

This is an electronic reprint of the original article. This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Defending the Truth of the Bible

Lindmark, Daniel; Andersson, Erik J.

Published in:
Conservative Religion and Mainstream Culture

DOI:
[10.1007/978-3-030-59381-0_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59381-0_9)

Published: 21/01/2021

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript

Document License
Publisher rights policy

[Link to publication](#)

Please cite the original version:

Lindmark, D., & Andersson, E. J. (2021). Defending the Truth of the Bible: Two Apologetic Periodicals in Early Twentieth-Century Sweden. In S. Gelfgren, & D. Lindmark (Eds.), *Conservative Religion and Mainstream Culture: Opposition, Negotiation, and Adaption* (pp. 191-212). (Palgrave Studies in Lived Religion and Societal Challenges). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59381-0_9

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Chapter 9

Defending the Truth of the Bible

Two Apologetic Periodicals in Early Twentieth-Century Sweden

Daniel Lindmark & Erik J. Andersson

Throughout the history of Christianity, apologetics has formed part of the theological approach to competing worldviews, from the New Testament defence of the Christian faith against paganism to modern-day responses to the challenges posed by secularism and atheism. In this article we will explore two apologetic projects launched in early 20th-century Sweden, namely the periodicals *Facklan* (“The Torch”) and *Nya Vaktaren* (“The New Watchman”). These journals can be regarded as conservative reactions to the increasing use of historical criticism in biblical scholarship, although their editorial profiles differed considerably. In their apologetic approaches, the two journals defended the literal truth of the Bible against the claims of modern science and secular society. Closely related to the evangelical revival movement, the journals represented conservative religion in their opposition to modern theology, science and culture. The aim of this article is to explore how the apologetics represented by the journals translated into their editorial profiles and discuss possible explanations of their choices.

Historical Criticism and Biblical Scholarship

During the latter part of the 19th century, the foundations of academic theological research and teaching at the Swedish Universities of Lund and Uppsala started to change under the influence of mainly German theologians, including Albert Ritschl (1822–1889), Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) and Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). In his exegetical work, Wellhausen dismissed the doctrine of verbal inspiration and argued that biblical texts should be studied using the same methods as other historical sources (Hidal 1979, 20–33; Bexell 2003, 217–77).

In the field of biblical exegetics, Professor Erik Stave (1857–1932) at Uppsala University became a Swedish pioneer who, in 1901, presented his programme for historical-critical Bible research (Hidal 1979, 136–48; Bexell 2003, 276). In the same year, another proponent of the historical-critical method, Nathan Söderblom, received a professorship at Uppsala University (Brohed 2005, 20). Gradually, the new Bible view was accepted by the

majority of professors at the two theological faculties of Uppsala and Lund (Bexell 2003, 270–9). The development of biblical scholarship was also discussed outside the academy: in newspapers and by bishops and other leading clergymen of the Church of Sweden (Hidal 1979, 103–23).

In 1903, Adolf Kolmodin (1855–1928) was appointed Professor of Biblical Exegesis at Uppsala University. He received the position in competition with Samuel Andreas Fries (1867–1914), an articulate advocate of historical-critical biblical research (Lundqvist 1977, 197, 224; Hidal 1979, 86–97). Kolmodin rejected most of the new approaches to biblical scholarship (Rodhe 1930, 169–70; Hidal 1979, 192–4). In 1906, he initiated a series of pamphlets labelled *Bibliska tids- och stridsfrågor* (“Current and controversial biblical issues”) in which he wanted to combine his profession as a biblical scholar with the role of a preacher and apologist (Larspers 2012, 136).

Kolmodin had been Director of the Swedish Evangelical Mission since 1893 and had taught at Johannelund Missionary Institute since 1879. The Swedish Evangelical Mission (*Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen*) was founded in 1856 and was still the major low-church missionary organization operating within the Church of Sweden. Johannelund Missionary Institute educated its missionaries and laymen preachers, until 1906 formally known as “colporteurs”, whose right to preach was disputed (Gelfgren 2003, 83–96). Kolmodin’s professorship at Uppsala University was combined with the benefice of Uppsala-Näs. As an active minister of the Church of Sweden, his views changed, and he started working to achieve closer relations between the Swedish Evangelical Mission and the Church (Lundqvist 1977, 55–6, 172–4; Larspers 2012, 133–4). This aroused dissatisfaction among those who supported the Swedish Evangelical Mission’s independent position vis-à-vis the Church of Sweden (Lundqvist 1977, 174–9).

In 1908, Kolmodin published a pamphlet entitled *Kristendomen och den urkristna församlingens bibel* (“Christianity and the Bible of the Early Christian Church”). A fierce debate broke out within the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Kolmodin had accepted minor parts of the historical-critical method, and this caused great concern among many members and sympathizers of the missionary organisation. The critics questioned Kolmodin’s positions, which were perceived to be in opposition to the Bible and the Christian creed (Larspers 2012, 136–7; Lundqvist 1977, 229–39). Criticism was also levelled at the national board of the Swedish Evangelical Mission for allowing the pamphlet to be distributed by its publishing house. Among the most critical voices were *Facklan* and *Nya Vaktaren* and their editors Valdemar Lönnbeck (1854–1914) and Axel B. Svensson (1879–1967), respectively (Lundqvist 1977, 230–4; Hidal 1979, 156–7, 172–4).

Apologetic Types and Editorial Profiles

In 19th-century Sweden, apologetics was an established theological field dedicated to the defence of the Christian doctrine. Apologetics was included in the discipline of systematic theology according to the 1884 regulation of the pastoral degree (Bexell 2003, 25). In 1900, Professor and Archbishop Johan August Ekman (1900, 119) defined apologetics as “a science searching for a complete theory on the defence of Christianity”. In 1903, a doctoral thesis on the history of religions was questioned at a public defence at Uppsala University with the argument that it lacked an apologetic purpose (Bexell 2003, 274–5). However, when the new historical-critical approach was established in theological faculties, apologetics was abandoned in academic theology (Bexell 2003, 270–9).

In the new situation, apologetic projects appeared outside universities, for example, in the periodicals *Facklan* (1901–) and *Nya Vaktaren* (1908–), which were edited by non-academic laymen. This change from an academic field to a concern for churches and

denominations was reflected in the definition of apologetics in a popular science encyclopaedia published in the 1920s. The encyclopaedia described apologetics as “the Christian Church’s written defence against unbelief and heresies” (Lönnegren 1925, 129).

Christian apologetics has taken many shapes over the centuries and scholars have elaborated various typologies of both historical and contemporary apologetics. Some of the typologies focus on the arguments used, for instance, historical, philosophical, moral and experiential evidence. Others address the fields in which the arguments are developed. Creational and biblical apologetics are examples of types that refer to certain areas. Others can relate to fulfilment of prophecies and defence of miracles. There are also typologies that represent a combination of the two ways of organizing the various types of apologetics.

In this article, we will not apply a complete typology of apologetics, since we will not analyse in detail the arguments put forward in specific articles in the studied journals. Instead, we will characterize the editorial profiles of the journals in more general terms. Another reason for not applying an established typology is that the two journals in many ways represent the same category, i.e. biblical apologetics, manifested in their mission to combat modern historical-critical biblical scholarship. The aim of this article is to study how the journals’ biblical apologetics translated into their editorial profiles, and the established typologies of apologetics are not inclined to cover such aspects. Thus, we would prefer to take an inductive approach and let the analysis of the foundation history, policy statements and journal contents lead to a conclusion concerning their editorial profiles.

Apologetic elements can be found in many religious periodicals from the beginning of the twentieth century, but in *Facklan* and *Nya Våktaren* the apologetic mission was so dominant that it defined the editorial profiles of the journals. This is what makes them especially interesting to study in this context. Since the two journals were independent enterprises driven

by individual editors and did not represent any religious organisations, it is motivated to pay attention to the editors, their backgrounds and connections.

The study is based on the contents of selected volumes of the two journals, including their policy statements. The journal *Facklan* is represented by its first six volumes. The analysis takes advantage of editor Lönnbeck's categorisation of the contents of the articles as presented in a booklet aimed at marketing the journal (Lönnbeck 1907). *Nya Vaktaren* is represented by its 1918 volume. The journal then got a new start and its new policy statement reflects the views of editor Svensson as the sole owner. The categorization makes use of the volume's list of contents, while the analysis of the apologetic articles is based on categories created by the authors. When it comes to the editors, biographical data have been collected from various secondary sources, including published biographies (Bengtsson 1979; Nordström 1980). Unpublished primary sources have been used to some degree, primarily in order to trace the evolving relationship between the editors.

Facklan

In October 1901, the first issue of a new monthly magazine was published, *Facklan: Tidskrift för kristlig tro och forskning* ("The Torch: Journal for Christian Faith and Scholarship") (Hidal 1979, 148–58; Dahlén 1999, 42–3). The editor Waldemar Lönnbeck (1854–1914) was an experienced newspaperman. He was born into a Fenno-Swedish family in Ekenäs, Finland.ⁱ At the age of 14 he went to sea and in 1874 took a mate's degree at the Maritime School in Turku. After sailing for a few more years, he signed off in England in 1879 and settled in Liverpool, where he made contact with the Plymouth Brethren. He committed himself to religious studies and worked for the British Gospel Book Association as a missionary and secretary. He developed an interconfessional and transnational interpretation of the Christian faith inspired by the Evangelical Alliance and, in 1880, became a teetotaller.

Returning to Finland in 1882, Lönnbeck became a leading figure in the revival and temperance movements. In 1883, he organised the first interconfessional “Alliance Conference” in Vaasa and started the journal *Lekmannen* (“The Layman”). The objective of the journal was to shed light on the worldwide revival movement and promote a true Protestant spirit, which included temperance. Moving to Turku in 1885, he supported himself and his family as a preacher, writer and publisher of religious and moral tracts. He also published the journal *Tro och lif* (“Faith and Life”). Returning to Ekenäs, in 1889 he took over the newspaper *Vestra Nyland* (“Western Nyland”) and the printing works Ekenäs Tryckeri and started serving the revival movement with these two enterprises. Lönnbeck continued to play a leading role in the interconfessional “Alliance Movement”, which involved members of several free churches. He served as president of *Fria Missionen i Finland* (“The Finnish Free Church Mission”) from 1889–1892 and, in 1889, published *De frikyrkligas program* (“The Free Church Manifesto”). In 1890, he launched the journal *Evangelisk Kristendom* (“Evangelical Christianity”). Consequently, by the time he moved to Sweden in 1900 and started the journal *Facklan* in 1901, Lönnbeck was an experienced publicist and dedicated revivalist with an interconfessional and Anglo-Saxon orientation.

The opening editorial in the first issue of *Facklan* contained a policy statement. According to this declaration, the founding of the journal aimed to counterbalance the “widespread and publicly proclaimed worldview which, through the theory of evolution, has manifested itself not only in natural sciences, but also in theology” (Lönnbeck 1901a, 1). The target of the new journal was “modern biblical criticism”, which not only questioned the authenticity of the authorship and origin of the Bible books, but also the divine nature of Christ. According to Lönnbeck, biblical criticism viewed the rise of Israelite and Christian religion as a slow evolution in which no divine intervention was needed (Lönnbeck 1901a, 1). The

objective of *Facklan* was to convey a strong message on religion and natural sciences to Christian homes and youth of an inquiring mind (Lönnbeck 1901a, 2).

In 1907, Waldemar Lönnbeck published a more comprehensive presentation of the objectives and contents of *Facklan* (Lönnbeck 1907). In this “monograph”, *En monografi öfver Facklan*, he claimed that *Facklan* had 1,500 subscribers. Nevertheless, the journal was said to need a wider readership in order to secure a solid financial basis (Lönnbeck 1907, 20). Naturally, the “monograph” served the purpose of recruiting more subscribers. Lönnbeck (1908, 8) refers to the “monograph” as “Facklan’s advertising leaflet” aimed at “angling for subscribers”. In this twenty-page “monograph”, the objectives were presented through extensive extracts from the opening editorial in the first issue, although more information was provided on the magazine’s contents during its first six years of operation. In quantitative terms, *Facklan* had offered more than 300 articles in around 50 different fields (in Lönnbeck’s own categories): biblical criticism (35), Darwinism (15), biblical archaeology (12), anthropology (16), geology and the Bible (15), apologetics (23), inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible (5), biblical difficulties (31), ancient scholarship (12), chronology (6), biblical history (19), new theology and new rationalism (9), palaeontology (6), religious education (6), biblical canon and authenticity (19), the Flood (5), ecclesiastical and doctrinal history (7), natural philosophy (6), comparative religious studies (4), etc. According to Lönnbeck, all the articles had, directly or indirectly, defended the Bible and the Christian faith. He was proud to announce that many of the authors were distinguished scholars, sometimes of world-wide reputation (Lönnbeck 1907, 6). Of course, this was a sales pitch, but the fact is that many of the authors held positions at renowned universities.

When presenting a sample of the subgroups in more detail, Lönnbeck touched upon the question of apologetics: “Even though the entire contents of the journal are more or less apologetic in nature, there are a great number of articles that specifically defend a certain aspect

or truth of the Christian doctrine” (Lönbeck 1907, 9). In addition to the full-length articles, the periodical also had a section of *Notiser och kommentarier* (‘News and Commentary’) in which the “field artillery” was levelled at various peculiar phenomena in the fields of theological, archaeological and natural science, insofar as they concerned the Bible (Lönbeck 1907, 11). Lönbeck concluded by stating that *Facklan* represented a “library of modern Bible defence”, paying equal attention to clearing up misconceptions and confirming the Christian faith. He reassured his readership that *Facklan* would continue to keep up with the times and take advantage of every opportunity to defend the Christian faith (Lönbeck 1907, 12).

In his “monograph” of 1907, Lönbeck also wrote an account of the reception of *Facklan* in various newspapers and journals. Of course, the presented sample is selective and the positive and encouraging voices of the press dominate. What can be noted, though, is that several of the reviewers use military metaphors when highlighting the mission of *Facklan*. According to the journal *Söndagsskolläraren* (“The Sunday School Teacher”), *Facklan* had “bravely defended the Holy Scripture and fought the devastating Bible criticism and theory of evolution” (Lönbeck 1907, 13). In *Göteborgs Stifts-Tidning* (“Gothenburg Diocese Newspaper”), the mission of *Facklan* was depicted in even more colourful terms: “*Facklan* has the twin mission of introducing the reader to the principal points of the battle in a brief and popular way, while simultaneously pulling out the gleaming weapons from the armoury of truth and with fearless courage using them to reveal the lie and defend the truth.” (Lönbeck 1907, 13). A subscriber expressed his gratitude for the courage of “waging open war on the enemy” (Lönbeck 1907, 19). There are recurrent biblical allusions to fighting the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12; Jude 1:3). Consequently, the editor and readers of *Facklan* shared the view that the magazine had an apologetic mission of defending the Christian faith against hostile attacks from biblical criticism and other actors undermining the belief in the literal truth of the Bible. Furthermore, in some of the readers’ responses, the term *apologetic* was explicitly used

with reference to the mission of the journal. *Göteborgs Stifts-Tidning* highlighted the “strong apologetic appearance” of Lönnbeck and characterized him as a “fearless apologist” (Lönnbeck 1907, 14). An anonymous vicar emphasized the “great apologetic value” of *Facklan* (Lönnbeck 1907, 16) and a voice of the press from Karlshamn welcomed the dissemination of “Bible-faithful and good apologetic literature” (Lönnbeck 1907, 17). Even critical letters to the editor published in *Facklan* recognized the apologetic approach. Bishop Uddo Lechard Ullman questioned “the affected apologetic means” employed in the alleged fight for God’s cause (Ullman 1907, 107).

How should *Facklan* be characterized in terms of its ideological inclination? In an article in *Svensk kyrkotidning* (“Swedish Church Newspaper”) in 1907, theologian Carl Dymling dismissed the contents of *Facklan* as an “English-American import” (quoted from Hidal 1979, 238, note 8). The above-mentioned Bishop Ullman referred to the view of the Bible represented in *Facklan* as a legacy of the Reformed denominations where editor Lönnbeck had received his religious education. This would explain the alleged “mechanical theory of inspiration” that resulted in the view that each and every detail in the Bible was free from human imperfection. According to Bishop Ullman, editor Lönnbeck had made this a “dogma of fundamental significance”, which all true Christian believers had to embrace (Ullman 1907, 106).

Naturally, contemporary critics suggested that *Facklan* represented Anglo-Saxon Reformed theology, or even fundamentalism. This picture has been confirmed by historical research. Church historian K.G. Hammar refers to the “fundamentalist *Facklan*” as a marginal phenomenon in his research on theological periodicals at the beginning of the 20th century (Hammar 1972, 72, 98). In his 1979 book on the breakthrough of historical-critical biblical scholarship in Sweden, Old Testament exegetist Sten Hidal labels Lönnbeck’s view of the Bible as “fundamentalist”, although without discussing his relationship to American fundamentalism

(Hidal 1979, 148). Rune Dahlén provides more detailed evidence in his dissertation on the Bible-view debate in the Mission Covenant Church in Sweden. He refers to the fact that in *Facklan*, Lönnbeck praised *The Fundamentals* – the classical twelve-volume series of 90 essays originally published in Chicago from 1910–15 (Dahlén 1999, 42). Of course, this praise occurred as late as 1912, but Dahlén states that several contributors to *The Fundamentals* had pieces published in *Facklan*, although this statement has not been substantiated. Dahlén also highlights the fact that Lönnbeck claimed to have obtained general permission to translate articles from *The Fundamentals* for publication in his journal (Dahlén 1999, 42; Lönnbeck 1912, 386–7). Regardless of how strong the links were to *The Fundamentals*, it is obvious that *Facklan* was quite unique in the contemporary landscape of Swedish religious journals, not only in its apologetic mission of defending the literal truth of the Bible by providing evidence from a wide array of academic disciplines, but also in its strategy of importing such evidence by translating and printing articles primarily written by American and English scholars. To be sure, the broad evangelical revival that *Facklan* was associated with in Sweden was a transnational phenomenon with a frequent exchange of persons, ideas and texts. From this perspective, *Facklan* was quite a typical example of the transnational print culture that developed in the evangelical movement. Only the academic content was atypical.

In the monthly “News and Commentary” section, Lönnbeck commented on events in churches and denominations, but even in this section he paid considerable attention to news in the academic world. His focus on science was founded on a specific view of its fundamental significance to future society. In a short editorial article in the second issue of the journal, Lönnbeck elaborated on his view of “The New Century, Its Struggle and Expectations.” He predicted that the 20th century, more than previous centuries, would be characterized by “spiritual fight” and profound changes. He dismissed several ideologies as potential challenges, but found it plausible that both the labour movement and political imperialism would play

significant roles. The “decisive factor in future development”, however, would be “the *new spirit* that has overtaken science.” According to Lönnbeck, the materialism that underpinned modern science was this new spirit that represented “Christianity’s most dangerous opponent” (Lönnbeck 1901b, 55–6). This statement explains Lönnbeck’s choice of editorial profile for *Facklan*.

Nya Vaktaren

The periodical *Nya Vaktaren* was founded in the autumn of 1907 by a small group of concerned members of the Swedish Evangelical Mission (Svensson 1912, 19).ⁱⁱ According to the founding document, dated 30 November 1907, Johannes Eriksson and Efraim Rang would share the financial responsibility, while the layman preacher of the Bethlehem Church of Stockholm, Axel B. Svensson (1879–1967), would serve as unsalaried editor for as long as the journal ran at a loss. In the event that the journal yielded a profit, the three founders would share and share alike (Archives of Bible-True Friends, F1:1). After a controversy in 1908, Rang left the board of trustees (Svensson 1912, 38) and the following year Svensson became the sole owner according to an agreement signed by Svensson and Eriksson on 20 November 1909 (Archives of Bible-True Friends, F1:1).

The goal of the new monthly journal was to “combat biblical criticism and defend the independent status of the Swedish Evangelical Mission” (Svensson 1912, 19). The immediate background was a proposal concerning formal integration of the Swedish Evangelical Mission into the organizational structure of the Church of Sweden. Since biblical criticism had gained a foothold in the theological faculties and the church, proponents of the infallibility of the Bible strongly opposed the idea of a closer relationship with the Church.

The first issue was published in November 1907 (formally issue no. 1 of 1908), and Svensson continued to edit the journal until his death in 1967. In the first issue, the editor

addressed the readers and presented the objectives of the periodical. According to the editorial, the adherents of the evangelical revival movement, including the Swedish Evangelical Mission, lacked an organ “which provided opportunities to speak out and critically examine present-day phenomena” (Svensson 1908b, 7). The name *Nya Vaktaren* alluded to a journal published by Bernhard Wadström (1831–1918) from 1878–1883 under the title *Waktaren*. Wadström was one of the founding fathers of the Swedish Evangelical Mission, so the name *Nya Vaktaren* (“The New Watchman”) was chosen to indicate that the new journal represented the genuine, dependable tradition of the golden age of the evangelical revival movement.

Axel B. Svensson was born in 1879 in Våxtorp in the County of Halland in Southern Sweden (the entire paragraph is based on Bengtsson 1979). His father was a farmer who lost his farm and supported himself and his family as a cabinet maker. After his confirmation, Svensson left his poor family and went to sea. After being shipwrecked in 1895, he signed off and returned home. In the autumn of 1897, he began studying at the elementary school teacher’s training college in Växjö. It was here that he lost what was left of his Christian faith and was heavily influenced by the new naturalist literature. He was appointed to his first teaching position in Forserum in August 1901, where he soon made himself known as a modern, radical teacher. During his first Christmas holidays he experienced a religious conversion when reading from a volume of Carl Olof Rosenius’ religious journal *Pietisten* (“The Pietist”) and shortly thereafter started preaching at meetings held by adherents of the evangelical revival movement. In 1902 he married and in 1906 he moved with his family to Stockholm to assume a position as layman preacher of the Bethlehem Church, which belonged to the Stockholm Evangelical-Lutheran Missionary Association, an organization affiliated with the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Svensson left his position in 1911 after a distressing conflict concerning the editorial profile of *Nya Vaktaren* and his involvement with the organization Bible-True Friends (*Bibeltrogna Vänner*) of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. When Bible-True Friends was

established in June 1911 as an independent missionary organization, Svensson continued to serve on the board as its secretary. For the rest of his life, he was a spokesperson for the new Biblicist organization, working as a layman preacher, author and editor. Even though *Nya Vaktaren* sympathized with the ideology of Bible-True Friends, the journal remained Svensson's private enterprise.

After editing *Nya Vaktaren* for ten years, Svensson decided to shut down the journal. The personal reasons stated were a heavy workload and a weakened fighting spirit. He also referred to the decreasing number of subscriptions and a poor financial situation. However, strong support for a continuation of the journal combined with alarming reports about "the increasingly blatant appearance of unbelief in the newspapers" and attacks on the Bible at a church event made him reconsider his decision (Svensson 1917b, 113–4).

It is not easy to find sources that reflect circulation numbers and reader responses to *Nya Vaktaren*. However, the November and December issues of 1918 contained an appeal to the readers in which the editor expressed his hopes for more subscribers in order to meet rising printing costs. He invited readers to subscribe on behalf of "clergymen, students and schoolteachers" who were not subscribers already. Such subscriptions would enable the journal to "reach those who should rightly read it" (Svensson 1918d, 167). In the December issue of 1919, the editor expressed his hopes that *Nya Vaktaren* would reach "at least 2,000 theologically educated readers" in the coming year (Svensson 1919, 175). He also stated that nobody receiving free copies in 1918 had cancelled their subscription. Obviously, Svensson wanted to influence key persons.

The following analysis of the editorial profile of *Nya Vaktaren* is based on the contents of Volume 11 (1918), which represents the new start of the journal. Eleven issues were published in 1918; there was a combined issue for July and August. Each issue contained at

least one edifying article, usually a poem or song, and quite often an exemplary narrative. The majority of the articles, specifically 25, were found under the headline “Apologetic and Polemical Articles” in the volume’s table of contents. These articles centred around three major themes: defence of the Bible against biblical criticism, reports and comments on developments in various churches and denominations, especially the Church of Sweden, and criticism levelled at the dechristianization of Swedish culture and society.

The first theme was the most prominent. Svensson used the term *biblical criticism* as a general designation of the kind of modern biblical scholarship that adopted the historical-critical method. In the first issue of the year, he declared that his mission was to fight a “life-long feud” against the “worst evil of our century”. He repeatedly referred to his efforts in martial terms: “war”, “fight”, “battle”, etc. (Svensson 1918c, 14–5). Professor Adolf Kolmodin continued to be one of Svensson’s main targets. Svensson and Kolmodin were leading figures in the Bible-view debate that raged within the Swedish Evangelical Mission from 1908 to 1911 (see Section 1, above). In 1918, a new round of this debate took place in *Nya Vaktaren*, initiated by Svensson’s article “A New Attack on the Bible” in the November issue of 1917 (Svensson 1917a, 111–3). Kolmodin made four contributions to the debate published in the journal. Even after his “Final Words,” in the June issue, he appeared with “A Piece of Information” in the following issue. In the 1918 volume, Svensson published nine contributions that were critical of Kolmodin’s view, seven of which he authored himself. He also strongly criticised another biblical scholar, namely, Associate Professor Johannes Lindblom. This discussion was brief and included only one contribution by Lindblom.

When defending the truth of the Bible, Svensson focused on four areas: the foundation of the authority of the Bible, historical errors and contradictions in the Bible, the relationship between the Bible and natural sciences, and the historical-critical method in biblical scholarship. The articles presented various kinds of evidence, including logical argumentation.

When refuting historical-critical biblical scholarship in particular, he referred to personal experience. Since biblical criticism created anxiety rather than faith among individuals, it should be fought (Svensson 1918c, 12–5).

As the second major theme, the apologetic and polemical content of *Nya Vaktaren* included critical evaluations of phenomena in churches and denominations, primarily in Sweden. The critical remarks were often based on reports in other journals and newspapers. Among the questioned activities were courses to which allegedly dubious biblical scholars had contributed with lectures. As far as the Church of Sweden was concerned, Svensson identified several problematic phenomena, including the gradual acceptance of biblical criticism, the occurrence of play, theatre and dance in religious contexts and the drift towards Roman Catholicism. The Mission Covenant Church also became a target of critical remarks when a teacher at its seminary had been found criticising the Bible (Svensson 1918a, 25–6).

The third major theme in Svensson's polemical articles was the dechristianization of Swedish society. When a donation was made for a professorship in East Asian theology at Gothenburg College, Svensson protested. To him, a professorship in a non-Christian religion was evidence of the renaissance of paganism, particularly when the contemporary decline of Christian teaching in schools was taken into account. When commenting on the professorship, he elaborated on his views of the reasons behind the rise of paganism. Free-thinking atheists had been able to recruit young people to their cause without any resistance from Christian circles; novelists and poets had criticised Christianity and accused Christian believers of being ignorant and bigoted; modern natural science appeared to verify hypotheses that challenged biblical teaching on creation and evolution; the political will to improve social living conditions had paved the way for a new culture of entertainment and consumerism (Svensson 1918b, 41–3).

Nya Vaktaren was characterized by biblical apologetics from a theological perspective. Its theology was confessional Lutheran as interpreted by Evangelical missionary organisations within the Church of Sweden. In addition to defending the truth of the Bible by fighting historical-critical biblical scholarship, the editor paid considerable attention to trends and events in contemporary society, including churches and denominations. Obviously, Svensson wanted to uphold the authority of the Bible in all sectors of society. In his view, dechristianization represented a major threat, closely linked to the diminishing authority of the Bible.

The Relationship between Lönnbeck and Svensson

In 1907, Lönnbeck published a “monograph” to promote his journal, *Facklan*. Since the closing plea for new subscribers was dated December 1907, it is possible that the publishing of the “monograph” was partially motivated by the launch of Axel B. Svensson’s new journal *Nya Vaktaren*, the first issue of which was printed in November 1907. *Nya Vaktaren* represented a possible threat to *Facklan*, since the two journals, at least to some extent, addressed the same potential readers. However, in the first issue of *Facklan* 1908, Lönnbeck welcomed the new journal as an ally, although the positive reference to *Nya Vaktaren* was immediately followed by information about “Facklan’s advertising leaflet”, i.e. the “monograph” of 1907 (Lönnbeck 1908, 8). Consequently, from Lönnbeck’s perspective, *Nya Vaktaren* was not only an ally, but also a competitor.

Throughout the period that *Facklan* was published, Lönnbeck expressed no animosity towards Svensson or *Nya Vaktaren*. Instead, in the “News and Commentary” section, Lönnbeck continued to refer to Svensson’s activities and publications in positive terms. In a letter of 17 March 1909, Lönnbeck expressed his gratitude for the new issue of *Nya Vaktaren*: “it is always welcome” (Archives of Axel B. Svensson, C 15) In fact, since 1904, Svensson was well-known to Lönnbeck after publishing articles in *Facklan* (Svensson 1904; 1905c; 1905b; 1905a; 1906a;

1906b; 1906c; 1907; 1908a). Furthermore, Lönnbeck became one of the first members of the organisation Bible-True Friends, in which Svensson was the driving force (Lundqvist 1977, 244, note 4).

Even though *Facklan* initially appears to have been met with acclaim from a broad spectrum of conservative Christians (Hidal 1979, 150; Svensson 1912, 13–4), it had strong links to the Swedish Evangelical Mission, the low-church, layman-preacher organisation. Early on, *Facklan* was recommended by leading figures in the organisation (Lundqvist 1977, 202–203), who also dominated the financial association (Sw. *garantiförening*) behind the journal. When biblical criticism became a burning question in the Swedish Evangelical Mission, Lönnbeck sided with the conservative Biblicist wing which, in 1911, separated from the parent organisation under the name of Bible-True Friends. In retrospect, Svensson noted that the history of the conflicts within the Swedish Evangelical Mission from 1908–11 could not be written without acknowledging the significance of *Facklan* (Svensson 1914, 119).

Not only did Svensson have articles published in *Facklan* from 1904–07, according to a letter from Lönnbeck to Svensson on 18 March 1905, he had recommended *Facklan* to new readers among adherents of the evangelical movement (Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission). Quite often he referred to *Facklan* in his writings, even in the editorial of the first issue of *Nya Vaktaren*. Here, the new journal was presented as a lightly-armed warrior in contrast to *Facklan*, which was said to use heavier scientific artillery (Svensson 1908b, 8). In his 1912 booklet on the Bible-view debate, Svensson highlighted the significance of *Facklan*, which was “received with benevolence and sympathy by all true friends of the Bible” (Svensson 1912, 14).

When Lönnbeck died in 1914, Svensson published an obituary in *Nya Vaktaren* in which he referred to Lönnbeck and his journal in very positive terms (Svensson 1914, 118–21). Thanks

to his life-long studies, initiated during his stay in Liverpool, Lönnbeck was “a knowledgeable and well-read man to compare with anyone” (Svensson 1914, 118). His articles were of “high and lasting value”, characterized as they were by “scientific weight and factual acuity” (Svensson 1914, 119). Svensson described two unforgettable visits to Lönnbeck’s in his final days. On the latter occasion, Svensson was urged by Lönnbeck to continue his fight against biblical criticism (Svensson 1914, 120). After Lönnbeck’s death, Svensson received an English translation of the New Testament, which had previously belonged to Lönnbeck. This indicates that the Lönnbeck family was aware of the close relationship between the two editors.

When describing Lönnbeck in his obituary, Svensson used martial metaphors. Even in the title of the obituary Svensson referred to Lönnbeck as “A Warrior of Jesus Christ” (Svensson 1914, 118), characterised by an “old Nordic fighting spirit” (Svensson 1914, 120). According to Svensson, it was clear to Lönnbeck that “modern theology had to be fought”, and in *Facklan* he “immediately attacked” biblical criticism (Svensson 1914, 119). After a few years, *Facklan* was “in combat”, but did not receive the “backup that he rightly expected” (Svensson 1914, 119). Svensson associated the martial terminology with the apologetic mission of *Facklan*. In his obituary, he defined Lönnbeck’s journal as “predominantly apologetic in nature” (Svensson 1914, 119) and when referring to the fact that Lönnbeck was a religious speaker held in high esteem, he stated that “his apologetic speeches in particular were much appreciated” (Svensson 1914, 120).

Naturally, it was the polemical and apologetic approach to the defence of the literal truth of the Bible that laid the foundation for the relationship between the two editors. In more specific terms, the Bible-view debate in the Swedish Evangelical Mission from 1908–1911 appears to have been instrumental in bringing the two editors together. On March 17, 1909, Lönnbeck sent a letter to Svensson in which he discussed Svensson’s positive interpretation of a statement recently made by the national board of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. From his

more negative perspective, Lönnbeck suspected that the board had made an attempt to silence Svensson, and he claimed to have been approached by the board for a similar purpose (Archives of Axel B. Svensson, C 15). In retrospect, Svensson admitted that Lönnbeck was right and he mentioned more occasions when attempts had been made to mitigate the critical views represented by the journals (Svensson 1912, 21).

Consequently, Waldemar Lönnbeck and Axel B. Svensson defined themselves as brothers-in-arms rather than competitors in the same market. Their recorded contacts were characterized by mutual appreciation and respect. Over the years, these contacts appear to have developed into a close personal relationship based on a shared view of the Bible and shared experiences of fighting the same enemy.

Concluding Discussion

The two monthly journals, *Facklan* and *Nya Vaktaren*, had common objectives. Their declared mission was to defend the literal truth of the Bible against attacks from any modern biblical scholarship that embraced historical criticism. The editors also displayed similarities in their profiles. They were non-academic laymen with strong links to the evangelical revival movement. They wanted to defend what they perceived as the traditional Christian belief in the Bible as being completely truthful and reliable in every detail. When commenting on contemporary phenomena, they were harsh in their judgements, and when engaging in debates, their style was strongly polemical.

The two journals were directed at readers in the evangelical revival movement. Nevertheless, instead of defining themselves as competitors, the editors Waldemar Lönnbeck and Axel B. Svensson appear to have considered themselves as brothers-in-arms fighting the same good fight. The two journals struggled financially which, to some degree, could be related to the fact that they were directed at the same readership. The fact that the editor of *Facklan*

promoted the journal by publishing a “monograph” in 1907 should be seen against the background of the launch of *Nya Vaktaren*. Even if the two editors were brothers-in-arms, their journals fought for their continued existence in the same market. *Facklan* appears to have found it hardest to recruit readers. Most people in the evangelical movement lacked higher education, and this could have made the academic profile of *Facklan* less attractive. The heavy predominance of translated articles edited by a foreigner could also have kept the subscription rates down. *Facklan* was repeatedly questioned by its opponents on these grounds, and the editor Lönnbeck himself found it advisable not to promote *Facklan* by referring to the qualities of the editor, since he, according to a letter to Svensson dated 18 March 1905, was not known by the Swedish readership (Archives of Evangelical Lutheran Mission). Another explanation, which refers to the financial hardship of both journals, was their siding with the Biblicist minority of the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Through their engagement in this conflict, their potential subscription base decreased.

The two journals differed considerably in terms of editorial profile. *Facklan* had an international and academic character. The majority of its articles were translated from English and had previously appeared in British and American journals. They were scientific or popular science texts in various disciplines, including geology, biology, archaeology, anthropology, biblical history, etc. In *Nya Vaktaren*, no articles authored by scientists were published and the only biblical scholars who appeared in the 1918 volume were representatives of the historical-critical method with whom the editor engaged in debates. In contrast, *Nya Vaktaren* had a more national and popular profile, offering accessible content to the common reader, i.e. edifying and polemical articles written by the editor and other Swedish authors. Even when commenting on contemporary phenomena, the two journals adopted different approaches. *Facklan* was directed more at scientific news and debates, while *Nya Vaktaren* focused on the development in churches and denominations.

Lönbeck's choice of editorial profile for *Facklan* can be related to his view that the materialism of modern science represented a major threat to the Christian faith. Since science was an international phenomenon, he employed international scholars and translated articles in his fight for the truth of the Bible. Because of this editorial profile, *Facklan* was not linked to any specific Christian organization, even though the majority of its supporters appear to have been adherents of the evangelical revival movement.

However, the editorial profile that Svensson chose for *Nya Vaktaren* was more defined by the Bible-view debate within the Swedish Evangelical Mission and the interlinked issue of its relationship with the Church of Sweden. This conflict situation gave *Nya Vaktaren* its *raison d'être*, and even though the journal had no formal links with any organization, its editorial profile made it clear that its primary readership was among the adherents of the Biblicist wing of the Swedish Evangelical Mission who, from 1911, were to be found in the new organisation Bible-True Friends. At the same time, it is obvious that Svensson wanted his journal to be read by the clergy of the Church of Sweden, towards which end he initiated a plan for the distribution of free copies.

Consequently, Lönbeck and Svensson identified modern historical-critical biblical scholarship as being a major threat to traditional Christian faith but, despite certain overlaps in the news and commentary sections of their respective journals, they primarily fought in different arenas: Lönbeck in the scientific field and Svensson in the theological field. What united the two editors, though, was a strong conviction that the ideology of modern society undermined the foundations of Christianity, either the materialism of modern science, as in Lönbeck's case, or the various factors behind dechristianization, as in Svensson's case. In both cases, the editors represented conservative religion in their indefatigable attacks on what they perceived to be problematic traits of modern culture.

References

- Archives of Axel B. Svensson. The Regional State Archives, Lund.
- Archives of Bible-True Friends. The National Archives, Stockholm.
- Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission. Strandhem, Örkelljunga.
- Bengtsson, Elsa. 1979. *Axel B. Svensson: En levnadsteckning*. Stockholm: BV-förlag.
- Bexell, Oloph. 2003. *Sveriges kyrkohistoria 7: Folkväckelsens och kyrkoförnyelsens tid*. Stockholm: Verbum.
- Brohed, Ingmar. 2005. *Sveriges kyrkohistoria 8: Religionsfrihetens och ekumenikens tid*. Stockholm: Verbum.
- Dahlén, Rune W. 1999. *Med Bibeln som bekännelse och bekymmer: Bibelsynsfrågan i Svenska Missionsförbundet 1917–1942 med särskild hänsyn till Missionsskolan och samfundsledningen*. Lund: Lund University Press.
- Ekman, Johan August. 1900. "Apologetik." In *Kirke-lexikon for Norden. Bd. 1, A – E*, 119–21, Copenhagen: Jydsk forlags-forretning.
- Gelfgren, Stefan. 2003. *Ett utvalt släkte: Väckelse och sekularisering – Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen 1856–1910*. Skellefteå: Artos & Norma bokförlag.
- Hammar, K. G. 1972. "Under inflytande från Tyskland: Tysk teologi i svenska teologiska tidskrifter vid 1900-talets början." In *Nordisk lutherdom över gränserna: De nordiska kyrkorna i 1900-talets konfessionella samarbete*, edited by Lars Österlin, 71–98. Copenhagen: Gad.

- Hidal, Sten. 1979. *Bibeltro och bibelkritik: Studier kring den historisk-kritiska bibelsynens genombrott i Sverige 1877–1910 med särskild hänsyn till Gamla testamentet*. Lund: Skeab/Verbum.
- Larspers, Torbjörn. 2012. *Konfessionalitet och medbestämmande: Evangeliska fosterlandsstiftelsens struktur och den nyevangeliska väckelserörelsens regionala nivå fram till 1922*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Lundqvist, Karl Axel. 1977. *Organisation och bekännelse: Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen och Svenska kyrkan 1890–1911*. Uppsala: Uppsala University/Stockholm: EFS-Förlaget.
- Lönnbeck, Waldemar. 1901a. "Inledning." *Facklan* 1, no. 1 (Oct.): 1–3.
- Lönnbeck, Waldemar. 1901b. "Det nya seklet, dess kamp och utmaningar." *Facklan* 1, no. 2 (Nov.): 55–7.
- Lönnbeck, Waldemar. 1907. *En monografi öfver Facklan, tidskrift för kristlig tro och forskning 1901–1907: Alla intresserade tillegnad af Facklans expedition, Stockholm*. Stockholm: Facklan.
- [Lönnbeck, Waldemar.] 1908. "Notiser och kommentarier." *Facklan* 7, no. 1 (Jan.): 2–8.
- [Lönnbeck, Waldemar.] 1912. "Notiser." *Facklan* 13, no. 9 (Sept.): 385–7.
- Lönnegren, Johan, ed. 1925. *Åhlén & Åkerlunds konversationslexikon, band 1*. Stockholm: Åhlén & Åkerlund.
- Nordström, Werner Edvard. 1980. *Fyra pressens pionjärer: Theodor Neovius, J. F. Grönroos, Ossian Reuter, Waldemar Lönnbeck*. Ekenäs: Ekenäs tryckeri.

- Rodhe, Edvard. 1930. *Svenska kyrkan omkring sekelskiftet*. Stockholm: Diakonistyr.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1904. "Den tredje basunen: Kampen om bibelordet i uppenbarelsens ljus." *Facklan* 3, no. 12 (Dec.): 563–5.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1905a. "Förklädd ateism." *Facklan* 4, no. 7 (July): 302–7.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1905b. "In hoc signo ... Ett kännetecken på sanningens män." *Facklan* 4, no. 12 (Dec.): 541–4.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1905c. "'I skolen blifva såsom Gud': Kritisk studie af Friedrich Nietzsches teori om 'öfvermänniskan'." *Facklan* 4, no. 2 (Feb.): 65–71.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1906a. "'I sin nöd skola de söka mig': En konstnårs vittnesbörd för Kristus." *Facklan* 5, no. 1 (Jan.): 20–4.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1906b. "Rationalistiska landvinningar: Minnen och intryck från en resa." *Facklan* 5, no. 2 (Feb.): 65–8.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1906c. "Slutackord." *Facklan* 5, no. 4 (Apr.): 173–4.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1907. "Randanmärkningar: Strödda reflektioner med anledning af fröken Ellen Key's 'Lifslinjer'." *Facklan* 6, no. 7–8 (July/Aug.): 294–306.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1908a. "Från allmänheten." *Facklan* 7, no. 10 (Oct.): 479–80.
- [Svensson, Axel B.] 1908b. "Till våra läsare." *Nya Väktaren* 1, no. 1 (Jan.): 7–8.
- [Svensson, Axel B.] Amythos. 1912. *Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen, den moderna teologien och Bibeltrogna Vänner*. Stockholm.
- Svensson, Axel B. 1914. "De hafva ro." *Nya Väktaren* 7, no. 11 (Nov.): 115–21.

[Svensson, Axel B.] Amythos. 1917a. "Ett nytt angrepp på Bibeln." *Nya Väktaren* 10, no. 11 (Nov.): 111–3.

[Svensson, Axel B.] 1917b, "Skall Nya Väktaren upphöra?" *Nya Väktaren* 10, no. 11 (Nov.): 113–4.

Svensson, Axel B. 1918a. "Bibelkritiska landvinningar." *Nya Väktaren* 11, no. 2 (Feb.): 25–6.

Svensson, Axel B. 1918b. "Hedendomens renässans i Sverige." *Nya Väktaren* 11, no. 3 (Mar.): 40–4.

Svensson, Axel B. 1918c. "Själfdeklaration: En vädjan till professor Ad. Kolmodin m.fl." *Nya Väktaren* 11, no. 1 (Jan.): 12–5.

[Svensson, Axel B.] 1918d. "Till våra läsare." *Nya Väktaren* 11, no. 11 (Nov.): 166–77.

[Svensson, Axel B.] 1919. "Till våra läsare." *Nya Väktaren* 12, no. 12 (Dec.): 174–6.

Ullman, Uddo Lechard. 1907. "Något om Gudsuppenbarelsen i den heliga skrift: Tillika ett genmäle." *Facklan* 6, no. 3 (Mar.): 102–9.

ⁱ The following biographical data have been collected from Nordström 1980, 93–145. Slightly diverging information on years of publication etc. can be found in Dahlén 1999, 521.

ⁱⁱ Svensson 1912 is a pamphlet published under the pseudonym *Amythos*, the most well-known of many pseudonyms used by Svensson in *Nya Väktaren* and elsewhere.