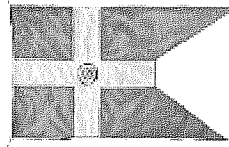


From Orthodoxy to Heterodoxy:  
A Study of the Historical Context and Causes of the Transition  
of the Lutheran Congregations of New Sweden from  
Lutheranism to Episcopalianism



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“See to it that in all things a true and due worship, becoming honor, laud, and praise be paid to the Most High God in all things, and to that end all proper care shall be taken that divine service be zealously performed according to the unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Council of Uppsala, and the ceremonies of the Swedish church; and all persons, but especially the young, shall be duly instructed in the articles of their Christian faith; and all good discipline shall in like manner be duly exercised and received.”<sup>1</sup> These words come from the 24<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the orders given to John (Johan) Printz<sup>2</sup>, Governor of New Sweden, upon his departure from Sweden in August, 1642. Even a casual reading of these words would lead one to the conclusion that the word of God and devotion to him was very important to the Swedish people. Indeed it was important to them. Worship of the Lord and spiritual nourishment through his means of grace, the word and sacraments, were to be hallmarks of this Swedish settlement on the Delaware.

How is it then that the people of this colony departed from evangelical Lutheranism? By the year 1791, Lutheran congregations were worshipping according to the Anglican Rite and were using the English Book of Common Prayer. Some of these congregations remain today, but they are members of the Episcopalian church.<sup>3</sup> A change of this magnitude cannot happen over night. What caused this transition from orthodoxy to heterodoxy? Do the histories which survive allow us to see the cause or causes? Do they allow us to see the affect these changes had on the common man? Finally, what can we learn from this history that is so full of pride and achievement and yet so sad? These are some of the questions with which we will concern ourselves within the pages of this paper.

## I. Civil Background

Sweden was involved in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). It was a bloody war that consumed both men and capital. Due to the pains suffered during those series of wars, many Swedes, not the least of whom was Gustav (II) Adolph, desired the founding of a Lutheran colony far from the political and economic strife of Europe. The desire was for a free land where Lutherans could worship according to the Lutheran rite<sup>4</sup>, and Pastors could lead their people without fear of persecution or death. Also, these people took the great commission of our Savior seriously. They wanted to spread the Word of God.

These people were mission minded. In almost all of the records which speak about founding this colony, mention is made of working with the heathen *wildmännen*, “wild people.” From the beginning, this colony was to be centered on God and his Word. This colony was to be a base of reaching out to believer and heathen alike. With God’s Word as its foundation it was then expected to be self sufficient and bring both glory and goods to the King of Sweden and to God.

The self sufficiency of this colony was the concern of the Dutchman Wilhelm Ussellinx. He suggested a trading company be formed whose reach would extend to Asia, Africa, and Terra Magellanica<sup>5</sup>. Ussellinx urged its formation on the grounds that “Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Acrelius, p.39: “Gud, den allrahögste, nu i allt bevisas en sann och skyldig gudtjänst och tillbörlig ära, lov och pris. Gudtjänsten skulle förrätas i överrensstämmelse med hemlandets trosbekännelse och svenska kyrkoceremonier och alla, i synnerhet ungdomen, noggrant informeras i sina kristendomsstycken.”

<sup>2</sup> Murray, p.129: Interesting note: Johan Printz originally studied theology until shanghaied into the army.

<sup>3</sup> Congregational web sites can be accessed through <[www.colonialswedes.org/Churches/Churches.html](http://www.colonialswedes.org/Churches/Churches.html)>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.129: “på samma sätt som hemma”: “exactly as in the homeland.”

<sup>5</sup> This term refers to the area close to the straights of Magellan, that is, modern day Chile, but it also serves as a metonymy for the rest of South America.

religion would by that means be planted among the heathen. Second, that his majesty's dominions would be enlarged, his treasury enriched, and the people's burdens at home diminished. Third, that it would produce to the nation many positive advantages, and a very profitable trade; and that the Swedes possessed all the means for carrying it on with advantage."<sup>6</sup> He obtained a commission, dated at Stockholm, the 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1624, for the formation of this trading company.<sup>7</sup> At that time preparations were begun. Unfortunately two years of war with Poland interrupted those preparations. A still greater interruption came in 1632, when on November 15 Gustav (II) Adolph fell in the battle of Lützen.

The young Christina followed Gustav Adolph on the throne. She was, however, too young to rule effectively, and much too inexperienced. Axel Oxenstiern therefore became administrator until she could rule on her own. He resumed preparations for this company and the colonies which it would support. Finally in 1637, plans approved, *Kalmars Nyckel* and *Vogel Grip* left Sweden to begin this Lutheran colony in the new world.

The Dutchman Menewe (Minit) was appointed as commander of the colony. This was, perhaps, an unfortunate decision. One of the causes for later strife with the Dutch undoubtedly lies with him. The Delaware region was an area he knew well for he had been commander of the Dutch Fort, Nassau, on the *eastern* shore of the river. Great disagreements arose between him and the Dutch settlers so that he was forced to return to Holland where "he was impeached, tired, and dismissed from his office."<sup>8</sup> From Holland he traveled to Sweden. He offered to lead settlers to the western shores of the Delaware, which he did in 1638.<sup>i</sup> The colony, founded early in the year on the *western* shores of the Delaware, was named Christina, in honor of the Queen. It was a very small colony, numbering only a few dozen, and it remained small for some time. Those people also remained without a pastor. It was not until the second expedition arrived in 1640 that a pastor lived and worked in the colony.<sup>9</sup>

This small colony, which one could rightly call a trading post (it consisted of a fort and two houses), struggled for the first years of its existence. The first few dozen grew, led by Printz<sup>10</sup> after 1642, but after nine years (1647) there were still only 180 inhabitants, 28 of whom were considered permanent.<sup>11</sup> There were no supplies, no settlers, not even one ship from Sweden during the years 1648-1654.<sup>12ii</sup> Finally in 1654 another ship arrived from

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<sup>6</sup> Clay, p.32

<sup>7</sup> Acrelius, p.408

<sup>8</sup> Clay, p.34

<sup>9</sup> The two year delay between expeditions was due in part to the death of Menewe who died on the return journey. In June 1638, while exchanging wines and distilled liquor for tobacco on the island of St. Christopher Menewe was invited aboard the Dutch ship *Het Vliegende Hert*. A storm blew up driving the ship out to sea where it was lost. Though driven out to sea *Kalmars Nyckel* returned to harbor. In the beginning of October 1638 *Kalmars Nyckel* encountered a horrendous storm in the North Sea off the coast of Holland. The main mast was lost in addition to other damage. Repairs were made to the boat in Vlie, Holland. These repairs and the search for a new leader added to the delay between journeys (Johnson, p.117).

<sup>10</sup> Murray, p.129: The man originally slated to lead the colony was Johannes Botvidi, cousin and close friend of Printz. Botvidi affected the colony nonetheless, as he was a bishop in Sweden. He affected the men sent over seas through his "orders of service for the life of the church in that place."

<sup>11</sup> cf. the Report of Governor Johan Printz, February 20, 1647, as recorded in Myers Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, p.121.

<sup>12</sup> During this time the Dutch and the Spanish caused much damage to the New Sweden Company. While the Swedes were fighting with the Dutch, the Spanish (who were fighting the Dutch in the "Eighty Years War" for independence) engaged in piracy against Swedish ships (cf. notes by Monroe, p.20f). From 1648-

Värmland. After losing some 50 people on the journey, close to 300 settlers survived the crossing to find a population of 70 souls. The last expedition from Sweden brought 100 settlers and by the 1660's there were between 500-600 Swedes living in the colony.<sup>13</sup>

From the first days of the colony there were problems with the Dutch. These problems were compounded by the small size of the colony. Some of the problems with the Dutch that lie rooted with Menewe as has already been mentioned.<sup>iii</sup> The greater problems stemmed from national "arm flexing." For the majority of the time they lived together on the Delaware relations between the two nations were at least civil. In fact the Dutch were heavy shareholders backing the Swedish expedition.<sup>14</sup> Holland and Sweden signed treaties with each other in 1614, 1618, 1633, and 1644. However these treaties were not signed because these nations were altruistic. As any nation does, the Dutch were serving their interests. When the Dutch perceived Sweden as a threat to their income with its growing influence in Europe and attempt to have influence abroad, they interfered with this Swedish colony and livelihood.<sup>15</sup>

After the Dutch took control of the colony the Swedish citizens found themselves in hard straights.<sup>iv</sup> Goods were seized<sup>v</sup> and religious restrictions were placed upon the people.<sup>vi</sup> One of the restrictions was the allowance of only one Swedish Lutheran pastor for the entire colony. One can only imagine how such an allowance would affect the spiritual life of the colonists. There was one pastor for roughly 500-600 people. This situation was hardly ideal. Eventually the settlers would find help (both temporal and spiritual) from the British, who controlled the territory from 1664-1776. With that said, let us examine the ecclesiastical background before we go any further with the state of affairs after the Dutch seized control.

## II. Ecclesiastical Background

The background and ecclesiastical context of the missions in New Sweden are not particularly surprising, but are worth remembering. The church in Sweden was Lutheran. It had been so since the earliest days of the reformation. Reforms, and perhaps they should be called renewals, were implemented without the radical destruction and change in ceremony which occurred in Germany. *Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Sola Scriptura* were the watch words of also the Swedish church. Laurentius Petri (Lars Petterson), the archbishop of Uppsala, along with his older brother Olavus Petri (Olaf Petterson), did a great deal to "Lutheranize" the church especially by way of the liturgy.<sup>16</sup> They removed "everything relating to the Roman Offertory

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63 the Dutch captured the Swedish settlement and holdings in Africa and in 1655 they captured New Sweden on the Delaware.

<sup>13</sup> This information was gleaned from Johnson's research in, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware. Their History and the Relations to the Indians, Dutch and English 1638-1664*, I-II. Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1911.

<sup>14</sup> cf. Munroe p.21

<sup>15</sup> The Swedish navy was very small in comparison to the great naval powers of Holland and England. Moreover, at the time, Sweden's attention was focused on Denmark, Poland, and eventually on Norway. New Sweden did not receive the protection and support it needed from the Fatherland. The colony needed support from somewhere and was forced to look elsewhere. The majority of people and supplies who came to New Sweden came aboard British ships by way of London or Dutch ships by way of Amsterdam, thus they were captive to their schedules and heavily affected by the aims of those governments. Only a handful of ships ever came from Sweden directly.

<sup>16</sup> Olaf Petterson "attended the University of Wittenberg between 1516 and 1518...returning to Sweden (he) was energized with the ideas of Luther but not with thoughts of a complete break with the Pre-Reformation church [which, of course, Luther did not desire either, we would add]...Laurentius (Lars) also

and Canon”<sup>17</sup> from the liturgy. The resulting liturgy, the *Högmässa* (High Mass), was published in 1531.<sup>vii</sup> There were a number of other orders published until 1576. In that year a liturgical struggle began between various “high church” and “low church” factions. This struggle finally ended in 1593 with the decision of the Council of Uppsala deciding in favor of the 1571 order, *Kyrkoordningen*. This decision finally “codified and stabilized liturgical use and sacramental practice in the Swedish church.”<sup>18</sup>

In addition to his *Högmässa*, Olaf Pettersson published a Swedish New Testament in 1526. It quickly gained widespread use, but was eventually replaced by translations of the entire Scripture. What has been termed the “definitive” Swedish bible, the Gustavus Adolphus Bible, was published in 1618 as a revision of the 1541 Gustav I Bible.<sup>19</sup> It was this Bible that was in use during Sweden’s “power years,” the years under question in this paper, and it was versions of this Bible that came to America with the colonists and ministers.<sup>viii</sup>

If all of this were not enough, Olaf Pettersson also played a role in the writing of the Swedish Catechism. His, *A Useful Instruction (Een nyttugh wnderwijsning)*, as it was titled, was published in 1525. It contained all the parts of Martin Luther’s *Betbuechlein* of 1522, with the addition of sections on the creation of mankind and the fall into sin, as well as a section on the Magnificat.<sup>20</sup> This book became very influential in the lives of the common man. Frank Blomfelt writes this about the importance of the catechism:

Swedish authorities considered the Scriptures to be too extensive to serve as a confessional document; the Catechism was used in their stead, and among people it acquired the same authority as the Scriptures. The Bible was also, during the seventeenth century, difficult to find and hard for most people to understand. For these reasons the Swedish church tried very hard to put the Catechism into people’s hands since it summarized the “core and marrow” of the Bible. Under those circumstances it was logical, at certain times, to preach the Catechism in church and to have the Catechism printed together with the hymnbook (it was part of the New Uppsala Hymnbook of 1645), the book most read in the home.

The growing influence of the Catechism in the Swedish church as an unofficial Bible is obvious in the constitution of 1634. Mention of the Catechism in the Form of Government of 1634 is a formal assurance of the high and general esteem in which the book was held in the Swedish Lutheran church at that time.<sup>21</sup>

As far as hymnbooks are concerned, from 1530-1665 there were some 11 hymnbooks published in Swedish. None of them served a majority of the people however. It was not until 1645 that a “national” hymnbook finally appeared, entitled the New Uppsala Hymnbook. One of the men who worked on that project was Canuti Leneaus (Kanut

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studied at Wittenberg, but during the days in which the first efforts were being made in the practical reform of church life in the period after 1522” (Senn, p.400).

<sup>17</sup> Reed, p.113

<sup>18</sup> Senn, p.418

<sup>19</sup> Blomfelt, p.266

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.403

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.268, summarizing information found on p.28-30 in Pleijel’s *Katekesen som Svensk folkbok*.

Linäus), who, interestingly enough, also helped plan the parishes and missions in New Sweden.<sup>22</sup>

### III. Concerning ecclesiastical work in America and the transition to Episcopalianism

The work of Lutheran pastors in New Sweden began as care for Swedish souls. The men who came were Lutheran. The liturgy in use at the congregations at Christina and Tinicum was the *Handbok* (Agenda Book) of 1614.<sup>23</sup> Governor “Printz writes in 1644 that ‘the services with its ceremonies are conducted as in old Sweden’ and in the ‘good old Swedish language.’ ‘Our priest,’ he says, ‘is vested with a chasuble and differs in all manners from other sects surrounding us.’”<sup>24</sup>

The men who carried the gospel to their fellow Swedes did so under difficult circumstances. There were not enough pastors for the work load. Covering the territory with regularity was difficult due to the lack of man power as well as something as mundane as travel in colonial Delaware and Pennsylvania. They brought the Word to people whose primary focus was survival through subsistence. This made the work of the pastors that much more difficult. Their lives and their health could only last so long. Israel Acrelius described what he entitled the “destitution” of the pastors:

The Christian work which had been aimed at by sending out five ministers, at the same time received a lamentable check. The Rev. Reorus Torkillus, of East Gothland, who came over with the Commandant Menewe, ended his days in Fort Christina, on September 7, 1643. The Rev. John Campanius Holmensis remained no longer than six years, during which time, however, he was very zealous in learning the nature of the country and the language of the heathen, and since he had much intercourse with the wild people, therefore a tradition is still circulated that he traveled up into the interior among them, and so went by land home to Sweden. From his journal, it is seen that he sailed from Elfsborg, in New Sweden, on May 18, and reached Stockholm on July 3, 1648, an uncommonly quick voyage. The Rev. Israel Holgh and Mr. Peter [the Rev. Peter Hjort] followed some years later. Mr. Lars Lock was the only one who remained in the country, and took care of the poor and scattered Swedes, preaching at Tenakong and Fort Christina until the day of his death, in the year 1688.<sup>25</sup>

Those men carrying out difficult work in difficult circumstances brought the Word of God to more than just the Swedes. They also carried the gospel to indigenous people<sup>x</sup>. Campanius was instrumental in this regard. He learned the Algonquin language spoken by the Leni-Lenape people (who lived in colonial Virginia/Delaware) and worked diligently

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.266; he obtained this information from Bror Olsson, *Psalmboken som folkbok* (Lund, 1942), p.15-25.

<sup>23</sup> The original *Handbok*, published in 1529, could be compared to the English Book of Common Prayer in its breadth of distribution and use in Swedish territories. It went through a number of revisions (1531, 1537, 1548, 1557, 1576, 1578) as the Swedish church struggled, its leaders taking various sides in the reformation. Relevant for our study is its descendant the *Handbok* of 1614, which was in use [in Sweden] until 1693 (Senn, p.446) and 1697 in New Sweden (Johnson, p.367).

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, p.367; For a detailed recording of how worship services were conducted in New Sweden, which had sermons, explanation of readings and festival practices, cf. Johnson, p.367-371.

<sup>25</sup> Acrelius, p.85

among them.<sup>26</sup> After his return to Sweden<sup>27</sup>, he completed translating Luther's catechism into their language. In 1696, 500 Algonquin catechisms arrived from Sweden: "Catechismus Lutheri Lingua Svecico-Americana."

All accounts record their diligent and faithful use with the materials and tools given to them, but these men could not live forever. More pastors needed to be sent from Sweden or from somewhere else if they could learn Swedish and English. The need was very great. After the death of the Finnish pastor Lars Lockenius (1688), an old blind German Lutheran pastor looked after some of the Swedish congregations. It is recorded that though he was "completely blind and led from place to place", he was "a splendid preacher."<sup>28</sup>

By 1693 there were no pastors to minister to the Swedes in Delaware, and there were 139 families made up of 939 individuals living in New Sweden (39 of them were born in Sweden)<sup>29</sup>. The people of the colony had asked the church in Sweden for a shepherd, but had not yet received one. Scripture says that God, in his mercy, directs all things for the good of his children, including the placement of pastors among his flock. As it is difficult for any congregation to accept a period of pastoral vacancy, it must have been difficult for these Christians in New Sweden to live trusting God's unfailing mercy and love. They must have struggled to remember that God had not forgotten them, for it seemed that the king of Sweden had.

In 1692 John Thelin, a royal postman in Sweden, received news of the colonists' situation. He began an exchange of letters with them<sup>x</sup> and brought their needs before the royal court. They needed help desperately. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1693 Carl Springer<sup>30</sup> also sent a letter to Sweden, signed by thirty principal men in the colony, recounting their situation and requesting means for religious instruction.<sup>31</sup> They wanted to hold fast to the Swedish language, but more importantly to the pure Lutheran teachings of the Bible.<sup>32</sup> Epistolary communication of the day was excruciatingly slow, but due to the work of Thelin, a response finally came from King Karl XI. In 1696, aid arrived from Sweden along with the reverends Eric Björk (Björk), Andrew (Anders) Rudman and the cartographer and mathematician Jonas Aurén.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> On his tombstone in Frösthult in Uppland these words are recorded in Algonquin: "Umarsa Chiman chinsika hacking haro ankarop machis chuki." Translated the inscription reads: "Här vilar en god hövding, som dog i hög alder / Here rests a good chief who died at a good old age;" Murray, p.132 and 134.

<sup>27</sup> Campanius worked in New Sweden for five to six years before returning to Sweden. At first glance one might wonder why he did not stay longer. For one, we might ask ourselves how long men usually remain in one place today. After doing so, working in New Sweden and then moving to new fields does not seem so out of the ordinary. In addition, it seems that Campanius was doing more work than he could handle on his own. Murray (p.131) quotes Campanius as requesting two or three more pastors just to preach the Word and administer the sacraments.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.132. One wonders whether this man preached in Swedish, German, or English.

<sup>29</sup> Clay, p.201; he quoted from a document left by the Rev. Anders Rudman.

<sup>30</sup> Springer was born to a rich family in Stockholm who employed himself at an early age with Swedish ministers in London. Later he stowed away on a ship bound for America where he sold himself into slavery and worked on a sugar plantation in Virginia. After years on the plantation he became a free man and moved to the Swedish colony where he was well received. His previous academic training served the colony well as he became the school master for the Swedish children as well as the lector at worship services; cf. Murray, p.132.

<sup>31</sup> Ferris, p.151f

<sup>32</sup> Murray, p.133

<sup>33</sup> Clay, p.75f

Their problems would have seemed solved. The colonists now had two pastors (as well as Springer, the de facto Staff minister). Between 1697 and 1776, 25 more pastors came to the colony from Sweden. However things were not as well as they seemed. The seeds of their doctrinal undoing had been sown already. There were still too few men for the job before them. The men who came were under trained and did not remain long anyway.<sup>34</sup> The vacancies had taken their toll as pastor Acrelius relates:

The many and long vacancies which have taken place from time to time have produced no little injury in these churches. The remaining ministers could not so well watch over the vacant churches, but the people were compelled to call upon the nearest English ministers for their assistance so that they might have some public worship. They were thus also rendered uncertain whether any minister was to be expected from Sweden, or any who would be suitable for the congregation, and so they doubted whether the church would continue to be Swedish. This has been poor encouragement for the Swedish language: it was also an open door for prowling sects, and a strong attraction for selfish Trustees to conceal the old Swedish church books, and draw the church property to themselves.<sup>35</sup>

For some time there had been a push to work with the British. In 1648 Svedberg traveled to England where he met in the city of Oxford with the leading bishops of the Church of England. His goal was that they declare they could work more closely together with the church in Sweden, and by extension, the church in New Sweden.<sup>36</sup> In the colonies, such work had already been going on. Svedberg wanted it to increase. William Penn had written to the Swedish ambassador in London for aid and ministers for the Swedes in Delaware. Nothing came of his request. However the British, or more accurately the English Episcopal Church had been helping to fund mission work in New Sweden through London mission societies.<sup>37</sup> Carl Springer was instrumental in this regard; he had spent time in London, and now he worked and lived in New Sweden. Joint work with the British seemed natural. The atmosphere in America, in general, lent itself to joint work. Along with the German Lutherans, English Episcopalians, and Quakers, Swedish Lutherans were viewed as “the Church people.” In that regard they did have something in common with those religious groups. For sometime the Swedes, now under British control, had been relying upon the British for food and supplies. Ever since the Dutch seized their land and goods they had depended upon English aid. They had a relationship with them. Joint religious work was a natural progression.

Language was another factor that drew the Swedes towards the Episcopalians. In an ideal world, language would have had no affect upon their doctrinal practices or their church affiliations. They would have remained faithful to the Scripture, but now in a new language. The language barrier being built between them and their homeland provided a stumbling block to people who were struggling to get by in a harsh land. They needed something. The

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<sup>34</sup> Many of the pastors who came after 1696 were chosen by Jesper Svedberg, Bishop of Uppsala. At this time “fighting” had begun in Sweden between the orthodox (those holding to the unaltered Augsburg Confession, who had refused to use the “new hymnal”) and Svedberg (who managed to align the crown with himself). Perhaps some of the cause for the shift from Lutheranism to Episcopalianism lies with Svedberg. Cf. Murray, p.133 for an account of his efforts on behalf of ecumenism.

<sup>35</sup> Acrelius, p.362f

<sup>36</sup> Jacobson, p.226

<sup>37</sup> Murray, p.138



vacancies did not help either. Surely many left the church in this time. The first colonists were long dead. In 1643 there was a great epidemic that killed off much of the Swedish settlers.<sup>38</sup> Those who survived were bi-lingual but used English more and more. When the Dutch seized their lands, the English Language became more important as they depended upon the British for food and supplies.

Many more left the Lutheran church during the time of "Awakening."<sup>39</sup> Whitefield and Edwards spent time working in these areas that had belonged to the Swedes. To people who needed spiritual nourishment, those meetings must have been attractive. The notion of "any port in a storm" prevailed, and "better their religion than no religion." The preaching must have been especially enrapturing for those who had not been able to go to church for a very long time, or who had listened to lay people read sermons out of necessity or who had listened to sermons on the catechism because their pastors did not think them capable of handling so much Scripture. Those meetings led must have felt like heaven on earth for those Swedes. It must have "felt" like church. Indeed, many left the Swedish church and joined something that felt more like church, they "joined the nearest English Episcopal congregation comforting themselves with their many similarities."<sup>40</sup>

#### IV. Conclusions

Originally Usselinx sold the idea of Swedish colonies with the promise that these goals would be achieved: "Christian religion would by that means be planted among the heathen. Second, that his majesty's dominions would be enlarged, his treasury enriched, and the people's burdens at home diminished. Third, that it would produce to the nation many positive advantages, and a very profitable trade; and that the Swedes possessed all the means for carrying it on with advantage."<sup>41</sup> History has shown that the Swedes did not possess the means to support two colonies in distant parts of the globe, while waging war in Europe. What they did possess was great zeal.<sup>42</sup> Usselinx played upon that zeal, and led them to think they could support something they could not. It would seem that he acted in his best interests. Menewe also seems to have acted in his best interests, as he led to colonists to land which had claimed, albeit tacitly, by someone else. Great zeal was put into action in the wrong place, and then the people were forgotten. Monarchs ruled and died. Power was transferred between regents and administrators. Wars were fought at home. New Sweden was a long way a way. Sadly, they were forgotten.

The King and people wanted to help their countrymen. They did help them, in very specific focused ways, but the help was too sporadic. New Sweden always seemed an after

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<sup>38</sup> Blomfelt, p.259: Torkillus Reorius (Reovius) needed help in the parish since there were so many deaths. Christopher Hermanni (a native Finn) supplied help by caring for the "spiritual needs among 'the free men' and servants in the different settlements."

<sup>39</sup> Jacobson, p.266

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.264

<sup>41</sup> Clay, p.32

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, p.30 "It was a period when Swedish scholars delved into the misty past and located the cradle of the human race in their country; when Swedish kings dreamed of world-power, and when Swedish leaders stretched their arms across the oceans and made settlements on two continents, that were to become *New Swedens*. The enthusiasm of youth permeated the nation and drove it on to deeds that an older power of twice its size would not have attempted. Patriotism ran high and national pride verged on chauvinism. No wonder that Printz with a handful of men talked the language of a general with an army at his back to give emphasis to his words, and then Rising with high-handed authority captured Fort Casimir."

thought to the court in Stockholm, which is not to say that they disregarded them, but with limited resources they were required to choose who would receive aid and who not. Unfortunately for those citizens (who also happened also to be Lutherans) resources they needed so desperately were allocated closer to provincial needs in Sweden.

The settlers were forced to fend for themselves. Both physical and spiritual needs demanded that they provide something if the State would not do so in a timely manner. Those settlers tried to make the best of a bad situation. Noble individuals were sent to carry on great amounts of work for the Lord. They preached the Word. They administered the sacraments. They cared for souls. Honor is due them. They were faithful with that which was put before them. Usselinx had even sold the idea with mission work as job one. In this sense they were successful. In another sense, they were unsuccessful. Humanly speaking, the job was too big.

Language, sickness, pastoral vacancy, greed, self-interest, national pride, lack of foresight and planning, and the religious atmosphere of America coincided to create an environment in which the transition from Lutheranism to Episcopalianism did not seem like such a bad thing. The Episcopalians had money. They had pastors. They had the liturgy. These things felt comfortable. They felt like church.

This history of New Sweden is sad in so many ways, and it is relevant. What can the modern reader take from this study? Let us stay close to the means of grace. Let us preach the Word and administer the sacraments. Had those Lutherans in New Sweden been more closely connected to the means of grace, would the outcome have been different? They needed spiritual water to live, but when they could not get water from a clean source, they went to a tainted well. They drank water, but tainted. It had an affect. It is true that the gospel is present in many heterodox churches and the Holy Spirit is active where the marks of the church are present. There were many believers there as there are in those same congregations today. It is also true that we want to drink pure water for the health of our souls.

We are also reminded to plan and follow through. For example we want to plan our support of college students and military personnel. We want to plan our support of missionaries. After planning we want to carry through and continue supporting them. Let us never send them and forget them. Let us never promise and then not deliver. We want to take an honest assessment of our abilities, and not promise work, people, or resources we are not able to give, or give consistently.

Finally we are reminded that the Lord, gracious, merciful, and loving, is the God of history and works all thing out for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his good will. He worked to send his Word to this new land. His Word was preached, and as Isaiah said, it is always efficacious. Believers lived in that colony. We are believers today. Both we and they are saved because our gracious God had mercy on us. He sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for us, but for the whole world. We thank the Lord that he worked in the lives of those Christians in New Sweden. We thank him that he works in our lives through the same means of grace. We pray that he would continue to do so, until he returns and takes us to be where he is. "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-- to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Revelation 1:5f

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## End Notes

<sup>i</sup> Adrian van der Donck in his history of New Netherlands related how the colony was founded: "...In the year 1638 one Minnewits, who had formerly acted as Director for the Trading Company at Mannhatts, came into the river in the ship *Key of Colmar*, and the yacht called the *Bird Griffin*. He gave out to the Hollander, Mr. van der Niederhorst, the agent of the West India Company in the South River, that he was on a voyage to the West India Islands, and that he was staying there only to take on wood and water. Whereupon said Hollander allowed him to go free. But, some time after, some of our people going thither

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found him still there, and he had planted a garden, and the plants were growing in it. In astonishment we asked the reasons for such procedure, and if he intended to stay there? He tried to escape from answering by various excuses, and gave us thus no information. The third time they found them occupied with building a fort. Then we saw their purpose. As soon as he was informed of it, Director Kieft protested against it, but in vain.”

<sup>ii</sup> From the report of Governor Johan Rising, 1654: (Myers, p.136)

“Several difficulties have befallen us, ever since we came here, bringing with us a lot of sick and weak people, finding before us an empty country, disturbed partly by despondency, partly by mutiny and desertion; nevertheless, God be praised, we still prosper. The people are now recovering. Would to God that we had provisions for them, now and during the winter. We are awaiting some provisions from the Fatherland and some with our sloop, which is daily expected from N. England; some also from the savages and other neighbors, until God willing, we are able to harvest the crops of one or two years. Then we hope to be able to get along, as far as food is concerned. The mutiny here is now fully suppressed; but still there is some smoke after the fire. I hope that good discipline and vigilance will prevent all such disturbances.”

<sup>iii</sup> This is the protest written to Menewe, dated Thursday, May 6, 1638: “I, William Kieft, Director-General of the New Netherlands, residing upon the island of Manhattan, in the Fort Amsterdam, under the government subject to the High and Mighty States General of the United Netherlands, and the West India Company, chartered by the Council Chamber in Amsterdam, make known to you, Peter Menuet, who style yourself Commander in the service of Her Royal Majesty, the Queen of Sweden, that the whole South River of the New Netherlands, both above and below, has already, for many years, been our property, occupied by our forts, and sealed with our blood; which was also done when you were a servant in the New Netherlands, and you are, therefore, well aware of this. But whereas you have now come between our forts to build a fortress to our injury and prejudice, which we shall never permit; as we are also assured that her Royal Majesty of Sweden has never given you authority to build forts upon our rivers and coasts, nor to settle people on the land, nor to traffic in peltries, nor to undertake anything to our injury: We do, therefore, protest against all the injury to property, and all the evil consequences of bloodshed, uproar, and wrong which our Trading Company may thus suffer: And that we shall protect our rights in such manner as we may find most advisable.” Myers, *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania*, p.63 (Acrelius Ch. 1, 13).

<sup>iv</sup> Governor Rising had this to say in his report concerning Fort Casimir and Trinity after the Dutch had seized them: “However, those reasons which the Dutch use as a pretext for their hostile attack are previously refuted here. The most important of their presumptuous motives was that they could not admit to or tolerate our progress, which in other places they later clearly have shown. And such was their purpose, as we sat there, deprived of aid, and could not hope that it would soon arrive, as the Polish War hindered such relief. In Manhattan or New Amsterdam in New Netherland they had at the same time intercepted our ship *The Golden Shark*, upon which the foodstuffs and supplies intended for our people in New Sweden were sent, along with the agent Heinrich von Elwich and the people of the American Company who were on the ship. Thus we were forced to seek credit from the English in New England to support our people. The sum is 2,196 1/2 Rdr, for which I have signed and Heinrich von Elwich has drawn up a bill of exchange charged to the Royal Board of Commerce on Behalf of the American Company to pay to Mr. Richard Lord in Hartford in New England, which is found in my report for the year 1655” Dahlgren and Norman, p.279f.

<sup>v</sup> Concerning this Ferris wrote, p.111-2: “On a review of the State of the Swedish settlements on the Delaware, under the dominion of the Dutch, there is little to incline the friends of civil liberty to love or admire a government whose *sole* object is *pecuniary emolument*. Its policy was not only mercenary and contracted, but highly injurious to the civil and intellectual improvement of the inhabitants. Under the leaden scepter of a Dutch trading company, every thing beautiful, fair, and good, drooped and languished. The people were discouraged and indolent, the lands, by nature fruitful, and offering rich returns to the diligent cultivator, were neglected and lay waste. The manners of the people were rude and unpolished, education was not promoted, the standards of morals was low, and the population, which had been gradually augmenting under the Swedish dominion, had increased but little under that of the Dutch. It is

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essential to the improvement of his rational nature, that man should have higher aims, and holier aspirations, than those which terminate in the accumulation of wealth, or personal aggrandizement.”

<sup>vi</sup> Concerning the tyranny of the Dutch, Acrelius writes on p.79-80: “The terrible tyranny to which the Swedes were at that time subjected cannot be fully described. The flower of the Swedish male population were at once torn away and sent over to New Amsterdam, though everything was done as though it were with their free consent. The men were taken by force and placed on shipboard; the women at home in their houses were abused, their property carried off, and their cattle slaughtered. Then it was the right time to send out a proclamation and call the people to take an oath of allegiance [only 19 did so]. Those who withheld themselves were had in continual suspicion and disfavor. Further proofs of this are the testimonials which Director Rising furnished to those who were in the midst of the fire. Several of these are found in their original date and import, of which it is sufficient to adduce the following:

His Royal Majesty, my Most Gracious King’s most humble and faithful servant  
and Director of New Sweden:

Hereby witnesseth, that inasmuch as the bearer of this letter, the upright and intelligent Nils Matsson, freeman, of Herring Island, in the troubles of these times here in New Sweden, wherein we Swedes have been unexpectedly involved by the hostility of the Hollanders, cannot remove from this country so hastily, but on account of his property must remain here until a more convenient season, and therefore desires a testimonial from me, which I cannot justly withhold from him; I therefore herewith testify that during the whole period of my residence in the country, he has conducted himself as an honorable and faithful subject of the Crown, and willingly assisted in the repair and building of the fort, as well as in other service to the Crown, and now lately in the war for defence of the country voluntarily went down to Fort Trinity, but was taken prisoner on the way and conveyed shipboard, where, during the space of three weeks, he encountered much contumely and reproach. (Meanwhile the enemy was robbing his house and stripping his wife of everything at their home.) Through all this he conducted himself as a good subject ought to do. The truth of all this I confirm with my own hand and seal.

Done at Fort Christina, September 24, 1655.

[L.S.]

John Rising

Chronological note: It was on September 15, 1655 that Rising was forced to surrender Fort Christina and all of New Sweden.

<sup>vii</sup> This included a congregational confession of sins before such a thing was included in any German services: “I, poor sinful man, who am both conceived and born in sin, and ever afterwards have led a sinful life all my days, heartily confess before you, almighty and eternal God, my dear heavenly father, that I have not loved you above all things nor my neighbor as myself; I have (alas!) sinned against you and your holy commandments in manifold ways both in thoughts, words and deeds, and know that of r that cause I am worthy of hell and everlasting damnation, if you should judge me, as your stern justice requires and my sins have deserved. But now you have promised, dear heavenly father, that you will deal graciously and pitifully with all poor sinners who will turn themselves and with a steadfast faith fly to your incomprehensible mercy; with them you will overlook whatsoever they have offended against you, and nevermore impute to them their sins; in this I miserable sinner put my faith, and pray trustfully that you will after thy same promise vouchsafe to be merciful and gracious to me and forgive me all my sins, to the praise and honor of your holy name” (Senn, p.407).

<sup>viii</sup> Blomfelt, p.266, “We can be fairly certain of which versions of the Gustavus Adolphus Bible came to New Sweden because ministers generally used the latest edition available to them. Thus the Bible brought by the first four ministers to New Sweden was almost certainly the 1636 edition. Lars Lockenius probably brought with him the deluxe edition of 1646 when he arrived in 1648. And the last two ministers may have brought the 1650 edition. The 1633 and 1635 editions were small, portable (about six by nine inches) army Bibles, which were meant to be used by troops in the field, including those in New Sweden.

“So we may presume that the Bibles used in New Sweden during 1640 to 1645 were the army Bibles of 1633 and 1635, as well as the Bible of 1636 that the ministers probably used as the ‘church Bible’

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at Christina and Tinicum churches. Bibles used from 1645 to 1655 were the army Bibles and the editions of 1646 and 1650. No New Sweden Bibles have been preserved.”

<sup>ix</sup> It is reported that only 10 Swedes ever died at the hands of a native tribesman. For the most part the relations between these peoples were amicable. The Swedes and Indians were on friendly relations even after 1655 as Acrelius relates: “The friendship of the Indians to the Swedes continued equally strong even after the change of government. The proof of this was given in the year 1656, March 24, when the Swedish ship *Mercury* came up into the river without knowing that the country was under a foreign government. The Swedish preacher Matthias was in this ship together with Anders Bengtson, a native of Stockholm, who was still living in 1703, when he gave with his own mouth this narrative: That the Hollanders forbade said ship to ascend the river, she having on board a large number of people. But the Indians, who were fond of the Swedes, united together, went on board the ship, and, in defiance of the Hollanders, conducted the ship past Sandhook, or Fort Casimir, without its daring to fire a shot, and conveyed it up to Christina. It was then determined that the ship should be set free, first going to New Amsterdam to take provisions, and then to make the voyage home to Sweden. The Rev. Mr. Matthias immediately returned to Sweden, where he became pastor in Helsingland. But Anders Bengtson remained in the country and became the ancestor of an honorable and wealthy family” [who now have the name Bankson], (p.90).

<sup>x</sup> This letter by Johan Thelin to the colonists is included in its entirety. This letter is very telling about the times, assumptions and solutions arranged to deal with the lack of spiritual guidance. This letter is quoted by Clay on p.64-67 of his book. The entire exchange of letters can be read in those pages of one so desire.

“Hon. Friends and Countrymen:

The occasion which leads me to write to you is, that when last year I was at Stockholm I met with one Andrew Printz, who, I found, had been in an English vessel to the West Indies. Upon my questioning him whether he had a prosperous voyage, he told me he had found there a good land, and had also met with some old Swedes in good prosperity, who had greatly rejoiced to see one from their native country, and had inquired who was now the reigning king of Sweden: and that you, good friends, had confidence in his majesty that if he were made acquainted with your want of ministers and godly books, he would provide for your necessities. When he had related such things to me, I took greatly, as did others, your condition to heart; and having good friends at his majesty’s court, I related these things to an honorable lord, who again mentioned them to his majesty. Whereupon his majesty took therein a special and particular interest and resolved that he would send unto you not only ministers, but also all sorts of godly books; and would willingly have used for an agent in accomplishing these purposes the same man who had related these things. But the Lord knoweth what became of that man; for he could not be seen nor heard of afterwards. Therefore I now do take the boldness upon me, being acquainted with an elderly woman here, who says she has a brother living among you, Peter Gunnarson Rambo, through whom this letter may be received, that I may know from you the truth of what has been related, and in what way such ministers may be sent to you; desiring that you would let it be distinctly known of what it is you are in need.

The aforesaid person has told me that you live comfortably, and in a loving manner one with another, and that you use the old Swedish way in everything, which it has much pleased his majesty to hear. And surely the great and special care which his majesty taketh for you should rejoice our hearts; who being in close friendship and alliance with his most excellent majesty of England, your desires may be more readily carried into effect. Indeed, this work doth certainly come and spring from the Almighty God, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, so that you may speedily send your answer, that it may be for your soul’s health and happiness. And we desire to know the number of ministers and books which you desire to have; and also how many you are in number, and how many churches you have. About eight or ten years ago, the governor, William Penn, petitioned the Swedish Ambassador at London for ministers and books for you; but for some cause or other, the request was not carried into effect. Be not negligent in the things which belong to your everlasting happiness; for you may certainly see that the Great God doth as soon help through friends that are humble as through those that are great and powerful. I commend you to the holy protection of Almighty God, both in soul and body. I shall expect to hear from you by the first opportunity that may offer, and remain your most loving friend and servant.

John Thelin

Gothenburg, 16<sup>th</sup> Nov., 1692