back to mission work undertaken by mission societies (quite seldom by an official church mission) and also have a Pietistic background. Many of these Churches were formed in previous British and German colonies. In these cases the Constantinian problem was unknown to the indigenous Christians (but not to the missionaries!). Other Churches had their roots in areas where the colonial power had a more or less Roman Catholic connection. In these cases, the Lutherans became a recognized or sometimes suppressed minority.²⁸

4. *The post-modern, confessional churches* – Lutheranism 4.0, **a-Constantinian**.

Basically small, confessional / biblically conservative churches. Here we find, e. g., the *Mission Province* in Sweden, the *Mission Diocese* in Finland, and *Det evangelisk-lutherske stift i Norge* (DELSIN) in Norway. These are small, confessional Lutheran Churches, with their roots in the national churches, which have to find a Lutheran identity in a modern society that is strongly influenced by democratic and egalitarian ideas. They are well aware of the historical development, but in their own case have to organize their life and work without the Constantinian superstructure which still, to a large extent, remains in the National Churches.

4. *The original Lutheranism appeared in a Constantinian (and Carolingian) setting*

As we have seen, the original Lutheranism appeared originally in four different versions but basically, it is only the first two (the German and the Nordic / 1.1 and 1.2) that have had any major influence on the later development. This means that *the original Lutheranism has “imbedded” elements of Constantinian and even Carolingian elements in it*. Without the “Carolingian” protection by *Fredrick III / the Wise*, Elector of Saxony,²⁹ Luther would not have remained alive for 24 ½ years after being put under a ban after the Diet of Worms. Another “Carolingian” support for the Lutherans in Germany came the next century through Sweden and King Gustavus Adolphus (see below).³⁰ Let us now study Lutheranism 1.1 and 1.2.

We cannot talk about a *German nation* before the unification in the 1870s. Before that time there was, however, a *German language* (more so after the linguistical contribution through the Luther Bible in 1534), a *German culture*, and a *German history*, but there was not properly speaking any *German nation*.³¹ (*The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation*, formally existing 962 – 1806, was in most

²⁸ Every colonial power from the 19th century had its own policy concerning State Churches in the colonies. Great Britain and Germany did not introduce any State Church system in their colonies, while the others (France, Portugal, Belgium, Italy) favored the Roman Catholic Church but seldom had it functioning as a State Church. For some aspects concerning this general development, cf. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York; Orbis Books, 2006), 274-277.

²⁹ It is well known that Charles the Great was active in the “Christening of the Saxons,” today often described as a “sword mission.” The Saxon tribe had given name to the principality where Luther worked as a University professor, as well as to the kingdom where C. F. W. Walther lived until emigrating to the United States.

³⁰ Concerning King Gustavus Adolphus, see Daniel Riches in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 308-309.

³¹ In *Luther. Man Between God and the Devil* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), Heikko Oberman describes in great detail a number of important ecclesiastico-political aspects of this period.



of Luther's time ruled by Charles V, who also ruled over Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, and a number of other areas. This empire was created out of some areas of the Carolingian empire, while Otto I, the first emperor, was of Saxon heritage.³²) This means that the Lutheran reformation came into existence in a geographic area, "Germany," which consisted of a patchwork of hundreds of principalities. Out of the seven Electors electing the German Emperor, four were traditional princes (one of them being the Elector of Saxony) and three were "ecclesiastical princes," i.e., Archbishops.³³ This means that a number of princes, and magistrates in the cities, supported Luther and the Reformation,³⁴ while other princes and magistrates remained obedient to the pope. Later, a number of princes and magistrates started to follow the line of Calvin and other Reformed theologians. Thus, *German Lutheranism* developed and grew in areas where the parishes, pastors, and princes were always surrounded by Roman Catholic (and later: Reformed) theologians and powers. From the very beginning, it was a struggle for survival, even militarily. In fact, the Thuringian town of *Schmalkald* is connected both with a confessional document *and* a military league!³⁵ Emperor Charles V conquered the town of Wittenberg shortly after the death of Luther, and the numerous military conflicts between the Roman Catholic emperor and Lutheran and Reformed princes finally led to the Thirty Years' War (1618-48).³⁶ Without the intervention of the Swedish army, led by King Gustavus Adolphus (*Gustav II Adolf*), it can be doubted if the Lutheran (and Reformed) Churches in Germany would have managed to survive the 17th century. Thus, the original situation for Lutheranism 1.1 was not only *Constantinian*, but (out of necessity) also a *Carolingian* one, involving military issues.³⁷ The other main area for Lutheranism (Lutheranism 1.2), in northern Europe, gives a totally different story, or rather: three different stories, partly because here we find national states involved in the Reformation process.

In 1534, Prince Christian of *Denmark* (later King Christian III), a convinced Lutheran, inherited the throne from his father, King Fredrik I. In order to keep the throne, Christian had to survive a civil war which ended in 1536. After his victory, the Reformation period in Denmark, which had lasted some 15 years, came to its end. He was, however, not only king of Denmark but also king of *Norway*. It

³² F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone, eds. *Dictionary of the Christian Church* [later abbreviated *DCC*], Hendrickson (1997 / 2007), 323, 782.

³³ A clarifying description of this situation is found in Oberman, *Luther. Man Between God and the Devil*. In the chapter "A German Event," 13-49, he deals with the relationship between Frederick the Wise and the emperors by this time as well as between Electoral Saxony and the Holy Roman Empire. This confusing Germany is the context of Luther's *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520) and the Diet of Worms 1521.

³⁴ This Constantinian, or even Carolingian, element is very present in the Lutheran confessional documents, cf. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), [1], [3], 7, 15-17, 136-137. In a similar way, the Swedish confessional statement from 1593, "Uppsala möte", is signed by 16 members of the higher nobility (incl. two princes, one German) and 7 bishops; after that comes in a modern printed volume 4 ½ pages with names of the lower nobility, more than 20 pages with names of the clergy, and finally more than 4 pages with town magistrates and counties in Sweden (incl. modern Finland); *Confessio Fidei. Uppsala mötes beslut om Svenska kyrkans bekänneelse* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1993), 105-136.

³⁵ Cross & Livingstone, *DCC*, 1464-65.

³⁶ It is strange to note that when the Roman Catholic princes were militarily planning to destroy the Lutheran areas, they were often distracted by Turkish attacks, especially directed against Austria and Vienna.

³⁷ Cf. Oberman, *Luther*, 236: "[S]hortly after he made his decision for the Reformation in 1524, Landgrave Philip of Hesse recognized that the Evangelical movement would have to fight for survival on two fronts, not only theologically against the pope but politically against the Hapsburgs."



might be a slight exaggeration, but it is sometimes said that the Norwegians went to sleep one evening in 1537 as Roman Catholics and woke the next morning as Lutherans, just because of a religious decree arriving from Copenhagen, made by King Christian III.³⁸ Iceland (which centuries later became independent from Denmark), also received an enforced Lutheran identity by a royal act, as it seems without any special Reformation process.³⁹

Thus, we have found a patchwork structure in *Germany*, a theological-political struggle of more than 15 years in *Denmark*, an overnight development in *Norway* (and *Iceland*), while *Sweden* offers a totally different development which, in fact, is rather unique in global Christianity – a popular, rather democratic Lutheran Reformation!⁴⁰

After a Reformation process, which had lasted almost 75 years,⁴¹ the *people of Sweden* finally decided in March 1593 – led by a majority of the clergy (including some bishops), and with the support of a royal prince, but against the wish of some of the leading noblemen and the King-to-be – to *proclaim Sweden as a Lutheran nation*. The new King, Sigismund Vasa, came from Poland to be anointed (his father had died in Nov. 1592), but the anointing service of the Roman Catholic King in Jan. 1594 was preceded, on the same day, by the consecration of Abraham Angermannus as Archbishop – who was a confessional Lutheran!⁴²

In order to be anointed as King of Sweden, Sigismund Vasa had to recognize the *Diet of Uppsala 1593*, where the Church in Sweden quite recently had accepted the Augsburg Confession as a theologically binding document, which it still is. After a Reformation struggle, which had lasted for more than 70 years, the Lutheran identity of this Church Province was defined in 1593, against the will of the king, who wanted a rapid reunion with Rome.

Consequently, the most important areas of Lutheranism in the 16th century appear in a *Constantinian*, national Church setting, also having some *Carolingian*, military elements.

³⁸ Of course this joke can also be used concerning a number of principalities in Germany as well – and then it can go in any direction (Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists / Reformed).

³⁹ See “Denmark,” “Norway,” and “Iceland,” in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 188-189, 550, 353. (“King Christian III . . . declared Lutheran doctrine to be the official religion in his twin kingdom”, 550.)

⁴⁰ We can also note that the Swedish Lutheran Reformation was more *parallel* to the process in Germany and less influenced by Luther personally than the process taking place in Denmark – Norway; cf. Åke Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 3. Reformations tid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1999), 30, and Erik Lund, “Denmark,” in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 189.

⁴¹ For more details concerning the Swedish Reformation development, cf. Rune Imberg, “A Light Shining in a Dark Place: Can a Confessional Lutheran Voice Still Be Heard in the Church of Sweden?” in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 78:3–4 (July/October 2014): 81-92. There I stress the strange fact that the *first* properly Lutheran King in Sweden was Gustavus Adolphus (r. 1611-32). His grandfather, Gustav Vasa, supported the Lutheran Reformation but, even more, wanted to control it; his uncle Erik XIV was influenced by Reformed theology and inspired by the development in England; his uncle Johan III was a Reform-Catholic, wanting to create a reunion with Rome; his cousin Sigismund was a traditional Roman Catholic; his own father, Prince Karl (later Karl IX), was basically leaning in a Reformed direction. Consequently – Sweden had officially been a Lutheran country some 18 years when Gustavus Adolphus in his Enthronement speech in 1611 became the first Swedish King to take a clear Lutheran position, some 90 years after the introduction of the Reformation. Cf. Åke Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 3*; also Ingun Montgomery, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 4. Enhetskyrkans tid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2002), 50-51.

⁴² It is interesting to note that the German *cuius regio, eius religio* (“whose country, his religion”; Augsburg Peace Treaty 1555) functioned in Denmark-Norway but never in Sweden. Johan III (king 1568-1592) never succeeded in his attempts to create a union with Rome. His son Sigismund (king 1592-99) got involved, first in perjury and later in a civil war which he lost, while Queen Christina (r. 1632-54) saw it necessary to abdicate from the throne and leave Sweden before entering the Roman Catholic fold.



Lutherans living outside of Germany and the Nordic countries (Lutheranism 1.3) could seldom influence the future development to any large extent, except perhaps culturally. They had to struggle for survival in countries dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, and they were heavily dependent on the ruling monarch.⁴³

5. *The Church of Sweden – a short historical background*

In order to understand the existence of the Mission Province of Sweden and its theological identity, it is necessary first to give a short summary of the development of the Church of Sweden. It gives a kind of background or context for the Mission Province in Sweden before we dig into the interesting question: what kind of Church is the Mission Province?

1. The first *missionary* to (Denmark and) Sweden who is known by name is St. Ansgar.⁴⁴ He travelled to Sweden twice, meeting King Björn in his residential town, Birka (c. 830 / c. 850). As we have seen, Ansgar was sent by Emperor Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne. An interesting detail is the fact that the king welcomed the missionary, but he could not give final permission for Christian mission work in his realm until the people had given consent in two public assemblies in different parts of the country.⁴⁵ This first document describing Sweden and Swedish “politics” indicates that even in the 9th century the king needed to have a kind of popular or “democratic” approval for his actions. This “democratic” or “popular” element is a recurrent feature in Swedish Church history.

2. The mission work done in Sweden was a part of the general mission work undertaken by the medieval (Roman) Catholic Church.⁴⁶ The really surprising element is to recognize that the initiative often emanated from the emperor, with the approval of the pope, and not the other way around.⁴⁷ In 1164 this mission work in Sweden finally became a *Church Province*, led by the Archbishop of Uppsala and supported by the King. The interaction between the Church and the political powers, especially the King, is clearly “Constantinian.”

3. The *Reformation process* in Sweden started in the early 1520s, just at the time when the Swedish nobleman Gustav Vasa initiated a fight for political independence for Sweden, breaking up the union between the three Nordic countries, *Kalmarunionen*, which had been created by Margareta, Queen of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, in 1397. Many of the Swedish clergy, including some bishops, were on the side of the Danish King *and* the pope against Swedish independence. As it happened, most of

⁴³ Cf. the entries, e.g., on “Austria” and “Poland” in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 64-65 and 603-606.

⁴⁴ Designations like “Denmark” and “Sweden” for this time are somewhat anachronistic. The process of creating these *nations* was partly initiated by the Church while the petty kings were more interested in ruling over certain areas than creating proper states. The influence of the Church is seen by the fact that all national flags in northern Europe are based on a Christian cross.

⁴⁵ Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 1*, 42-51, esp. 45.

⁴⁶ It must, however, be noted that Christianity did not really come with the Christian mission. A number of Christians had lived in Sweden before the arrival of Ansgar – Christians captured as slaves, perhaps also warriors and Vikings. Cf. Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 1*, 35-36, 43-45.

⁴⁷ Rimbart, *Boken om Ansgar* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1986), 22-25, 28-31.



the people supporting the Reformation in Sweden were at the same time in favor of political independence. The victorious leader of the independence struggle, Gustav Vasa, initially supported the Lutheran Reformation. As King Gustav I (r. 1521/23-1560), he in general supported the Reformation and gradually broke with the pope. He even wanted to participate in the (Carolingian!) Schmalkald League. In other periods he wanted to control and contain the development and had two of the Reformation leaders condemned to death in 1540, although they were finally pardoned.⁴⁸

4. From 1593 onwards, Sweden followed a clear Lutheran, Orthodox line. Early in his reign, King Johan III had authorized a Lutheran Church Order, *Kyrkoordningen 1571*,⁴⁹ before initiating his personal Reform Catholic program,⁵⁰ but from 1611 Sweden fully entered into a period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, which lasted for more than a century. In 1686 the nation received a *Church Law* which, in principle, had legal authority nationally until 1993. In this way Sweden, as I understand it, has been the only *nation* in the world (except perhaps some principalities in Germany), which has had the *Book of Concord* as a legally binding document for the entire nation, a status which lasted until 1809. The new constitutional law in 1809, *Regeringsformen*, kept silent about the Book of Concord, which means it gradually became obsolete as a national law. For the Church of Sweden, the Book of Concord, is still binding, even after the disestablishment of the Church of Sweden in AD 2000.⁵¹

5. From the early 18th century, Sweden has gone through a number of important changes – politically, spiritually, and culturally. The downfall of Sweden as a European (military) superpower from 1709 onwards led the country in new directions. A number of *revivals*, many of them more or less Pietistic, came from Germany and later from the English-speaking world – some of them dividing the Church of Sweden, others invigorating it. The *Enlightenment* came in several ways, both as philosophical schools and as theological movements. An indigenous theological version, called *neology*, was very influential.⁵² Later, Sweden (like most of the other Lutheran Churches in Europe, which I have

⁴⁸ For details, see Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*. 3, esp. 82-99.

⁴⁹ It is commonly called “Laurentius Petri Kyrkoordning of 1571”. It was prepared, initially in 1546, by the Lutheran Archbishop Laurentius Petri and, finally, accepted by King Johan III. Cf. Sven Kjällström, ed., *Den Svenska kyrkoordningen 1571 jämte studier kring tillkomst, innehåll och användning*, 209, 221.

⁵⁰ The expression *Reform Catholic* is used in Sweden, and other Nordic countries, to describe a middle position in theological issues between a traditional Roman Catholic stand and a full scale Lutheran one. For the term *Reform Catholic*, see Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*. 3, 38-39, and Kauko Pirinen, “Bibelhumanism och reformation. En forskningsöversikt”, in Carl-Gustaf Andrén, ed., *Reformationen i Norden: Kontinuitet och förnyelse* (Lund: Gleerups, 1973). Pirinen connects the Reform Catholic position with the “Bible humanism” which acted as a kind of “via media” (p. 47-48). He also states (p. 47), that the German expression *Reformatkatolizismus* often has been used by Roman Catholic theologians (e. g. in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*), but then it normally refers to recent Catholic modernism and not to a middle position in the Reformation period. In a paper in the same book (“Kyrkan och den världsliga överheten under senmedeltid och reformation”), Sven Kjällström describes Sven Jacobi and Johannes Magni as *Reform Catholic* bishops, 88.

⁵¹ After being mentioned in some Royal documents in 1683, the Book of Concord was finally recognized as a binding document in the Church Law of 1686; cf. Ruben Josefson, “Inledning”, in *Svenska Kyrkans Bekännelseskriter* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1957/1969), 11-13; for the present status, see *Kyrkoordning med angränsande lagstiftning för Svenska kyrkan* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1999), 3, 11, 14.

⁵² Savonius, the curate in the first section of *The Hammer of God*, the famous novel by Bo Giertz, is an exponent of this neology. The Swedish neology was influenced by Christian Wolff; cf. Cross & Livingstone, *DCC*, 1759 f.



labelled “1.1-1.3”) gradually became influenced by the *Liberal theology*, especially of a German variety, first in the universities and then, increasingly, in the Church.

6. During the 20th century, the transformation of Lutheran Sweden continued. Until the end of the 19th century, the country was ideologically still influenced by a mixture of conservative Lutheran theology and German culture. The Liberal theology, especially in the exegetical field, began to take almost total control over the universities, where all Lutheran pastors had to study before their ordination and where a number of bishops had made an academic career.⁵³ The Swedish Labor party (*Social democrats*) gathered more political power. Since 1932, they have been out of government for just a few periods (1976-82, 1991-94, 2006-14, 2022-). In the early opposition period, the Labor party wanted to disestablish the Church of Sweden, but upon coming to power they instead wanted to transform it, making it less “clerical” and “rigid” and instead more “democratic”.⁵⁴ Especially since World War II, Sweden has gradually reoriented itself, distancing itself from its dependence on German culture and instead getting involved in a strange mixture of Americanization and criticism of the United States, a kind of love-hate relationship. Very few people in the Nordic countries, however, have sensed that the development in these post-Lutheran countries to a large extent now can be described as a secular, Socialist, version of Lutheran ethics – without God.⁵⁵ What is clear is that the Constantinian structure in the Church of Sweden remains, but in a modern, democratic, and even secularized version. The disestablishment of the Church of Sweden in 2000 meant that the *Government* lost its control over the Church, but not the *politicians*. Most members of the Church Assembly are elected on political party tickets, while bishops cannot be voting members of the Church Assembly.⁵⁶

⁵³ Cf. Sten Hidal, *Bibeltro och bibelkritik* (Stockholm: Skeab/Verbum, 1979). One of the few important, more conservative, Lutheran theologians was Bengt Hägglund (1920-2015), famous for his *History of Theology*, published in several languages.

⁵⁴ A number of books have described this development from different perspectives. A few examples: Rune Imberg, *Biskops- och domprostutnämningar i Svenska Kyrkan 1866-1989* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1991), Dag Sandahl, *Kyrklig splittring. Studier kring debatten om kvinnliga präster i Svenska kyrkan samt bibliografi 1905 – juli 1990* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1993), Ingmar Brohed, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 8, Religionsfrihetens och ekumenikens tid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2005), Daniel Alvunger, *Nytt vin i gamla läglar. Socialdemokratisk kyrkopolitik under perioden 1944-1973* (Göteborg: Församlingsförlaget, 2006), Johan Sundeen, *68-kyrkan. Svensk kristen vänsters möten med marxismen 1965-1989* (Stockholm: Bladh By Blad, 2017), Jesper Bengtsson, *Reformismens väg. Om socialdemokratin och kyrkopolitiken* (Stockholm: Tankesmedjan Tiden, [2020]), Per Ewert, *Moving reality closer to the ideal. The process towards autonomy and secularism during the Social Democratic hegemony in 20th century Sweden* ([Stavanger]: VID Specialized University, 2022).

⁵⁵ In an interesting paper in *Lutheran Quarterly* 2018 (“Martin Luther and the Danish Welfare State”; LQ 32:1, 22) Jørn Henrik Petersen deals with the Danish situation. He refers to Niels Kærgaard who has analyzed the relation between religion and the welfare state in Denmark. The conclusion by Petersen, quoting Kærgaard, is “that it is difficult to decide whether the Danish welfare state has to be understood as a result of Lutheran preaching, activities of the Social Democratic party, the societal homogeneity, humanistic attitudes, provident politicians or some combination.” The situation in the other Nordic countries, including Sweden, is quite similar.

⁵⁶ Brohed, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 8*, 277.



6. *The crisis – events leading up to the formation of the Mission Province in Sweden*

1. *The split which did not take place – 1843 and onward*

Many Lutheran Christians in the Nordic countries have been very eager to break with the National Church. A number of them were influenced by the events in the Scottish Presbyterian Church in 1843, the “Disruption,” out of which came the Free Church of Scotland, while others have left later.⁵⁷ Some groups of Lutherans belonging to different revival movements left the Nordic National Churches in the 19th and early 20th century, but most of them have only managed to get a few dozen or hundred members in some few congregations.⁵⁸ A couple of Norwegian Lutheran Free Churches from the 19th century still have a number of congregations and run Christian, independent schools.

The majority of biblically conservative Lutherans in Sweden decided, however, to remain within the Church of Sweden, recognizing a call to remain there, standing for a confessional Lutheran position, living a regular Christian life within those congregations that still functioned spiritually.

2. *The split which did not take place – 1958 and onward*

In 1957 the Swedish Parliament wanted to open the ordained ministry within the Church of Sweden to women. The Church Assembly, however, voted against such a decision, which means that nothing happened. (By this time, such changes still needed to be decided upon jointly by both the Parliament and the Church Assembly – another example of the Constantinian synthesis!) That decision was followed by an uproar in the country from many groups of people, especially women’s groups, journalists, and politicians. Many of the lay members, and also some clergy in the Church Assembly were replaced by others, and the Government threatened to disestablish the Church. Consequently, the Church Assembly summoned by the Government the following year, 1958, took a totally different position. Led by a few important theologians, they “realized” that it was not against the will of God to start ordaining women.⁵⁹

The first ordination of women pastors took place on Palm Sunday 1960 in three different places. Since then the number of female clergy has increased. Today some 3 out of 4 candidates for ordination are female. Almost half of the 14 bishops are female, and Sweden has even had a female Archbishop (Antje Jackelén, 2014-2022).

A number of confessional Lutherans were even ready in the early 1960s to leave the Church of Sweden. Some also referred to the development in Scotland in 1843. But the leading conservative Lutheran Bishop, Bo Giertz, was not willing to take this stand. He tried to create a kind of *modus vivendi* for the minority, and for this reason he and others created *Kyrklig Samling*, “The Church

⁵⁷ Cross & Livingstone, *DCC*, 1472f., 489f.; Anders Jarlert, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 6, Romantikens och liberalismens tid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2001), 114, 163, 165, 296.

⁵⁸ Concerning this development in general in the Nordic countries, see Ola Österbacka ed., *Vägen fram? Lutherska väckelserörelser i uppbrutt*, (Vasa: OF System, 2001), 10-11 (Denmark), 104-105 (Finland), 152 (Norway), 176-177 (Sweden), and Mikkel Vigilius, *Kirke i kirken. Luthersk vækkelseskristendom – fra kirkelig bevægelse over organisation til kirkeligt opbrud* (Hillerød: LogosMedia, 2005), esp. 106-116.

⁵⁹ The decision by the Church Assembly took place in September 1958. Within a matter of weeks, one of the leaders of the majority group, Ruben Josefson, was appointed by the Government to become Bishop of Härnösand. He was later promoted to Archbishop by the Government; cf. Rune Imberg, *Biskops- och domprostutnämningar i Svenska Kyrkan 1866-1989*, 101, 107, 112, 131, 149-150.



coalition for the Bible and confession”.⁶⁰ Towards the end of his life (he died in 1998), Giertz understood that his cause was lost. If he had been a young theologian, he would have been denied ordination because of his stand on the ordination of women.⁶¹

3. *The split that did take place. But what happened afterwards? – 1970 and onward*

In the early 1970s, a theological institution with a Lutheran, biblically conservative profile called *Biblicum* was established in Uppsala. It aimed to be an academic institution, but after a short while it also became involved in more ecclesiastical issues, “Church politics.” Some persons involved in this institution left the Church of Sweden and organized themselves in a *bekännelsekyrka*, a Confessional Lutheran church. Many of its roots went back to previous Swedish revivals, but a great majority of confessional Lutherans totally refused to join this church. Quite soon two things became quite clear. Confessional Lutherans in Sweden were well aware of the existence of the Missouri synod and the development there, including the events leading up to *Seminex*,⁶² but now they found, to their surprise, that the dominating influence within this Swedish Confessional Church was coming from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.⁶³ This influence was in general received with suspicion. Many felt that *Biblicum* and the Confessional Church were introducing quite foreign elements into a Swedish setting, some of them even in a clandestine way. This kind of American conservative Lutheranism (in my terms: Lutheranism 2.0 in a WELS version), had great problems in adjusting itself to a Swedish context, and it felt very foreign.⁶⁴

There was also a second problem that appeared quite rapidly. This movement grew, not much but in a rather strange way. Within some years there were *several* confessional Churches, each of them numbering a few dozen members and one or two congregations. This situation remains, basically, up to today. There are still some free Lutheran churches or congregations of this character in Sweden and Norway, and after fifty years you can identify some 4 or 5 clusters. Today, after all these years,

⁶⁰ <http://kyrkligsamling.se/indexuk.htm> (accessed April 10, 2024); Erik Petrén, “Bo Giertz och Kyrklig Samling”, in: Rune Imberg, ed., *Talet om korset – Guds kraft. Till hundraårsminnet av Bo Giertz födelse* (Göteborg: Församlingsförlaget, 2005), 368-383, Dag Sandahl. *En annan kyrka. Svenska kyrkan speglad genom Kyrklig samling och Kyrklig samling genom Svenska kyrkan* (Helsingborg: GAudete, 2018), 172-223.

⁶¹ The majority in 1958 agreed to a “conscience clause” which would make it possible for the minority to remain with the Church of Sweden. After some 20 years this conscience clause was revoked by the Swedish Government and Parliament. This made it clear that Bo Giertz had lost, totally; cf. Dag Sandahl. *En annan kyrka*, 284-320, and Imberg, “A Light Shining in a Dark Place”, 86-88. But this lost battle gets a very special dimension through the final novel of Bo Giertz, published in 1973; Engl. transl.: *The Knights of Rhodes* (Eugene, Or : Resource Publications, 2010). The lost battle becomes the starting-point for a new one, which is victorious!

⁶² Concerning *Seminex*, see Mark A. Granquist, “*Seminex* and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches” in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 678-679.

⁶³ Mark E. Braun, “Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod” in Wengert, *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, 782-784.

⁶⁴ As a young theologian-to-be, I could witness this development, and I personally knew or had met many of the leading persons from different sides. My father, Josef Imberg, a well-known Confessional parish pastor, was critical of the development, more so because of his experiences as an interpreter in some early events. For Danish reactions on *Biblicum* and the Wisconsin Synod influence in the Nordic countries, see Flemming Kofod-Svendsen, *Teologi og konsekvens: Niels Ove Rasmussen Vigilius' teologiske virke med særligt henblik på bibelsyn, kirkesyn, konfessionstroskab, karismatik og samarbejde på den kirkelige højrefløj i sidste halvdel af det 20. århundrede* (Copenhagen: Det Teologiske Fakultet, Københavns Universitet, 2014), 197-201.



they have altogether a few hundred members, and they have great problems in recruiting new pastors. Basically, they survive, but they hardly ever expand.

4. *Did a split really take place? The Mission Province, from 2003 and onward*

As Confessional, biblically conservative Swedish Lutherans, we in the Mission Province have learned from Swedish history. We have seen that there are a number of Lutheran confessional groups that have left “Egypt” (the Church of Sweden!) with very good intentions, but did they ever really arrive in the Promised Land? Many of them seem instead (at least in the eyes of others) to have ended up in the “desert,” that is: being very small groups, sometimes having a rather aggressive rhetoric against their opponents.⁶⁵

To many of us – Confessional, biblically conservative Swedish Lutherans – it seems that we still have a calling to continue to serve the Lord in the Church where we were called (and where some of us were ordained), the Church of Sweden.⁶⁶ If that is so, *how are we to continue in the faith, and serving other faithful Christians, not being run down by secularization and liberal theology?*⁶⁷ This is the context of the events which took place in 2003, when the Mission Province in Sweden started to exist. But still we have two complicated questions to solve: Did a *split* take place in 2003/2005 or not? Is the Mission Province a new form of Lutheranism, perhaps even a *Lutheranism which has returned to its roots*, being an a-Constantinian Lutheranism 4.0?

7. *The Mission Province in Sweden is formed*

Perhaps the confessional Lutherans should have made a massive walkout 1960, leaving the Church of Sweden, and continuing the work within another Church body. Who knows? God does, but we can recognize that nothing of that kind happened. Either there was no call from God to make an exodus – or God issued a call, but there was no Moses willing lead his people (Ex. 3:8-10, 4:13). There have also been later occasions when it would have been logical to act in a dramatic way.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ This is my personal experience from Sweden (from the 1970’s), and I have often also met similar problems in the other Nordic countries; cf. Flemming Kofod-Svendsen, *Teologi og konsekvens*, 195, 201.

⁶⁶ It must be noted that a majority of the members of the Mission Province in Sweden still (as I understand it) belong also to the Church of Sweden, although some other members left some years ago, while others have come from other Lutheran groups in Sweden or abroad. In a similar way, a number of Mission Province pastors have a dual status, also being ordained pastors within the Church of Sweden (just like me). My point is this: there has been no general exodus by Mission Province members from the Church of Sweden and no principal and definitive split.

⁶⁷ The Church of Sweden ordained its first female pastors in 1960, its first female bishop in 1997, its first female archbishop in 2014. In Oct. 1993, the bishops decided not to ordain any male pastors who are not willing to serve together with female pastors. The Church of Sweden Church Assembly decided in 2009 to label gay and lesbian partnerships as “marriage,” etc. – When I had written a letter to the female bishop of Gothenburg in 2018, stating that I do not recognize her as my bishop “in any real sense”, I was defrocked by the diocesan chapter of Gothenburg, but later reinstated by the Church Board of Appeal, *Kyrkans överklagandenämnd*. For more historical details, see Dag Sandahl. *En annan kyrka*, and documentation in <https://kyrkligdokumentation.nu/>; my own case is found here: <https://kyrkligdokumentation.nu/overklagandenamnden-upphaver-goteborgs-domkapitels-beslut-att-forklara-rune-imberg-obehorig/> (accessed April 10, 2024).

⁶⁸ I have touched upon these issues in a couple of writings; Rune Imberg, “Från Stockholm 1911 till Göteborg 2005 via Kenya” in Göran Beijer, Bengt Birgersson & Jakob Okkels eds., *Lyda Gud mer än människor. Festskrift till Arne Olsson, Missionsprovinsens förste biskop* (Göteborg: Missionsprovinsen, 2010), p. 37-43, and Imberg, “A Light Shining in a Dark Place,” 88-90.



What happened in 2003 when the Mission Province in Sweden came into existence was, instead, a peaceful event with dramatic consequences. There was no storm, not earthquake, no fire (1 Kings 19:11-12), there was just a very Swedish element – a committee meeting! A number of Confessional Lutherans, gathered in Gothenburg, decided to *create a new organization, a Mission Province*, which had the aim of being an *ecclesiastical structure* which could *ordain fitted men* who would be sent to *serve in independent congregations* (by this time often called “koinonias”; cf. Acts 2:42 in Greek).⁶⁹ As could be expected, there was both open and implied criticism of the development within the Church of Sweden, but no big attacks and no preparation for a general exodus. Instead, the pastors and laymen involved in creating this Mission Province decided just to follow the Lutheran Confessions, especially what is said about the necessity of ordaining new pastors (not only the *right*, but rather the *duty!*), when the bishops refuse to ordain them, as Philipp Melanchthon states in *On the Power and Primacy of the Pope*:

Therefore, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Church, or are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain their own right. [Because the regular bishops persecute the Gospel and refuse to ordain suitable persons, every church has in this case full authority to ordain its own ministers.]

....

*From all these things it is clear that the Church retains the right to elect and ordain ministers. And the wickedness and tyranny of bishops afford cause for schism and discord [therefore, if the bishops either are heretics, or will not ordain suitable persons, the churches are in duty bound before God, according to divine law, to ordain for themselves pastors and ministers. Even though this be now called an irregularity or schism, it should be known that the godless doctrine and tyranny of the bishops is chargeable with it], because Paul, Gal. 1,7 f., enjoins that bishops who teach and defend a godless doctrine and godless services should be regarded as accursed.*⁷⁰

The Mission Province came into existence in 2003, and quite rapidly three bishops were elected. On February 5, 2005, Rev. Arne Olsson (1930-2024) was consecrated as a bishop by Bishop Walter Obare Omwanza from Kenya, assisted by other Lutheran bishops from Africa and Europe. Later the same day, Bishop Olsson ordained the first three pastors within the Mission Province: Jan-Ulrik Smetana and Gunnar Andersson were sent to serve in Sweden and Niko Vannasmaa to work within the Luther Foundation in Finland.⁷¹ The next year, in April 2006, Bishop Arne Olsson consecrated

⁶⁹ For a traditional academic analysis of the history and theology of the Mission Province, see Carola Nordbäck, “Tio år med Missionsprovinsen,” parts 1 and 2, in *Svensk Kyrkotidning* 25 (2013): 517-522 and 26 (2013): 539-547, and “Att återvända till början. Historia och identitet inom Missionsprovinsen,” in Urban Claesson & Sinikka Neuhaus, eds., *Minne och möjlighet. Kyrka och historiebruk från nationsbygge till pluralism* (Göteborg: Makadam förlag, 2014), 132-162; also Sandahl, *En annan kyrka*, 354-356. A number of relevant documents are printed in Göran Beijer, Bengt Birgersson & Jakob Okkels, eds., *Lyda Gud mer än människor*. – The expression “koinonia” was especially used by Bertil E. Gärtner, Bishop in Gothenburg 1970-91 (the successor of Bishop Bo Giertz).

⁷⁰ *Concordia Triglotta. Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 523-525.

⁷¹ The Finnish pastors ordained in the Mission Province in Sweden started to work within the framework of the Finnish Luther Foundation. For a number of years (2009-2013) the Mission Province served two countries, being called the



two Assistant Bishops, Lars Artman and Göran Beijer. All three Bishops, who had remained as pastors within the Church of Sweden, were later defrocked by their diocesan chapters, together with Rev. Bengt Birgersson, the Provincial secretary.⁷²

Consequently – there was no exodus, no big split. Instead, the Conservative Lutherans who were gathered in this fold did something totally unexpected: They “corrected” some “abuses” within the framework of the Church of Sweden (and the Church of Finland) by calling, equipping, and sending out men to serve the Gospel according to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, even when they were hindered by the Bishops within the National Churches.⁷³

8. *The Mission Province in Sweden – a free Province*

What, then, is the Mission Province in Sweden? Is it a Church or not a Church, but something else? The Church of Sweden has taken a clear stand: It understands the Mission Province to be a new, separate Church with no formal connection to the Church of Sweden. Clear statements of that kind have been made, time and again, by representatives of and bodies within the Church of Sweden.⁷⁴ The Mission Province defines itself in another way. The wording in the foundational document (its Province Order, *Provinsordningen*) is expressed in this way:

The Mission Province is part of “the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”. It is a free province of the Church and Congregation in Sweden, on the foundation of the unaltered Evangelic-Lutheran Confession. It is in continuity with the spiritual tradition that has emerged and been preserved according to this Confession in the Church of Sweden, and understands itself as a non-territorial diocese in this tradition.⁷⁵

There is, of course, an ongoing discussion within the Mission Province concerning its own identity. Already 20 years have gone by since the momentous events in 2005. But the statement made in the Province Order from 2003 is very clear and still stands. It describes the Mission Province as *a non-territorial diocese in this tradition*, i.e., the spiritual tradition within the Church of Sweden, based *on the foundation of the unaltered Evangelic-Lutheran Confession*.

Mission Province in Sweden and Finland, but when an independent *Mission Diocese in Finland* was created in 2013, the name was changed back to the original one; cf. Nordbäck, “Att återvända till början”, 146, and Juhana Pohjola, “Missionsstiftet i Finland och dess rötter”, in: Rune Imberg, Gunnar Andersson & Jakob Okkels, eds., *Allt vad vi har uträttat, har du utfört åt oss. Festskrift till Missionsbiskop Roland Gustafsson* (Göteborg: Missionsprovinsen i Sverige, 2022), 157-161.

⁷² All ordinations of pastors (and one deacon) and consecrations of bishops performed by Bishop Arne Olsson are listed in Göran Beijer, Bengt Birgersson & Jakob Okkels, eds., *Lyda Gud mer än människor*, 248-252. The defrocking of Arne Olsson is described on pp. 83-117.

⁷³ Cf. the expressions used by Melancthon in the Augsburg Confession, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 59 (Section 2). The aspect of “unexpected elements” is elaborated by Rune Imberg, “Problemet med kyrkliga minoriteter. Några kyrkohistoriska reflexioner”, in Imberg, Andersson & Okkels, eds., *Allt vad vi har uträttat, har du utfört åt oss*, 168-170.

⁷⁴ Some early statements, made by Archbishop K. G. Hammar, the Church of Sweden’s Bishops’ Conference, and the Church of Sweden’s Church Board of Appeal, are found in Göran Beijer, Bengt Birgersson & Jakob Okkels, eds., *Lyda Gud mer än människor*, 60, 101, 104.

⁷⁵ The quotation comes from a semi-official translation into English, used by the Mission Province in theological and ecumenical discussions. The translation reflects the wording in *Provinsordningen* in 2015; e-mail from Bishop em. Göran Beijer to R. I., June 1, 2020. Cf. *Appendix*, below.



What does “the spiritual tradition within the Church of Sweden” mean? It can, of course, stand for many things. For those who are familiar with the books of Bishop Bo Giertz, I would say that especially three of his books reveal a number of important elements within this Church of Sweden tradition. I am thinking of his book *The Hammer of God* (for those reading it in English, the third edition is the best!) and *Christ’s Church*. Unfortunately, the third book is not translated into English, but it has been translated into several Nordic languages and also into German; I am thinking of his *Pastoral letter*, written 1949 when he had just been appointed by the Government of Sweden as Bishop of Gothenburg (the Constantinian element, once more!).⁷⁶

From a doctrinal point of view, the Mission Province has taken the same doctrinal position as the Church of Sweden, although it is more successful in following it:

The doctrine, faith, and confession of the Mission Province is founded in the Sacred Word of God, the prophetic and apostolic books of the Old and the New Testament, summarized in the three Catholic confessions, the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian, and in the unaltered Augustana confession of 1530, which is affirmed and recognized by the Council of Uppsala in 1593, and explained in the Book of Concord.

The administrative bodies of the Mission Province have the duty to explain and apply this Confession.⁷⁷

9. The Mission Province in Sweden – returning to the Lutheran roots!

From my personal perspective, I think it is a mistake to stress the *splitting aspect* when interpreting the Mission Province as a new Church. I can understand why Americans often raise the question “Why not just leave the Church of Sweden?” because in the United States, there have been perhaps 150 Lutheran Churches within the last 150 years (German, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and then a number of subgroups – haven’t there been some 30 or 50 Norwegian Lutherans Churches?). They have existed within the framework of Lutheranism 2.0. When the Migrants came to the United States, there existed no national Churches there (with some few exceptions). Consequently, for anyone not being Roman Catholic, the work had to start from zero, creating a number of *congregations* which then began to organize themselves in *Synods* and *Churches* and in many other ways.

For many Swedish confessional Lutherans, living in the Old World (i.e. within Lutheranism 1.2), they would consider such actions to be equivalent to losing their identity. In fact, the very expression *Mission Province* is like a bell sounding across the centuries, referring back not only to the initial

⁷⁶ Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God. A novel about the cure of souls* (Minneapolis, Mn.: Augsburg Books, 2005, Rev. ed.); Giertz, *Christ’s Church. Her Biblical Roots, Her Dramatic History, Her Saving Presence, Her Glorious Future* (Eugene, Or.: Resource Publications, 2010); Bo Giertz, *Herdabrev till prästerskapet och församlingarna i Göteborgs stift* (Stockholm: SKDB 1949) / German translation: *Sendschreiben an die evangelische Christenheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2. Aufl., 1953). – Unfortunately, there are many problems connected with the English translation of Giertz’s book the *Hammer of God*, even in the third edition; for more details, see Rune Imberg, “Bo Giertz’s The Hammer of God in English”, in *Lutheran Quarterly* XXVIII (2014), 280-300.

⁷⁷ The quotation is taken from the source mentioned in note 75. It is basically the same statement as the one in the Church of Sweden’s Church Order from the year 2000, *Kyrkoordning med angränsande lagstiftning för Svenska kyrkan*, 14, which goes back to the Church Law of 1686, *1686 års kyrkolag* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1936), 5. Cf. also the Formula of Concord, *Concordia Triglotta*, [777], 779.



Swedish Church history,⁷⁸ but also to the mission revival and expressing the call, once more, to reach the Swedish people with the gospel. It has a call to *mission*, and it is a *part* of the Church of Christ. (In this way, the word “Province” partly functions in the same way as the term “Synod,” which has been so popular in the States.)

A kind of key to understanding the *ethos* of the Mission Province is to *go back to the Bible* – and especially the Old Testament, and the problems facing the Jews in times of spiritual decline: The prophet Isaiah talks about a *remnant* within the people which would remain faithful to the Lord (Is. 6:13, 10:20-21, 11:11), while Jeremiah refers to the Rechabites as an example of a *faithful* remnant (Jer. 35), and Ezekiel mentions that the faithful remnant is *sighing and groaning* “over all the abominations that are committed” in the temple of Jerusalem. (Ez. 9:4).⁷⁹

The Mission Province can also be understood as a *Continuing church*, to use an expression popular among Conservative Anglicans / Episcopalians,⁸⁰ reaching back to the Reformation period and the Orthodox period of the Church of Sweden. This is made clear in the Constitution of the Mission Province, *Provinsordningen*:

[Preamble] 4 § At the use of this Constitution the doctrinal foundation of the Mission Province shall have priority when bylaws are interpreted and applied.

Support for the interpretation and supplementation of this Constitution shall be the legal tradition of the Church of Sweden as it, on the foundation of the Church Order of Laurentius Petri of 1571, has been developed and consolidated in the Church Law of 1686 and in later bylaws. When these sources of law do not give guidance, ecclesiastical legal tradition is applied.⁸¹

The best way to understand the Mission Province is therefore, in my opinion, to understand it as a *kind of “reinvented” Lutheranism* (Lutheranism 4.0) which, in fact, means *returning to the roots of the original Lutheranism* (1.0) – without the Constantinian elements.

The Mission Province has grown out of the Church of Sweden (Lutheranism 1.2), which today has given up its Lutheran identity and struggles with being a kind of post-modern Church in a democratic society. The theological confusion in the national Nordic Churches is increasing year by year.⁸² For

⁷⁸ Note, as we already have seen (above, ch. 1), that the *mission* work in Sweden one thousand years ago matured into the Church *Province* of Uppsala (Sweden), which came from the Church Province of Lund (Denmark), and in A. D. 1164 was established by the Pope.

⁷⁹ For details about this self-understanding within the Mission Province, and a critical assessment of it, see Nordbäck, “Att återvända till början”, 133-145.

⁸⁰ “These churches [- -] are preserving or ‘continuing’ both Anglican lines of apostolic succession and historic Anglican belief and practice.” Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continuing_Anglican_movement (accessed April 11, 2024)

⁸¹ The quotation taken from the 2015 translation of the Mission Province Constitution; cf. note 75, above.

⁸² The theological confusion is found in all the Nordic Lutheran National Churches, and is evident not least in the clergy. For a Finnish example, see Kati Tervo-Niemelä, “Female Clergy as Agents of Religious Change?”. She argues “that the adoption of female clergy is one of the main factors that cause the Church to change its practices, policies and theological orientation”;

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279423541_Female_Clergy_as_Agents_of_Religious_Change (accessed April 11, 2024). Two other Finnish theologians have made a comparison between the young clergy in the Church of Finland and the Church of Sweden. They identify important differences between male and female clergy; Patrik Hagman & Eetu Kejonen, <https://research.abo.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/25161655/Artikkel-4-SJLT-2019-K%C3%B6n-kyrka-och-kyrkligt-ledarskap-.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2024). That this development could (would?) come was stated



the Mission Province, the Confessional documents from the Reformation period (and the Early Church) are a joy to read, interpret, and follow, while these same documents often are a problem and a burden to the leaders of the Church of Sweden. The Mission Province is, thus, more congenial with these documents, and the Reformers, than the bishops and Church politicians who today are in power and govern the Church of Sweden.

At the same time, the Mission Province can keep a certain distance to the Constantinian and Carolingian elements found in these texts (e.g. the role given to the princes). In this way, the Mission Province can be more “Evangelical Lutheran” than even Reformers like Luther and Melanchthon themselves succeeded in being. (When reading Luther, you often find that he had problems in getting out of the Constantinian thought system. A clear example is his 1520 text, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*.) During my years in Africa, I have also noted that African Lutherans in general manage to evade the Constantinian, Carolingian, and Enlightenment issues that serve as a stumbling block for European and American Lutherans. (Instead, African Lutherans face other problems – old tribal traditions, nepotism etc.)

What we can see, and here we come to a tentative conclusion, is that *the Mission Province to a certain extent is “reinventing” the Original Lutheranism (1.0), or, at least, returning to its roots*. The Reformers clearly stated that they were in no way creating a new Church, they just wanted to be true to the true call of the Catholic Church: to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments. In a similar way, the Mission Province states in its Constitution:

3.1 § The Mission Province wants to obey the Mission Commandment of Jesus and to help people in our country to come to believe in Him and be able to worship in Spirit and truth.⁸³

This evangelistic work is the center of the work of the Mission Province. But the Province does not stand alone in this work. In its daily life it is connected with Christians and Lutherans all over the world. It has its origins within the Church of Sweden (Lutheranism 1.2), but the consecration of its first Bishop, Arne Olsson, was led by a Bishop from Africa, Walter Obare Omwanza (3.0) with a number of representatives from other Lutheran Churches in Europe (1.1-1.3), Africa (3.0), and also from the Missouri Synod (2.0) being present. When the present Bishop was consecrated, Bengt Ådahl, one of the participating Bishops came from the National Lutheran Church in Latvia (1.3), Hanss Martins Jensions.

What, then, is the answer on the original question: *Is the Mission Province a Church – or not?* Perhaps the answer should be: *Yes, and No*. Once more a Lutheran paradox!⁸⁴ And thus it is stated, as we have seen, in the Province Order, ch. 2:

more than 40 years ago by a female pastor in her dissertation: Ulla Carin Holm, *Hennes verk skall prisa henne. Studier av personlighet och attityder hos kvinnliga präster i Svenska kyrkan* (Helsingborg: Plus Ultra, 1982), esp. 130-133.

⁸³ Concerning this quotation, see the source mentioned in note 75.

⁸⁴ Concerning the *simul* perspectives, which often explain the Lutheran “paradoxes”, cf. Torbjörn Johansson, “Simul – ett genomgående drag i luthersk teologi”, in: Imberg & Johansson, eds.: *Den mångfacetterade reformationen*, 271-279.



*It is a free province of the Church and Congregation in Sweden, on the foundation of the unaltered Evangelic-Lutheran Confession. It [- - -] understands itself as a non-territorial diocese in this tradition.*⁸⁵

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⁸⁵ This quotation (with my *italics*), comes from the source mentioned in note 75.



Appendix

*(A semi-official translation of the Constitution of the Mission Province in Sweden
made in 2015 by Bishop Göran Beijer)*

Constitution For the Mission Province in Sweden

Preamble

1 § The Mission Province in Sweden was constituted September 6, 2003 by representatives of koinonias [free congregations] and Mission organisations, members of the college of priests and elected delegates from the Support Organisation for the Mission Province.

2 § The aim of this constitution is to indicate the doctrinal foundation, purpose, structures and work of the Mission Province, and to further and preserve the unity of the worshipping communities.

3 § The Constitution shall continuously be evaluated and reviewed by the Convention of the Mission Province.

4 § At the use of this Constitution the doctrinal foundation of the Mission Province shall have priority when bylaws are interpreted and applied.

Support for the interpretation and supplementation of this Constitution shall be the legal tradition of the Church of Sweden as it, on the foundation of the Church Order of Laurentius Petri of 1571, has been developed and consolidated in the Church Law of 1686 and in later bylaws. When these sources of law do not give guidance, ecclesiastical legal tradition is applied.

1. Chapter Doctrinal Foundation

The doctrine, faith, and confession of the Mission Province is founded in the Sacred Word of God, the prophetic and apostolic books of the Old and the New Testament, summarized in the three Catholic confessions, the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian, and in the unaltered Augustana confession of 1530, which is affirmed and recognized by the Council of Uppsala in 1593, and explained in the Book of Concord.

The administrative bodies of the Mission Province have the duty to explain and apply this Confession.



2. Chapter Identity

The Mission Province is part of “the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”. It is a free province of the Church and Congregation in Sweden, on the foundation of the unaltered Evangelic-Lutheran Confession. It is in continuity with the spiritual tradition that has emerged and been preserved according to this Confession in the Church of Sweden, and understands itself as a non-territorial diocese in this tradition.

3. Chapter Purpose

1 § The Mission Province wants to obey the Mission Commandment of Jesus and to help people in our country to come to believe in Him and be able to worship in Spirit and truth.

2 § The Mission Province has the duty to support worshipping communities that are members and further the establishing of new communities, and to support worshipping communities that are served by priests from the Mission Province.

3 § The Mission Province shall for the need of the worshipping communities examine and ordain servants of the Word in accordance with Apostolic faith and order.

4 § The Mission Province shall encourage and support mission, diaconal work and education.

5 § Congregations, mission groups and organisations in the Church of Sweden can support the Mission Province and ask to be served by it.

6 § The Mission Province seeks international cooperation on the foundation of the Evangelic-Lutheran tradition, and cultivate contacts with other Ecclesiastical traditions, when appropriate.

4. Chapter Worshipping Communities / Koinonias / Free Congregations

5. Chapter Ordained Ministry and Other Ministries

6. Chapter The Organisation of the Mission Province

The main bodies are:

- Provincial convention
- Mission Council
- Consistory
- Doctrinal committee

7. Chapter Decision Review and Appeal

8. Chapter Change of Doctrinal Foundation, Dissolution of the Mission Province