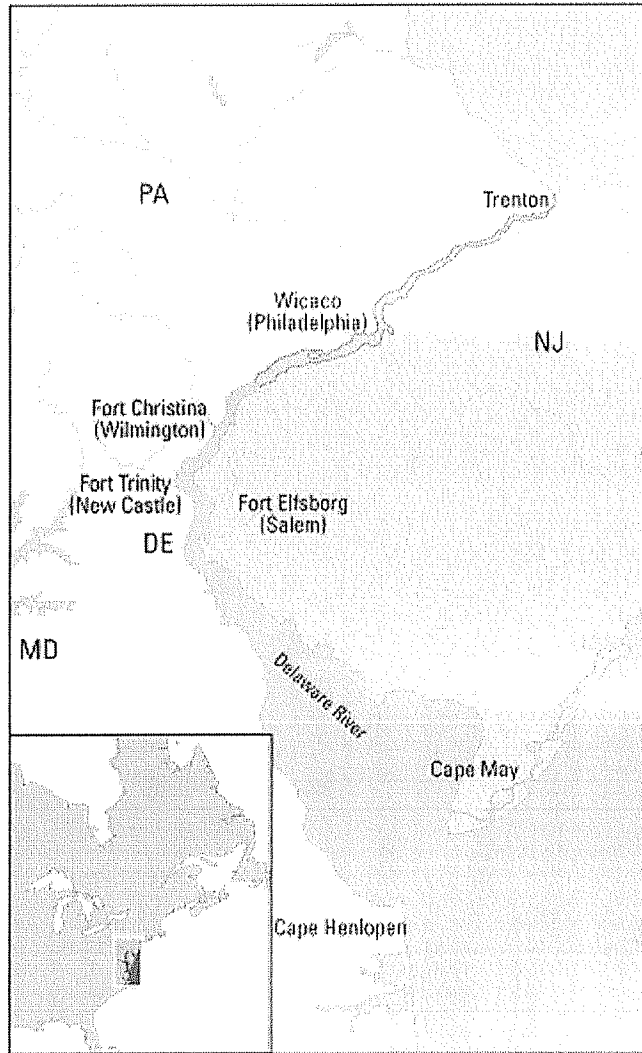


**“The Swedish Lutheran Mission to the
Delaware Indians:
Faithful Service Inspires WELS Outreach”**

**Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
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John P. Mattek
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New Sweden in America

“Church History Inspires Gospel Outreach”

History reveals the importance of gospel outreach in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). It illustrates the efforts of men and women to communicate the message of Jesus to non-Christians, and shows how these endeavors have been critical to the synod’s development. For example, WELS had its beginnings in the nineteenth century mission societies of Europe, which trained missionaries for work in North America among the heathen (*Heidenmission*), and also among the German emigrants. Many of these missionaries founded the Wisconsin Synod and served it in its early years.¹

Another example of the link between gospel outreach and WELS development comes from the era after World War I. At this time America’s door was closed to most foreigners, ending the WELS pattern of reaching out to German immigrants. This period in the twenties also saw a shift from rural to urban residence. Thus began a shift in evangelism to the cities. At mid-century job opportunities, improved communication, and transportation advances moved the synod’s members out of its Midwestern boundaries. Coastal districts in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) lured many Wisconsin Synod members. Automatic transfers to LCMS churches were not guaranteed and thus began a new chapter in the synod’s mission objectives.²

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, gospel outreach continues to play an important role in the WELS. Advances in transportation have given rise to outreach programs such as Travel-Canvass-Witness and WELS Kingdom Workers. Modern technology makes the gospel accessible to people all over the world via the Internet. Diversity has led to a greater awareness of minority cultures. All these developments have led to changes in the WELS worker training curriculum. Most recently, a declining US economy, budget deficits, and a declining

¹ Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Milwaukee: NPH, 1992), 1-2.

² *Ibid.*, 209-211.

membership at home, have moved WELS to establish North American outreach as its top priority through 2008.

History truly reveals the importance of gospel outreach in the WELS. Therefore as WELS refocuses mission efforts on North America, it not only looks forward to a changing world for inspiration and insight, it also looks back. It looks back upon a rich history of Lutheran Christian outreach, a history that offers timeless examples of faithful service to God.

This paper aims to provide inspiration and insight for WELS North American outreach by drawing attention to the faithful efforts of the Swedish Lutheran mission to the Delaware Indians - the earliest Lutheran outreach attempt on American soil. The Swedish mission is often overlooked by historians. Of the European powers in Colonial America, New Sweden was by far the least significant. The colony itself only lasted seventeen years, and the population was never more than a couple hundred. Nonetheless, the Swedish Lutheran church, the Swedish government, and the New Sweden Company all wished to convert the Indians to Christianity. It is the intention of this paper to highlight the faithful outreach efforts of the Swedes as a contribution to Church History, as well as an inspiration for WELS Lutheran Christian outreach.³

“The Lutheran Church in Sweden”

The Lutheran Church in Sweden was relatively young when it began its mission in North America. After royal seizure of the property of the Catholic Church during the 1530s and 1540s, the Swedish Reformation was established by mid-century, essentially carried out by King Gustav I. The Reformation severed all ties with Rome, and Sweden accepted the Augsburg Confession in 1593. Lutheranism was fully established as the official state church in Sweden's first written

³ Lorraine Williams, “Indians and Europeans in the Delaware Valley, 1620-1655” *New Sweden in America* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1995), 118.

constitution, the “Form of Government” of 1634. At the time of New Sweden in 1638, the church was independent within the state and the archbishop of Uppsala was the head of the church in both Sweden and New Sweden.⁴

“New Sweden”

William Usselinx, a prominent merchant in Stockholm, first proposed the idea of founding a Swedish colony in the New World. In 1624 he approached King Gustavus Adolphus with plans for starting a trading company with business interests in America. Delayed by Sweden’s involvement in the Thirty Years War, and the untimely death of the King, the idea of a trading company was dropped, but the establishment of a colony in the New World was not.

Peter Minuit, a Dutchman, was largely responsible for the founding of New Sweden. He had been director of the New Netherland colony from 1626 to 1631, when he became dissatisfied with the Dutch company. He and several stockholders of the Dutch West India Company sought a new and more profitable venture. They had inside information about a brisk fur-trade with the Minquas Indians of the Delaware River Valley and also empty land in the same area. In the meantime, the Swedes seemed to be interested in finding New World markets for their copper and iron. With this in mind, Peter Minuit sought to establish a Dutch-Swedish trading company under Swedish protection. In 1637, with half of the capital raised from Sweden, and the other half from Holland, Minuit led out an expedition in two ships, *Key of Calmar* and *Bird Griffin*. In 1638 he founded Sweden’s first colony on the west bank of the Delaware River, at Fort Christina, the present site of Wilmington, Delaware. Land was purchased from the local Indians,

⁴ Frank Blomfelt, “The Lutheran Churches and Their Pastors” *New Sweden in America* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1995), 249-250.

and occupied by the Swedish Crown and the South Company, which later became known as the New Sweden Company.⁵

New Sweden expanded to include land in the modern day states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The colony subsisted on agriculture and trade with the Indians, and was also largely dependent on the tobacco industry. Israel Acrelius, a colony historian, recorded that in 1642 the second emigration under Governor John Printz was explicitly “invested with the exclusive privilege of importing tobacco into Sweden.”⁶

As previously mentioned, New Sweden existed as a Swedish colony for only seventeen years, and during the height of its operation the population was only a few hundred people. Altogether, twelve expeditions departed the homeland for New Sweden, out of which ten made it. In 1655 it was taken over by New Holland, a Dutch company, which in turn lost its North American colonial hegemony to the emergent British Empire in 1664.⁷

“The Mission Begins”

Plans for Lutheran Christian mission work in New Sweden began alongside commercial plans for the colony. The archbishop of Uppsala, Laurentius Paulinus Gothus, was the driving force behind the church’s expressed wish to convert the Indians to Christianity.⁸ There also was support from the Crown for such a mission. King Gustavus Adolphus, known for his support of Protestantism, intended that such an undertaking would lead to the conversion of non-Christians. According to Israel Acrelius, “[the king] availed himself of this opportunity to extend the

⁵ Williams, *New Sweden*, 115.

⁶ Israel Acrelius, *A History of New Sweden*, trans. W.M. Reynolds (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1966), 29,60.

⁷ Williams, *New Sweden*, 118.

⁸ Blomfelt, *New Sweden*, 250.

doctrines of Christ among the heathen.”⁹ After King Adolphus’ death, his daughter Queen Christina also instructed New Sweden’s governor to expose the Indians to the truths of Christianity. Ultimately, the Rev. Reorus Torkillus was commissioned to New Sweden to be the first Lutheran pastor in America. Torkillus arrived with Minuit on the *Key of Calmer* in 1638.¹⁰

“The Native Americans”

There were two main Indian tribes that inhabited the lands around the Swedish mission. One of them was the Delaware Indians. The Delaware lived in small bands that occupied drainages of the Delaware River. Also known as the Lenne Lennape, these Indians belonged to the Algonquin family of Indians whose territory extended from the mouth of the St. Lawrence River to Florida, running along the coast. These bands were largely self-ruling, and typically consisted of two hundred persons at most.

The other tribe on the Delaware River was the Minquas, or Susquehannock Indians. They dwelled along the lower Susquehanna River, which empties into Chesapeake Bay. The Minquas belonged to the Mohawk branch of the powerful Iroquois nation. They were more numerous than the Delaware and often invaded them. By 1634 the Minquas had pushed the Delaware Indians across the Delaware River to its eastern bank, leaving the western side uninhabited. This was significant for the Swedes because when they arrived on the western bank in 1638, they did not displace any local Indians.¹¹

⁹ Acrelius, *History of New Sweden*, 21.

¹⁰At this time the kingdom was under regency. Christina, who had succeeded her father, Gustavus Adolphus, in 1632, was only sixteen years old at this time. The regency was effective until she was eighteen. *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹ Williams, *New Sweden*, 114.

This native culture featured a significant religious tradition. Peter Lindstrom, an engineer in New Sweden, recorded that these Indians practiced a religion that centered around two gods. One was the ruler of the heavens, the other of earth. The former was good and not entitled to be worshiped; the latter was evil, and was to be feared and worshipped. It was also believed that these Indians knew a little historically about Christ, which they considered to be a fable.¹²

“Rev. John Campanius”

During the first years of Swedish occupation there was no great opportunity to convert either the Delaware or the Minquas Indians. Rev. Torkillus, the only pastor, was too busy with the care of his own congregation. Sunday services were open to the natives, but language barriers limited any progress. In 1643, Torkillus died, and Rev. John Campanius was chosen to be his successor. From the beginning, Rev. Campanius was highly enthusiastic about bringing Christianity to the Indians, and he spent much time in their presence.¹³

The Indians responded well to the initial efforts of Campanius. They frequently visited his home, and often came to hear him speak at church. His grandson wrote, “They [Indians] had great pleasure in hearing these things, at which they greatly wondered, and began to think quite differently from what they had done before, so that he gradually gained their affection, and they visited and sent to him very frequently.”¹⁴

¹² Peter Lindstrom, *Geographia Americae*, trans. Amandus Johnson (Philadelphia: Swedish Colonial Society, 1925), 208-9.

¹³ Albert Keiser, *Lutheran Mission Work among the American Indians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1922), 25.

¹⁴ Thomas Campanius Holm, *A Short Description of the Province of New Sweden* (Philadelphia: M’Carty & Davis, 1834), 82.

The attitude of the Indians greatly moved Campanius, and with resolve he set out to convert them to Christianity. He attempted to learn their language, becoming fairly proficient in their difficult American Virginian language to better communicate with the Indians through sermons and the liturgy. The liturgy was an important outreach tool because the Swedes believed that primitive people would be drawn to formal procedure. They figured that conversion efforts could be furthered through the rites of the liturgy.

In addition Campanius prepared the first significant vocabulary of these Indian tribes, with phrases, numerals, and dialogues. He also translated Luther's Small Catechism into their language, the first Protestant book translated into a native tongue. Campanius' translation did not go to print until half a century later, when the King of Sweden caused five hundred copies of it to be printed at royal expense for use in the New World.¹⁵

Campanius appears to have been fairly successful in his work among the Indians. His grandson relates, "Many of those barbarians were converted to the Christian faith, or, at least, acquired so much knowledge of it that they were ready to exclaim, as Captain John Smith relates of the Virginia Indians, that so far as the cannons and guns of the Christians exceeded the bow and arrow of the Indians in shooting, so far was their God superior to that of the Indians."¹⁶

Although the extent of Indian conversion was likely an exaggeration, it is unfortunate that after only a few years of success, Campanius became weary under his extensive responsibilities and requested a recall back to Sweden. He asked that younger men replace him, men who would be better suited for the vigorous work. In 1648 the request was granted and Campanius returned to Sweden where he received a grant for his services. He lived until 1683, dying at the age of eighty-two.

¹⁵ Keiser, *Lutheran Mission Work*, 27-31.

¹⁶ Campanius, *Short Description*, 105.

“The Mission Declines”

After Campanius' departure the Indian mission went into decline. Interest in the colony waned along with resources necessary for its support. Sweden was engaged in war with Denmark, therefore no ships were available for trade. Plus, there was an agrarian crisis in Sweden. The Dutch took advantage of these distractions to send governor Stuyvesant with seven ships and seven hundred men to attack New Sweden. In 1655 the Dutch took control of the Swedish colony and sent all the Swedish pastors home except one, decreeing, “those who choose to remain shall have the liberty of adhering to their own Augsburg Confession, as also to support a minister for their instruction.”¹⁷

Rev. Lars Lock remained the only Swedish pastor in the region for many years. He took care of the congregations at Tenakong and Christina for twenty-two years. He encountered many troubles in old age, becoming too lame to help himself, much less the churches, for some time before his death in 1688. Rev. Jacob Fabritius, a German by birth, helped out with the Swedish churches for fourteen years beginning in 1677. Yet for nine of these years he was entirely blind. The congregations periodically wrote home to Sweden for more pastors, but there was never a reply. Correspondence with the mother country had been completely cut off. From 1691-1697 the churches were entirely without clergymen, and had to rely on laymen to do the readings in church.

“Sweden Revives Outreach”

In 1697 the mission was revived. In a meeting with King Charles XI, Dr. Jesper Swedberg, a high executive official of the Cathedral in Upsala, recommended a plan to restore

¹⁷The Swedish Lutherans adhered to the Augsburg Confession. The Dutch were Calvinists, and followed the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt. Acrelius, *History of New Sweden*, 77.

the mission. He recalled how he had discovered that the early Christians in Bremen had set aside in their wills large tracts of land for the explicit purpose converting non-Christians (Jews at the time). The Swedish crown now had possession of the lands in Bremen, but it was using the revenue for other purposes. Thus, he suggested that the money be used in the New World to support the Swedish missions. The king supported the idea and immediately sent three men to reestablish the Lutheran mission. Rev. Andreas Rudman was called to the congregation at Wicaco. Rev. Eric Bjork was commissioned to the church at Christina, and Rev. Jonas Auren was sent to Raccoon and Penn's Neck. The king at this time also commissioned Campanius' translation of the Small Catechism, which was still in manuscript form, to be printed at royal expense and sent to America.¹⁸

All of these efforts produced scattered results. Rev. Bjork sounded a positive note in a letter he wrote in 1697 to a colleague:

“The Indians and we are as one people...they were very glad when we came, as they see now that Sweden does not abandon them. They are also very fond of learning the catechism, which has been printed in their language; they like to have it read to them, and they have engaged Mr. Charles Springer to teach their children to read it. Who knows what God has yet in store for them, if our lives should be spared, when we shall have acquired their idiom? We shall spare no labor to attain that object.”¹⁹

Rev. Auren's missionary efforts produced less optimistic results than Bjork's. In 1699 Auren, with the help of an interpreter, penetrated Indian territory in order to bring the gospel. He attended a meeting of Indians at Canistowa in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and invited them

¹⁸ Ibid., 195-196.

¹⁹ Mr. Springer was one of the lay leaders while New Sweden had no pastors. His journey to America is remarkable. He was kidnapped in London and put aboard a merchant ship bound for Virginia, where he was sold into slavery for five years. After this time he eventually made his way to New Sweden. Jehu Clay, *Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware* (Chicago: Swedish Historical Society, 1914), 61.

to convert to Christianity. The Indians would not give up their beliefs, but said if the Lutherans had anything useful to add to their religion, then they would consider it.²⁰

The few isolated references to mission work among the Indians following the letter of Bjork and the preaching of Auren are generally devoid of success stories. Acrelius noted that Rev. Andreas Hesselius, a successor to Bjork from 1713 to 1723, “expended a great deal of labor in the conversion of the Indians, who, at the time, were frequently seen among the Swedes.” Yet his efforts accomplished little. He once instructed and baptized a young Indian boy who was living at his house, for example. But eventually the boy returned to his people, preferring his traditional way of life.²¹

It is hard to know exactly when the Swedish mission to the Indians ended. However, we do know that a regular supply of Swedish ministers was sent to the region until 1831, when the last Swedish minister, Rev. Dr. Nicholas Collin, passed away. By this time the English language had replaced the Swedish language in the area, and the congregations were asking for ministers who were educated in their own country.²²

“The Integrity of the Swedish Mission”

The witnesses of Campanius, Bjork, Auren, and Acrelius all point to the integrity of the Swedish mission. The Swedish missionaries showed a genuine interest in the spiritual well-being of the Indians with their enthusiasm and energy to carry out mission efforts, while at the same time attending to regular congregational duties. Their dedication to overcoming the language barrier was remarkable. The Swedes also spent much time with the Indians,

²⁰ Eric Bjork, *The Planting of the Swedish Church in America*, trans. Ira Nothstein (Rock Island, IL: Augustana College, 1943), 37-38.

²¹ Acrelius, *History of New Sweden*, 283.

²² *Ibid.*, 262.

welcoming them into their homes. In addition, their conversion attempts were conducted with honesty, and they did not impose their beliefs on the Indians.

“Indian Missions Of That Period”

The principled nature of the Swedish effort contrasted with other mission attempts of the same era. The Spanish Franciscans in New Mexico, for example, converted Indians by force. In 1597 Juan de Onate, a Spanish military leader accompanied by one hundred twenty-nine soldiers and eight Franciscans, founded San Gabriel on the northern Rio Grande. After being threatened by military force, the Indian chiefs submitted, promising to obey Onate as their temporal lord, and the Franciscan commissary as their spiritual lord. These missionaries also used deceptive conversion techniques, portraying themselves as supermen who controlled nature by assuming the role of rain chiefs and impersonating medicine men.²³

The Swedish effort also differed from the Jesuit mission in Canada, which seems to have been more trade-based. For example the Jesuit mission made a start in 1633 when the French presented three missionaries to a contingent of Huron traders, offering to pay their passage to the Huron nation with gifts. For this service the French also promised protection to the Huron. In this and in many other cases as well, the Jesuits set up camp inside the Indian community, which coveted the French supplies. The Indians would often times provide food for the missionaries in exchange for other supplies.²⁴

²³ Ramon Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, The Corn Mothers Went Away*, (Stanford University Press, 1991).

²⁴ Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, (Lincoln: Univ. Nebraska, 1997).

The English mission of John Eliot also gives a perspective to which the Swedish mission may be compared. In 1646 Eliot, the “Apostle to the Indians,” began his outreach in New England, where disease and conquest made natives vulnerable to mission pressures. In addition, Eliot was allied with the Massachusetts General Council, whose jurisdiction encompassed many Indian communities.²⁵ Traditional Indian ceremonies were outlawed, and the end result was the displacement of the local Indians. The colonists justified this disruption by converting the Indians to Christianity, reasoning that they provided “the spirituals for the temporals.”²⁶

“Euro-Indian Relations on the Atlantic Seaboard”

The Indian mission in New England typified Euro-Indian relations along the Atlantic seaboard of North America. In the seventeenth century Europeans came to North America bent on trade. They sailed into the rivers and bays with finished products such as metal tools and guns, to exchange for Indian furs. Eventually Native American trapping depleted local fur-bearing animals. The Europeans then moved their trading business into the interior, bypassing the coastal Indians who then had only land to sell. The result of this business snub was escalating conflict between the two groups, in which the Indians were often handicapped by European diseases against which they had little resistance. In the end the Indians often had to choose between moving west, or blending into the new Euro-American colonial society at the lowest socio-economic level.²⁷

²⁵ George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 20-40.

²⁶ Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), 3.

²⁷ Williams, *New Sweden*, 112.

“Native Power in the Delaware Region”

This pattern, however, was absent in the Delaware River valley of the seventeenth century, a fact that helps to explain the unique traits of the Swedish Lutheran mission. In 1609 Henry Hudson opened the Delaware River valley to Europeans. Yet decades later, the local Indians still had not been displaced. Even though the Swedes, the Dutch, and the English all claimed the Delaware River valley, none was able to control trade there before the English conquest of 1664.

The Delaware Indians were able to remain in the area as traders long after they had depleted the local supply of fur-bearing animals. Unlike the other Colonial powers, Sweden was mainly an agrarian country that imported finished products and exported raw materials. Therefore it was not in the market for the main products of North America such as wood, furs, and grain, which it exported itself; nor was it producing commodities that could be sold in the New World markets. Thus supply ships to New Sweden were rare, and the colonists had to look to the Dutch and English for supplies. By the mid-1640s most of New Sweden's fur trade was being used to exchange with Dutch and English traders. With furs acquired from the Minquas Indians the colonists obtained supplies to then trade to the Delaware Indians for food. In 1644, Governor Printz set aside all the lands in New Sweden for tobacco production, which was possible because of the food provided by the Delaware. These Indians now had another option for trade just as their fur supplies were exhausted, namely, agriculture.²⁸

According to historian Lorraine Williams, other factors influenced this anomalous contact situation as well. In addition to not being displaced by the Swedes, the Delaware Indians may have welcomed the colonists as a buffer against the emergent Minquas. The tiny population

²⁸ Ibid., 115-117.

of New Sweden also meant that there was enough land for both colonists and Indians to co-exist, which prevented Swedish aggression. The dearth of Swedish supply ships may have also attributed to less disease. There are very few reports of sickness raging through the Delaware River valley.²⁹

Native power in the Delaware region led to a high level of cultural interaction, in which Swedish settlers and local Indians produced a mixed backwoods culture. (Later settlers would carry this backwoods culture to large areas of America.) Writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Swedish botanist Peter Kalm confirmed these cultural exchanges, saying, “[the Swedes] were accused of being already half Indians when the English arrived.”³⁰

“The Power of Native American Religion”

The unusual co-operation between the Indians and the Europeans of the Delaware region enabled the native tribes to preserve their cultural identity. This, in turn, made it very difficult for the Swedish missionaries to effectively make inroads with the gospel, because the Native American religion remained a powerful obstacle to Christianity. According to Eric Bjork, the Indians had an “almost invincible obstinacy along with a prejudice concerning the superiority of their own life and religion.” In addition, if anyone did show signs of converting to Christianity, other tribe members would often times oppose it, because they believed that the converted one would be gaining more wisdom than the rest.³¹

Testimony concerning the power of Native American religion to preserve traditional belief also comes from Rev. Auren’s meeting with a band of natives. In response to his inquiry

²⁹ Ibid., 118.

³⁰ Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds For All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 5-6.

³¹ Bjork, *The Planting of the Swedish Church*, 35.

about accepting Christianity, a certain old Indian stepped forward and replied through an interpreter that the crucial point was salvation, and that God would grant a good afterlife to the prudent. The Indian's proof for this was obtained directly from the revelation of God. He concluded by saying that if the Christians agreed, no reply was needed from them; and if they disagreed, they were foolish. Yet, if they could add something that was new to the Indian, and if the Indian understood it as important, then they would gladly accept it.³²

Anthropological research also shows the power of the Native American religious tradition. Anthropologist Bruce G. Trigger, for example, maintains that Indian religious traditions were the main determinants of religious conversion. "Cultural traditions may play a more important role in determining the content of religious beliefs," he asserts. Trigger holds this view despite his belief that Euro-Indian contact situations were affected mostly by calculations of economic self-interest.³³

Native American culture was certainly not static or impenetrable. During this period of colonization, and even before 1492, many native cultures had changed to accommodate new social systems and values.³⁴ Yet history shows, and modern research confirms, the power of the Native American cultural tradition. The Swedish missionaries experienced this power to a great degree in the Delaware region.

³² Ibid., 37-38.

³³ Bruce G. Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Conflict: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *The Journal of American History* 77 (Mar., 1991): 1215.

³⁴ Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 22.

“More Obstacles to Effective Evangelism”

In addition to strong Native American resistance to a foreign religion, the Swedish missionaries were also challenged by the harsh living conditions of New Sweden, which often shortened their stay in New Sweden and prevented continuity in the mission field. For example, of the five early ministers sent over, only one, Rev. Lars Lock, remained until his death in 1688. The other four returned home to Sweden some years after their arrival.

These difficult conditions are also seen in the life of Rev. Andrew Rudman, who was called in 1696 to minister in New Sweden. Anticipating great hardships, he asked for and was granted an assurance that after some time he would return home and receive a suitable promotion. After being in America only three years, he became sick, and sent many letters home asking for help and a replacement. His natural lung problem had worsened in the strange climate, connected with hard labor, and extensive travel. Because of his condition, a voyage home was questionable, so he moved with his family to Philadelphia. There he presided over two English churches until his death in 1708. He was thirty-nine years old, and never made it back to Sweden.³⁵

Indian brutality also threatened the mission. On one occasion Indians were sent to retrieve a band of run-away Swedes who fled to Virginia. The runaways resisted the Indians, who then slaughtered the run-away Swedes, bringing their heads back to Fort Christina. To the Swedes, such brutality characterized the Indians: “The Indians might in this way become accustomed to slaughtering our Christians, which the Indians are only too willing to do when they have the opportunity.” As a result, the Swedish colonists took precaution by modifying the architecture of their churches: “After a sufficient height like an ordinary house there was added

³⁵ Acrelius, *History of New Sweden*, 203-214.

an overhanging portion some courses higher, out of which they could shoot; so that if the heathen attacked them...the Swedes could shoot down upon them.”³⁶

In addition, competition among local religious groups may have distracted Swedish outreach. The Dutch were Protestants too, but they were Calvinists. The Quakers also had a large presence in the area. In addition, there were Anglicans, Sabbatarians, Presbyterians, Anabaptists, and Latitudarians with which to contend.

“The Swedish Mission Inspires Gospel Outreach”

The Swedish missionaries are inspirational because, despite many obstacles, their faithful efforts bore fruit. First of all, they shared the powerful message of the gospel with a number of Native Americans. Only God knows how many Indians were brought to saving faith; one takes great comfort in the lesson of the mustard seed. In addition, the Swedish mission was the forerunner of all Lutheran mission attempts in North America, including the one that resulted in the formation of the Wisconsin Synod. These missionaries were the spiritual forefathers of all American Lutherans today - not an insignificant portion of American society.

The Swedish mission is also inspiring because it shows the many advantages of modern day outreach in North America. For example, their struggle to conduct gospel outreach far away from home highlights the advantage enjoyed by the WELS in carrying out mission work in its own backyard. In addition, modern improvements to transportation and communication have minimized the challenges of distance in mission work.

Modern technology also provides better living conditions for missionaries today. In seventeenth century America, the Swedes had to adjust to a strange climate, hard physical labor, and extensive travel. They also lived under the threat of violence from the native population and

³⁶ Bjork, *The Planting of the Swedish Church*, 19.

other Colonial powers. Today on the other hand, WELS missionaries benefit from a stable government that guarantees safety and a more permanent presence in North America.

The Swedes also struggled to overcome the language barrier. The Virginian language of the Indians was extremely difficult to learn, and was completely unknown to the missionaries when they began their work. In addition, the language change in nineteenth century Delaware effectively ended the Swedish supply of pastors to America. Today, on the other hand, North American missionaries have English as a common tongue. Plus, Spanish and other languages are relatively easy to learn because they are languages known in word books and grammars.

Common language breeds common culture. North American missions today also benefit from a mass-American culture, in which most people have a Christian background, or at least are familiar with the basic tenets of Christianity. At the same time however, the United States remains the great cultural tapestry to which people from all over the world flock. Therefore another important lesson from the Swedes is that cultural norms, and the religious beliefs they contain, are extremely resilient. The Swedish missionaries experienced first-hand the power of Native American religious traditions in the region of the Delaware River. Their difficulty in planting the gospel shows how humanity's resistance to the gospel can be aided by social custom. Their experience underscores the need for missionaries to be sensitive to different cultural traditions.

The Swedish mission therefore is an inspiration for conducting gospel outreach in love. The Swedes were sensitive to the native culture, going to great lengths to learn the language. They showed a genuine interest in the spiritual welfare of the Indian with their enthusiasm and energy to carry out mission efforts, in addition to caring for the needs of their own congregations. They conducted gospel outreach with integrity and honesty; there is nothing in

the record to indicate a compromising of the gospel message. In short, the Swedish missionaries lovingly and faithfully preached the gospel to fellow sinners.

The Swedish Lutheran mission to the Delaware Indians is finally a testimony to the power of the gospel to overcome adversity. Their planting of the gospel in North America, despite many obstacles, is an indicator of the faith, determination, and grit of a people inspired by Jesus Christ. The spiritual seed they sowed ultimately yielded a lasting crop, harvested by Lutherans today who find inspiration in their timeless example of faithful service to God.

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Blomfelt, Frank. "The Lutheran Churches and Their Pastors in New Sweden, 1638-1655." *New Sweden in America*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995, 215-248. 366, index, map, illus.

New Sweden in America contains some of the newest research on the Swedish colony. It is a collection of articles from twenty-eight scholars who represented several fields including history, anthropology, and geography. Blomfelt's article provided background information on the Swedish Lutheran Church.

Bowden, Henry Warner. *American Indians and Christian Missions*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981. xix, 255, index.

This book describes precontact civilizations. It charts the role of religion in subsequent cultural conflicts, and stresses the priority Indians gave to their own religions.

Calloway, Colin G. *New Worlds For All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. 229, index.

This is a recent look at how both Europeans and Indians shaped America.

Clay, Jehu. *Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware*. Chicago: Swedish Historical Society, 1914. 170, illus.

Rev. Clay was a nineteenth century pastor in Delaware, descended from Swedish immigrants. He gives an account of the first Swedes on American soil.

Cogley, Richard W. *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999. xii, 331, index, map.

This is a history of Eliot's mission until 1675.

Donnelly, Joseph P. *Jean de Brebeuf*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1975. xii, 346, index.

This is a biography of Brebeuf, the most noteworthy Jesuit missionary to the Huron Indians.

Ferris, Benjamin. *History of the Original Settlements on the Delaware*. Wilmington: Wilson & Heald, 1846. 312, map, illus.

This is a history of the settlements on the Delaware River from its discovery by Hudson to the colonization under William Penn. It also describes the religious affairs of the Swedish settlers.

Fredrich, Edward C. *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. Milwaukee: NPH, 1992. 304.

Gutierrez, Ramon A. *When Jesus Came, The Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*. Stanford University Press, 1991. xxxi, 424, index.

This book portrays the Franciscan missions employing manipulative and calculative means to achieve their goals.

Harrod, Howard L. *Becoming and Remaining a People*. Tucson: University of Arizona, 1995. xi, 149, index.

This describes native religion on the Northern Plains. It stresses the power of Native American religious tradition as it enabled the Indians to actively participate in how they were impacted by European culture.

Higham, Carol L. *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000. 283, illus.

This is a broad work on Protestant missions to North American Indians. It features some of the newest scholarship on the topic, and thus is a good starting point for research.

Keiser, Albert. *Lutheran Mission Work among the American Indians*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1922. 189, illus., index.

This is a broad work of the Lutheran Indian missions in North America. It describes the Swedish, German, Danish, and Norwegian efforts.

Parkman, Francis. *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, reprint. Boston: Little, Brown, 1867. xxi, 586, index, maps.

This is a history of the Jesuit mission to the Huron Indians until 1650.

Shea, John Gilmary. *Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States*. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969, reprint. New York: Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1855. 513, index.

This is a history of the Norwegian, Spanish, French, and English missions of 1529-1854. It provides a full list of missionaries with dates.

Speck, Frank G. *A Study of the Delaware Indian Big House Ceremony*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1931. 192, illus., index.

Speck relates an interview with a native Delaware Indian who described the doctrine and ceremony of the Delaware tribe. The book illustrates how Indian religion affects cultural change.

Tinker, George E. *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. ix, 182, index.

This is a collection of case studies that wants to show how missionaries confused gospel values and European cultural values to produce lethal results on the Indians.

Ward, Christopher. *The Dutch and Swedes on the Delaware, 1609-1664*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1930. xi, 393, maps, index.

This is a history of the Delaware River Valley from its "discovery" in 1609, to 1664 when the English took from the Dutch New Amsterdam, along with its then accessory, the Delaware territory.

Williams, Lorraine. "Indians and Europeans in the Delaware Valley, 1620-1655." *New Sweden in America*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995, 112-120. 366, index, map, illus.

Williams exposes the anomaly of the Delaware region, namely, the power of its natives, and the open trading between Europeans and Indians.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

McNally, Michael D. "The Practice of Native American Christianity." *Church History* 69 (Dec., 2000): 834-859.

This article looks at Indian encounters with Christianity, and it shifts the focus away from missionaries and their motives to what the Indians made of Christianity. It brings into focus the complexity of being both native and Christian.

Trigger, Bruce G. "Early Native North American Responses to European Conflict: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations." *The Journal of American History* 77 (Mar., 1991): 1195-1215.

An anthropologist, Trigger analyzes determinants of Indian response to European contact. He found that Indian behavior was largely determined by rational, individual choices. He also testifies to the immense power of native religion.

ONLINE SOURCES

www.colonialswedes.org