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The Oxford Movement and the early High Church spirituality in Sweden

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ABSTRACT
In the early twentieth century, Swedish priests went to England for pastoral studies. There they met the influential leaders of the Oxford Movement and were inspired by them. They discovered a Catholic, but not Roman Catholic, worship and High Church spirituality. They read Charles Gore, E.B. Pusey and others. Their great discovery was the eucharistic worship and its sacramentally orientated liturgy and the world-wide Catholic Church, a catholicity they recognised in the Church of Sweden. However, when they wanted to use their experience and visions in Sweden, they were accused of being ‘English importations’ of something strange and un-Swedish. This essay shows not only that this was not the case, but how they rejected such nationalist criticism. The Oxford Movement inspired them to dig in the Swedish field and there they found the Church’s common treasures – the Catholicity they had, which gave a concrete form to worship and parish life. For Gunnar Rosendal, the influential High Church pioneer in Sweden from the 1930s, this was absolutely fundamental.

KEYWORDS
The Oxford Movement; Swedish High Church; Catholicity; Charles Gore; E.B. Pusey; John Henry Newman; John Keble; German Neo-Lutheranism; Scottish Free Churches; Gunnar Rosendal; Archbishop Yngve Brilioth

Well into the twentieth century, Sweden was almost a German province. The sixteenth-century Swedish reformers had studied in Germany and particularly in Wittenberg. They had their contacts there, and there they also received a theology which they brought back home. Much of the devotional literature that was distributed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was translated from German sources. Compared with the cadre of Swedish students who went to Germany, we know that from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, only 112 Swedes studied in Oxford. The so-called Lund High Church Movement (lundahögkyrkligheten) in the nineteenth century was inspired by German Neo-Lutheranism, coming from Kliefoth (1810–1895) and Löhe (1808–1872) and others who contributed to a deeper understanding of what church, worship and parish life was all about. The Church was
an institution for the provision of the means of grace, founded by Christ himself. The heavenly and the earthly Church were but two aspects of the same reality. Fellowship with the German Lutheran Churches was strong. Until well into the twentieth century, Swedish politics in general was strongly orientated towards Germany. The language curriculum in Swedish secondary and high schools had German as the first foreign language.\(^4\) The dominance of English only emerged during the post-War period.

Even so, the contacts between Church of Sweden and the churches in the British Isles were far from non-existent. As early as 1726, the Rector of the Swedish congregation in London, Jacob Serenius (1700–1776; later Bishop of Strängnäs) had published a book entitled \textit{Examen harmoniæ religionis ecclesiæ Lutheranæ & Anglicæ}, aiming to show that these two confessions were doctrinally very close to one another. It was these two churches which had best kept the inheritance from the Early Church. A few years earlier, the Swedish Secretary of State, Carl Gyllenborg (1679–1746) and the then Bishop of London, John Robinson (1650–1723), who had previously been the Chaplain to the English Delegation and the English Ambassador to Stockholm, had collaborated on a proposal to amalgamate the Swedish and the English Churches – \textit{de unione ecclesiæ svencanæ et anglicanæ}.\(^5\) The purpose was – as they expressed it – the more strongly to ‘frighten off’ the expansive Roman Catholic Church. Both churches also had common interests in Delaware. The Swedish episcopate of the period of Lutheran orthodoxy did, however, take an unsympathetic attitude to such plans.\(^6\)

During the nineteenth century, the Scottish Free Churches were the major source of inspiration, when the Low Church missionary organisation called Evangeliska Fosterlands–Stiftelsen (EFS; the Evangelical National Foundation; Swedish Evangelical Mission) was established. Contacts in both directions were lively and at the initial stage, included not only ideological and spiritual support; the EFS was also, to a not insignificant degree, financed from Scotland. The cash flow was so large that they even had their own treasurer in Sweden. The songs of the Evangelical Revivalist Movement, which quickly became very popular, were largely translations from English.\(^7\) The Evangelical Alliance was responsible for translations into Swedish of a number of Reformed tracts, which were published and spread in enormous print runs.\(^8\) The Swedish Neo-Evangelism has thus also had a Reformed and even a Congregationalist influence on Swedish church life. For that reason, Lutherans, who were aware of their confession, were often strongly critical towards such influences.

At the same time, there were High Church Revivalist Movements in the Church of England. The one that we associate with the nineteenth century is the Oxford Movement and in particular Tractarianism. These movements had a marked

\(^4\)Bratt, I \textit{Engelskundervisningens villkor i Sverige 1850-1905}.
\(^5\)Lundström, ‘Ett förslag från 1700-talets början om närmare förbindelser mellan Englands och Sveriges kyrkor’, 139-150.
\(^7\)Selander, ‘Den nya sången.’
\(^8\)Ribbner, \textit{De svenska traktatsällskapen 1808-1856}. 
ecclesiology, and the branch theory was seen as the foundation for understanding empirically separate churches. The historic Christian Church was seen as a tree, and the denominations should be seen as branches of this, the one and only Church, provided that they included certain components: apostolic succession; the basic sacraments; and at least the Creeds, the *symbola* from the Early Church. The Church was a divine institution, founded by Christ himself. The Early Church was an indivisible unit, the foundation and the norm for true historical developments.⁹ The *catholicity* of the Church consists of its universality, with regard to time and place, and also of the fact that the faith was universally accepted within the Church.

The Oxford Movement thus formulated the Anglican theory of *antiquity*, i.e. that the undivided Early Church was the highest forum of Christian faith and order. The paradigm formulated by the fifth-century monk, Vincentius of Lerinum, and often referred to as the Vincentian Canon, was highlighted, namely that the faith of the Church is *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est* (‘what has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone’), unchanged throughout the ages, although, as time goes by, it gains increasing precision and anchorage within human experience.¹⁰ For the Oxford theologians, the agreement between the theology of the Early Church and their own spiritual experience was fundamental.¹¹ It is that period, J.H. Newman says, that testifies to

what that faith is, which was once delivered to the saints, the faith that will always remain in the world, and which is the treasure and the life of the Church, the condition for membership of the Church and normative of its teaching.¹²

It is patristic *symbola* that contain the normative doctrinal formulations, which characterise the continuity of the Church. The *apostolicity* of the Church consists of the organic unity of the contemporary church with the Early Church, handed on through apostolic succession.¹³ The Church is the institution that provides salvation, and that is why the sacraments and the ordained ministry have an inevitable place, and the liturgy is the manner in which worship is offered. Arthur Philip Perceval (1799–1853), one of Keble’s disciples, who in the 1840s worked on the issue of apostolic succession, was in touch with the Swedish Rector in London on this subject and sought to convince him that the apostolic succession in Sweden was unbroken.

For the leading representatives of this Movement – Richard Hurrell Froude (1803–1836) and John Henry Newman (1801–1890) – it was important to stress that the Church and the Christian faith were not based on the subjective feelings of various individuals, but on the objectivity of the outward ecclesial life, in which God’s action was specifically made manifest. The Church was the work of God. Protestantism was certainly right in pointing to the Bible as the source and foundation of the faith, but it was wrong in making the interpretation of the Bible exclusively a matter for the individual. The Scriptures should be interpreted within tradition, within the holy Tradition of the Church. That was a very different attitude from that which, through

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¹⁰Brilioth, _The Anglican Revival_, 195.

¹¹Ibid., 218–19.


Schleiermacher, had come to dominate the Protestant and the Swedish understanding of Christianity at that time. It was not a matter of achieving, in one way or another, any kind of Christian emotions, but of training a person’s will and habitual behaviour. Our duties to God require habitual response, practice, regularity and perseverance. This practice of the life of the Church and of faith is nothing less than seeking to make people used to being freely and joyfully aware of the presence of God in all aspects of life, around the clock, and to adapt their lifestyle and behaviour accordingly.

In their pastoral and theological analysis of England in the 1830s, the Fathers of the Oxford Movement and of Tractarianism worried that the Eucharistic life was at a low ebb. The Church had become a church of prayer, but not a sacramental church. The Eucharist was rarely celebrated; the liturgical life was poor. Celebration of the sacrament only took place on the major feast days, not at other times. This they found to be in conflict with the ideal of parish life in the Early Church, with the ecclesiology that they had adopted and found to be genuinely the esse of the Church. The Church had been instituted by God and through her teaching, liturgy and sacraments she offered his salvation to the people. As they read The Book of Common Prayer, they found inspiration for the revival they wanted to see. They did not even have to move outside the official orders and ordinances of their own church; they only had to apply them with consequence to their own contemporary circumstances. In the service of worship, God’s presence in the world was made manifest. So they appealed to the parish priests and encouraged them to celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday. They should however not change the 10 o’clock Service of Matins, but should celebrate the Eucharist in the early morning, even if only one communicant was present. The emerging revival saw increasing numbers of people attending. It was stressed that to practise Christianity means to be a regular communicant. And the Mass should be celebrated in the manner of the undivided Church. Every Sunday was Easter Sunday, and the Sunday Mass should be characterised by festivity, light and joy and the liturgy should be functional. Not every Sunday should be the same, but the liturgical year should be observed.

In 1827, John Keble (1792–1866) published his book The Christian Year, which included hymns and poems suitable for the various liturgical seasons. Edward B. Pusey (1800–1882) was also a Professor at Oxford. In a particular way, he drove the Eucharistic revival in the Church of England. In 1853 he preached a sermon about the real presence. This caused extensive debate and led to a prohibition for him to preach. That made him delve more deeply into this matter, and he published a substantial work of 700 pages, in two volumes, entitled The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Doctrine of the English Church (1857), in which he expounded the theology of the real presence from the period of the apostles and the Early Church until the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

\[14\] Brilioth, 1925, 228–30.
\[15\] Basic reading on this is Härdelin, The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist.
This is one of the tributary inflows to our contemporary Swedish High Church spirituality. Why and how could this be made use of in Sweden? What was it that was seen and discovered?

The pre-history of the Swedish High Church Movement had begun about the same time as the influence from German Neo-Lutheranism in Bavaria in the middle of the nineteenth century. There Wilhelm Löhe in Neuendettelsau was the major name. The Swedish Bishop of Härnösand, Martin Johansson (1837–1908) compared his influence to that of the Swedish Pietist Revivalist priests, Henric Schartau (1757–1825) and Peter Lorenz Sellergren (1768–1843) in Southern Sweden, where they had a seminal impact on popular spirituality in extensive areas. In 1845, Löhe published what he called a Haus-, Schul- und Kirchenbuch, (‘House-, School- and Church-Book’) intended to provide an equivalent to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer for German emigrants to the USA. His important book, Drei Bücher von der Kirche (‘Three Books about the Church’, 1845) has been translated into Swedish several times. It was intended to encourage an ecclesiological and liturgical renaissance.

From the Early Church onwards, the liturgy of the Church has been characterised by ‘holy multiplicity and holy simplicity’. The Eucharist must be at the centre of Lutheran church-focused Christianity, because that is where the divine and the human realities interact. The liturgy has an organic link to the Early Church and it is the natural expression of the Christian congregation. Theodor Kliefoth (1810–1895) in Mecklenburg stood in the same tradition, and in the 1840s he published a number of proposals for orders of services, in which he subscribed to the Neo-Lutheran programme. The Eucharist must become a firm part of the main service and the liturgical year must shape the rhythm of the worship. Every service should express the encounter between the divine and the human; it should be sacramentum and sacrificium.

The Swedish Bishop of Strängnäs, U.L. Ullman (1837–1930), was inspired by these predecessors. As the great scholar of liturgy at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he was the one who more than many others channelled the thinking of German Neo-Lutheranism into the Church of Sweden, and he made sure that these views had their impact on the orders of services that were adopted at that time. As the Church of Sweden broke away from the legally marked worship of the unified national church – the legal requirement to receive Holy Communion was, for example, abolished – it returned at the same time to a more clearly marked and historically motivated liturgy of the Mass, liberated from the theology of the Enlightenment period.

During the nineteenth century, Swedish worship was marked by the rationalism of the Enlightenment. This was expressed in the 1811 Service Book (kyrkohandboken), which in an insensitive and radical manner had broken away from the older liturgical tradition. The main service in the parish was primarily a service of preaching, surrounded by short altar devotions. The Eucharist was at a low point and in many parishes, towards the end of the century, there were hardly any communicants at all.

18 Bexell, O. Liturgins teologi hos U.L. Ullman.
The reason was the official legal regulations attached to the celebration and reception of Holy Communion, coupled with the Neo-Evangelistic criticism of the church. Ecclesiological awareness was very low. For many people, it was the official legal regulation of the church that was at the forefront, rather than its divine origin and function as the place for God’s presence and intervention.

It was in these circumstances that some enterprising Swedish priests in the early twentieth century – as part of the Swedish government’s internationalisation endeavours – began to travel abroad and especially to England in order to meet the Church.

As early as 1908–1909, a young priest from the Swedish province of Dalecarlia was able, thanks to a university grant procured by Nathan Söderblom, to undertake the trip of his life, a trip that lasted for a whole year. Among other places, Samuel Gabrielsson (1881–1968) visited Canterbury, and in the Cathedral he gained knowledge of Anglican worship from the inside. He presented his report in the very interesting book entitled *Kyrkostudier från långfärd och bokvärld* (‘Church Studies from a Long Trip and from the World of Books’, 1910). His travels coincided with the Lambeth Conference, and thus he gained a very wide knowledge of the Anglican tradition. From the High Church priest, Cecil Robert Tyrwhitt (1862–1924) at St Peter’s Church, Leckhampton, Gloucestershire, he received a letter of introduction to the Fr Superior of the Cowley Fathers in Oxford, and from the like-minded Edmund Boggis (1863–1951) at St Mary Magdalene, Barnstable, North Devon, a letter to Bishop John Wordsworth (1843–1911) of Salisbury, who was very knowledgeable on the Church of Sweden. In Oxford he visited the church of St Barnabas, which seems to have been the most High Church, with – as he puts it in his autobiographical memoirs, ‘incense, turnings, bows and genuflections endlessly performed’ and an ‘incredible overload’ for his ‘Swedish–Hellenic sense of the right proportions and the austere style’. And from a critic of the High Church, he learnt that ‘the High Church Movement had completely transformed this part of town, which previously had a notoriously bad reputation.’

Thanks to the influence of the later Bishop of Oxford, Charles Gore (1853–1932), there was a strong social commitment among English High Church priests. The Cowley Fathers of the Society of St John the Evangelist were a major experience. That community had been founded in 1865 by Newman’s and Pusey’s disciple, Richard Meux Benson (1824–1915), and it was the first religious community in the Church of England after the Reformation. Gabrielsson met him and greeted him as if he were a saint, worthy of great reverence, although he was both blind and deaf at the age of 85. Here he learnt about the foundation stones of Tractarianism: the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed are the foundation of the Church, together with the apostolic succession and the sacraments. For Swedish theologians, the Nicene Creed was at that time only a document belonging to the history of doctrine. Liturgically it was not used at all; it was excluded from the Service book (*kyrkohandboken*) from 1811 until 1917. Today it is in fairly common use in the High Mass. The Divine Office was a new form of prayer for Gabrielsson, so unfamiliar that, in his account of the travel, the names of the various

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19 Wordsworth’s extensive ‘Hale Lectures’ 1910 on *The National Church of Sweden* were printed in 1911 and translated into Swedish in the following year.
21 Ibid., 334.
22 Ibid., 352.
offices had to be written in English and not, as later became normal practice in Sweden, in Latin. The various pieces of priestly vestments – alb, amice, stole and so on – also had to be explained.

A decade later – in the spring of 1920 – Albert Lysander (1875–1956; rector of St Petri in Malmö) was travelling in England. He, too, visited the Cowley Fathers, and he was considerably more receptive and adapted to the rhythm of the offices and the retreat of four days of silence, although he found this spiritual life too intense for a Swedish priest. ‘My spiritual digestion could not keep up,’ he says. And neither Gabrielson nor Lysander was permitted to receive the Holy Communion with the Cowley Fathers, which caused them great pain: they were of course Lutherans, and intercommunion with the Church of England had not yet been established. That only came about in 1922.

Lysander also visited the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield, West Yorkshire, which had been founded in 1892 by Charles Gore, the author of the theological classic *Lux Mundi* (1889) and of the book on sacramental theology, *The Body of Christ* (1901), which would later be decisive for the influential Gunnar Rosendal’s theology of the Eucharist, mentioned later in this article. Here, as with the Cowley Fathers, he experienced the beauty of the liturgy, with candles and processions and – as he says in his description of it all – ‘I hardly dare to reveal it’, even incense. At Mirfield he met Paul Bull (1864–1942) and read his book *The Sacramental Principle* (1915). Paul Bull was the leading representative of what in English is usually called sacramental socialism. In his periodical *The Church Socialist*, Bull fought for the cause of the labourers in industrialised England. The English Catholic Movement had a strong social passion from the very beginning, which never took root in the same way in Sweden.

The beauty of the worship appealed to Lysander. In St Paul’s Cathedral he witnessed processions and liturgically functioning church music, sung both by the choir and the congregation. People all around him sang in a manner that made it obvious that they had ‘a spiritual understanding of the content’. Evensong, in High Church All Saints, Margaret Street, he found liturgically overloaded, as it was not a Eucharist: ‘That “special something” was missing on the altar.’ He continued:

> Whoever devoutly and humbly believes that God is sacramentally and corporately present on the altar in the monstrance – he may be forgiven if he sings and plays in the high choir before the corporeal face of the Lord. [– – – ] Liturgy should serve, not only impress.

The visit to England in 1919 by the future Archbishop of Uppsala, Yngve Brilioth (1891–1959), on the commission of Nathan Söderblom, for the purpose of preparing for the agreement about intercommunion between the two churches, is worth an exposition of its own. Through Harold Fendick (1883–1962) at Pusey House, he received an introduction to Anglo-Catholicism and decided to write a scholarly investigation about the Oxford Movement, entitled *Nyanglikansk renässans* (‘Neo-Anglican Renaissance’,

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23 See Bland gåvor mångahanda. En minnesbok om Albert Lysander in References.

This is what Swedish priests experienced in England in the early twentieth century. They met a reformed church of a different kind, when compared with the Lutheran church that they were used to at home. Samuel Gabrielsson gave one of the earliest presentations to the wider Swedish readership of the twentieth century, in his book *Kyrkostudier från långfärd och bokvärld* (‘Church Studies from a Long Trip and from a World of Books’, 1910). The status of the Church of Sweden was reminiscent of that of the Church of England, and he therefore wanted to introduce the Oxford Movement – although as ‘a movement with both good and bad’ – as a way ahead for the future. ‘Maybe something like the Oxford Movement is needed in Sweden in order to lift our church out of its status of humiliation’, he wrote, and he pointed out the parallels.

The Swedish priests who travelled to England had met the Anglican religious life at Cowley and at Mirfield. They had experienced retreats and liturgical worship. They had discovered how this kind of binding commitment could strengthen, not only the life of faith, but the life of the church as well. The time was not yet ripe for any thoughts of religious life in the Church of Sweden. However, during the first years of the 1910s, Gabrielsson, together with a few younger priests, took the initiative to form a brotherhood which was not intended to be a monastic community, but which was also open to married Lutheran priests. They wanted to work for

a higher appreciation of the Church with its costly inheritance from former generations and its extraordinary mission in our own day: a High Church view with respect for the 1,000-year old tradition of the church is very compatible with a clearly Evangelical view of the faith.

This led to the constitution of the Brotherhood of St Sigfrid (Sankt Sigfrids brödraskap, abbreviated SSB) in 1915. The name was chosen in commemoration of a medieval English Bishop who was a missionary in Sweden and the founder of the diocese of Växjö, where he is buried in the cathedral. The intention of SSB was to celebrate liturgical services which, among other things, included Gregorian chant, and once again to begin to use the chasuble at Mass – the purposes were modest – and to publish popular writings on ecclesiastical subjects. Thus their views would be extensively spread around. Pictures show priests of the Brotherhood of St Sigfrid with thuribles in their hands.

The choice to form a Brotherhood for priests has, in my view, two explanations. Priests were thereby nurtured in a committed way of life, which they could hand on to their parishes. Furthermore – and this is a consequence of the former – they took the view that the renewal of the parishes would come about through the priests. They did not want to form High Church conventicles. The renewal of the church takes place in

30 Quoted in Kilström, Högkyrkligheten i Sverige och Finland under 1900-talet, 33.
the parish and through the parish. It is because of this basic ecclesiological attitude that the Swedish High Church Movement did not have the same popular anchorage, which its correspondent in England did. However, through the priests, the liturgical renewal did eventually begin in a broad sense: that renewal, which has born such rich fruit in the current Service Books and particularly in the general practice of liturgical celebrations.

This short-lived association was assimilated into the new High Church community Societas Sanctæ Birgittæ, with the same short form, SSB. It was founded in 1920 and is today, one century later, a vital spiritual fellowship in the Church of Sweden. It is a kind of third order in the spirituality of St Bridget of Sweden, with over 200 members, clergy and laity. Its annual General Chapter on St Bridget’s ‘heavenly birthday’, 23 July, in the Vadstena Abbey Church where her shrine is situated, is very well supported by a great number of external visitors. SSB has lively contacts with the corresponding movements in England and, for example, the spiritual revival connected with Our Lady of Walsingham.

One of the first members of the old SSB was the priest Axel Lutteman (1880–1920), who in 1908 was given a government grant of 600 Swedish Crowns (about £40) for travel and accommodation in England for six weeks. He was significantly inspired by the Oxford Movement, which he met through the mediation of the then Bishop of Stepney and future Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864–1945), at Pusey House in Oxford and at the services of the Pan-Anglican Congress in St Paul’s Cathedral in London. In London he lived at the High Church community of St John’s Clergy House. The liturgical procession – with the cross, banners, bishops in full vestments, boys’ choirs, a string orchestra and trumpet blasts – became an anticipation of the worship in heaven.

As protection against the emerging liberal theology, the Sodalitium Confessionis Apostolicæ (SCA) was formed in 1919. The initiator was Lysander together with a few priests from Scania, including Otto Ehde (1808–1874; later rural dean in Barkåkra). He had been nurtured in the Swedish Young Church Movement (ungkyrkligheten) and had spent the year before his ordination to the priesthood in 1912 as the Youth Leader in the Swedish congregation in London. In England he met the Oxford Movement. Its theology and liturgy inspired him and he wanted to apply that in his life as a priest. He is one of the earliest priests in the Church of Sweden to begin to use the alb and stole in the liturgy, but when he wanted to light candles on the altar – as he had learnt to do in England – he had to pay for them himself, as this was considered a waste of church funds.

A newly ordained priest from the Diocese of Gothenburg, whose first posting was to London, succeeded Ehde. His name was Simon Lüders (1885–1969), and he later became the Fr Confessor of Societas Sanctæ Birgittæ. However, the influences from the Anglican Oxford Movement are probably clearer in the SCA than in the SSB. With its bridgevine spirituality, SSB had an articulated source of inspiration in the Swedish Middle Ages. For both these groups – and we do not here have to compare in any

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deeper sense – although more clearly expressed in the SCA, it is the apostolic faith that they want to protect, and consequently also the liturgy. The intention was to strengthen priestly identity and to encourage a renewal of the church on the apostolic foundation. It is the Oxford Movement’s stress on *antiquity* that is highlighted: the faith of the undivided Early Church and, expressed or implied, the old phrase *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*. Bible study, sacramental confession, Communion. The renewal of the church takes place through the parishes, and the renewal of the parishes comes through the priests. Here too, the inspiration from Anglican religious life is obvious: the members commit themselves ‘as far as possible’ to receive Communion once a month, daily and at a specific hour, to say the office of None, even if only by reciting the Lord’s Prayer. These Third Order Societies presupposed a committed way of life among their members, which would prove essential for the whole church at times of particular pressures.

The one who, given the contemporary circumstances, most programmatically assimilated his experiences from a visit to the spiritual environment of the English Oxford Movement was the Stockholm priest Elis Schröderheim (1863–1937). In the summer of 1908 and the spring of 1909 he was there, as a holder of a Government scholarship. He wrote two pamphlets on his experiences. One of them was entitled – and the subtitle is important – Något om engelskt kyrkoliv och svenskt. Iakttagelser, jämförelser och önskningar (‘English and Swedish Church Life. Observations, Comparisons and Wishes’, 1910).35 “The stronger the spiritual life is lived within a church, the more faithfully one cares about that which belongs to the outward appearance of that life,’ he says with reference to the worship he has met.36 He pointed to the care of the churches and the way they were beautified, the reverence for the sanctity of the church building, the active participation of the congregation in the liturgy, genuflections and the sign of the cross. He appreciated not only the liturgical vestments of the priests, but also choir robes. He discovered the value of letting churchwardens take the collections, pew by pew while the congregation sang a hymn – something which, at that time, was unknown in Sweden.37 And that children were baptised in the parish church and that plenty of water was used at the aspersion, not only the ‘lightly bedewed’ hand of the priest.38 In ‘High Churches’ he had met not only celebrations of the Eucharist every Sunday, but also weekday Masses. He found the free-standing service of corporate confession (*skriftermålet*), which was used in Sweden, unliturgical. That could be replaced by a formal confession of sins. And he liked it that the congregation read the Confession and the Creed aloud. As he observed the practice of the priests giving themselves communion, he found this usage, which was forbidden in Sweden, to be a pastoral necessity in order to ‘increase the reverence and the love of the Eucharist among the people’. ‘All legalistic attitudes must be done away with!’ The priests must receive the sacraments themselves.39 ‘The more frequently Holy Communion is celebrated, the more communicants there will be,’ he says. At a time when the

37 Ibid., 12.
38 Ibid., *Engelskt kyrkoliv och svenskt.*, 18f.
39 Ibid., 27. Schröderheim, *Minnen*, 21–2. When some opinion in Sweden in these days, for fear of infection’s sake, was critical of the common eucharistic chalice (see Bexell, *Liturgins teologi*, 343–4), Schröderheim could report that this
opportunities to receive Communion in rural parishes in Sweden numbered maybe two a year, he saw that in some churches there was so much incense that he could hardly see the altar. That, he thought, was overdoing it, but incense was a good biblical symbol, although it might be used in moderate doses. Schöderheim’s little pamphlet about church life is one of the earliest High Church programmes, clearly influenced by the ideals of the English Oxford Movement. These ideals he also expounded in his little tract, aimed at mass distribution, entitled Vår kyrkogång (‘When we Go to Church’, 1919), in which he explicitly speaks of the sanctity of the church building, its accessibility even on weekdays, and about the altar as the holy place where the consecration takes place; thus he explains why it is decorated with ‘flowers, candles (not electric lights!) and liturgical colours’. He gives an extensive motivation for the place of the sign of the cross in the service. That was justified, since this was never used in the Church of Sweden in his day. ‘In our religion, we need that which speaks to ears, eyes [and] to our immediate senses, not least to our sense of beauty and to our spiritual being.’ Schröderheim wanted to show how his discoveries in English Catholicism did not have to be imported, since they already also had their home in the Church of Sweden.

III

We usually say that Dr Gunnar Rosendal (1897–1988), Rector of Osby, province of Scania, is the great pioneer of the High Church Movement in Sweden today. There were numerous High Church initiatives before him, and it is important to point that out. Even so, he is a pioneer.

In 1937 Rosendal published his book Kyrklig förnyelse (‘Church Renewal’), a programme of action for pastoral theology and practice. This book was a starting signal for a far-reaching development and transformation of Swedish parish life in a catholic direction. It was the first number in his series of nine volumes. This first book contains no activity scenario, no programme hints. The basic idea was that the Church itself already possessed what was needed. The necessary renewal of the Church of Sweden would be achieved by strengthening and deepening the Church’s confessional awareness, its sacramental life, its theology of ministry and its liturgy. Rosendal draws attention to the treasure already owned by the Church.

When searching for the sources of inspiration behind the Swedish High Church movement, scholars often highlighted the Oxford Movement in England, as well as the Neo-Lutheran Hochkirchentum in Germany. It is incontrovertible that contact with them was inspiring, and both these movements should therefore be viewed together. Swedish priests visited these countries and were influenced, but, as Rosendal emphasised, it was with no special English interests from the Oxford Movement that they

attitude was totally unknown in the Church of England. In Sweden this question was ‘unnecessary and brought up at the wrong moment’. Schröderheim, Minnen, 33f.
40 Schröderheim, Minnen, 73f.
41 Schröderheim, Vår kyrkogång, 9–12.
43 For a presentation and in-depth theological analysis of the above pioneering and also controversial book and series of books, see Bexell, ‘Renewal of the Church from within the Church itself: Gunnar Rosendal’s Kyrklig förnyelse – an ecclesiastical classic in the Church of Sweden’ in Classics in Northern European Church History over 500 Years. Essays in Honour of Anders Jarlert, 117–51.
came home, but with interest in the shared heritage of a universal Church. He defended himself against any accusation of ‘theological importation’. As he pointed out, foreign travel engendered an interest in seeking the spiritual tradition of Sweden’s own Church. This already contained the one holy and universal Church, *ecclesia catholica*.

Earlier, some of the typical features of the spirituality and the renewal programme of the Oxford Movement were pointed out: *antiquity*; the Early Church as the golden age of the Church; the call to a holy life with binding promises in a religious community; and the conviction that the institutional form is central for the Church as the body of Christ. Aesthetics and ritual, as part of the language of symbolism, were not dangerous in a church that built its existence on the Incarnation.

This is what Rosendal picked up when he speaks about church renewal. Just like the Oxford Fathers, he dug where he was standing. They turned to *The Book of Common Prayer*. That was what they began to apply. Rosendal turned to the ‘right teachers’ (*räte lärare*) of the Lutheran tradition and found out what they had said, among them the Swedish reformers, Archbishop Laurentius Petri (1499–1572) and his brother Olaus Petri (1493–1552), the German devotional authors who were widely read in Sweden, Johann Arndt (1555–1621) and Christian Scriver (1629–1693), and to the Swedish Pietist Church Revival, whose major names, still to this day, are the Chaplain to the King, Anders Nohrborg (1725–1767), the Provost Henric Schartau, and others. Rosendal read those as the basis for his programme, wrote a series of books about them and found through them the necessary legitimacy for the Swedish Church. On their inheritance and the Lutheran orthodoxy he could build further. And, like the Oxford Fathers, he wanted to see his church in a perspective wider than that of a particular denomination. Catholicity became central. It was not a matter of building up the national church or the Swedish church, but of building up the Church of Christ. The foundation of the liturgy was neither their own, nor even Martin Luther’s world of ideas. Rather, Mass should be celebrated as it had been *ubi que, semper et ab omnibus*. Its history goes far beyond the Reformation. Here the German Neo-Lutherans and the confessional programme put forward by Löhe and Ullman had paved the way. There was continuity in the life of the Church, right back to the Lord Jesus Christ. That could not be cut off. It is a sacramental and Eucharistic renewal of what has already been given that enables the Church of Sweden to live on into the future.

When the Anglican Oxford Movement inspired Swedish priests, they made discoveries that filled them with enthusiasm. But they did not return home to make the Church of Sweden Anglican. From the Oxford Movement they had learnt that the Church of England had a history of treasures that were already lying in Sweden, waiting to be dug up. They had read their own books, but in England they discovered not only the Church of England, but the Holy Catholic Church. Therefore, in the Swedish language, they began writing – contrary to the normal writing rules – the word for Church, ‘*kyrka*’, with a capital *K*. And they saw all its riches displayed before them.

That Church also existed in Sweden, and in that Church, they were priests. It was a matter of discovering and highlighting these treasures and of making them visible to the people. The treasures of the Church are the same, both here and there. They did not

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44He published a series of monographic investigations about them and others in a series of books entitled *Rätte lärare* (1931–1936).
have to dig up and replant anything, but they could dig where they stood and there they could find the same roots. This holy Church became visible through its liturgy, in the form in which it met God the Holy Trinity. It was the Catholicity that was highlighted, the Catholicity professed in the Creeds.

These were the thoughts and ideas that Gunnar Rosendal put into practice at Osby, and he turned them into an extensive and thought-through programme for church renewal. The basic principles of the Oxford Movement are applicable also to Swedish church life and they are possible to realise in a church marked by the inheritance from Luther and Melanchthon, and from the German Neo-Lutheranism, which during the nineteenth century had become general theological property. He highlighted the original constitutional documents of the Church of Sweden itself, the Church Order, the confessional documents and its own right teachers, and he showed how they all stood firmly in the Catholic tradition. He read the Lutheran theology of Johann Gerhardt (1582–1637) with his book series Confessio Catholica (1–4, 1634–1637) and David Hollatz (1648–1713), with his Examen Theologicum acroamaticum (1707), and he found them to be exemplary Catholics.

Rosendal considered Eucharistic renewal to be at the very centre and he acted accordingly. He understood that the programme of renewal had to be theologically well founded. The most obvious example of this is his great book about the Eucharist. Already its extensive title, Vår Herres Jesu Kristi Lekamens och Blods sakrament ('The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ’, 1938), betrays his inspiration from Pusey’s corresponding books, The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and from Charles Gore’s The Body of Christ.

I will not continue the history any further. I wish only to point out that these links between the English and Swedish High Church Movements have continued into modern times. The visit to Sweden in 1950 by Dom Gregory Dix (1901–1952) of the Benedictine Abbey of Nashdom, near Burnham in Buckinghamshire, the author of The Shape of the Liturgy (1945) was, for example, of very great importance. Both students and priests learnt a liturgical attitude and approach from him. And the so-called Whitby Conferences, Swedish-English theological conferences, were arranged from the final years of the 1940s for a couple of decades. Twenty theologians from each church met every other year, every other time in Whitby, and every other time in Sweden, at the Conference Centre of Stjärnholm.

Fr James Fenwick (b. 1918), known as Fr Hugh, the Novice master of the Franciscan Friary of St Mary at the Cross, Glasshampton in Worcestershire, spent the years 1959–1960 in Sweden. He inspired the renaissance of religious life for men in the Church of Sweden and, as a consequence, the community, which is today the Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Cross, at Östanbäck. Through contacts with The Order of the Holy Paraclete and Mother Margaret Cope (1886–1961) at St Hilda’s Priory, Whitby, Yorkshire, the religious life for women had been established in Sweden as early as 1954, with the Order of The Holy Spirit, today in Kloster Alsike, near Uppsala. In the number of Third Order Societies in the Church of Sweden – there are more than those mentioned here – Catholic Christian faith and order, as once

45See Dunstan, This Poor Sort. A History of the European Province of the Society of St Francis. On contacts with Sweden, see 300–4.
46On the emergence of contemporary religious life in the Church of Sweden, see O. Bexell, ‘Religious Orders and Congregations: Church of Sweden.’
inspired by the Oxford Movement has been preserved, through the commitment of the
members of these Societies, even in a politically pressurised minority situation.

IV

The Oxford Movement could be received in Sweden because it had shown the priests
who travelled to England the common treasure of the Church. They discovered the
catholicity of the Church in a particular way and they wanted to apply that in practice
at home, where Neo-Lutheranism and the Lund High Church Movement had prepared
the way, and where a liturgical renewal of worship and of the use of vestments had
already begun. They could reach beyond their own sixteenth-century history to quod
ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est. That also applied in the Church of
Sweden. The Church of Sweden was not a national but a catholic church. That was the
nature of the church, its esse, and that had been affirmed by its Lutheran confession. Its
form of expression in preaching and liturgy must therefore also be catholic. The early
travellers to England gained a fundamentally ecumenical attitude in the best sense of
the word, which they brought home with them. The Oxford Movement has thus – as I
have shown by these few examples – contributed to the life of the Church of Sweden
and to its Service Book tradition. It has, not least, enabled the catholic priestly
spirituality to continue to work in well-prepared formats, and to a high degree to
hand on the inheritance of the Catholic tradition of faith and worship.

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47See Kilström, High Church in Sweden and Finland, 1990.


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