



*Auctoritate Papae. The Church Province of Uppsala and the Apostolic Penitentiary 1410-1526*, Sara Risberg ed., intr. by Kirsi Salonen (Diplomatarium Suecanum Appendix, Acta Pontificum Suecica 2, Acta Poenitentiariae), National Archives of Sweden: Stockholm 2008. 520 p.

The archives of the Apostolic penitentiary, now housed at the Vatican Secret Archives, have been accessible to only a handful of selected scholars, and only from the 1980s on. Luckily this privileged group has included a good number of Scandinavian scholars (in addition to the authors of this present book, one could mention Danish historian Per Ingesman). So far this research has produced mainly articles and monograph studies. The present study, however, is a general introduction to the Penitentiary and the Swedish material in it, as well as to the comprehensive edition of that material.

Let's not beat about the bush: this is an extremely important book for two reasons. Firstly, the introduction to the book, written by Kirsi Salonen, is, as far as I know – together with Kirsi Salonen's own published dissertation – the most comprehensive text written in English on the subject to date. It holds up well in comparison with the classic German language introduction to the penitentiary published some thirteen years ago. Furthermore, scholarly study of the Apostolic Penitentiary has thrived during this last decade; the bibliography in the present book is thus much broader and more up-to-date than that of its German predecessor.

The second reason is that the book's second part – the edition itself – is a considerable addition to the existing source material on the medieval history of Sweden and Finland. There are altogether 453 documents, most of

which have never before been printed, or even known to the scholarly community. Not only is the number of new documents impressive, they are also of a very different nature from the majority of surviving Swedish and Finnish medieval material. These documents do not deal with fiscal issues or landowning, but are in many cases far more personal. Some of them are indeed so colourful that, had they been of the present day, they would surely have made the headlines of tabloid magazines.

Thus, *summa summarum*, there is no doubt that this book belongs on the shelves of any serious scientific library, or of any scholar of Scandinavian medieval history, by virtue of its subject matter alone. Having said that, however, we must take a closer look at the book in order to evaluate the manner in which the edition project has been carried out.

The introductory part of the book is written by Kirsi Salonen, who is considered one of the primary authorities on the Papal penitentiary and well-schooled in Canon law in general; thus it comes as no surprise that the text is very competent and thorough. As always, there are minor issues that raise questions, but, it must be stressed, these have no significant effect on the general level of the text, which is excellent. One could, for example, ask why she has decided to use the Finnish name of the diocese (Turku) instead of the Swedish name (Åbo), or why the text speaks of the 'Birgittine order' when the common English form would be 'Bridgettine order'. These seem to be ideological choices rather than simple mistakes; one might thus expect some kind of explanation as to why these forms were chosen.

When presenting the cardinal penitentiaries, regents, and others who worked with the Penitentiary, Salonen does not differentiate between those people who worked at the Penitentiary of the anti-pope John XXIII and those who worked with the official Penitentiary. It can be argued that, from the point of view of the Catholic Church, the members of the anti-pope's administration were not functionaries of the Apostolic Penitentiary at all. The fact that the first documents of this edition were dealt with by the Penitentiary of the Pisan anti-pope is explained for the reader only in the third footnote of page 93.

The second part of the book – the edition proper – is much more difficult to evaluate, for the simple reason that, since Penitentiary volumes are not available on microfilm, it is far too difficult to make even occasional checks to control the quality of the transcription. One must therefore simply look at the principles of the edition as they are presented in the book and assume the transcriptions to be faultless. (In reading the text I found no obvious misspellings.)

The editorial principles are explained clearly, and as far as it is possible to see without the actual manuscripts, they have been followed in a logical fashion. The choices reflected in these principles are in some cases too philological for my liking. It is understandable that banal errors in the text have been corrected, but I do not see any reason to add missing words to *formulae* even in the clearest possible cases, nor to delete words which according to the editor are either unnecessary or scribal errors. From a historian's point of view it is the Latinist's capital sin to always presume to know better how the language of the medieval authors should have been written, and to try to 'restore' it to its 'correct' form. Luckily, in this case deleted words have been left in the text and merely placed within square brackets. As a general rule, however, the text as found in the manuscript should be tampered with as little as humanly possible.

The edition on the other hand will be found to be very user friendly by those readers whose skills in Latin leave something to be desired. All the documents are preceded by a reasonably long and detailed English summary. It is thus possible to grasp the content of the texts very quickly without having to translate the original Latin. There are also good indices of the persons and places, which further facilitate the search for information. Unfortunately, there is no subject index. Considering the time and effort put into this book, it would have been a good idea to go the extra mile and create a thorough subject index too. Nevertheless, it must be stressed, this edition is, even in its present form, a very useful tool for any historian of fifteenth-century Sweden or Finland.

Immediately after the indices, there are three very useful appendices: the first catalogues the Penitentiary volumes and the years each of these covers, the second lists the bishops of the Swedish dioceses during the time period relevant for this book, and the third gives the headings found in the Penitentiary volumes (*De confessionalibus*, *De declatoriis*, etc.) and numbers the Swedish cases found under each one. Finally, it can be noted that the general layout of the book is very pleasant and readable. This is especially important in connection with this kind of edition: it is nice to know with just one glimpse where one document ends and where the next one begins.

All in all, this book is a very welcome addition to the existing sources on Swedish and Finnish medieval history. Furthermore, it is perhaps the best and most up-to-date introduction to the history and functioning of the Apostolic penitentiary during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As such it can be recommended to any and every reader interested in those subjects.

Jussi Hanska, PhD  
Vice director  
Institutum Romanum Finlandiae  
hanska[at]irfome.org.