

Suvi Rytty

## **BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND NATIONALISTIC INTERESTS. THE MISSIONARY ACTIONS OF PROPAGANDA FIDE IN PROTESTANT FINLAND, 1920–1924**

### **Introduction**

The missionary work became a central preoccupation of the Holy See during the pontificates of Benedict XV (1914–1922) and Pius XI (1922–1939). The main reason for this was the change in geopolitical structures caused by the First World War, which offered the Catholic Church new possibilities to strengthen its influence in this new world, especially in the formerly inaccessible territories.<sup>1</sup> One of the territories in the focus of the Catholic Church was Finland, a new nation state established in 1917 after the dissolution of the Russian Empire. Finland, however, was a thoroughly Protestant country, where approximately 98 per cent of the inhabitants were members of the Lutheran Church.<sup>2</sup>

Responsibility for the missionary work was entrusted to the Congregation for Propagation of the Faith, called also simply Propaganda Fide.<sup>3</sup> The prefect of Propaganda Fide during most of the inter-war period was Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum C.Ss.R<sup>4</sup> (1854–1932). A peculiar feature characterizing Cardinal van Rossum was his interest in reintroducing Catholicism into the Nordic countries: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland. This endeavour deviated from Propaganda Fide's primary missionary attention, which at that time mainly focused on non-Christian areas in Asia and Africa. During the years 1920–1924 van Rossum initiated a series of missionary activities in the Protestant North including not only apostolic visitations and the appointment of new apostolic vicars and prefects, but culminating in his visit to all the Nordic countries. After his journey, he even published a travelogue, which proved to be a propagandistic appeal to Catholics to donate money to the Nordic mission.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme 2011, 123; Vernooij 2011, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Gummerus 1917, 387.

<sup>3</sup> In 1962 the congregation was renamed as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. See *Del Re* 1998, 154.

<sup>4</sup> *Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris* (the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer or the Redemptorists), founded in 1732 by St Alphonsus de Liguori in Scala, Italy. Van Rossum became a member in 1874. *Corsius* 2011, 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Poels* 2011, 159–160, 165–167.

Since the Protestant areas in Northern Europe have not been the primary target of Catholic evangelization after the Counter-Reformation,<sup>6</sup> there exist very few studies on the subject. *Vefie Poels*, however, has in a recent article examined the reasons behind Cardinal van Rossum's interest in investing time and money in the missionary work in the Nordic countries in general, but the study gives very little information especially about Finland. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the missionary actions of Propaganda Fide in the Finnish context during the years 1920–1924. The history of the Catholic Church in Finland has been well documented by *Kalevi Vuorela* and the diplomatic relations between Finland and the Holy See thoroughly studied by *Pekka Salo*.<sup>7</sup> But the role of Catholic mission and Propaganda Fide in Finland have drawn less attention in previous research – an exception being van Rossum's visit to Finland and the reactions it generated especially among the Lutheran clergy. This topic has been touched upon for example by *Aila Lauha* in her study about the international relations of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church.<sup>8</sup>

By combining the historiography of the Catholic Church in Finland and the European research concerning the missionary policy of the Holy See, Propaganda Fide and Cardinal van Rossum<sup>9</sup>, this chapter examines how the supranational missionary policy of Propaganda Fide was carried out and received in Finland, where the nationalistic interests of a new nation state sometimes required co-operation with the Holy See, thus overriding the religious interests to defend Lutheran faith and culture. This chapter discusses too, whether the Finnish balancing between religious and nationalistic interests would explain why van Rossum imagined that Finland would be fertile ground for Catholic mission as well as how the Cardinal made use of it in his endeavour to spread the Catholic faith in the Protestant North.

In addition to the previously mentioned research literature the analysis of this chapter is based on newspaper articles, magazines, archival material and publications of the research

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<sup>6</sup> One of the important goals of the Counter-Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was *Missio Suetica*, a plan to bring back the Catholic faith to the Swedish kingdom and to the Baltic Sea area. *Lappalainen* 2009, 19, 32–35 and *passim*. Later, there had been in 1855–1869 a period called North Pole Mission, when the Holy See had established a Prefecture Apostolic of the Arctic regions in Alta (Lapland) encompassing the entire area around the Arctic Circle. The project turned out to be rather unrealistic and impossible construction because of huge distances, cultural diversity and problems of communication. *Tüchle* 1976, 145–147.

<sup>7</sup> *Vuorela* 1989; *Salo* 1997.

<sup>8</sup> *Haranen* 1989; *Lauha* 1993; *Tenhunen* 2004.

<sup>9</sup> An excellent example combining all these aspects is the thematic number of *Trajecta* called *Life with a Mission. Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum C.Ss.R. (1854–1932)*, vol. 19–20, 2010–2011.

era – especially van Rossum’s travelogue *Die religiöse Lage der Katholiken in den nordischen Ländern*.

## **Propaganda Fide**

The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was established in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV’s (Alessandro Ludovisi, Pontiff 1621–1623) bull *Inscrutabili Divinae* as an answer to the two most important events of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: the expansion of the world through geographical discoveries and the Protestant Reformation.<sup>10</sup> Originally it had a threefold task: to lead the heretics fallen into Protestantism back to the Catholic Church, to convert pagans in America, Asia and Africa and to nurture closer relations with the Orthodox, separated from the Catholic Church because of the schism.<sup>11</sup> These three tasks reflected the traditional Catholic conception that bringing the Protestant heretics and the Orthodox schismatics back to the Catholic Church was as necessary for their salvation as was baptism for heathens. In theory Propaganda Fide did not equate Protestants and Orthodox with pagans, but in practice the Catholic mission did not make a distinction between the conversion of heathens and the return of heretics and schismatics to Church Unity.<sup>12</sup>

The founding of Propaganda Fide was an important step in the history of the Catholic Church since it started a new epoch of mission history. Previously, missionary work had been largely confused with colonial expansion and the commercial interests of Catholic countries such as Portugal and Spain due to the system called “royal patronage” according to which the popes had granted the kings of Portugal and Spain certain privileges in the field of missionary work on condition that the newly found peoples in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies were evangelized. The foundation of Propaganda Fide was an attempt to ensure the independence and the spiritual character of missionary activity by returning the direction of the missions from princes and rulers to the hands of the pope. In order to emphasize the spiritual character of the Catholic missionary work, Propaganda Fide was not to use violence but keep aloof

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<sup>10</sup> Benigni 1913; *CIC 1917* 2001, Canon 252.

<sup>11</sup> Metzler 1971b, 80–81, 93–95; *Del Re* 1998, 146–147, 150.

<sup>12</sup> Metzler 1971b, 95–96.

from any use of power and from religious war. Most importantly, it was to avoid any involvement in politics.<sup>13</sup>

From the beginning, the territory under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide was large. As a general principle, it was understood to cover those countries that had a non-Catholic government. There were, however, a few exceptions to this rule. For example, Russia subordinated ecclesiastically to the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, not Propaganda Fide.<sup>14</sup> This also concerned Finland, which belonged to the Russian Empire as an autonomous grand duchy during the years 1809–1917. Only after Finland had gained independence in 1917 and the Holy See had both separated the Finnish Catholics from the Russian archdiocese of Mohilev and established the apostolic vicariate of Finland in 1920, did Finland fall under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide.<sup>15</sup>

The territorial jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide was diminished as a result of the curial reforms of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1908, the apostolic constitution *Sapienti Consilio* of Pope Pius X entrusted to Propaganda Fide those regions where the sacred hierarchy had not yet been established and the status of mission remained. This reform removed from the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide those Protestant countries that had a considerable number of Catholic inhabitants (Great Britain, Holland, Luxembourg, Canada and the United States). When the Congregation for the Oriental Church was established in 1917, it took over the responsibility for the relationship of the Holy See with the Eastern Churches. Hence, as Propaganda Fide's jurisdiction over the Eastern Churches and the Protestant countries diminished, its attention shifted to the non-Christian areas in Asia and Africa, against which background the interest of van Rossum in the Nordic countries is a noteworthy deviation from the general missionary policy of the era.<sup>16</sup>

In 1918 the 64-year-old Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum was appointed as prefect of Propaganda Fide and he held this position until his death in 1932. The appointment of van Rossum to this important position was unusual, because he was not Italian but Dutch. He had,

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<sup>13</sup> Metzler 1971a, 37; Metzler 1971b, 80, 96, 104; *Del Re* 1998, 146. About the royal patronage, see for example *McAllister* 1984, 194–197.

<sup>14</sup> *Benigni* 1913.

<sup>15</sup> von Christierson to Dehon, 4.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 30; Metzler 1976b, 566; *Vuorela* 1989, 107–109; *Salo* 1997, 21–28. The Catholic Church in Finland belonged under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide until 1977. About Finland belonging under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide, see also *Atlas Missionum* 1958.

<sup>16</sup> *Benigni* 1913; *Del Re* 1998, 153; *Poels* 2011, 160.

however, already held several positions in the Roman Curia, the most notables being a consultor and a member of the Holy Office, a member of the Commission for the Codification of Canon Law, a member and later a chairman of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and the Major Penitentiary.<sup>17</sup> The choice of Pope Benedict XV of a neutral Dutchman as the prefect of Propaganda Fide was a deliberate attempt to show that the Holy See did not want to take sides in the First World War.<sup>18</sup>

The term of van Rossum was significant, because he developed and modernized the Catholic missionary work, which made the missionary movement boom. What was characteristic of this new missionary era, was the centralization of all missionary activities under the authority of the Holy See, a fact which was reflected, for example, in the relocation of the important missionary societies, like the originally French Society for the Propagation of the Faith<sup>19</sup>, to Rome. Van Rossum opposed the Europeanization traditionally attached to the mission among heathens, and strove to detach colonial interests from missionary work primarily by promoting the creation of an indigenous church hierarchy. Geographically, the area of Catholic missions was expanded by increasing the number of apostolic vicariates and prefectures. In order to increase the number of the Catholic missionaries, van Rossum invested in the expansion of religious institutes and in the training of future missionaries.<sup>20</sup> This new missionary activity was based on missionary policy formed during the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI and confirmed through the apostolic letter *Maximum illud* (1919) and the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926).<sup>21</sup> The latest research has even suggested that van Rossum might have played quite a significant role in formulating these documents.<sup>22</sup>

In van Rossum's time, the external organization of Propaganda consisted of delegations, dioceses, vicariates, prefectures, simple missions and colleges. The role of an apostolic delegation was to maintain the immediate representatives of the Holy See in places where the Church seemed to be growing in organization or in numbers. A diocese was a district under the supervision of a bishop, who held a title to the see and who administered the local ecclesiastical community with the aid of a cathedral chapter and parochial clergy. Those

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<sup>17</sup> Vernooij 2011, 9, 13–24.

<sup>18</sup> Prudhomme 2010, 81; Prudhomme 2011, 136.

<sup>19</sup> l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, founded in Lyon, France, in 1822. Prudhomme 2010, 79.

<sup>20</sup> Metzler 1976a, 303–312; Metzler 1976b, 464–465; Prudhomme 2011, 123–133; Vernooij 2011, 20–22.

<sup>21</sup> Metzler 1976a, 303; Metzler 1976b, 464–465; Prudhomme 2011, 123–135; Vernooij 2011, 19–21.

<sup>22</sup> Prudhomme 2010, 82; Prudhomme 2011, 136–137; Vernooij 2011, 21.

missionary regions, where a diocese had not yet been established, were either apostolic vicariates or apostolic prefectures. Apostolic vicariates were administered by a bishop, while apostolic prefectures, which were missions of minor importance, were administered by a mere ecclesiastic. The simple missions represented a transitory condition that could be strengthened by the establishment of an apostolic prefecture.<sup>23</sup>

### The “nationalization” of the Catholic Church in Finland

In the 1520s, when Finland was still part of the Swedish kingdom, King Gustav Vasa (1496–1560) carried through a Reformation in his realm.<sup>24</sup> Since then the main religion in Finland has been Lutheranism and the Finns had no right to convert to Catholicism until 1869. During the period of Russian rule (1809–1917) there were only two small Catholic parishes in Finland: Vyborg and Helsinki – both established mainly for Polish soldiers serving in the Russian army.<sup>25</sup> It has been estimated that there were roughly 1,000 Catholics in Finland in 1917, while the number of Orthodox at the same time was circa 63,000.<sup>26</sup> Since the Catholic parishes in Finland were subordinated to the Russian archdiocese of Mohilev<sup>27</sup> and the clergy and most of the parishioners in Finland were foreigners from Poland, Lithuania or other parts of the Russian Empire, Catholicism in Finland had a distinctly Russian or Slavic character.<sup>28</sup>

In the early 1900s the number of Finnish parishioners started to grow and the first indigenous clerics, Wilfrid von Christiernson (1878–1945) and Adolf Carling (1882–1966), were ordained to priesthood. They both had a common dream: to “nationalize” the Catholic Church in Finland by detaching it from the Russian archdiocese of Mohilev and increasing the number

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<sup>23</sup> *Benigni* 1913.

<sup>24</sup> *Lappalainen* 2009, 18, 23–24.

<sup>25</sup> von Christiernson to Dehon, 4.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 28–32; *Vuorela* 1989, 22–23, 26–27, 37–39; *Salo* 1997, 20–21.

<sup>26</sup> *Setälä* 1967, 168. The estimates vary annually. According to the official statistics, in 1915 there were only 443 Catholics in Finland, but in reality the number was bigger due to the Polish soldiers serving in the Russian army and the Russian summer house settlement in the Karelian isthmus. *Loima* 2006, 127. Also the Polish and Russian refugees during the First World War temporarily raised the number of Catholics alone in Helsinki approximately to 3,000. After the war, the amount of Catholics dropped. *Vuorela* 1989, 80–81. According to *Salo*, the amount of Catholics in 1919 was circa 700. *Salo* 1997, 26.

<sup>27</sup> The diocese of Mohilev was established in 1772 by the Empress Catherine the Great, without consulting Rome, and elevated to an archdiocese in 1782. *Vuorela* 1989, 24; *Pettinaroli* 2008, 47.

<sup>28</sup> von Christiernson to Dehon, 23.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 34–35; *Setälä* 1967, 168; *Vuorela* 1989, 22–23.

of Finnish parishioners by spreading the Catholic faith among the Finns.<sup>29</sup> Their dream seems to have been influenced by the rising Finnish national ideology of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Fennomania*, and strengthened by the attempts of the Russian authorities to russify Finland during the periods of oppression (1899–1905 and 1908–1917).<sup>30</sup> Moreover, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Finnish Catholics were more and more dissatisfied with the archdiocese of Mohilev because of its neglect of the Finnish parishes.<sup>31</sup>

The appointment of Wilfrid von Christierson as the administrator of the parish of Helsinki in 1906 is said to have begun a new Catholic mission period in Finland.<sup>32</sup> He, however, needed help in his endeavour of reviving the Catholic faith among the Finns. Christierson was by education and by his principles very much western-oriented and resented both Slavic culture and the domination of Poles in the Finnish parishes.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, he turned his eye to Western Europe and invited Father Leo Dehon (1843–1925) to send members of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (S.C.J.) to Finland, which was done during the years 1907–1910. Also, four French sisters arrived in Helsinki in 1908 to take care of the parish school and children's home there. The work of the priests of the S.C.J. and the French sisters was complicated by the suspicion of the Russian authorities towards Catholicism and all western influence, typical of Slavophilia and Pan-Slavism of the time in imperial Russia.<sup>34</sup>

By personal appeals to the Holy See and through Father Dehon's contacts in the Vatican, von Christierson pressed for the separation of Finland from the archdiocese of Mohilev and the establishment of a separate apostolic prefecture. In spite of these efforts, the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs decided in April 1908, that Finland could not be separated from Mohilev because Finland was a part of Russia, and the Holy See couldn't

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<sup>29</sup> von Christierson to Dehon, 4.2.1907 and 23.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 28–30, 35–36; *Vuorela* 1989, 23, 65, 107; *Vuorela* 1993, 25, 35, 108, 111–112.

<sup>30</sup> von Christierson to Dehon, 4.2.1907 and 23.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 28–30, 35–36; *Paasivirta* 1978, 321–346; *Vuorela* 1993, 17, 25, 35; *Pulkkinen* 1999, 130–133; *Loima* 2004, 96.

<sup>31</sup> von Christierson to Dehon, 4.2.1907 and 23.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 28–30, 35–36; *Vuorela* 1989, 107.

<sup>32</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 65. This is supported by the fact that the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, originally a French association aiming to help Catholic missionaries mainly financially, supported von Christierson's work during the years 1905–1908 with 15,000 francs. Mrs. von Christierson to Dehon, 31.12.1907, van Gijssel to Dehon, 28.2.1908, Mrs. von Christierson to Dehon 16.3.1908 and von Christierson do Dehon, 25.6.1910. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 65, 78, 87, 217.

<sup>33</sup> von Christierson to Dehon, 4.2.1907 and 23.2.1907. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 28–30, 35–36; *Vuorela* 2007, 15.

<sup>34</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 65, 71–77; *Vuorela* 2007, 13–33. About Slavophilia and Pan-Slavism see for example *Paasivirta* 1978, 306–310; *Loima* 2006, 135–149.

afford to antagonize the Russian government with whom it already had tense relations.<sup>35</sup> However, in 1909, the priests of the S.C.J. received authorization to work as missionaries directly under the Holy See even though Finland was part of the archdiocese of Mohilev.<sup>36</sup> According to *Laura Pettinaroli* it seems as if the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs aspired to create the basis of a missionary organization in Finland without establishing an apostolic prefecture or passing the affairs of Finland to Propaganda Fide.<sup>37</sup> The first mission period in Finland came to an end in 1911, when Russian authorities deported the members of the S.C.J. and forced the French sisters to leave the country. Due to the complaints of the Polish parishioners, von Christierson was also dismissed from his post.<sup>38</sup>

In the turmoil of the Russian Revolution,<sup>39</sup> Finland made a declaration of independence in December 1917. Immediately, both indigenous priests, von Christierson and Carling, sent a plea through the Greek Catholic Archbishop Andrei Sheptytskyi of Lwów to the Vatican, asking for the separation of the Finnish parishes from the archdiocese of Mohilev and the establishment of an apostolic vicariate subject directly to the Holy See. This was also the wish of the Finnish government, because the newly gained sovereignty of the nation no longer allowed the Catholic Church in Finland to be part of a foreign diocese. The same principle applied to the Orthodox Church as well. Settling the status of the Finnish Catholics, even though their number was small, was considered relevant also because of the world political importance of the Holy See, from whom the young republic wished to receive sympathy and support.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, only a few months after the declaration of independence, a Finnish delegation travelled to Rome to ask the Holy See to recognize Finland as a sovereign nation, which Pope Benedict XV did on 2 March 1918.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> von Christierson to Dehon, 4.10.1907, Dehon to von Christierson, 16.10.1907, 4.11.1907, 29.12.1907, 17.1.1908, 18.1.1908 and Dehon to Mrs. von Christierson, 31.1.1908. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 59–63, 72–75; *Pettinaroli* 2008, 274–275.

<sup>36</sup> Dehon to von Christierson, 22.4.1908. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 101–102; *Vuorela* 1989, 76; *Pettinaroli* 2008, 275.

<sup>37</sup> *Pettinaroli* 2008, 274–276.

<sup>38</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 65, 69–71, 74, 76–77.

<sup>39</sup> The Russian Revolution is the collective term for a series of revolutions in Russia in 1917 which led to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and ultimately to the rule of the Bolshevik (Communist) government.

<sup>40</sup> *Setälä* 1967, 168–169; *Setälä* 1968, 238; *Autio* 1986, 155–156; *Vuorela* 1989, 107–108; *Salo* 1997, 21–22.

<sup>41</sup> *Salo* 1997, 16–20.

The Catholic Church in Finland, however, could not be “nationalized” with the actions of the Finnish government only, because that would have made the local Church schismatic. Therefore, the Finnish government resorted to foreign policy, but it was complicated by the confrontation between the indigenous Catholic priests, who both lobbied for their own language political interests. Finnish-speaking Carling aimed to improve the status of Finnish, while Swedish-speaking von Christierson favoured Swedish and the Swedish-speaking parishioners who formed the majority of Catholics in Helsinki.<sup>42</sup> This controversy was part of a larger question about the position and the relative strength of Finnish (language of the common people) and Swedish (language of the upper class) in Finnish society, which became the target of political disputes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards and intensified after the independence.<sup>43</sup>

The diplomatic actions of the Finnish government in order to detach Finland from the archdiocese of Mohilev were directed to the Holy See through German diplomatic channels in October 1918.<sup>44</sup> The attitude of the Holy See towards the endeavours of Finland was positive from the beginning, even though the Polish Catholic Church considered itself as the heir of the prerogatives of the archdiocese of Mohilev, and therefore presumably opposed the detachment of Finland from it. In December 1918, the Holy See decided to send the apostolic nuncio in Warsaw, Monsignor Achille Ratti (later Pope Pius XI), to visit Finland. The visit, however, never took place – according to the official explanation, due to connection problems caused by the post-war situation. Therefore, the Finnish Secretary of State Rudolf Holsti (1881–1945) sent von Christierson in September 1919 to Rome to negotiate with the Holy See about the position of Finland within the Catholic Church. Carling, offended by the sending of von Christierson, travelled in October 1919 as a private person to Warsaw to discuss the Finnish situation with Monsignor Ratti.<sup>45</sup> In December 1919, the cardinal secretary of state Pietro Gasparri informed Rudolf Holsti that Pope Benedict XV was willing to separate Finland from the archdiocese of Mohilev and to elevate it directly to an apostolic vicariate, led by a bishop, instead of creating an apostolic prefecture, which would have been

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<sup>42</sup> *Setälä* 1967, 160–161, 168; *Vuorela* 1989, 108–109, 112.

<sup>43</sup> *Engman* 1995, 179–209; *Pulkkinen* 1999, 118–119, 130–131.

<sup>44</sup> *Setälä* 1967, 169–170; *Vuorela* 1989, 108; *Salo* 1997, 21–22.

<sup>45</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 108; *Salo* 1997, 21–23; *Pettinaroli* 2008, 401.

the normal procedure.<sup>46</sup> On 8 June 1920, the apostolic vicariate of Finland was officially established, and thereby Finland belonged to the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Finland became entwined in the new missionary policy of Benedict XV and, later, of Pius XI, in which one characteristic feature was the multiplication of the number of apostolic prefectures and vicariates. Benedict XV, for example, established 28 apostolic vicariates – Finland among them – and eight apostolic prefectures.<sup>48</sup> The establishment of a strong organization of Catholic mission in Finland seems to correspond with the idea of the Holy See about Finland being an outpost of European culture and therefore deserving to be supported.<sup>49</sup> This idea was obviously influenced by the eastern policy of the Holy See which strove to fight the spread of Communism by strengthening the position of the Catholic Church in the new nation states founded after the dissolution of Russia.<sup>50</sup> On the question of establishing the apostolic vicariate, the missionary policy of the Holy See and the national interests of Finland seemed to be in accordance with each other.

### **The apostolic visitation and the problem of appointing a vicar apostolic**

The first important step in van Rossum's goal to reintroduce Catholicism into the Nordic Countries was to carry out an apostolic visitation. Van Rossum saw apostolic visitations as one of the means to reorganize and revive the Catholic mission, and during the first year of his term he assigned apostolic visitations to take place in China, Siberia, South-Africa, Egypt and Albania.<sup>51</sup> The later visitation to the Nordic countries, which originally was intended to cover only Denmark, Norway and Sweden, was assigned to Monsignor Arnold Frans Diepen, the bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch) in the Netherlands. The visitation of Monsignor Diepen took place during the summer 1920 and as a deviation from the original plan it also included Finland, which had just been subsumed in the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gasparri to Holsti, 15.12.1919. *Wilk* (ed.) 2003, 262–263; *Vuorela* 1989, 109; *Salo* 1997, 28–29.

<sup>47</sup> *Metzler* 1976b, 566; *Vuorela* 1989, 107–109; *Salo* 1997, 21–28; *Pettinaroli* 2008, 401–402.

<sup>48</sup> *Prudhomme* 2011, 123, 128.

<sup>49</sup> Monsignor Marmaggi, the nuncio in Bucharest, had told Väinö Tanner, chargé d'affaires of Finland in Bucharest, about a report, drawn up by order of Benedict XV, according to which Finland was thought to be an outpost of European culture. *Salo* 1997, 19–20.

<sup>50</sup> About the Eastern policy see for example *Pettinaroli* 2008.

<sup>51</sup> *Metzler* 1976a, 305; *Poels* 2011, 165.

<sup>52</sup> *Salo* 1997, 31; *Poels* 2011, 159, 165.

The immediate reason for Monsignor Diepen's visitation was found in Sweden. There had arisen, in 1911 and again in 1916, some turmoil among lay Catholics who did not accept the Holy See's plan to pull the German Jesuits out of the country and to hand the Swedish parishes over to the Priests of the Sacred Heart. Most members of the Roman Curia, including Cardinal van Rossum, disapproved of the lay Catholics' interference in ecclesiastical affairs. This was thought to be a common feature of the Lutheran converts who – raised as Lutherans – had never learned to be good and obedient Catholics. Pope Benedict XV and Cardinal van Rossum discussed the Scandinavian issue during an audience on 20 February 1919 and decided to organize an apostolic visitation to correct the situation in the North.<sup>53</sup>

Finnish history has seen Monsignor Diepen's visitation in July 1920 as a continuation of the negotiations between the Holy See and the Finnish government to arrange the status of the Catholic Church in Finland.<sup>54</sup> Despite the establishment of the apostolic vicariate, the juridical status of the Catholic Church in Finland had remained unresolved, concerning especially the legitimacy of Catholic marriages and parish registers as well as the right of the Church to appoint its own administrators and priests.<sup>55</sup> In particular, the question of the administrator of the new apostolic vicariate needed to be settled. The Holy See intended to entrust the administration of the vicariate to a foreign congregation, which aroused opposition in the Finnish council of state because members of ecclesiastical congregations were understood to be monks, whose entry to the country was forbidden according to a parliamentary decree dating back to 1779. Therefore, the Finnish government supported entrusting the administration of the vicariate to the indigenous priests and wished to be heard concerning the question of appointing the new bishop. The Holy See was not pleased with the Finnish government's interference in ecclesiastical affairs, which was seen as an insult and restriction of the rights of the Holy See. In fact, the Holy See informed the Finnish negotiator von Christierson that if the appointment of a Catholic bishop had to be approved by the

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<sup>53</sup> *Poels* 2011, 159–162, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Dehon to von Christierson, 21.5.1920. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 238; *Setälä* 1967, 174; *Steinby* 1979, 185–186; *Autio* 1986, 156; *Vuorela* 1989, 110; *Salo* 1997, 31.

<sup>55</sup> *Inkinen* 1936, 112–113, 118–121; *Setälä* 1967, 175–176; *Vuorela* 1989, 112–113. The juridical status of the Catholic Church in Finland was not resolved until in 1929, when the Church finally signed up as a religious community according to the freedom of religion of 1922. *Setälä* 1967, 178; *Autio* 1986, 157–158; *Salo* 1997, 50.

Finnish government, the negotiations would cease and the separation from the archdiocese of Mohilev would be cancelled.<sup>56</sup>

During his visitation to Finland, Monsignor Diepen met President K. J. Ståhlberg (1865–1952) and discussed with the Minister of Education Lauri Ingman (1868–1934) about the possibility of sending members of Catholic congregations to Finland. Diepen also recommended the settling of the juridical status of the Catholic Church in Finland through a separate statute.<sup>57</sup> Such a statute was, in fact, outlined to form a basis for a possible concordat with the Holy See, but in the end the initiative was dropped, presumably due to the negative attitude of President Ståhlberg towards the scheme.<sup>58</sup> Diepen also met the Catholic priests in Finland, had particular discussions with Carling and apparently seemed to appreciate his views.<sup>59</sup> Overall, Bishop Diepen was content with his visitation to the Nordic countries and his enthusiasm presumably gave van Rossum a reason to believe that a Catholic mission there might bear fruit. In his report, Diepen stated that with the increase in the number of Catholic parishes, schools and religious orders the situation in the Nordic countries seemed promising. He also recommended that the vicars apostolic, especially in both Norway and Sweden, who were “old and stubborn and functioned poorly”, were to be replaced by younger men.<sup>60</sup>

According to *Vefie Poels*, it is clear from the archives of Propaganda Fide that van Rossum himself carefully directed the selection of the new apostolic vicars and prefects placed in every Nordic country during the years 1921–1923.<sup>61</sup> The Nordic countries strongly lobbied for their own candidates and in Finland Carling as well as von Christiernson wished to be appointed as the new vicar apostolic.<sup>62</sup> In fact, the indigenization of the clergy and the promoting of their admittance into the episcopate was one essential feature in van Rossum’s endeavours to modernize and develop the mission. The importance of local clergy had been noticed in different parts of Europe during the expulsions of foreign Catholic missionaries as citizens of hostile states during the First World War.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, van Rossum chose

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<sup>56</sup> *Setälä* 1967, 172–173; *Vuorela* 1993, 116–118; *Salo* 1997, 28–29.

<sup>57</sup> *Haranen* 1989, 49; *Salo* 1997, 31.

<sup>58</sup> *Inkinen* 1936, 118–122; *Setälä* 1967, 175–176; *Vuorela* 1989, 112–113; *Salo* 1997, 33–36.

<sup>59</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 77, 82, 110.

<sup>60</sup> *Poels* 2011, 165.

<sup>61</sup> *Poels* 2011, 165.

<sup>62</sup> Gasparri to Ratti, 31.12.1919. *Wilk* (ed.) 2003, 261; *Vuorela* 1989, 107–109; *Vuorela* 1993, 111, 114; *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 11; *Poels* 2011, 165–166.

<sup>63</sup> *Prudhomme* 2011, 130.

foreigners as leaders for all Nordic vicariates and prefectures: two Dutchmen, two Germans and one Belgian.<sup>64</sup>

Propaganda Fide presumably did consider the Finnish candidates to the episcopacy, because in November 1919 it had asked Father Dehon, leader of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, whose members had worked in Finland in 1907–1911, for an evaluation of von Christiernson and Carling.<sup>65</sup> In the end, however, the Catholic mission in Finland was entrusted to the Priests of the Sacred Heart and a Dutch Father Johannes Michael Buckx (1881–1946) was appointed as the apostolic administrator of Finland on 17 March 1921. He arrived in Finland in July the same year, after the Finnish government had re-interpreted the law of 1779 (forbidding the entry of religious orders in Finland) as referring to old religious orders, whose members gave solemn monastic vows, and not to later congregations, like the Priests of the Sacred Heart, which demanded only simple vows. On 15 August 1923, Buckx got the appointment of vicar apostolic.<sup>66</sup>

In Finnish historiography the refusal to appoint an indigenous priest as the vicar apostolic of Finland has been explained by the reciprocal rivalry and disputes between von Christiernson and Carling concerning the position of the native languages, which it was feared would damage the Catholic Church in Finland. The choice of a Dutchman has been seen as a neutral alternative amid the disputes between different language groups.<sup>67</sup> However, the correspondence between Monsignor Ratti and the Cardinal Gasparri suggests that the personal characteristics of the Finnish indigenous priests might also have affected the decision-making. Ratti seemed to consider von Christiernson as a man to whom important ecclesiastical affairs could not be entrusted, based on information he had received mainly from the high members of the clergy of the archdiocese of Mohilev – but also from Carling. Carling accused von Christiernson of poor knowledge of Theology and Canon Law, but also of tendencies to Lutheranism and of being schismatic: together with Swedish-speaking parishioners, von Christiernson had established a separate parish in Helsinki where lay Catholics took part in the administration. Moreover, von Christiernson considered himself as

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<sup>64</sup> To Denmark: Belgian Josef Brems (1870–1958); to Norway: Dutch Jan Olav Smit (1883–1972); to Finland: Dutch J.M. Buckx (1881–1946); to Sweden: German Johannes Erik Müller (1887 – 1965); to Iceland: German Martin Meulenberg (1872–1941). *Poels* 2011, 165–166.

<sup>65</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 109.

<sup>66</sup> *Inkinen* 1936, 117–118; *Setälä* 1967, 175; *Autio* 1986, 156–157; *Vuorela* 1989, 111–112; *Salo* 1997, 36–37.

<sup>67</sup> *Vuorela* 1989, 109–111; *Vuorela* 1993, 120; *Salo* 1997, 21–22, 28, 32–33.

the only legitimate Catholic priest in the country since the Finnish government had given him the mandate to negotiate with the Holy See and because the other Catholic priests were still subordinated to the Russian archdiocese of Mohilev, despite Finland's independence.<sup>68</sup>

Presumably Adolf Carling was seen in a better light, because, apparently on Bishop Diepen's recommendation, he was appointed in December 1920 as apostolic administrator. The appointment, however, was cancelled even before it reached Carling, and was explained as a result of an unfortunate breakdown in communications inside the Vatican.<sup>69</sup> The reason for the cancellation of the appointment is unknown, but one can always wonder whether his exaggerated nationalism had anything to do with it. Carling openly planned to give the Catholic Church in Finland – consisting by this time mostly of foreign parishioners – a distinctly Finnish label by improving the status of the Finnish language in the parishes. Furthermore, he planned a union of the Finnish Orthodox Church with the Holy See and, inspired by the Finnish nationalist idea of the “Greater Finland”<sup>70</sup>, even cultivated utopian plans to convert to Catholicism all the Finno-Ugric peoples living in the area of former Russia and speaking Finnic languages.<sup>71</sup> These plans clearly fought against one of the central features of the missionary policy of Propaganda Fide during the inter-war period: the emphasizing and increasing of the supranational character of the Catholic Church in order to suppress the effects of nationalism. According to this principle, the missionaries for example were prohibited from getting involved in politics or propagating in a nationalistic spirit the glory of their own nations.<sup>72</sup>

The Holy See justified the entrusting of the ecclesiastical administration of Finland to a foreign congregation by the necessity of securing the continuity of the vicariate in a country that had only two indigenous priests and very few Catholics in general, among whom new priests were very unlikely to appear.<sup>73</sup> This is in accordance with what is known about van

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<sup>68</sup> Ratti to Gasparri, 4.11.1919 and 31.12.1919 and Gasparri to Ratti, 31.12.1919. *Wilk* (ed.) 2003, 14–15, 254–255, 261.

<sup>69</sup> *Setälä* 1967, 174; *Vuorela* 1989, 110–111; *Salo* 1997, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Greater Finland was a nationalist idea which emphasized the territorial expansion of Finland mainly to the areas of East-Karelia and the Kola Peninsula in Soviet Russia, inhabited by Baltic-Finn kindred people. The idea gained popularity and influence even in Finnish foreign policy from 1917 onwards, but lost ground and support after World War II. *Kallenautio* 1985, 39–40.

<sup>71</sup> *Setälä* 1968, 235–242; *Vuorela* 1989, 112; *Vuorela* 1993, 111–112, 121, 134–138; *Salo* 1997, 25–26; *Vuorela* 2007, 14–15.

<sup>72</sup> *Metzler* 1971b, 104; *Metzler* 1976a, 310; *Prudhomme* 2005, 356; *Prudhomme* 2011, 131–132.

<sup>73</sup> Gasparri to Ratti, 31.12.1919 and Gasparri to Holsti, 15.12.1919. *Wilk* (ed.) 2003, 261–262; *Vuorela* 1989, 109; *Salo* 1997, 27–28.

Rossum's attitude towards religious institutes like congregations and religious orders. The relationship to them was close to van Rossum's heart, because he considered them as the principal initiators of the new missionary era and largely responsible for the Catholic missionary work in practice. Van Rossum favoured the education of missionary leaders among the members of the religious institutes, so that the leading figures wouldn't have to be sought elsewhere.<sup>74</sup> He also encouraged more congregations and orders to start working in the Nordic countries.<sup>75</sup> Because all the new apostolic vicars and prefects in the Nordic countries were foreigners, it is tempting to speculate whether also the turbulence caused by lay Catholics in Sweden made van Rossum question the ability of Lutheran converts – who had never learned to be good and obedient Catholics – to work as missionary leaders.

Both indigenous priests, Carling and von Christierson, were disappointed because the establishment of the vicariate apostolic of Finland, for which they both had fought for many years, had in the end weakened their own position. Von Christierson, the former parish priest in Helsinki, was degraded to chaplain. Carling for his part had got into a disagreement with Buckx, who refused to raise the Finnish language to a dominant position, and therefore withdrew from Vyborg to the small chapel in Terijoki, the “Siberia of the Netherlands”, as he called it.<sup>76</sup>

### **Van Rossum's visit**

The most memorable action of Cardinal van Rossum in his missionary endeavour concerning the Nordic countries was to personally visit all the countries in the North. His journey during the summer 1923 lasted for more than two months, and he chose even to visit Iceland even though the sea journey alone took over two weeks. The fact that the Nordic countries were the only missionary area of Propaganda Fide which van Rossum personally visited stresses the importance of the Nordic missionary endeavour to him. According to *Vefie Poels*, the Nordic missionary endeavour was primarily van Rossum's own project, because during his term as the prefect of Propaganda Fide, neither Benedict XV nor Pius XI showed a particular

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<sup>74</sup> Metzler 1976a, 311.

<sup>75</sup> Poels 2011, 166.

<sup>76</sup> Carling to Ratti, 15.1.1920. *Wilk* (ed.) 2003, 326; Dehon to von Christierson, 19.4.1921. *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 240; *Setälä* 1967, 177; *Vuorela* 1993, 121–122; *Verschuren* (ed.) 1999, 11.

interest in the Nordic countries.<sup>77</sup> Before his departure, the Scandinavian vicars apostolic had warned van Rossum that the Northern European Lutheran countries might interpret his journey as a threat. To his surprise, he was, however, kindly received by the Lutherans, and alongside the Catholics he met kings and political leaders as well as ministers of the Lutheran Churches.<sup>78</sup>

Van Rossum arrived in Finland on Sunday 12 August and stayed for a week. His official travel program included visits to the Catholic chapels of Turku and Terijoki and the Catholic churches of Vyborg and Helsinki. The main event in his programme was nevertheless the episcopal consecration of Monsignor Buckx, the vicar apostolic of Finland. The consecration took place on 15 August in Helsinki and it was the first consecration of a Catholic bishop in the Nordic countries since the Reformation, which added to its importance. Three Scandinavian bishops from Sweden, Norway and Denmark assisted the Cardinal in the ceremony. Many representatives of the Finnish government as well as several members of the diplomatic corps took part in the celebration, and large crowds gathered outside the church out of curiosity.<sup>79</sup> According to van Rossum, “The whole city was full of this event, everybody talked about the unparalleled celebration, the newspapers praised the Holy Church and its impressive and glorious ceremonies.”<sup>80</sup>

Van Rossum’s visit did arouse a great public stir because a cardinal with such a remarkable status in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church had never before been seen in Lutheran Finland.<sup>81</sup> Cardinal van Rossum himself was very pleased about the attention the visit and the consecration created,<sup>82</sup> because he clearly used his visit to the Nordic countries as a means to gain a lot of positive publicity to the Catholic Church. He posed in many newspapers, avoided being provocative and gave a lot of interviews emphasizing how he revered the

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<sup>77</sup> *Poels* 2011, 166, 169–170.

<sup>78</sup> *Poels* 2011, 166–167.

<sup>79</sup> “Kardinal van Rossum i Finland”, *Hbl* 13.8.1923; “Kardinaali van Rossum saapunut Suomeen”, *HS* 13.8.1923; “Kun “punainen paavi” kävi Turussa”, *HS* 14.8.1923; “Kardinaali van Rossum Viipurissa”, *HS* 14.8.1923; “Kardinal van Rossums besök i Norden”, *Hbl* 14.8.1923; “Kardinal van Rossum i Helsingfors”, *Hbl* 15.8.1923; “Biskopsinvigningen i katolsk kyrka”, *Hbl* 15.8.1923; “Kardinaali van Rossum Helsingissä”, *HS* 15.8.1923; “Suomelle vihitty katolinen piispa”, *HS* 16.8.1924; *van Rossum* 1924, 39–42.

<sup>80</sup> “Die ganze Stadt war voll von dem Ereignis, alles sprach von der nie geschauten Feier, die Blätter waren eines Lobes über die heilige Kirche und ihre ehrwürdigen ergreifenden Zeremonien.” *van Rossum* 1924, 42.

<sup>81</sup> “Kardinal van Rossums besök i Norden”, *Hbl* 14.8.1923; *Steinby* 1979, 187; *Vuorela* 1989, 118–120; *Lauha* 1993, 176.

<sup>82</sup> *van Rossum* 1924, 42.

Nordic people, their culture and their hospitality.<sup>83</sup> The Catholic press especially in Italy and in the Netherlands – the homeland of Cardinal van Rossum and Bishop Buckx – followed van Rossum’s visit to Finland and published descriptions about the country and its Catholic history, reported about the details of the journey and interpreted it as the advancement of Catholicism in Finland.<sup>84</sup> The Finnish publicity around van Rossum’s visit, however, was not always as overwhelming or overly positive as van Rossum himself described.

In particular, the religious press in Finland, reflecting the opinion of the Lutheran clergy, was highly critical towards van Rossum’s visit, which concretized the interest of Propaganda Fide towards Protestant Finland.<sup>85</sup> The religious press debated why the two small Catholic parishes were in need of a bishop and concluded that it had to be part of a papal plan to restore Protestant Finland to the sphere of influence of the “Mother Church”.<sup>86</sup> The increasing Catholic influence reflected by van Rossum’s visit was considered threatening especially because longing for mysticism and atmospheric rituals – characteristic of Catholicism but absent in Lutheran devotion – were seen to be increasing among the Finnish cosmopolitan educated classes and in artistic circles.<sup>87</sup> The Lutheran clergy feared that people in Finland knew so little about the Catholic Church in general, that they did not even understand enough to be afraid of Catholic evangelization: “And that is why we do not even take the defensive position. The papal church, on the other hand, is always mobilized to attack, always in activity. Its ‘actio catholica’ never rests. Everywhere its henchmen, especially Jesuits, keep watching and lurking.”<sup>88</sup>, warned one opponent of Catholicism.

The fear of Catholic expansion was not, however, a purely Finnish phenomenon, but highly influenced by the European anti-Catholic movement that arose as a consequence of the First

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<sup>83</sup> *Poels* 2011, 166–167; see for example *Hbl* 19.8.1923 Hos hans Eminens, en blixintervju.

<sup>84</sup> “Den katolska kyrkan i Finland. En holländsk tidning om Mgr Buckx och om vår medeltida kyrkokonst”, *Hbl* 13.7.1923; “Kirje Roomasta. Kardinaali van Rossum Suomessa”, *HS* 12.8.1923; “Monsignor Buckx om Finland. Ett sympatiskt uttalande i en holländsk tidning”, *Hbl* 14.8.1923; SLS, SLSA 900, AA 900.2., “L’E.mo van Rossum in Finlandia”, *OR* 19.9.1923; SLS, SLSA 900, AA 900.2., “La Finlandia cattolica”, *OR* 23.9.1923; SLS, SLSA 900, AA 900.2., “La Finlandia cattolica”, *Corriere di Vicentino*, 25.9.1923; *Steinby* 1979, 187.

<sup>85</sup> *Haranen* 1989, 78, 81–84; *Lauha* 1993, 177–179; *Tenhunen* 2004, 68–72.

<sup>86</sup> “Rooman kirkko Suomessa”, *Paimen* 1.8.1923; “Paavillinen kirkko luterilaisessa Suomessa”, *Kotimaa* 10.8.1923; “Tien ohesta tempomia. Katolisuuden vaara”, *Herättäjä* 10.8.1923; *Lehtonen* 1927, 5–11.

<sup>87</sup> “Rooman kirkko Suomessa”, *Paimen* 1.8.1923; “Paavillinen kirkko luterilaisessa Suomessa”, *Kotimaa* 10.8.1923; “Tien ohesta tempomia. Katolisuuden vaara”, *Herättäjä* 10.8.1923; *Lehtonen* 1927, 5–11; *Haranen* 1989, 78, 81–84; *Lauha* 1993, 177–179, 201–202.

<sup>88</sup> “Ja siksi emme mobilisoi edes puolustusasentoon. Paavinkirkko sen sijaan on aina mobilisoituna hyökkäämään, ollen aina aktiivisessa toiminnassa. Sen ‘actio catholica’ ei koskaan lepää. Kaikkiällä sen kätyrit, ennen kaikkea jesuiitat, valvovat ja vaanivat.” *Lehtonen* 1927, 10.

World War that had strengthened the position of Catholic Church in Europe: predominantly Catholic Belgium, France and Italy belonged to the victors; three new Catholic states, Lithuania, Poland and Ireland, had been formed; and the Catholic Church had gained a firm foothold in the political life of Germany and the Netherlands. The prolific influence of Catholicism was reflected by the tendency to increase dioceses, vicariates and prefectures in the Protestant countries, which had also happened in Finland. The actions of Pius XI to mobilize the Catholic mission made the Protestants even talk about a new Counter-Reformation.<sup>89</sup>

The rivalry between the Catholics and the Protestants in the inter-war Europe led in 1923 to the establishment of an anti-Catholic Protestant defence alliance, *Verband zur Verteidigung des Protestantismus*, in Germany. It was largely German propaganda that speeded up the development of anti-Catholic attitudes in Finland, but evidently the cooperation called border state policy during the years 1919–1927 between Finland and other countries, such as Catholic Poland, that had recently broken free from Russia, restrained the Lutheran clerical unions from joining in the Protestant defence alliance.<sup>90</sup>

Despite this anti-Catholic atmosphere, many Finnish Lutherans were ready to welcome the prefect of Propaganda Fide to Finland. The newspapers of the metropolitan area, *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Hufvudstadsbladet*, for example, proclaimed that the fears about the appeal of Catholicism among the Lutherans were highly exaggerated and therefore van Rossum could safely be welcomed to Finland.<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, there was, as van Rossum himself wrote in his travelogue, “a committee formed of Protestant gentlemen to receive us properly and to show us all the sights”<sup>92</sup> on his arrival in the old capital of Finland, Turku. These Protestant gentlemen were well-known members of the Finnish cultural elite: businessman Amos Anderson; lector and promoter of museum work, Julius Finnberg; architect Armas Lindgren; state archaeologist Juhani Rinne; vice consul of the Netherlands in Turku, Edgar Grönblom and vice-chancellor of Åbo Akademi, the Swedish University in Turku, Severin Johansson.

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<sup>89</sup> Lauha 1993, 21; about the mobilization of the Catholic mission, see for example *Prudhomme* 2011, 123–135.

<sup>90</sup> The Finnish clerical unions joined in the German Protestant defence alliance in 1927 when the border state policy was over. *Salokangas* 1987, 634–636; *Lauha* 1993, 184–188.

<sup>91</sup> “De katolska kyrkosamfundets ställning”, *Hbl* 3.8.1923; “Kirje Helsingistä. Turhaa levottomuutta”, *HS* 4.8.1923; “Den romersk-katolsk kyrkan och Finland”, *Hbl* 16.8.1923; “Kirje Helsingistä. Kardinaali”, *HS* 18.8.1923.

<sup>92</sup> “Da die Katholiken dort noch sehr gering an Zahl sind, hatte sich ein Ausschuss aus protestantischen Herren gebildet, um uns gebührend zu empfangen und uns alle Sehenswürdigkeiten zu zeigen.” *van Rossum* 1924, 39.

The new vicar apostolic of Finland, Monsignor Buckx, also welcomed van Rossum along with the local Catholics, but his presence was not even mentioned in van Rossum's travelogue.<sup>93</sup> Apparently, the attention van Rossum received from the Protestants suited better the propagandist aims of his booklet.

The leader of the reception committee, Amos Anderson, probably influenced van Rossum's impressions about the religious state of the Finns a great deal. Besides being a businessman, Anderson was also a Member of Parliament, the editor of the newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* and a well-known supporter of Catholicism – even though he was a Lutheran.<sup>94</sup> Anderson was acquainted with Monsignor Buckx who wanted to give van Rossum's visit to Finland a more official character than the Cardinal's visits to the other Nordic countries had had – presumably in order to add importance to his own episcopal consecration. Buckx arranged for van Rossum a meeting with the President of the Republic, Ståhlberg, and asked Anderson to plan some other official programme.<sup>95</sup> For this reason, Anderson ended up hosting that part of van Rossum's visit which had no ecclesiastical character. Finnish historiography even gives Anderson credit for convincing van Rossum to change his plans to consecrate Monsignor Buckx in Helsinki instead of Copenhagen, Denmark. Together, Anderson and Buckx had sent a telegram to Rome requesting Cardinal van Rossum to extend his journey to Finland, which actually happened.<sup>96</sup> Obviously there might also have been some other reasons unknown to us behind van Rossum's decision.

Considering Anderson was a Lutheran, he was unusually interested in Catholic mysticism, church art and sacral music, and aimed to improve the status of the Catholic Church in Finland, for which he was also criticised or even ridiculed – especially after van Rossum's visit.<sup>97</sup> In her dissertation *Eva Ahl-Waris* has claimed, however, that Amos Anderson's interest in Catholicism was not an interest in the Catholic faith in itself, but rather an expression of High Church sympathies. High Church was a Protestant movement gaining

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<sup>93</sup> “Kardinaali van Rossum saapunut Suomeen”, *HS* 13.8.1923; “Kardinal van Rossum i Finland”, *Hbl* 13.8.1923; “Kun punainen paavi kävi Turussa”, *HS* 14.8.1923; *van Rossum* 1924, 39.

<sup>94</sup> *Landgrén* 2000; *Tenhunen* 2004, 25, 125–129.

<sup>95</sup> SLS, *SLSA 900*, AA 900.1 (Buckx to Anderson, 27.6.1923).

<sup>96</sup> *Anderson* 1962, 88–89; *Steinby* 1979, 186; *Vuorela* 1989, 117–118; *Lauha* 1993, 176; *Salo* 1997, 37–38.

<sup>97</sup> “Chanson Amosant”, *Blinkfyren* 1.4.1924; *Tenhunen* 2004, 28–30, 75–77; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 129, 169, 191.

popularity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century wanting to reform the Lutheran liturgy – lacking mysticism – and closely related to ecumenism and admiration of medieval monasticism.<sup>98</sup>

On the other hand, a special feature uniting most of the members in van Rossum's reception committee was their interest in the Catholic past of Finland, which was clearly related to the building of national identity and to the west-oriented patriotic conception of Finnish history already developed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. State Archaeologist Juhani Rinne, for example, was the pioneer of Finnish medieval archaeology and directed together with architect Armas Lindgren the restoration of Turku cathedral, the national shrine built in the Catholic Middle Ages. The restoration project, which had been started on the initiative of Anderson in 1923, reflected for the first time in Finland a new scientific endeavour to restore medieval features and details, such as the Catholic wall paintings, which had been painted over during the period of Lutheran orthodox doctrine.<sup>99</sup>

As for Anderson, he believed that the Catholic Middle Ages had been the Golden Age for Finland. In 1921, he financed a book written by experts in art history and architecture, called *Religious Art in Finland during the Middle Ages*. The book was published in five languages (Finnish, Swedish, English, French and German) and attracted attention abroad.<sup>100</sup> In addition, inspired by Swedish examples, Anderson was fascinated by the Birgittine Order, founded by St. Birgitta of Sweden (1303–1373)<sup>101</sup>. Together with lector Julius Finnberg, he initiated the revival of the Birgittine legacy during the years 1921–1923 in the form of Catholic vespers in Naantali, where a Birgittine abbey was situated in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Anderson's vespers was not a proper prayer service, but rather an atmospheric musical drama representing Catholic tradition.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, based on Catholic saints' legends, Anderson wrote a play called *Vallis Gratiae*<sup>103</sup> which represented medieval spiritual life, poetry, and music. The play had its premiere in May 1923 in Helsinki and was a success.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Ahl-Waris* 2009, 65; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 143, 159, 164–166, 169, 191.

<sup>99</sup> *Kaisti* 1979; *Tenhunen* 2004, 21–23, 31, 32–37, 52–58, 125; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 129–182.

<sup>100</sup> *Tenhunen* 2004, 32–37, 125; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 148, 166–170.

<sup>101</sup> *Setälä & Mäkelä-Alitalo* 1997.

<sup>102</sup> *Tenhunen* 2004, 21–32; *Ahl-Waris* 2009, 61–62; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 143–159.

<sup>103</sup> *Vallis Gratiae* was the name of the Birgittine monastery in Naantali. *Ahl-Waris* 2009, 46.

<sup>104</sup> *Tenhunen* 2004, 52–62; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 180–182.

These people were happy to welcome van Rossum because according to their view, Finland owed a great debt of gratitude to the Catholic Church which during the Middle Ages had brought western culture to Finland. It was emphasized that although Finland only had a short political history as an independent nation, its cultural history, dating back to the Catholic Middle Ages, was old and rich, and this was seen as an asset in the attempts of the young nation to establish itself among other sovereign states of the Western Europe. The patriotic view of Finnish history emphasizing the early contacts with western culture suited well to the anti-Russian atmosphere in Finland in the 1920s.<sup>105</sup> Anderson and his like-minded friends justified the visit of van Rossum by the fact that it had a positive effect on the international image of the young nation, because it was a definite sign of Finland's detachment from Russia and a confirmation of the Holy See's recognition of Finland's independence.<sup>106</sup>

These ideas were clearly visible when the Protestant reception committee presented Turku to van Rossum. The tour included both Swedish and Finnish universities, but special attention was paid on the historical attractions reflecting the Catholic past of Finland: Turku Castle, where the relics of the Catholic bishop Hemmingus (c. 1290–1366)<sup>107</sup> were kept, and Turku Cathedral, which was under restoration to its original medieval appearance. The visit to the medieval Church of St. Mary, near the medieval residence of the Catholic bishops of Finland, however, seemed to impress van Rossum most. There, a Lutheran parson, called Tallgren, who together with his whole family shared Amos Anderson's enthusiasm towards medieval history, welcomed the Cardinal in Latin and had decorated the altar with candles and flowers, which was not the custom in the Lutheran churches. Later on, Parson Tallgren got into trouble with the other Lutheran clergy because of his hospitality towards a Catholic cardinal.<sup>108</sup>

On Friday 17 August, Amos Anderson organized a tea party in his house in Helsinki in honour of van Rossum, which the Cardinal described in detail and with delight in his travelogue. Anderson had invited approximately 150 guests, including the Finnish council of

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<sup>105</sup> Anderson 1962, 87, 95–96; Haranen 1989, 77–79; Karemaa 1998, 148; Tenhunen 2004, 27, 33–34, 37; Ahl-Waris 2010, 129–133, 167.

<sup>106</sup> SLS, *SLSA 900*, AA 900.1, (Buckx to Anderson, 27.6.1923); “Den romersk-katolsk kyrkan och Finland”, *Hbl* 16.8.1923; “Kirje Helsingistä. Kardinaali”, *HS* 18.8.1923; Anderson 1962, 87, 95–96; Haranen 1989, 78–79.

<sup>107</sup> Palola 1998.

<sup>108</sup> “Kardinal van Rossum i Finland”, *Hbl* 13.8.1923; “Kardinaali van Rossum saapunut Suomeen”, *HS* 13.8.1923; “Kun ”punainen paavi” kävi Turussa”, *HS* 14.8.1923; van Rossum 1924, 39–41; Anderson 1962, 90–93.

state and many notable representatives of Finnish cultural life as well as some members of the diplomatic corps. A choir sang medieval Latin songs and Anderson gave a speech in German expressing in the name of the Finnish people the appreciation of Cardinal van Rossum's visit. As a souvenir Anderson donated to van Rossum a special Latin edition of his book about medieval religious art in Finland, *Flores Ecclesiae Finlandiae medii aevi*.<sup>109</sup>

Amos Anderson's overwhelming enthusiasm for the visit of Cardinal van Rossum, however, caused anxiety in certain circles. Before the visit, Anderson was warned by influential political circles to avoid any imprudent actions during the visit, because they might incite anti-Catholic tendencies in the country, thus compromising the organizing of the status of the Catholic Church in Finland.<sup>110</sup> This warning was probably related to an account published in a Catholic Dutch newspaper and later also in the Finnish press, which indicated that Amos Anderson's play *Vallis Gratiae* and the book about Finnish religious art published by him were signs of a growing interest towards Catholicism in Finland.<sup>111</sup> The conservative circles were worried that Cardinal van Rossum might misinterpret the appreciation of the medieval Catholic history, reflected for example in the restoration of the Turku cathedral or in the celebration of St. Birgitta of Sweden, as a sign of benevolence towards the Catholic faith and as a sign of weakness concerning the status of the Lutheran religion and culture.<sup>112</sup> Ironically, this was exactly what van Rossum did.

### **Religious lies?**

Van Rossum's most straightforward attempt to promote the mission in northern Europe was the writing of a travelogue in which he described his journey to the Protestant North. It was first published in Dutch (*Aan mijne katholieke landgenooten*), but became known in the Nordic countries in German translation titled *Die religiöse Lage der Katholiken in den nordischen Ländern* (1924). The purpose of the travelogue was the promotion of missionary

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<sup>109</sup> SLS, *SLSA 900*, AA 900.2.3.9, (Tal hållet till Kardinal van Rossum på tebjudningen, 17.8.1923); *van Rossum* 1924, 42–43; *Anderson* 1962, 95–98; *Steinby* 1979, 188; *Vuorela* 1989, 119–120.

<sup>110</sup> SLS, *SLSA 900*, AA 900.1, (A letter from Hjalmar Procopé, mediating the message of former Prime Minister Lauri Ingman, to Amos Anderson, 6.7.1923).

<sup>111</sup> "Den katolska kyrkan i Finland. En holländsk tidning om Mgr Buckx och om vår medeltida kyrkokonst", *Hbl* 13.7.1923; *Steinby* 1979, 189.

<sup>112</sup> *Haranen* 1989, 81–82; *Lauha* 1993, 176–179; *Tenhunen* 2004, 69–72.

zeal in the Netherlands, among the countrymen of van Rossum. He requested the Dutch to pray, to donate money and to send out missionaries to convert the Nordic countries.<sup>113</sup>

In the Nordic countries the travelogue caused uproar because its basic claim was that people in the North were ready to renounce Protestantism and convert to Catholicism.<sup>114</sup> Van Rossum claimed that he had seen during his journey how the Protestants had realized what a mistake the Reformation had been and therefore searched for the truth in Catholicism. He wrote: “This impression is supported by historical research, which is so ardently practised in the Nordic countries. - - Therefore what is to be found and to be salvaged from the Catholic era is carefully and diligently traced, restored and preserved.”<sup>115</sup> Van Rossum considered the respect towards the Catholic past as a bridge facilitating the return of the Nordic Protestants to the faith of their ancestors.<sup>116</sup>

According to van Rossum’s travelogue, the Lutheran services were filled with emptiness, soullessness and deathly coldness, which drove people away. Putting candles and flowers on the altar – like pastor Tallgren in Turku had done – or celebrating St. Birgitta with Catholic rites, were according to van Rossum signs of desperate attempts to bring life into the Lutheran services.<sup>117</sup> In reality, these acts might simply have reflected the ecumenical endeavours towards a greater Christian unity that gained popularity in the Nordic countries during the inter-war period. This was the case with the Swedish Lutheran Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, the leading figure of the Protestant ecumenical movement, whose presentation about St. Birgitta and Reformation at the first Swedish St. Birgitta celebration in 1916 is said to have created a wider interest towards medieval art and the revival of the Birgittine legacy.<sup>118</sup> The attitude of the Catholic Church towards the ecumenical movement, however, was negative because the Church understood itself as the one and only true Church of Christ where holy unity already existed. Therefore van Rossum saw the ecumenical endeavours in

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<sup>113</sup> *van Rossum* 1924, 7, 49–52; *Poels* 2011, 167.

<sup>114</sup> *van Rossum* 1924, 44–48; *Steinby* 1979, 189–191; *Lauha* 1993, 202–204; *Poels* 2011, 167.

<sup>115</sup> “Gestützt und gefördert wird diese Gesinnung nicht unbeträchtlich durch das Studium der Geschichte, das in den nordischen Ländern so fleissig betrieben wird. ... Daher spürt man auch so sorgfältig und emsig wieder alles auf, stellt wieder her und sucht zu erhalten, was noch aus katholischer Zeit aufzufinden und zu retten ist.” *van Rossum* 1924, 45–46.

<sup>116</sup> *van Rossum* 1924, 46, 48.

<sup>117</sup> *van Rossum* 1924, 44–48.

<sup>118</sup> *Lauha* 1993, 15, 20; *Tenhunen* 2004, 21; *Ahl-Waris* 2010, 144. Amos Anderson was acquainted with Söderblom and his ecumenical views through correspondence which had started the same year van Rossum visited Finland. *Anderson* 1962, 34–35; *Tenhunen* 2004, 85–106, 127.

the Nordic countries as a sign of Protestantism falling apart, which gave him an additional reason to believe that people in the North, who were searching for the Christian unity, might be ready to return to the Mother Church.<sup>119</sup>

Probably for propaganda purposes van Rossum also distorted certain incidents that had taken place during his journey. A lot of condemnation was aroused in Finland by van Rossum's claim that during his visit to the church of St. Mary, parson Tallgren's wife had taken Monsignor Buckx's hand and said to him: "This is our bishop, you are our shepherd". According to Mrs. Tallgren, she had never said, or even thought, anything like that and she found it very hard to believe that Cardinal van Rossum would have wilfully twisted the truth.<sup>120</sup> Doubts and anger were also raised by the claims that van Rossum had met several Lutheran pastors, who thought Protestantism was a mistake and deception, and were willing to convert to Catholicism, but could not do so without endangering their livelihood.<sup>121</sup> Because of such untrue claims, one Finnish magazine suggested that instead of *Die religiöse Lage* (the religious state) van Rossum's travelogue should be called *Die religiöse Lüge* (the religious lie).<sup>122</sup>

Obviously, van Rossum's impressions of the Nordic countries were coloured by his uncompromising and competitive attitude towards Protestantism, which he had adopted already during his youth in the Netherlands – at the time a predominantly Protestant country, where the subordinate role of Catholics was to be seen both in politics and in intellectual and economic life. His views were strengthened in 1873 when he entered the postulate of the Redemptorists, a congregation supporting the conversion of Protestants to Catholicism.<sup>123</sup> Presumably van Rossum's anti-Protestant ideas were confirmed when moving to Rome in 1895, where Protestantism was considered as a serious threat to the Catholic faith, because it seemed to spread much faster around the world than Catholicism did. During the pontificate of Leo XIII, a Pontifical Work for the Preservation of the Faith was established in order to stop the spread of Protestantism. In 1902, the task of promoter of the "Work" was entrusted

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<sup>119</sup> van Rossum 1924, 45; Poels 2011, 164.

<sup>120</sup> van Rossum 1924, 41; "Katolisuus ja Pohjoismaat", *Suunta* 23.8.1924; "Katolisuus ja Pohjoismaat", *Suunta* 30.8.1924.

<sup>121</sup> van Rossum 1924, 36, 48; "Kiertokatsaus", *Kirkko ja kansa* 1.4.1924; "Katolisuus ja Pohjoismaat", *Suunta* 23.8.1924; "Der neueste Angriff Roms auf den Norden, besonders auf Finnland", *Deutsch-evangelisch in Finnland* 1.1.1925.

<sup>122</sup> "Blinkfyrens fyrblinkar. Religiöse Lüge", *Blinkfyren* 1.12.1924.

<sup>123</sup> Poels 2011, 162–163; Vernooij 2011, 9–10, 13–14.

to van Rossum, who warned his fellow Catholics against a widespread Protestant network trying to destroy the Catholic faith even in Rome. The “Work” was supported both by Pius X and Benedict XV.<sup>124</sup>

In the end van Rossum’s travelogue turned out to be a grave miscalculation in relation to his Nordic missionary endeavours. It made van Rossum, who during his visit had appeared to be charming and benign, look deceitful and ungrateful of the warm welcome he had received. In Finland especially the religious press reproached both Amos Anderson and the political leaders for showing unnecessary politeness, grovelling even, to this uncompromising Catholic cardinal, who saw Finnish hospitality merely as a sign of weakness on behalf of the Protestants. To the Finns the travelogue proved the suspicions of the Lutheran clergy right: van Rossum had indeed been exploring the ground for a Catholic “invasion” of the Nordic countries. Such a threat to Lutheran identity considerably increased the anti-Catholic attitude in Finland and in the other Nordic countries.<sup>125</sup>

The most noticeable – and semi-official – reaction against van Rossum’s travelogue was a statement drawn up by the Finnish and Swedish Central Organizations of Parish Work<sup>126</sup> in December 1924. According to this statement, the attention shown to Cardinal van Rossum in Finland had been normal hospitality and a general curiosity of the crowds, not a sign of an interest in the Catholic faith. The fact that members of the Finnish cultural and political elite had met van Rossum was explained by political and national interests: it was a question of gratitude towards the Holy See which was among the first to recognize the independence of Finland. The Catholic propaganda in van Rossum’s booklet was condemned and considered to constitute unjustifiable interference in the ecclesiastical life of Finland. The clerical union in Sweden formulated a similar protest as well.<sup>127</sup>

As a consequence of the uproar caused by his travelogue, van Rossum felt obliged to write a public apology, published in the newspapers, for any hurt that he may have caused among the people in the North. The apology, however, did not manage to cease the anti-Catholic writing

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<sup>124</sup> *Poels* 2011, 163–164.

<sup>125</sup> “Kiertokatsaus”, *Kirkko ja Kansa* 1.11.1924; “Chanson Amosant”, *Blinkfyren* 1.4.1924; “Der neueste Angriff Roms auf den Norden, besonders auf Finnland”, *Deutsch-evangelisch in Finnland* 1.1.1925; *Steinby* 1979, 190–191; *Haranen* 1989, 89–91; *Lauha* 1993, 202–204.

<sup>126</sup> Suomen Kirkon Seurakuntatyön Keskusliitto (SKSK) and Förbundet för Svenskt Församlingsarbete i Finland (FSF).

<sup>127</sup> *Haranen* 1989, 91–92; *Lauha* 1993, 204–206.

which continued for a few years. Some Catholics held van Rossum responsible for the setbacks of the Nordic missionary policy, and it was even claimed that van Rossum's poor results had halted the progress of Catholicism altogether in the Nordic countries.<sup>128</sup>

## Conclusions

After Finland gained independence in 1917, the nationalistic efforts to break free from all Russian influence led the Catholic Church in Finland to the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide. Thus Finland became part of Cardinal Willem van Rossum's Nordic missionary policy, whose reception in Finland was characterized by balancing between nationalistic and religious interests.

In the field of religious interests, the missionary actions of Cardinal van Rossum revived the age-old confrontation between Catholicism and Protestantism. Accordingly, the most antagonistic to van Rossum's visit was the Lutheran clergy, whose duty it was to safeguard the Lutheran faith against Catholic evangelization. On the other hand, the nationalistic interests, like the tendency to bolster up the international image of the young nation, made certain members of the Finnish cultural elite warmly welcome van Rossum to Finland.

Especially Amos Anderson's enthusiasm towards Catholicism and the Catholic past of Finland probably gave van Rossum an erroneous impression about the attitudes of the larger public – but also a propagandist weapon. By interpreting the interest in the Catholic past as a sign of interest in the Catholic faith, and by slandering the Lutheran faith and culture in his travelogue, van Rossum meant to legitimize the need to support the Nordic mission. Unfortunately, this propaganda backfired by hurting the national self-esteem of the Finns to whom the Lutheran Church was still an integral part of Finnish national history and culture. In the end, increasing anti-Catholic atmosphere in Finland and in other Nordic countries proved van Rossum's Nordic mission to have been far too naive and idealistic.

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<sup>128</sup> Lauha 1993, 207–208; Salo 2007, 38–39; Poels 2011, 167, 170.

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