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AFTER THE STATE CHURCH.

A REFLECTION ON THE RELATION BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY SWEDEN

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**Abstract.** When the Church of Sweden ceased to be a state church in the year 2000, the parameters for a change in the relation between academic theology and religious studies (*religionsvetenskap*) at the state universities in Sweden was in place. My article, which is intended as a contribution to the sometimes unnecessarily agonistic discussion following the sharp critique levelled by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket) in 2008, focuses on two basic oppositions underlying the present discourse, namely the tension between the expectation of economic utility and the ideal of a free search for knowledge; and that between, on the one hand, confessional neutrality and, on the other hand, the education of priests and pastors. As a conclusion, I suggest a way forward in three points: 1. The education of priests for the Church of Sweden must change as a result of the abandonment of the state church system. 2. At the same time, the state system should nurture a more positive attitude toward theological reflections developed at nongovernmental university colleges. 3. Thirdly, the interrelationship between secular religious studies at state universities and the tradition specific theologies developed at private university colleges could be essential for the balancing of the demand of economic utility and the principle of academic freedom as it concerns religious studies.

**Key Words:** State church, religious studies, theology, economic utility, academic autonomy, Sweden.

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## Introduction

When the Church of Sweden ceased to be a state church in the year 2000, the parameters for a change in the relation between academic theology and religious studies (*religionsvetenskap*) at the state universities was in place.<sup>1</sup> However, it was only with the sharp critique levelled by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket) in 2008 against the confessional nature of courses in pastoral theology that the temperature of the debate became sufficiently high to bring about a public reflection on questions foundational for the study of religion. The tone of that debate has been emotionally charged and antagonistic, thus making it advisable to initiate a more restrained and open approach, that is, if we are to reconsider the academic study of religion in Sweden for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a constructive way and not merely redesign old trenches.

In my article, which is intended as a contribution to such a reflection, the Swedish situation is first presented for those not acquainted with it; then the article focuses on two basic oppositions underlying the present discussion, namely the tension between the expectation of economic utility and the ideal of a free search for knowledge; and that between, on the one hand, confessional neutrality and, on the other hand, the education of priests and pastors.

As a conclusion, I suggest a way forward for the discussion which addresses the present context of religious studies and theology in Sweden.

## The state church and beyond

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the context of the academic study of religion in Sweden has been thoroughly transformed by a number of processes. Of these the most fundamental is the movement away from a state church model with its close connection between citizenship and membership in the Church of Sweden. For even if a dissenter law in 1873 made it possible for Swedish citizens to leave the Church of Sweden and join another state-approved Christian or Jewish religious community, it was first in 1951 permitted for Swedes to join a non-Christian religion as Hinduism or Islam and for Catholic monastic and mendicant orders to establish monasteries and convents in Sweden, though the latter permission came with some restrictions. In 1953, The Swedish parliament also decided that membership in the Church of Sweden was not necessary in order to be employed as a government official, for example, as a professor or lecturer at a state university.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the Church of Sweden continued as a state church to have certain privileges as receiving funding from the governmental taxation of its members and it was only the priests of the Church of Sweden who were

educated at the state universities; the latter is still the case while the possibility of taxation has been opened up for other denominations.

An important new regulation in 1996 decided that baptism was to be a condition for membership in the Church of Sweden; previously a child became a member automatically if the parents were members. But it was in the year 2000 that the most decisive change hitherto was initiated when the state church label was abolished by a new law, though the Church of Sweden is still under obligation by that law to be a democratic evangelic-Lutheran folk Church.<sup>3</sup> The new relation between the Church of Sweden and the state, commonly called their “divorce”, is augmented as well as complicated by the fact that the Church of Sweden loses members at a rate of one per cent per annum. For the moment its members constitute approximately 70 per cent of the Swedish population and of these only a few per cent (in 1999, 3 %) are ritually active in the church.<sup>4</sup> It is, however, important to emphasise that the notion of a total separation between the Church of Sweden and the state is not correct; the church has not the same status or freedom as other religious organisations in Sweden. The state by law, as previously mentioned, stipulates its confessional profile, and, furthermore, obliges the members of the church to pay church tax, which the state still collects for the church by the taxation system, though this possibility after the year 2000 has been extended to other religious organisations. Furthermore, the Church of Sweden is still responsible for the cemeteries in Sweden.<sup>5</sup> The separation of church and state is thus only partial, creating an ambivalent status that has consequences for the study of religion and theology at Swedish universities.

The establishment of a Lutheran state church in Sweden was reflected in higher education by that at both of the two re-established universities in Uppsala (1595) and in Lund (1666) there was a theological faculty that, however, first in 1831 became directly responsible for the education of priests for the state church. From medieval times until the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, priestly education was carried out at the cathedral chapter, thereafter until 1831 at gymnasia, while the theological faculties were primarily devoted to research and the conferral of academic degrees.<sup>6</sup> During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the post-1831 situation prevailed, but with the establishment of new university colleges and universities in the 1970ies, and with the transformation of Lutheran catechesis in primary and secondary education into teaching about religion, a new demand for an education of teachers conversant with a broad range of religions (world religions) emerged. The institutions where religious studies and theology could be studied multiplied accordingly. Of these merely a few offered a Bachelor of Theology (Göteborg, Umeå and Linköping), while some nongovernmental university colleges with a free church background were given rights of examination for the same degree (Stockholm School of Theology 1996, Örebro Theological University College 2007 and Johannelund’s Theological University College 2007).

In accordance with the new status of the Church of Sweden and the introduction of the Bologna reform in 2007, the Bachelor of Theology degree ceased to be a centrally regulated professional qualification and became merely a general qualification which is regulated by the university locally. The necessity of maintaining the many subjects of the traditional theological faculty is thus no longer a prerequisite for the degree; the department or centre instead has to ensure that the requirement of specialized study within the main field (subject), is satisfied and this, or these, are defined differently at the various universities and university colleges.

### **The development of religious studies from theology**

The first tentative development of a non-confessional study of religion in Sweden took place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a response to the need to provide academic discourses about the expanding religious material that had become available by, on the one hand, the historical, philological and archaeological uncovering of old civilizations during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, on the other hand, the European colonial interaction with newly discovered contemporary cultures. History of religions in a Swedish context was established in Uppsala (1901) and Lund (1912) within the theological faculties as a complement to the range of subjects within Christian theology and focused on non-Christian religions. It was the rule rather than the exception, that the professor holding the chair was ordained and pursued a parallel ecclesial career as Nathan Söderblom, the first professor in Uppsala (the chair was then not yet named History of religions but Theological prenotations and theological encyclopaedia), and Tor Andrae, professor in Uppsala (1929–1936), both who were bishops in the Church of Sweden.

At the university college in Stockholm (that became a university in 1960), there was no theological faculty, and the chair of History of Religions established there in 1913 and the discipline connected to it developed, therefore, somewhat differently with a marked emphasis on the anthropology of religion during the incumbency of Åke Hultkrantz (1958–1986). The disciplines of psychology and sociology of religion (the former emerging institutionally earlier (1967 Uppsala) than the latter (1975 Lund; 1987 Uppsala) complemented the historical study by an emphasis on contemporary religion and its relation to modernity, but they also catered in many ways to the demands of the education of priests and other professional roles within the Church of Sweden.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, the theological field, consisting of the many subdisciplines organized within the two theological faculties, became increasingly influenced by the historical critical perspective, especially in the exegetical subjects, and a development toward a nonconfessional

academic theology began.<sup>8</sup> The real watershed was the so-called Hedenius debate of the 1950ies, initiated by Ingemar Hedenius, a Swedish philosopher, who in his book *Tro och Vetande* (Faith and Knowledge) published in 1949, attacked the truth value of theology and the position of the Church of Sweden in Swedish society – a debate that coincided interestingly with the introduction of religious freedom.<sup>9</sup> As a response to the charge of overstepping the boundaries of legitimate scholarly and scientific discourse, the theological disciplines were transformed into non-confessional academic subjects. Theology in a Swedish academic context, especially in Uppsala, thus became more or less synonymous with ‘religionsvetenskap’ (lit. science of religion) religious studies, while still having close connections with the education of priests for the state church.<sup>10</sup> This change necessitated a dual conception of theology as, on the one hand, academic non-confessional theology and as, on the other hand, confessional Church theology outside of the academy.<sup>11</sup> The distinction is, though, not always so sharp, as the same person frequently upholds the two roles and the notion of confessional relevance (in contradistinction to confessionality) is used as a way of arguing for that academic theology has to be part of an on-going living religious form of life.<sup>12</sup> Theology then still retains a *differentia specifica* in comparison with a more, at least ideally, detached religious studies perspective<sup>13</sup> not connected to a particular religious organisation or movement, but which nevertheless has a comparable ideological element by its adherence to the ideal of a secular society as argued by Timothy Fitzgerald:

The industry known as religious studies is a kind of generating plant for a value-laden view of the world that claims to identify religions and faiths as an aspect of all societies and that, by so doing, makes possible another separate ‘non-religious’ conceptual space, a fundamental area of presumed objectivity.<sup>14</sup>

The next phase in the development of the non-confessional study of religion came in the 1970ies with the expansion of higher education that brought with it the establishment of religious studies at many new university colleges and universities that did not have traditional theological faculties, though at some places parts or the whole of the education of priests were offered. A reform called the RUMO reform (1973) also changed the landscape by dividing the study of religion into five subdisciplines: History of religion, Behavioural studies (psychology and sociology of religion), Faith and worldview studies (systematic theology, ethics and philosophy of religion), History of Christianity and Exegetics. The reform enhanced the development toward a non-confessional study of

religion, while at the same time preserving the multidisciplinary character of the theological faculty.

The possibility of building up strong religious studies milieus at places not influenced by the demands of priestly education was thus present, but at many places religious studies was only offered as part of the education of teachers and with a low research profile while at other places, as previously mentioned, one opted for the professional degree of bachelor of theology. However, in Stockholm, Södertörn, Högskolan Dalarna and in Gävle non-theological religious studies initiatives have gained momentum.

Religious studies in Sweden is thus dominated by, on the one hand, the two traditional theological faculties in Lund and Uppsala, with their strong ties to the education of priests for the Church of Sweden, and, on the other hand, institutions with a similar bond to the education of teachers for public and private schools. In between, we find departments catering to both student groups, and on the periphery there are university colleges connected to other Christian denominations. The major tension regarding the approach to the study of religion follows this bifurcation and is interestingly parallel to the semidetached nature of the Church of Sweden.

Through the Bologna reform that was implemented in 2007, the traditional bachelor of theology degree no longer was a professional education regulated by the state, but it was first with the national evaluation in 2008 by the National Agency for Higher Education (HSV) that this fact was used as leverage for effecting change in the basic structure of religious studies and theology in tertiary education.<sup>15</sup> Particularly, it was the so-called courses of pastoral theology that came into the limelight, both in the report and in a rather animated public debate.<sup>16</sup> These courses, which train future ministers in the Church of Sweden to perform their duties such as baptism and Eucharist celebration, were from 1980 to the introduction of the Bologna reform in 2007 located outside of the universities at the pastoral institutes of the Church of Sweden in Lund and Uppsala. From 1831 to 1980 as previously mentioned, the universities of Lund and Uppsala carried this responsibility, while earlier still it was the task of the Cathedral chapters and the gymnasia.<sup>17</sup> With the Bologna reform and its emphasis on professional education some of these pastoral courses were transferred to the universities and were given higher education credits, though it was still mainly teachers from the pastoral institutes that taught the courses. We can thus historically see the task of providing practical training for the ministers of the Church of Sweden moving to and fro between the Church of Sweden and the Universities. The report of HSV though stressed that these courses, which include practice in the Church of Sweden, broke with the demand of confessional neutrality, something disputed by representatives of both universities and the Christian denominations.

## A multireligious society

Another important factor for the development of religious studies in Sweden, beside the loosening of the tie between the state and the Lutheran church, the introduction of religious freedom and a move to confessional neutrality is that as a result of immigration during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic, cultural and religious make up of Swedish society has become more varied. Within religious studies, this has necessitated a focus on religions of Sweden in the plural and a reflection on the issues of assimilation and integration, especially in relation to Islam.<sup>18</sup> The theological landscape has as a result of immigration slowly become more diverse, though the different forms of academic theology are still varieties on a basic protestant Christian theme.

An interesting sign of the times was the official report in 2009 *The State and the Imams: Religion, Integration and Autonomy* that had as its task to investigate the question whether Sweden should have some form of governmentally controlled education for Imams. If such an education would be realized at the university level, then that would bring about an interesting plurality on the academic theological scene in Sweden and most probably once more awaken the question of the proper relation between academic and church theology, but now in a Muslim context. Somewhat surprisingly, considering the political will, the report argued that the government should not take such an initiative, because:

Above all, it is the reasons of principle that decide the question: the state should not authorize and give legitimacy to religious educations. It is instead a question for the religious organizations themselves. The state should act in a confessionally neutral way and not contribute either to the process of reinforcing or weakening the role of religion in the society. [My translation]<sup>19</sup>

When the report declares that it is not a task for state universities to educate religious functionaries, in this case Muslim imams, it joins forces with the controversial evaluation of religious studies and theology made in 2008 by HSV, and implicitly delivers a critique of the education of priests for the Church of Sweden in its present state subsidised form.

Another sign of emerging theological pluralism that points in a more post secular direction is that in April 2010 the Catholic college *The Newman Institute* in Uppsala was awarded rights of examination and now offers a Bachelor Degree of Theology. Although its curriculum does not include courses of a pastoral theological nature, the education of Catholic priests is located in the building beside that of the college and candidates for the priesthood take the majority of their courses at the Newman Institute. It is the first Catholic theological institute of higher education in Sweden

recognized by the state since the reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and by its inclusion into the state system of higher education, the government now indirectly contributes to the education of Catholic priests.

### **Religious studies and theology at the cross roads**

In many respects, religious studies and academic theology in Sweden, after the partial separation between church and state in 2000, stand at a cross road. Several different ways are open, while others have been erased or belong to the past. In order to make a well-informed choice of which way to take, faculty and administrators within the university system have to address fundamental oppositions that underlie the present antagonistic positions. In the following, two of these will be highlighted, the first is the tension between the economic use value of research and education, and, on the other hand, aspects of *Bildung* and the free search of knowledge, an opposition not unique to the study of religion but a challenge that most universities now face with increasing intensity. In contrast, the balance between state-mandated confessional neutrality and the requirements of the professional education of priests and religious functionaries is a question particular for the study of religion.

The reconceptualization of religious studies in Sweden requires that the interrelationship between these two questions (the emphasis on utility and secularity) are explored and taken into account.

### **Economic utility and academic autonomy**

The university systems all over the globe face increasingly powerful demands of societal utility, as scientific research and education are considered as the primary engines of the new emerging knowledge society.<sup>20</sup> Universities are thus expected to contribute actively to the development of society not merely with knowledge but also with innovations.<sup>21</sup> National and European policies are formulated in a context of global competition, inducing politicians to rearrange the structure and conditions of their national systems of higher education and research so that these will deliver upon the high expectations.<sup>22</sup> This trust in the economic potential of scientific knowledge, gives rise to the simultaneous but contradictory tendency of providing universities with more autonomy, while at the same time subjecting them to tighter economical control in relation to the goals formulated at the political level. It is in essence a utilitarian position, for it is the results that matters at the same time as the techniques to achieve them are of secondary importance. The so-called crisis of the humanities is linked to the concomitant decreasing focus on the preservation and transmission of a cultural heritage which to a large extent was connected to the fostering of a national identity.



The attempts (or at least proposals) to resist this development have taken different forms. One is the old argument for the value of knowledge for its own sake, that it should be deemed a goal in itself and not merely considered as a means to some more tangible objective. To this rather unpractical ideal a notion of *Bildung* is mostly coupled; knowledge in itself develops the human potential, which is not only of a crude material nature.<sup>23</sup> Other values beside that of economic gain, therefore, have to be included in education and research. For example, to the universities, in common with the school system, belongs the task of forming democratic persons – to provide citizens with the competencies that contribute to the development of a democratic society.<sup>24</sup>

Presently, in Europe the opposition between economical utility and academic freedom is played out against the backdrop of a threatening economic crisis caused by fiscal hubris, making it urgently necessary with optimization and efficiency instead of merely expanding, which has been such a marked feature of the mass university growing in size and scope since the 1960ies. The consequences for universities can become drastic when governments have to reduce their budget deficits; and cuts will ultimately be founded on value choices connected to the ideals of society and the human person that politicians embrace.

If we place religious studies and theology in this context what is the result?

Theology at the Swedish universities has been an important part of the effort to give the national state cultural glue by educating a profession in charge of this ideological task. The semi-separation of state and church in the year 2000 decisively undermined that position and the returning of courses in pastoral theology to the Church of Sweden will further augment the emancipation of the academic study of religious phenomena from its connection to the Lutheran former state church.

At the same time, there is a parallel development for religious studies as part of the humanities, which faces a radical reorientation, pressed as it is to move from a preoccupation with a preservation of a (national) cultural heritage to a need for legitimizing its research and education in relation to the demands of the labour market and politically defined economical goals.

In this situation, theology and religious studies share the same discursive space in that they have to argue from the vitality and importance of religion for Swedish public life, that is, from a post secular situation.<sup>25</sup> Religious studies can argue that if Swedish society is to thrive, knowledge of, for example, religious extremist positions are necessary, but also basic religious cultural knowledge is essential in a nation with many religious cultures. Religious studies in this way places itself as a resource for knowledge about the many different religious perspectives, a knowledge that is necessary for the public good and also for the functioning of the economic and political systems. The line of argument is

further that a narrow Christian theological perspective will not do, as for example it will not give information and competence necessary to interact with Muslim groups in Sweden. In the same way, it is important for those who study to become teachers that they have such a broad perspective, since Sweden no longer is as religiously monolithic as 100 years ago.

Theology, for its part, can also argue from the actual labour market which is dominated by the Church of Sweden, when it comes to jobs demanding a theological education. To make the study of religion at the universities irrelevant for the professional role of the ministers of the Church of Sweden is then to close a window on the labour market, and in the long run to force the Church of Sweden to found its own academy.

Furthermore, theology can argue from the post secular nature of Swedish society that not only a perspective from the outside will be necessary but also perspectives from within the different religions and denominations must be allowed intellectual space. The basic line of argument is that if religious positions are *a priori* categorised as irrational, they may dangerously conform to this and become either overly emotional or violent, thereby not contributing to a reasoned public discourse. It is consequently in the interest of democracy that all significant religious groups are allowed to develop their theological reflections on their traditions in an intellectually sophisticated and public way, in order to avoid ghettoisation. This was one of the primary reasons behind the idea of a state sponsored education of imams. If the theologies of the religious groups are merely seen as objects of rational investigation in a positivist sense and not as discursive partners, as subjects capable of rational reflection, then that ties down public discourse to a secularist position. Christian theology can argue that the focus on both the labour market and on the utility for society makes it necessary with theological reflections on the academic level, though now they must with necessity be of a plural nature.

In the tension between the demands of utility and the ideal of pure research both religious studies and Christian theology can argue forcefully from the post secular insights now prevalent, that is, the understanding that religion in many different forms will continue to be alive and of importance for the public sphere.

### **Confessional neutrality and the education of priests**

In the Swedish debate, another pair of oppositions has been at the forefront namely that between confessionality and confessional neutrality and that between secularist and post secularist positions. In their report, the Agency for Higher Education especially focused on the question of confessionality and we could define that loosely as the demand on the student or the teacher to either accept some religious positions as true (e.g. in the form of a creed) or the requirement to belong to a religious

organization or denomination. All courses offered within the state system, including those at private university colleges that have been granted rights of examination, must be open to all students that have the necessary qualifications and no discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion or other forms of beliefs, sexual identity or functional disorder are to be done.<sup>26</sup> To reserve places on an education program for students aiming to become priests or pastors in a specific church or religious organization is thus not possible. This has not been such a big problem as the absolute majority attending the courses of pastoral theology has been candidates for the priesthood in the Church of Sweden, but there have been some cases of students not accepted by the Church of Sweden as candidates and who have had to do their practice in a different way than the rest of the students.

The critique from HSV has also been rather tough toward some university colleges that educate students to become pastors in different free churches; many of the applications for offering the bachelor of theology were repelled and former rights of examination were questioned which for example occasioned the following statement from one of the editors of Dagen, a newspaper with an evangelical background.

For the churches it must be obvious to define theology as Christian faith, and that the main purpose is to educate people that can spread the Christian gospel. There is naturally a limit for how far the churches can adapt themselves.

The question is whether this limit has been reached. Sometimes one speaks about a “honey trap” that tempts with what is sweet, but where the one enticed gets stuck unable to leave. The temptation is there for the religious communities to adjust until death, in order to partake of the sweetness. [My translation]<sup>27</sup>

The critique from HSV was not confined to the question of confessionality in the narrow sense, but also the focus on Christianity in the curriculum was mentioned. If theology in a weak sense means a focus on Christianity, then this was clearly a demand for a movement in the direction of religious studies understood as the study of a broad range of religions on an equal footing. The question here is where the limit is to be drawn between confessional neutrality and confessionality. If the courses are open to all academically qualified persons and no confessional positions are used as basis in the teaching and research then one could say that the requirements are met, but at the same time these university colleges are projects that both intend to educate pastors and on the other hand to develop a theological reflection relevant to a particular denomination. If the distance between church theology and academic theology becomes too great they will have failed their purpose.<sup>28</sup>

## The Study of Religion after the state church: A proposal

How are we then to proceed forward? I would like to make some suggestions:

1. It is a natural process that as the links between the state and the Church of Sweden are weakened the education of priests for the Church of Sweden must change. It cannot claim a privileged position in the state system for higher education, but must get used to be considered as one religious organization among others. It is not a concern of the state to train the ministers of a particular religious organization in how to perform rituals particular to that religion and denomination. If the state universities are to address such questions, the courses must be unspecified in relation to religious organisation. This development should not be a cause of anguish, but seen as a logical development of giving up the state church model. Another way would be to extend the offer to all churches and religions, and then theology at the university would include all religious groups prominent in Swedish society. I, however, consider such a development quite infelicitous as this should be a concern of the religious organisations themselves, not that of a secular or religiously neutral state.
2. Secondly, a more positive attitude from the state system should be nurtured in relation to nongovernmental university colleges that develop theological reflections specific for a religious tradition and train religious functionaries for denominations within that tradition. These institutions are necessary for the development of religion in a democratic society. To try to mould them into a uniform model that out of concern with confessionality deprives them of their foundation in a particular tradition would be a great mistake. Education and research at such institutions should conform to sound scientific and scholarly principles, but should be allowed tradition specific rootedness. As the separation of university and state church should not frighten theologians, a lively theological landscape in higher education should not be a cause of alarm for scholars of religious studies.
3. Thirdly, the interrelationship between secular religious studies at state universities and the tradition specific theologies developed at private university colleges could be essential for the balancing of the demand of economic utility

and the principle of academic freedom as it concerns religious studies. Tradition specific theologies can make good use of religious studies for achieving a critical distance from their tradition and religious studies can benefit from the development of non-utilitarian perspectives in the study of religion which are often connected to theological reflections.

All in all, I see in this proposed division and interaction between state universities and private institutions a great potential for a fruitful discussion that concerns tradition, religion, modernization, civil society and democracy. There are signs in Sweden, as in Europe at large, that an opposition is growing between, on the one hand, defenders of liberal society that want to legislate for a freedom *from* religion in the public sphere and, on the other hand, religious groups insisting on that religion implies a political dimension thus rejecting the privatisation principle of religious belief and practice. This opposition has been evident in the debate surrounding the evaluation of religious studies and theology in 2008 and have made it unnecessarily antagonistic. Hopefully, the finalization of the abandonment of the state church system and the awareness of the positive value of a plurality of academic theologies both Christian and non-Christian in Sweden will help to overcome this deadlock.

### **Appendix 1. List of Swedish institutions offering courses in religious studies or theology**

#### ***Universities and university colleges providing part or the whole of the education of priests for the Church of Sweden***

Ersta Sköndal university college (only introductory courses)  
 Johannelunds theological university college  
 University of Gothenburg  
 Karlstad University  
 Linköping University  
 Lund University  
 Umeå University  
 Uppsala University

#### ***University Colleges with a Free Church background***

Orebro Theological Seminary (Evangeliska Frikyrkan, in English "Interact")  
 Stockholm School of Theology (the Swedish Mission Covenant Church, the Baptist Union of Sweden, and the United Methodist Church of Sweden)  
 Newman College (Catholic Church)

***Universities and university colleges with religious studies but without the education of priests***

Högskolan Dalarna (that however, from 2008 offers a new master program “The Challenges of the Folk Church” that targets priests)

University of Gävle

Halmstad University

Jönköping University

Mid Sweden University (only an introductory study of one year)

Stockholm University

Södertörn University

Linnaeus University

**Appendix 2. The debate of the reports of HSV in 2008 and 2009 on religious studies and theology**

***Pro***

***Teologiska fakulteter bör avskaffas [Theological faculties should be abolished]***

The historian of religions, Stefan Arvidsson in a reply to Stefan Helgesson’s article in the newspaper Dagens Nyheter defends the report of HSV and argues for that theology at the universities should be abolished in a similar way as alchemy or astrology.

[www.dn.se/kultur-noje/debatt-essa/stefan-arvidsson-teologiska-fakulteter-bor-avskaffas-1.887042](http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/debatt-essa/stefan-arvidsson-teologiska-fakulteter-bor-avskaffas-1.887042) (accessed June 8, 2009)

***Kan teologen reformera sig? [Is it possible for the theologian to reform himself?]***

The professor of History of Religions in Uppsala, Peter Schalk, argues in the newspaper Uppsala Nya Tidning that the theological faculties have a long history of confessionality and that they keep the control of the faculty within a group of likeminded. He, therefore, questions whether they can reform themselves. Radical reform is necessary and the impulse has to come from the outside.

<http://www.unt.se/debatt/kan-teologen-reformera-sig-118351.aspx> (accessed July 14, 2009)

***HSV vill ha öppenhet [The National Agency of Higher Education wants openness]***

HSV defends its position in a discussion with by Göran Janzon, lecturer at Örebro Theological University College, that courses in pastoral theology for priests in the Church of Sweden should not be offered at state universities.

<http://www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=173646> (accessed July 10, 2009)

***Vad verket verkligen sagt [What the agency actually did say]***

HSV clarifies its position put forward in the report.

<http://www.hsv.se/omhogskoleverket/pressrum/debattartiklar/debattartiklar/debattartiklar2009/vadverketverklighensagt.5.2a5cf5b912264260f867ffe2281.html> (accessed March 15, 2011)

***Contra***

***Högskoleverket säger nej till flera teologiska utbildningar [HSV says no to several theological educations]***

Ulf Ekman the leader of the Free Church movement Livets ord [The Word of Life] compares on his blog the will of the government to control the theological educations with the former situation in the Soviet Union.

<http://ulfekman.nu/category/teologi/> (accessed June 3, 2009)

***Honungsfälla för samfunden [Honey trap for the churches]***

Thomas Österberg editor at Dagen asks the rhetorical question whether the demands put on the Christian churches by HSV to be confessionally neutral does not come into conflict with the demands of the education of priests and pastors which requires closeness to the religious praxis.

[www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=171636](http://www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=171636) (accessed June 4, 2009)

***Universitetet och frikyrkorna [The University and the Free Churches]***

Stefan Green ph.D. student in Åbo, Finland, in Old Testament Exegesis argues on his blog for non-confessional academic theology as an arena open for confessional positions.

<http://exegetiskeologi.wordpress.com/2009/06/12/universitet-och-frikyrkorna/> (accessed June 12, 2009)

***Teologi i teori och praktik hör ihop [Theology in theory and practice belongs together]***

In an article in the newspaper Dagen, representatives of protestant Free Church education institutions argue for the necessity of incorporating practical training with the study of academic theology.

<http://www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=172634> (accessed June 18, 2009).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of a paper given at the XXth World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in Toronto, August 15–21, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Pia Karlsson Minganti and Ingvar Svanberg, *Religionsfrihet i Sverige: om möjligheten att leva som troende* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006), 9–14.

<sup>3</sup> Svensk författningssamling, “Lag (1998:1591) om Svenska kyrkan” (April 22, 2010), [www.riksdagen.se/webbnav/index.aspx?nid=3911&bet=1998:1591](http://www.riksdagen.se/webbnav/index.aspx?nid=3911&bet=1998:1591).

<sup>4</sup> Stefan Arvidsson and Jonas Svensson, *Människor och makter: en introduktion till religionsvetenskap* (Halmstad: Högskolan i Halmstad, 2008), 9.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview and an argument for a more radical separation of Church and state see Ingemund Hägg, “Sweden – Separation of Church and State in Europe,” in *Separation of Church and State in Europe*, ed. Fleur de Beaufort, Ingemund Hägg and Patrick van Schie (Brussels: European Liberal Forum, 2008), 31–42.

<sup>6</sup> Ragnar Askmark, *Svensk prästutbildning fram till år 1700* (Lund: Lund University, 1943); Oloph Bexell, *Prästutbildning, prästtjänster och prästerlig befordran i äldre tid: en kyrkorättslig översikt* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, Teologiska institutionen, 1995); Anders Bäckström, *Präst år 2000: en studie av svensk prästutbildning inför 1990-talet* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Jörgen Straarup, “Svensk religionssociologi,” *Signum* 1 (1992), <http://www.signum.se/signum/template.php?page=read&id=1750>.

<sup>8</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, “Uppsalaexegetiken,” in *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 8, Religionsfrihetens och ekumenikens tid*, ed. Ingmar Brohed (Stockholm: Verbum, 2005), 392–395, 426. Ola Sigurdson, “Teologins uppgift: traditionsbildningar inom svensk 1900-talsteologi,” in *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 8, Religionsfrihetens och ekumenikens tid*, ed. Ingmar Brohed (Stockholm: Verbum, 2005), 396–403, 426–427.

<sup>9</sup> Ingemar Hedenius, *Tro och Vetande* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1949). Rainer Carls, *Om tro och vetande: Ingemar Hedenius kristendomskritik i ett halvsekelsperspektiv* (Lund: Arcus, 2001). Johan Lundborg, *När ateismen erövrade Sverige: Ingemar Hedenius och debatten kring tro och vetande* (Nora: Nya Doxa, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Anders Jeffner, “Religionsvetenskap,” *Nationalencyklopedin*, [www.ne.se/religionsvetenskap](http://www.ne.se/religionsvetenskap).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Girmalm’s distinction between two different forms of academic theology. The first denotes merely that the object of study is some form of Christian religious life, while the second denotes that a critical-constructive probing of a religious tradition is undertaken. However, the second is not confessional in principal, in the sense being constrained by the confessional requirements of a specific religious organization, but a high degree of freedom is possible through the relative autonomy of the University. Thomas Girmalm, *Teologi och det moderna universitetet: perspektiv på polariseringen mellan teologi och religionsvetenskap under svenskt 1900-tal* (Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2006), 12.

<sup>12</sup> The argument is, for example, used in *Dagen* (a Swedish newspaper with roots in the Pentecostal movement) by Göran Janzon lecturer at Örebro Theological University College in a debate with HSV regarding their 2008 report and



decisions. Göran Janzon, "Högskoleverket vill ha öppenhet," *Dagen*, July 10, 2009, [www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=173646](http://www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=173646).

<sup>13</sup> For an example of the close connection between academic theology in Uppsala and the confessional theology of the Church of Sweden see Anna Karin Hammar, *The Mystery of Creation, The Sacrament of Creation: Baptismal Theology in the Encounter between Tradition and Situation* (Uppsala : Uppsala Universitet, 2009). Hammar as a priest and former candidate in 2006 to become archbishop of the Church of Sweden (her brother was archbishop 1997-2006), puts before her the task in the dissertation to construct a trustworthy baptismal theology for the Church of Sweden.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Fitzgerald, *The ideology of religious studies* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 9. Cf. Girmalm, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Anna-Karin Magnusson and Hedda Gunneng, *Granskning av utbildningarna inom religionsvetenskap och teologi* (Stockholm: Högskoleverket, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> For a collection of contributions to the debate see appendix 2.

<sup>17</sup> For three reports on the education of priests see Yngve Brilioth, *Betänkande med förslag rörande ändring av gällande bestämmelser i fråga om prästutbildningen SOU 1942:33* (Stockholm: Ecklesiastikdepartementet, 1942). Prästutbildningskommittén Biskopsmötet, Svenska kyrkan, *Betänkande med förslag angående utformningen av prästutbildningen*, (Stockholm: Diakonistyr, 1965). Carl-Gustaf Andréén, *Praktisk prästutbildning: Betänkande SOU 1971: 89* (Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> Jan Samuelsson, *Muslimers möte med svensk sjukvård och skola* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1999). Jonas Otterbeck, *Islam, muslimer och den svenska skolan* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000). Göran Larsson and Åke Sander, *Islam and Muslims in Sweden: Integration or Fragmentation?: A Contextual Study* (Berlin: Lit, 2007). Daniel Andersson and Åke Sander, ed., *Det mångreligiösa Sverige: ett landskap i förändring* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Imamutbildningsutredningen, *Staten och imamerna: religion, integration, autonomi: betänkande* (Stockholm: Fritze, 2009), 105. "Framför allt är det de principiella skälen som överväger för denna slutsats: staten ska inte ägna sig åt att auktorisera och ge legitimitet åt religiösa utbildningar. Detta utgör istället en fråga för samfunden själva. Staten bör förhålla sig konfessionsneutral, och inte bidra till att vare sig förstärka eller försvaga religionens roll i samhället."

<sup>20</sup> Lewis M. Branscomb, Fumio Kodama and Richard L. Florida, ed., *Industrializing Knowledge: University-Industry Linkages in Japan and the United States*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Within the EU see e.g. The League of European Research Universities (LERU), *Universities and Innovation:*

*The Challenge for Europe* (Leuven: LERU, 2006), [www.leru.org/files/general/Universities%20and%20Innovation%20The%20Challenge%20for%20Europe%20\(November%202006\).pdf](http://www.leru.org/files/general/Universities%20and%20Innovation%20The%20Challenge%20for%20Europe%20(November%202006).pdf) (accessed May 24, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> In Sweden, a number of reforms are implemented in 2011, the most important is that which gives the universities a higher degree of autonomy, but a new system for measuring quality in higher education is also introduced.

<sup>23</sup> Lenore O'Boyle, "Learning for Its Own Sake: The German University as Nineteenth-Century Model," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 25, 1(1982): 3-25.

<sup>24</sup> Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Another recurring argument points out that it is impossible to know what knowledge that will actually give rise to profitable breakthroughs resulting in innovations. Autonomy and freedom are thus necessary, not only in regard to the procedure, but also as concerns the goals and types of knowledge pursued.

<sup>25</sup> Ola Sigurdson, *Det postsekulära tillståndet: religion, modernitet, politik* (Göteborg: Glänta produktion, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> For English translations of the laws and regulations governing Swedish higher education see: Höskoleverket, "Laws and Regulations," Höskoleverket, [www.hsv.se/lawsandregulations.4.5161b99123700c42b07ffe3904.html](http://www.hsv.se/lawsandregulations.4.5161b99123700c42b07ffe3904.html) (accessed March 15, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Österberg, Thomas, "Honungsfälla för samfunden," *Dagen*, April 6, 2009, [www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=171636](http://www.dagen.se/dagen/article.aspx?id=171636) (accessed March 15, 2011). "För kyrkornas del måste det vara självklart att definiera teologi som kristen tro, och att huvudsyftet är att utbilda människor som kan sprida det kristna evangeliet. Det finns självklart en gräns för hur långt samfunden kan anpassa sig.

Frågan är om den gränsen är nådd. Ibland talar man om en "honungsfälla" som lockar med det som är "sött", men där den hugade sedan fastnar och inte kommer loss. Frestelsen finns för trossamfunden att anpassa sig till döds för att få del av sötman."

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of this problem see Liviu Andreescu, "Academic Freedom and Religiously-Affiliated Universities," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* vol. 7, issue 19 (2008): 162–183.

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*ekumenikens tid*, edited by Ingmar Brohed, 396-403, 426-427. Stockholm: Verbum, 2005.

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