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Editorial Note

In this issue of Temenos we are pleased to present a diverse selection of articles exploring various aspects of religion and religiosity in both historical and contemporary contexts. The issue includes a discussion article, three peer-reviewed articles, and four book reviews.

In his discussion article Göran Larsson delves into the historical context of methodological discussions within the Nordic field of the Study of Religion. This year holds particular significance, as it commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Åke Hultkrantz's book, *Metodvägar inom den jämförande religionsforskningen* (Methodological Paths within Comparative Religion Research). Larsson takes this opportunity to examine Hultkrantz's perspective on the discipline and the methods he advocated during the early 1970s. Larsson demonstrates that even then Hultkrantz envisioned the field as multidisciplinary and multimethodological, foreshadowing the future developments in the field.

In our first peer-reviewed article, Stefan Gelfgren takes us on a historical journey to the nineteenth century, where he explores the paradoxical relationship between Evangelical revivalism and secularization. Focusing on the Swedish confessional revivalist denomination *Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen* (EFS), Gelfgren argues that despite its negative approach to modernization, the revival movement played a significant role in promoting religious pluralism, individualism, and religious democracy. His study offers a nuanced perspective on the interplay between faith and modernity during an important transformative era in the history of the Nordic countries.

In his contribution Jere Kyyrö investigates the intricate relationship between civil religion and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) in the context of the Finnish Independence Day celebrations (FID). Through the analysis of a survey and thematic writings Kyyrö examines the key elements of civil religion in FID celebrations, shedding light on their traditional, negotiating, and critical modes. The article speaks for the utility of employing an open definition of civil religion in research. Kyyrö's study highlights the generational dynamics at play in the context of national memory and identity, suggesting that the role of the ELCF in the Independence Day celebrations is that of *banally nationalist institutional religion*.

Tuomas Järvenpää presents an ethnographic analysis of gospel rap music as an integral part of evangelical Christian youthwork in Finland. Through observations and interviews with musicians and event organisers Järvenpää explores the aesthetics of gospel rap and its relationship with the emotional regimes of Finnish evangelical Christianity. The study shows how the emotional moods within Christian rap performances resonate with the broader emotional cultures of late modern societies and reveals the role of irony and self-irony as tools for social commentary and theological reflection.

Collectively, these contributions enrich our understanding of religion's place in society. From the historical dynamics of revivalism to the intersection of civil religion and church and the contemporary aesthetics of gospel rap, each contribution offers a unique perspective on the intricate relationship between worldview practices and culture. We wish our readers a rewarding reading experience!

Minna Opas and Sofia Sjö

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Åke Hultkrantz on Method: The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of *Metodvägar inom den jämförande religionsforskningen*

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Introduction

In my research on the establishment of the History of Religion as an academic discipline in Sweden (Larsson 2022; 2023), I have more than once been surprised by the almost total lack of discussion of method. That said, I must also say that most studies of religions in Sweden until the early 1970s took little interest in the topics we would today call theory – that is, a systematic idea that we take as our premise for explaining how the world functions. There are of course exceptions (e.g. Professor Erland Ehnmark, 1903–1966, at Lund University had an explicit interest in methodological and theoretical religious questions), and most publications provided discussions of animism, evolutionism, phenomenology, and how to make comparisons, but few attempts were made to explain how a religious worldview played out in real life, or why humans had the capacity to label something as a religion or religious. Most studies used a comparative typological approach (often labelled a phenomenological or comparative method) and focused on the religions of the past.

In this text, however, I will turn my gaze from the first generations of Swedish Historians of Religions – scholars like Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931), Tor Andræ (1885–1947), and Geo Widengren (1907–1996) – and focus on what I see as a shift that occurred in Sweden in the early 1970s. There are, of course, many ways to illustrate this change, but in this short article I will focus on the Swedish scholar Åke Hultkrantz (1920–2006), and on how his interest in methodological questions illustrates this turn.

Like many of his contemporaries, Hultkrantz studied to become a teacher of the History of Religions at Stockholm's Högskola. However, the History of Religions under the leadership of Professor Ernst Arbman (1891–1959)

was intriguing, and Hultkrantz become at once fascinated and inspired by the many ways of interpreting sources. The History of Religions was a topic that 'spoke to a person that was stimulated by fantasy and independent thinking', explained Hultkrantz (Minnen 2005, 134). It was especially the so-called primitive religions that caught Hultkrantz's interest. This was the area on which most of his studies focused, and in numerous publications he applied an ethnographic method to the study of rituals and religious lives among Indigenous populations, especially in North America. An example is his doctoral dissertation, *Conceptions of the Soul among North American Indians: A Study in Religious Ethnology* (Hultkrantz 1953). Only five years after the defence of his thesis Hultkrantz was appointed professor and chair of Comparative Religion at Stockholm University; he was then only 38 years old (Drobin 2008; *Minnen* 2005 contains some glimpses of Hultkrantz's early career and his formative years in academia). Despite several academic stints abroad, Hultkrantz remained loyal to Stockholm University and stayed in his position until his retirement in 1986.

The times they are a-changing

It is impossible within the limits of this short article to study if and to what extent Åke Hultkrantz actually had an impact on his contemporaries outside the Department of Comparative Religion at Stockholm University, but his publications demonstrate an international outlook, and it is fair to say that in Sweden at least he shifted the focus from the study of past (dead) religions to living religions among Indigenous populations. For example, in 1973, when Geo Widengren – the grand old Professor of the History of Religions at Uppsala University – retired from his chair, Stockholm's Professor Åke Hultkrantz published a textbook on methodological questions called *Metodvägar inom den jämförande religionsforskningen* ('Methodological paths within comparative religion research').[1] I believe this book marks a shift in the study of religions – at least in Sweden, but perhaps less so in the other Nordic countries (think of the ethnographic and folkloristic approaches applied by scholars like Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939), Lauri Honko (1932–2002), and Rafael Karsten (1879–1956) in Finland, for example). Whatever its impact on later scholars, it is now time to examine the book's content and structure, especially as this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of its publication. How did Hultkrantz envisage the study of religions, and what methods did he advocate in the early 1970s?

1 The book was never translated, but some of the methodological questions that Hultkrantz raised in it were also addressed in other publications and articles (e.g. Hultkrantz 1970a; 1979b).

Methodological paths in comparative religion research

Turning to the content, *Metodvägar* consists of 227 densely written pages organized under four subheadings: 'The sources of religious studies and their analysis'; 'The problem of comparative research'; 'Descriptive and systematic religious research'; and 'Historical and evolutionary religious research'. The book's aim is thus to provide the reader – presumably a student – with an overview of the various methods that can be applied to so-called religious data. Whilst Hultkrantz stresses that method is an important aspect of all scientific research, there are no specific or unique methods for the study of religions. Scholars must therefore pick and choose from other academic disciplines when they approach religious traditions, he argues. Like many of his contemporaries, Hultkrantz also wishes to contribute to the general discussion and create an opportunity for debate. Most importantly, however, the awareness of methodological questions among scholars of religions must be raised to enhance the quality of their research. In Hultkrantz's words: 'Research that does not strive for objective truth is pointless' (p. VII). It is only with the aid of a solid knowledge of method and research design that this objective can be achieved.

According to Hultkrantz the basic method of all religious studies is philology, and on this point he resembles his predecessors. Compared, however, to ethnologists and social anthropologists, who are portrayed as having too strong an interest in methodological questions, religious scholars have mainly trusted their intuition and been guided by their own ideas, he argues. An intuition can at best help us set up hypotheses, but all hypotheses must be scrutinized according to a strict scientific protocol (i.e. a method) if scholars are to contribute to scientific progress.

In the first sections of *Metodvägar* Hultkrantz describes the various sources (written and oral sources, iconography, archaeological sources) that can be used in writing the history of religions, but he also stresses that sources can be analysed with the aid of a historical-critical approach. How to make comparisons and evaluate typological schemas (i.e. patterns) that previous anthropologists and phenomenologists have used (cf., for example, p. 82; several examples are also given in Larsson 2022) are presented and critically discussed. Hultkrantz also addresses problems with definitions and comparing different sources from different places and times. On this point, I suggest, Hultkrantz reminds us that as historians of religions we should pay more attention to the historical roots of our discipline. For Hultkrantz and his contemporaries, however, a source-critical approach was probably the obvious method, and the ambition of his book on method

was therefore to introduce other ways of conducting religious studies. This may be why Hultkrantz was so keen to introduce what he saw as new ways of doing religious studies, at least for his Swedish target audience. To do this, Hultkrantz argues, it is necessary to supplement written records with oral sources, ritual studies, and quantitative and statistical studies (in the book he even addresses the potential usefulness of computers, p. 93). He also advocates the promotion of archaeological and ecological approaches to the study of religions. The last aspect, ecological approaches – how the climate can influence different worldviews, rituals, and beliefs – was one of Hultkrantz's most cherished topics (e.g. Hultkrantz 1965; 1966; 1974a; 1974b, and 1979; in 1981 and 1982 Hultkrantz also gave the Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen on the topic 'The Veils of Religion: Religion in its Ecological Forms').

Unlike Widengren, for example, Hultkrantz was a generous tutor, and throughout the book he presents examples of his own failures and successes, especially regarding his own field studies among various Indigenous groups in North America. The reader is given practical examples of how to conduct interviews and participant observation, and the need to ask open questions, potential problems with gatekeepers and interpreters, surveys, and so on are also addressed. As a field researcher, the scholar must learn to live the life of their informants: 'They must socialize on an equal footing with those they examine, participate in their everyday life, preferably live with them' (p. 35). Besides practical tips, Hultkrantz also provides an overview of several different theoretical perspectives like behaviourism, functionalism, and structuralism and discusses how theoreticians like Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955), Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973), Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), to name only a few, made comparisons and explained the spread of religious ideas through evolutionism, positivism, diffusionism, parallelism, survivalism, syncretism/conversion, acculturation, and so on.

Some of these approaches can of course be criticized today, but it is fair to say that Hultkrantz was an innovative scholar, and that unlike many of his contemporaries, he was well read outside the discipline of religious studies. He even laments that many scholars suffer from a kind of silo thinking – that they seldom if ever read books or texts that stem from academic disciplines other than religious studies. 'Communication between different research fields is inadequate,' argues Hultkrantz (p. 24). As noted above, he is unafraid to reveal and discuss his own flaws and shortcomings during his own fieldwork.

Discussion and conclusions

Although some of the presentations and methods Hultkrantz promotes are outdated, his book remains important, as it gives us an opportunity to understand how earlier scholars – especially in Sweden – approached their material, and how they analysed their data. Compared to Widengren, for example, Hultkrantz gives the reader plenty of background information and presents the various methodological approaches in an unbiased way that enables the reader to access them and decide which method they wish to use. In other words, instead of presenting his preferred or most cherished ideas, Hultkrantz's textbook is a smorgasbord of different methods, and this broad presentation is helpful for any student or scholar wishing to grasp the subject matter and understand how different scholars have constructed and studied the phenomena that are labelled 'religion'. Yet although Hultkrantz's presentation is modern in the sense that he places great stress on oral material, his discussion of religion as a topic is somewhat outdated. Like most if not all his predecessors, Hultkrantz can be accused of seeing 'religion' as something distinct that can be separately viewed from the rest of society.

> A religion may be very intertwined with social or material culture, or with ethnic ideology, but it expresses the belief in another, supernatural, reality, and beliefs form one or more systems of coherent ideas… (p. 12)

While as a scholar Hultkrantz was very interested in rituals, it is beliefs (i.e. dogma) that are the core of all religions (p. 13), and he sometimes even speaks of 'the essence of religion' (p. 124). This attitude towards religion resembles how earlier scholars (e.g. Widengren) have understood the subject matter, and it was only with the 'linguistic turn' and the criticisms of religious phenomenology that religion as something *sui generis* was brought into question. Instead of viewing religion as something distinct or separate, 'religion' came to be more explicitly associated with questions of power, ideology, constructions, and functions, for example (e.g. Martin 2012). The strong emphasis on the importance of language, definitions, and power structures has today been supplemented by scholars who adhere to the so-called cognitive study of religions and evolutionary psychology (see e.g. Larsson and Sorgenfrei 2019 for a general overview of and introduction to these debates), and who seek natural explanations for religious beliefs. This question is also included in Hultkrantz's overview, but like most scholars of his time (and like many contemporary critics of the cognitive study of

religions), he is sceptical concerning the possibility of establishing generalizable laws for human behaviour (p. 125).

Although Hultkrantz emphasizes that there are no special methods for the study of religion, he defends the position that the study of religions has an 'individuality' and 'uniqueness' that makes it a discipline in its own right. Without evaluating this claim the development of the study of religions is closely associated with internal and external factors rooted in both local and global society. For example, it is much easier to conduct field studies today, and globalization has changed the global religious landscape, but academia has also gained a new role and function today compared to the 1970s. Although it was impossible for Hultkrantz to foresee how the world would change in the coming decades (some negative predictions of the future, however, are found in an interview with Hultkrantz in *Minnen* 2005), it is interesting to see how he viewed the changes of the 1960s and 1970s in academia. For example, the humanities were divided at this time, and a Faculty of Social Sciences was established in 1964 in Sweden. Moreover, several reforms in the 1960s and 1970s changed the 'professor rule', after which the state had a much stronger hold on educational content. Instead of primarily providing *Bildung* and seeking knowledge for its own sake, the university was now to function as a provider of skilled workers and bureaucrats. Most northern and western European universities were at the same time influenced by socialist visions and the so-called 1968 movement. These changes are not addressed in *Metodvägar*, but in an interview published in 2005 Hultkrantz speaks negatively of these changes. He describes the 1968 movement as 'nasty', saying, 'in some way the joy and optimism that I had felt died within me' (quotation from *Minnen* 2005, 145). But to what extent did these changes influence the study of religion? Unfortunately, *Metodvägar* provides no answer to these and similar questions, but it is striking that Hultkrantz stresses, explicitly and implicitly, that the study of religions should provide general models for, or even explanations of, the phenomena that are labelled 'religion'. At least for me this position is interesting because one can argue that it differs from the tendency to provide merely descriptions instead of explanations or larger comparative models, a tendency that grew stronger with the linguistic turn and the critical study of religions.

Thus, I think Hultkrantz can still provide an example of how to think critically about religious studies, and how we can learn from earlier generations of scholars like him if we wish to develop and challenge the study of religion. In other words, the past provides a perspective, or maybe even a

corrective, for the future. For these and many other reasons it is important to highlight milestones in the study of the discipline that we call the History of Religions, and it is essential from this perspective both to address and critically scrutinize a textbook on method that was published fifty years ago.

* * *

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How the Nineteenth-century Evangelical Revival Strengthened Faith and Undermined Christendom: A Swedish Case

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Abstract

This article deals with the paradoxical relationship between the nineteenth-century Evangelical Revival and secularization. It is argued here that the revival and its worldview played a role in increasing pluralism and choice in the nineteenth century – a process often related to secularization. The Evangelical movement both attempted to oppose modernity and rationalism and emphasized religious freedom, voluntarism, and individualism. It therefore induced and popularized self-reflection, doubt, and deconversion. It also favoured religious democracy in opposition to a state-imposed religious monopoly (at least in northern Europe). Furthermore, by dividing people into believers and nonbelievers, it emphasized religious polarization. This contributed to an undermining of established religious structures, fragmenting and pluralizing the religious landscape and giving people the option to abstain completely from religious commitment. The Swedish confessional (inner mission) revivalist denomination Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen (EFS – approx. the Swedish Evangelical Mission Society), founded in 1856, is used as a case. The popular literature they published and distributed manifested an evangelical worldview. In this article four themes, based on the popular literature, are used to study empirically the changing role of religion in relation to nineteenth-century revivalism: 'the dualistic worldview'; 'conversion'; 'activism'; and 'self-reflection'.

Keywords*: secularization, modernity, revivalism, evangelicalism, church history*

Many attempts have been made to analyse and understand the transformation of religious faith and practices over time. Is there an overall process that can interpret and explain religious change, or are there many different processes and contexts that together formulate a framework to which

religion and religiosity relate and respond? This article acknowledges the complexity of intertwining processes over a long period. It focuses, however, on how the worldview of the nineteenth-century Evangelical Revival challenged and undermined established European protestant religiosity and its institutions. Not only did the revival contribute to the formulation and creation of new alternatives, adding to increasing pluralization but also (unintentionally) by introducing doubt, polarization, and deconversion. The revival promoted a situation in which religious faith became voluntary and one of several religious and nonreligious options. The Swedish confessional (inner mission) revivalist denomination called the Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen (EFS – approx. the Swedish Evangelical Mission Society) is used as a case, or a prism, through which this development is studied. The EFS was part of the broader international contemporary Evangelical Revival in sharing worldviews and networks (for people, publications, tracts, and mission societies, etc.).

This article addresses the following questions: How can we understand the worldview of the Evangelical Revival in relation to the changing role of religion during the nineteenth century? How can we understand the seemingly paradoxical relationship between revivalism, modernization, and secularization?

The correlation between Protestantism and religious pluralism has been proposed before (not on the same ground as here though), going back to Lutheran thinking and the Reformation. For example, Goldman and Pfaff (2017) point to Luther as the key figure for an understanding of religious and social transformation after about 1500. Lutheran thinking individualized and relativized religious conviction by focusing on 'sola fide' (faith alone). It became possible for people to read and understand the Bible themselves (with a focus on 'sola scriptura'/Scripture alone and vernacular language), and the church's authority was scattered, contributing to a pluralist society. Likewise, Charles Taylor (1989) reasons along similar lines when discussing modern individualistic self-identity. According to Taylor, the Reformation paved the way for individualist thinking and hence for a pluralist society in which religious movements like the pietists, puritans, and evangelicals were part of this process. Brad S. Gregory (2012) sees Luther as the one who split the monopolistic Catholic Church and unintentionally introduced pluralism (see also, for example, Beck 2010; Berger 2014; Taylor 2007, on the Reformation and pluralism). Although Luther started the process, it gained momentum and was popularized through the nineteenth-century Evangelical Revival, thus, it is argued, affecting a wider stratum of society than ever before.

According to protestant and Evangelical theology, a true Christian devotee had to believe in the word and grace of God, and walk a righteous path through life to be saved. This was not, however, an easy path. This way of thinking was manifested and popularized, for example, by the popular and widespread allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come,* written by John Bunyan in 1678 (Bunyan 2009), in which Bunyan (born 1628 in Elstow in England, died 1688), himself an unordained puritan preacher, describes how the main character, Christian, who is the pilgrim of the book's title, travels through life navigating temptations, having experiences, and aiming for eternal life in the 'Celestial City'. *The Pilgrim's Progress* illustrates how conversion, the path of the righteous, and doubt were intertwined with protestant Christianity. This worldview, expressed through protestant prints, had consequences for the role of Christianity in society and in the life of individual Christians (see, for example, Bassimir and Gelfgren 2023 on protestant print culture). For example, Candy Gunther Brown (2004) and David Morgan (1999) explicitly see tracts and the evangelical printing enterprise as part of the formulation of a specific culture and an evangelical identity.

Printing has also been seen as an integrated part of creating and maintaining a worldwide evangelical community (Edwards 2002; Moreshead 2015). Furthermore, according to David Hall (1990), for example, tracts are part of the expression and formulation of popular beliefs among the laity, and Kyle B. Roberts (2006) takes a similar approach. The various tract societies of the nineteenth century and their relations are also studied as part of the modern and marketized mass-media society by David Paul Nord (2004), for example. The role of the distributors of evangelical prints (such as tracts), the colporteurs, or itinerant preachers, has also been the subject of research. Sonia Hazard (2020) has studied the practice of colportage and how the colporteur used tracts to initiate discussions and ultimately conversion, and Sean Geoffrey Sagan (2017) has studied contemporary colporteurs, street preachers, and their use of tracts. This article therefore studies the worldview the revivalist literature expresses more than the framework of which they are part.

Modernity, secularization, and the role of religion

The relationship between societal developments and the changing role of religion has been well studied, often in terms of modernization and secularization (see, for example, Mouzelis 2012; Pollack 2015, for good overviews).

Modernity usually includes a period (approx. 1500–1950), societal changes (for example, technological developments, industrialization, urbanization, and functional differentiation), and related changes in values and worldviews (for example, rationality, democratization, and individualization). These changes also affect the role of religion – a process often interpreted in terms of secularization, which includes the diminishing role of religion and is at the core of the 'secularization thesis' (proposed, for example, by Berger (1969) and Wilson (1966) in the 1960s and Bruce (2011), Stoltz (2020), and Stoltz and Voas (2023) more recently).

Since approximately the 1990s, however, the thesis has been contested (and nuanced), based on the notion that religion and religious faith prevail and adapt, and that the role of religion varies in different geographical areas and societal strata (see, for example, Beck 2010; Berger 1999; Casanova 2018; Martin 2010; McLeod 2000; Stark 1999; Stark and Iannaccone 1994; Swatos and Olson 2000). According to those who criticize the secularization thesis it is difficult or even impossible to find an overall theory that will once and for all prove the decreasing role of religion in relation to modern society.

The bottom line here, and the premise for this article, is that there is probably no single all-embracing model that explains the relationship between modernity and secularization. McLeod (2000) is inspiring here, claiming that 'rather than one simple story-line, we need a narrative in which a variety of plots and sub-plots are intertwined' (p. 286). However, even if it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons and models to interpret the process, something has happened, at least in the Western world between the 1500s and today. As Charles Taylor (2007) claims, whatever the definition of secularization is, there is a process that has affected religious faith, its associated practices, and its institutions: churches are now separated from political structures, people tend to participate less in institutional religious practices, religion or its absence is largely an individual matter (for believers and nonbelievers alike), and religious beliefs are today founded on personal preferences instead of institutionally defined doctrines. 'The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic [before 1500], to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace [today]' (Taylor 2007, 3).

Meanwhile, Peter L. Berger has reversed his previous view of secularization (which was in line with the secularization thesis – compare with Berger 1969), stating that 'we [the proponents of the secularization thesis] misunderstood pluralism as just one factor supporting secularization: in

fact, pluralism, the co-existence of different worldviews and value systems in the same society, is *the* major change brought about by modernity for the place of religion both in the minds of individuals and in institutional order' (2014, ix). He continues: 'if secularization theory must be given up, we need a theory of pluralism to replace it' (Berger 2014, ix). Both Taylor and Berger argue, in other words, that religious faith today is one belief/opinion among many others – that is, pluralization instead of secularization.

The changing role of religion in society is often measured in quantifiable terms through church attendance, baptism rates, self-expressed religious affiliation, membership of organizations, belief in God, and so on (see, for example, Stoltz 2020 or Voas 2009). In a reply to Stoltz (2020) François Gauthier (2020) calls for the need also to have a qualitative approach to religion and faith for a more nuanced understanding of the process of religious change. This article is inspired by such a qualitative approach.

This study adheres to and focuses on the idea that pluralization is key to understanding religion's changing role in relation to modernity.[1] Around the nineteenth century, the focus of this study, pluralization can be described both in terms of the societal functional differentiation that undermined the position of the majority churches as all-encompassing institutions and has been interpreted in terms of secularization. Yet pluralization can also be related to how the various revival movements pluralized and diversified religious expressions and faiths by increasing the number of options. While the worldview of the Evangelical Revival is mentioned in such a context, in the wake of the Reformation its paradoxical relationship with modernity and secularization is rarely empirically studied through the actual worldview of the Evangelical Revival, which is this study's aim. It is therefore also inspired by Ulrich Beck, who relates religion to individualization and pluralization, claiming that 'religion is the very *opposite* of individualization', and yet 'religion is the *source* of individualization' (Beck 2010, 79). This paradox is studied here and will add to the discussion of the relationship between modernity, secularization, and the role of religion.

1 In the long-time perspective, it is noticeable that Sweden is today a country with low degrees of institutionalized religious commitment, which is often mentioned, however, as related to the welfare state and the state church tradition, processes that are beyond the scope of this article (see, for example, Bäckström et al. 2004; Hamberg and Pettersson 1994; Kasselstrand 2015; Zuckerman 2009). For example, Bergfeldt (1997), Jarrick (1987) and Sanders (1995) touch on the relationship between alternative religious worldviews and secularization, but their studies focus on other periods and empirical material.

Source material and its contextual background

The relationship between the revival and the undermining of established Christendom will be discussed through the widespread and popular literature (tracts and books) distributed during the second half of the nineteenth century by the EFS. The literature was largely translations from English and German and was in line with international confessional protestant evangelicalism.[2]

The EFS was part of the Evangelical (with an uppercase 'e') Revival of the nineteenth century, sharing the idea of spreading the Word of God and the need for personal revival – as opposed to the evangelical (with a lowercase 'e') Lutheran church. To quote Bebbington: '"evangelical" … is occasionally used to mean "of the gospel", the term "Evangelical" … is applied to any aspect of the movement beginning in the 1730s [with Methodism]'" (Bebbington 1989, 1). The Evangelical Revival was indeed broad and geographically dispersed (originally in Germany, Britain, and North America), but shared many features (Ditchfield 1998). In the nineteenth century the Evangelical movement spread to other parts of the world, including Scandinavia and Sweden (see, for example, Hodacs 2003 on the British mission to Sweden in the early nineteenth century). Compared with its contemporary established (state) churches, the Evangelical movement tended to emphasize individual conversion and its moral implications, to which we will return (for an overview of the Evangelical movement see, for example, Bebbington 1989; Noll et al. 1994).

The EFS was inspired by and can partly be seen as a continuation of the English chapel in Stockholm, founded in 1840 and run by the Scottish pastor George Scott, initially for English residents of Stockholm. Scott left Sweden in 1842 after a riot in his church (which was considered a free church at a time when free churches were prohibited due to the Conventicle Act in place between 1726 and 1858 to prohibit religious gatherings without an ordained clergyman from the Church of Sweden). Thereafter Carl Olof Rosenius continued to run the chapel as a lay preacher. The EFS was founded in 1856, then as a board in Stockholm, with C. O. Rosenius the leading theological inspiration. It consisted of 12 men from the upper strata of society (including the nobility, clergy, royal court, and others) who were in contact with various tract and mission societies in Evangelical Europe and North America.

2 I wrote my PhD thesis on a related subject (Gelfgren 2003), and this article seeks to deepen the argumentation on revivalism and secularization. I read approximately 60 tracts, ranging from four to 32 pages, for this article, though I do not refer to them all.

Inspiration was also found in the Free Church of Scotland (founded in 1843 based on Evangelical criticism of the established Church of Scotland). When the Conventicle Act was active, the board saw it as their mission to promote confessional revival on Lutheran pietistic grounds (rather than on Methodist grounds, for Methodism could be seen as a free church) (for the history of the EFS see, for example, Gelfgren 2003; Lundqvist 1977; 1982).

The EFS was critical of the state church for being moribund and too institutional, but was supportive of its Lutheran creed. It explicitly opposed contemporary Baptist/free church initiatives too. The main reasons for opposing the free churches were the urge to guarantee the Lutheran and confessional nature of the literature it distributed (from its own publishing house, established in 1857) and that their distributors, the colporteurs, were confessional.

Every year the EFS published and distributed (by selling or giving away) hundreds of thousands of cards, tracts, books, and other publications in a country with approximately 3.5 to four million inhabitants.[3] Its publishing house therefore became the largest publisher in the Nordic countries in the early twentieth century (Rinman 1951). The EFS maintained that people should be able to trust the confessional content and identity of its publications and colporteurs, in contrast with those influenced by contemporary free church tendencies – that is, the Baptists. The tracts were a means to communicate the Christian message in a popular way. The intention was, according to the EFS's 1863 annual report (p. 22), that the publications should rain down on the country, and that God would then give spiritual growth to it. In the late nineteenth century the competition with other forms of literature increased, and the EFS's 1899 annual report acknowledged a common disinterest in reading tracts (p. 170).

The popular and often moralizing (fictional) tracts presented an idealized picture of Christian life (Lindmark 1995). They contained stories about the lives of true Christian believers, their conversions, and how to spread the Word of God, but also stories about the horrors and consequences of denying Jesus in one's life.

For this article a representative selection of tracts was chosen with the intention of encompassing a timespan (from the 1860s, when the EFS first published this form of literature, to the late nineteenth century, when from the EFS's perspective belief in tracts began to decline): tracts written by both anonymous and well-known authors; and tracts aimed at both children and

3 The publication numbers were published annually in the EFS's printed annual report.

adults. Sixty-two tracts were read, and a selection is cited in this article. I also draw on a book with a similar premise to that of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, called *Brukspatron Adamsson eller Hvar bor du?* (Squire Adamson, or Where Do You Live?[4], Waldenström 1863). The first edition was published in 1863 by Paul Petter Waldenström (theologian, lecturer, clergyman, and member of parliament) as an easy and accessible way of summarizing the basics of Christian faith. Waldenström was then part of the EFS but later left it to found the Mission Covenant Church (Svenska missionsförbundet – SMF) of Sweden in 1878. *Brukspatron Adamsson* (Squire Adamson) became one of the most-read books in Sweden in the late nineteenth century (Schück and Helms 1904) and is therefore relevant for this study.

The Evangelical Revival worldview regarding the changing role of religion

The genre of so-called true fiction presented in tracts and books was supposed to translate the faith and teaching of the revival movement to common language and to appeal to the ordinary man, complementing more conventional literature in the Christian tradition such as the Bible, catechisms, printed sermons, and Bible explorations (Lindmark 1995). Among members of the board of the EFS these fictional stories were initially regarded as a threat to the intellect of common people (linking this genre with contemporary fiction), but when the EFS began to publish true fiction in the late 1860s, the intention was to (indirectly) teach the Word of God, while people (in the worst case) only wanted to read interesting stories (Gelfgren 2003).

The stories had a strong focus on several themes, and here David W Bebbington's characteristics of the Evangelical movement are used to highlight some. He mentions 'Conversionism', 'Activism', 'Biblicism', and 'Cruciecentrism' as essential to the Evangelical movement's worldview (Bebbington 1989). Hence, the tracts encouraged individual *conversion*, or revival, which led to an urge for the newly converted *actively* to seek to convert other people. The path to conversion was mediated through the message of *the Bible*, in which the atoning death of Christ on the *cross* was at the centre of the Bible and the convert's life. We therefore find people in the various stories who are confronted by the gospel, who choose to live accordingly, and who choose not to. For those who have chosen the way of Jesus, life is presented as pleasant and content despite their struggle to follow a narrow path through life. However, those people doing the opposite, that is, not saying yes to Jesus,

4 In this article the author has translated the Swedish titles to English.

choose damnation, self-righteousness, and misery – in both their mental and material wealth. This is also the essence of *Squire Adamsson*, which describes Adamsson's path through life, walking from city to city (cities with names like Holiness, the World, and the City of Darkness), meeting people of various characters (people with names like Freethinker, Gospel, and Mother Innocent), and seeking a life in the presence of God.

In this article four themes from true fiction literature are chosen to illustrate the worldview of the nineteenth-century revival and to highlight and illustrate the role of the revival movement in relation to the changing role of religion – 'conversion', 'activism', 'the dualistic worldview', and 'self-reflection'. Conversionism and activism are directly related to Bebbington's terminology. Two further themes are added for the sake of the argumentation – the dualist worldview and self-reflection. These two themes emerge from the reading of the empirical material, and a consequence of the conversionism aspect (one had to be converted or saved from the old sinful life to a new life). At the core of revivalist thinking was the reinforcement of a dualistic view of the world, a worldview that divided the world into Christian or non-Christian, and faith by heart or faith by reason. A true believer was supposed to be 'hot', not 'cold', and not even lukewarm (see Rev. 3:16), indicating a worldview that induced a stern duality and hence different alternatives. Conversion also resulted in self-reflection, which arose from the need to approach and deal with the dualistic worldview, with its different possibilities of choosing different ways of life.

The dualistic worldview

In the revivalist worldview there was a sharp contrast between believers and nonbelievers, and what was considered Godly and worldly, and this was repeatedly enforced through the tracts and *Squire Adamsson*. The foundation of this dualistic worldview is the need for conversion, without which man is fallen, ever since Adam was tempted by Eve to eat the apple in the Garden of Eden. Mankind is fallen, and only God can save it, and the world without God is dark, chaotic, and lost. The tracts polarized the world and man alike and popularized this view.

The tract *Två hem* (Two homes, 1890), for example, depicts two different men and their lives. They are both British working-class individuals, and both have just been paid and are on their way home from work. However, before arriving home they go to the pub for a few drinks, and when they leave, they are both intoxicated and have forgotten to buy necessities for

their families. The home of one of the workers is described as 'barely a home', as it is messy and generally an unpleasant place to be. The wife is depicted as angry and yelling at him, and the son is a 'shaggy child'. In the other case the man comes home to a tidy but simple home; it is clean, and the meal is described as simple but well prepared by his pious wife. In this case the wife and his son forgive him for his negligence, which then gives him a guilty conscience, and in the end he converts to Christ. The story ends with a picture of 'a drunkard's' (the first worker's) grave (*Två hem*/Two Homes 1890). In another tract a Christian man seeks the home of a non-Christian alcoholic, who is sitting in a shed, dressed in rags, with his dead wife by a wall, blaming himself for her death. The Christian character tells the drunken man and his pale daughter with her starving baby in her arms about salvation through Jesus Christ (*Endast två ord*/Only Two Words 1897; *Det värnlösa barnets brev*/The Letter of an Innocent Child, undated).

In *Den lycklige bibelläsaren* (The Merry Bible Reader 1892), a gentleman named Thomson visits the more dilapidated areas of London, and behind a half-rotted door he hears someone reading the Bible and a 'simple prayer' and is moved to the bottom of his heart. When he looks in, he finds a tidy home, with the mother doing her housework surrounded by her three children doing their Sunday school homework. A true Christian is thus depicted as tranquil, sober, and hardworking, with a joyful and positive mind (*Gamle Anders*/Old Anders 1876), as someone who goes to church, trusts the Bible, and is content with life (*Duglig till intet*/Good for nothing, undated). Meanwhile, a non-Christian way of life includes wasting time, drunkenness, reckless talking, being absent-minded, and so on. Worldly success and happiness originating in career, money, or other ungodly measures of prosperity results in a life without true meaning, which is only to be discovered when hardship and ordeals set in.

Only conversion and salvation through Christ can save man from a sinful and meaningless life. The two sharply polarized alternatives are repeated and accentuated over and over again in the tracts, and there are no different shades of grey – the alternatives are either/or.

Conversion

If the dualistic worldview is the basis for the Evangelical Revival, conversion, awakening, or revival is the means to salvation – a notion going back to the Lutheran and pietist view of individual faith. The individual themselves is responsible for deciding their fate. Conversion is the pivotal point in life

when they decide to follow the way of God and abandon mankind's sinful nature. Within the revival movement a definable moment of conversion is inevitable for a true Christian, and one has to be a Christian 'by heart', not simply 'by mouth' or 'by reason' (*Hon talar som en kristen*/She Speaks Like a Christian 1890). Through free will and deliberate choice the individual can be raised and become the image of God they were intended to become before the Fall. The importance of conversion and the moment of and path to it are repeatedly narrated throughout the tracts. In the Swedish case, for example, this must be contrasted with the more collective form of religious practices traditionally found in the contemporary Lutheran Swedish state church.

The path to God is narrow, but through his love God keeps the gates open for anyone who wants it. Anyone can pass through, even though it may be difficult to do so (*Den trånga porten*/The Narrow Gate, Waldenström 1873; *En för alla*/One for All 1896). Conversion usually begins with the individual realizing their sinful nature and estrangement from God, and the tracts describe this process in many ways. The conversion is described as a wedding party (analogous with Jesus's Parable of the Great Banquet in Matt. 22 or Luke 14) to which everyone is invited, and all that is required is to respond positively to the invitation and to act and live as a worthy guest (*Allting är redo*/Everything Is Prepared, Fr. Sandberg 1896). According to one tract God calls on you to marry His Son Jesus, though you be the most wicked and a slave to sin and death (*Ett råd till de nödställde*/Some Advice to Those in Need 1896). The first step towards conversion is to become aware of your sins and shortcomings, which is done by reflecting on your life in the light of the Word of God.

When the individual is confronted by their depravity, they must act quickly because they cannot know if they will be interrupted by death or overcome by other obstacles. Sickbeds and deathbeds are therefore a common setting for reflection and conversion – because their fragile and sinful nature confronts them at their death, and they are thus prone to realizing the need for conversion (cf. *Världen förgås*/The World Perishes 1907). Even the hardest mind is softened when fearfully facing death. The tract *Hwarthän? Hwarthän?* (Where to Go? Where to Go?, Bonar 1891) describes a truly horrifying death scene where the non-Christian dying person is frightened by their destiny. The author concludes that darkness is persistent, and there is no light of hope, but the one who is saved is lifted above despair and hopelessness. Another tract tells the story of a woman 'who speaks like a Christian', but who is lying on her deathbed, terrified and not in her ordinary joyous mood (*Hon talar som en Kristen*/She Speaks Like a Christian 1890).

Conversion is ever present in the tracts, and they emphasize the need for conversion as the only way to salvation and a truly joyous life. It is and must be a deliberate and individual choice between life and death with eternal consequences, and one should not wait until it is too late.

Activism

The dualistic worldview is the foundation for revivalist thinking. Conversion, encouraged by reflecting on and being exposed to the Word of God, is a leap of faith – from being sinful and damned to being eternally saved and restored to the image of God that was God's original intention for the individual. A true Christian takes responsibility for their life and lives life accordingly, a life of sanctification. A consequence of conversion, however, is the need and desire to spread the gospel to others to save their lives (cf. *Lef för Jesus*/Live for Jesus, Moody 1876). The tracts, as well as youth associations, Sunday schools, Bible study groups, journals, and so on, were all part of this activist endeavour. G. M. Ditchfield claims that every hour must be accounted for before God (Ditchfield 1998), and Callum. G. Brown even describes revival as a 'salvation industry' and as aggressive and exclusive (Brown 2001, 43–57). It accentuates and contributes to a division of people into us and them – those who are saved, and those who are not; those who spread the gospel, and those in need of receiving it.

A tract by the American revivalist preacher and publisher D. L. Moody illustrates this. He describes how every Christian must seek to convert others, and how not a single day should be left without an attempt to spread the Word – through prayer, talking to people, writing to them, knocking on doors, and sending them tracts and other publications. Many mistakes will be made, but the worst is not to try (*Lef för Jesus*/Live for Jesus, Moody 1876). *Besök hos the fattiga* (Visiting the Poor 1899) advises the reader about how to approach poor people to save their souls: do not act in a superior way; rather, offer jobs, learn about their psyche, discuss mutual interests (for example, healthcare or knitting with women, or farming or gardening with men), offer help or loans, and so on. Use anecdotes when speaking about spiritual needs, as they are easier to understand and remember.

In most tracts, however, it is by setting an example that a true Christian can demonstrate the Word of God in practice. In several tracts the leading Christian character speaks to people and reads the Bible or lives a righteous, just, and clean life that convinces others to convert, or when this does not happen, misfortune or disaster befalls the stubbornly unconverted. It

may be more accurate to speak of passive activism, as Christians, through their honest and dignified lives, show that Christ 'shines' through them. In *En troende familjs strid och seger* (The Fight and Victory of a Believing Family 1888) a man and his family are sentenced to death by a Japanese king because of their Christian faith. One after another the members of the family choose martyrdom and are taken away to be brutally executed. At the end of the story it is the husband's turn, and he is then presented with a test of his faith. All the members of his family are alive, for everything has been staged. The king is impressed by the family, and he converts to Christ.

A truly converted Christian therefore takes responsibility for their life and aims to stand trial at the feet of the Lord on Judgment Day. Every moment must be accounted for, and one of the responsibilities is the aim of converting others – showing them an alternative way, the way of God. This approach to life must be differentiated from life as a Christian within the framework of the state church, which sets no such ideals for being a Christian believer.

Self-reflection

The mere fact that the various revival movements create alternatives in an otherwise rather religiously homogenous society raises questions about personal faith and convictions. At the very core of the revivalist notion of faith is individual choice. The dualistic worldview, with a focus on conversion, emphasizes and polarizes various alternatives. Simultaneously, there is a push towards, and an activist approach to, missionizing to the unreached, supported by the revival movements' infrastructure (for example, voluntary associations, publishing houses, Sunday schools, foreign missionary endeavours, etc.). It is argued here that a situation is generally created in which self-reflection is introduced at a popular level.

In *Brukspatron Adamsson* (Squire Adamsson) Waldenström wishes to introduce and teach the basics of Evangelical doctrine. The grace of God is emphasized as the only way to eternal life throughout the book. Only faith in Jesus can save man, and the quest for salvation by works is never sufficient but is instead enthusiastically rejected in the book. In reading the novel, we follow Adamsson throughout his life, from his position as squire of Diligence manor (Arbetsamhet) in the city of Gospel (Evangelium) and finally, after many hardships and temptations, in the city of Holiness (Helighet), governed by Justus Omnipotent (Justus Allsvådlig).

The book's universe consists of seven cities. The book's other places include the Realm of Darkness (Mörkrets rike), ruled by Beelzebub; Paradise (Paradis), created by Justus after the schism after which the Realm of Darkness is created, and where the common people live; the World (Världen), which men created but is under the rule of Beelzebub and governed by the men I (Jag), Want (Vill), and Shall (Skall). The mere creation of the World angers Justus, and he therefore sends his son Immanuel to the people in the World, who execute him at Golgotha, even though he has been resurrected. The city of Gospel is created around Golgotha, with Immanuel as its ruler. Gospel is the city that harbours people who want to be set free from Beelzebub, and from which preachers are sent out to preach grace, the law, and the consequences of not receiving grace or following the law. Meanwhile, the World sends out freethinkers to preach spiritual freedom. There is also a seventh city, Indecency (Lösaktighet), from which preachers are sent out to preach, as is also the case for the city of Self-righteousness (Egenrättfärdighet). All these preachers proclaim their view on life, which in and of itself can be seen as an illustration of the changing spiritual and ideological landscape of the nineteenth century, a landscape contemporary man had to navigate.

Adamsson lives a good and righteous life in his manor. He is decent and educated, serves as chairman of the local mission society, is a monthly donor to missionary associations, and is engaged in the local church. The first to point out his self-righteousness is the old widow Mother Simple, who throughout the story accompanies Adamsson as his associate and corrective other. Adamsson is for some reason in debt to Justus Omnipotent, who seeks to reclaim his money. Mother Simple suggests that Adamsson leave his manor and move to Gospel. He is then torn between the works suggested by the law of the church and its clergy and the free offer of grace Mother Simple proposes. For a while he enjoys the easy-going company in the city of Indecency that contrasts with the anxieties he moans about experiencing in the city of Gospel.

The book's main theme is that Adamsson cannot believe that grace can be free, that he only has to believe, without doing anything, and that the faith he has learned from books and the church is in vain. He is constantly reflecting on his state of mind and his nature in relation to the various available choices. 'After a while I started to like myself and sought my personal glory. I abandoned Gospel and moved to Self-righteousness. There I lost my first love and became more and more blind,' Adamsson muses (p. 213). At one point, in Gospel, he thinks: 'maybe they are right over there [in Indecency].

Here I suffer from doubts, fear, and uncertainties. … If I only knew what to do! Maybe it is us [the people of Gospel] Paul the Apostle means when he talks about being a slave to the law' (p. 124). Even Mother Incipient occasionally suffers from doubt. In both cases – and this is the ultimate message of the whole story – they grow spiritually through doubt and agony.

There is the offer of free grace, but it is up to the individual to choose to receive grace. For Adamsson this offer is followed by self-reflective questions about whether he has been saved, how to live, what is true, how to know what the right thing to do is, and which is the path to follow through life – all questions of which someone never can be sure.

Discussion: Revivalism, modernity, and secularization – a paradoxical relationship

The role of the church was indeed transformed when modernity – including social differentiation, industrialization, and the resulting urbanization – scattered locally based (religious) communities and established new ones, as mentioned in the introduction. The church and Christendom were also contested by rationalist thinking based on the promises of science and new ideologies such as liberalism and communism, for example. This article, however, focuses with a complementary perspective on the relationship between the worldview of the Evangelical Revival itself and the transformation of the role of Christianity and religious faith. The Swedish case is used to operationalize and empirically study this relationship.

At the core of Evangelical thinking is the individual's relationship with God and the choice and responsibility to receive the grace God offers – to be revived and to be converted (or to choose not to be). Here is the link to the paradoxical relationship between revivalism, modernity, and secularization – in terms of pluralization, individual choice, polarization, and the possibility of abstaining from any religious affiliation.

In opposition to (what was seen as) an overly rigid and institutionalized Lutheran orthodoxy, the Swedish Evangelical movement followed Luther's example and acted to individualize the relationship with God. This involved personal conversion, which was at the centre of Evangelical thinking. Conversion includes a leap of faith, the leaving of one's old life and the entering of a new one, an action founded on a dualistic worldview – a duality expressed, for example, in the tracts through images of misery, drunkenness, and depravation versus contentedness and well-orderedness. If converted, one has the obligation of setting an example by implicitly

converting others through deeds such as honesty and dignity and explicitly spreading the Word through conversations and handing out tracts. However, people cannot be really sure if they have been saved by the grace of God, and self-reflection is therefore an integral part of Evangelical life. These doubts are illustrated by the wandering life of Squire Adamsson, for example. If someone is saved, this will have consequences in their life, and they should aim to live as if they are saved. If they try too hard, however, they are probably unsaved. Charles Taylor expresses this in the case of the puritan spiritual life as:

> … [it] moved between a Scylla and a Charybdis. On one hand, one had to have confidence in one's salvation. Too much anxious doubt amounted to a turning away from God's gift, and could even be a sign that one was not saved after all. But at the same time, an utterly unruffled confidence showed that you were altogether forgetting the theological stakes involved, forgetting that one was a sinner who richly deserved eternal damnation, and was only saved from this by God's gratuitous grace; that one was in fact hanging over a cliff, and was only held back by God's outstretched hand (Taylor 2007, 82).

One can therefore never know if one is saved; rather, one has to live in doubt – but not too much if we are to believe Taylor. Squire Adamsson (as well as Pilgrim in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*) represents here the revivalist way of life. Throughout the book Adamsson wanders around, asking himself about the meaning of life and how to live it, and whether he is saved or not. It illustrates how the revivalist worldview created a situation in which individual self-reflection was introduced, and then repeated throughout the tracts. Although previous revival movements had been quite limited in their distribution, the nineteenth-century revival movement reached far more individuals in a society that was becoming increasingly modern.

The legal possibilities of formulating new religious ideas, attracting new proponents, and establishing new religious voluntary organizations were in line with contemporary demands for religious freedom. In the wake of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, demands for religious freedom arose (often in opposition to the Ancien Régime and the established church), demands shared by proponents of various revival movements and other religious minorities throughout Europe. During the latter half of the nineteenth century the legal framework that upheld the monopolistic role of the Swedish state church was undermined, starting with the abolition of the Conventicle Act

in 1858. This development can also be illustrated by the mushrooming of contemporary religious associations with different affiliations. In Sweden, for example, the confessional inner mission explicitly contested with the free churches (i.e. the Baptist movement) of the early nineteenth century. Their associations (originally one for inner mission, one for baptism) split and re-established themselves several times in the late nineteenth century, pluralizing and thus diversifying the religious landscape itself, a development that was also part of the process of negotiating the role of a hegemonic church. The distribution and establishment of various revival associations were related to the worldview of the revival movements, which had opened different interpretations of the Word of God, each interpretation of which 'needed' its institutional framework (compare with Gregory 2012).

Through voluntary organizations, their way of working, and their rationale the revival movements were clearly part of the process of modernity. As Peter L. Berger writes, without any specific investigation of the nineteenth-century revival movement,

> Evangelical Protestantism is one of the major religious traditions in which a personal act of individual decision is at the heart of the faith. One cannot be born as a Christian, one must be born again, having decided (in Evangelical parlance) 'to accept Jesus as personal lord and saviour.' Nothing could be more modern than this principle of individual agency (Berger 2014, 27).

To support such a claim, Squire Adamsson and his walk of life serve as an illustration. He spent a major part of his life reflecting on his choices, fate, and eternal life. He was torn between doubt and assurance – was he saved or just self-righteous, should or could he work on his redemption, or what should he do? In the different tracts the characters in one way or another must choose between being saved by grace or being lost for eternity – and there are no shades of grey in between.

In his discussion of modernity Giddens claims that it entails a self-reflexive attitude originating in the loss of the premodern homogenous society, which was replaced by a heterogenous and fragmented society (Giddens 1991 – compare with Beck's (2010) 'reflexive modernization'). Heterogeneity inevitably leads to relativization and choice. Moreover, modern science introduces doubts, according to Giddens, and truth remains true only as long as new discoveries do not overrule it. Hence, truth is relativized. To doubt and to seek new knowledge are part of the modern project, and for individuals this means being confronted with making decisions on a daily

basis. Giddens claims that 'Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, "How shall I live?" has to be answered in day-to-day decisions' (Giddens 1991, 14), an attitude resembling Adamsson's struggle, and well known in the protestant Evangelical Revival.

The revival movement(s) claimed that the Word of God and the atoning death of Jesus Christ were an absolute truth – mainly in relation to the established majority church and in opposition to contemporary secular tendencies. The aim was to strengthen Christian faith, but in doing so – as the tracts illustrate – dichotomies, alternatives, and doubts were introduced. The hegemonic role of the (protestant/Lutheran) church was questioned and hence undermined, calling for alternative interpretations of the Word of God. While doing so, however, a sharp distinction/dualism between the saved and 'the others' was introduced to Christian faith and practice (a dichotomy further emphasized from the other side by contemporaries such as the socialists and freethinkers) (compare with Beck 2010; Berger 2014).

This division was further induced because of the 'activist component' of the revival movements. As a token of being saved, the saved individual would seek to proclaim the gospel to the unsaved, encouraging conversion. Being lukewarm was not a desired alternative, and one can only imagine how dualism and individual doubt could result in different outcomes, ranging from the 'faith of the heart', nonfaith, or even religious apathy or simply ignorance. Individualism, choice, and pluralism made alternative outcomes possible: 'Pluralism enables, indeed compels the individual to make choices between different religious and non-religious possibilities,' according to Berger (Berger 2014, 37). Here Adamsson and his contemporaries sought to find their way between Scylla and Charybdis.

Even if the Evangelical Revival and the worldview it formulated aimed to strengthen religious faith overall, it reformulated religious faith and commitment – pushing it towards religious enthusiasm and unity but at the same time pluralizing its contemporary mental landscape, thus removing from its contemporaries the option to be religiously lukewarm.

It has thus been observed that the Evangelical Revival was part of and contributed to a pluralist situation by providing new alternatives. New associations were created, new theological interpretations saw daylight, and conflicts with nonreligious actors arose. This article, however, further highlights how the seed of self-reflection, faith, doubt, religious apathy, and deconversion is inherent in the worldview of the revival. The nineteenth-century revival sought the restoration of the Word of God but was ultimately

part of part of and contributed to the complex process of a pluralizing society and thereby of the undermining of both the church and Christianity as the hegemonic paradigm – to the extent where Christianity, according to Charles Taylor, is nowadays only 'understood to be one opinion among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace' (Taylor 2007, 3).

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Relating to Tradition: Civil Religion and the Evangelical Lutheran Church on Finnish Independence Day

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Abstract

By analysing a survey and elicited thematic writings, this article seeks to identify the main elements in the civil religion (CR) of Finnish Independence Day (FID) celebrations, how FID is related to CR, and the role the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) plays in FID. It further demonstrates the utility of an open definition of CR in which its relationship with church religion is understood as an open question and tests the various dimensions of CR presented in previous discussions. The CR of FID celebrations centres on its *traditional mode* in the memory of war and employs other national symbols. The *negotiating mode* is favoured by younger generations and distances itself from the rituals of the traditional mode, while the *critical mode* uses the rejection of FID celebrations as a platform for a general social critique. Membership of the ELCF, Finnish as a mother tongue, higher education levels, and an identification with higher social classes are the most important predictors for celebrating FID. In the writings the ELCF's role is associated with the traditional mode in blending with the backdrop of other national symbols, especially those related to the war.

Keywords*: civil religion, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Independence Day, cultural religion, banal nationalism*

On national days ideas of nationality or nation-ness typically taken for granted or operating in the background (Billig 1995) are publicly reflected on in a ritualized manner. Such occasions serve as focal points for matters deemed nationally relevant, and they possess a certain sacred quality (Warner 1974), combining national myths, rituals, and symbols. National days provide an appropriate arena for an examination of *civil religion*, a concept widely utilized yet often ambiguous within the sociological study of religi-

on that can have both religious and secular dimensions, depending on the definition (Botvar 2021; Helve and Pye 2002, 95; Kyyrö 2018; Mahlamäki 2005). In this article civil religion's relationship with the religious dimension is an open question.

Previous studies on national day celebrations in Finland and other countries have explored various aspects, including the development of celebration forms (Halonen 2003; Klinge 1979; Kuusi 1979; Nyyssönen 2009). They have often focused on public dimensions such as national symbols, speeches, parades, rituals, and media coverage (Elgenius 2011; Nyyssönen 2009; Paasi 2016; Pajala 2012; see also Blehr 1999; Botvar 2021). The role of church religion in national day celebrations has also been approached through public materials. In Finland the focus has been on Independence Day church services (Meriläinen 2011; Sihvo 1992; 1998).

This article seeks to identify 1) the main elements in the civil religion of Finnish Independence Day celebrations; 2) how Independence Day is related to; and 3) the role the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) plays in these celebrations. Previous studies have approached Independence Day celebrations through public materials, but it is also important to consider how individual Finns receive and relate to this public phenomenon. This article complements the previous research on Finnish Independence Day and national days in other countries, as well as studies on civil religion, by examining how the public phenomenon has been received and related to from the private and individual perspectives.

Independence Day celebrations in Finland

Finnish Independence Day, celebrated on 6 December, commemorates the acceptance of the senate's proposal of independence from Russia in 1917. It was officially established as a politically neutral date in 1919 during the presidency of K. J. Ståhlberg (1919–25) following the civil war between the Reds and Whites in early 1918 (Nyyssönen 2009, 140). The declaration of Independence Day as a paid holiday played a significant role in its establishment as the national day, with laws passed in 1929 and 1937 (Halonen 2003, 18). Military parades and special church services have been part of the celebrations since the early years of independence, while certain public traditions like the presidential ball took shape in the early years and developed further after World War II (Kuusi 1979; Nyyssönen 2009).

The lighting of two candles in the window continues to be the most spontaneous popular custom related to Independence Day (Kuusi 1979). It

is derived from the years of Russification (1899–1905 and 1908–17; known in Finland as 'the years of oppression'), when lighting candles became a kind of silent protest. In 1927 the Independence League began to propagate the idea that this custom should be adopted on the evening of Independence Day along with traditions related to the flag (Halonen 2003; Kuusi 1979, 185).[1] Whereas the lighting of candles originated before independence, and the flying of the flag and the president's reception in its early years, the Winter War (1939–40) and Continuation War (1941–44) against the Soviet Union introduced a new stratum of commemorative traditions to Independence Day, many of which take place at war graves (Halonen 2003).

The role of the special church service held on Independence Day has been the subject of scholarly discussion. Attended by the President of the Republic, the cabinet, and members of parliament (Sihvo 1988), it has been seen as a sign of the ELCF's role as a state church. For those who prefer to characterize the ELCF's role as a folk church it is a remnant of the old state church model, which was allegedly abandoned after the 1867 Church Law (Meriläinen 2011, 362). This issue has also been discussed among civil religion scholars. For Juha Meriläinen state church religion is not civil religion, and the special church service therefore does not qualify as such (ibid.). Jouko Sihvo, meanwhile, counts 'Independence Day church services [including others than those attended by the president and cabinet], along with war grave visits, military parades and university students' processions', as civil religion (Sihvo 1992, 52–53). Since 1998 the special church service has been ecumenical, but it has been organized in the ELCF's Helsinki Cathedral in a central location on Senate Square close to the presidential palace.

To shift the focus to the nonreligious aspects of Independence Day, television has played a significant role in its celebration. The day's media ritual builds on the national military parade and the special church service shown during the day, which are usually followed by Edvin Laine's war film *The Unknown Soldier* (1955). The media ritual culminates in the evening with the presidential ball, a notable citizens' celebration at the presidential palace. The televised presidential ball and *The Unknown Soldier* have been among the most watched television programmes throughout the 2000s. Although war remembrance is by no means alien to national day celebra-

1 There are competing interpretations of the origin of the custom: according to Nyyssönen 'Some say that the custom already commemorated [national poet Johan Ludvig] Runeberg's birthday whilst others refer to an illegal jaeger movement to signify a safe house on their way out of the country' (Nyyssönen 2009, 148). The origin of the custom in the jaeger movement was also mentioned in one of the thematic writings.

tions in various countries (e.g. Botvar 2021), Mari Pajala notes that since the 1990s, following the collapse of Soviet Union, remembrance of the Winter War and Continuation War increased in the media, and 'independence' has come to be associated with them (Pajala 2012, 131–134). This turn in the memorizing of the war has been described as neo-patriotic. It has been accompanied by an interpretation that instead of losing the wars, Finland won a 'defensive victory'. Veterans have since gained a more prominent role in the presidential ball. The screening of *The Unknown Soldier*, based on a novel by Väinö Linna (1954) describing the Continuation War from the perspective of a Finnish machine gun company, is a new tradition of the 2000s. It is associated with the increased war remembrance (Nyyssönen 2009, 137, 147; Pajala 2012) and has acquired a central position in the contemporary Independence Day media ritual.

Another focus of public attention is the various street activities that oppose the official forms of public celebrations – or in the case of demonstrations, each other. In the 1960s the elitism of the presidential ball was criticized, and since 1967 an alternative party for the homeless has been organized (Nyyssönen 2009, 144). This tradition of an 'Independence Ball for the Poor' has continued into the 2020s. Since the 1990s, and especially during the 2000s and 2010s, various left-wing, anarchist, nationalist, neo-Nazi, anti-immigrant, and anti-EU groups' street activities have been prominent (see also Heikka et al. 2016; Nyyssönen 2009, 144).

Civil religion and Independence Day

The definition of civil religion has been widely debated within the sociology of religion and related fields. For Robert N. Bellah American civil religion is not denominational but Christianity-influenced general religion that legitimizes the nation's transcendent ideals, which can be found in presidents' inauguration speeches (Bellah 2006). Marcela Cristi has noted that although Bellah's notion of civil religion builds on both the Durkheimian sociology of religion and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's political theory, there is a paradox in how Bellah combines them. Cristi maintains that Rousseau's view of civil religion as a usable political resource (top-down) has received insufficient attention, and the Durkheimian view that sees civil religion as a spontaneous cultural product (bottom-up) has dominated the discussion (Cristi 2009, 49). Johanna Sumiala underlines that it is the official state that is at the centre of the moral order and thus of civil religion (Sumiala 2013, 111). This is also the case with Finnish Independence Day's media ritual,

which is centred on the presidential ball (Nyyssönen 2009). This article approaches civil religion from the bottom-up perspective, but it is important to note that there is a dynamic at play between public and officially endorsed forms of civil religion and the responses to it of individual citizens, who may be active participants in or oppose civil religious practices.

Another question has been whether definitions of civil religion should be limited to those phenomena that concern belief in a divinity or the supernatural (e.g. Lüchau 2009, 377–383; Warburg 2017, 130), or whether secular phenomena should also be included. A related discussion is civil religion's relationship with secular nationalism. Bellah was himself critical of equating civil religion with religious nationalism: he understood civil religion as subjugated to the transcendent and nationalism as idolatrous self-worship (e.g. Richey and Jones 1974, 14–18). Yet scholars of nationalism have often equated them, understanding nationalism-as-civil-religion as a modern substitute for religion. Following the latter reasoning, Michael E. Geisler writes about how historiography takes religion's place in secular national holidays (Geisler 2009, 20).

In the Finnish and wider Nordic context scholars of religion have used the concept to refer to the special role the Lutheran 'folk churches' have played in society (Lampinen 1984; Sundback 1984). While Tapio Lampinen, employing Bellah's concepts, analyses references to God and biblical archetypes in various materials, for example, Susan Sundback understands Finnish civil religion as an ideology that enables citizens to remain members of the church, regardless of secularization. Belief in God is unnecessary for civil religion or the 'folk church ideology' to exist. Additionally, Finnish historians and sociologists have used the concept to refer to secular phenomena like the temperance movement or Finnish nation building (for a wider overview see Kyyrö 2018). Helena Helve and Michael Pye include even nationally relevant sets of beliefs related to sport and business as 'civil religious' (Helve and Pye 2002, 97), seeing civil religion as something shared by the majority and related to shared symbols and ideas of right and wrong (ibid., 98; cf. Mahlamäki 2005, 212).

A discussion of Sundback's understanding of folk church Lutheranism as civil religion has resurfaced alongside the discussion of cultural religion. In the context of nonreligious identification in Finland, Teemu Taira, Kimmo Ketola, and Jussi Sohlberg write that for older generations, especially those who are more religious, there is nothing special about the connection between Finnishness and the ELCF. The latter has supported the former, which was constructed in opposition to the communist and atheist Soviet Union. As the chain of memory of the wars against the Soviet Union weakens, especially among millennials, so does the ELCF's role as a cultural religion (Taira et al. 2022, 14).

Tiina Mahlamäki defines civil religion as a system of beliefs, myths, and ritualized practices that are associated with the nation and national belonging (Mahlamäki 2005, 212). Following Mahlamäki, I have proposed that especially in the Finnish context civil religion should be defined to include both secular and religious forms of sacralizing the nation, instead of focusing only on its divine legitimation. This allows more scope for a consideration of the various ways of sacralizing, and the roles church religion may or may not play. How religious institutions, practices, and beliefs (i.e. going to church, believing in or referring to God) are related to sacralizing the nation thus becomes an open question, and the data determine whether civil religion is religious or secular (Kyyrö 2018, 203). This creates more opportunities to discern the reciprocity of the religious and secular in the celebration of the nation.

I have also pointed out that in the 2000s and 2010s secular civil religion in Finland was divided between the conservative remembrance of the war and relations with the Eastern neighbour and the liberal valuing of the development of democratic institutions and the welfare state (Kyyrö 2018). These versions of civil religion emphasize different periods of trial for the nation (Kyyrö 2018; see also Bellah 2006). Several scholars have pointed out that the use of civil religious language increases during crises such as war, when the structures of society are threatened (e.g. Lampinen 1984; Mahlamäki 2005; see also Billig 1995, 44).

The study of civil religion has often focused on the public and official rituals, myths, and beliefs associated with the nation. Mahlamäki notes that public civil religion is often masculine and conservative, while the private side is more feminine (Mahlamäki 2005, 201, 213–214). Valdermar Kallunki observes that Finnish civil religion combines Lutheranism and values and myths connected with national defence. Kallunki has found that groups of conscripts and those who undertake civil service are differentiated by how they orientate themselves to working life and the national churches, group orientation, education, types of hobbies, and their relationship with alcohol and drugs (Kallunki 2013).

Using survey data, Pål Ketil Botvar examines popular celebrations of the Norwegian National Day (Constitution Day, 17 May) and the influence of religion in these events. Like Finland, such celebrations are a majority activity and are therefore associated with the majority religion. He distinguishes between 'exclusive' ethnocultural or religious nationalism and 'inclusive' civil religion. Botvar finds that the Lutheran church lacks a prominent official presence but plays a more subdued role in casual allusions to God in songs and speeches, for example. Although restrictive types of ethnocultural nationalism are less prevalent, participation in celebration is related to 'church involvement, pat-

riotism, and sometimes an inclusive form of national identity' (Botvar 2021).

Based on previous research on civil religion and Finnish Independence Day celebrations, various dimensions need consideration. The first is the religious–secular dimension. Being religious can take various forms, from strict belief in God to inactive membership of a national church. The secular aspect can also take various forms such as war remembrance or an appreciation of the welfare state. The second is the dimension between official and unofficial civil religion, which is connected with the third, public and private, dimension: citizens may celebrate Independence Day privately as part of the media audience or participate in public events, and they may take certain officially endorsed or produced forms of celebration for granted or reject them. Finally, various sociodemographic factors such as gender, social class, education, political orientation, and so on may be connected with the other dimensions.

Data and methods

This article employs two datasets, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative dataset is the 'Historical Consciousness in Finland 2009' (FSD2932) survey; the qualitative dataset is a collection of *thematic responses* to a writing call on customs and meanings related to Independence Day ('Päivä itsenäisyyttä – A Day of Independence'). In the following I refer to the respondents of the former dataset as 'survey respondents' and the latter as 'writers'. Ultimately, the two datasets reveal for whom Independence Day is important, how the respondents relate to it, and what they consider relevant about the day.

Survey data

The 'Historical Consciousness in Finland 2009' survey was collected in October–December 2009 by a research project led by Dr Pilvi Torsti. It included several questions about the importance and meaning of events, periods, and history. The survey was conducted using mailed structured questionnaires by Statistics Finland. The survey's target group was Finnish- and Swedish-speaking people between 15 and 79 living in Finland, with 1,208 valid responses and a 35.3 per cent response rate. The sample was drawn from the population register using probability sampling. It included two questions of specific interest here: *whether* the respondent celebrated Finnish Independence Day; and an open-ended question about *how* the respondent celebrated it. Additionally, the survey included the respondents' background variables. All the analyses in the survey dataset were made using a weighting

that balanced the dataset so that it was more representative of the Finnish population[2] (FSD 2014). Some variables were recoded further from the data to ensure that each category had more than 30 responses. The generations variable was the categorization of birth years, which was based on Wass and Torsti (2011), using the same dataset. Wass and Torsti name the generations by their key experiences as follows: 1930–1944: the generation of war and reconstruction; 1945–1958: the generation of President Kekkonen, the moon landings, and the 1960s; 1959–1974: the generation of the end of the Cold War; 1975–1984: the generation of EU membership and economic depression; and 1985–1994: the generation of technology, internationalism, and terrorism (Wass and Torsti 2011, 172).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables included in the logistic regression model.

Descriptive statistics of the variables		**Count**	**%**
Do you celebrate Finnish Independence Day?	No	234	19,6 %
	Yes	959	80,4 %
Gender	Woman	618	51,2 %
	Man	589	48,8 %
Place of habitation	Big city (100,000+)	336	28,1 %
	Suburb or suburban area	111	9,3 %
	Small or medium town or commune (20,000 to 100,000)	329	27,5 %
	Smaller town or commune (20,000 or less)	215	18,0 %
	Countryside	205	17,2 %
Main acitivity	Working or temporarily not working	596	50,1 %
	Student	174	14,6 %
	Unemployed	64	5,4 %
	Retired	287	24,1 %
	Other	69	5,8 %
How many books do you have at home?	10 or fewer	98	8,2 %
	11–50	323	27,1 %
	51–200	438	36,7 %
	201–500	210	17,6 %
	500 or more	124	10,4 %
Mother tongue	Finnish	1142	94,5 %
	Swedish	66	5,5 %
Do you have evacuee Karelian roots?	Yes	282	23,8 %
	No	904	76,2 %

2 The weighting balances the overrepresentation of the Swedish-speaking and younger populations, as well as non-responses (FSD 2014, 4).

Belonging to a religious community	Does not belong	356	30,3 %
	Evangelical Lutheran	765	64,9 %
	Other or cannot say	57	4,8 %
Household income	€0–999	136	11,6 %
	€1,000–1,499	145	12,4 %
	€1,500–1,999	174	14,9 %
	€2,000–2,999	252	21,5 %
	€3,000–4,999	352	30,0 %
	€5,000 or more	112	9,5 %
Generation	1944 or before	202	17,0 %
	1945–1958	296	25,0 %
	1959–1974	313	26,4 %
	1975–1984	190	16,1 %
	1985 or later	184	15,5 %
Education	Primary	148	12,3 %
	Lower secondary	194	16,2 %
	Upper secondary general	102	8,5 %
	Upper secondary vocational	331	27,6 %
	Post-secondary or more	425	35,5 %
Self-identified social class	Working class	236	19,8 %
	Lower middle	186	15,6 %
	Middle	546	45,9 %
	Higher middle or upper	116	9,8 %
	Rather not say	107	9,0 %
Childhood social class	Working class	397	33,4 %
	Lower middle	217	18,3 %
	Middle	392	33,0 %
	Higher middle or upper	104	8,8 %
	Rather not say	78	6,5 %
Military service	Did military service	494	44,8 %
	Did civil service or released from military	49	4,4 %
	No military service	561	50,8 %
Party voted in parliamentary elections 2007	Center	169	14,5 %
	National Coalition	195	16,8 %
	Social Democratic	172	14,8 %
	Left Alliance	46	3,9 %
	Green League	124	10,7 %
	Swedish People's	43	3,7 %
	Finns	75	6,5 %
	Other party	60	5,1 %
	Did not vote	173	14,9 %
	No right to vote	105	9,0 %

In the survey data I examined the statistically significant demographics associated with the respondent's celebration of independence, as well as the most common ways of celebrating Independence Day. The background variables were chosen based on the civil religion research described in the previous section. The responses to the question about how Independence Day and the responses contextualize each other.

First, the association of various sociodemographic variables with the question about whether the respondent celebrated Independence Day was analysed by building and interpreting a binary logistic regression model (Tables 1 and 2). Logistic regression calculates the effect of each covariate (independent variable) on the dependent variable. The dependent variable is binary (one either celebrates Independence Day or does not), the method is suitable for modelling categorical independent variables, and continuous variables can also be used as covariates. The values of independent categorical variables are displayed as 'dummy' variables (for example, one either is or is not of a certain gender or a voter for a certain party). In the analysis of the survey data each independent variable was first modelled pairwise with the dependent variable, after which the statistically significant variables were chosen as covariates in the adjusted model. The adjusted model reports the effect of each variable when the other variables are standardized. This helps in evaluating whether the effect of a variable is mediated by another variable.

The logistic regression model reports the statistical significance of each independent variable and the odds ratio by which the presence of the variable affects the independent variable rather than the reference category (the other gender or one of the parties). Additionally, the model's prediction power (sensitivity) is calculated as a percentage of correct predictions, its performance with the Nagelkerke R^2 value, and its fitness with the Hosmer-Lemenshow test value. The interpretation of the logistic regression model and its parameters are presented in the 'Who celebrates Independence Day, and who does not?' section. This part's findings contextualize the responses and help estimate their generalizability.

Second, the open-ended survey responses give an idea of the prevalence of a specific custom, and the responses help understand the meanings of a certain practice. The open-ended survey responses were further categorized, and repeating customs and references to symbols were coded.

Thematic responses

The responses were collected through an open call formulated in cooperation by the author, Dr Tiina Mahlamäki, and the Finnish Literature Society. The call was forwarded to the respondent network of the Finnish Literature Society and published online, and it could be responded to online and by mail. The call was made in Finnish, Swedish, and English in two rounds in December 2016 and 2017. It yielded 49 and 17 responses respectively. The returned writings were in Finnish (65) and Swedish (1). Elderly people and women were overrepresented in the dataset. The median year of birth of the writers who provided information about their age was 1955, and 63.6 per cent of the writers were women, 25.8 per cent men, and 10.6 per cent of unspecified gender (see Table 3).

The writings provide a detailed insight into the customs and meanings attached to Independence Day and independence. First, ways of celebrating were analysed to identify the recurring customs, rituals, and symbols the writer attached to Independence Day. Most importantly, the repeating modes of relating to Independence Day were analysed: how the writer characterized their relationship with Independence Day. First, recurring customs and symbols, as well as the writer's relationship with the celebrations (embracing, critical, distancing, humorous), were coded. On this basis the three main modes of relating were summarized, and the dominant mode was coded for each writing.[3]

Who celebrates Independence Day, and who does not?

In the following I will answer the question presented in the section headline by interpreting the logistic regression model that predicts the celebration of Independence Day. Table 2 presents the unadjusted and adjusted binary logistic regression models. The unadjusted effects were produced by modelling each predicting variable independently with the dependent variable.

3 Regarding the limitations of the data and methods, neither of the datasets captures the views of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities other than Swedish speakers, meaning the article's focus cannot be on the minorities. Although the responses to the survey question 'Do you celebrate Finnish Independence Day?' say little about differences in celebrating and not celebrating, the responses and the statistically significant difference in the responses between certain groups of survey respondents reveal that this relationship is somewhat divisive. The responses do not include views that were completely indifferent to the day, while some of the non-responses to the survey may be a signal of this indifference. Additionally, the responses do not contain consistent background information other than age and gender, which would have allowed a more thorough comparison with the survey data.

Statistically significant variables were chosen for the second, adjusted, model, in which all the predicting variables were modelled together. I focus on the odds ratio ('Exp(B)') and the statistical significance of individual variables. The odds ratio ranges between zero and indefinite. The statistically significant variables are those with a value of 0.05 or less, indicated by asterisks. The odds are calculated against the reference categories (ref.) that have a value of 1.

Table 2. Logistic regression model: 'Do you celebrate Finnish Independence Day?'

Dependent variable: Do you celebrate Finnish Independence Day?		Unadjusted effects			Adjusted effects		
Predicting variables		Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B) data bars	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B) data bars
Gender	Man (ref.: Woman)	0.63**	(0.15)		0.74	(0.41)	
Main activity	Working or temporarily not working (ref.)						
	Student	0.98	(0.22)		1.23	(0.41)	
	Unemployed	0.46**	(0.28)		0.54	(0.39)	
	Retired	1.49*	(0.20)		1.06	(0.38)	
	Other	0.76	(0.30)		0.61	(0.37)	
How many books do you have at home?	10 or fewer (ref.)						
	11–50	1.33	(0.26)		1.40	(0.33)	
	51–200	1.84*	(0.26)		1.43	(0.34)	
	201–500	1.81*	(0.29)		1.42	(0.38)	
	500 or more	2.49**	(0.35)		1.13	(0.43)	
Belonging to a religious community	Does not belong (ref.)						
	Evangelical Lutheran	3.81***	(0.16)		3.04***	(0.20)	
	Other or cannot say	0.88	(0.30)		1.00	(0.40)	
Mother tongue	Swedish (ref. Finnish)	0.55*	(0.28)		0.24**	(0.50)	
Household income per month	€0–999 (ref.)						
	€1,000–1,499	1.04	(0.28)		0.67	(0.36)	
	€1,500–1,999	1.27	(0.27)		1.07	(0.37)	
	€2,000–2,999	1.71*	(0.26)		1.11	(0.37)	
	€3,000–4,999	1.74*	(0.24)		0.97	(0.37)	
	€5,000 or more	2.58**	(0.36)		1.42	(0.50)	
Generation	1944 or before (ref.)						
	1945–1958	0.72	(0.27)		0.88	(0.42)	
	1959–1974	0.55*	(0.26)		0.55	(0.48)	
	1975–1984	0.40***	(0.27)		0.46	(0.51)	
	1985 or later	0.50*	(0.28)		0.49	(0.59)	
Education	Primary (ref.)						
	Lower secondary	1.17	(0.25)		1.99	(0.37)	
	Upper secondary general	1.15	(0.29)		2.09	(0.42)	
	Upper seconday vocational	1.86**	(0.24)		3.94***	(0.35)	
	Post-secondary or more	2.33***	(0.23)		4.01***	(0.37)	
Self-identified social class	Working class (ref.)						
	Lower middle	1.78*	(0.25)		1.32	(0.30)	
	Middle	1.74**	(0.19)		1.17	(0.27)	
	Higher middle or upper	3.85***	(0.36)		2.73*	(0.49)	
	Rather not say	0.90	(0.26)		0.88	(0.36)	
Military service	Did military service (ref.)						
	Did civil service or released from military	0.50*	(0.32)		0.63	(0.40)	
	No military service	1.32	(0.16)		0.98	(0.43)	
Party voted in parliamentary elections 2007	Center (ref.)						
	National Coalition	1.40	(0.33)		1.31	(0.39)	
	Social Democratic	1.49	(0.34)		2.13	(0.40)	
	Left Alliance	0.32**	(0.39)		0.77	(0.48)	
	Green League	0.65	(0.32)		1.02	(0.38)	
	Swedish People's	0.55	(0.43)		2.10	(0.69)	
	Finns	0.59	(0.36)		1.15	(0.43)	
	Other	0.59	(0.39)		1.07	(0.46)	
	Did not vote	0.24***	(0.27)		0.74	(0.34)	
	No right to vote	0.59	(0.33)		1.38	(0.53)	

Robust standard errors in parentheses. The data bars visualize the odd ratios: the red bars refer to odd ratios below 1 and the blue ones above 1.
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.
The model's sensitivity was 82.5%, and its Nagelkerke R^2 value 0.227; the fitness of the model (Hosmer and Lemenshow test value) was 0.038.

In the adjusted model the differences produced by gender, main activity (employment status), household net income, generation, military service, and number of books were similar and had no significant effect on the celebration of Independence Day. No statistically significant political pattern could be identified when adjusting for increased differences between voters by party. It is noteworthy, however, that in the adjusted model the celebration was most popular among voters for the politically established parties, the Social Democrats, National Coalition Party, and the Swedish People's Party and least popular among Left Alliance voters and non-voters. The biggest differences were accounted for by level of education, belonging to a religious group, mother tongue, and self-identified social class. Those with upper secondary vocational or post-secondary or higher education were four times more likely to celebrate Independence Day than those with only primary education. Swedish speakers were four times less likely to celebrate than Finnish speakers. Members of the ELCF were three times more likely to celebrate than those not belonging to any religious group.

The increased likelihood of celebrating Independence Day is connected with social class (through self-identification and education). Although the majority (80.4%) of survey respondents reported celebrating Independence Day, the association with higher social classes may partly explain the elitist stigma some of the respondents associated with the celebrations (see below). Evangelical Lutherans' positive and Swedish speakers' negative odds support the idea that celebrating Independence Day in the late 2000s was a majority activity.[4] Those who were less likely to celebrate Independence Day belonged to minorities or lower social classes.

Regarding the qualitative analysis that follows, it is important to note that in the adjusted model the generations had no significant covariation with celebrating Independence Day, although younger generations were less likely to celebrate than the generation born before 1944. An obvious explanation is that the generational effect on celebration was mediated by religious belonging.

Previous studies have noted that public Finnish civil religion is masculine and conservative and complemented by private and feminine 'civil faith', which is connected with being on the 'threshold' of citizenship (Mahlamäki 2005), and that the civil religious orientations of conscripts and those who

4 At the end of 2006 82.5% of the Finnish population belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In 2017 the share had fallen to 70.9%. In 2006 91.5% of the population were Finnish speakers, and 5.5% Swedish speakers. In 2017 the respective shares were 87.9% and 5.2% (StatFin 2022).

choose civil service differ (Kallunki 2013). Based on the logistic regression model, the celebration of Independence Day is not divisive in respect of these social categories, but it is celebrated by men and women, voters for conservative and liberal parties, those who have been through military service, and those who have not. Viewed from the individual perspective, the celebration of Independence Day is a combination of participation in public and private practices, which may explain its wider popularity. Some symbols or rituals of Finnish Independence Day may indeed be considered too conservative, but a negotiating approach can be taken to them that allows distanced participation, as we will show below. Answering 'yes' or 'no' to the question about whether one celebrates Independence Day reveals something about how one relates to the day, but analysing the qualitative writings provides a further insight into the variation in these ways of relating.

Relating to Independence Day

In the following three sections I will present the main findings about the writings, supporting them with the survey's open-ended responses. The three modes of relating are presented in the 'Traditional Mode', 'Negotiating Mode', and 'Critical Mode' sections. Respectively, the names of the sections are broad classifications based on the analysis of the data. Table 3 presents the dominant mode by gender and generation in the writings. I have classified both the writings and the survey respondents by generations based on year of birth. The generation classification is the same as in Wass and Torsti (2011) (see the 'Survey data' section), which was also used in the FSD2932 dataset.

Table 3. Modes of relating to Independence Day in the writings.

Modes of relating to Independence day by gender and generation of the writer										
	Traditional		Negotiating		Critical		N/A		Total	
Gender										
Not specified	4	(57.1%)			2	(28.6%)	1	(14.3%)	7	(100.0%)
Woman	32	(76.2%)	8	(19.0%)	2	(4.8%)			42	(100.0%)
Man	6	(35.3%)	2	(11.8%)	9	(52.9%)			17	(100.0%)
Generation										
1944 or before	13	(92.9%)			1	(7.1%)			14	(100.0%)
1945–1958	12	(70.6%)			5	(29.4%)			17	(100.0%)
1959–1974	5	(55.6%)	2	(22.2%)	2	(22.2%)			9	(100.0%)
1975–1984	2	(28.6%)	3	(42.9%)	2	(28.6%)			7	(100.0%)
1985 or after	2	(28.6%)	4	(57.1%)	1	(14.3%)			7	(100.0%)
Not specified	8	(66.7%)	1	(8.3%)	2	(16.7%)	1	(8.3%)	12	(100.0%)
Total	42	(63.6%)	10	(15.2%)	13	(19.7%)	1	(1.5%)	66	(100.0%)

The traditional mode

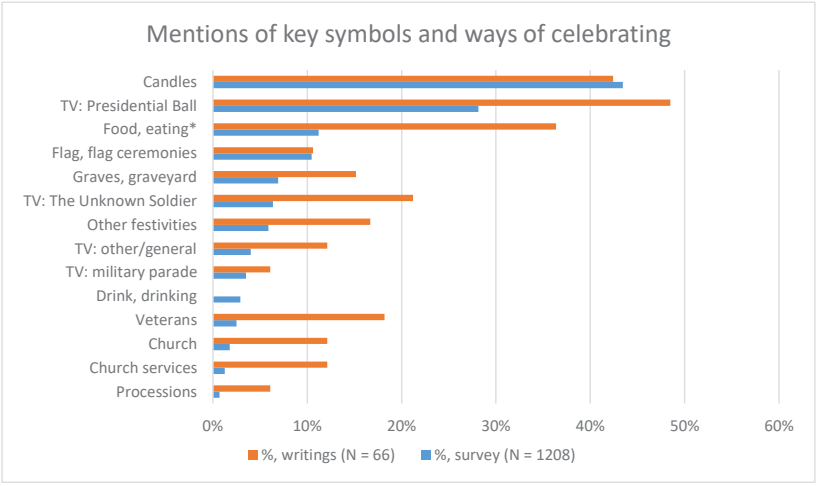

Figure 1. Key symbols and ways of celebrating Independence Day. *'Drink, drinking' was not counted separately from the writings and was included in the 'Food, eating' series.

Traditional customs and symbols related to celebrating Independence Day could be easily identified in both datasets. These included lighting two blue and white candles in a window between six and eight o'clock in the evening, watching the presidential ball on television, eating better than on normal holidays, raising the national flag or displaying it at home, visiting the graveyard, and watching *The Unknown Soldier* on television. The excerpts below crystallize the traditional way of relating to Independence Day:[5]

> Independence Day is a patriotic festival associated with the commemoration of the war and the deceased. The day's traditions include the national parade and university students' procession. The laying of a wreath on soldiers' graves is a valuable tradition. My husband and I light candles on the graves of my father-in-law and father, who fell in the Winter War. We dress appropriately for our church service, after which we have lunch. A white tablecloth, a standard on the table, lit candles, and the best tableware dignify our dinner table. Watching the president's reception on television is an annual tradition (SKS KRA. PI2016-23. Woman, born in 1937).

5 All translations by the author.

> My Independence Day celebration starts with the raising of the Finnish flag on our housing cooperative's flagpole. During the morning I prepare my suit for the afternoon's Independence Day festivities. I put my suit on, with a couple of medals, at about 11 o'clock.
>
> At 11.30 I participate in a memorial service at the war graves as part of the audience. From the war graves I go straight to the church for the celebratory service. After the service the City hosts a coffee party. After coffee we move on to the festival premises. The City and local associations organize the festivities.
>
> After the festivities I start to prepare the illumination: between four p.m. and six p.m. a candle is lit in every window. And then we watch the Independence Day parade on television. The evening programme at home continues with watching the presidential ball until almost midnight.
>
> The flag has been lowered at eight o'clock (SKS KRA. PI2016-9. Man, year of birth not specified).

In these excerpts churchgoing is part of the symbolic and ritual setting of Independence Day. Remembrance of the war plays a significant role, often with reference to relatives who took part in, fell in, or simply lived through it. The traditional mode is dominant among the generations born before 1974. The memory of the war is closer for them, and churchgoing is a more natural part of good citizenship. Those identifying as women favour the traditional mode.

Negotiating mode

The negotiating mode emerges among writers born after 1959 and becomes dominant among writers born in 1975 or after. Typical of this mode is a distanced, more individualistic relationship with the traditional expression. The writers try to find their own ways of relating to Independence Day, sometimes humorously:

> When I was between the ages of 20 and 26, I often spent Independence Day working in restaurants. The restaurant manager put fancy candles in the restaurant's windows. I thought it was important to light them. But often when I was working, I sold beer to those who had an extra day off, and me

> and my workmates went to a bar to hang out, and the occasion wasn't different from the Epiphany[6], for example.
>
> Now I'm in my thirties, and I always feel a bit funny about what to do. My husband and I ponder the current state of Finland, and why the celebration is so solemn. This time [this Independence Day] we went to sauna, ate, and tried watching the presidential ball with a bottle of sparkling wine and a drinking game (drink when someone shakes hands for too long, steps on a long dress that drags on the ground, etc.) (SKS KRA. PI2016-24. Woman, born in 1986).

However, such an approach can also be combined with the more traditional mode, which is often endorsed by the parents:

> This Independence Day I slept late with my boyfriend because we were at a party the previous night. On Independence Day eve there were many gigs and parties. My friends and acquaintances were laughing in advance at the [idea of celebrating the] Independence Day, but anyway, everyone celebrated it with pleasure. We even received a blue and white candle as a gift, which we lit. However, the food was Tex-Mex pizza – intentionally as un-Finnish as possible. The beer, however, was Karjala, which we joked about.[7]
>
> Part of my tradition is visiting the graveyard with my father. We take a candle to his parents' grave, and I think it's very atmospheric to look at the flames flickering on the war graves and the university students' torch processions. It's nice to see other people too, to experience something communal (SKS KRA. PI2017-9. Woman, born in 1988).

Compared with the negotiating mode the generations born in 1974 or after favour, the traditional mode older generations favour often appears more humorous and less individualistic, but in the cases presented above the traditional Independence Day is also part of the general background, as something that is given. These three excerpts reveal that Independence Day traditions are mediated by both media culture and families. Adapting

6 The Epiphany is a minor holiday marking the end of the Christmas holidays.
7 The brand refers to Karelia and the historical province of Finland ceded to the Soviet Union after World War II, except for the contemporary regions of North and South Karelia. Another text also mentioned the brand, and it can be interpreted as a signalling of ironic distancing from the memory of the war.

to the traditions happens from a distance: in wonder, but also comically or ironically, and in creating one's own makeshift versions of them. In the negotiating mode church religion is not prominent, and as with the traditional mode women dominate among the writers.

Critical mode

Some of the traditional forms of celebrating Independence Day prompt direct criticism. This critical mode was steadily present but not dominant in all generations. Interestingly, men favoured the critical mode. Some of the writers criticized the militarism of Independence Day:

> [I] appreciate independence, but I find the gloom of the celebration heavy. Why can't we be happy about it without reproducing the gloomy and the warlike. Must all the music be in a minor key? And I don't understand why we can't celebrate independence without constantly drawing parallels with World War II. The celebration's stark nationalism is unappealing (SKS KRA. PI2016-15. Woman, born in 1958).

> I think wallowing in the memory of the Winter War on Independence Day today is a false religion, and that other achievements of Finnish independence should be celebrated. Riding on the veterans' achievement of independence has brought about several disgusting phenomena such as neo-Nazism, which is a grotesque reflection of the short-sightedness of many regarding Finnish independence (SKS KRA. PI2016-3. Gender not specified, born in 1975).

Solemnity is understood as gloominess, and the focus on the remembrance of the war is criticized. Nationalism and war remembrance are associated, and they are seen as pathological causes of undesirable phenomena such as neo-Nazism. As mentioned in the introduction, during the 2010s nationalist and neo-Nazi demonstrations became commonplace during Independence Day celebrations.

Apart from the critique of the ways of celebrating independence, a more general social critique could be found in the responses. One writer was 'appalled and saddened by the prevailing extremely neoliberal political atmosphere' (SKS KRA. PI2016-37. Woman, born in 1976). In addition to the economic critique, some writers highlighted the elitism of the celebrations and society in general:

> As a historian, I have a critical view of the idea of independence. The power to make decisions has been given away to such an extent that we don't have our own currency, we barely have our own language, and there's no agrarian or foreign policy or judicial system. So in the morning I was critical of the day. Anyway, I wanted to see how the day went, so first I went to see Heikki Hursti's independence celebrations in Hakaniemi. The view was rather harsh, people waiting for their food bag to get even the necessary. Then I went to the front of Kiasma [modern art museum] for the Independence Party's event, where people spoke the truth. I saw Independence Day from its dark side (SKS KRA. PI2016-42. Man, year of birth unknown).

The writer's views are aligned with EU-critical arguments that juxtapose independence with EU membership (see also Blehr 1999; Paasi 2016). The small extra-parliamentary Independence party has raised similar points. The response paints a picture of the little people who have been left outside society by referring to the Poor's Independence Day celebration that has been organized since the 1960s, first by Veikko Hursti and later by his son, Heikki. However, the writer was not displeased with the same year's presidential ball because many 'regular Finns, voluntary workers, and representatives from the cultural field and the authorities' were on the guestlist (SKS KRA. PI2016-42. Man, year of birth unknown).

In the critical writings the public celebration of Independence Day reflects the corrupt state of the country and its elite (SKS KRA. PI2016-10. Man, born in 1974; SKS KRA. PI2016-20. Man, born in 1949). Interestingly, in the latter passage the writer regards the celebration as too cheerful. One writer (SKS KRA. PI2016-20. Man, born in 1949) begins his response by discussing his relatives who participated in the Civil and Winter Wars. His father, who was wounded in the Winter War, had not received proper compensation from the state for his back injuries. Like many writers, he evokes his relatives' wartime sacrifices, but this time they are used to question the state's legitimacy, as they emphasize the importance of the state's independence rather than the writer's belonging to society in the more traditional cases.

What is noteworthy in the critiques presented above is that they all identify the central ways of celebrating Independence Day and see some of them as undesirable. There is a critique both of nationalism and militarism and of society and its elite in general. The elite is contrasted with regular Finns. The sacrifices of the veterans and wartime generation – who are also understood as regular people – are not questioned, but the construction of society on their sacrifice is seen as false.

These two modes of social critique were also prevalent in the Independence Day demonstrations of the 2000s and 2010s, discussed at the beginning of this article. There is a critique of nationalism and militarism, which stems mainly from liberals and the left, and there is an anti-elitism, present in the left-wing 'gate-crasher parties' but also in far-right and anti-EU demonstrations. These anti-elitist critiques often build on the 'little people', those who are underprivileged, or whom society mistreats. It is noteworthy, however, that although the traditional mode is criticized, neither religion nor the ELCF is among the targets or means of critique.

Conclusion: Independence Day, civil religion, and the role of the ELCF

Based on the analysis, the Independence Day celebration is associated with the linguistic and religious majority, as well as higher class positions, all of which reflect the ideal components of national belonging. The traditional mode of celebration, favoured by older generations, is directly connected with this ideal of national belonging, as the negotiating mode of the younger generations distances itself from it. The criticism of Independence Day stems from a more general societal unhappiness.

Keeping in mind that in the logistic regression analysis one of the most important predictors for celebrating Independence Day was membership of the ELCF, in this section I will summarize the role church religion plays in Independence Day celebrations. In the survey's short open-ended responses only a few mentioned the church or church services, and there was only a few examples of religious significance being given to Independence and Independence Day in the writings:

> I think Independence Day and its celebration have a religious significance for me. I believe in God and His influence on the fate of nations, which means it also has a worldview-related, as well as increasing political, significance today (SKS KRA. PI2016-26. Woman, born in 1937).

> I eat my humble meal whenever I feel it's appropriate. In my heart I thank God that we still live in an independent Finland (SKS KRA. PI2017-2. Woman, born in 1946).

These references are connected with other traditional forms of celebration and come from the generations born before or immediately after the war. However, the role of religion in the form of the ELCF seems mostly to be

strongly connected with memorial services at war graves and participating in church services and in the special televised church service. This variation shows that religion can be connected with the civil religion of Independence Day in various ways: belief in or references to God may indeed be part of it as a side note, but religion more often takes the role of cultural religion, in which it is an unquestioned part of the national backdrop.

Although there were too few mentions of church or churchgoing (Figure 1) in the survey to draw statistically significant inferences, most were by older generations (more than 90 per cent of mentions of the church or church services were made by those born before 1975). This supports the notion that the ELCF is associated with the traditional mode, as cultural religion (Taira et al. 2022, 14). My argument here is that it is precisely its role as a supporter of Finnish identity and the chain of memory the ELCF plays in Independence Day celebrations that is apparent in the traditional mode. The popularity of the negotiating mode among younger generations reflects their distance from the cultural memory of the war, as the traditional mode with its war remembrance is more popular among older generations. The ELCF is therefore associated with the same constellation of symbols as war remembrance, which is less important to younger generations.

As an afterthought, the role of the ELCF can be approached from the perspective of banal nationalism, an everyday imaginary related to national belonging. Anssi Paasi maintains that Independence Day condenses banal and hot nationalism through recurring performances (Paasi 2016). The ELCF's presence in the Independence Day celebrations – both as media representations and participation in its practices – reproduce its position in relation to the Finnish nation. By combining Billig's (1995) notion of banal nationalism with Stig Hjarvard's (2013) derived notion of *banal religion*, such religion can be characterized as *banally nationalist institutional religion*. It neither emphasizes nor requires expressions of belief in God but is connected with national belonging in the minds of individuals, and as an institution it provides props that maintain nationality and serve as a reminder of what it is, thus reproducing its own position. There is thus great similarity with the 'banal Christianity' of Christmas celebrations in the Nordic countries, where secularized Christian symbols are defended or are objects of nostalgia (Lundmark 2023; cf. Warburg 2017, 138). By emphasizing the word 'institutional', I am pointing out that Christianity is not merely present as symbols or cultural products, as Hjarvard's notion of banal religion suggests, but that the banality concerns how the ELCF takes its place as an institution in society.

Independence Day is neither the only nor the most important setting where the ELCF can take the banal nationalist role. Nor is the ELCF as a means of reproducing a shared idea of nation-ness the only means from the perspective of Finnish civil religion: both public and private rituals that refer to shared symbols (notable persons, memories of war, past generations, national flag, candles, processions) do this too, and the ELCF is in the background. The ELCF's subsidiary role is emphasized by the fact that although ideas of nation-ness and ways of remembering the past are criticized or contested, it has not been part of these contestations but has instead been ignored in the critiques. If the ELCF had a more central position, it might also be among the objects of criticism.

* * *

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'The Wisest Man in the East': The Aesthetics of Gospel Rap Music within the Emotional Regimes of Finnish Evangelical Christianity

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Abstract

This article presents an ethnographic analysis of the performance of gospel rap music as part of Evangelical Christian youthwork in Finland. The article is based on my observations of six onsite and five online events that featured gospel rap music in their line-up, as well as interviews with nine musicians and three event organizers. I address the relationship between the aesthetics of gospel rap music and the emotional regimes of Finnish Evangelical Christianity. I define 'emotional regimes' here as cultural, social, and material practices that set normative rules for the expression of collective emotions. I conclude that light-hearted humour and irony are prevalent emotional moods in these Christian rap performances in Finland. The article shows how the emotional sequencing around gospel rap music at these Christian events conforms with the general individualistic and therapeutic emotional cultures of late modern societies. Yet I show how some gospel rappers are also self-critical of this individualism and the spectacular nature of these music events and use self-irony and parody as social commentary tools in their performances. Irony in gospel rap performances also opens opportunities for theological innovations and a reflection of social differences.

Keywords*: Evangelicalism, Finland, Christian music, ethnography, emotions, rap music*

In recent decades European national churches such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) have made a significant shift from passively listening worshippers towards multisensorial participation that involves the whole body (Roeland et al. 2012; Moberg 2018). At the same time, audiovisual media and electronic amplification have become increasingly common in Christian musical practices in Europe. One of the main soundtracks

of these changes has been rap music, which is now an established part of youthwork in many Christian communities (Roeland et al. 2012, 245; Nissilä 2019, 88, 100). In this article I therefore ask what the relationship is between the aesthetics of rap music and the emotional regimes of Finnish Evangelical Christianity. In asking this question, I address the presence of humour, joy, and playfulness in Christian music and worship, as well as the creative agency musicians have within religious institutions.

I understand 'aesthetics' here in the broad sense as 'our total sensory experience of the world and our sensitive knowledge of it' (Verrips 2006, 30; see also Meyer 2009, 6–11). I am thus interested in how rap music is performed in Christian contexts not only by sonic and verbal means but also through body movements, fashion, non-verbal utterances, and lighting, amplification, and architectural choices in the performance space. The second theoretical term in the research question, 'emotional regime' is derived from the work of Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead (2010, 10–12, 47–51, 69–73), who use the term for the interrelated social, cultural, and material conditions that govern the hierarchical order and flow of collective emotions. In other words, emotional regimes include understandings of the value of different emotions, and how they are expected to be combined and sequenced in each situation and place. As the word 'regime' implies, there are social rewards and sanctions on what is perceived as the correct display of emotions. Riis and Woodhead (2010, 49–50) note that intersecting and potentially conflicting regimes operate at all levels of society, both at the macro level, for example, within denominations, but also at the micro level, where face-to-face communities such as congregations have their own emotional cultures.

The general historical developments of rap music are closely linked with North American Christianity (Harris and Gault 2020). Christian references are also abundant in the rap genre in Finland, and many rappers are committed Christians. Yet in the ethnography that follows I focus on a very particular intersection of Christianity and rap music, namely the subgenre of 'gospel rap'. I begin the article with a discussion of the cultural context of this musical genre in Finland and an introduction of my research material, as well as my own position in relation to this genre. The article continues with an ethnographic description of various gospel rap music events.

Finnish Evangelical Christianity and Contemporary Christian Music

In its everyday use in Finland, the term 'gospel music' refers to a genre that encompasses various musical styles such as heavy metal and rap, and in

which the personal Christian faith of the performer(s) is the norm (Könönen and Huvi 2005, 8–10). As such, I consider Finnish gospel music a localization of Anglo-American 'Contemporary Christian Music' (CCM), which is defined not by its auditory qualities but by its ideological connection with Evangelical Christianity in particular, as a similar drive for differentiation from the perceived secular music cultures has not been historically present to the same degree in other Christian traditions (Abraham 2020, 8–12). Comparable national variants of CCM are found across Europe, for example, in neighbouring Sweden (see Bossius 2018, 156–157).

I understand 'Evangelicalism' here as a broad and scholarly term for Christians who believe in the importance of being born again, missionary activism, the central authority of the Bible, and Christ's redemptive work on the cross (Bebbington 1989, 2–17). I use Bebbington's descriptive definition of Evangelicalism in contrast with recent North American political definitions in which 'Evangelical' has come to mean 'aggrieved white conservative' (Gushee 2019), and in which CCM is understood as a marketing category mainly for this demographic segment (Lindebaum 2013, 112). In the Finnish context the Evangelical praxis Bebbington (1989, 2–17) describes is found in various Christian groups that have historically defined themselves against the perceived passive and institutionalized Christianity of the ELCF. These groups include independent denominations such as the Finnish Pentecostal movement and the Evangelical Free Church of Finland but also revival movements operating within the ELCF. Despite the existence of these Evangelical groups within its fold, the ELCF as a national church institution does not represent Evangelical praxis in the sense that Bebbington (1989, 2–17) defines the term. To clarify this distinction between Evangelicalism and 'Evangelical Lutheran', I will refer to the latter in this article as 'Lutheran'.

Throughout the twentieth century Finland was marked by 'cultural Christianity', where belonging to the ELCF, but not necessarily participation in church activities, was the assumed social norm. Although approximately 69 per cent of Finns still belonged to the ELCF in 2019, cultural Christianity has lost its relevance, especially among the younger age cohorts, where the majority is no longer Lutheran nor Christian by self-definition. For such young people, who still see relevance in the teachings of the ELCF, Christian faith is increasingly seen as an individual choice and is defined by active participation (Salomäki et al. 2021, 50, 67–90, 257–267). Due to this decline of cultural Christianity and the general weakening of denominational loyalty in the late modern situation, the borders between Finnish Lutheranism and Evangelicalism are increasingly blurred. One indication

of this blurring is that protestants across denominational borders have embraced more world-affirming and expressive musical styles and worship (see Roeland et al. 2012, 254; Moberg 2018). Finnish gospel music therefore also has wide appeal among those Christian listeners who otherwise would not identify themselves as Evangelicals (Salomäki et al. 2021, 142–145; see also Abraham 2018, 2).

Although the gospel rappers who participated in this study represent various theological and political views, most shared a self-definition against what they perceived as 'secular rap'. At the same time they were also self-reflexive about the secular–sacred distinction and wished to bridge this divide in various ways, as I will demonstrate in my analysis. They generally understood the term 'secular' in an approximately similar fashion to social scientific research: a cultural phenomenon, in which Christianity might be present, but which is not regulated by Christian values (see Abraham 2017, 8).

The music events I observed occupied an ambiguous position between a concert and Christian worship (see Bossius 2011, 52; Abraham 2017, 58). In the Evangelical understanding the musicians who appear on stage at Christian events are not considered simply performers but ministers who are key characters in setting the norms for an appropriate bodily worship and display of emotions for the rest of the congregation (Bossius 2011, 67–69; Jennings 2014, 84–92; Abraham 2018, 14–16). In the following ethnography I argue that the emotional regimes at the music events that I observed resembled the general Evangelical patterns E. P. Thompson (1980, 351–374; see also Riis and Woodhead 2010, 167) identified in his classic work on the emotional culture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British Methodists. For Thompson the Methodism of the time was based on passionate conversion and the bodily display of emotions, which afforded a contrast with the dull emotional landscape of the working class. Yet this passionate emotional culture was carefully regulated and confined within congregational gatherings (see also Jennings 2008, 92–100). In general, the Methodism of the time was based on the regulation of the body and its desires. This contradictory mixture of the excitement and disciplining of emotions by institutions of power later became characteristic of late modern culture in general (Riis and Woodhead 2010, 172–206).

Thus, despite the common ideological claim within protestant communities that they are aesthetically neutral in the sense that any musical style can be used to express Christian truths (Porter 2013, 202), the bodily level of music is a typical source of conflict and negotiation within them (Hendershot

2000, 28–34; Abraham 2017, 140–145). In recent years scholars have shown that the innovations around 'Black' musical styles such as rap (Hodge and Harris 2020) or African American gospel (Blenda Im 2021) have initiated discussions of the inherited colonial theology within Christian communities around the world. I argue that in addition to enforcing the historically established Evangelical emotional and bodily discipline, gospel rap music can also open spaces for postcolonial reflection and theological innovation in Finland (see Miller 2009; Porter 2013, 212–214).

Research material and the ethnographic field

Between 2019 and 2021 I participated in six onsite and five online events that featured gospel rap in their line-up. The onsite events ranged from concerts of individual rappers to the biggest Christian youth festival in Finland, 'Maata Näkyvissä' ('Land Ahoy'), which I attended twice in 2019 and 2021. I documented the events with written notes, as well as with occasional video and audio recordings. Apart from the 'Maata Näkyvissä' festival, I do not locate or name the events in this text to prevent unnecessary attention to the organizing communities or individual participants, many of whom were minors at the time. The five online events were YouTube broadcasts. Three of these online events were live broadcasts from simultaneous onsite events, one event featured a video recording of a live rap concert from 2012, and one consisted of pre-recorded musical performances without live audiences. With the consent of the organizers I also saved these YouTube videos for offline use.

My ethnographic interpretations are also informed by formal recorded interviews, which I conducted with nine currently active or formerly self-identified Christian rappers (namely, Daikini [Lauri Kemppainen], Roni Samuel, Pastori Pike [Pierlin Mpaka Makumbu], Joonatan Palmi, Fiskaali [Tuomas Fiskaali], Teku [Joel Johansson] from the group Big Bless, Häiriö [Heikki Mujunen], DJ Panic [Peter Regalado], and Paradox from the now disbanded group Connection Posse), as well as with three organizers of Christian music events (namely, Juha Heinonen, Elise Hasanen, and Jarkko Lindqvist).[1] When establishing informed consent with the interviewees, I asked them if they would like to appear in the research text with a pseudonym, their full name, or with their stage name alone, and I refer to them accordingly in this article, though none of them chose to use a pseudonym.

1 The ethnographic notes, transcribed interviews and downloaded online streams used in this study are stored in Music Archive Finland for researchers' future use.

All the rappers I interviewed are men and ethnically white Finns except for Pastori Pike, who is a Finn of Congolese origin, and DJ Panic, whose ancestry is from the Philippines.

Both my encounters with the interviewees and my ethnographic interpretations, were affected by my own persona. I generally introduced myself to the interviewees as a 'lukewarm Lutheran', as despite growing up as a white Finn with both Lutheran religious education and the advent of rap music in Finland, I had only passing previous contact with Finnish Evangelical Christianity before the start of this research project.

The gospel rappers that I describe perform across denominational borders: three of the events I observed were organized by local Lutheran parishes, three by Pentecostal congregations, and five by the 'Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland' (LEAF) ('Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys' (SLEY)), which is a revivalist organization operating under the umbrella of the ELCF.

My focus on the 'gospel rap' subgenre directed me to these Lutheran and Evangelical communities instead of other Christian communities where rap music might also be present. Such communities include the Awakening Movement ('Herännäisyys'), which is a traditionalist and socially liberal revival movement operating under the umbrella of the ELCF. Paula Nissilä (2019, 88, 100) mentions how the summer gathering of the Awakening Movement's youth programme included live rap music in 2016, but not from the gospel rap genre. This anecdote serves to indicate that in many Christian communities such as the Awakening Movement the perceived distinction between Christian and secular rap music is not framed as a central question in the same way as in the Finnish Pentecostal movement or LEAF.

One also finds great social and theological diversity within Finnish Evangelicalism, and the events and communities that I observed therefore had idiosyncratic emotional regimes. Yet I argue that all these organizing Christian groups expected a similar emotional effect from a gospel rap show. Riis and Woodhead (2010, 48–49, 72), however, note that assigned emotional roles are potentially in a state of constant flux through the agency individuals exercise, with a risk of emotional disharmony. Having described the general role of rap music in the events I attended, in the final section of the article I therefore focus on the performance of an individual rapper, Joonatan Palmi, who balances his creative ambitions and the structural requirements of these Evangelical performance settings.

Evangelical joy at Maata Näkyvissä Festival

Hundreds of teenagers jump up and down as the rap group NNS is about to end their midday concert at the festival. The multiple video screens behind the stage and on the ceiling of the ice hockey hall flash with the yellow capital letters 'BOUNCE'. Flames and smoke explode from the front of the stage, and the MC shouts at the crowd, 'It isn't enough, bounce harder!' As this last song reaches its climax, one of the band members shoots colourful streamers and a T-shirt at the crowd with a cannon. This is the T-shirt that the band has promised to 'the best jumper in the audience'. A high row of flames rises once more at the front of the stage as the rap group retreats from the stage. The music suddenly stops, and the show is over. The festival hosts walk to the stage and address the audience: 'You did very well; very well indeed! Now we have to empty this hall. Please go outside calmly and in good order.'

This ethnographic vignette is from my fieldnotes from the Maata Näkyvissä festival in 2021. The annual event is held in the city of Turku in the Turkuhalli indoor arena, which is known mostly as a venue for ice hockey games. The festival is organized by LEAF in conjunction with several local Lutheran parishes. When I interviewed rap musicians, they frequently mentioned performances at the Maata Näkyvissä festival as the highpoint of their musical careers or their desired goal. Rappers were indeed among the headline acts of the Maata Näkyvissä festival in both 2019 (the rap artists Mikaveli, Roni Samuel, Big Bless, NNS, and the UK rap group Social Beingz) and 2021 (NNS). The festival is the central event for the gospel genre in Finland, and in its heyday in the first years of the new millennium the festival weekend drew approximately 30,000 visitors annually, making it one of the biggest music festivals in general in Finland at the time (Vähäsarja 2017). Most of these attendees are underage youth groups from various ELCF parishes around Finland.

In recent years the number of visitors at the festival has dropped steadily to 18,000 in 2019 and only 2,000 in 2021, when the festival was shortened to a one-day event (Maata Näkyvissä 2019; 2020). Although 2021 was severely affected by the Covid-19 restrictions and included an online stream, there is a significant downward trend in attendance that reflects the decreasing religious participation of young Finns in general (see Salomäki et al. 2021, 105–106). In 2017 the festival also received a wave of negative publicity in the national media because of the open rift between the ELCF and LEAF on the ordination of women (Vihavainen 2017; see also Nissilä 2019, 107–108): LEAF does not accept women as ordained ministers; the ELCF has ordained

women since 1988. The director of LEAF youthwork, Juha Heinonen, explained to me that these disputes meant the festival organizers actively discouraged social or theological commentary at the event. Heinonen stressed that the festival sought to convey 'only the message of the gospel', thus implicitly aligning it with the self-professed apolitical stance of the North American CCM (Hendershot 2000, 75; Lindebaum 2013, 155).

Riis and Woodhead (2010, 199) note that in the late modern situation conservative religious movements especially face increasing pressure to adapt their emotional cultures to the demands of the consumer society. LEAF is indeed facing such pressures and has invested in the Maata Näkyvissä festival to such a degree that it not only parallels the spectacularism of secular music festivals but in many ways exceeds their production values (see also Roeland et al. 2012). Performances feature intense strobe lighting and pyrotechnics carefully synchronized with the music, and most performers have elaborate visuals or video segments as part of their show. The video segments include occasional Christian references like images of the cross or Bible passages that accompany the short talks musicians give on the stage. Yet there are no physical symbols of Christian traditions or authority in the festival hall during the music performances, though there is a separate Lutheran service at the festival on Sunday morning. The functionalist architectural choices in the performance space follow the general Evangelical praxis, which generally seeks to highlight its rupture from local religious traditions and instead foregrounds individual autonomy in one's relationship with Christ (Abraham 2018; see also Hovland 2016).

Like most secular music festivals, Maata Näkyvissä is a 'spectacle' (Debord 1987; see also Roeland et al. 2012, 246; Abraham 2018; Nissilä 2019, 49–54) in the sense that it seeks to arouse carefully pre-planned collective emotions at certain moments. For example, there is a memorial altar with flowers and pictures of a young man and a tombstone assembled in a relatively quiet spot in the arena corridor. The altar is to the memory of Timo Vainio, a young believer, who died suddenly of a heart attack in 1984. The festival began as his memorial event in 1985, and Vainio's tragic death is also regularly presented in the festival programme as performers speak of the ultimate reunion with lost friends in heaven. Similar serious and sad themes are routinely present not only at the Maata Näkyvissä festival but at all the music events I attend. All the rap artists I meet also discuss themes of death, longing, and depression in tunes such as 'Nähdään taivaassa' ('See you in Heaven') by the group Bigbless, 'Taakka' ('Burden') by the rapper Fiskaali or 'Taideteos' ('Work of art') by the rapper Roni Samuel.

Yet most rappers close their stage appearances in an upbeat mood that sets longing and grief aside for the joy of salvation. An intimate relationship with Jesus is regularly presented at the Maata Näkyvissä festival as the way to overcome sorrow and pain in similar therapeutic fashion as Luhrmann (2004; see also Riis and Woodhead 2010, 161; Roeland et al. 2012, 249–251) observes in the North American Evangelical context. As one musician assures the audience in the middle of his concert at the 2021 festival, 'Jesus is the answer to all the questions in life'. Overall, the general emotional moods at the events I attend conform with general late modern trends in which a variety of emotions are present in the public sphere, but where happiness is the ultimate value due to its compatibility with the overall consumer logic of society (Riis and Woodhead 2010, 172–206).

The festival rewards and encourages expressive bodily participation in different ways (see also Roeland et al. 2012, 246–248). For example, in 2021 an annual prize for 'the festival congregation of the year' is awarded to a congregation that has equipped its youth group with light sets that the teenagers wear around their bodies in the dark festival hall. I also asked some of the rappers why and how they have developed their performance routines in which they encourage their audiences to participate physically. The rapper Teku, who is from a Pentecostal background, responded by stressing that 'emancipation' is a central Christian value for him:

> The short answer is that we want to give the organizers bang for their buck, and we want everyone to enjoy the show as much as possible. […] On the other hand, I don't want to spiritualize everything, but then again, I would say that emancipation is one of the biggest spiritual values (Johansson, Joel 'Teku' 28.8.2020).[2]

This quotation shows that gospel rap performances are linked to contemporary Evangelical understandings of Christian music as a bodily form of worship (Roeland et al. 2012; Jennings 2014, 92–100; Abraham 2018, 14–16), but it also hints at how the rappers play a specific role within the emotional regimes of these protestant youth events. It is a given for Teku that the organizers of these Christian youth events expect the rappers to deliver a physically engaging show. At all the live events I attend most of the audiences consist of pre-existing youth groups

2 All quotations from interviews and lyrics translated from Finnish by the author.

such as confirmation school classes. I get the sense that the organizing institutions expect rap performances to work as a social icebreaker for the teenage groups, as the socialization of teenagers into congregational activities is an area where Christian denominations face increasing pressure in Finland and beyond (Abraham 2017, 111–153; Moberg 2018; Nissilä 2019, 43–47).

This icebreaking is not always easy for performers: apart from the Maata Näkyvissä festival, most of the events I attend offline or online are in churches with immobile pews and altars, offering only limited space for bodily movement. This architectural incongruity between the performances and their venues further highlights the contrasts between the Evangelical stress on the bodily display of emotions and the historical logocentric understandings of worship in Finnish protestant church institutions (see also Roeland et al. 2012). Yet many of these institutions are themselves currently taking the initiative in moving beyond logocentrism by encouraging new kinds of activities in church buildings, of which rap shows are only one indication of this broader change. For example, in 2021 the Lutheran parish in the small town of Lieto renovated its fifteenth-century church as a multipurpose space by removing its pews and pulpit (Törmänen 2021).

The encouragement to participate physically at gospel music events does not include open displays of sexuality. For example, at the 2019 Maata Näkyvissä Festival a former member of an erotic male show dancing group gives a testimony on one of the festival's side stages in which he describes how he left the entertainment world after being born again and now considers his former show dancing 'selling sex' and a sin. Romantic references are nevertheless occasionally present in rap performances as references to one's marriage, as rappers mention or joke about their wives during their performances. Again, in this sense Finnish gospel rap is aligned with the North American CCM, where the absence of sexual references and the emphasis of heterosexual commitment are the main performative elements that distinguish the genre from its secular counterparts (Häger 2005; see also Hendershot 2004, 52–84).

To summarize, in this section I have described how the gospel rap events that I attended conformed with the general social trends in which therapeutic individualism and the drive for bodily sensations have become increasingly important for late modern religiosity. In the next section I examine the cultural encounter between this late modern Evangelicalism and rap music's racial and political connotations more closely.

Invisibility and irony in gospel rap music

> Because I am invisible, invisible, invisible
> Invisible no matter what I do
> Invisible no matter where I go[3]

These lyrics are from the chorus of the track 'Näkymätön' ('Invisible') by Jodahe, who is a Finnish rapper of Ethiopian origin and was a 19-year-old debut artist during the track's release in 2019. Melodically, it consists of two short alternating synthesizer or piano loops. The melodies have a metallic and echoing sound, giving the song an eerie feel. The song's beat is formed by deep bass sounds, snare drum hits, and faster but silent hi-hat hits in the background that subdivide the beat. Jodahe's voice is deep and filtered with an autotune effect, giving a mild transhuman or robotic sound to his voice (see Burton 2017, 76–78), which is a sound effect that I also hear him using in a live performance. In the track Jodahe raps actively with an irregular lyrical delivery that creates rhythmic patterns between the bass and drum beats. In the background there is an echoing voice that doubles his lyrics, giving a further sense of eeriness to the track. His lyrics have a generally boastful tone. The only obvious Christian reference that I spot in them comes midway through the track, when Jodahe raps that 'I do this for the one who put me ahead of everything'.

In the rap genre the previously mentioned sonic characteristics fall under the broad subcategory of 'trap music', which became a dominant subgenre in mainstream rap music in the 2010s. 'Trap' refers to a 'trap house', which is a building where the drug trade takes place. Justin Adams Burton (2017, 90) argues that as in the US 'decades of unequal policing and imprisonment have marked drug trafficking as a primarily black or brown endeavor', the musical qualities of trap music are culturally embedded with transgressive blackness that 'plays on the mainstream's willingness to invest blackness with all that is wrong in society'.

With these aesthetics Jodahe's track can be contextualized with the postcolonial moment in Finnish rap music in which a growing number of artists from minority backgrounds came to identify themselves as 'black' or 'brown' in the 2010s and 2020s. Their music is indicative of the coming of age of the first substantial generation of Finns born to African immigrant

3 Koska mä oon näkymätön, näkymätön, näkymätön
Näkymätön mitä ikinä mä teen
Näkymätön mihin ikinä mä meen.

parents (Kelekay 2019). The new public visibility of black Finnishness has been a significant shift in Finland, where social diversity was formerly discussed outside the concept of race and through the paradigms of immigration and ethnicity. The Finnish public sphere has thus only recently begun to discuss the historical impact of white supremacy in this Nordic welfare context, whereas the existence of structural racism was previously generally unacknowledged in public discussion (Rastas 2019). This postcolonial shift in Finland has been especially liberating for those young African Finns who have faced racism in their daily lives but have lacked the vocabulary to articulate themselves as black subjects (Rastas 2019, 374).

In 2020 I follow an online stream of a national Pentecostal youth event that takes 'Näkymätön' as its theme song and starts with a live performance by Jodahe. 'Invisibility' is actively given a Christian interpretation throughout the event, starting with the opening of the broadcast, where there is a video montage of natural landscapes and close-ups of humans and animals. During the montage Jodahe's voice says that he is ready to become invisible so that God's will can become visible. 'Invisibility' is thus interpreted through the otherness Pentecostals experience in relation to the secular world, as well as through their conviction that the invisible realm of the Kingdom of God is actively breaking into everyday reality (see Hovland 2016, 348).

Later the event features a segment in which three youth groups from different congregations have each made competing music videos for the 'Näkymätön' track, as it has no official music video. The first video features a series of spectacular and even disturbing scenes: a backflip in a skateboard park, a group of young people posing seriously with dark shades, a moving car with a man posing from the sunroof, and a close-up of a man's face being hit by a boxing glove. The second depicts a black man wearing a face mask, shades, and a leather jacket. The man is shown in various social situations, where he is invisible in the sense that others do not react to his presence, until the end of the video, where they all dance together. The third is built on parodic double meanings. For example, as the rapper states in the song, 'I don't take the easy way out', the video shows a youngster jumping over a high fence and falling in the attempt. When the lyrics declare that 'I play against time', the video shows a ping-pong match in which the other player is hidden under the board and uses a clockface as their racket. After the screening of these three videos Jodahe announces the final video as the winner and awards the youth group with gift cards for a fast-food restaurant.

This ethnographic vignette exemplifies, first, how the organizers and artists seek to frame the sonic qualities of trap music with moods of light-

hearted joy in this Pentecostal event, even though the unawarded videos in the competition imbue the song with a variety of darker emotions. The privileged light-hearted mood is built with a humour that does not make fun of non-Evangelicals but takes the form of self-irony that in this case comments on the Evangelical culture itself by parodying 'Näkymätön' as the event's theme song. The case resonates with the observations of Monique Ingalls (2022), who notes the central importance of self-reflexive humour in the construction of Evangelical identities, which are increasingly voiced through irony and parody in a similar fashion to other late modern identities. Rick Moore (2017; see also Bielo 2011, 47–69) in turn argues that Evangelicals generally prefer self-irony in their mutual use of humour as a logical outcome of their religious conviction in which those who do not share their faith are seen as objects of compassion and outreach, which makes their ridicule largely inappropriate.

Second, the vignette shows how the event organizers, as well as Jodahe himself, align the performance with the apolitical stance of Anglo-American CCM, which has historically sought to flatten social differences such as race and class in favour of a common Evangelical identity (Hendershot 2000, 75; Lindebaum 2013, 155). However, given that the trap genre is associated with transgressive blackness (Burton 2017, 69–100), the song's lyrics could easily be interpreted as referring to the experiences of racial exclusions in Finnish society. One of the young parishioners' unawarded videos is connected with this interpretation by showing a black person as socially invisible. As such, the music video competition shows how gospel rap performances can also open unintended spaces for young Finns to discuss race at a time when Finnish society has only recently begun to assess its colonial past and structural racism (Rastas 2019).

All in all, the described case thus demonstrates the ambiguity of gospel rap music in the sense that one can also read socio-political messages into it, but also how this ambiguity at gospel music events is curbed with a particular Evangelical framing connected with a light-hearted emotional mood and a focus on individual salvation. In the article's final section I discuss how gospel rap artists can also occasionally push against the prevailing therapeutic individualism in the described performance settings.

Theological playfulness with the Young Theologian

The church hall is darkened as the main theme of the Star Wars movie starts to play, and the iconic opening crawl of the movie begins with the rolling

text: 'Palmi a.k.a Jorski a.k.a Pastor Jorski a.k.a Joonatan Palmi a.k.a The Young Theologian a.k.a Napalm was offered an invitation one day. He was invited to bring wisdom to you.' The text crawl then continues by praising the rapper and his wisdom with quoted recommendations from the Star Wars characters Darth Vader and Yoda. Eventually, the rapper Joonatan Palmi steps onto the stage and opens his set with his song 'Wisdomii' ('Wisdom'). His rhymes are composed as self-help tips, which are obviously parodic in their self-evident nature, including 'always remember to breathe, otherwise you won't be alive soon', and 'if your feet are squeezed, your shoes might be too small for you'.

After the track 'Wisdomii' Joonatan Palmi introduces the performer of the next track, who is his own alter ego, called 'The Young Theologian'. He puts on dark sunglasses, as 'The Young Theologian always wears shades', and starts his next song 'Bägissä toivoo' ('Hope in my bag'):

> […]
> Then, I was a professional believer
> I was a full-time shepherd and got my pay
> But it gave me only enormous pressure
> […]
> Preaching a word, for which I had no faith
> Yes, my heart was cold, I just wanted to make quick money
> […]
> But then I heard a voice of God
> Who said, 'Just come here boy!'
> 'Just switch on the lights and come here!'
> And I switched, went, and my heart is still burning like this[4]

When I meet Joonatan Palmi for the first time in 2020, he is working as a youth pastor in the Evangelical Free Church in Helsinki. When I ask him

4 Sit mä olinkin ammattiuskovainen
Sain palkkani, kun olin vaan paimen
Siin sai valtavasti vaan paineita
[…]
Saarnasin sanaa, johon ite en uskonut yhtään
Kyllä, sydän kylmä, halusin massit nyhtää
[…]
Mutta sit mä kuulin Jumalan äänen
Se sano tulepa poika tänne
Se sano poika laitapa valoja päälle
Ja mä laitoin, ja mun sydän palaa edelleenkin tällee

about his 2019 track 'Wisdomii', he explains that the track was born out of his wish to activate his own social media accounts with daily 'wisdoms'. He soon concluded that his attempted wisdoms were hopelessly cliched, so he instead took an ironic approach to the Christian self-help culture. Joonatan Palmi further explains to me that he intentionally wrote the song's lyrics to leave room for interpretation. He laughingly mentions the phrase 'Wisest man in the east, who knew everything about everything' in the hook of the song, which he says may refer parodically to himself 'as the wisest rapper in East Helsinki' or to 'Jesus as the wisest man from the Middle-East'.

James Bielo (2011, 47–69) notes that the use of irony also plays an essential role within the 'Emerging Church' movement, which has sought to renew North American Evangelical culture internally with a community-based approach to worship and an emphasis on social justice. The Emerging movement thus falls under the broader category of the 'Evangelical left', which is characterized by its theological understanding of sin as a collective phenomenon that has led these Evangelicals to address issues such as racism, poverty, and ecological crisis as sins. The Evangelical left stands in contrast with the 'Evangelical right', which has seen sin primarily as an individual concern, resulting in an emphasis on sexual ethics in issues such as infidelity and abortion (Gushee 2008; Strother 2020, 38–41). According to Bielo (2011, 47–69; see also Abraham 2018, 9), 'Emerging Evangelicals' voice irony specifically at the expense of the conservative Evangelical cultural industry and the Evangelical right. The use of irony among Emerging Evangelicals also challenges the historically established literal use of Christian language in Evangelicalism by instead emphasizing 'the processes of dialogue, thinking, and expression from which truths are given' (Colebrook 2004, 110, quoted in Bielo 2011, 61).

Overall, the specific point of the critique for the Emerging Evangelicals is the religious commodification and consumer culture, which they see as an obstacle to authentic Christian faith (Bielo 2011, 55). Joonatan Palmi has similar concerns about the drive towards spectacularism in Christian culture, as he describes his thoughts behind his 2017 track 'Jumalii' ('Gods') to me: 'Perhaps we've been confused to think that God wants to give you just great things in your life, and you can do anything […] That we just do big things, going big all the time.' Such an internal theological critique is also a common feature of North American Evangelical rap music, where, for example, the rapper Shai Linne attacks the prosperity gospel in his 2013 track 'Fal$e Teacher$' in very similar fashion to Joonatan Palmi (Harris and Gault 2020, 21). Whereas Shai Linne's critique is based on specific passages

of the Bible, however, Joonatan Palmi's 'Bägissä toivoo' is lyrically focused on the symbol of the burning heart, which is a central Christian symbol associated with the inner emotional world.

With the symbolism of the heart the performance of The Young Theologian can be further contextualized within the internal critiques circulating in transnational Evangelicalism, according to which the current overemphasis on the spectacle of worship has led many Evangelicals to 'participate in a predictable capitalist ritual' that undermines the emotional sincerity of their worship (Abraham 2018, 9). The described performance took place at a regional event organized by LEAF, and my interpretation is that the satire in Joonatan Palmi's performance refers specifically to the extravagant stage videos used at the Maata Näkyvissä festival. In addition, his vocal gesture of pronouncing 'wisdom' with a Finnish 'ö' in the song 'Wisdomii' highlights the perceived Anglo-American origins of this therapeutic culture within Finnish Protestantism (see Luhrman 2004).

Palmi has very consciously created the current humorous tone in his music. He mentions that his 2017 album 'Jumalii' was perhaps too melancholic and dark for Christian organizers, as he got few bookings until he released new, more light-hearted, music. He laughingly tells me: 'Then I heard that some organizers said at some point: "Hey, Palmi has now done something positive and joyful. We could bring him again to our gigs".' Although Joonatan Palmi describes The Young Theologian to me as a satirical character, he does not see this role taking as insincere but as a performative element that allows him to express his Christian faith honestly. When I ask him about the character of The Young Theologian, Joonatan Palmi tells me he created the character to do 'really Christian rap, where you can say things straight and really speak about it [Christianity]'. According to my interpretation when Palmi plays the role of The Young Theologian, he intentionally uses Christian themes and vocabulary excessively to create a critical contrast with the mainstream of Finnish gospel music and Anglo-American CCM, in which specific lyrical references to Christian tradition are often veiled in ambiguity, as we have previously seen in this ethnography (see also Hendershot 2004, 52–84; Häger 2005).

As a musical genre, rap offers specific cultural models for the blending of satire and sincere expressions of faith. For example, Monica Miller (2009) demonstrates that North American rappers have long engaged in theological playfulness, in which they embrace the contradictions of their personal faith. According to Miller (2009, 44) such contradictions create 'complex subjectivities' (Pinn 2003, 86; see also Dehanas 2013, 297), which

trouble 'normative ideas of religious "certainty" and "dogmatism"'. Wind Dell Woods (Hill et al. 2019, 74) in turn notes how a complex use of irony, or 'non-serious seriousness', as he calls it, is a fundamental characteristic of rap music, which uses subversive humour and strategic lyrical ambiguity, especially in restrictive social contexts. Such 'non-serious seriousness' is also audible in Joonatan Palmi's 'Wisdomii', in which he intentionally conflates Jesus with himself and Biblical Judea with East Helsinki. These artistic choices again bear resemblance to the Emerging Church movement, where 'place-work' is considered central to authentic Christianity in the sense that the movement has sought to connect itself with specific local communities and traditions in contrast with the universalized identities of mainstream North American Evangelicalism (Bielo 2011, 178–194; Hovland 2016, 351).

Moreover, other Finnish gospel rappers, and most prominently the rapper Roni Samuel, have set their lyrics to East Helsinki like Joonatan Palmi. Yet the playfulness around the perceived sacred values of Christianity in Joonatan Palmi's performance is an exception among the events that I observed, where artists and organizers mainly sought to maintain the perceived Christian–secular binary in the manner I have previously described in this article (see also Dehanas 2013, 298; Hill et al. 2019, 60). Despite the exceptionality of Palmi's performance, I argue that it shows that rappers can also incorporate critical takes on Evangelical culture into the light-hearted and playful atmosphere that is expected from them. Yet this criticism is only viable in Evangelical culture if the musician comes across as a sincere believer (see Abraham 2018; Ingalls 2022), and I argue that such sincere expressions of personal faith are also valued and developed in rap music's global genre conventions.

Conclusions

In this article I have demonstrated how the advent of gospel rap music in Finland indicates a shift to an increasingly playful, light-hearted, and therapeutic emotional regime in Finnish Evangelicalism (see also Roeland et al. 2012). Scholars (such as Riis and Woodhead 2010, 172–206) have widely observed that late modern societies are marked by growing emotional self-reflexivity and the prevalence of irony and parody in public culture as the major outcomes of this trend towards self-reflexivity. The existing research has also recognized the important role irony and playfulness play in the negotiation of contemporary Evangelical identities (Bielo 2011, 47–69; Moore 2017; Ingalls 2022). My analysis shows the presence of this general trend

towards irony and playfulness in the specific context of Finnish gospel rap music, which, despite its Evangelical roots, has also become an important medium for other Finnish protestant communities in the socialization of young people into Christian faith.

I further argue that social negotiations around emotions in gospel rap performances are linked with two emerging social trends: the decline of Finnish cultural Christianity in favour of diverse and personal spiritual practices and the emerging discussions on racialized inequality (Salomäki et al. 2021, 67–90, 257–267; Rastas 2019). I showed how some gospel rappers and their listeners manage to use playfulness in their own way to voice novel theological constructions, which interrogate and expand beyond the structural limitations of Evangelical communities and their joking cultures, which generally do not encourage the direct commentary of social identities such as class, ethnicity, or race (Moore 2017; Ingalls 2022).

To summarize, I would like to encourage further empirical studies on the future directions of the different forms of young people's theological playfulness in the Nordic context, where Christianity is undergoing drastic change and contestation, both culturally and demographically. One apparent direction for theologians and social scientists alike in tracing this playfulness would be the further study of music and dance in the protestant setting, with the realization that theology and doctrine are not only reflected in aesthetic practices, but that music and dance also shape theology and social relations within Christian communities (see, for example, Porter 2013; Blenda Im 2021).

* * *

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Book Review

Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman (eds): *Vernacular Knowledge: Contesting Authority, Expressing Beliefs.* Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2022, 423 pp.

The term 'vernacular' has emerged in academic discussion in recent decades. It has aimed to inspect the various aspects of the practitioners of a certain religious system more closely. For example, it focuses on individual religious practices rather than institutionalized ones – although the line between these is blurred to say the least. The aim of *Vernacular Knowledge: Contesting Authority, Expressing Beliefs* is to 'to offer a set of case studies that highlight how vernacular knowledge is made, what techniques are involved, how it is related to vernacular religion and how it might interact/intersect with institutionally approved truths' (p. 6). This means handling themes of intertwined knowledge, authority, and beliefs, as Ülo Valk explains in the introduction. These themes are also linked to power relations and the maintenance of hierarchies in society and human communication. Vernacular knowledge is rooted in vernacular religion, a term that arises from the fields of folkloristics and the study of religion, both methodologically and theoretically. In the introduction Ülo Valk writes almost poetically of vernacular knowledge: it is in dialogue with institutional actors and is only empowered when institutional expressions of knowledge seek to oppress it. Vernacular knowledge can be found in visual art or internet memes. It is characterized by subjectivity. Although criticized as emerging from a Christian, and especially protestant tradition, the concept of belief in its fluidity remains valid in the study of religions with both academic and non-academic speakers. The editors aim to transcend the dichotomy between religious and nonreligious, contending that various types of knowledge exist: vernacular, religious, and scientific knowledge all have their basis in 'some kind of belief' (p. 6).

The book's aim is vast, and one could say ambitious. It takes the reader across research fields, past and present. However, a disadvantage is the risk that such vastness might remain superficial in choosing to focus only on certain predetermined aspects of vernacular studies in three or four articles or chapters. However, the book seems to avoid superficiality, as the chapters are well formed and strictly follow the concept of vernacular in their analyses. The book is divided into five sections. Each contains three to four independent chapters. I will next examine these parts and their chapters more closely.

The interaction between vernacular and political power structures is discussed as the 'Politics and Vernacular Strategies of Resistance'. Vernacular narratives can tell stories of resistance and question authori-

ties. They serve as a means to elucidate issues about which officials may prefer to keep silent. Anastasiya Astapova discusses a controversial book published in 1965. Legends surrounding this book and other Belarusian national heritages have become a way to speak about the Belarusian national spirit without arousing suspicion of a loss of appreciation of the contemporary authorities. Taking the book and its perception solely as a case study would have shifted the focus more to its contemporary uses and illuminated changes in narratives driven by political changes such as the fall of the Soviet Union. Another way to make power structures visible is through humour. Irina Sadovina explores the eco-spiritual Anastasia movement and its utilization of humour within the community. The movement emphasizes the bond between humans and nature. It employs humour to discuss and even critique rules and ideology in a manner reminiscent of the discussion of the ideology of the Soviet Union. Using humour does not necessarily contradict personal beliefs, although individuals may utilize it to critique an authority's dichotomy.

The section 'Narrating and Creating the Past' invites the reader to explore the construction of contemporary communities. Martin Wood's chapter addresses the hagiographical chain of memory that crosses religious traditions in the Jalaram tradition. This chapter's aim is vast, considering the religious materiality of various 'geographical, cultural and religious contexts' among both Hindu and Muslim practitioners. Unfortunately, the chapter does not quite fulfil these promises, and it would have benefited from a focus on a couple of specific traits within the chain of memory. For example, the final analysis of controversies in non-devotee films seems somewhat disconnected from the chapter's overall theme. Ülo Valk then sets out to discuss the relationship between history and belief narratives in his chapter about the leader of the Bhakti movement, Shankaradeva's birthplace at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is a vast network of vernacular stories, historical information, and folkloric patterns, making it impossible to discern which of the two sites could be the actual birthplace or was the first to attract devotees. By analysing these various narratives told by interviewees from diverse backgrounds, Valk shows how challenging they are to 'facts' from vernacular narratives, and how contradictory they can be. It would have been interesting to read more about the interaction and any challenges between the interviewees and Valk as an outsider in narrating spiritually meaningful locations. Unfortunately, the chapter does not delve into this question.

The 'Renegotiating Tradition and Authority' section takes us to the question of authority. By analysing the *2012Forum* internet forum, Robert Glenn Howard seeks to demonstrate how vernacular authority is formed as an act of aggregate

volition. He analyses four key forum members. Howard shows that the forum remained an important platform for its members for aggregate volition and epideictic deliberation, although the apocalypse's due date had already passed. The chapter tangibly demonstrates through quantitative results how vernacular authority has focused on a few individuals, exploring possible reasons for the concentration of authority. Kristel Kivari approaches non-verbality in the study of vernacular. She examines how practitioners of dowsing in contemporary Estonia experience and narrate supernatural or natural occurrences such as detecting running water underneath the soil through their bodies. Authority in dowsing is established within a community after years of experience and is associated with a certain idea of 'purity' or the non-commercial nature of one's craft. The chapter is generally clear, but it would have benefited from more examples of vernacular narratives.

The 'Vernacular Knowledge and Christianity' section discusses aspects of vernacular and (mainly Catholic) Christianity. As an example of vernacular religion, Melanie Landman applies feminist and Christian approaches to understandings of black Madonnas, revealing controversial perspectives. Some devotees see her as an empowering feminine figure; others believe she has absorbed too much attention within the congregation's life. The chapter thoroughly considers various narratives and their underlying motivations. Before his death Leonard Norman Primiano wrote a chapter for the book in which he emphasizes the significance of the individual practitioner of vernacular religion, specifically focusing on a young catholic student who has been constructing home altars since the age of ten. Also in this chapter Primiano reviews developments in vernacular studies in recent decades and weaves various threats of different approaches together. This is an interesting and valuable read, but it gives the chapter a somewhat dual nature.

The final section discusses the 'Afterlife and Death'. Death and dying are related to vernacular authority. In Mongolia the type of burial, whether inhumation or a traditional burial in the steppes, reflects various authorities' aims of control, as Alevtina Solovyeva discusses. This becomes evident in narratives that describe 'restless places' that can affect living and supranormal creatures alike. The chapter returns us to the book's premise and the theme of vernacular and politics. Paul Cowdell raises the issue of what is lost in translation between the narratives of interviewees and scholars when discussing them in academic settings. By using ghost narratives as a case study, Cowdell illustrates the nuanced nature of vernacular estimations of ghosts. The chapter is rich in references to academic discussions, but this can also be somewhat puzzling, as the thread seems to slip from the reader's grasp, especially at the begin-

ning. Nevertheless, Cowdell's point is important for anyone studying vernacular narratives, serving as a significant wake-up call to acknowledge the diversity of vernacular communication concerning beliefs, knowledges, and doubts, among other nuances.

The afterword, written by Marion Bowman, serves a dual purpose. It summarizes the articles the reader has just read, a placement that might have been more informative in the introduction. Bowman weaves the diverse chapters together, elucidating their significance in the context of the study of vernacular. It also pays tribute to Leonard Norman Primiano (1957–2021), underscoring his indispensable contribution to the field of vernacular studies. Primiano emphasized that 'vernacular' does not supplant but rather enhances our understanding of what has traditionally been termed 'folk'. It is evident that in recent decades the exploration of vernacular has evolved, delving into new realms of research, and ventured into new research questions, which is also reflected in this book's content.

This is a versatile book that examines vernacular from various perspectives. It is a treasury of theories, materials, and methods. The scrutinized articles effectively maintain a focus on exploring vernacular, each bringing its own voice to the theme. However, what is vernacular ultimately? How is it defined? The book provides no definitive conclusion here that will be beneficial for the field's development as the discussion continues. Vernacular in this book is outlined in opposition to institutions, seeking the experiences of individuals or groups regarding various dimensions of belief. Nevertheless, more geographic variation under certain headings would have been appreciated, for example, in 'Narrating and Creating the Past', and some chapters would have needed a more careful refinement of the research question.

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Book Review

Mathew Guest: *Neoliberal Religion: Faith and Power in the Twenty-first Century.* London: Bloomsbury, 2022, 203 pp.

Mathew Guest's book *Neoliberal Religion: Faith and Power in the Twenty-first Century* is a concise treatise of the impact of neoliberal culture on religion. It 'started out as a book about evangelical Protestantism' (p. 7) but ended up as an analysis of a 'tendency to merge religious with capitalistic thinking' (p. 7). While examining neoliberal culture, Guest also comments widely on the state of the sociology of religion in the twenty-first century. Among other issues the book discusses politics, economy, secularism, and – obviously – religion. Mathew Guest is Professor in the Sociology of Religion at Durham University in the UK.

The book is organized into nine chapters. Guest starts the introduction with the claim 'that social change has overtaken sociology of religion as conventionally practised' (p. 7). Guest suggests that in considering neoliberal culture, we gain insights into several important changes, but he does not claim that neoliberalism is the only development of which to take note. Having briefly presented neoliberalism, its history, and main characteristics, Guest moves on to debate 'neoliberal culture'. The building blocks of neoliberal culture are: (1) individualism as consumer freedom and choice; (2) competition as effective resource allocation; and (3) commodification in turning things into sellable commodities. Together, these can be understood as marketization (pp. 12–13.) Importantly, Guest views the impact of neoliberal culture as a tendency, a development that gradually changes how things are seen and treated, rather than an absolute change.

Chapter 2 places religious diversity at the centre of the debate. While religion is part of the human world and has always engaged with other societal sectors or institutions (as understood in modernization and secularization theory), it is due to neoliberalism that the market ceases to be a metaphor and increasingly – but again not exclusively – the case. Having discussed some other theoretical perspectives, Guest moves on to an examination of marketization, and how religious organizations and entrepreneurs have internalized market norms. Guest's knowledge of and insights into evangelical Christianity comes to the fore as he points to the numerous ways in which evangelicals have repositioned themselves within consumer society through the creation of museums and theme parks, media outlets, new styles of leadership and management, marketing, organizational innovations, and so on (pp. 32–33). What unites these various efforts is that they often break the modern religious/secular distinction, draw on contemporary business culture,

and put the religious consumer in the driver's seat.

The third chapter focuses on religion and populism. It takes up the rise of various conservative political movements with a religious twist, including Christian nationalism in the USA, the Islamic populism of Erdoğan's Turkey, and the European far right with its Islamophobic tendencies. All are understood as conservative responses to the growing liberalism commonly associated with globalization. While the presentations are all interesting in themselves, the neoliberal aspect is not very central in the debate. Some occasional references to neoliberalism make the point – for example, 'to be adversarial, combative and ruthless is justified as it grants a competitive edge' (p. 64) – but do not lead to a systematic analysis of how neoliberalism makes populism tick.

Religion in the post-truth era continues the topic in the fourth chapter. The debate starts with Donald Trump's assumption of the presidency of the United States and continues by examining how new populists aim to destabilize existing knowledge structures, authorities, and expertise and create mistrust of (selected aspects of) science. They question the existing authorities, at times with the most bizarre claims. Huge exaggeration and the assumption of victimhood are common populist tactics that aim to widen the limits of the possible. Guest then argues that 'the conditions of neoliberalism have enabled religions expressions of "rejected knowledge" to gain global traction and public support as never before' (p. 78). While I agree that new forms of media have certainly been used to many actors' advantage, and outward-oriented religious movements certainly attempt to use the available means to promote their cause, the examples look more like an external adaption than a deep-rooted cultural change.

Chapter 5 examines the securitization of religion and views the UK's Prevent Strategy especially as an empirical example. Guest discusses how religious radicals oppose themselves to the capitalistic West, and how various monitoring and anti-radicalization policies change the state's relationship with religious actors who are considered problematic. He also notes the harmful consequences of securitization for religious minorities, as they are increasingly viewed negatively by the public. The role of neoliberal culture is less obvious beside the global view and could have been extended by examining how public administration itself has changed over the years, as neoliberalism has affected the means and tools through which administration engages with citizens and civil society. Here, a discussion of New Public Management would have been helpful to support Guest's claims.

The sixth chapter examines the entrepreneurial self, providing numerous examples of how neoliberal culture has penetrated religious action and thought. The section starts with Guest attending 'a convention of the "Global Leadership Summit"

(GLS)' (p. 109), which sounds grand but is a franchised DVD-mediated lecture of the Vineyard Movement that focuses on social awareness and the entrepreneurial spirit. The entrepreneurial approach cultivates religiosity by focusing on oneself and bearing responsibility for one's actions. Self-development and personal growth are both the means and ends that are nurtured through endless participation in and consumption of suitable mentorship programmes, community events, courses, and so on. For example, Guest makes historical links with the Human Potential Movement, thereby illustrating historical predecessors of contemporary forms of thought. I found this the volume's strongest chapter, as Guest uses his extensive knowledge of evangelicals.

Chapter 7 deals with power and religion. Having discussed some classics, including Weber, Guest returns to the evangelicals to discuss gender and the role of aesthetics, including clothing, among conservatives. He then, rightly in my opinion, raises the seemingly unlikely combination of individualism, religious piety, and conservatism. The performative role of clothing is placed at the fore, as in Islamic fashion, which is simultaneously mainstream fashion and distances itself from it. This is followed by debates on race, racialization, and various injustices. While Guest's discussions shed light on several features of consumerism and the commodification of piety, the neoliberal perspective could have been more fully developed beside the by now obvious understanding that religious conservatism can also be a personal choice and thus follows much the same path as other individualistic choices.

The eighth chapter focuses on secularism and the nonreligious. After a brief introduction of the current debate on the nonreligious, Guest moves on to present an overview of nones in Britain, discussing various political variants of secularism. The chapter's final part discusses political sociology, multiculturalism, and other issues that have pondered the role of religion in public (and private) life in recent decades. The debate about neoliberalism is mainly related to growing individualism and its apparent contradiction by religious clothing bans.

The final chapter examines the ethics of the sociology of religion. Guest starts his conclusion by restating his efforts to renew the focus of the sociology of religion by examining the book's topics. Having noted the well-known downsides of neoliberalism of income distribution, the accumulation of wealth, relentless individualism, and so on, Guest seeks to find some key ethical concerns for the sociology of religion in our times. He takes up value neutrality in sociology and anthropology, reminding us of their dark side in supporting suppressive measures on minorities and others. So what is the moral responsibility of researchers on neoliberalism and the impact of neoliberal culture?

Should religion be treated as a special case, or is upholding a self-reflexive view of one's own position enough (pp. 172–173)? Guest provides no clear answer to these questions, but legitimately – in my opinion – argues that we should certainly be aware of the complex position of religion in today's world and engage in more proactive debate on contemporary ethnical issues.

Mathew Guest's book is an accessible contribution to the growing literature on religion and neoliberalism. It does this particularly well in presentations of evangelical Christianity and the entrepreneurial self. The other chapters are somewhat lacking in their analysis of the impact of neoliberalism on political structures, and the argumentation is not fully developed in this respect. Altogether, the book will help popularize research perspectives on neoliberal culture and provide new methods of analysis. The book will be suitable as an introductory reading on contemporary religion in the sociology of religion, and how capitalism changes religious practices.

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Book Review

Mitra Härkönen: *Power and Agency in the Lives of Contemporary Tibetan Nuns: An Intersectional Study*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2023, 252 pp.

Mitra Härkönen's ethnography offers a much-needed insight into the reality of Buddhist nuns in Tibet and the multiple structures of oppression within which they are caught. The book is based on Härkönen's PhD dissertation research. In her own words the goal of the study was to 'provide a voice to a largely marginalized group of Tibetan Buddhist nuns', as well as to 'extract different dimensions of disadvantages and opportunities in the intersection of their female *gender, religion* and *nationality*' (p. 5, italics preserved). Indeed, the book fulfils both goals in an excellent piece of scholarly writing.

The introduction is dense with theoretical and methodological considerations. It also provides a detailed and much-needed description of 'Tibet', its boundaries as seen for the study's purposes, its history and culture, and the intricacies of the Tibetan national identity. With respect to the actual subject of the book, Härkönen's introduction contains several illustrative quantifications based on the previous literature and data, convincingly showing that the group in question is indeed marginalized. From the first pages Härkönen demonstrates an intimate familiarity with the subject and the available research, providing the necessary background for a reader who may be unfamiliar with the situation in Tibet.

Theoretically, Härkönen's book presents a fresh insight into intersectionality in a non-Western context. It duly explains the relevant critical frameworks, disambiguating the understanding of intersectionality and arguing in favour of Patricia Collin's theory (2000; 2015), at the same time showing an awareness of alternative definitions. Mitra's presentation of her methodology and data collection adds to the credibility and reflexivity of her work on this highly politicized topic. She critically reflects on her position as a researcher and student of Tibetan Buddhism and the ethics of data collection and analysis. The participant observation and ethnographic detail are impressive: 49 interviews with lay and monastic Tibetans, several trips to Tibetan regions of the PRC, visiting 'dozens of nunneries and monasteries' (p. 37) and participating in public events. The interviews were collected in Tibetan by Mitra herself when they were in the Central Tibetan dialect, with the help of a translator when they were in a local dialect, and three were conducted in English.

The book's most important feature and strength is already reflected in the contents. Härkönen's research goes way beyond the phenomenological accounts of her monastic respondents; instead, it is based on a detailed picture of the structural,

cultural, religious, economic, and political features that shape their experience. The nuns' accounts are collected with impressive fidelity. For example, the first appendix contains a short biography of each. In addition to these encounters and interviews, however, Mitra analyses her conversations with other members of this milieu: teachers; and lay men and women. She also explores relevant texts, previous research, and ethnographic observations. This results in a multifaceted depiction of high quality, which places the reader in the context, allowing the depicted reality to speak for itself, rather than spurring the reader to draw conclusions. She shares unadorned opinions of lay Tibetan men to demonstrate the societal perception of nunhood, for example: 'Then, the other type is those, who become nuns due to personal problems' (p. 70). The ethnographic account is thus believable and forceful precisely in its multifaceted realism.

Power and Agency highlights the monastic path not only by describing the conditions of nuns but by going into a deep analysis of alternatives to monasticism, education, marriage, and the conditions of working life women face in Tibet. In particular, in talking about marriage and motherhood as seen by the nuns and by lay respondents, Härkönen paints a comprehensive picture of the push and pull factors that affect a woman's decision to be ordained. In this analysis she alludes to the narrative of opportunity, showing how the women navigate the forces of oppression as they seek to fulfil their personal and spiritual ambitions, and how this pursuit is embedded in the societal circumstances. For example, her analysis of the interconnection between communist modernity and religion for changing gender roles in Tibet, and especially its nunneries, based on Charlene Makley's research (e.g. Makley, 2005), is truly remarkable. She summarizes this elegantly: 'As Tibetan women they can find themselves as representatives of both tradition and modernity. As female religious practitioners, they are observed by other Tibetans. And as Tibetan religious practitioners, they are monitored by the Chinese state' (p. 152).

Among the possible limitations of this study is the age of the data. The interviews were collected in 2008–2009 and 2011. Many circumstances may have changed since, as Härkönen herself mentions: 'I could witness some of the dramatic changes that took place in the Tibetan regions during the course of my research project' (p. 208). The beginning of the data collection, for example, coincided with increased political attention on Tibet from both Chinese Communist party officials and the Western media because of the protests that were taking place alongside the Olympic Games in Beijing. The book reflects the impact of those events and the political backlash on activists, in which the structures of oppression were manifested at their cruellest. Section 7, *Life as a nun*, contains

detailed accounts of imprisonment, torture, and rape. While representing a relevant truth that merited public attention, the depictions call for a trigger warning. As Härkönen points out on page 120, the accounts were preserved and shared in their entirety at the request of the narrators (the nuns). In this regard, the data, unfortunately for the Tibetan people, remains painfully relevant and timely. While the specific events and circumstances may change annually, stirring up more facets and angles of oppression and opportunity, the societal structures take a long time to change, as Härkönen aptly shows in her analysis.

Overall, the book represents an ethnographic insight into the lives of Tibetan Buddhist nuns and an empirical advance within intersectional theory beyond the West. The premises of *Power and Agency* remain important and germane. This book may be of interest to a broad range of readers. The intertwining of theoretical references with the empirical observations will be useful for an academic reader but will also be accessible and transparent to someone reading this out of human, political, or personal interest. *Power and Agency* is definitely a piece of academic scholarship of a high level that will be useful for scholars and students of anthropology, Tibetan and Asian studies, gender studies, and so on. However, its value is at least equal outside the academic realm. For those interested in Tibet from the perspective of activism and human rights, this book provides a reflexive and accurate account of the ongoing oppression that is unconstrained by a specific political agenda apart from basic humanism and empathy. A keen practitioner or sympathizer of Tibetan Buddhism would find the book enlightening in terms of how gender affects religious life in the Tibetan community, and the cultural and religious mechanisms involved. *Power and Agency* will be a valuable item for a university library. However, despite its academic references, the book reads smoothly and will also feel accessible and engaging for the lay reader.

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Book Review

Frederik Wallenstein: *Muntlighet och minne. Sagatraditionen, kulturhistorien och det kulturella minnets blinda fläck.* Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2023, 367 pp.

Historians of religion have long used the Icelandic sagas as sources for knowledge of pre-Christian Nordic religion. However, in recent decades this has increasingly been questioned. Especially problematic according to the critical voices is the gap of 200–300 years between the pre-Christian era and when the sagas were written. The sagas were not only written later but by people with a different religion and worldview. Can Christian authors, with a learned classical education, really give us a correct picture of the pagan Norsemen, their belief, and rituals after a purely oral transmission over several centuries? Leading Old Norse scholars such as the philologist Annette Lassen and the historian Henrik Janson have answered this question with a resounding *No*.

Today's historians of religion often note the problem of the time gap, but they usually draw no deeper conclusions about it and rarely discuss principles with other disciplines' critical scholars. Jens Peter Schjødt and Olof Sundqvist are scholars who mention the potential problems without fundamentally breaking with the discipline's traditional practice. This unfortunately divides Old Norse studies into two groups, both with great scholars, which communicate remarkably little with each other.

Frederik Wallenstein's *Muntlighet och minne. Sagatraditionen, kulturhistorien och det kulturella minnets blinda fläck* (2023) is, however, an example of a work within the history of religion which clearly acknowledges the problems, notes their fundamental consequences, wrestles with them in a theoretically conscious way, and not least attempts to present new ideas, both regarding scholarly principles and old research questions concerning pre-Christian religion.

Wallenstein's premise is the currently leading theoretical fashion within Old Norse research, *memory studies* – about collective 'memories' of various kinds – and primarily the concepts and models of Jan and Aleida Assmann. In this he is far from alone. In 2018 the gigantic *Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies* (ed. Jürg Glauser et al.) was published, containing 103 contributions adopting precisely this approach, presented on 1188 pages. That volume's editors made the fashionable character clear of Old Norse studies clear in their introduction, claiming a 'memory turn'.

Central within this theory is the distinction between *communicative* and *cultural memory*. The former is a kind of memory existing in everyday communication, which has yet to be culturally fixed or materialized, with a temporal horizon of only 80–100 years or three to four

interacting generations. The latter, which has been most scholars' main focus, concerns historical or mythical time; it is institutional and relatively fixed, transmitted and interpreted by specialists and institutions. Wallenstein notes that oral tradition, according to the model, belongs almost entirely to *communicative memory* and its survival over only a few generations. *Cultural memory*, meanwhile, depends at least primarily on literacy and written texts. Aleida Assmann's distinction between *functional* ('Funktionsgedächtnis') and *storage memory* ('Speichergedächtnis') points in the same direction: oral and literate cultures differ in their cores, and only a literate culture can *store* inactive memory that has become non-useful and lacks relevance for the present time, but which can be reactivated much later and given a new meaning; in oral cultures it is claimed such storage is impossible, as everything that has become irrelevant or non-useful ceases to be transmitted and is thus gone forever.

Wallenstein accepts the basic concepts – *cultural* and *storage memory*, and so on – and is strongly inspired by the Assmanns. Yet he criticizes their view of the oral prose tradition. He notes that such tradition has no real place in their system, and it cannot explain it. His own conclusion is that the processes of oral collective memory transmission are largely the same as in written transmission. Oral tradition can also show traces of processes which strictly fulfil the criteria of *cultural memory*. The depth of memory in oral tradition far exceeds the three to four generations represented by *communicative memory* in the Assmanns' model. Oral tradition can also store inactive memories and revive them after a long time. At these points Wallenstein attempts to improve the Assmanns' model and adjust it to work for the oral prose tradition too. This improvement of the theoretical model is one of the book's main aims. His tool in this objective is the Icelandic saga literature.

The Icelandic sagas, or at least most of them, are indeed prose works with an oral background (though scholars dispute its kind and extent). They treat events that are supposed to have taken place several hundred years earlier, usually in pre-Christian times.

Wallenstein focuses on a few selected cases, discussing them thoroughly. In an episode in the *Völsunga saga* Sigmundr and his son Sinfjötli roam the woods as robbers and find two men sleeping in a hut with wolfskins beside them; the saga says they have been stuck in the skins for ten days but have now been released. Sigmundr and Sinfjötli don the skins themselves and cannot get out of them. They live as wolves for some time and speak with wolf voices; only after Sigmundr has bitten his son in the throat and saved his life with a herb given by a raven do they escape the wolfskins and burn them. The saga's explicit claim is that evil magic underlies all this. Yet Wallenstein refers to (quite

old) research which argues that the saga author has misunderstood the entire episode, and that it was originally a depiction of an initiation ritual: a young warrior's initiation by a master, including liminal conditions, a ritual death, and rebirth (pp. 127–130). Wallenstein accepts this interpretation, placing the episode in Aleida Assmann's model. In Wallenstein's view we see here *storage memory* at work in oral tradition: through the oral tradition, inactive cultural memory layers have been preserved without their original relevance or being understood by the transmitters. Wallenstein uses some other cases as arguments for the same point – for example, an episode in the *Kormáks saga*, when a person wears a bearskin and mask when challenging a warrior; the saga explains this by the challenger's wish not to be recognized by his opponent, but twentieth-century scholars have interpreted it as a ritual whose original meaning and relevance was lost during oral transmission and misunderstood by the saga author (p. 133). As these episodes and details 'belonged to the story', Wallenstein claims, they were transmitted orally over centuries, though without their original meaning.

It might, however, be stressed that the observation of these episodes and details as blind (unmotivated by context) and therefore probably reflecting earlier, more comprehensible, versions is by no means new; on the contrary it has long been the standard view among scholars (regarding these and many other obscure saga episodes). Nor are the interpretations of the two episodes as rituals new, and Wallenstein does not claim this. He correctly refers to these previous scholars. It should also be noted that the two episodes' specific interpretation as rituals is not at all generally accepted by scholars. The identification of obscure passages in the sagas as initiation rituals is fashionable only in the history of religion, while it is viewed sceptically by scholars from all other disciplines. Naturally, however, as most scholars agree that several obscure saga episodes contain details which originally had a now lost meaning, we can admit that Wallenstein's idea of stored inactive memory in the oral tradition is at least partly justified.

As we have seen, Wallenstein's own contribution in these cases is not to present new interpretations of obscure passages or any kind of well-founded new knowledge of them. His own contribution is indeed only to put new labels, borrowed from the Assmanns, on some old (and quite questionable) hypotheses of other scholars. The purpose of this in the book as a whole is to argue for a slight revision of some other scholars' theoretical model. The obscure passages' interpretation is a *tool* for him, not in any way claimed new knowledge of them.

The book also contains another extensive part consisting of investigations of some specific conceptions of the soul. Here, too, most of the observations and interpretations

are borrowed from other scholars, but Wallenstein is clearly more independent in this chapter than in the previous part. Some analyses are truly original, and the conclusions new.

Using a stanza about the creation of man in *Völuspá* as the starting point, Wallenstein identifies three aspects of the soul: *önd*, representing the breath, the most basic animating principle; *óðr*, representing the higher intellect and thus the distinctive human feature; and *lá*, representing blood and the warmth and colours of life (p. 223). Based on this, Wallenstein interprets both some obscure nose rituals (p. 235) and the medieval Norse view of revenants – who lack *óðr* and *lá*, but still have *önd* (pp. 233–236). Wallenstein concludes that this conception of the soul is pre-Christian but was nevertheless still a living view at the time when the sagas were written (p. 239, 246). In this part of the book Wallenstein's analyses and conclusions seem generally convincing and highly interesting. In the following sub-chapter Wallenstein analyses the idea of 'free souls' in Old Norse texts, the idea that the soul can leave the body. Again, Wallenstein can convincingly show that this view was pre-Christian but still alive when the sagas were written (pp. 258–263).

In short, this part of the book differs fundamentally from the previous one. Here, the sagas are not tools for revising a theory, but material that is analysed and from which new conclusions are drawn. Here, he does not claim a fossilized memory that has lost its original meaning but a long unbroken continuity from pre-Christian times.

Generally, Wallenstein's dissertation is a stimulating work. One must admire his independent and constructive approach to the most fashionable theory in today's Old Norse studies – it is clearly superior to all the 103 contributions to the recent *Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies*. In all his analyses he demonstrates a sharp and truly scientific intellect combined with an impressive knowledge of both sources and previous research. His analyses and results in the investigation of Norse conceptions of the soul are convincing and partly new.

The book's problem is its unclear overall character. It falls into one almost purely theoretical part on the Assmanns' *cultural memory* model and a completely traditional empirical part on Norse conceptions of the soul – and these parts have remarkably little contact with each other. In the investigation of soul conceptions, the Assmannian notions and model, discussed so extensively in the theoretical part, play a very small role and indeed seem superfluous for the analyses and results. In the theoretical part Wallenstein uses passages from the sagas to 'correct' the Assmanns' model instead of using the theory to shed new light on the saga cases. It often seems he regards notions such as *cultural* and *storage memory* as phenomena with an 'objective' existence (similar to, for example,

mushrooms, grandmothers, steam turbines, and so on). He seems to view his work as a way of giving the notions their (objectively) correct description – instead of viewing them as more or less functional tools for making new observations, asking new questions and attaining valid new knowledge of the sagas and Old Norse traditions.

However, one should not exaggerate this problem. Wallenstein is aware of the different character of the different parts of the book, and he does indeed contribute many valuable analyses regarding both theory and the sagas. This is an important work with strong scholarly qualities. An English translation is to be recommended, as it would give the book the role in international research it deserves.

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