

*Reforming Finland. The diocese of Turku in the age of Gustav Vasa, 1523–1560.* By Jason Lavery. (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 210.) Pp. xviii + 228 incl. 3 maps and 4 tables. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2018. €105.978 90 04 35469 2; 1573 4188

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In European Reformation narratives, the Reformation in Finland tends to be neglected. This is due not only to the fact that the Reformation in the Nordic countries as a whole is largely missing in these narratives, but also because development in the eastern part of the Swedish kingdom, corresponding to today's Finland, is in many respects unknown also within Swedish and Scandinavian historiography. This is not because of lack of interest but rather due to the fact that most of the research on the Reformation in Finland is written in Finnish, a language which non-Finnish Scandinavian researchers rarely master. For this reason, it is of great value for both English-speaking and Scandinavian scholars that the American historian Jason Lavery has written an English-language monograph on the Reformation in Finland. In the book, the author gives a broad introduction to the Reformation in Finland, a region that until the early nineteenth century was a province in the kingdom of Sweden, focusing on the diocese of Turku, which until 1554 was the only diocese encompassing present-day Finland. The study takes its beginning in 1523 with the election of Gustav Vasa as king of Sweden, an event that usually is regarded as the start of the Reformation in this kingdom, and ends with his death in 1560, at a time when the diocese of Turku at least formally had been divided between the diocese of Turku and the new diocese of Vyborg. Special attention is of course devoted to the process of making the mass and the Bible available in the vernacular and thereby, with Mikael Agricola as the chief creator, creating a Finnish literary language.

The recurring central argument of this book is that the Reformation in Finland was driven both by King Gustav Vasa's state-building programme and through the impact of Lutheranism. While this might seem rather unproblematic, Lavery's point of departure is that these two perspectives, although not regarded as contradictory, are seldom brought together. Furthermore, the author also questions the top-down perspective that we find in both the state-building historical and the theological perspective. Unlike earlier research on the Finnish Reformation as state-building, that has emphasised the Church's loss of wealth and described the royal Reformation in Sweden as a top-down process, according to Lavery the Reformation is related to state-building as an interactive process between the crown and other groups. In this perspective the Church and the various social groups are not understood as mere victims of an oppressive regime, but rather as active agents in the process. What is especially important in this study is the description of the Church not as a powerless victim but as an agent that cooperated with the regime and in many ways benefitted from it. Consequently, Lavery often describes the Reformation as a process of negotiation. For Gustav Vasa, the key to reform was to control the episcopate and thereby to gain direct power over the parish pastors. The transfer of the Church's wealth to the crown was dependent on agreements between the king and local clergy. Consequently Lavery emphasises the ways in which higher and lower clergy actually cooperated with the king and regards the late medieval Church as an 'agent of regionality'. Since the medieval

diocese of Turku encompassed most of the Finnish peninsula, it helped to make Finland a distinct region in the kingdom.

Of great value also is the discussion of the reasons why Lutheranism and royal reform acted so well together. The flexible and pragmatic approach to reform that was characteristic of Lutheranism made it appropriate in a kingdom where ecclesiastical transformation had to be achieved slowly and sensitively. While the Finnish example, with its aversion to conflict and its deliberate continuity with late medieval church practice, surely differs from the confessional development in many German states, the author is also conscious of direct German influences in the diocese of Turku. Even though many important Lutheran impulses came from the western part of the kingdom, clergy such as Petrus Särkilähti had received their theological education on reform directly from Germany.

Unlike much other literature in English dealing with the Reformation in the Nordic countries, the author is well informed on much new research in the field. Because of the broad perspective, it is not surprising that occasional misinterpretations have occurred. On p. 78 it is held that during the Västerås *riksdag* in 1527 plans for the elimination of the kingdom's monasteries, convents and nunneries were outlined. However, no such explicit plans were made known at the *riksdag*. Furthermore at p. 86 it is claimed that mendicant monasteries were formally abolished at the council in Uppsala in 1536. But as far as is known the fate of the monasteries was not even discussed at this council. The outbreak of the Dacke rebellion occurred in 1542 and not in 1538 as is stated at p. 94. And since Vadstena Abbey survived until 1596, Naantali Abbey was not 'the last monastic institution in the Swedish kingdom to close' (p. 123) when its last nun died in 1591.

With a reference to a book published in 1962 Lavery argues that the Finnish church historian Kauko Pirinen used the term 'Reform Catholics' long before the Swedish theologian Sven Kjöllnerström, who is usually associated with it (p. 83). However it should be noticed that Kjöllnerström used this concept in 1941 in his study *Missa Lincopensis: en liturgihistorisk studie* (Stockholm 1941).

The book states that the papal consecration of bishop Peder Månsson 'safeguarded the apostolic succession in the Swedish kingdom' (p. 57). Here the author could have emphasised Finland's role in this. Lavery mentions bishop Botvid Sunesson's consecration of Paulus Juusten 1554 with 'laying of the hands' (p. 175), but he does not mention that this act, through Juusten's consecration of archbishop Laurentius Petri Gothus in 1575, is today regarded as one of the most important links in safeguarding the apostolic succession in Swedish and Finnish Lutheran churches.

These minor remarks do not detract from an overall positive impression. Jason Lavery has written a well-informed and very useful book on the Reformation in Finland: he both manages to give a broad view of the subject in question and at the same time to challenge both historical and church-historical research in the field.

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