

THE INNER AND OUTER JOURNEY:  
CONTEMPORARY SWEDISH PILGRIMAGE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Division of Religion

Drew University in partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree,

Doctor of Philosophy

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Madison, New Jersey

November, 2014

## ABSTRACT

### The Inner and Outer Journey: Contemporary Swedish Pilgrimage

Ph.D. Dissertation by  
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November 2014

Swedish pilgrimage is simultaneously a reinvented ritual of organized religion, an off-shoot of medieval pilgrimage, and the cultural expression of a close connection to the land. This study of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, in part a product of participant-observation, enters into the debate about conventional definitions of “religion,” and about a perceived dichotomy between “sacred” and “secular.” In Sweden, where much pilgrimage takes place under the auspices of historic churches, pilgrimage is a public performance often assumed to be religious. Even this assumption is examined here. Swedish pilgrims may define themselves as “spiritual, but not religious,” or even as atheists, but many have a deep faith in the natural order that they themselves may not recognize as religion. For many Swedish pilgrims, the journey in nature is more important than the destination, reflecting a view of the Swedish land’s immanent sacrality. Some pilgrimage destinations are merely parking lots or city centers, while others are great cathedrals or small parish churches. Atheist pilgrims, as well as believers, see their Swedish or European religio-cultural heritage reflected back at them in these destinations, a confirmation of identity which, itself, may well be a religious experience. New expressions of religion in Europe, as well as enactments of religious memory, may

be missed or misrecognized. The Church of Sweden, which has supported most contemporary pilgrimage thus far, now also advocates increased efforts in environmental and social justice. Despite this potential for greater inclusivity, however, Swedish pilgrimage may continue to exclude the individual who is neither of Swedish heritage, nor a member of a traditional Swedish church. Alternatively, a more expansive pilgrimage ecumenism, born from an ecotheological perspective, may emerge.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Doctoral Committee, first of all, Laurel Kearns, Ph.D., Committee Chair, and my advisor of many years, during which our children grew up, and we encountered both enjoyable times and obstacles along life's journey. Some of the knowledge imparted in her classes, especially from the memorable course, "Religion and the Earth," has found an outlet and expression in this dissertation. Now that I have arrived at the destination, I would like to thank historian Todd H. Green, Ph.D., who has counseled and challenged me since 2009. Without his perseverance, knowledge of Swedish church history, and the Swedish language, this study would not have been possible. And, finally, I would like to thank my newest committee member, Catherine Keller, Ph.D., who, despite her late arrival as a member of my committee, shared her intuitive and scholarly wisdom, thereby making this dissertation a more thoughtful work. I would also like to express my gratitude to the late Otto Maduro, Ph.D., who was a member of my committee until his passing in 2010, and also an active participant in shaping my work through coursework and through the dissertation prospectus phase. (I apologize, Otto, for the multiple clauses in the above sentence.) Otto taught all who knew him many lessons in life, and the greatest of these, was certainly the preeminence of love. In my particular case, he taught me a tenacity that I did not know I could possess. Finally, I would like to thank Karen McCarthy Brown, Ph.D., retired anthropologist of religion, wise and wonderful woman and professor, with whom I was privileged to take courses, and from whom I learned some of the art of working as an insider-outsider.

Immeasurable thanks go to my family, all of whom have been given far too little of my time, and from whom I asked much, and for whom I have been a shadow figure for many years now. More than anything, I look forward to spending sustained time with my family and to fulfilling promises long-deferred. For some, this project took too long.

I would especially like to thank my late father, Thomas George Marshall, Jr., Ph.D., and my mother, Berit S. Marshall, for their unwavering support. My parents, and my husband, Stefan Otto, and my children Stellan, Kai, and Karsten have, at times, been frustrated, but almost always loving and available for support and sustained encouragement. I am so very fortunate to have you all in my life.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO SWEDISH PILGRIMAGE

Hikers, many apparently middle-aged, some using metal hiking poles, trudge down the trail in unison and in single file. The sun has just broken through after a rain shower, and all step carefully, possibly to avoid orange slugs slowly making their way back to roadside ditches. Some are still wearing hats and rain jackets, and others have tied their jackets around their waists, and clipped their hats to their backpacks. They proceed slowly and silently, and it is only when I reach the last person in line, who is carrying a carved wooden pilgrim staff, that I realize that a group of pilgrims has passed by. A closer look then reveals that many are wearing Pearls of Life rosary bracelets, and a few are wearing simple crosses.<sup>1</sup> What, other than these items, and their manner of walking silently, slowly, and in single file, distinguishes this group of wanderers from any others one might pass on a trail in Sweden? This brief sketch of Swedish pilgrimage, the subject of this dissertation, precedes more detailed presentation and analysis below.

Nils Uddenberg, a Swedish professor whose work focuses on worldviews, biology and the more-than-human environment, cites survey data on the many Swedes who look upon time spent in nature as a time of spiritual renewal. Uddenberg writes that “Seventy percent of respondents agreed with the statement ‘There is an intentionality and meaning underlying the connections in nature,’” He continues, “Almost as many (63%) agreed that

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<sup>1</sup> Pearls of Life rosary bracelets were designed by Bishop Emeritus Martin Lönnebo. Lönnebo, together with the Church of Sweden, Verbum Press, and more recently his son, Martin, has transformed the Pearls of Life into an industry of its own, giving rise to not only to the original bracelets for adults, but also bracelets for children, books for adults and children, a Pearls of Life smartphone app, Pearls of Life art installations at churches and on parish grounds, and, most important for this dissertation, newly popular Pearls of Life pilgrimages.

‘Nature is animated by a power that flows through all life’” (Uddenberg, 2001, 153).<sup>2</sup> So what distinguishes pilgrims from other Swedes? On the one hand, not very much: they are doing what Swedes often do in their free time: spending time outdoors. On the other hand, there must be some specific reason why one would decide to opt for a pilgrimage journey rather than on a hike with a tourist organization. But, since pilgrimages are co-sponsored by tourist associations and economic organizations along with churches, there is no sharp distinction to be drawn there either. So what is a pilgrimage? What, in particular, is a Swedish pilgrimage? And why might Swedes decide to go on a pilgrimage rather than a back-packing trip? These and other questions will be explored in this dissertation. In the words of process theologian Catherine Keller, however, Swedish pilgrimage appears to be a movement of “irreducible complexity,” so definitive answers are elusive.<sup>3</sup>

Pilgrimages took place long before the era of Christianity and continue to take place in both Christian and non-Christian contexts. Pilgrimage is often described as sacred quest, and the question of sacrality, which is central to scholarly debates about pilgrimage, will also be addressed in this dissertation. In Victor and Edith Turner’s iconic 1978 volume, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, the Turners write that “pilgrimage is both like and unlike affliction ritual” (12). Focusing on Roman Catholic Christian pilgrimage of long duration and hardship, they write of the *communitas* that forms among pilgrims, who “go out to be cured, . . . [and] abandon the tight structures of kinship and locality, and voyage far to their font of healing” (13).

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<sup>2</sup> All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

<sup>3</sup> In private conversation on October 27, 2014.



More recent pilgrimage theory argues that most pilgrimages are, and have long been, local, everyday events, not dependent on entering into strong ties of fellowship (*communitas*), or into a liminoid state. But all who theorize about pilgrimage have the Turners' work in mind, as do I in writing this dissertation. Neither the Turners, nor Sidney and Mary Lee Nolan, whose *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe* (1989) is mainly concerned with pilgrimage shrines, offer a succinct definition of pilgrimage. The Nolans opt for self-definition of the shrine, or center of pilgrimage (just as many scholars opt for self-definition of pilgrimage), writing "Thus a particular place is a center of pilgrimage if people think of it in that way and behave accordingly" (13).

Anthropologist of religion Alan Morinis's definition of pilgrimage in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Religion*, has come to have significance for scholars of many disciplines, perhaps, in part, because it is based on his multi-cultural work in religion and pilgrimage. Morinis's discussion of the term "sacred" concludes with a definition of pilgrimage that I will adopt for this dissertation. Being careful not to refer to the transcendental, Morinis writes that pilgrimage is "the pursuit of the ideal (whether deified or not) that defines the sacred journey" (1992, 2). Morinis's definition, though perhaps inspired by his knowledge of Indian religions and pilgrimages, applies to the medieval Christian pilgrim as well as to the seeker of today, who may travel on a Christian pilgrim path but who may adhere to no religious institution. Morinis's definition is useful to my excursions into varying definitions of sacrality and secularity.

An expansive view of pilgrimage states of being taken by Swedish pilgrims, who claim to honor key principles, or symbols, of contemporary pilgrimage—calling them neither sacred nor secular, but tools to employ in the journey—helps to broaden the

dialogue beyond the resurfacing sacred/secular dichotomy. Swedish pilgrimage journeys, and the land they traverse, achieve a continuous interplay between the sacred and secular, as well as the innumerable states and places, marked by individual footsteps, in between. As though presaging contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, which I and other Swedish pilgrimage scholars argue centers more on the journey itself than on the arrival, Alan Morinis claims that “a true typology of pilgrimage focuses on the pilgrims’ journey and motivations, not on the destination or shrine” (1992, 10).<sup>4</sup>

Before entering into discussions about the nature of pilgrimage in general, however, and about contemporary Swedish pilgrimage in particular, I offer an overview of the subject at hand: Swedish pilgrimage today. The Church of Sweden is currently the main driver of Christian pilgrimage in Sweden, as was the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages. The Church of Sweden website offers some insights into its perception of who contemporary Swedish pilgrims are, and why they go on pilgrimage. One such web article asks and even answers the question “What is a Pilgrim?”<sup>5</sup> The question is answered under the heading “Sustainable Lifestyle.”

Who choose to call themselves pilgrims today? Many are interested in the history of medieval saints, and walk in their footsteps. Others do so because their pilgrim journeys to holy places are encompassed by their belief systems. Others seek a temporary break from a hectic city life or a more sustainable lifestyle. Pilgrimage is an environmentally friendly and climate-savvy way to go get around. People who are unaccustomed to, and maybe also uninterested in, worship services in church, can experience nature’s beauty as a spiritual deepening.

The Church of Sweden now offers pilgrimages in all of its thirteen dioceses. Most Swedish pilgrimages are offered either by a diocese, by a pilgrimage center, or by a

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<sup>4</sup> Though the publication date of this edited volume is 1992, Mornins states that it was inspired by papers delivered at a conference in Pittsburgh in 1981.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/troochandlighet/vad-ar-en-pilgrim> November 08, 2014. No authorial attribution.

parish.<sup>6</sup> And most are based on the pilgrimage model of The Vadstena Pilgrimage Center, as first promoted by its founder (in 1996), pilgrim priest, and national pilgrimage spokesperson still today, Hans-Erik Lindström. The Vadstena Pilgrimage Center was the first contemporary pilgrimage center to open in Sweden.

In 2014 the Church of Sweden announced that “hundreds of parish and diocesan pilgrimages” take place in Sweden every year.<sup>7</sup> In 2008, in an article in *The Journal of Empirical Theology* titled “Spirituality in Silence and Nature: Motivations, Experiences and Impressions among Swedish Pilgrims,” Lund University sociologist of religion Anna Davidsson Bremborg provides a sense of the initial rapid growth in pilgrimage. Bremborg writes that “In 2002, one-sixth of all parishes reported having arranged at least one pilgrimage (LUKA, 2003), a proportion that has probably increased since then” (150). In 2014, Erika Willander, sociologist of religion at Uppsala University, explained that no exact figures of pilgrimage alone exist through the Church of Sweden, but that figures combining pilgrimages and retreats are available from 2008 through 2013. Though these pilgrimage numbers have been confused by the inclusion of retreat numbers, they show a slow and steady growth. Willander explains of the Church of Sweden Statistical Database figures that “Each individual taking part in a pilgrimage (notwithstanding how long the walk is) is counted as 1 in the statistics.” Some pilgrimages are many weeks in length, and some are an hour long, so these figures represent a daily count of “participants at pilgrimages/retreats.” Recorded from 2008 to

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/troochandlighet/svenska-kyrkans-pilgrimsvandringar> Accessed November 08, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/troochandlighet/svenska-kyrkans-pilgrimsvandringar> Accessed November 08, 2014. No authorial attribution.

2013, they are 18,757; 20,614; 20,887; 25,555; 28,728; and finally 25,971 in 2013.<sup>8</sup> The total increase in individual participation in pilgrimages or retreats of any length over the five-year period beginning in 2008, and ending in 2013, was 28 percent. The highest recorded annual increase in participation was 18 percent from 2010 to 2011. The number of individual participants in counted events dropped 11 percent from 2012 to 2013. Difficulties in counting the practitioners of religious praxes are all too familiar to sociologists, but the numbers provide a sense of a broad and growing contemporary pilgrimage movement in a church with 13 dioceses and approximately 1,400 parishes, according to a count made in the fall of 2014.<sup>9</sup>

These rates and figures, and the level of interest in pilgrimage vary by diocese. Researching regional or diocesan levels of pilgrimage can be difficult. The most information was gleaned from the home webpage of each of the 13 dioceses.<sup>10</sup> As well as searching home diocesan webpages for information on pilgrimage or environmental events, and in order to see whether pilgrimage and the environment is connected at the diocesan level (which it appears to be, as I discuss at length in chapter six), I also made some calls to diocesan pilgrimage administrators. The answers I received allow me to provide the following brief glimpses of regional pilgrimage. Several calls to the Diocese of Västerås led me to an assistant diocesan priest who told me of the approximate increase in his area of Västerås from 20 pilgrims in 2013 to 60 in 2014. When I asked whether I might have more specific information to document, he naturally asked how I

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<sup>8</sup> Personal correspondence with Erika Willander, [Erika.Willander@svenskakyrkan.se](mailto:Erika.Willander@svenskakyrkan.se) November 10, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/organisation> Accessed November 10, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> There are actually 14 dioceses, if the Archdiocese of Uppsala is counted as well as the Diocese of Uppsala, but it is not one of the 13 geographic dioceses of the Church of Sweden that cover the landmass.

planned to use the information. (There is definitely a degree of wariness about providing hard data regarding pilgrimage at the local, regional, and national levels.<sup>11</sup>) I now have figures that are (purportedly never) published provided to me by a priest who explained that in his area there was what amounts to a 300% increase in pilgrimage over a single year. This is explained by the fact that there were three pilgrimage offerings in 2014 versus a single pilgrimage offering in 2013. The pilgrimages and numbers of persons partaking in pilgrimage offerings arranged by Västerås on the diocesan level follow. In 2013, 19 people went on a day pilgrimage from Rättviks Stiftsgård<sup>12</sup> to Boda Church on June 11th. In 2014, the three pilgrimages and pilgrim meetings attracted 22 people on a pilgrimage from October 3rd through 5th, a pilgrimage day on November 18<sup>th</sup>, and overnight on December 31<sup>st</sup> to January 1st attracted 34 and 39 people, respectively. These offerings varied, and each may have appealed to different individuals. The first of the 2014 Västerås offerings was a multi-day pilgrimage, the second was a day pilgrimage,

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<sup>11</sup> Whether this is an unspoken church policy about a movement advertised as “growing,” or whether this reflects common sense in not divulging information to a stranger, I am uncertain. It is unsurprisingly, difficult, to reach academics or pilgrimage leaders in their offices. However, even diocesan pilgrimage assistants are elusive. Hours of calls and email exchanges over the course of a week resulted in only a modicum of useful information from one very friendly diocesan assistant. The promised assistant with whom multiple calls and emails were exchanged led to no concrete information. Persistence paid off in the second week in the form of hard facts from a parish assistant and from a Swedish researcher with access to the Church of Sweden Research Unit personnel (whose names and contact information were not shared with me.) Having already devoted many hours to the same process in 2011 and 2012, I conclude that phone and email contacts, even with introductions from other scholars, are not ideal for this type of research. (Survey responses might be higher.) The persons contacted going out of their way, and doing extra work (if promotional), and simply being helpful, is part of the pilgrimage and diaconal ethos.

<sup>12</sup> This is a conference and retreat center with a well-developed website, and to appearances quite unlike the family hostel with bunk beds, such as at a summer camp, at which we stayed during my participant-observation week. <http://www.stiftsgarden.org/> Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=648546> Accessed November 25, 2014. A subject for future research, it may be that the use or development of retreat centers for pilgrimage retreats is a sign of greater SES distinction from the general population than is group pilgrimage with simple living quarters and meal preparation by the group itself, rather than by professionals.

and the third was a New Year's Eve overnight event. These meetings and pilgrimages, some in wintertime, were arranged by the diocese, and not by individual parishes.<sup>13</sup>

Dean Kerstin Strömberg is the pastor of Västra Storsjöbygden's congregation in the diocese of Härnösand.<sup>14</sup> The parish offices are located on a short Swedish stretch of the long St. Olav's Path that leads from the town of Sundsvall, near the Baltic Sea in Sweden, to Trondheim, at the Atlantic Ocean in Norway. Though Pastor Strömberg and her colleagues have noticed an increase in pilgrims along their stretch of the St. Olav's Path, they do not have firm numbers because not all pilgrims passing by visit the parish office. Some go to the local tourist office instead. The pastor and her colleagues, however, noted increases in pilgrim groups asking for the pilgrimage stamp of Mörsil, in pilgrim pairs, and in single pilgrims walking by on the path, and in numbers of participants on brief, local pilgrimages. After ten years of seeing only the occasional group or pilgrim per summer, Dean Strömberg and her colleagues noticed four to five groups, four to five pairs, and approximately ten single pilgrims on the path during the summer of 2014. Dean Strömberg also reports (in English), that "This summer we also initiated a "ridegrimage," for people who wanted to go along a part of the route on horseback. The interest is certainly growing!"<sup>15</sup>

### **Ecotheology in the Dioceses of the Church of Sweden**

Of the thirteen dioceses of the Church of Sweden, all have links and discussions about land-holdings and stewardship, as well as climate change on their websites. The

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<sup>13</sup>This information was provided in personal correspondence by Mikael Mogren, Diocesan Assistant in Västerås for the Development of Worship Service, on November 11, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Pastor Strömberg is also rural dean of the Krokomb-Åre-Strömsunds Contract, a Church designation for multi-congregational divisions larger parishes and smaller than dioceses.

<sup>15</sup> Kerstin.h.Strömberg@svenskakyrkan.se Personal correspondence. November 6, 2014.

connection between pilgrimage and the environment is evident from the review of websites. Some websites also explicitly address ecotheology, explicitly recognizing the environment as a sphere intersecting with (or perhaps coterminous with) the sphere of the sacred. Most Church of Sweden dioceses also include the subheading of “Pilgrimage” under the “Belief and Life” drop-down menu. Often included, sometimes confusingly, in this section are links to pilgrimage photos, articles, and information, and also to material on stewardship of the land, and a list of nature reservations owned by and within the particular diocese. This is a strong indicator that pilgrimage is a land-based movement, and that the Church of Sweden anticipates that Swedish pilgrims are also concerned about the environment. The space given to pilgrimage versus environmental preservation and stewardship or ecotheology varies from one diocese to another. Some dioceses link to pilgrimage offerings at the parish or community level, directing potential pilgrims to the local area in which they live, while other dioceses focus more on geographically broad environmental issues in their web presence.

Church of Sweden dioceses take a broader view of environmental preservation than any species-specific preservation effort. Church land preservationists recognize that not only obvious larger species but also small, often barely visible, living beings are threatened by economic development of unpreserved church lands. All beings and ecosystems must be considered when carrying out the sale or preservation of church land. How this is accomplished, and how effective programs to sustainably harvest lumber from church lands, for example, have been, is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but constitute a large project worthy of consideration.<sup>16</sup> This is an ecotheological perspective,

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<sup>16</sup> Swedish sociologist Anders Lund works in this field of study.

as opposed to an anthropocentric stewardship perspective.<sup>17</sup> The Church of Sweden (for centuries, part of the Roman Catholic Church) has been a large landowner since the Christianization of Sweden. Parish priests still earn income from the land. What follows is an overview of specific webpages of Swedish dioceses and pilgrimage organizations, and what, in brief, is documented about their land ethic and pilgrimage.

Home to the first and founding pilgrimage center and the early leadership of pilgrimage priest and prophet, Hans-Erik Lindström, Linköping's Diocese has the longest history of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. Linköping's link takes one directly to the Pilgrimage Center in Vadstena, and is pilgrimage and program-focused. Lindström is not only well-known in Linköping: the webpage of Luleå's Diocese, for instance, features an article by Lindström, who has also journeyed in, and helped to popularize, pilgrimage in northern Sweden. Lindström's article reflects on pilgrimage in the vast north. In "*Om Pilgrimsvandring*," "About Pilgrimage," Lindström writes about the "visible and invisible landscapes" and that "the outer journey becomes a way to access the inner."<sup>18</sup>

"*Ekoteologi*"—"Ecotheology"—is the main topic of the home page of the northerly Härnösand Diocese. Links include "*Om Pilgrimsvandring*" ("About Pilgrimage"), and "*Vad Är en Pilgrimsvandring?*" ("What is a Pilgrimage?"). There is a photo with the simple caption, "green maple leaves." Under the photo a pilgrim is defined

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<sup>17</sup> A discussion of ecotheology from the American and global perspective by sociologist of religion Laurel Kearns may be found in her chapter, "The Context of Eco-Theology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, especially pages 475, 477, and 479 (2004, 465-484). For a Swedish perspective, one recent Swedish work on ecotheology, *Creation's Salvation: Ecotheology in the time of the Environmental and Climate Crisis*, (*Skapelsens Frälsning: Ekoteologi i Miljö-och-Klimatens Tid*), was written by missionary and ecotheologian Per Larsson, active within the Church of Sweden (2010).

<sup>18</sup> H-E Lindström. <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=665175> Accessed 24-03-2014.



as follows: “Pilgrim—a person with an interest in cultural history who seeks experiences in which the Middle Ages and contemporary time intersect in a reflexive way.”<sup>19</sup>

Härnösand’s Diocese offers a pilgrimage program for young leaders in the church. This program, which has an integral environmental component, is called “Life’s Journey.” When a prospective young leader has accumulated enough “environment points,” he or she can progress to the second of the three steps before the young person journeys, often to Iona, Scotland. Interestingly, these journeys are not called “pilgrimages” but, instead, the young adult’s “life’s journey.”<sup>20</sup> *Ung* (Young) Pilgrim and *Livsresa* (Life’s Journey) are two other Church of Sweden youth programs. The primary emphasis of these programs is institutional integration, while (at least in the online promotional appeals) nature and environmental engagement is emphasized secondarily. These programs are designed to help future church leaders self-identify and prepare for leadership roles within the Church. Young Pilgrim is for those who want to find a path within the Church of Sweden after confirmation. “‘Crossroads Life-Journey’ is for those nineteen or older who wonder what adult engagement within the Church involves.” This year, *Svenska Kyrkan’s Unga* (the Young People of the Church of Sweden)—the overarching organization of young Church of Sweden members—are taking their life’s journey to Iona. This journey is described in pilgrimage terms as an inner and outer journey, but not called a pilgrimage.<sup>21</sup> Has pilgrimage become so common that the Church of Sweden felt the need to give this particular pilgrimage, outside of Sweden, a

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=660372> Accessed 24-03-2014.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/harnosandsstift/fridah-18-samlar-klimatpoang-for-att-fa-aka-pa-sin-livsresa> Gustafsson, Monica. 2014-03-24. Accessed 24-03-2014.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/uppsalastift/vagval/livsresa> Accessed March 30, 2014.

different name? Though Iona is tied to pilgrimage and nature, did they perhaps decide to use a less loaded term for young people than “pilgrimage”?

Important steps in earning the privilege of making a Life’s Journey comprise changing one’s own lifestyle, and participating in community education to help merchants do business in a more environmentally friendly manner. In this setting, the categories of “nature” and “the environment” seem disconnected. “Nature” is personal, local, regional, or national and available for enjoyment, spirituality, and healing: all pilgrim values. “The environment” is global. It is an entity about which one must be concerned and which one must strive to improve.

Ameliorating environmental destruction is no simple or easy task, and, since the Swedish individual feels such great personal responsibility, attending to the environment is likely to add stress to one’s existence, even though basking in the immediacy of nature and its gifts provides relief to the same stressed individuals. This exchange between avid work and dedication and taking the time, for one’s health, is a larger pilgrimage issue. It is, in fact, an issue for activists and workers in all fields, addressed, perhaps most appropriately by a psychologist of religion, but also touched upon in chapters to follow. One author writes, “Pull Out the Plug!”<sup>22</sup> making the use of language such as “recharging,” suspect, and implicating pilgrimage as possibly task-oriented itself, and a product of a product-oriented culture. Pilgrimage cannot entirely remove itself from the culture that created it.

A Facebook post by a diocesan worker about a March 19, 2014 day pilgrimage in Västerås Diocese provides insight into the regional pilgrimage culture in Västerås. Alf Englund, on behalf of the diocese, announces that this is its fifth year of offering

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<sup>22</sup> See Brian Palmer, “Ryck ut Jacken!” in *Guds Närmaste Stad*, 2008, 277-292.

pilgrimages. Day pilgrimages appear to be gaining in popularity and are part of the pilgrimage momentum in Västerås. About 30 people seem to attend the Saturday pilgrimages offered by the diocese, for which there is no requirement to register in advance.<sup>23</sup> Of the relatively few posts by this newer Facebook group, specifically called “Pilgrimage in Västerås Diocese,” several in early 2014 concern a sustainable foods cook-off competition. On a very small scale, the Västerås Diocese may have managed to succeed in fostering the environmental ethos of which some pilgrimage scholars seem to despair. By starting with a strong environmental focus and expanding into the pilgrimage realm, the Västerås Diocese has distinctly tied pilgrimage to environmental concerns and to fostering a sustainable lifestyle.

Uppsala is the Archdiocese of the Church of Sweden. It is a bit harder to find information about pilgrimage at the diocesan level on Uppsala’s home page. Like Härnösand’s Diocese, Uppsala Archdiocese’s home page focuses on environmental concerns over pilgrimage; that is, environmental issues are given more space and priority on the website.<sup>24</sup> However, under the heading of “Of Help in Environmental Work,” Jerry Olsson presents a guide to literature in Swedish, events in Sweden, and other resources and guides about “the environment and sustainable development” for students or instructors of the diocese.<sup>25</sup>

On the ground and local level, the Uppsala diocese features an interview with Ulf Krantz, past head of *Pilgrimstid Sverige*, (Time for Pilgrimage Sweden), the motto of

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/PilgrimsvagariVasterasStift> Accessed March 24, 2014. Posted 1 March 19, 2014. Englund, Alf.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=629021> “Pilgrim i ur och skur.” Posted August 19, 2009. Accessed March 23, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> <https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/uppsalastift/miljoarbete> “Environmental Work.” Olsson, Jerry. Updated March 21, 2014. Accessed March 24, 2014.  
<https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/uppsalastift/till-hjalp-i-miljoarbetet> Olsson, Jerry. Updated October 18, 2013. Accessed March 24, 2014.

which is “A Pilgrim knows no Borders,” about new pilgrimage developments—importantly a new pilgrimage path—in the diocese. Krantz is himself a professional pilgrim, who works as a pilgrimage organizer and path-builder. This article about pilgrimage on a new path through Uppsala Diocese mentions that a pilgrimage insider group, including Bishop Ragnar Persenius, has gathered for the announcement about the new path. The initial pilgrimage journey began in Kårböle Church in Uppland, (where Uppsala is located). The ambitions of the economic organization, *Pilgrimstid Sverige*, are greater, and extend beyond Uppland’s province line. The group’s intention is to tie Uppsala into Sweden’s pilgrimage network. The Saints’ Path continues well beyond Uppsala to Trondheim, and the plans of *Pilgrimstid Sverige* are to extend it from Finsta, in the province of Stockholm, northeast to Trondheim in Norway, a major pilgrimage destination for Scandinavian pilgrimages. An Italian representative of the tourist organization, Walden, which plans to sponsor pilgrimages in Sweden, was a member of this insider group.<sup>26</sup> The presence of an Italian tour guide suggests that some effort is being made in marketing Swedish pilgrimage to other Europeans. But the event suggests that each diocese operates fairly independently and that interest in Swedish pilgrimage continues to be generated on a regional level.

Interestingly, the Diocese of Karlstad provides an entrepreneurial perspective of pilgrimage. Unlike dioceses that focus on reviving medieval pilgrimage paths, saving the environment, or promoting a strong Christian message (such as Lund’s Diocese). Karlstad offers corporate team-building pilgrimages. Having compared pilgrimage to the twelve-step programs in my analysis of Swedish pilgrimage, I had also considered the

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1013597> Hård, Per. “Vandring på nymärkt led.” Posted June 13, 2013. Accessed March 24, 2014.

possibilities and existing consonances with group—whether corporate, church, leadership—team-building programs. This brief post, which provides the name of a contact person and few details about what the program might entail is, nevertheless, the first mention I have found of pilgrimage as a corporate team-building practice. This innovative blending of the sacred and secular spheres is perhaps a risk to the integrity of pilgrimage, the essence of which is to leave the stress of daily life—most especially the business world—behind.<sup>27</sup>

Stockholm is the newest and geographically smallest diocese in Sweden. The Stockholm’s Diocesan pilgrimage page contains many links, but the lead article is, as is typical, below a photo of a group of pilgrims. These pilgrims are walking on planks just beside a shallow waterway, so the importance of keeping your balance, and a slight risk of getting wet, is hinted at, but not highlighted. The article below the photo contains standard Swedish pilgrimage language about making an inner and outer journey, and “living a comparatively simple life, for a while.”<sup>28</sup> The article describes a nurse named Lena Rosenius, who has been going on pilgrimages for the past thirteen years. Though she is not a believer in a personal God, Rosenius says that coming into the church through what some call the “kitchen door” of pilgrimage, has allowed her to understand Christian mysticism, and allowed her “to dare to believe.” The article describes the belief Rosenius holds as a belief-in-relationship. It is a belief that allows her to “reach the depths of emotion” along with fellows on her journey.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=662961>

<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=765409> Undated. Accessed March 24, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/stockholmsstift/pilgrimsvandring> “Pilgrimsvandring.” Undated.

Accessed March 23, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/stockholmsstift/pilgrimsvandring-har-hjalpt-mig-att-vaga-tro>

“Pilgrimsvandring har hjälpt mig våga att tro.” Christina Nilsson. Undated. Accessed March 24, 2014.

Strängnäs Diocese seems at first glance focused more on heritage issues than on pilgrimage, since it does not have an original pilgrimage mission statement on its pilgrim page. (Strängnäs Diocese is the oldest diocese in Sweden, and celebrates its 1,100-year anniversary in 2014, so it is perhaps natural that this milestone be highlighted above other ongoing events). The two paragraphs on the Strängnäs pilgrim page are the generic paragraphs linking to more information on Swedish pilgrimage on other websites. Digging a bit deeper, however, Strängnäs, which has a more traditionally Christian message on its pages than some other dioceses, devoted the Summer 2011 issue of its diocesan magazine, *The Portal*, to pilgrimage. While God is mentioned, and “nature” is not, the images are of beauty in nature. A photo of a tree in leaf fills an entire page. Missing are the photos of walking pilgrims seen on other websites.<sup>30</sup> The current home page of Strängnäs show photos from a diocesan festival held in early September, 2014, the theme of which was “Sustainable Concern,” suggesting that despite its rich heritage, Strängnäs Diocese is maintaining its relevance by addressing environmental concerns of its members.<sup>31</sup>

A click on a link on Linköping’s home page brings the navigator to the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center’s home page. As mentioned, the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center is the first contemporary pilgrimage center, and it is also the largest, and most active, containing (as described at length in the chapter below), not only cloisters and a cloister church, but also housing for pilgrimage retreats. In 2014, the Pilgrimage Center and the Church of Sweden were together focused on young pilgrims and ecology and on their

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/strangnasstift/pilgrim> Accessed March 24, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/strangnasstift> Accessed September 12, 2014.

pilgrimage to Canterbury.<sup>32</sup> The Pilgrimage Center page prominently displays a photo of pilgrims walking and, below that, information about the new Pearls of Life with the green bead that stands for both nature and for the diaconate. Green is the color of the deacon's liturgical garb, and, it goes without saying but is stated nonetheless, the color signifying the environment. Suggestions on using the bead to exercise a diaconal level of environmentalism are included on a webpage replete with events and topics relevant to pilgrimage.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, the webpages, PDFs, and articles about ecotheology on the Church of Sweden diocesan websites, or linked to them, are brief, and non-academic. The articles about pilgrimage do not use the term "ecotheology" but nevertheless express a theology of corporate care for the earth. The pilgrimage pages might use the word "God" in a sidebar, but neither the word "God" nor the word "nature" figures prominently in the pilgrimage web pages of the thirteen Church of Sweden dioceses. Yet both are implied. For example, a web page of Stockholm's Diocese (mentioned above), says that one can find what one is looking for in "the deep," which seems to refer to nature as well as spirituality and mysticism.

The Church of Sweden and other Swedish churches have clearly taken note of the appeal and urgency that environmental causes have for many Swedes. At present, the web pages of the dioceses mostly do not mention being in nature as a primary motivator for pilgrimage, but pilgrimage links or articles now often lead to links or articles about environmental events. The pilgrimage and environmental movements are being married, if not merged, with a deft rapidity. Ecotheology and pilgrimage stem from similar

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/program-2014/ung-pilgrim-canterbury-20328213> Accessed March 27, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/> Accessed March 24, 2014.

impulses, though pilgrimage emphasizes the meditative element of a lifestyle that springs from some of the principles of deep ecology. The practice of deep ecology, founded by Norwegian Arne Naess, as explained by Bill Devall and George Sessions in “Principles of Deep Ecology” includes “Going beyond a narrowly materialistic scientific understanding of reality...[and]...the search for a more objective consciousness and state of being through an active deep questioning and meditative process and way of life” (2003, 434-435).

The festival tradition in religion is also returning to Sweden with renewed vigor reminiscent of the great awakenings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in a new guise. Attendees must also become destination-oriented pilgrims, journeying to a festival destination. The Church of Sweden is planning two large festivals in 2014 and 2015, a social justice festival and a theological festival, both with environmental issues at the forefront. “The Theological Festival takes place with the conviction that we are all theologians, and that theology is a constructive force, totally necessary for the earth’s survival.”<sup>34</sup> Karlstad’s Diocese sponsored the nationwide festival of environmental awareness in the summer of 2014. People of all ages will partake in this festival, which is simultaneously a pilgrimage, retreat, and conference on environmental and social justice issues. The journey to the festival itself is a pilgrimage with a defined destination and purpose. Also among the activities offered are hour-long pilgrimages. This World Festival is eco-certified by both the Church of Sweden and the organization “Keep Sweden Clean.”<sup>35</sup> The Youth of the Church of Sweden also sponsored their own summer

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/varldensfest> ; <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/teologifestivalen>  
Accessed April 2, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/karlstadsstift> Accessed March 24, 2014.  
<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/varldensfest/miljodiplomerat-mote> Nystrand, Ove. Accessed April 2, 2014.



program to elevate the issue of climate change before national elections. This Climate Tour is also held within Sweden, in four regional locations, and includes a preparatory meeting for volunteer leaders in Uppsala, the seat of the archdiocese.<sup>36</sup>

A pilgrimage to Canterbury is offered to second-year members of the Young Pilgrim program of the Church of Sweden. Whether or not the young pilgrims have a particular desire for broader European travel, this program involves leaving the boundaries of Sweden and participating in a larger European retreat. The Young Pilgrims will travel to Canterbury by mass transit and on foot. While many events are open to members and non-members of the Church of Sweden, the Canterbury pilgrimage is planned for recent Church of Sweden confirmands. It is thus unlikely that it will attract any unchurched youth. Confirmation today often signals the end of active church participation, but these are youth who wish to remain active in the Church after confirmation. Taizé is the final destination of the Young Pilgrim's European tour and its two years of preparation. In some respects more traditionally Christian than adult pilgrimage, Young Pilgrim centers on fellowship at camps, study of Bible texts, and Christian music.<sup>37</sup> The Young Pilgrims are the youth who will be responsible for upholding the next links in the Swedish Christian chain of memory. But, unless their numbers are large, these Young Pilgrim youth leaders cannot alone uphold the vast architecture of the Church of Sweden on behalf of generations to follow.

The Swedish pilgrimage story is even more nuanced, and even more regionalized—even beyond diocesan or national borders—as pilgrimage narratives, like *Modern Pilgrims...About a Journey from Hälsingland to Nidaros*, a pilgrimage journey

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<sup>36</sup> <http://ChurchofSwedenunga.se/globalt/2014/04/svenska-kyrkans-unga-soker-volontarer-till-sommarturne-om-klimat/> Accessed April 2, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.svenskakyrkansunga.com/sv/ung\\_pilgrim.html](http://www.svenskakyrkansunga.com/sv/ung_pilgrim.html) Accessed April 2, 2014.

from Sweden to Trondheim, Norway, suggest (*Moderna Pilgrimer...Om en Vandring från Hälsingland till Nidaros*, 2008, 9-10, 17, 41-43).<sup>38</sup> Pilgrimages are even more globalized as well, as economic organizations like the *Cammini d'Europa* attest. In *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, Simon Coleman and John Eade argue that “processes of globalization can stimulate the rediscovery of different kinds of particularism and localism” (2004, 15). That is, the push to create pan-European pilgrimage is countered, in Sweden and elsewhere, with a greater emphasis on the regional. Regional and organizational cooperation, as well as the push towards globalization—for example, the recent naming of the first Scandinavian routes as European Culture Ways—will be more fully examined, especially in the chapter on pilgrimage and secularization.

Spending time in the natural world is a quality of Swedish pilgrimage most central to its pilgrims. The natural world heals and gives, wherever in Sweden the pilgrim may be. A Swedish book entitled *Naturkraft, The Power of Nature* (Åsa and Mats Ottosson), is a guide to spirituality and healing in nature cited on several Church of Sweden pilgrimage webpages.<sup>39</sup> This is but further testimony to what Swedes find central in pilgrimage, to whatever degree the cultural, regional, socio-economic, and political affiliations are recognized or not. A central experience for a Swedish pilgrim is to struggle, yet to be at one with nature, and to self-realize through this experience. As a Church of Sweden pilgrimage webpage pronounces, pilgrimage is timeless, but in a new form.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Trondheim was known as Nidaros in the Middle Ages, so the use of the name Nidaros is evocative of the Roman Catholic pilgrimage past.

<sup>39</sup> This volume is unavailable in the United States.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=665943> Accessed March 28, 2013.

## **Chapters: Order and Topics**

The introduction above provides some overview of pilgrimage issues and the available Swedish pilgrimage statistics. The second chapter comprises participant-observations and information such as the typical pilgrimage schedule and behavior. Each narrative, based on my Swedish pilgrimage participation, leads to theoretical reflections that will be expanded upon in the following chapters. In fact, each participant-observation narrative was written and selected in order to introduce one or more of the theoretical debates in pilgrimage today, and to provide a background to these debates in the unique Swedish case. These observations highlight some of the uncommon features of Swedish pilgrimage and furnish insight into the pilgrimage experience.

The third chapter of this dissertation will present essential historical background to the Swedish case, as well as introducing theoretical questions about pilgrimage, including the somewhat confusing swings between embrace at some times, and denial at others, of the historical relevance of Swedish pilgrimage. This chapter will address the history of pilgrimage and Christianity in Sweden, especially periods and movements in Swedish Church history relevant to contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, and themes that will resurface throughout my exploration of this new social movement.

The fourth chapter will discuss secularization and the possible resurgence of spirituality in Sweden. This chapter will address the ways in which contemporary Swedish pilgrimage pushes back against definitions of Sweden as the “most secular” nation (Zuckermann, 2008; Hornberg, 2007). Among the important conversations is whether the lines between secular and sacred have been blurred in Swedish pilgrimage

even though the movement is promoted by traditional Christian churches and apparently structured around traditional Christian praxes.

The fifth chapter, “The Inner and Outer Journey,” considers many themes of Swedish pilgrimage, focusing on pilgrimage as a return to nature and as “lived religion,” a term borrowed from Meredith McGuire (2008). “Lived religion,” or “everyday religion,” as Nancy Ammerman also refers to it (2007), is religion as experienced day-to-day by those who practice it, and may not fit neatly within the paradigm of its institutional creators. Spirituality is a central issue in pilgrimage and of this study. Spirituality as studied in the Kendal Study in England (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005) inspired a similar study of religion and spirituality, the Enköping Study, using a case study of a similar-sized average town in Sweden (Ahlstrand and Gunner, 2008), is discussed in this chapter. The concepts of the diaconal pilgrim and of adopting pilgrimage as a lifestyle are both introduced in chapter five.

A central theme of the dissertation, already introduced in observations about Vadstena and Skara in chapter one, is the importance of heritage in Swedish pilgrimage. Heritage is embodied not only in buildings but also in the land, and even in the pilgrims themselves. Scholars of other religions and places have emphasized the importance of heritage in pilgrimage, so this is not a new, or exclusively Swedish, concept (Edith and Victor Turner, 1978; Paul Basu, 2004). The discussions of heritage and sacred space, whether in buildings or land are interrelated, so the discussion of sacred space is also included in this chapter, as well as in chapter six, where sacred space is considered more fully. The environmental ethic of pilgrimage is also an important theme in chapters five and six.

The sixth chapter, “The Dark Green Journey,” expands upon the intertwined themes, addressed throughout, of nature, nation, and identity. The 2008 Enköping Study of religiosity in an average Swedish suburban town is discussed in chapter six. Among the findings, one stands out: Jonas Bromander, who provides an overview of the entire study, writes that “Spiritual experiences in nature were the single type of supernatural event partaken in by most people in Enköping” (80). I also discuss nature as a means for escape from high technology and high-stress society, and as a method of achieving a “relaxed” state of being both as presented in Enköping Study chapters and in pilgrimage. The subject of religio-cultural heritage is related to the discussion of sacralization of the land and pilgrimage in chapter six. This chapter also investigates practices associated with pilgrimage, such as rituals of mourning and silent processions, and visits to shrines not only ancient but also constructed in honor of innocent victims of tragedies. The phrase “dark green” may also refer, as Bron Taylor explains in his 2010 volume, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*, to the “dark,” or nationalistic land-based impulses found within green religion.

In the conclusion and final chapter, I consider the future of the pilgrimage movement in Sweden and Europe. Pilgrimage as a religious and cultural phenomenon has continued to grow worldwide for many decades now, somewhat belatedly in Sweden. I address the possible trajectories of the pilgrimage movement in Sweden, arguing that it is likely to continue to grow, since the numbers of pilgrims and congregations and organizations offering pilgrimages continue to increase and because it gives expression to many facets of Swedish culture. As addressed in chapter six, Swedish pilgrimage is also likely to continue to grow since the pressures of modernity and immigration—cultural

phenomena against which Swedish pilgrimage mounts explicit, and possibly implicit and misrecognized,<sup>41</sup> protests, respectively—seem likely to intensify.

The final chapter will briefly develop conclusions drawn from the preceding chapters and the sociological research and participant-observations from which they were extrapolated. This chapter will also consider the possible future trajectories of Swedish pilgrimage, and some of its newer manifestations. Thoughts regarding future work in the field of Swedish or Scandinavian pilgrimage and related phenomena will also be considered.

## **Conclusion**

Contemporary pilgrimage arose following a 450-year post-Reformation-imposed pilgrimage hiatus in Protestant Sweden. Now an ecumenical phenomenon, contemporary Swedish pilgrimage began in the 1990s with pilgrimage journeys of the bishops of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, described in a volume with a chapter by the current bishop of each diocese published in 1995. Hans-Erik Lindström, a Church of Sweden priest of Linköping’s Diocese, made the first well-publicized national pilgrimage journey in the year 2000, and thus brought pilgrimage to the attention of the Swedish people.<sup>42</sup> Swedish pilgrimage is still primarily founded on the work, paid and volunteer, of Church of Sweden clergy and laity. Swedish pilgrimages to Norway are a testament to the ecumenism and history of pilgrimage, as Catholics are also well-represented in the leadership of the organization that leads pilgrimages from Sweden to Trondheim.

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<sup>41</sup> The Bourdieuan term “misrecognition” refers to actions taken or beliefs held by an actor or actors who misrecognize (fail to perceive) the underlying significance, motives, or causes of actions taken or beliefs held.

<sup>42</sup> Hans-Erik Lindström. “Pilgrimsvandring har hjälpt mig igenom en svår period i livet.” Accessed November 17, 2014 <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/stockholmsstift/pilgrimsvandring-har-hjalpt-mig-igenom-en-svar-period-i-livet>.

Trondheim is an international destination, such as Sweden cannot yet claim, and attracts Roman Catholics as well as others from nations outside of Scandinavia.<sup>43</sup>

Though the journey is emphasized over the goal in most Swedish pilgrimages, many pilgrim paths do, nevertheless, end at traditional destinations. Medieval paths are often used; pilgrimage centers are typically located in diocesan seats (where lodging and transportation are available); and Swedish pilgrimages often end at small churches or medieval cathedrals, or in Vadstena, now home to an entire pilgrimage complex.<sup>44</sup>

Medieval destinations are not mere matters of convenience. Such destinations attract visitors by using structures already in place, delight visitors with their architectural grandeur and works of art, and reveal the importance of heritage in Swedish religiosity. The coexistence of pilgrimages that culminate at heritage destination with local circular or city center pilgrimages, and pilgrimages of simply unremarkable destinations is discussed below. Whether or not all pilgrims make the complete journey, or even elect to visit churches or cathedrals upon their arrival, the Church of Sweden asserts its long history in order to attract pilgrims interested in heritage, as well as those with religious motivations.

“Pilgrimage” is a word and tradition with deep resonances, but also a newly relevant, revived, and even reinvented phenomenon in contemporary Sweden. Contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, I will argue, offers pathways to nature, nation, spirituality and health. Despite deep differences from the medieval pilgrimage tradition, contemporary Swedish pilgrimage from the mid-1990s retains some strong connections to pilgrimages of the past, not least many of the paths upon which pilgrims walk. Though

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<sup>43</sup> Maddy Savage. “Norway's Trondheim is Europe's new 'pilgrim hotspot'.” *BBC News*, July 30, 2012. Accessed November 16, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com>.

<sup>44</sup>There are thirteen cathedrals in Sweden, one in each diocesan seat or bishopric.

the focus of the dissertation is on contemporary pilgrimage and contemporary lives, this pilgrimage tradition draws from Swedish heritage and is a conduit to Sweden's past, from its geologic past to its more recent agrarian past. Pilgrimage is a living ritual in nature. With each pilgrim footstep new memories or relational pathways are formed, making the pilgrim and the church less reliant on "vicarious memories."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Scholar Grace Davie's theory of vicarious memory is discussed in chapters three and beyond, and remains relevant to the Swedish case. But as more holders of memory step forward to claim heritage and create new memories, Swedes should, in theory, become less reliant on the vicarious holders of memory. Such a measurement would be difficult to take, but as I write of the Church of Sweden in crisis and in calm, it continues to stand for the people as a collective.



## CHAPTER TWO

### INTRODUCTION AND PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION NARRATIVES

#### **Introduction**

On a smaller scale, this dissertation is one participant-observer's effort to do for Swedish pilgrimage what Victor and Edith Turner attempted in 1978 in their classic anthropological study, *Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. The Turners write that "This book is, in effect, an attempt to map and frame some of the institutional 'territories' within which pilgrimage processes circulate, and to suggest how institutional changes within pilgrimage may be linked to changes outside it" (1978, xv).<sup>46</sup> Like the Turners' work, this dissertation will focus on pilgrimage as a changed phenomenon, containing new elements. The Turners attempt to answer what they describe as "institutional questions," and though they relate the history of the ancient and early modern shrines they describe to the present, they also do not seek to write or relay history, as "That is a task better left to professional historians" (1978, xiv). It is the institutional questions of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage I examine. At times it is useful to recall the history, held, always, in the land. At other times—such as when describing the tensions of modern Swedish pilgrims, who negotiate leaving the pressing pursuits of work and family, and who temporarily escape modern technology and its burdens—the conversation is focused on the present, since these pilgrims must work out the solutions to any personal or existential dilemmas in the present day. The dialectic of past and present is not always the foremost dialectic of the researcher seeking to unveil a

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<sup>46</sup> I take "institutional territories" to approximately mean social spheres.

phenomenon re-arisen and new to its adherents. And so, like the architects of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, I use disciplines as they are most relevant to answer contemporary questions. A European-American thinker, I deny neither the past, nor the present, nor the future its place. Neither do I deny the *conscience collectif*, so operative in pilgrimage and every other social institution, nor the agency of the individual. In Swedish pilgrimage, those aspects of pre-Reformation pilgrimage that have been expedient and appealing have been adopted and codified to suit contemporary Swedish culture. Swedish pilgrimage is a bit like a bridal outfit, most definitely with “something borrowed” from the many centuries of Roman Catholic pilgrimage in Swedish history as well as with a great deal of the new, adopted from late modern culture and contemporary norms (Wadensjö, 1995, 22, Bremborg, 2010).<sup>47</sup>

By virtue of the Church of Sweden’s dominant position in Swedish culture and its establishment of pilgrimage centers in geographically critical and central locations, this dissertation will inevitably focus on Church of Sweden pilgrimage practice. The Church of Sweden pilgrimage movement and its training of pilgrimage leaders are intentionally Christian ecumenical. Whether the church’s practice is in effect ecumenical is another focus of this study.

### **Swedish Pilgrimage: Types and Sponsoring Organizations**

Though similarities exist, all Swedish pilgrimages are not offered by the same organization, and they are thus not all alike. Even Church of Sweden pilgrimages vary from the adult group pilgrimages I primarily describe, to pilgrimage on horseback, skis,

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<sup>47</sup> I refer here to the English-language saying that a bride should wear “something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue” in order to ensure a happy marriage.

and even motorcycles, and from lasting only an hour to a week or longer. Although I will examine types of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage in more detail later, a brief overview may help to indicate the scope of this study. The types of pilgrimage in Sweden and pilgrimage on foot within Sweden (and also from Sweden to Norway) have been helpfully described by Anna Davidsson Bremborg of Lund University (2010, 34-56). Bremborg is Sweden's first sociologist of religion to conduct extensive research specifically on Swedish group pilgrimages, and she is also a priest in the Church of Sweden.

According to Bremborg, the primary pilgrimage organizations in Sweden are the Church of Sweden, *Pilgrimsvägen* in Southern Sweden, with its unique pilgrim insignia, and *Pilgrim i Sverige*, with rights to the Olaf's Cross insignia. All paths of *Pilgrim i Sverige* lead (directly or indirectly) to Trondheim ([www.pilgrimisverige.se](http://www.pilgrimisverige.se); Bremborg, 2010, 107-109).<sup>48</sup> The Birgitta Symbol, developed for the Vadstena Pilgrim Center, is used by the Church of Sweden for paths that lead to Vadstena ([www.pilgrimisverige.se](http://www.pilgrimisverige.se)). The Dag Hammarskjöld Path in the high mountain ranges is also part of the Church of Sweden pilgrimage path network. Each network of paths, together with supporting organizations, is responsible for its own paths and has a distinct proprietary pilgrim insignia or symbol, also used as a trail blaze. Newly constructed, or "purpose-built" pilgrim paths create pseudo-links where, historically, there were none. Even pilgrim paths from Sweden to Denmark now exist. Within Sweden, any walk from one church to another, or in a loop around the church environs may be called a pilgrimage. I will

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.pilgrimisverige.se/att-vara-pilgrim/pilgrimssymboler-17272531> Accessed March 3, 2014.

consider below whether some of these walks are called pilgrimages with the constructivist intent of restoring lost community religious connections.

The Vadstena Center model of pilgrimage (which will be discussed at length below), is currently dominant in terms of numbers of participants, trained leaders, and visibility. It was also the first contemporary pilgrimage center to open in Sweden in 1997. Other models exist and are active in Sweden. Skåne Blekinge Pilgrims' Way organization,<sup>49</sup> with the Diocese of Lund and inspirational pilgrim priest Anna Alebo at the fore, is increasingly visible. Although Vadstena Center developer Hans-Erik Lindström and his seven key words inspire these pilgrims and Alebo, the Skåne Blekinge message, with its emphasis on destination, deviates from that of Lindström, with its emphasis on "the inner and outer journey." "All pilgrimages lead to a holy place, and the outer pilgrimage is only a conduit to the most important journey: That which leads us inward into ourselves, to the holiest of places—the place where we meet God," is the message of Lund's Diocese.<sup>50</sup> The far smaller Franciscan pilgrimage movement grew out of anti-war sentiment after World War I. Non-violence to other living beings and pacifism are the core values of Franciscan pilgrimage organizations, the Swedish Franciscan pilgrims among them. Franciscan concerns extend openly to the greater more-than-human animal kingdom, and vegetarianism is the firm rule among Franciscans. Sweden has been home to its national branch of Franciscan pilgrimage since 1986.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.pilgrimsvagen.se/> Accessed November 17, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/lundsstift/pilgrim> Accessed November 17, 2014.

<sup>51</sup> <http://hem.fyristorg.com/pilgrimsvandring/index.htm> Accessed December 17, 2012. The new website for Franciscans in Europe, *Campangons de Saint Francois* is well-developed, and the older site in the process of being retired. [http://www.cdsf.org/spip/article.php?id\\_article=265](http://www.cdsf.org/spip/article.php?id_article=265) Accessed November 25, 2014.

New types of group pilgrimage promoted within parishes and dioceses have arisen since Bremborg's writing. Of these, the Pearls of Life pilgrimages, confirmation and other youth pilgrimages, and pilgrimage lifestyles with an emphasis on diaconal caring for one's fellow pilgrim (as advocated by Lindström among others) seem to be attracting the most adherents and attention. The Skåne-Blekinge branch of the national organization Sensus has compiled a detailed document describing these newer pilgrimages, as well as pilgrimage as it is typically conducted in the southernmost diocese and provinces of Sweden, where many of the pilgrimages are completely silent.<sup>52</sup>

Swedish pilgrimage can no longer be considered only in the context of a lengthy time commitment involving effort, privation, and unfamiliar or vast spaces. Hour-long, lunchtime pilgrimages, which are becoming more common in Sweden, challenge the ideas of adventure and liminality—a frame of mind set apart from the everyday—as components of pilgrimage. The focus of this dissertation is, however, on the multi-day Swedish pilgrimage model. Bremborg, who called her 2010 book *Pilgrimage the Swedish Way* (*Pilgrimsvandring på svenska*) argues that Swedish pilgrimage is so distinctive that even pilgrimage in neighboring Norway is unlike Swedish pilgrimage. One such difference, argues Bremborg, is the comparative ambivalence of the Swedish pilgrim ambivalence to arrival at an historical and sacred destination. She argues that the path, or the way, is of deep and symbolic significance, as well as a “concrete stretch of pathway.” Bremborg says that, to simplify Swedish pilgrimage categorization, “one may consider two different views of the journey,” a first view in which the path's beauty is of central significance, and a second view, in which the historical significance of the path is central

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<sup>52</sup> [http://www.sensus.se/Global/Sk%C3%A5ne-Blekinge/pilgrimsparmen\\_sensus\\_skane-blekinge.pdf](http://www.sensus.se/Global/Sk%C3%A5ne-Blekinge/pilgrimsparmen_sensus_skane-blekinge.pdf) Accessed April 23, 2013

(62). Bremborg points out that one of the distinctive features of Swedish pilgrimage, “as pilgrimage courses typically highlight,” and, as Hans-Erik Lindström himself emphasizes, is that not all pilgrimages follow historical paths. This allows all parishes and dioceses, whether in a vicinity with historical paths or not, to offer pilgrimages, and puts the emphasis on the pilgrims’ “inner state.” Bremborg claims that “decoupling [pilgrimage] from history and the physical place seems, in large measure, to be a Swedish phenomenon” (62). These claims will be further considered and addressed below in the context of the journey and the destination, in the context of the Swedish relationship to nature, and in the context of the Swedish relationship to history and heritage.

While a few pilgrimages are conducted in total silence, complete silence can be uncomfortable for some pilgrims. Many pilgrimages alternate periods of imposed silence with periods of optional conversation. One veteran leader, who prefers not to impose times of silence, feels that pilgrims will naturally tire of chatter after having made initial acquaintance and will then settle down into periods of natural, self-imposed silence (Bremborg, 72). The two features which most distinguish Swedish pilgrimage, argues Bremborg, are the centrality of spirituality in nature and periods of silence. These are the features which most Swedish pilgrims surveyed consider the most important to their pilgrimage experience (69-74).

Drawing on her extensive participant-observation experiences and surveys, Bremborg argues that spending time in nature is the most compelling factor enticing Swedish pilgrims to go on pilgrimage. Bremborg hypothesizes that for some Swedish pilgrims, who are not drawn to traditional church services “the image of divinity and spirituality may be tied to nature” (60). The laity Bremborg surveyed was more unified in

their view that scenic nature, with open vistas, and even glades or fields along wooded paths, is central to the pilgrimage experience, than was the clergy she surveyed (66). The clergy is divided on the centrality of nature to Swedish pilgrimage, but most agree that a soothing experience in natural surroundings rather than a walk on a busy asphalt road is most likely to entice Swedes to try pilgrimage. One parish priest, who started pilgrimages in her congregation, was particularly straightforward in her explanation that the beautiful natural settings in her parish's environment were "a deciding factor" and a "resource" to encourage Swedes to try what is, for many, the new experience of pilgrimage (65).

Not only is pilgrimage a revived movement in Sweden, but in the year 2000, the Swedish State and the Lutheran Church of Sweden (the Church of Sweden) formally separated, so it must be considered in the context of institutional change. Other changes were already afoot. Until 1996, when it became elective, membership in the Church of Sweden was hereditary for children born to Church of Sweden members. Disenfranchisement and the end of hereditary membership did not have sudden, drastic effects on the church, or on its membership and resources, but they may in the long run.<sup>53</sup> Whatever the effects, Swedes are often labeled "secularized" because, it is estimated, a mere three to four percent of Protestants and other Christians attend church services on Sundays (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 129). Religiosity and spirituality in Sweden, however, is more complex than a head-count of people in pews on Sunday. Religiosity and spirituality, as many contemporary social theorists point out, is no longer only about institutionalized forms of religion or religion in buildings. In a nation often called

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<sup>53</sup> Post-disenfranchisement numbers have been a subject of speculation and debate for many years. Some numbers showing fairly steady and consistent decline in membership and participation in church membership beginning in 1970 follow. This change was long anticipated, and sought after by various church factions beginning in the early 1900s, as the history chapter will describe.

“secular” (Stark and Finke, 2000, 231), I argue that pilgrimage now fills a religious or spiritual need for Swedes no longer active in the institutional Church of Sweden (or other traditional Swedish Christian churches) in traditional ways. Pilgrimage refuses to fit neatly into existing categories: it is part of the institutional church and yet appeals to those who call themselves “spiritual but not religious” (Ammerman, 2013). The questions of whether pilgrimage is an individualized or collective activity, a secularizing or desecularizing force, or both, are considered throughout the dissertation. Whether or not firm answers to questions regarding this complex phenomenon can be provided, pilgrimage is a newly vibrant part of lived religion (McGuire, 2008) in today’s Sweden.

### **Pilgrimage Reflections**

”Herre, Visa mig din Väg och gör mig villig att Vandra den”

Lord, Show me Your Path, and make me willing to Walk It.

--The Prayer of St. Birgitta

In 2011, the Vadstena Pilgrim Center of the Church of Sweden offered a 14-week-long pilgrimage: The Dag Hammarskjöld PAX Pilgrimage for Peace. This pilgrimage was offered in week-long segments to registered participants. For logistical reasons, no more than approximately 25 participants were able to register for any one week. Some weeks were sparsely attended, but others—including the week during which I traveled—were full to capacity.<sup>54, 55</sup> Other participants were invited to join in for a day’s

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=795362> July 5, 2011. Accessed January 24, 2014. This also links to a photo of a pilgrimage leader and a Swedish pilgrim. Such photos identifying leaders and especially pilgrims, are rare.

<sup>55</sup> As I have learned through correspondence with Erika Willander on November 13, 2013, and from statistics she provided from the Church of Sweden Statistical Data Base, the average number of participants in a Swedish pilgrimage has been approximately 10, from 2008 through 2013. As mentioned,



pilgrimage at no cost, with no registration required. My experiences as a participant-observer and pilgrim, an insider and an outsider, during one of those weeks, form the basis for the observations and stories that follow.<sup>56</sup>

On our pilgrimage week, we walked along suburban streets, on asphalt highways, on country lanes, and at times, on the “Birgitta Path,” where St. Birgitta, Sweden’s patron saint, had walked in the 1300s. We began every new stretch of the pilgrimage—after the hourly ten-minute break, and even after any brief break to remove or don rain clothing—gathered in a circle, with a group recitation of Birgitta’s prayer. This was a formal religious ritual that I had not expected, because the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center materials online mentioned nothing of prayers or masses as part of this pilgrimage. As it turns out, reciting Birgitta’s prayer is a common practice on many Swedish pilgrimages, far from unique to ours. For example, I later learned that this commonly-recited pilgrimage prayer was recited during all fourteen segments of the PAX 2011 pilgrimage, even when pilgrims were not walking Birgitta’s path.

The 2011 Dag Hammarskjöld pilgrimage began in Uppsala on June 12th, north of where my pilgrimage participant experience began in July, and ended at Dag Hammarskjöld’s birthplace, in Backåkra, in Southern Sweden on September 17th. Before the pilgrimage began, the ceremonial pilgrim staff—hand-carved by a Swedish artisan, and designed to be carried for all fourteen weeks--was blessed and carried by the Dalai Lama on Easter, April 2011 in Lund’s Diocesan Cathedral.<sup>57</sup> After then being sent off in

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other weeks of this pilgrimage had very few participants, so the fact that this particular week was booked at maximum capacity of 25 may explain some of the logistical difficulties we experienced.

<sup>56</sup> Names, age, sometimes gender, and other personally identifying details have been changed to protect the anonymity of subjects.

<sup>57</sup> The second photo of this set, dated April 20, 2011, and provided by the Pilgrim Center at Vadstena and Church of Sweden, shows the hand-carved staff close-up and in detail.

a ceremony conducted by Archbishop Anders Wejryd in Uppsala, the fragile staff was broken by mishap on the first day of the journey. The shop of a master carpenter was on the pilgrimage route, so it was soon repaired and carried onward.<sup>58</sup> The repaired staff survived to be carried every step of the 14-week journey. At the end of the fourteenth week, Bishop Antje Jackelén and a company of approximately 140 pilgrims on foot, many of whom had joined in from local parishes for the final day of the journey, first walked an entire day in silence, and then processed, while led in prayer by Bishop Jackelén of Lund's Diocese, to Backåkra itself.<sup>59</sup> The pilgrims, priests, and bishop were met at Backåkra by Archbishop Emeritus K G Hammar, and gathered around the rock inscribed with the word PAX. As noted in a pilgrim blog of PAX 2011, those who traveled on foot were also joined by many *bilgrimer*, or pilgrims who traveled to the destination by car (*bil* in Swedish).<sup>60</sup>

Though promoted as a vehicle of multiculturalism, pluralism, and greater humanity, the 14-week long Dag Hammarskjöld PAX Pilgrimage for Peace in 2011 remained within the borders of Sweden, where Hammarskjöld himself lived and wandered. The PAX pilgrimage was held in remembrance and celebration of the life of the late Dag Hammarskjöld, who worked for peace as the Secretary of the United Nations, and had died in a plane crash 50 years earlier. Hammarskjöld was also a member of the Swedish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the posthumous recipient of the Nobel

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pilgrimsvandra/5828555050/in/set-72157626951200274/> Accessed January 24, 2014.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.kyrkanstidning.se/nyhet/pilgrimsvandring-drabbades-av-stav-haveri-2011-06-17>. National News. Accessed January 24, 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Bishop Jackelén was since elected to be the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden in October, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> <http://pilgrim.kyrkanstidning.se/2011/09/backakra.html> Alebo, Anna. "Backåkra." Posted 19 September 2011. Accessed January 24, 2014.

Peace Prize in 1961.<sup>61</sup> Though Hammarskjöld worked for world peace, and though one pilgrim occasionally called out “We are walking for peace!” little group discussion about peace among nations or peoples took place during our leg of the pilgrimage. Since it might have disrupted the “inner journey,” the overtly political was seemingly avoided. Many of the pilgrims in our group carried personal burdens, and so this may have been a conscious, sensitive decision on the part of the group’s leader. This is but one example of how a Swedish pilgrimage may be promoted as one type of activity, and enacted as another.

The “Pilgrimage for Peace” was intended to make the cause of world peace more visible to onlookers. The symbol for this pilgrimage was a red, green, and yellow variation of the internationally recognized peace symbol and Christ’s Monogram.<sup>62</sup> The colors, as explained in a leaflet, *PAX-2011 Pilgrimage for Human Dignity*, “are taken from Congo’s flag, and stand for the outer journey (green), the inner journey (yellow), and the continuation of the journey (red)” (Josefsson and The Church of Sweden, undated). Though no explanation is offered, the colors of the Congolese flag may have been chosen to represent the PAX Pilgrimage to express historic and contemporary Swedish solidarity with the people of today’s Congolese nations. Swedish missionaries from the Swedish Mission Covenant Church went on missions to “The Congo” as early as 1881.<sup>63</sup> The inner-church splinter organization of the Church of Sweden, *Evangeliska*

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?di=779884> Undated. Posted prior to the PAX 2011 Pilgrimage. Accessed January 24, 2014.

<sup>62</sup> This link includes a large picture of the PAX 2011 symbol on a web page of an Church of Sweden congregation hosting a subsequent PAX Pilgrimage: <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=809491> Accessed December 11, 2013. This link is hosted by a course registration site, and includes a small image of the monogram, as well as a detailed schedule of one week’s PAX segment: [http://www.dinkurs.se/appliance/?event\\_id=7747](http://www.dinkurs.se/appliance/?event_id=7747) Accessed January 24, 2014.

<sup>63</sup> <http://ekumeniakyrkan.se/om-oss/bakgrund/svenska-missionskyrkan/> Accessed December 11, 2013.

*Fosterland Stiften* (EFS) and The Swedish Mission Church began overseas missions in the late 1880s.<sup>64</sup>

Swedish Pilgrimage has qualities that, if not strictly unique to Sweden, taken together, form a unique type of nature, land, and nation-based pilgrimage. The following participant-observation narratives may help orient the reader to Swedish pilgrimage as it is practiced today, and to the particular type of Swedish pilgrimage in which I participated. Many pilgrimages operate on the borders and boundaries of institutional religion. Contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, however, while not a traditional Church of Sweden (or post-Reformation activity in Sweden), maintains a strong institutional connection to the Christian churches in which it originated. Swedish pilgrimage is unlike medieval pilgrimage in Europe and the Holy Land, and unlike contemporary Marian pilgrimages, and also unlike pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago, which today attracts confessional and non-confessional pilgrims from the world over (Frey 1998; Coleman and Eade, 2004, 11). Since Swedish pilgrimage does retain explicitly religious ritual elements, and most group pilgrimages are organized by, or in concert with, a religious institution, it is also unlike non-confessional pilgrimage, such as visits to the Vietnam War Memorial or Graceland Mansion in the United States.

Many qualities contribute to the distinctiveness and particularities of Swedish pilgrimage. The participant-observation narratives that follow will illustrate the qualities I summarize here. First, as I discuss later in this chapter and in chapter four, experiencing spirituality in nature is of paramount importance to Swedish pilgrims. Second, the journey is more important than the pilgrimage goal or destination. Though destinations may be churches or cathedrals housing relics of saints, little attention may be paid to

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<sup>64</sup> [http://www.nacksta.com/Wiren\\_artikel3.pdf](http://www.nacksta.com/Wiren_artikel3.pdf) Accessed December 11, 2013.

tombs or reliquaries. For example, though St. Birgitta is Sweden's guardian saint, I observed no pilgrim from the group with which I travelled worshipping, or in prayer, at Birgitta's reliquary chest in Vadstena Cloister Church. These pilgrims participated in other ceremonies including a brief outdoor service upon arrival at the church, walking through the door of reconciliation, a candle-lighting ceremony, and optional private prayer and blessing by a pastor in the church's left semitranssept.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the particular pilgrimage route taken, or pathway of the journey itself, may be of varying historical relevance: Swedish pilgrimage need not follow an historical path. Additionally, Swedish pilgrimages may be brief and need not be physically challenging; many are as brief as an hour-long walk, often to and from a church or pilgrimage center. Swedish pilgrimages typically include periods of meditative silence. Some pilgrimages are conducted entirely in silence, as I will discuss in chapters below. Silence is one of the distinctive and best-loved elements of Swedish pilgrimage, yet, especially in cases of complete silence day and night, too much silence proves problematic for some pilgrims.<sup>66</sup>

Most contemporary Swedish pilgrims carry *The Little Pilgrim Book*, written in 1997 by groundbreaking Church of Sweden pilgrim priest, Hans-Erik Lindström and now used at pilgrim mass. Lindström's *Little Pilgrim Book*, which is truly pocket-sized, contains all of the liturgical elements and hymns for three daily pilgrim services. In fact, almost all Swedish pilgrimage literature is produced or edited by theologians in the Church of Sweden. As yet, no substantial body of pilgrim narrative exists. Lindström also authored the Swedish pilgrim's "seven key words" of silence, simplicity, slowness,

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Participant observation, July 2011.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Though far from the subject of this dissertation, a cursory search will find many of the world's great pilgrimages, at Nazareth, for instance, are characterized by unwelcome crowds and noise (Collins-Kleiner and Kliot, 2000). The silence and peace is an element of Swedish pilgrimage that many Swedish pilgrims especially appreciate.

sharing, spirituality, freedom, and lightheartedness. Pilgrims use or carry many of the closely corresponding seven objects: shoes, the pilgrim staff, hat, backpack, tent, cloak, and the cross. (Tents are rarely used, pilgrims wear modern rain gear rather than cloaks, and many pilgrims wear Pearls of Life rosary bracelets<sup>67</sup> either in place of, or in addition to, crosses.)

While penitential pilgrimage, in the medieval (and Roman Catholic) sense of expiation of sin as a reward for a completed pilgrimage, is highly atypical in contemporary Sweden, there is a contemporary pilgrimage culture of asceticism and of doing without unnecessary possessions and distractions (Melin, 2009, 104).<sup>68</sup> The use of alcohol is generally forbidden, as is eating meat, on Swedish pilgrimage within Sweden. The use of tobacco is, on the other hand, a personal choice on Swedish pilgrimage. In neighboring Norway, and on pilgrimages from Sweden to Norway, pilgrims drink beer or special pilgrim wine with their evening meal, and eat meat.

The following schedule of a typical day of a Swedish pilgrimage day is also helpful in understanding group pilgrimages stretching over several days or weeks. This schedule applies to the Church of Sweden model. The distance walked in a week's pilgrimage is approximately 150 kilometers, or a bit over 20 kilometers a day. For example, on the pilgrimage I describe below, we walked between 16 and 26 kilometers a day, some of which were more strenuous, and others a mere stroll, in the relatively flat and pleasant landscape we traversed.

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<sup>67</sup> The Pearls of Life bracelets, designed by a retired bishop emeritus of the Church of Sweden in the 1990s, will be discussed further in this dissertation.

<sup>68</sup> The Reformation explicitly overturned what was not only the medieval, but also that Roman Catholic, sense of works of expiations of sin. "By faith alone," (*av nåd allena*), is an originally Lutheran Protestant phrase, a phrase central to Luther's teaching meaning, specifically, that a person may be freed from sin by faith, and not by "works" or deeds (Andrén, 1998, 10). Christ's grace, in Protestant post-Reformation terms, was to be available by faith alone.

## Typical Daily Pilgrimage Schedule

- Arise at 7:00am. Arise at 6:30 if part of crew preparing breakfast food and setting out fixings for lunch.
- Shower, pack, eat breakfast and prepare lunch at 7:30. Each pilgrim packs his/her own lunchbox.
- Morning prayer or Holy Eucharist. Departure at 9am.
- Walk for 50 minutes; pause for ten.
- Resume walking after standing in a circle and reciting Birgitta's prayer. All pilgrims walk at the same pace and stop when the leader stops.
- Noon: Hour-long lunch break. This time may be free to eat and rest, or partly spent celebrating Holy Eucharist or listening to a lecture on a historical or architectural subject.
- Hour-long segments continue until between four and six o'clock in the afternoon.
- 4pm to 6pm: Arrival at the evening's destination; a church, a hostel, or a pilgrim center.
- Dinner preparation of vegetarian meal by the designated crew or by the "house mother" if pilgrims arrive late.
- Dinner. Cleanup by designated crew.
- Confidential candlelight sharing: One person speaks at a time. No commentary permitted.
- Evening prayer. Hymn singing with accompaniment when possible.
- Preparing for bed.
- 9pm: Quiet time and lights out. This schedule was strictly enforced.

This typical pilgrimage schedule suggests shows that a pilgrim's day unfolds in a group setting with few individual options.

When I decided not only to research, but also to experience, Swedish pilgrimage, my official pilgrimage was a pilgrimage-within-a-pilgrimage. I have lived in Sweden and am half-Swedish, so a return to Sweden is always a personal pilgrimage. My mother came to the United States as a Swedish au pair. My mother spoke Swedish to me at home, so I learned Swedish as a young child, at the same time as I learned English. My English-speaking father did his best to learn Swedish, We all lived in Sweden while my father attended the Chalmers Institute of Technology, and where I attended public schools from the day after our arrival for a year-and-a-half during my elementary school

years. We lived on the beautiful Swedish West Coast close enough to the ocean that sea gulls would land on our balcony railing. The apartment complex in which we lived was not completed, and the area was surrounded by stands of birch trees, granite boulders, and blueberry bogs. I spent some time alone outdoors after school during the seasons when darkness had not already fallen, picking wild flowers, blueberries, and flowers from the garden of a small abandoned home. As a child, I was probably more excited about visiting the nearest kiosk for Saturday candy than any other event during the week.

Now, not only would I be doing research and going on a Church of Sweden-sponsored pilgrimage, but first visiting with friends in Stockholm whom I came to know during years living in Southern California. After the pilgrimage I planned to continue to Sweden's West Coast to visit family acquaintances from elementary school years spent in Gothenburg. I have also returned to Malmö, where my grandparents lived—though neither was originally from Southern Sweden—and also to Stockholm several times, but every trip to one's ancestral home is a pilgrimage.

When I set out to investigate pilgrimage in contemporary Sweden, and to show how different it is from what most people and scholars assume pilgrimage to be, I did not expect the imposition of rules and asceticism. While no overtly penitential Protestant pilgrimage, like those of the Christian Middle Ages, is imposed in modern-day Sweden, still a culture of doing without, of pushing oneself beyond comfortable limits, and of making only modest requests, prevails. This culture of “doing without,” or simplicity, may be experienced as strict (or perhaps even punitive). It is ascetic without being penitential, but it is most often experienced, or at least described by those who lead pilgrimage, as key to leaving worldliness and technology behind.



Despite, or perhaps because of, the requirement to pare down belongings and interactions with the outside world, going on a pilgrimage may lead to expectations of experiencing adventure. Adventure may include danger and discomfort, but may also be synonymous with exhilaration and a sense of accomplishment. Bremborg discusses the expectation, or hope, shared in the Middle Ages and today, that pilgrimage will contribute an element of adventure as one facet of change or transition from everyday life. “An adventure can provide new knowledge of one’s own body, other people, history, nature, and Christian belief” (129). The pilgrimage week in which I participated was neither an extreme physical challenge, nor an easy stroll. So a real sense of accomplishment did follow the longer days of our pilgrimage. The element of adventure was more elusive. Some pilgrims suffered blisters, exhaustion, or injuries, and others, who were physically fit and accustomed to outdoor life, seemed impatient for more of a physical challenge. Some pilgrims long to push, if not to punish, the body. This, as Bremborg mentions, and as Nancy Frey (1998) discusses at length, is typically true of pilgrims who embark on longer and more arduous pilgrimages. Is adventure or extreme physical challenge part of the Swedish pilgrimage experience? This question leads to the scholarly debate surrounding pilgrimage tourism and outdoor activities outside of the religious arena. I ground these debates in my research, my experiences, and my observations. Some days and moments, especially the quiet moments, were magical, while others were not. Getting lost and walking on a busy highway was unpleasant, but the pay-off did come in a stronger sense of serenity later. Pilgrims on our journey expressed exasperation, discouragement at times, and delight and enchantment at others.

Most pilgrimage days proceeded in an undramatic routine. On each day of the week-long pilgrimage, our leader, Björn, read select passages from Dag Hammarskjöld's posthumously discovered work of conversion and worship, *Markings*. In addition to the Birgitta Prayer, always recited as a group, Björn sometimes read a few of Hammarskjöld's brief, meditative words before we commenced a silent hour of walking. Each phrase or passage was so brief that it could be remembered, and silently repeated, like a mantra. No interpretations or instructions were given. The words simply fell, like leaves or raindrops, upon the seemingly receptive and contemplative pilgrims, who were free to immediately forget the passage, or to meditate continuously upon it. It was only from remarks made during the evening sharing hour—none of which, just as in a twelve-step program, may be repeated outside of the circle—that I understood how deeply some pilgrims had internalized the poignant and provocative words of Hammarskjöld's conversion process. Pilgrims shared, or elected not to share, brief reflections on the bygone day and their own retrospective feelings about that day's journey.

Meditating on the brief passages from *Markings* and on the natural surroundings helped promote a pilgrim mentality. Focusing on the readings and scenery helped me clear my mind of daily "white noise." The readings were brief, as were Hammarskjöld's almost cryptic, mystical notes in his posthumously published diary. One such brief reading from *Markings* was simply "The longest journey is inward," (*Den längsta resan är inåt*). At times, I approached a fleeting liminal state such as described by Victor and Edith Turner (1978) in their discussion of what Weber would recognize as an "ideal type" of pilgrimage (Weber, 1978, 21). The liminal state, as defined by the Turners, is a state experienced by individuals or groups. This state is "betwixt and between" everyday

social roles and positions left behind and an anticipated return or “reaggregation” into “secular” existence (1978, 2). One stands, in a liminal state, at the threshold of a new way of being. A person in a liminal state is stripped of possessions and social status in preparation for the transformative group ritual to come. Though this concept arose from ritual studies, the Turners understood pilgrimage—not a mandatory ritual—as a semi-liminal or “liminoid” phenomenon (1978, 30, 34, 249-250).

My preconceived notion was that a pilgrimage would change me: I would become kinder and more generous, if not converted—though to what was unclear. I was both unwittingly confirming some sociological insights into the late-modern person, by becoming a practitioner of pilgrimage, while blurring other boundaries by this expectation of conversion. Grace Davie writes that French scholar Danièle Hervieu-Léger claims that “Life becomes a perpetual seeking” in late modernity. Hervieu-Léger also categorizes the “ideal types” of late modernity as the pilgrim (the seeker) and the convert, but not as the practitioner (Hervieu-Léger 1986 and 1991 in Davie, 2000, 161). But I sought not only to practice pilgrimage, but also to experience conversion.<sup>69</sup> Readings and invitations to register for pilgrimage journeys suggested that pilgrimage would be a transformative experience. My unrealistic expectations were, in retrospect, those of a person approaching a full-immersion baptismal font: the conversion would be immediate, complete, and communal. Perhaps, told to expect something more experiential than intellectual, I did not sufficiently heed my own sociological training, or Coleman and

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<sup>69</sup> Conversion itself takes on new meaning in late modern times. The conversion I eventually achieved was that which Anders Melin (discussed below in this chapter, and in chapter four), hopes will occur: the pilgrim’s concern with nature (and more broadly speaking, the environment), becomes a way of life, a practiced religion, not only during pilgrimage.

Eade's (2004) dismissal of notions of pilgrimage *communitas*, or Melin's (2009) pessimistic view that Swedish pilgrimage probably does not change people much.

Though research, and not enlightenment, was the primary purpose of my journey, surely my motives—though complicated by my position as a pilgrimage researcher—were, in part, those of many modern pilgrims: to find a deeper inner resonance and a reply to life's existential questions. When agreeing to allow me to go along on the pilgrimage as a researcher, the leaders asserted their authority on the phone, and in person upon arrival, insisting that I “be a pilgrim first and a researcher second” during the pilgrimage. So in my best attempt to keep my word, and also, admittedly in the hopes of having a more authentic experience about which to write, I followed their injunction as well as I was able to. Transformative experience is described as the typical expectation and experience of a Swedish pilgrim. Swedish pilgrimage experts create these expectations by the language with which they describe, or market, pilgrimage. Though it is possible to measure neither how I am still changing to this day, nor how lifestyle changes I have since made were influenced by my pilgrimage experience, most of the changes in my life since the time of my pilgrimage in Sweden are consistent with the seven key words of pilgrimage. Slow, organic change is consistent with the principles of pilgrimage. Many Swedish pilgrims are veterans of previous pilgrimages, and many intend to go on a pilgrimage journey again. They adopt both a pilgrim habit and a pilgrim *habitus*. Subsequent studies of Swedish pilgrimage may well be a cause for greater optimism regarding long-term benefits to pilgrims as well as to pilgrims' commitments to environmental and humanitarian causes.

Other Swedish pilgrims are neophytes, as this is a relatively new movement.<sup>70</sup>

The numbers of veteran pilgrims and of newly trained pilgrimage leaders (photos of whom are posted at regular intervals in almost every Facebook pilgrimage group) suggest that the Swedish pilgrimage experience does cultivate the desire for future pilgrimages, and meets the needs and expectations of many of those who are willing to give pilgrimage a first try. Before departing on my journey, I was focused on creating my survey and practical, international trip preparations. Did going so far, rather than as the Swedish pilgrims most often do, to a convenient and familiar location, lead me to expect more from my first pilgrimage experience than was realistic? Did the inconvenience of starting out as neophyte pilgrim with jetlag, and with additional physical baggage for other parts of my journey overseas, detract from the key pilgrimage element of simplicity? I planned six months ahead. On the other hand, one of my fellow pilgrims saw a flyer in a public location advertising the pilgrimage shortly before we commenced. He thought he would give it a try, as we were, literally, walking by his front door.

Bremborg notes that the information provided about pilgrimage is fairly scanty, and even some Swedish nationals complain of feeling “ambushed” by elements and expectation embedded in pilgrimage practice. Bremborg attributes these feelings to the “unspoken” demands that the leaders and group places on participants. One of her interviewees was especially frustrated by the feeling that participating in evening sharing was, in practice, not optional, and that the “rules of the game” should be articulated more

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<sup>70</sup> Sköldberg, Marita. ”*En Dag som Pilgrim.*” ”A Day as a Pilgrim.”  
<http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/troochandlighet/en-dag-som-pilgrim> Accessed January 24, 2014

clearly, so as not to disempower the pilgrim (79-80, 94).<sup>71</sup> A few of the pilgrims in our group elected not to participate in sharing. Not sharing was done by silently passing the candle on to another person. Though no explanation for passing was ever required or offered, doing so was the exception rather than the rule. Traveling as a group can be taxing, and especially given the many silent hours, sharing time was often used as an opportunity to express gratitude for one's fellow pilgrims and natural surroundings.

Christian Pilgrims have been traveling in groups to the Holy Land and Rome for close to two millennia, as well as to other European pilgrimage sites for a millennium. The pilgrimage to Lough Derg, or St. Patrick's Purgatory, in Ireland, dating from the fifth century, is described by the Turners in "St. Patrick's Purgatory: Religion and Nationalism in an Archaic Pilgrimage," (1978, 104-139). Catholic pilgrimage to Lough Derg, an arduous, penitential journey which lasts three days in modern times, contrasts sharply with contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. The name of the Irish pilgrimage itself is a clue to its nature: a Lough Derg pilgrimage requires going without shoes for three days, periods of fasting, a period during which the pilgrim may not sleep for an entire night and the following day, and nine stations, which involve saying three prayers hundreds of times walking around or kneeling by stations (an ancient cross, for instance). This speaks to a deep belief in fulfillment of a specific, ritual agenda in order to please God (1978, 115-123). Pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory is thus very unlike contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, though continuities can be seen. For example, the Swedish pilgrim is shod, but the pilgrims' feet are often sore nonetheless. Swedish pilgrims eat, but the rations may be meager and unsatisfying. My unarticulated agenda—which I attempted to

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<sup>71</sup> As explained in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, being inculcated into and understanding the rules of the game is empowering, while those who do not possess capital in the form of this knowledge may be "considered a negligible quantity" (98).

keep loose and flexible—was not to have an easy time, but to become more aware and changed, not by knowledge, but by the spiritual connection to land and people, and inner spiritual growth. We bring ourselves as well as our research questions wherever we go, and, in that sense, I was no different from any of the other pilgrims. The retrospective is not the perspective of the pilgrim just setting out. The journey and return are, indeed, very different experiences accompanied by quite different emotions.

My own pilgrimage stories carry a dual burden: both bringing to life the experiences and stories of my fellow pilgrims, and relating my own experiences. Thus the stories of others, who fleetingly appear and reappear in my narrative, are mine. But they are not mine alone. There were pilgrims who sought to lighten the physical or psychological load of others. There were also pilgrims whose own burden was such that they needed encouragement to carry their own. And there were, in my interpretation of what I experienced, individuals who showed every sign of being pleased with their outer journey, and of appreciating their “inner journey” to its fullest. There is nothing selfish or ignoble about being preoccupied with one’s own inner religious journey. Or is there, if preoccupation undermines development of the collective identity and collective community? In chapter three, I will discuss arguments of Swedish theologians and sociologists about individualization and religion, and specifically secularization theory, as it pertains to religion in Sweden and the new pilgrimage movement, arguing that both individual and collective needs may be simultaneously satisfied.

Robert N. Bellah raises questions about the individual and the collective in his article “Is There a Common American Culture?” Bellah puts language at “the heart of culture” and points to the dominance of English as evidence of a single American culture.

In Sweden, as in all of Europe, two or three languages are spoken passably by most residents. Swedish, but one of Sweden's five national languages, was the only language spoken on our pilgrimage, and is the dominant national language. Some pilgrimage literature is in Swedish and in Norwegian, and some websites include German and English translations. But the use of Swedish persists during the pilgrimages themselves, and in the literature and social media sites on which they are promoted. By Bellah's definition, this implies a common Swedish culture. It also displays the assumption that those who go on Church of Sweden pilgrimages will be Swedes, or speak Swedish, which is the overriding case. If Swedish pilgrimage does not reflect the reality of Swedes who do not speak Swedish, and of Sweden's membership in the linguistically diverse European Union, it may display the yearning for the "return" of the lost common culture.<sup>72</sup> But pilgrims, like those who partake in any religious community action, may, suggests Bellah, not be attempting to reify the existing culture. Some may, to the contrary, be acting out a protest, or "criticism of the common culture."

As Bellah further argues, culture and identity are not coterminous. People may share the same culture, yet identify themselves very differently. Sweden is a land of overarching community, yet, within it, there is significant regional variation in political and religious affiliations. For example, the Pilgrimage Center of Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city on Sweden's West Coast, offers some original programs. This Center

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<sup>72</sup> Franciscan pilgrimage, international in nature, is the obvious exception, but there is no evidence in the Franciscans' reports of pilgrimage in Sweden that their pilgrimages are multi-lingual, either. The Church of Sweden itself recognizes the five official minority languages of Sweden (Finnish, Tornedal Finnish, Sami, Roma, and Yiddish), and many Church of Sweden congregations have services in Finnish and Sami, particularly in Northern Sweden. The pilgrimage week in which I participated may have been an exception to the norm, as one of the pilgrims was a Church of Sweden member and native speaker of Finnish, proficient neither in Swedish nor English. No special effort was made to accommodate this pilgrim. But since many hours of pilgrimage were spent in silence, or eating or preparing meals, and that pilgrim shared musical talents with the group a few times (so had perhaps even been recruited to go on the pilgrimage), there may have been no expectation that any special accommodation would be made.



displays a keen interest in making the pilgrimage experience open to pilgrims who would not be able to go on pilgrimages without special accommodations. This pilgrimage center has offered lunchtime pilgrimages for the blind and the hearing-impaired, as well as its usual monthly lunchtime pilgrimage walk in the downtown area not far from the center and neighboring church. The Gothenburg Pilgrimage Center has recently begun offering a meditational series of evening programs on “bodily prayer,” and was the first Church of Sweden center to offer a few interreligious pilgrimages. The offerings of this center, as described above, suggest a pilgrimage model more apt to contest than to reify the common culture.

Sociology is an important discipline—across cultures and fields—because it questions all assumptions that people tend to make of one another, and looks for patterns, collective behaviors, and worldviews. Yet it is only through my own subjective eyes that I was able to see, and only in my own body that the subjective pilgrimage experience I describe played out. Still, I speak for the others—or at least do my best to help the reader imagine her/himself in the shoes and on the path of a Swedish pilgrim. Since the pilgrimage leader did not permit me to interview pilgrims during the pilgrimage, but only to disseminate a survey at the end of the pilgrimage, after which all pilgrims dispersed, my voice is heard above that of the others.<sup>73</sup> To make up for this, I bring in Swedish pilgrim narratives relayed in Church of Sweden websites and publications that I find representative of Swedish pilgrimage. Other stories are told through an intermediary pilgrim organization, also on websites or in publications. Thus, the voices of individual

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<sup>73</sup> I received 15 responses, some very hurriedly completed. Since pilgrims quickly dispersed upon arrival at Vadstena, and some left without bidding the group farewell, I am unsure how many of those who actually received the survey completed it. Though I had provided only unstamped envelopes, which were at least of the mandatory Swedish size (we never walked past a post office or any place in which stamps were sold), I was especially pleased to receive three surveys somewhat later by mail.

pilgrims are typically abbreviated or interpreted by authorized voices in Swedish pilgrimage narratives. I suspect that elisions occur, and that disgruntled pilgrims wishing to air grievances aren't selected for these websites and publications. In hopes of adding a pilgrim narrative that has not been vetted by pilgrimage organization employees, I will interpret what I observed and experienced on a Swedish pilgrimage in conversation with these narratives. To that I will add what I gleaned from the surveys returned to me at the hectic conclusion of the pilgrimage week in which I participated.

Many of our evening hours were in settings that disallowed conversation: these included services, evening sharing, and quiet time after 9 p.m.. Many of our daytime hours also precluded conversation: approximately half of our walking hours were obligated to be silent. Mid-day services, as well as the desire of some pilgrims to nap, and of all to eat and take care of physical needs, abbreviated lunchtime chats. Conversation flowed more naturally among two or three pilgrims while on the road, during a time when silence was not imposed, than when in a clustered group during any unoccupied moments of lunch hour. It was then that I had the opportunity to have individual conversations with fellow pilgrims. The questions I asked were necessarily neutral. Some pilgrims replied only about their church affiliations, their motives for joining our particular week, and the geographical area from which they came. Others shared confidential information.

Not being overly personal or intrusive is important in Swedish society, and perhaps even more so when on a pilgrimage. People shared when they cared to, and some spoke to me openly, but none told me his or her complete "story." Snippets of life stories and difficulties were shared, and I will attempt to relate them, as filtered by my notes, memory, and interests, and as confidentiality allows. As mentioned above, much of the

pilgrimage was conducted in silence, so conversations were often cut short by the mandate that the next hour of walking would be a silent hour. I too, held secrets and sorrows that I was reluctant to share, so the decree that the ensuing hour would be one of walking and contemplation, not conversation, was often a welcome relief to me, as well as to others. Maybe I was tired of speaking Swedish and only Swedish, but even friendly questioning about family and children felt intrusive. Why did I resist revealing personal struggles to others? Did I feel that I needed to maintain some distance—which broke down now and then—because of my position as a researcher? My position as a researcher was announced; I described my intent and project whenever asked, but for most of the time, I was simply another pilgrim on a journey. Mine was a journey of multiple, fractured meanings and intentions, but so, no doubt, were those of many other pilgrims in our mid-sized group.

Various personalities and chronic conditions and illnesses were part of the group experience. Pilgrims told of marital problems, illnesses and depressions, of not feeling Swedish, or feeling rebellious, or not wanting to walk at the set pace. It was clear that not all were cut out for the ascetic discipline of the pilgrimage, but this difficulty manifested itself in different ways and at different times. And in some way, the asceticism and deprivation formed bonds and friendships as we were supportive of one another, and at times, rebelled.

### Berry-Picking and Birgitta's Peninsula

Out in our pasture grow berries of blue,  
 Come Heart's delight!  
 What e'er you may wish, I will wait there for you.  
 Come lilies and columbine!  
 Come salvia and roses on the vine!  
 Come sweet peppermint, Come heart's delight!  
 --Swedish folksong, Unknown

Lunch boxes and backpacks were reassembled. Shoes taken off for airing were laced up again, and hiking poles were taken in hand. It was a drizzly July day in south-central Sweden. Some pilgrims had prepared for the next rain shower by draping a raincoat or tarp over themselves and their pack; others were willing to risk a light soaking, as the weather had cleared. The idyllic peninsula on which St. Birgitta had lived had been a perfect spot for our hour-long lunch rest and repast that day. We looked, in parting wonderment, at the ruined foundations of the home where Birgitta of Vadstena, her husband, Ulf, and their children had lived. Birgitta and her husband had many children, and were also pilgrims together during his lifetime. After Ulf's death, Birgitta, who had visions of the Virgin Mary since early childhood, began to have more visions. Birgitta went on many pilgrimages, and died in Rome in 1373, but not before she had determined to form an order of nuns and monks that came to be known as the Bridgettine Order (Pernler, 1999, 59-61). None of this information was imparted to us by our pilgrim leader. The group's focus was on the natural beauty of the peninsula, and on the opportunity for rest and our mid-day meal. As on most days of our journey,

the path we walked this day had taken us to a tranquil resting place for our lunch hour. Some were serene pastoral settings, and others places of historical and religious significance. We were told by our pilgrimage guide that Birgitta's peninsula, Ulvåsa, may also have been the temporary home of women in difficulty, to whom Birgitta was reputed to have provided help. We modern-day pilgrims, perhaps also fleeing trials in our personal lives, could not help, from our high perch, but admire the view of the great lake Vättern and feel grateful for the sturdy trunk and protective foliage of the magnificent beech under which we had lunched and rested. As after every break in our journey, we gathered briefly in a circle and recited Birgitta's prayer along with Björn, our pilgrim guide: "Lord, show me your way, and make me willing to follow it."

We continued our measured footsteps, single-file, in silence. Björn had given us the option of going back by the way we had come, or taking a new, unknown, and possibly more difficult path towards our resting place that evening. This leading question, framed in terms of whether we would choose the known or the unknown, elicited a consensus response that we should venture into the unknown that afternoon. As always, the pilgrim carrying the hand-carved staff made for this pilgrimage and blessed by the Dalai Lama, was last in line. She stopped, and waited wordlessly, until any pilgrim pausing to retie a shoelace or make any other adjustment resumed her walk. The pace was deliberately even and too slow for some who were fit and had packed lightly, yet challenging, at times, for those who were footsore.

After a pause at the bottom of the hill, by a little wooden building with a heart carved in the door—the traditional Swedish symbol for WC—we resumed our silent journey into a more wooded forest trail. The sunlight still peeked through, and the undergrowth was not threatening, but inviting. Lingonberries<sup>74</sup> and wild blueberries glinted red and blue in the shifting light, causing many a brief pause. Those with sharper eyes and more experience picked more quickly, and held out silent offerings in the palms of their hands to their fellows. After a little while, the path widened, and wild cherry trees lined the way, nature's uncultivated gift to the pilgrims. No longer crouching in ditches among the low-growing bramble of lingon and blueberries, we stretched upward to reach for the small, shiny red fruit. The cherries were of a variety unknown to me, far smaller, more thin-skinned and flavorful—both sweet and sour—than any I had previously tasted.

Once again, we walked in the usual smooth flow. There was no prescribed order in which we were to line up, but time and again I found myself walking just behind a shorter pilgrim with a springy step, cheerful green jacket, and quiet, unobtrusive manner. Though all were quiet, this pilgrim radiated a serenity that I must unwittingly have sought. Like many others, this pilgrim had, during stretches of walking and talking, confessed to worrisome personal challenges, but these did not dim the apparent gratitude with which she took in the experiences: both gifts of the land and of the community.

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<sup>74</sup> Lingonberries are related to cranberries, and like cranberries are tart, yet slightly sweet. Lingonberries grow on low, brambly bushes in the wild in the woodlands of Sweden. Picking lingonberries is a traditional pastime.

***Communitas: Sofa-Diving and other Unanticipated Pilgrimage Practices***

On the first night of my official pilgrimage, I arrived at a contemporary church in Linköping, and learned that not all aspects of pilgrimage would be quite the spiritual, serene and democratic experience I had anticipated. There were clear leaders among the pilgrim women. I didn't realize it until later, but it was the veteran pilgrims who rushed in like passengers boarding a plane, and dove onto the softest and largest sofas, grabbing pillows and blankets as they purposefully situated themselves for the night. The existence of a hierarchy of pilgrims did not become obvious to me until the third or fourth night of the pilgrimage when Ingeborg, the volunteer in charge of food-shopping and driving the support vehicle, directed everyone where to sleep. Some—in groups of four or five—were assigned sofas in small, cozy rooms complete with doors and curtains. Others were left to find a suitable spot on the open floor of the great hall. Veteran pilgrims had the best understanding of how to play by the rules of the game—what Pierre Bourdieu would call the *collusio*—and thereby formed their own inner circle within the pilgrimage group and also thereby won Ingeborg's tacit and implicit approval.

On my first pilgrimage night, after a pleasant dinner of a light vegetarian soup and crisp bread, with water for thirst-quenching, followed by co-operative clean-up and evening sharing, we started to get ready for bed. Since I was the only pilgrim who had traveled from outside of Europe, and only one of two who came from outside of Sweden, I had arranged to borrow an air mattress and a sleeping bag from the Pilgrimage Center in Vadstena. Our busy leader was occupied until late in the evening. When he finally appeared with the promised air mattress, it proved to be somewhat defective, and he was able to inflate it only with difficulty. By that time, all spaces but those on the basement's

cement floors were taken. Though I was sorry to add to his troubles, the air mattress was necessary for sleeping on cement. I looked for a wall or a corner in which I might find a little privacy and quiet. According to Bremborg, this quest for a semi-private space is a typical ritual in group pilgrimages (2010, 87-89). In fact, she devotes an entire chapter, “Expectations and Aggravations,” to describing some of the irritations and challenges that pilgrims walking and living together experience (2010, 79-94). After some searching, I settled in, thinking I had found a reasonable spot, only to realize that I was directly under a continuously and brightly lit emergency exit sign. Using my hand-held flashlight, I tiptoed around looking for some place warmer and darker.

The women who had claimed sleeping spaces on sofas had decreed that the windows above them should remain open, and I was not only freezing but dreading the 4:30 a.m. sunrise. I had underestimated how chilly summer weather in Sweden can be and had been too careful in following the instructions which mandated packing only one sweater. I was enough of a travel veteran to pack an eye mask for any overnight journey, but the mask proved more suitable for a dimmed plane cabin with drawn shades than for bright sunny mornings. After some searching, I found a room that was completely and wonderfully dark and spacious, and pulled my air mattress inside. No sooner had I done so, than a woman who had also joined the group that day wordlessly dragged my air mattress and sleeping bag straight back out. I was speechless. I wondered whether I was wrong, and the room was already over-crowded. So I said nothing. I tiptoed quietly around—all others were settled in and it was dark—until I noticed a woman sleeping under one end of a ping-pong table. She greeted me pleasantly, and I made myself as



comfortable as possible at the other end. This room also had windows and cool breezes, but my roommate was friendly, and I managed to sleep for three or four hours.

When I went downstairs to gather my belongings the next morning, I noticed that the otherwise empty, warm, dark, and comfortable room from which I had been summarily ejected had been occupied by one lone woman. The pilgrimage ideal—the most repeated of the seven words most—is “sharing.” Newcomer though I was, I recognized that this fellow pilgrim had violated not only a Swedish pilgrimage ideal, but a universal ideal, in refusing to share her more-than-ample sleeping space.

Furthermore, one day’s silent hours were disrupted by her lengthy cell phone conversations. Since silence is among the most valued aspects of Swedish pilgrimage, and when given a choice by our leader, the group chose silent stretches over conversational ones, I was not the only pilgrim whose silence was disturbed. By this time, however, she, too, was inculcated into the pilgrimage “rules,” and was apologetic that evening for having been disruptive and inattentive.

Anyway, on that first morning, I woke up very early, had a shower, drank some tea, and for the first and only time jotted down field notes into my laptop. The laptop obviously set me apart from the other pilgrims and was difficult to set up quickly in an unobtrusive corner. A small simple notebook would have been a better tool for field notes and observations. So after that morning, I did turn to pencil and paper, time permitting. Since dinner and clean-up and bedtime were all group affairs, and the consensus of the group was lights-out at nine o’clock, I had very little time to write, except one night when I found an unoccupied storage closet in the area where the women were sleeping. Unbeknownst to me, it was attached to another closet appropriated by a male pilgrim who

sought quiet and privacy there, even though our sleeping quarters were otherwise segregated by gender. I did not enter his space, but went in and out through the ladies sleeping area. Using my mini-flashlight for light and—I do guiltily confess—some felt art-project materials stored in the closet for added warmth, since the sleeping bag was thin, I was reasonably comfortable. The large white and deep purple felt dots with which I peppered myself did not totally compensate for the lack of a blanket, but added some warmth that night.

It turned out that the male pilgrim was trapped by my presence, since his contiguous room had no door. He had to exit through my space, which he did quite early in the morning, as he was on the kitchen crew. Furthermore, our adjoined closets turned out to be right under the kitchen, so though I had stayed up quite late, reveling in some time to write and think, morning came too soon yet again. Pilgrimage is a very physical endeavor. The lack of sleep and warmth, and the wear and tear on the feet from carrying a heavy pack, did, at times, interfere with this pilgrim's ability to focus on the "inner journey."

A group of traditional free church<sup>75</sup> pilgrims who joined us after my arrival were extremely friendly, interested in my work, and welcoming. Though all were welcoming and friendly by day, this was a pleasant contrast to my earlier evening experiences. It may be that I was looked upon as an interloper by those who had started out before me and had already formed a comfortable community. Though most pilgrims travel for only one week or part of a week, one pilgrim was already on her second week of the journey. I did not feel my outsider status often, and there were, of course, as many ways of feeling

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<sup>75</sup> The traditional free churches in Sweden are other Protestant churches that broke away from the Church of Sweden (now technically a free church itself), some as early as the mid-1800s. These include Baptist, Methodist, and Mission Covenant denominations, among others.

like an outsider as there were pilgrims. The occasional feeling of being an outsider may have been mitigated among those who arrived in small groups or family units. It is possible that other neophyte pilgrims or lone travelers felt like outsiders at times, but this was never discussed. It was clear that individual particularity was always at play with the efforts at group *communitas*.

Sharing was also emphasized every evening after dinner. When the volunteers for that evening's clean-up had completed their tasks, the group reconvened in a circle, or around a table, or around a piano, for sharing time. As Bremborg notes, though all personal conversations were confidential, sharing time was shrouded in an even more mandated aura of secrecy and confidentiality. Though sharing is normative in most Swedish group pilgrimage, it can be experienced as intrusive, painful or embarrassing by some (2010, 76-80).

The ritual of sharing was conducted by providing each person with a time to speak about experiences and feelings that arose that day. Björn lit a candle and then passed it to one of the pilgrims, who could speak uninterrupted, as long as he or she wished. The candle was not passed in a circle. Instead, each person would stand up and decide to whom to pass the candle. This felt a bit like being chosen, or not, for a dodgeball team in middle school, and I wonder whether I was the only pilgrim who found this passing of the candle awkward and imbued with artificial significance. Some, who were not loquacious, or who had pronounced themselves atheist or agnostic in personal conversation, had little to share or reveal. Those who did speak often used physical and natural metaphors. A day was most often described as "heavy" or "light," rather than "difficult" or "effortless." Though the beauty and gifts of nature were mentioned, whether

through Björn's leadership, or normative pilgrim practice, sharing time seemed to be a time to convey—if one chose—some aspect of one's inner journey and gratitude for the day.

Sharing is not intended to elicit response or dialogue. What is shared simply hangs, untouched, like a prism or a mobile gently swaying in the draft for others to meditate on. Individual expression during group sharing time was followed by pilgrim mass, a group service. The evening mass is a quiet service of compline, which is the evening service in Catholic and high church Protestant traditions. The mass was traditional. Well-known hymns, familiar to all participants, and printed in *The Little Pilgrim Book*, were sung. Psalms were spoken antiphonally, followed by brief biblical readings, moments of meditation, and a group recitation of the Lord's Prayer, as written in *The Little Pilgrim Book* (16). Other than in the rarest of instances, neither the mass nor the sharing commenced until all pilgrims were accounted for and present. Group participation was stressed and absences noted.

Like Bremborg who examines the Swedish case, Hermkens, Jansen, and Notermans, who examine Marian pilgrimage, question whether Turnerian pilgrimage *communitas* is as pervasive as pilgrimage scholars have believed through the years (1-13). Coleman and Eade argue that each pilgrim carves out a personal niche of distinction. Conflicts and individual goals, argue Notermans, *et al.*, are as central to the pilgrimage experience as is blending with a group and experiencing *communitas*, harmony, and suspension of individual needs (2009, 3).

My view of Swedish pilgrimage, colored perhaps by a double-outsider perspective as a neophyte pilgrim and non-Swede and researcher, and shaped by the

theoretical bent of this dissertation, reflects the model of Coleman and Eade in dialectic tension with that of the Turners. Coleman and Eade's Introduction to *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (2004) opposes their own theory of movement and journey to the Turners' theory of stasis and destination (1-25). Coleman and Eade explain that the Turners focus on great destination pilgrimages and the exceptional qualities of pilgrimage, including theories of *communitas* and pilgrimage as a transformative life event. Coleman and Eade instead consider the many types and constructions of movement. Motion is integral to Swedish pilgrimage—focused on nature, health, and individual well-being—while destinations are less so. Coleman and Eade state that their intention is to “broaden our ethnographic gaze to take in more than the central shrine, so we attempt to widen the theoretical location of ‘sacred’ travel” (2004, 3). Swedish pilgrimage has successfully “contested the sacred” (Eade and Sallnow, 1991), blending sacred and secular successfully in its emphasis on journey, and on the sacrality of the everyday, rather than a specific place or moment.

It is in its attempt at institutionalizing group pilgrimage that Swedish pilgrimage struggles with the eternal problematic of upholding both a group ethos and ethic, while validating the individual. As Bremborg notes, it remains to be seen, this early on in Swedish pilgrimage culture, whether one strand will remain dominant, or whether competitor models will emerge (132-134). Other models have tentatively emerged, including the Pearls of Life pilgrimages. Pearls of Life Pilgrimages are gaining in popularity, as is the Pearls of Life wrist rosary itself. The pilgrimage paradigm of week-long pilgrimages—led by a professional leader, and with a full day's schedule of events including Lutheran mass, and imposed hours of silence along with an imposed pace of

walking—developed by the Church of Sweden and the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center, and as outlined and described in my participant observations, currently remains dominant.

Tensions may arise between pilgrims who seek wholeness in nature, and the institutions, which seek not only to foster social cohesion grounded in both group and indoor activities, but also to cultivate a particular Christian religiosity. These pilgrimage institutions may not yet be fully attentive to the largely silenced voices of pilgrims who wish to break free from some imposed group norms. Or perhaps they are overly attentive to the dangers of individualism.

The tensions arising between the needs of individuals, groups, and the institutions that promote pilgrimage will be examined throughout this dissertation. The chapter on Swedish religious history will examine modern-era free church Protestant churches that rebelled against religious belief as prescribed by the Church of Sweden beginning in the mid-1800s. A common characteristic of these movements, reflected in today's pilgrimages, was the belief that religion was a matter of individual conscience more than normative, communal beliefs. Individualism will also be discussed in the chapter on secularization.

### **Lightheartedness**

One of the seven key words of Swedish pilgrimage is “lightheartedness.”

Lightheartedness, and its corresponding artifact, the hat, may be the least emphasized of the seven key words and their corresponding objects. Pilgrimage leaders attempt to create both meaningful and entertaining ritual, but nonetheless emphasize the former. The practitioners, or laity, respond by themselves occasionally interjecting some more or less appropriate levity.

Surprisingly many of the paths we walked were asphalt. Several pilgrims mentioned that asphalt was harder on the feet than forest paths, so perhaps the asphalt explained some of our many blisters. The wooded paths, like the one we walked when leaving Birgitta's Peninsula, are the paths most often depicted in photos and pilgrimage descriptions and narratives, including my own. When we left Birgitta's Peninsula, we enjoyed a communal feast of tiny, wild raspberries. I rolled each bumpy berry across my tongue, appreciative of its gifts of flavor, granted to me in one tiny burst after another: Nature's Pop Rocks. Just down the same path, tiny, dark blueberries with purplish flesh—real Swedish blueberries—grew on their blueberry bramble close to the ground. Picking berries and stepping off the path into the woods made keeping precise tempo with the pack impossible. This slight departure from the prescribed routine was a relief. Nibbling while strolling was as natural as it was to the birds on the wing, whose treasures we shared.

We noticed no wild animals larger than birds but came across three young horses in a paddock by the country lane we wandered. The three foals were galloping in a clockwise circle around a pleasant green paddock in sunshine after a light rain shower. They were young, testing their own abilities, just playing at this running business that came so easily to them. I was bemused when the three stopped and peered at our odd procession parading past. There was no question that we were being examined, intently and curiously. The horses suddenly cantered off again, led by the one I saw was a colt, with two admiring fillies following. They stopped again and looked me in the eye. They were, it seemed, taking the measure of my being, wondering what I was doing, as I plodded past. Like others, whose attention had been caught by the foals, I moved off the

roadway onto the grassy bank to be closer to the foals, but they lost interest again, running in their frolicking circle. We continued to walk in silence, so no words, but only smiles and nods were exchanged, as we enjoyed the pastoral scene of spontaneous joy in nature.

We pilgrims had set out, ostensibly to refresh our souls, but certainly not to play. Since we were silent and serious much of the time, could our experience have been enriched by a spirit of horseplay, now and then? Some spontaneous jogging to the next milepost or rest stop, or laughter at some of the absurdity of the discomfort we were in, might have lightened our hearts. Some pilgrimages, Franciscan most notably, emphasize play, and have a designated “troubadour,” who arranges group activities such as games, songs, and dance for the evenings (Bremborg, 2010, 50-51).<sup>76</sup> Would more lightheartedness—for example, laughter and play—have refreshed our spirits as we kept careful time with, and were considerate of, others? Perhaps spontaneity or playfulness should be the eighth key word, added to the pilgrim’s “seven key words” of silence, simplicity, slowness, sharing, spirituality, freedom, and lightheartedness.

Pre-planned “surprises” lightened our mood but were not spontaneous. One pilgrim carried chocolate bars provided by the trip organizer’s assistant. The flavor of the day’s chocolate—would it be filled with marzipan, orange, pistachio, or nougat--and who would reveal the treat at lunch break, were surprises, but the act of sharing a special treat was part of the ritual.<sup>77</sup> The constructed ritual “surprises” were a bit like a murder

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<sup>76</sup> [http://www.cdsf.org/spip/article.php?id\\_article=58](http://www.cdsf.org/spip/article.php?id_article=58) Accessed January 29, 2014. International Franciscan pilgrimages take place in member countries every seven years. International pilgrimages in Sweden took place in 2006 and 2013. There are also intra-national Franciscan pilgrimages. Swedish Franciscans host one, to whom all are invited, every summer. There are no professional leaders; all are volunteers.

<sup>77</sup> Because everyone packed his or her own lunch, according to personal preference and dietary constraints, but from the same selection set out in the morning, sharing of lunch food was uncommon.



mystery play. Priests who appeared for a day hike acted as though they were merely other pilgrims joining the group for the day, until we stopped, and then the strangers walking among us donned stoles and served Holy Eucharist.

In her 2001 lecture *Who Owns Tradition? Religion and the Messiness of History*, Catherine Bell argues that the ritual practices of the laity “often have little to do with what authoritative religious leadership or scholarship have to say” (2). She claims that “For practitioners, tradition is incredibly regional, even local,” and that “The tradition of practitioners can even involve a type of quiet resistance to any higher leadership” (7-8). Unaware at the time that I was proving Bell’s claims—resisting what felt like oppressive authority—I enlisted two other pilgrims to join me in a plea to be permitted to use the sauna the night we stayed at a family hostel. This family hostel was on one of Sweden’s three largest lakes, the deepest and cleanest of the three. Swedish tradition, which is not inconsistent with pilgrimage tradition, is to fire up the sauna and then, once suffocatingly overheated, swim, preferably nude, in icy water. Bathing in the extremely hot sauna, followed by very cold water, has an element both of asceticism and sensuality. This is also Finnish cultural tradition, and the sauna there was the finest wood-fired Finnish sauna imaginable. One could argue that such cleansing practice is part of a spiritual practice.

The entire evening was a special surprise and treat. We stayed in comfortable bunkhouses with luxurious comforters, and we all enjoyed dinner prepared by the hoteliers. The atmosphere was festive and holiday-like. When gathered at dinner, we three therefore felt comfortable asking the leader whether our group could be allowed to

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Pilgrims had no access to shops, or refrigeration. Nor did any seem to have room in their backpacks to carry treats for a group of 25. Thus the shared food, both chocolate and Holy Eucharist, was planned for and provided by the organizers.

rent towels and to use the sauna that evening. He was receptive, but momentarily unsure how to manage the request. Swedes usually bathe in saunas in the nude, but men and women do not sit together. Most public facilities have two saunas and separate areas for male and female bathers. The couple who ran the hostel readily agreed, but warned that it would take a couple of hours for the wood-fired sauna to heat up. There was then a flurry of interested response and negotiation, during which an injured pilgrim expressed an especially strong interest. Saunas are known for their healing properties. For this reason, or so he stated, the pilgrimage leader said that the sauna fees would be on the tab of the Pilgrimage Center, and that we needn't pay individually. Not only was this a kind act on his part but also a strategy to keep uniformity among the pilgrims. It turned out that we three women—who had earlier sat on lawn chairs behind the lodge, overlooking the lake and conversing while others napped—were the only ones who managed to stay up late enough to bathe in the sauna.

Since this was not a coed event, there was no question of bathing suits. We sat down and heated up while talking. Then, when we could bear it no longer, we walked quietly towards the pier, wrapped only in towels. All of us were near-sighted, and we had left our glasses in the anteroom to the sauna. A sign warned against diving due to debris in the water, so we fumbled about in the dark, finding a very mossy and slippery ladder on which to descend. Once immersed in the refreshing water, we saw another creature moving towards us. Man or duck, we wondered. It was either a waterfowl of some sort, or an unresponsive man, as there was no reply to our query. Once thoroughly chilled, we went back into the sauna to repeat the process. We were annoyed with ourselves at

having forgotten to stoke the fire, so it wasn't quite as hot as earlier, but we were back in the lake before long.

This deeply rooted Scandinavian ritual became, in this case, a truer opportunity to bond with a couple of other neophyte pilgrims than when we were herded along together in a fairly large group. It can be difficult to exchange confidences or speak freely in a group of 25. That evening, I finally experienced a sense of Turnerian *communitas* for which I had been longing. Though it would have been socially awkward to discuss having formed a special bond, we interacted more frequently than before our sauna and swim.

### **The Troll's Tale**

Swedish children's literature includes a story of the troll who tries to pass as human. The troll, who has carefully hidden its tail under human clothing, is invariably undone when its tail sneaks out from its britches. This allegory is about pretending to be someone of a more elevated social class, and about the value of knowing and staying in one's place.

One of the exciting coincidences about the timing of my trip to Sweden was that both Sweden and the U.S. were in the final rounds of the Women's World Cup Soccer in 2011. A soccer fan, a soccer mom, and former soccer player, I was so excited about the tournament that I considered stopping off in Germany to watch a live game on the way to Sweden. I pulled up game schedules, flight schedules, and maps and reluctantly realized that I could either attend World Cup soccer in Germany or go on a pilgrimage in Sweden, but not both. My itinerary involved visiting multiple sets of friends on the East and West Coasts of Sweden as well as going on a pilgrimage with complete strangers in between.

Neither a hiker, nor a pilgrim, nor an authentic Swede, I knew this was more than I should attempt.

On the fourth evening of the pilgrimage, I was very excited to discover that the light and airy church building where we would spend the night housed a sanctuary, meeting rooms and offices, Sunday school rooms and an efficient kitchen. One of the comfortably furnished rooms in which some of the women would later sleep, also featured a mid-sized flat-screen television. Normally not much of a television watcher, I was elated, as this was the evening of a match between Sweden and the United States. Happily, I bounced up to the no-nonsense Ingeborg—a retired volunteer, and as second-in-command to Björn, in charge of organization and running the practical side of the pilgrimage—and asked if I could watch the match. I did this unhesitatingly, as other pilgrims had used their small laptops and also cell phones nightly to communicate with their families. With no evidence of any strict ban on modern technology, I was merely being polite, and even hoping for shared enthusiasm. I was so taken aback by Ingeborg's sharp reprimand that I shuffled away disheartened. I confided in a kind fellow pilgrim. Gunnel had been friendly and motherly during the trip. Her questioning glance and invitation to sit and talk brought forth a few tears that I had managed to hold back. Ingeborg had said that watching the soccer match would be entirely inappropriate and out of keeping with the pilgrimage experience, and I was hurt. I had not asked to watch *Desperate Housewives* but an international tournament of female athletes, half representing Sweden, on a pilgrimage well-represented by women. Watching women's sports can be a statement of feminism and female solidarity, since few men are interested. Gunnel encouraged me to talk to Björn.

Björn was in the garden, sorting out another conflict. Already slightly ill-at-ease, Björn listened to my dilemma. I explained the situation, and then--suddenly quite aware of the outsider I truly was, said, in Swedish, as in all my pilgrimage conversations—"Now the troll has gone and shown its tail." After I had explained the situation, and by whom I had been forbidden, Björn looked a bit impatient, assured me that there was nothing inappropriate about women's soccer. Of course I should watch the match, but I would have to find a television where other pilgrims would not be disturbed.

This proved impossible in the small tourist town of Borensberg. Though I searched all restaurants and hostels for a public television, I found none. The only family hostel in town was completely booked for the evening, and the managers could not risk displacing their paying guests by offering me a seat in their small TV room. Truly a dejected troll, I rushed back to be a punctual pilgrim for dinner hour. We had been given more free time than usual that afternoon, and some pilgrims straggled in uncharacteristically late, but the pressure to be polite and punctual overrode any other concern I had.

As dinner would be a bit late, one of the younger pilgrims set up her laptop, and we began to watch the game huddled in a corner, with the volume practically inaudible. The call for dinner came just as the game started. After dinner, while watching some halftime replays, we were heralded by the less-than-welcome call for an early sharing hour that evening. It is more than possible that the interests of Swedish pilgrims on spiritual quests in nature do not always intersect well with those of an American soccer mom. My identity during the pilgrimage, however, was more that of a pilgrim than soccer mom, researcher, or anything else. It was only the unusual fact of Sweden playing so well

in the Women's World Cup that caught my attention. Though soccer is a national obsession in Sweden, I found that only one of my fellow pilgrims expressed any interest whatsoever.

The following morning, fellow pilgrim Astrid and I were assigned cleaning duty. When Astrid, whose acceptable rebellion took the form of smoking in a polite and discreet fashion, asked whether I liked Nora Jones and wanted to listen to music while cleaning, I happily assented, and picked up my mop and bucket with renewed vigor. Astrid set up her iPod on a table, quietly playing soft pop music. In a country known for its heavy metal bands, and as an accompaniment to housework, this seemed appropriate. Ingeborg, however, was at the door between the kitchen and great hall not two minutes later telling us to turn off the inappropriate music. Had Astrid showed her tail, too? While smoking discreetly was tolerated, music, other than traditional hymns, apparently was not. Though Björn did not observe this brief interaction, I suspect that he would have been more irritated with Ingeborg than with the ambitious cleaning crew. Astrid said nothing in reply, but turned off the music. After our chores were complete, we were invited to spend an hour exploring the historic ruins of monastic ruins nearby. Though Astrid did not respond to Ingeborg, and only grumbled a bit under her breath to me, she appeared to feel slighted by the incident. She and another pilgrim friend walked at an acceptable, but perceptible, distance from the rest of the pilgrims, who were exploring the gardens and ruins of the medieval monastery.

Though Astrid downplayed her social status, it was, nevertheless, evident that she came from a privileged background. The social and intellectual capital I might have called on if faced with an Ingeborg in the United States was, naturally, less meaningful in

a foreign land, and especially in a context promoting simplicity, though scholarship is highly regarded in Sweden. Did Ingeborg, when it suited her, intentionally participate in the *collusio* of equality among pilgrims? Were Ingeborg's reactions based strictly on pilgrim protocol and, thus confirmation of social leveling among people who go on a pilgrimage together?

The Turners' (1978) argue that pilgrimage provides a forum for abandoning the status one holds at home, and thus for social leveling. This claim has been and continues to be contested, notably by Coleman and Eade, who do not agree with the Turners theory of a naturally arising, cooperative community ethos. As a pilgrim, particularly when in motion, one's mindset is such that one almost always marches on without protest or question. I witnessed an incident involving a pilgrim who was unable or unwilling to keep pace with the rest and left the pilgrimage under clouded circumstances. This was probably extremely unusual. No similar event has been described in any Swedish pilgrimage literature that I have read. Before his departure, this pilgrim confessed to feeling that his true identity was not Swedish. It was only later, sometime after the pilgrimage, and after my initial attempt to recreate the experience of being on a Swedish pilgrimage, that I began to recognize and relive the unequal treatment and distribution of power and favors among the pilgrims in our group of approximately 25. That perceived favoritism colored initial reactions, but the perception of it has faded with time and analysis. Any favoritism, real or imagined, may, upon reflection, have had more to do with past pilgrimage experience, and familiarity with, and willingness to play by the rules of the game. And, in these areas, leveling did not take place so readily.

*In Religion, the Social Context*, Meredith McGuire's fifth chapter is on "The Dynamics of Religious Collectives." Though focusing on larger rebellions within the Catholic Church or Jehovah's Witnesses, her theory may also be applied to a small community. Her analysis emphasizes that the experience of deprivation, whether real or imagined, by some members of a collective, creates discontent and eventual schisms as the malcontents look back on their experiences, brood, and form new sects (McGuire, 2002, 170-174). Though there was never any open mutiny, one or two events led to some muttering, discontent, and a few pilgrims not following the rules exactly as laid out. These events were noteworthy because they contributed to solidarity, or bonding, among pilgrims against perceived unfair and capricious decision-making by lay leaders. The elements which caused discontent may be those that will be changed in the next generation of Swedish pilgrimage. Some, as mentioned in this chapter, already vary in pilgrimages sponsored by other organizations. Not requiring vegetarian meals or abstention from alcohol, and allowing pilgrims to walk at their own pace, but meet again in the evening for a communal meal and dwelling, continues to be customary in some Swedish pilgrimages. One pilgrim who preferred solitude and walking alone neither journeyed with us, nor participated in group meals and other activities with our group, but stayed with us a few nights when space and our pilgrimage leader allowed. She had worked out her own modification to the Church of Sweden pilgrimage model.

One minor pilgrim "rebellion" was trivial in retrospect, but a source of discontent at the time. Herring and potatoes were offered as an option at one mealtime. When we gathered for dinner, those who had elected herring as their main course, versus the vegetarian meal, were told that the salad was for vegetarians only. Health and diet-



conscious people, the pilgrims who were told that they were not to have salad, were annoyed. Peeled and boiled potatoes, as traditionally served in Sweden, with a topping of sour cream and a few snippets of dill are not a nutritional substitute for a salad. The pilgrims were further annoyed because it seemed that this hasty decision was made because of a miscalculation when shopping, and those who had chosen to eat fish with dinner were being illogically and capriciously punished. Because at least two pilgrims suffered from digestive disorders, the effects of this decree were not, moreover, entirely trivial. Those abstaining from fish were offered a vegetarian main course and a green salad with assorted bell peppers, cucumbers, and other seasonal vegetables. The decision to quietly defy Ingeborg's seemingly capricious mealtime decree was not discussed with the leaders, but only amongst the pilgrims themselves. There was no open rebellion: Several pilgrims simply quietly added some salad to their plates after a general agreement had been reached that this restriction was unreasonable. None openly confronted Ingeborg who stood close guard over provisions and meal distribution. While perhaps not fitting the anthropological, Turnerian definition of pilgrim *communitas*, this was one incident in which a group bond among pilgrims was evident.

### **The Bus Stops Here**

Among the pilgrims was "Helga," a woman distressed by past events in her life, but taking positive steps towards repairing her self-confidence and building friendships with fellow pilgrims, some of whom she would see again at future pilgrimages. She seemed to be using pilgrimage practice in an effort to build a more ethical and spiritual life. Helga had also been on pilgrimages in the past, and was planning to go on future pilgrimages. She and other practiced pilgrims mentioned attending both Taizé and icon-

painting retreats, suggesting that the tie between pilgrimage and retreat is relatively strong in Sweden. This is not surprising, since Swedish pilgrimage is meditational, and therefore much like a retreat on foot.

Helga had ready-made friends on our pilgrimage, so we neither conversed much during the journey, nor chatted in the evenings when we were often in separate quarters. Gallbladder trouble and doctor's orders had rendered her a rider along with Ingeborg rather than a walker for the last few days. Despite not having become especially close to her, we had all formed a bond of care and consideration, and I, along with the rest of the group, applauded her extraordinary effort, when she rejoined us for the last few symbolic meters of our journey.

Once we arrived at Vadstena, the end of our week-long journey, some of us stayed overnight to attend the large Sunday pilgrim mass in the Vadstena Cathedral, an option open to all pilgrims. The Pilgrimage Center, in which coffee and pastries were served after church, housed the pilgrims who decided to stay and participate in the morning's service. The option to stay, and in this inexpensive group housing, was not mentioned online or in phone conversations when I was planning my trip. Since I had planned to remain a day or two longer, I had already reserved a room in the retreat hostel, also managed by the Pilgrimage Center, and on the Vadstena campus. The pilgrims' response to the unexpected offer of staying at Vadstena was enthusiastic, and the dormitory-style housing in the Pilgrimage Center, with its well-stocked kitchen and homelike feeling, could not have housed one more person. Sheets and towels were in short supply due to so many unexpected guests. There were none at all at the affiliated retreat hostel, so I simply did without. This suggests that the response to the invitation to

stay in the Pilgrimage Center was a bit overwhelming to those who worked there, and is yet another indication of the growing popularity of, and participation in, Swedish pilgrimage.

This serene and sedate campus includes—in addition to its centerpiece, the Vadstena Cathedral—Bridgettine Cloisters, a churchyard and a graveyard, the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center and Pilgrimage Center retreat hostel, an affiliated hotel, and an adult-education building. The retreat hostel in which I stayed is a residential building with minimalist kitchen and other facilities. This entire space, demarcated by, and all within, the confines of a low stone wall, is set apart, and is a bustling hub of both sacred and ordinary activity. As in cloisters of medieval times, the secular is not excluded. Even an amateur theatre troupe's caravan was contained within Vadstena's walls. Not expecting theatre at the borders of the medieval graveyard, I almost walked onto the ground-level stage, while the troupe was performing a Shakespearean play, and I was attempting to navigate the labyrinthine grounds.

The town of Vadstena, the center of Swedish pilgrimage now as in the Middle Ages, is itself a tourist destination and former home to royalty, so pilgrimage and tourism come together there. The Vadstena Castle—which I had, coincidentally, toured ten years earlier—is slightly removed from the cathedral and cloisters. Vadstena is on the water, with a path and low stone wall bordering a small beach area of Lake Vättern. The town's grand tourist hotel with a veranda overlooking the water, plush carpeting, sparkling chandeliers, and a large dining room stands in striking contrast to the Pilgrimage Center, and the simplicity of the pilgrim lifestyle.

Pilgrim *communitas* or camaraderie now developed among the core group of remaining pilgrims. Those who stayed, and were not whisked away by a waiting partner in a private car, departed one-by-one via public transportation. The train station in Vadstena is long-abandoned, so the bus station became the destination of the weekend. In a show of solidarity and support, we walked, sore feet notwithstanding, with each departing pilgrim, to the stop, or to a nearby location and gave a proper pilgrim farewell.

One of the rituals of Swedish pilgrimage is singing the Irish hymn in Swedish, “May the Road Rise up to Meet You.” My translation of the Swedish adaptation of this Irish prayer as a pilgrimage hymn follows. My source for this hymn is the *Little Pilgrimage Book*. Fittingly, aside from an appendix and few references, this hymn of farewell is the last entry in the minute 123-page volume:

May the road rise up to meet you,  
And may the wind be your friend,  
And may the sun warm your cheek,  
And may the rain water the soul’s earth.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold, hold,  
You in God’s hand.

An engaged participant-observer, I participated in these farewell rituals, one of many experiences shared with fellow pilgrims. Before the bus to Gothenburg left, the pilgrims of our group who still remained in Vadstena sat together at a bus stop restaurant. On the edge of town, with a captive clientele, this restaurant offered poor service, high prices, and, as we eventually discovered, practically inedible food. The restaurant was run by a man with a foreign accent and a brusque manner.

As we waited for our food, frustration mounted. Helga, whose departure was imminent, must have focused on the foreign accent of the man running the restaurant. She

asked whether I had recently visited Gothenburg. I had not been there for close to ten years. She said I would not recognize it because the streets were crowded with veiled Muslim women. She went on to describe the high rates of Muslim unemployment and the squalid living conditions in immigrant neighborhoods. I knew that the most recent Swedish immigrants were not guest workers, as in the 1970s, but refugees and asylum-seekers. Somewhat startled, I said, “Oh, yes. We have areas of poverty and poor living conditions in the U.S. as well.” Searching for a phrase with which she might be familiar, I added, “We used to call them ‘ghettoes.’”

My attempt at a neutral reply aggravated her further. She replied that these were not ghettoes, that “these people” elected to live together, and that they chose to remain uneducated, neither learning Swedish nor becoming gainfully employed. My reply about unforced migration and social justice issues was, happily, cut short by the arrival of her bus. (Many Swedish immigrants were forced to leave their homelands to flee deadly wars and intolerant regimes, just as Syrian refugees are now fleeing.) As I mentioned, Helga was among the veteran pilgrims planning to attend a retreat-oriented pilgrimage later that summer. Because I knew this, I was the more troubled by her comments: Our pilgrimage theme was tolerance and peace among peoples. In chapters to follow, I will investigate connections between pilgrimage, heightened nationalism, and xenophobic attitudes, and, on the other hand, between pilgrimage and heightened social tolerance.

After Helga left, no one in the small group of remaining pilgrims discussed immigrant populations. Though “forced pilgrimage”—immigration, migration, and asylum-seeking—is part of the Church of Sweden and larger pilgrim conversation, no one mentioned the subject in my hearing during my participant-observation week.

When Helga left, we all stood, and sang together, some reaching out hands, some with tears streaming down cheeks. The brief moment of uncomfortable conversation had passed. We all set out together—at the request of a pilgrim with special dietary needs—to do some grocery shopping at a cozy neighborhood grocery store. We were of good cheer, basking in the warm feeling of companionship and being considerate of the needs of others. Our pilgrim goodwill seemed to extend beyond our immediate group and to draw people in. I found myself helping an older Frenchman—who spoke neither English nor Swedish—in the yogurt aisle, while the other pilgrims bought snacks for their travels. We soon met at the two registers and exited as we had arrived, together.

### **Identity: Regional, National, Swedish, Scandinavian & Pan-European?**

When I first arrived in Sweden, I was met at the airport by Swedish friends who used to babysit for me years ago in San Diego. Though I call them my “Swedish friends,” the Nelsens are actually a Norwegian family. Further testimony to the close ties among Nordic lands is that one of the family members, Veikko, is also not Swedish, but Finnish. (The young children, born in Sweden, are first-generation Swedes.) My Swedish-Norwegian friend Ylva was dating a Jordanian immigrant, Henry, at the time of my visit. We all stayed together at Ylva’s parental home, where, at one point, I found myself watching a Swedish world cup game with Henry’s eight-year-old Swedish son, while the other adults, all Norwegian by birth and nationality, read in the rose garden or conversed on the porch. The older Norwegians spend much of their summer at their summer place in Norway. The generation of working age vacations there every summer. The Swedish-Norwegian-Finnish part of the family juggles visits to the Norwegian summer home with those to the summer home in Finland. Strong generation-long ties to their lands of

national origin bind Nordic Swedes to their non-Swedish homelands. Most photos I am shown of summer homes and summer pastimes show children playing outdoors. Few of the photos are taken indoors. The children, the older people taking their ease in lawn chairs, or performing vigorous tasks in the yard, are featured together with the idyllic backdrop of natural landscape, and well-tended gardens.

This extended family's traditions point to Scandinavian interconnectedness, as well as the strong nationalism in Scandinavia. Just as this family has ties to land across Scandinavia, increasing cooperation is opening and connecting pilgrimage routes between Scandinavian. Pilgrimage in Sweden is still a movement largely bounded by national borders, characterized by its adherents' love of nature and their Christian roots. But there is now a pilgrimage center in Visby, Denmark, and pilgrimage paths today link Sweden and Denmark. The cooperation between Swedish and Norwegian pilgrims has been ongoing for a longer time, driven by the organization Pilgrim Now (*Pilgrim Nu*) and its Swedish Roman Catholic director, Elisabeth Andersson. Pilgrim Now ([www.pilgrim.nu](http://www.pilgrim.nu)) was founded in 2008 and is now part of the National Organization Pilgrim in Sweden (<http://www.pilgrimisverige.se/>). Many of its paths lead to Trondheim, Norway, Scandinavia's most visited pilgrimage destination both in the Middle Ages and today. Roman Catholics may have a particular interest in reviving the medieval pilgrimage traditions of destination-oriented pilgrimage to the relics of saints. Having the ancient St. Olof's Path cleared and signed for more convenient journeys, and then earning the distinction of being marked a European Pilgrimage Route in 2010, was a major step forward in Scandinavian pilgrimage. The routes to Trondheim are now more traveled, bringing more Euros as well as Swedish pilgrim kronor and Norwegian kroner to the

area.<sup>78</sup> The designation of St. Olof's Way as a European Culture Way was earned in 2010, and has brought funds from the European Union for the restoration and promotion of this path. The cultural and economic goals of Pan-Scandinavianism and Pan-Europeanism are inextricably tied together. But from the literature and posts on sites, it appears that the actual goal of pilgrimage organizers is to promote pilgrimage in its present-day form.

Bureaucratization, a term borrowed from Max Weber in *Economy and Society* (1978, 984-993) may take hold of the movement, and many pilgrims do follow uniform regimens as promoted by the Vadstena Center and Church of Sweden. However, as mentioned above, different types of Swedish pilgrimage flourish alongside the Vadstena model. A booklet entitled *Modern Pilgrims. . . About a journey from Hälsingland to Nidaros*, describing a Swedish-Norwegian pilgrimage in 2006, recounts a pilgrimage from Sweden to Norway in alternating Swedish and Norwegian pilgrim narratives. (Reflections on a common theme, e.g., "The Participants," "Experiences in Nature," "The Path," are recorded by both a Swedish and Norwegian pilgrim, each in his/her native language.)

The organization formerly known as "Pilgrim Now," is now the national organization informally called "Pilgrim in Sweden."<sup>79</sup> This organization, which uses the same key words as the Vadstena pilgrimages, offers pilgrimages on paths throughout Sweden and into Norway. The above 2006 booklet features a photograph of a bottle of Heart Wine, served to pilgrims, on the same page as Lindström's "The pilgrims keys" (17). One of the pilgrims, identified as Kenneth, writes "Never has a cold beer tasted as

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<sup>78</sup> Both Sweden and Norway continue to use their own currencies rather than the Euro.

<sup>79</sup> The full name is *Riksföreningen Pilgrim i Sverige* (the National Organization Pilgrim in Sweden).



good as when we arrived at Stugdals Campground.” Alongside honest, hand-written complaints of unappetizing and insufficient fare are descriptions of hearty meals including local food and wild game enthusiastically described by two pilgrims Tore and Kenneth. Pilgrimage as experienced by hungry bodies is downplayed in my experience of the Vadstena pilgrimage model, however.

### **My Third Pilgrimage Leg: The West Coast**

The few important pilgrim leaders and deacons who had stayed or arrived at the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center for the Sunday morning pilgrimage mass at the Vadstena Cloister Church left immediately thereafter for summer vacation, so those whom I had hoped to interview were unavailable. Instead, I had other experiences: both a reunion with friends and attendance at a funeral, the Church of Sweden rite most practiced today. The unplanned intervened in the form of a funeral for the father of West Coast friends, whom I had planned to visit, so I was forced to revise my schedule and leave Vadstena a day early.

That I could represent my family at the funeral of one of my father’s Swedish friends and colleagues was meaningful not only to me, but also to the wife and children of the deceased. As a sociologist of religion, I was also interested to learn that neither the deceased nor his family had met the presiding pastor before funeral planning commenced. It was nonetheless a very formal and moving event, in a church, presided over by a priest. Following the service, all friends of the deceased laid beautiful flowers in a bounteous display of life and beauty on the coffin. Flower arrangements were everywhere; first located in the church and then moved to the graveyard, where every arrangement and the ribbon, stating from whom it had been sent, was photographed by

the family. Having just completed a Church of Sweden pilgrimage week, it was interesting and thought-provoking to see how rare—yet critical in time of need—contact with the Church of Sweden was for this extended Swedish family.

It also happened that the youth Gothia Soccer Cup tournament, one of the top youth soccer tournaments in the world, not a mere neighborhood event, was held in nearby Gothenburg while I was there. This was mentioned in passing, but of no particular interest in a family of engineers and design specialists, who have a country home on the ocean, and are sailors.<sup>80</sup> We shared a common interest in spending as much time outdoors as possible. Three of us happily agreed to take a walk together. We walked in a heavily wooded park, which was an oasis easily accessible in one of Gothenburg's sprawling city suburbs. We walked along a relatively flat path, with a couple of strenuous detours, and sat down to a picnic lunch on a granite outcropping so typical of Sweden's West Coast overlooking a stream and swimming hole. Only one element detracted from our shared enjoyment of time outdoors away from any confining structures: My friends pointed out several trees that had been intentionally damaged at the roots, and would not survive. We were saddened and mystified by this intentional destruction of lovely birch trees. Swedes—whether or not they are pilgrims—feel a genuine connection for more-than-human nature.

Furthermore, though my friends had not expressed any particular interest in pilgrimage, they suggested an outing to the diocesan seat of Skara and to two pilgrimage centers—one in Skara and one in Varnhem--within driving distance of their home. An excursion of this type, motivated more by interest in (Swedish) heritage than by religious

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piety, but to a religious site, is sometimes referred to as heritage pilgrimage (Basu, 2004). The grand cathedral in Skara would, in itself make a fine destination for any pilgrim, student of art, or person interested in Swedish heritage and history. The stunning collection of small and ornate pieces from medieval times held at the cathedral is almost overshadowed by its large, contemporary stained glass windows.<sup>81</sup> The Skara Pilgrimage Center, then just a small wooden building off a dirt path, has moved and expanded since July, 2011.

Skara is a center of heritage pilgrimage (a topic to be discussed further in chapter four). The neighboring town of Varnhem has the earliest known Christian remains and monastic ruins in Sweden. The adjoining Cistercian Cathedral is the oldest and only remaining Cistercian Cathedral in Sweden. The Cathedral houses the remains of Birger Jarl, founder of Stockholm and twelfth century Swedish king of the Erik Royal Dynasty that ruled Västergötland (where Varnhem is located), during an extended time (Josefsson, 2010, 38-41). The grounds at Varnhem also feature an archaeological museum. A small pilgrimage center serves light fare, and picnic tables are provided for those who have packed their lunch to enjoy outdoors.

While I was inside the Cistercian Cathedral at Varnhem, a group of pilgrims appeared. The pilgrims were enraptured, paid close attention to a discussion by a docent or their leader, and then sang a hymn. I recognized a few of them, and the group itself, as the pilgrims whose leg of the Dag Hammarskjöld pilgrimage followed mine. Despite the coincidence, I felt the distinction between outsider or tourist—which I felt I had now

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<sup>81</sup> Skara played a significant role in the early centuries of the introduction of Christianity to Sweden. This role has, arguably, long been relegated to Uppsala, the seat of the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden and its renowned theological seminary, and Lund, the site of the other most respected Church of Sweden theological seminary.

become—and pilgrim quite acutely, and did not greet the group. The long scholarly debate about the distinctions between pilgrims, tourists, heritage pilgrims and tourists is worthy of further discussion, and relevant to the Swedish case, and will indeed be treated below. Happening across this pilgrim group convinced me, at that moment, that one is a pilgrim when one literally and psychologically dons the pilgrim habit and joins a pilgrimage group. I had left this realm to enter a realm of personal pilgrimage and heritage tourism, and I felt disinclined to reappear in my new guise.

Only an hour away, the Gothenburg Pilgrimage Center serves heritage pilgrims and the congregation of the Sea-faring Church, Masthuggskyrkan. Masthuggskyrkan is perched high on a granite cliff at the top of the city, with a view to the Baltic, and served as a lookout spot for the return of sea-faring vessels (before the advent of modern technology). As mentioned above, the small Gothenburg Pilgrimage Center opened late in the summer of 2011—after my visit—and offers some innovative pilgrimages, including interreligious pilgrimages as well as pilgrimages designed for the blind and hearing-impaired. The Gothenburg Pilgrimage offerings are ecumenical in a broader sense. The impulse behind these pilgrimages appears also to be to erase cultural and socio-economic boundaries. Lunch-hour pilgrimages (which is perhaps self-explanatory, but does literally mean pilgrimages that meet for an hour at lunchtime), are a regular offering downtown in Gothenburg’s Iron Square. Not only retirees and those with disposable income and vacation time can participate in these pilgrimages, which are designed to also serve the working-age population.<sup>82 83</sup> The Church of Sweden is

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<sup>82</sup> The mandatory retirement age in Sweden is currently 67, so the working population is not elderly, as is the case in some professions in the United States.

<sup>83</sup> Pilgrim, Marie. “*Lunchvandring*.” (“Lunch Hour Pilgrimage Walk.”) Posted January 23, 2014. Facebook Group *Pilgrimscentrum i Göteborg* (Pilgrimage Center in Gothenburg)

attempting to reach diverse populations with a growing variety of pilgrimage offerings, and the Gothenburg Pilgrimage Center is a pioneer in this effort.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORY OF SWEDISH PILGRIMAGE AND CHRISTIANITY

#### **Introduction to the History of Religion and Pilgrimage in Sweden**

The older a tradition and the more people who recognize it and revere it, the more powerful the emotions it can evoke and the stronger its social impact (Halbwachs, 1992, as paraphrased by Riis and Woodhead, 2010).

The Roman Catholic Church, and then the Lutheran Church of Sweden, were the institutional churches of Sweden for many centuries. The Church of Sweden was even the national church from the year 1593 to the year 2000, so the perception of Sweden as a place of long-standing religious homogeneity, or at least of a “monopoly church” (Stark and Finke, 2004, 127), is not entirely false. But, as this chapter will help to show, history challenges that perception. Other religiosities competed through the early and later Christian centuries. Polytheistic Norse religion, regional in some of its expressions, predated Christianity by centuries, as did Sami shamanistic religions of northwestern and northeastern areas of today’s Sweden (Bexell, 1998; Svestad, 2013). Thus pre-Christian religiosity in what is now Sweden was not homogeneous, and reflected the movements and regionalism of peoples. Sweden was Christianized during the middle ages by missionaries from other parts of Roman Catholic Europe, specifically today’s Germany and England.

The Lutheran Church of Sweden, officially replacing Catholicism, was established during the sixteenth-century Reformation. As I discuss below, Swedish religious expression after the Reformation was less uniform than has often been described by church historians of subsequent centuries (Nyman, 1997, 14-15). For instance, even

though pilgrimages are considered a revived, or even new, form of religious expression today, pilgrimages took place after they were officially forbidden in Sweden in 1544 as one expression of post-Reformation rebellion (Nyman, 1997, 113-115). But the era of missionization and the introduction of Christianity to Europe, and finally, to Scandinavia, came before pilgrimages, whether officially encouraged or forbidden.

### **The Christianization of Franconia and Kent**

Any telling of the history of Sweden's Christianization must include the two northern European areas that first sent forth Christian missionaries to Sweden: Franconia and Kent. Christianization in these two areas began four or five centuries before the Christianization of Sweden was first attempted in the early ninth century. Franconia was a site of the early and official introduction of Christianity into northwestern Europe.<sup>84</sup> The baptism of King Klodvig in late fifth-century Franconia was followed by the forced baptism of the Frankish populace. Christianity knit together the powers of the Roman Catholic Church and the Frankish Nation (Nilsson, 1998, 16-17). Though official Christianity arrived quickly and forcefully, the pre-Christian practices and beliefs of the Frankish peoples were not immediately extirpated. Repeated dicta and imprecations following church meetings show that church officials struggled with how to manage ongoing pre-Christian belief and practice. These records of early Christianity existing alongside pre-Christian indigenous religion in Franconia lead Doctor of Theology and senior lecturer in Christian History at Gothenburg's University, Bertil Nilsson, to hypothesize the existence of syncretic Christianity in that time and region (1998, 17).

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<sup>84</sup> Franconia was a Duchy in what is now Bavaria (in Southern Germany).

Nilsson also hypothesizes the early medieval syncretism of indigenous religion and Christianity in Kent, the other region of Northern Europe from which missionaries later went forth to Sweden. Kent was not quickly or easily Christianized. The early Christian bard, Bede, emphasizes the difficulty with which Kent was Christianized in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* of 727 (Phelpstead, 2006, 58). In the year 601 Pope Gregorius wrote two contradictory letters. He first commanded the destruction of all heathen objects and places of worship and then urged the missionaries to allow the heathens to retain them. The missionaries were counseled to overlay signs of paganism with Christian symbols of the “true God.” Syncretism in Europe was thus sanctioned from early on. The Kentish people, reasoned the Pope, could only incrementally come to know the true God (Nilsson, 1998, 18-19). Missionaries, or “pilgrims of Christ,” thus retained, and perhaps passed on, the tradition of Christianity as both rooted and restless. Their missions—travel into distant, dangerous lands—foreshadowed medieval centuries when pilgrimage was a part of the common Christian experience.

### **Early Swedish Christianity**

Christianity has seemingly always been a religion of missionization, a message carried on foot. Missionization, with its salvific intent, seems in many ways like the European pilgrimages of the Middle Ages. The first known Christian missionary to Sweden, Ansgar, came to Sweden from Schleswig in 829. The worship of Norse Gods continued in Sweden, however, problematizing claims in our time about the “Christianization” of Sweden (Kent, 2008, 13; Green, 2011, 2286). Contemporary pilgrimage, with its signs of syncretic religiosity, may raise this question once again.



After the period of missionization, the center of Swedish Christianity moved from the West to the Eastern areas accessible by sea, particularly the province of Östergötland (1995, 52-69). Östergötland is the province that encompasses the Diocese of Linköping and the city of Vadstena, the center of the new religious movement of pilgrimage today and the most important pilgrimage site in medieval Sweden. The first seven dioceses in Sweden correspond fairly well with the Lutheran dioceses today, as well as to the provinces of Sweden (Brohed, 2005, 86). The first diocese, Lund, then part of Denmark, was established in 1103. The first Swedish diocese within what was already then part of Sweden was established in the Uppsala area in 1164 (Ryman, 2005, 4). These dioceses are among the primary instigators and directors of pilgrimage today.

Missionaries, by the few available accounts, do not appear to have forced the Swedish peoples to convert from belief in the Old Norse Gods to Christianity. Christianity and the Old Norse religion co-existed for some time. There was a “drawn-out process...by which the Roman Catholic Church was slowly integrated into the Viking-dominated society” (Nilsson, 1998, 53). There is debate among some sociologists about whether Sweden as a whole, and especially Northern Sweden, was ever Christianized. Some theorists argue that Christianity was adopted as a thin overlay to the retained Norse practices and beliefs, primarily to placate rulers of the Swedish Kingdom and the Church (Starke and Finke, 2000, 69). This newer understanding problematizes even the term “Christianization,” which suggests a pure and uniform product, not influenced by older indigenous beliefs and praxis.

Despite some recorded and graphic instances of forcible conversions (Jörälv, 2000, 19-21), historian Sven-Erik Pernler explains that Old Norse “household religion”

was accepted and practiced alongside Christianity through the late thirteenth century, particularly in the countryside (1999, 15). Swedish scholar Stefan Brink maintains that Old Norse beliefs and practices live on in a syncretic Swedish Christianity and culture to this day (2013, 33). Historian Bertil Nilsson claims, however, that despite connections to the Byzantine Empire there is no sign of missionization or early influence of Russian Orthodoxy in Sweden (1995, 63-64). Though the early mission period of Swedish Christian history is linked only indirectly to contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, the interplay of Catholic, Sami, and, arguably, pagan (or earth religion) influences described above during the mission period remains alive in Swedish Christianity and pilgrimage today.

### **Medieval Christianity and Pilgrimage**

Christianity in Sweden was introduced and imposed in a top-down fashion by kings and nobility. The discovery of a late ninth- or early tenth-century Christian community on the property of a wealthy patron in Varnhem helps to illustrate how Christianization was achieved in concert with the concentration of wealth and political powers (Vretemark, 2011, 53-66). The conversion and baptism of Olof Skötkonung, who was a powerful king, in approximately the year 1000, was another important step in the introduction of Christianity to Sweden (Nilsson, 1998, 38; Ryman, 2005, 3). Some sources give the location of King Olof's baptism as St. Sigfrid's Spring, a spring in Husby (or Husaby) in the Skara Diocese of Sweden. Whether or not King Olof's baptism took place in Husby, or in England, as did his father's, these are early recorded conversions of Viking kings to Christianity. Husby is now the site of both religious and cultural tourism because of its spring, the pilgrimage path which leads to and from

Husby, and the presence of Sweden's oldest church and first bishopric. Today, Orthodox Christian pilgrims also visit St. Sigfrid's Spring, and pay homage to Saint Anna, the daughter of Olof, born Ingegerd, who was married and canonized in Russia (Josefsson, 2010, 70-72).<sup>85</sup> The supposed site of the first baptism of a Swedish king in Sweden has now taken on renewed popular significance in multiple Christian traditions with the advent of contemporary pilgrimage.

The first Christian cathedral in Sweden was built in Old Uppsala circa 1174. Old Uppsala may have been the site of a great pagan temple that was razed; other sources speculate that this was a central meeting place, although no pagan building ever stood there. This site in Old Uppsala was, however, a central place of meeting and of the enactment of Old Norse rites before the advent of Christianity in Sweden (Nilsson, 1998, 39; Pernler, 1999). Whether or not temples existed as physical structures, or as forest groves, they were important in Norse religion. Old Uppsala, and other sites co-opted by early Swedish Christians, were formerly places where pagans worshipped, and to which they made pilgrimages.

In medieval Sweden, pilgrimage was part of the medieval penitential system. Pilgrims first had to be given absolution by a priest (or bishop if the sin was particularly egregious), and then go on pilgrimage as one way of fulfilling works of satisfaction that a priest or bishop had assigned. Pilgrimage was one of the primary means of petitioning for the reduction of time in purgatory. This applied both to the pilgrim and to family members, living or dead, in whose stead the pilgrim did penance and begged indulgence. The diocesan bishop could grant indulgences to pilgrims even for visiting particular paintings and other works of art. Parish churches, in their quest for more visitors and

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<sup>85</sup> Josefsson does not mention whether the Orthodox pilgrims are from Sweden or not.

additional gifts, eagerly sought indulgence-giving, capital-providing, works of art for their collections. Some of these art works were purchased with parish funds, while others were donations from private persons from both within and without recipient parishes (Pernler, 1999, 71-72).

Pilgrimage was a major undertaking performed only after absolution had been granted by priest or bishop. This was not only true in Sweden, but wherever Christians went on pilgrimage. An indulgence was granted by an individual's confessor and dependent on the individual's true remorse. This was to be followed by satisfactory completion, or earnest attempt, to complete an imposed penance, such as going on a pilgrimage.

Euan Cameron, a scholar of the European Reformation explains that "An 'indulgence' was, officially, a favour conferred by the Church, which cancelled the works of satisfaction ('penances') imposed at the recipient's last confession" (87). An indulgence could be purchased by penitential acts, such as going on pilgrimage, or by offering gifts to the Roman Catholic Church through its priests or bishops. Reformers, urged by Martin Luther decried the ease with which wealth could purchase indulgences and claimed that the Catholic Church was corrupt.<sup>86</sup> Those who were able also contributed money to have masses said for their own souls, and for the souls of those already languishing in purgatory, awaiting release. During times of famine, plague, and war, no one could expect a long and healthy life on earth. Thus, despite the hazards inherent in pilgrimage—sometimes intentionally in the face of these very hazards—

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<sup>86</sup> Luther found indulgences to be a particular abomination, and preached that granting indulgences was "endangering souls" (Cameron, [1991], 2012, 102).

pilgrimage with a goal of ensuring an eternal heavenly afterlife was an important practice of medieval Christian life in Sweden (Pernler, 1999, 72-75).

Pilgrimage in Sweden was institutionalized and grew in scope when annual church meetings were instituted in Sweden in the 1200s. Annual church meetings entailed clerical journeys, which included a large lay contingent. These non-mission-oriented group travels of Swedish clergy and their attendants were early intra-Swedish pilgrimages. Beginning in the middle of the thirteenth century, priests not mandated to remain in their home parish journeyed to the annual church meeting of their diocesan seat. Skänninge, on the East Coast of Sweden, was the site of the first national meetings of The Swedish Church Province (Pernler, 1999, 18).

Skänninge meetings encompassed the entire Province of the Church of Sweden and were national, not merely diocesan. These meetings were held in the winter, when Skänninge was more easily reached. Bishops (other than from Finland) and their entourages could easily cross frozen rivers, travelling more directly than possible in the summer months. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, national meetings were no longer held in wintertime in Skänninge, but in each of the seven medieval diocesan seats in the summertime. These annual diocesan meetings of priests, with accompanying contingents of laypeople, began to contain elements of regional Swedish pilgrimage. Pernler explains that laypersons made donations for masses to be said for themselves or their relatives at the annual meetings. As on other pilgrimages, the parish churches at which these masses were offered could be quite far from the donor's home parish (1999, 26-27).

Some parts of Sweden, especially in the north, were Christianized later than others. The claim by Rodney Starke and Roger Finke in “Secularization R.I.P.,” that Scandinavia—and Sweden in particular—was never Christianized, is, for example, contradicted and complicated, even in Norrland, Sweden’s northernmost area. Other claims, that “popular paganism” persisted problematizes the concept of Christianization, but not the fact that Christianity was practiced, in Sweden, in the Middle Ages (2000, 69-70).<sup>87</sup> The first Christian church in Västerbotten, Norrland (bordering on Finland), was founded in 1339 and expanded in 1492, suggesting an early and ongoing commitment to Christianity (Kent, 2008, 19). Old church towns still stand where people from the vast countryside surrounding the few towns of pre-industrial Sweden stayed overnight every Saturday, so that they could also fulfill the edict to attend church once during the week and once on Sunday. The old church town in Lower Luleå, the original site of the town of Luleå,<sup>88</sup> still stands as testimony to the vigor with which Christianity was practiced even in the sparsely populated northern regions of Sweden (Bexell, 2003, 12-14). For Christians of the vast northern spaces, church attendance itself was mandated pilgrimage, over long distances in the Arctic north, with its inherent dangers.

Convents and monasteries were also an early part of Christianity in Sweden. The first monasteries in Sweden were Cistercian, reflecting the order of early missionaries. Monasteries located in Alvastra in Östergötland, and in Nydala, in the neighboring south-

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<sup>87</sup> Rational choice theory, of which Starke and Finke are proponents, will be discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>88</sup> This history is somewhat confusing: The medieval Catholic Church of Old Luleå remains standing in what first became a church town in the 1500s when Church of Sweden laws mandated church attendance. <http://www.lulea.se/omkyrkstaden/gammelstadshistoria.4.634a7f7d11953a781328000176.html> Accessed June 12, 2014-06. The town of Luleå was moved in the 1600s. <http://www.lulea.se/omkyrkstaden.4.fad391114421ce01880001917.html> Accessed 2014-06-12. Luleå today is a university town, soon also to be the second site of Facebook’s servers, with a population given as close to 50,000 as of 2010. (StaticsSweden.se). Accessed March 8, 2013.

central province of Småland, were inhabited by approximately 1143. Later in the 1100s, the Varnhem Monastery was established in Västergötland, on Sweden's West Coast, and Julita Monastery in Södermanland, on Sweden's East Coast in the Stockholm area. Sweden was also home to two cloisters of the Order of St. John. Originally Hospitallers of St. John, the Order of St. John had cared for injured crusaders and other pilgrims in Jerusalem. The members of the Order of St. John who came to Europe, including Stockholm, provided other humanitarian aid, but focused on healthcare, particularly of pilgrims (Berntson, 29-31).

While some monasteries and convents suffered not only self-imposed privations, but ongoing poverty and want, many wealthy monasteries, convents, diocesan and even parish churches, existed. Their wealth depended on the generosity of the members of the order and the clergy as well as that of laypersons who gave large, often commemorative gifts. This practice of gift-giving and the attempt to realize the wishes of the donors, made some institutions—even monasteries whose orders demand frugality and abstinence from comfort—places of beauty, wealth and ease (Pernler, 1999, 43-46). Monasteries were part of the support system on which pilgrims relied for lodging and for care when they had fallen ill, and pilgrims, in turn, often made donations to monasteries, cloisters, and their churches.

According to legend, Olav Haraldsson, Norway's national saint died in battle in 1030, and was quickly sanctified by 1031 and his relics were subsequently transported to Nidaros. St. Olav was the national saint of Norway, but the day of his death, July 29, was celebrated throughout Scandinavia (Nilsson, 30-31). The history of St. Olav's relics and their storied journey to Nidaros is itself illustrative of the unsettled religious and political

conditions early in Scandinavia's Christian history.<sup>89</sup> Pilgrimage to Nidaros attracted many pilgrims from before the time of the birth of Sweden's patron saint, Saint Birgitta, in 1303. Relics held a special place in the lives of medieval laypersons. Medieval, (and even earlier, though not in Scandinavia), pilgrims traveled to churches, tombs, and crypts that held relics—often bones, body parts, or items associated with the Passion of Christ, the Holy Family, the Apostle, and other saints—for sanctification, purification, worship, and the healing powers they believed these items held. Medieval laypersons also visited relics and other sacred items, such as consecrated hosts reputed to spontaneously bleed, for purely practical reasons as well: though this approach may seem impractical to a modern, Western person, in the Middle Ages, pilgrims went to their local shrines to pray for health, good harvest, and even luck in love (Cameron, 1997, 429, 14-15). The cults of saints were often very regional, and thus very attainable, and a source of comfort to the poor and to women who had little opportunity to travel far. As Peter Berger wrote in *The Sacred Canopy*, denying the cults of saints, and access to the sacred through relics, was one of the means by which the Reformation “cut the umbilical cord between heaven and earth” (1967, 112). Though never attaining the status of El Camino, Nidaros was the pilgrimage destination most commonly visited by Scandinavian commoners (Pernler, 2012, 76). Pilgrims visited Nidaros in remote, sparsely populated Norway, even when plagues and famines had eviscerated the population of the Scandinavian Peninsula to merely an estimated 750,000 persons in the late Middle Ages. Scholars estimate that the

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<sup>89</sup> St. Olav's relics were buried in the Trondheim Cathedral after the Reformation, and plundering Danes removed the silver chest that held them, but ignored the wooden chest and the relics inside. Later plundering Swedes were not so choosy, and took the wooden chest, too, but after removing the silver nails, they left it at another Norwegian church, from whence it was moved back to the cathedral. In the spirit of the Reformation, however, the chest with the saint's relics, were buried in an unmarked location in the cathedral (Jörälv, 2000, 133-134).



plague that killed many people throughout Europe was at its peak in Northern Europe in 1349-1350, and killed one-third of Scandinavians (Pernler, 1999 62; Piltz, 202). Despite depopulation and dangers, pilgrimages continued, perhaps in an effort of penitence because the plague was seen a sign of God's wrath and punishment.

### **Medieval Swedish Pilgrimage and Its Hardships**

Travels of pilgrims within Scandinavia, and those of Birgitta and others to foreign lands (to Jerusalem and to Rome, and to other European destinations), were much more difficult and distant than for those who travelled from Scandinavia versus Central or Southern Europe because many parts of Norway and Sweden were wilderness. That these travels were made during this time of extreme hardships is all the more remarkable. The hardships a medieval pilgrim in Sweden or Norway might endure by any of the routes that led to Nidaros show that marked pilgrim paths, monasteries, and provisions for pilgrims, were not in place in the early history of Scandinavian pilgrimage. Nidaros could be reached via dangerous mountain passes from the east by only the most fearless of pilgrims, but even the southernmost path leading to Nidaros wound through unmarked wilderness often without lodging. Pilgrimage to Nidaros was, nonetheless, not reserved only for the young and fit: older persons could be carried on a litter, and many went on horseback. Some chose the equally treacherous sea route. None, apparently, departed without a blessing from the parish priest—or from the diocesan bishop in the case of nobility (Jörälv, 2000, 37-58).

In the “Introduction” of his book *Pilgrims, Miracles and the Every Day: Forms of Behavior in the Scandinavian Middle Ages (Twelfth-Fifteenth Centuries)* Christian Krötzl writes that “[Scandinavian] pilgrims searched for miracles in the presence of relics. In

most cases they undertook these pilgrimages asking for cures from illness or injury” (1993, 28). Krötzl notes that just as in contemporary times, Scandinavians usually went on pilgrimage during the summer, when the weather was more hospitable. He also adds that “Just as today, Scandinavians could collect berries, and catch fish and game, and so were self-sufficient” (160). But Scandinavian pilgrims were not always able to be self-sufficient, and they wore special clothing which marked them as pilgrims. This pilgrim attire and equipment “fulfilled the important function of distinguishing pilgrims from other travelers.” Scandinavian pilgrims are described as wearing distinctive pilgrim attire, like that of pilgrims in the rest of Europe, as early as the eleventh century, “when the special status of pilgrims was recognized.” “The characteristic elements of pilgrim attire were broad-brimmed hats bearing the sign of the pilgrim, the long cloaks (pelerine), the rucksack or bag hanging from the waist, containers for carrying drinks, as well as the long pilgrim staff” (1993, 68).<sup>90</sup> A 1303 decision of (the Norwegian) King Håkan Magnusson was enacted against foreign persons wearing pilgrim attire and posing as pilgrims. “For this reason, foreigners were required to carry with them a letter composed by a holy or worldly authority, or, otherwise, be shown out of the country” (1993, 140). These “foreigners” dressed as pilgrims must have made easy victims of fellow travelers and also of unsuspecting hosts who may have provided food and lodging to pilgrims,.

Krötzl, whose work is focused on distance miracles, nevertheless, provides some insight into pilgrimage journeys themselves. He provides one example of an individual pilgrim in the Late Middle Ages that shows how difficult it was to fulfill penance for a

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<sup>90</sup> “A few depictions is mostly drawn from distance—that is mostly Santiago-or-Jerusalem pilgrims, from which the attributes taken from iconographic overviews from pilgrims all over Europe, are also applied to Scandinavian pilgrims.” A specific Scandinavian example is taken from gravestone images of two Danish pilgrims from the year 1300 (Krötzl, 1993, 168).

serious crime. In 1458 a Norwegian was sentenced to pay eight coins (*Goldmark*) for committing rape. The sentence was commuted by two coins to six because he was poor, but he then also had to make penitential pilgrimages to Vadstena and to Trondheim” (160).

At the time of St. Birgitta, Sweden’s patron and best-known saint, the tradition of pilgrimage for landed and noble families like hers had already been established several generations before Birgitta made her first pilgrimage. Birgitta was born in 1313, and died at the end of her final and most exhausting pilgrimage in 1373. The example of Birgitta’s own father, Birger Persson, is illustrative of the station, or class, of those who were able to make distant pilgrimages from Scandinavia. Later in his life, in 1321, Persson made pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela and Rome, as well as to Avignon, the papal seat at the time (Pernler, 1999, 58).

Birgitta’s own pilgrimages were many and legendary, including a pilgrimage to speak to the pope on theological and political matters. Her renown and later beatification were based, in part, on her many visions of the Virgin Mary, and even of Christ. Birgitta interpreted some of her visions as directives to take action on matters of church and state, helping to broker peace between England and France by her insistence on a prominent marriage that brought peace to the war-weary region. In 1348 she even attempted to persuade the pope, through correspondence and two intermediaries—a Church of Sweden bishop and a prior--to return to his rightful seat in Rome (Pernler, 1999, 62).<sup>91</sup>

Until after St. Birgitta’s canonization in 1391, and the establishment of the Bridgettine Cloisters in Vadstena in the fourteenth century, there is little evidence of

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<sup>91</sup> Birgitta’s intermediaries were Bishop Hemming of Åbo and the Alvastra Monastery Prior Petrus (Pernler, 1999, 62).

pilgrimages made to sites of Swedish saints from outside of Scandinavia. Moreover, it was not until the establishment of Bridgettine orders in Sweden in the fourteenth century, by Birgitta's daughter Katarina<sup>92</sup> that a Swedish saint came to be widely known outside of her own region. Following the establishment of the Vadstena Cloisters, Bridgettine cloisters for both monks and nuns were rapidly established throughout Europe (Pernler, 1999, 59-69).

The experiences of a Swedish pilgrim like Birgitta, from a landed family, were unlike those of the common pilgrim of late-medieval Sweden. Even the wealthy of landed or noble estate, however, were not immune to the hazards that befell many common pilgrims. One of Birgitta's own sons died while they were on pilgrimage in Rome (Jönsson, 2003, 156).

Poor commoners in Sweden were generally unable to go on pilgrimages to distant lands or regions. Their pilgrimages mainly consisted of local travel to the nearest church where satisfaction could be made or indulgences, in the form of masses for the souls of deceased relatives could be made and bestowed. The pilgrimage would often consist of walking to the parish church and walking the Stations of the Cross on the church grounds, or visiting the church that featured crosses and other holy objects (Pernler, 2012, 76-77). Pilgrims might walk around their own churchyard or visit another church that featured holy objects. These pilgrims performed pilgrimages within their own parish grounds, just as is done by many Swedish pilgrims today. This continuity from medieval to contemporary Swedish pilgrimage is evident in a new trend designed to increase local

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<sup>92</sup> Though she initiated the process, including by making her own pilgrimage to Rome and seeking her mother's canonization, Katarina herself died before her work was completed.

pilgrimage, and is inspired by Pearls of Life Protestant rosary bracelets.<sup>93</sup> The installation of sculpted pearls on pedestals and in church grounds provides objects, or stations, to and from which pilgrims may walk.<sup>94</sup>

A labyrinth from about 1300 has been discovered on the island of Gotland, as have partial remains of labyrinths in other areas of Sweden. This suggests that the meditative element of pilgrimage—not just punishing physical hardship and physical remove from everyday surroundings—was considered important even at that time (Pernler, 1999, 87-89). Medieval pilgrimage, nonetheless, clearly emphasized physical privation, endurance, and even suffering that is only mildly replicated in today's Sweden.

Pilgrims began to journey to Vadstena after the establishment of the Bridgettine Order, and its approval by Pope Urban V, and the inhabitation of Vadstena Abbey in 1370. Though Stephan Borgehammar's conference paper, "Preaching to Pilgrims: *Ad Vincula* Sermons at Vadstena Abbey," presented at a symposium, *A Catalogue and Its Users: A Symposium on the Uppsala C Collection of Medieval Manuscripts*, tells us more about the preachers and the sermons than it does about the pilgrims who heard those sermons, it is indirectly illuminating about the pilgrims themselves. Borgehammar explains that though the Vadstena Abbey was not consecrated until 1384, it was occupied by nuns and brothers by about 1370. Brothers had the duty of preaching, which Borgehammar presumes began already at that time and "continued unabated throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century" (1995, 91). Pope Urban V granted indulgences to Vadstena Abbey, so there was much traffic there. Borgehammar estimates that the 5,000 extant sermons for

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<sup>93</sup> The Pearls of Life rosaries and pilgrimages are introduced in chapters one and discussed further in chapter four.

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/13142007963/> Frälsarkransen. Post by Meta Måhl, June 6, 2014. Accessed June 22, 2014.

the populous represents a quarter of those composed (which were ever delivered in a different matter for speculation), by 25 identified and 25 unidentified authors. Of the 95 extant *ad vincula* sermons, Borgehammar made a “rapid (and cursory) survey of 90 of them” (93-95). These sermons spoke to pilgrims seeking liberation from sin through penitential pilgrimage, and all contained a reference to St. Birgitta and her revelations (95). The subject of these *ad vincula* sermons, preached on August 1, was “the bondage of sin, and the liberation from sin through penitence” (99).<sup>95</sup> The pilgrims, writes, Borgehammar, “had come specifically to confess and be absolved. The sermons are designed to prepare them for this, treating in detail various categories of sins, the parts of penance, obstacles to true penance, and the conditions of absolution.” Though St. Peter *ad vincula* (August 1), was a day of “general indulgence at Vadstena” the preachers, with one exception, never mention indulgences in their sermons. The purpose of the preachers was not to browbeat the pilgrims, concludes Borgehammar, but rather “to put their audience on the road to heaven” (100). We thus know that medieval pilgrims who went to Vadstena could expect both imprecations and instructions helping them to ultimately reach their heavenly destinations, and based on the number of sermons produced for the common populous and for pilgrims, that it was an important destination for Swedish pilgrims in the Late Middle Ages.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Ad vincula sermons refer to St. Peter in chains (Borgehammar, 98-99). *Vincula* is the Latin word for chains.

<sup>96</sup>The numbers of pilgrims who arrived in Vadstena, even on the St. Peter’s *ad vincula* day of August 1 is not a matter in which Borgehammar speculates.

## **The Reformation in Sweden: An End to Pilgrimage?**

At the end of a seven-decade-long process of banning Catholic practices, usurping goods belonging to the Catholic Church of Sweden, and destroying Catholic monasteries and infrastructure, Protestantism was adopted in the form of Lutheranism in 1593.

Despite the early Reformation efforts of Roman Catholic nobility and some Swedish Bishops to reinstate or preserve elements of Catholicism, the Lutheran factions of church and state representatives eventually prevailed, at least publicly and officially. Masses said for the soul, and all practices of earning indulgences—and therefore the pilgrimages by which absolutions were satisfied or indulgences sought—were banned in 1544 (Andrén, 1999, 111). Lutheranism was finally formalized as the state religion of Sweden in 1593.

The Protestant Reformation appears to have brought an end to officially sanctioned pilgrimages in Sweden. Nevertheless, since Lutheranism was adopted by fits and starts, and imposed on the people by the state, rather than occurring as a popular movement, some forms of pilgrimage continued, especially during the early Reformation. Just before the Church Meeting of Örebro, Sweden in 1529, influential reformer Olavus Petri, wrote that pre-Reformation ceremonies—that is, those not associated with the appropriate celebration of mass—were not to be done away with. Among folk, or “traditional ceremonies,” spared were the use of incense and pilgrimage (Andrén, 1998, 63).<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Though the subject for a church historian, it should be noted that even today Lutheran ceremonies bear a close likeness to Roman Catholic ceremonies. One piece of evidence that all elements of Roman Catholicism were never completely extirpated in the Swedish Protestant Reformation can be dated back to Olavus Petri’s pronouncements in 1529. Again, this matter is best left to church historians, who may find this an insignificant part of the Lutheran Reformation in Sweden. I note this because it relates directly to pilgrimage.

Gustav Vasa was the first Swedish regent (later crowned king in 1528), to adopt Lutheranism, if primarily as a method of enriching state coffers at church expense (Kent, 2008, 53). Gustav I endorsed evangelicalism at the Diet of Västerås in 1527, and he adopted it more fully, to the exclusion of Catholicism, in 1544 (Andrén, 1998, 44-45, 110-112; Montgomery, 1995, 144-145). Later, after the death of Gustav I, other members of the Vasa dynasty reverted to Roman Catholicism, while yet others, even Vasa counselors, adhered to anti-Lutheran, Calvinist doctrine (Green, 2011, 2287; Kent, 2008).<sup>98</sup> Despite these challenges, Lutheranism prevailed.

At the onset of the Reformation in Sweden, it was unclear even to cooperative Swedish bishops what the changes should entail, while others actively resisted. The Lutheran Church of Sweden functions, then and now, on the basis of apostolic succession, but this was not achieved without some machinations on the part of Gustav Vasa. Gustav I, rejecting Roman Catholicism, needed an evangelical Archbishop who was willing to be elected as such without papal consecration. Apostolic succession was preserved by the election of the schismatic Archbishop Laurentius Petri. The Swedish apostolic succession is thus considered unbroken—as it was by reformers in 1530—by reason of the Pope’s later consecration of Laurentius Petri’s successor, and, by extension, retroactively, of Petri himself (Andrén, 1998, 71-72). In retaining apostolic succession, Swedish Lutheranism retained an important element of Roman Catholicism. Today, Swedish Lutherans and Catholics again worship together during ecumenical pilgrimages, most notably, those from Sweden to Trondheim.

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<sup>98</sup>Johan III, the second of Gustav I’s sons to succeed him, sought to reunite Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism in Sweden. This attempt at counter-Reformation met with popular resistance and was unsuccessful. This failure resulted in the important meeting in Uppsala in 1593 and the formal formation of the Lutheran-Evangelical Church of Sweden (Andrén, 1998, 114-157).



## Pilgrimage and Monasteries

Pilgrims could not have made many of their journeys without the services provided by monasteries and cloisters. Throughout his work *Monasteries and the Reformation: The Closing of Monasteries and Convents in Sweden 1523-1596*, (*Klostren och Refomationionen: Upplösningen av Kloster och Konvent I Sverige 1523-1596*), Martin Berntson argues that the Reformation in Sweden has been misrepresented by Church of Sweden scholars. He argues that the Reformation was never more than a political movement and thus encountered much popular dissent (2003). In *The History of the Defeated: Catholic Life in Sweden from Gustav Vasa to Queen Kristina*, (*Förlorarnas Historia: Katolskt Liv i Sverige från Gustav Vasa till Drottning Kristina*), Roman Catholic scholar Magnus Nyman also writes of both royal and popular resistance by Roman Catholics to Reformation decrees (1997). Nyman argues that the presentation of Reformation history in Sweden has, until very recently, been one-sided, and resistance to the Reformation downplayed. The story of the Reformation has been told from the vantage point of those in power, rather than of the people of Sweden, who were attached to, and even defended, their Catholic practices and beliefs. Nyman explicitly asks “What happened to all the lay members of religious organizations and with the pious pilgrims who had journeyed in large numbers to shrines and cloisters?” (11-22).

All pilgrimage havens in monasteries and convents were not immediately destroyed. As explained by Berntson in *Monasteries and the Reformation* the time period required to effect closure of all monasteries and convents in Sweden was decades long, in some cases. Berntson also makes the larger point that the Reformation did not proceed either quickly or smoothly in Sweden. Berntson argues that while other scholars have

researched the dissolution process of particular orders, monasteries, and convents in Sweden, his is the first overview of the topic and process as a whole (13-16, 338).

Scholarly discussion of ongoing post-Reformation Swedish pilgrimage is related to the discussion of cloister closures because pilgrims were dependent on safe lodgings in monasteries.

In the late Middle Ages, before the first rumblings of the Reformation (1523 in Sweden), there were approximately 50 cloisters in Sweden (Berntson, 2003, 28). Nyman notes that by the early 1500s monasteries performed many services on which the society at large depended. Of these services he lists extending hospitality to pilgrims and running schools and hospitals first. But he also notes that among their most important functions was to introduce new technologies, often from foreign lands where monks had been educated. Furthermore, the wealthiest monasteries functioned as the only “agricultural-industrial complexes,” and the greatest centers of learning in Sweden. The only remaining centers of learning and economic growth in late-medieval agrarian Sweden were diocesan cathedral towns (1997, 41-43).

Armed uprisings against the reformers and the crown in defense of monasteries are thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, the best-known examples of the Swedish Counter-Reformation. Berntson claims that Swedish kings responded by ceasing rapid, forced closures, and instead allowing slow depopulation (by death and attrition of the inhabitants), of some monasteries and convents that had not already been ruined (Berntson, 360). Berntson explains that not only pilgrims, but the masses of laypeople of the sixteenth century perceived the prayers of monks and nuns as performing a salvific function, which was also a social function, since “society needed the prayers” (339). As

will be discussed below, sociologist Grace Davie argues that clergy (no longer monks and nuns in Sweden) still bear the responsibility for upholding the common good of laity and society, and that the laity still approves this arrangement (2000).

Not all Roman Catholic pre-Reformation pilgrimages ceased immediately in Sweden, where the Reformation was not an instantaneous event. Though Swedish sources are more elusive, German and Bohemian sources suggest that pilgrimage continued in Germany and Bohemia well after the Reformation. There are few older historical sources that do not dismiss post-Reformation pilgrimage as *Völksfrömmigkeit*—people’s piety—and as an insubordinate, if relatively innocent, religious practice of uneducated people. In his chapter “Pilgrimage in the Perspective of the History of the Reformation: History of Research and Desiderata,” Siegfried Bräuer (2007) claims that he finds no discussion in scholarly literature written before the late 1970s of how the pilgrimage impulse in post-Reformation Germany may have been disguised and subverted. His review of literature on that topic suggests that pilgrimage was an extra-churchly spiritual impulse, and that this spiritual impulse did not end abruptly with the official adoption of institutional Lutheranism. Bräuer mentions the work of Bernd Moeller, a scholar who suggests the possibility of ongoing post-Reformation pilgrimage disguised by (unspecified) metaphors associated with the “natural world” (2007, 33-37).<sup>99</sup> It is not surprising that some pilgrimage continued in Germany, despite Germany’s being home to both Luther (whose 95 theses were written in 1517), and the earliest Reformation in Europe. Unlike Sweden, what we know as Germany today became a

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<sup>99</sup> Bräuer cites Moeller and many other German language sources, specifically on the subject of pilgrimage in Germany. Some are unavailable, but even were time permitting to translate all that are, Bräuer’s mention suggests his is a study of academic debates of the time rather than tales of how the common people rebelled and went about pilgrimage once it was forbidden (2007, 31-53).

partly Protestant and partly Catholic group of kingdoms and territories, in which regional churches were institutionalized.

Swedish church historian Åke Andrén writes that attempting to describe the devotional life of the commoner in medieval Sweden places one on “highly precarious ground” (1998, 62). In a brief article titled “The Reformation and the Laity,” Sven-Åke Selander nevertheless theorizes that pilgrimages in Sweden continued during the sixteenth century after being forbidden in 1544 because they were so tightly connected to commerce.<sup>100</sup> Since pilgrimage sites and sites of market places visited on weekends and holy days during medieval times were often one and the same, and going to the marketplace did not cease with a ban on pilgrimage, there is no proof that the commoners did not continue to combine both practices. These were more local and regional pilgrimages associated with folk religiosity and a good harvest rather than the churchly Catholic practices the reformers most urgently sought to end. Selander also writes that the cults of Saints Olav, Sigfrid, and Eskil, and Helena were practiced after such practices were officially ended, but that commercial motivation eventually superordinated religious motivations (1998, 296-297).

Lesser-known examples of Swedish counter-Reformation are the local pilgrimages, which seem to have persisted to a degree that attracted notice at the highest level of church administration during the early Reformation in Sweden. Among the Catholic practices most despised by the reformers, among whom Archbishop Laurentius Petri was most powerful, was the worship of saints. The worship of saints, as Petri wrote, encouraged pilgrimage, whether to their relics or their images, and thus encouraged

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<sup>100</sup> Though the Reformation is typically considered the end of the Middle Ages, both came late to Sweden.

idolatry. So Petri sent out missives throughout the land discouraging, and even threatening, the laypeople from continuing their pilgrimage practices. This understanding of the steadfastness of the Catholic pilgrimage practices is based on written records of reformers' efforts to make commoners cease their pilgrimage practices (Nyman, 1997, 110-111).

### **The Post-Reformation Era in Sweden from 1600**

The Reformation was followed by several centuries of strict state pressure on the populace, and intolerance of any religious difference. Though regional differences existed before the Reformation, all had answered to Rome. The cohesion of the 150-year-old nation-state and church was strengthened by the adoption of the sweeping Church Law of 1686. This law, which was proclaimed from pulpits throughout the land, consolidated the powers of the monarchy under Karl XI. The 1686 law was an over-arching law, designed to bring doctrinal uniformity to all the parishes and congregations in the land. The underlying purpose of imposing rigid and conformist Lutheran doctrine was to win complete fealty to the King and his heirs. The publication of the Lutheran Catechism, psalm book, and, finally, the Swedish Bible of 1703, contributed to the oppression of alternative Christianities by firmly establishing what was orthodoxy (Montgomery, 1998, 156).

The rise of Protestantism was achieved only alongside the creation of many of the powerful nation-states that exist today. Post-reformation Europe was the product of many territorial wars, forming new and still fluid and warring nation-states. The banning of church-sanctioned pilgrimage in northern European nations played a part in growing nationalism. The time and resources of the well-lived Christian life were no longer to be

spent fruitlessly in distant lands, but profitably stored up at home. Northern Europeans were no longer to go out in search of pardons and indulgences. Devastating and depopulating imperialist wars included Sweden's (1630-1635) involvement in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).<sup>101</sup> These nation-building wars, fought with the intent of enriching the state and land-holdings, had long-lasting and impoverishing effects in Sweden. Pilgrimage and granting of indulgences had enriched bishops and cloisters and the Catholic Church, but not the state. But neither the enrichment of the clergy, nor the so-called corrupt practices of Catholicism, wreaked such devastating havoc as many years of war.

Catholics who remained in Sweden after the Reformation were subjected to religious persecutions. Forced Lutheran baptisms of Catholics were common, and some Post-Reformation Catholics were even put to death for their religious adherence in the 1600s. All Swedish Catholics unwilling to convert were finally exiled in 1617 (Lindqvist, 2000, 254). However, even during the 1600s, Sweden's strictest era of anti-Catholicism, small numbers of foreign Catholic tradespersons were permitted to work and live there. During a Swedish post-war period of economic recovery in the mid-1700s, more Roman Catholic tradespersons and artists were permitted to enter Sweden. Nevertheless, the number of Catholics is not believed to have reached over 2,000 in Stockholm, then a city of 70,000. And, as Barbro Lindqvist points out, this small number of Roman Catholics in Stockholm was, surprisingly, not surpassed until the 1980s (2000, 244-245).

Another post-Reformation movement that gives evidence of cracks in the façade of the monolithic and all-encompassing Church of Sweden is the Pietist movement of the

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<sup>101</sup> The battle over sovereignty of what is now Southern Sweden, Skåne, was resolved at last in 1679, when Sweden again prevailed over Denmark (Montgomery, 1998, 152).

late 1600s and early 1700s. Like the Reformation itself, Pietism in Sweden was a movement originating with German theologians and teachings. Swedish Pietism was, at first, an inner-churchly movement of individualism and even mysticism. Some theologians of Uppsala Theological Seminary adopted Pietist beliefs themselves and continued allowing students to attend German institutions known for Pietist teachings. Swedish theologians even allowed a measure of Pietist belief within the Lutheran Church for a short time when Pietism was a small movement, in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Though royalty was normally against any threat to the Church of Sweden, early Swedish Pietism was adopted by members of the upper class, and even accepted by Queen Ulrike Eleonora, who reigned briefly from 1718-1720. This early Swedish pietism, which was not a radical people's movement, did not threaten the monarchy or state church. Pietist conventicles, or Bible group meetings separate from the Sunday services of the Church of Sweden, were permitted as long as teachings did not conflict with Lutheran teachings (Lenhammar, 2005, 20-22).

This compromise did not last long. The power of the monarchy depended on a unified church, and Swedish Pietism rapidly became less orthodox, refuting the Lutheran teaching that the King was anointed and chosen by God. Pietists sought to distinguish worldly from Godly powers, thereby challenging the monarchy's claim to divine appointment. The radical but central Swedish Pietist teaching—that laypersons did not require the intervention of a priest to commune with God—and that religion and piety were individual matters, stood in opposition to Lutheran orthodoxy and a unified Church of Sweden. Swedish Pietist practices and beliefs caused even greater consternation and

legal repercussions towards the end of the 1720s when the middle and lower classes began to adopt these teachings (Lenhammar, 2005, 20-31, 62-77).

Historian Todd Green writes about early Swedish Pietism as “popular resistance.” Green argues that Pietism broke barriers of social class and gender. Swedish Pietists allowed non-traditionally educated preachers, and even some women, to speak from the pulpit in the context of conventicles (2007). Green argues that Pietism is an unusual instance of a popular religious movement, lacking the usual hallmarks of a popular resistance movement because early Pietists were highly educated and of high social status. The Pietist movement of the 1700s was, like today’s neo-pilgrimage movement, begun in Sweden by priests and initially accepted by some eminent theologians of the Church of Sweden. Both Pietism then and pilgrimage now, attract members of higher socio-economic standing and levels of education. As Green explains, not only did later Pietism in Sweden challenge authority of Church and State, but “the emphasis [of Pietism] was on personal experiences of spiritual renewal” (79). Though contemporary pilgrimage is no challenge to the state, the individualistic impulses of Pietism appear to be re-emergent in Swedish pilgrimage today.

The Enlightenment in Sweden was an era of increased mobility as well as new, scientific ideas. Carl Linnaeus, who came to Uppsala in 1741, was widely respected for his ideas and was ennobled in the year 1757. Linnaeus, subsequently von Linné, believed in a natural theology, but did not develop his personal, visionary theology, since it was met with unwelcome critique by theologians in Uppsala (Lenhammar, 1998, 98-99). The natural theology of Linnaeus may have indirectly have influenced the Swedish view of God and nature through his scientific teachings, which convey that “organic harmony in



nature, which filled him with worship of the Creator” (99). This was also a time when forced, or at least coerced migrations befell farmers due to “The Great Change,” a government program instituted in 1757 in order to improve agricultural production (Kent, 2008, 122). Though captives of foreign wars and displaced farm families were not then associated with pilgrims, we speak, today, of both forced migrations and in/voluntary pilgrimages within the context of human movements.

### **The Expansion of Religious Freedoms, Religious Awakening, & the Free Churches of Sweden**

Swedish society and the Church of Sweden functioned in relative harmony—though the church was under the dominion of the crown. The Church Law of 1686, which enforced Lutheran orthodoxy, prevailed, despite earlier challenges, (including Pietism and Enlightenment thinking, as mentioned above), until the mid-1800s when Lutheran orthodoxy was challenged by evangelical movements. Though some restrictions on the religious practice of non-Swedes were lifted as early as the 1770s (Green, 2011, 2288), the 1686 law was not fully retracted until 1951.

Like Christianity in the Middle Ages, the Reformation in the 1500s, and Pietism in the 1700s, the neo-evangelical movements of the 1800s grew—at least in part—out of foreign European influences. A century after Pietism’s rise in the 1700s, the Swedish free church movement arrived in the 1800s primarily from England (Nyman, 2005, 13), and later from the United States. The Swedish free church movement was both imported and homegrown. For example, the Methodist Church in Sweden was born from, and was the Swedish arm of, English Methodism in the 1830s, and influenced by Methodist missionaries from the United States in the 1860s and 1870s (Jarlert, 2001, 130-132). The

Swedish Baptist Church, though strongly influenced by preachers from the United States, became an independent entity (Jarlert, 2001, 167-170). The free churches, while not introducing pilgrimage, did introduce an element of escape from the every day, in out-of-doors meetings. In fact, the free churches rebelled when told to meet only indoors (Bexell, 46). These meetings were, as the Turners argue, similar in intent to pilgrimage. Meetings held outside of the immediate city limits, or what the Turners call *per agros*, which the Turners translate as “in the fields” (1978, 241) provide a similar escape, despite limited physical remove, from home and household, which is particularly important for women.

Looking back towards the beginning of the neo-evangelical movement, we see a remarkably different Swedish society from that of today. A full ninety percent of the approximately 3.9 million Swedes in the 1860s—when the neo-evangelical movement was in its turbulent heyday—lived rural lives based on an agricultural economy (Bexell, 1998, 38). In the early 1990s, about four of the approximately five million Swedish residents in 1900 still lived in the countryside, yet only half were still occupied in agriculture (Brohed, 2005, 10). In 1900, at the height of the new evangelical free church movements, Sweden was rapidly moving away from its agrarian past to its post-agrarian present (Bexell, 1998, 93-94). Pilgrimage is a movement in which people mostly move within the agrarian countryside of Sweden, walking in the footsteps of their immediate ancestors as well as of saints.

Evangelicalism, stemming from the desire to liberate churches from state control, resulted in changes both within the Church of Sweden and in the formation of the Swedish Free Churches. New laws establishing some tolerance of Christian

denominations other than Lutheranism, the so-called “dissenter laws,” were enacted in 1860 and 1873. The 1860 dissenter law permitted leaving the Church of Sweden for membership in another recognized Christian denomination (Bexell, 45-46). Paving the way for Christian change outside of the Church of Sweden, traditional free churches also indirectly paved a path for change within. And that path has led, 150 years later, to a church that has once again taken up the forbidden practice of pilgrimage.

Meanwhile, congregational differences between Church of Sweden churches had arisen even before 1860. Evangelicalism brought change from within the Church of Sweden as well as from without (Bexell, 37). The evangelical movements resulted in semi-schismatic organizations within the Church of Sweden, such as the Evangelical Motherland’s Foundation, or *Evangeliska Fosterland-Stiftelsen*, (EFS). The EFS movement was, like other free church movements, not truly homegrown, but arose from missionization, and teaching back and forth between Sweden and Scotland, just as the early Christianization of Sweden was a product of missionization from Franconia and Kent. When the Swedes proved reluctant to break away from Lutheran teachings altogether, the Scottish influence waned, and the EFS became, over time, led by Lutheran Swedes (Bexell, 1999, 50-55). Joining the EFS or the Bible Faithful Friends (*Bibeltrogna Vänner* or BV) was, however, not equivalent to joining a different non-Lutheran denomination. There has never been a major schism within the Church of Sweden, and the EFS and BV still exist within the Church of Sweden today. The EFS still has influence, particularly in the Jönköping area where it was founded.<sup>102</sup> The Bible-believing, Bible Faithful Friends organization has ceased to be an independent

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<sup>102</sup> The Province of Jönköping still has the highest percentage of free church members of any province in Sweden, at approximately ten percent. The Province of Örebro is second in free church numbers today, and is the spiritual and cultural home of Swedish Baptists (Skog, 2010, 58-68).

organization. Its few remaining members joined a mission-oriented, inner-churchly, Evangelical Lutheran Mission or *Evangelisk Luthersk Mission* (ELM), to form the ELM-BV in 2005. It is perhaps a testament to the ecumenical sentiment, as well as to the laws and traditions that bound Swedes to the Church of Sweden, that, even at the height of neo-evangelical membership, only ten percent of Swedes were free church members. Today's pilgrimage movement still reflects this seeming unwillingness to leave the historical church. Pilgrimage attracts many who are skeptical of traditional Christian belief and praxis. But, despite divergence from orthodox Lutheran ways, many pilgrims are willing to search for a new and different spiritual path without outright rejection of the historical church.

The Swedish Mission Covenant Church, or *Svenska Missionsförbundet* (SMF) though also originally an inner-churchly movement, elected to exit the Church of Sweden and become an independent denomination during the First World War. SMF leaders were pacifists who did not believe in mandatory military service for all (Brohed, 2005, 90). Swedish pilgrimage today, with an emphasis on pacifism (anti-war) and peace (non-violence), may reflect SMF pacifist thinking, as well as its Church of Sweden roots. Pacifism and global peace was the central theme of the Church of Sweden's 2011 Dag Hammarskjöld PAX Pilgrimage for Peace.<sup>103</sup> Pilgrimage as a potential vehicle for peace and social justice will be discussed further in chapter six.

The free churches with the largest membership in 1960 were the Swedish Mission Covenant Church, with an estimated membership of 96,700, followed by the newer Pentecostal Church (92,000), the Salvation Army (41,000), the Swedish Baptists (32,

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500), and the newer Swedish Alliance and Örebro Mission Churches (memberships of 14,900 and 19,800 in 1960, respectively), and the older Methodist Church (11,200). The older free churches started to lose members quite rapidly in the 1960s, and, like the Church of Sweden, mostly continued to do so (Gustafsson, 1997, 92). In the interest of salvaging some of their church buildings, and of remaining a viable denomination, the Swedish Baptist Church, the Swedish Mission Covenant Church, and the Methodist Church in Sweden decided to form a new, common denomination. In early March 2013, this denomination adopted the official name of the “Equimenia.”<sup>104</sup> One of the hallmarks of this new denomination is its ongoing commitment to Christian ecumenism, of which active participation in the Swedish pilgrimage movement is a part.

In *The Free Churches in Cooperation: The History of Ecumenism in the Swedish Free Churches 1905-1993* (*Frikyrkor i Samverkan: Den Svenska Frikyrkoekumenikens Historia 1905-1993*) Torsten Bergsten (1995), himself a Swedish Baptist, follows the development of ecumenism in the Swedish free churches from 1905, when they held their first ecumenical meeting, through 1993. Though there were differences among the free churches—notably in their views on baptism—the free churches shared the common and primary goal of separating church and state (19-32). The “Church-State Question” was the central issue in these ecumenical meetings. Some free churches, including the Pentecostal churches, focused more on the individual’s relationship with God, while the older free churches—the Mission Covenant, Swedish Baptist, and Methodist Church in Sweden—came to focus more on the community. These latter churches focused more

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<sup>104</sup> <http://www.kyrkanstidning.se/inrikes/gemensam-framtid-far-nytt-namn> Accessed March 28, 2013.

intently on social welfare, or being part of a caring Christian, ecumenical community, (Bergsten, 1995, 49-50).

The free church awakenings and revivals were central developments within Swedish Christianity in the mid-1800s. These revivals were usually situated in fields at short distances from town centers, but still enabled seekers to remove themselves from everyday existence, enter a liminal space of transformation, and subvert the priestly order with their response to prophetic calls for change. Mid-nineteenth century revivals and many of today's Swedish pilgrimages have several features in common. Both are at the borders of their time's traditional religious expression, and both allow deep and transformative participation without demanding that an individual travel far or endure physical hardship to participate. As Lutz Kaelber argues in his chapter in *On the Road to Being There: Studies in Pilgrimage and Tourism in Late Modernity*, "Place and Pilgrimage, Real and Imagined," "After all, religion...is a social sphere where most events are immensely local (2006, 283.) And while the events, like pilgrimage, may be more often local than distant, the religious symbols travel over vast time and space even when the pilgrims themselves do not.

Though the free church membership never reached more than ten percent of the total population, even around 1900, the traditional free church movement on the Church of Sweden and on Swedish society, was and remains disproportionate to free church membership numbers at any time in their history (Gustafsson, 1997, 85-87). Free church members are the few Swedish carriers of traditional, orthodox Christianity—if not Lutheranism—in contemporary Sweden. Outsized traditional free church involvement

and influence, now even as conference leaders (see chapters below) is again exemplified in today's pilgrimage movement.

*The "Folk Church" Movement of Late 1800s & Early 1900s*

Influential bishops of the Church of Sweden, foremost among them, Einar Billing (1871-1939), Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931), and Manfred Björkqvist (1884-1985), were leaders of those who sought, from the early 1900s on, to separate the Church of Sweden from the state. This effort came in part as a response to the free church critique that congregations were artificially aligned, in ungodly fashion, according to geographically and state-determined parishes. These liberal bishops sought to separate strict Lutheran theology from private, religious expression (Brohed, 2005, 26-27). In the attempt to bring the Church of Sweden closer to the people, the clergy tried to refashion and reframe it as the "folk church," (*folkyrkan*). Though not an attempt to separate church and state, this was also an effort to distance the Church of Sweden from the state, but despite these efforts, people continued to refer to the Church of Sweden as the "state church" (*statskyrkan*) (Green, 2009).<sup>105</sup> In their belief that individual religiosity should be valued, these liberal bishops of the early 1900s are the clear forbears of the bishops of the 1980s and 1990s, who believed that pilgrimage—an unorthodox practice hearkening back to Sweden's Catholic past—presented the individual with a path to a deeper spiritual life (Wadensjö, 1995, 11-22).

Billing sought to define the Church of Sweden as a folk church, a welcoming people's church. But in recognition of growing secularization in Swedish society, Billing strongly emphasized that the folk church was an evangelical, New Testament-based church, not a church based on laypersons' understandings of Christianity. Billing, who

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<sup>105</sup> Todd Green. Personal correspondence, Feb 18, 2009.

had influential family connections within the Church of Sweden dating back to the early 1700s, challenged the received order, and was the first highly influential proponent of the folk church movement. Billing also challenged free church critique, and maintained that the Church of Sweden territoriality was an instrument of providing Christianity to all people in Sweden (Brohed, 2005, 26-29; Bäckström, 2001, 142).

Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, perhaps the most influential Swedish theologian of his time, noted the drop-off in Church of Sweden attendance during his tenure as Archbishop of the Church of Sweden from 1914-1931. Söderblom's response was to actively embrace ecumenism (Green, 2011, 2289). The position of open, ecumenical Christianity introduced during Söderblom's tenure as archbishop is held by the Church of Sweden and its bishops to this day. The push towards ecumenism among free churches was already apparent in 1919, when the Church of Sweden was still the state church (Bergsten, 1995, 63). Now that the Church of Sweden has been, to some degree, freed from the state, Christian ecumenism has reached a level of cooperation only dreamt of one hundred years ago. The contemporary Swedish pilgrimage movement is an example of Swedish Christian ecumenism at work.

### **State & Church in Modern Times**

The push for a folk church was in opposition to the wishes of the Social Democrats of the 1930s, who wanted the people to rely on the social welfare state, "the people's home," and not on the Church of Sweden (Ryman, 2005, 50). The Social Democrats had already begun to lobby for a separation of Church and State in 1897. From different perspectives, Social Democrats, free church leaders, the Baptists (and their spokesperson, P.P. [Paul Petter] Waldenström, in particular), and even Church of



Sweden leaders all sought to create a new society in which freedom of belief would take precedence over traditional Lutheran orthodoxy. The Social Democrats of the early 1900s lobbied with the free church leaders for a Church of Sweden separate from the State on the grounds that religion should be a private, individual matter, not state regulated (Brohed, 2005, 115, 26).

In 1920, Arthur Enberg, a politician as well as a priest, lobbied for the state's supremacy over the Church of Sweden, which was "not a free agent, but a function of the State itself," and whose property belonged to the Swedish people (Brohed, 2005, 35). Though the position of the Social Democrats in Sweden subsequently changed, the primary point of some scholars has been that Swedes have had no freedom of religion for centuries (2000, 229). A more thorough reading of Swedish Christian history, as I have tried to present, shows, however, that movements emphasizing the individual's relationship to God arose periodically throughout the supposedly monolithic, post-Reformation period. Today's pilgrimage movement also emphasizes individual spirituality. This position, of actively seeking and questioning, is, as this dissertation shows through the example of pilgrimage, no longer heterodox in Swedish society, but falls within the realm of religious expression supported by the Church of Sweden.

Bishops of the Church of Sweden continue to bring new ideas and new vitality into the Church of Sweden today. Like the bishops of the Reformation, who introduced Lutheranism to Sweden, and the bishops of the early twentieth century who first promoted the idea of a folk church for all, Church of Sweden bishops today offer alternative spirituality and practices that may appeal to those who have been disenchanted or discouraged with church "religion." Interestingly, the Church of Sweden Bishops are

among those who have been most active in promoting pilgrimage since the 1990s, and continue to be most active and efficient today. Pilgrimage, though growing in numbers of participants and in numbers of participant congregations, is not yet the activity of the average Swede who attends baptisms and funerals in the Church of Sweden.

### **Religion in Contemporary Sweden**

Europe's cultural heritage is generally perceived as Christian, while its present, though Christian, is perceived as more pluralist than its past. Pilgrimage plays a constructivist role in this re-creation of Christian culture by assisting in what Nancy Frey (1998) calls post-War efforts of "rebuilding Europe through a collective past" (14).

Sweden, like many other European countries, became a nation-state with stable borders only in recent centuries. Echoes of regionalist affiliations continue to reflect long and bitter wars between Sweden and Denmark. As mentioned above, Southern Sweden was wrested from Denmark for the last time in 1679 (Montgomery, 1998, 152). These affiliations also reflect the acrimonious battle between the Danish bishoprics in Lund—formerly in Denmark and now in Southern Sweden—and the Swedish Archdiocese of Uppsala. Finland was ceded to Alexander I of Russia in 1809 after many years of brutal war. This accord was reached with the understanding that Lutheran Finns would be permitted to practice their religion freely (Jarlert, 2001, 12). Despite past strife, Scandinavian identity is also felt and expressed in many ways by Scandinavians. Pilgrimage within Scandinavia, such as take place on the *Jämt-Norge Vägen* between

Sweden and Norway, and along other networks of paths, may also be understood as a constructivist effort to maintain a regional Scandinavian identity.<sup>106</sup>

Swedish church laws and new religious freedoms of the 1800s were designed with the dissident, resident Swedish population in mind. Church of Sweden dissenter laws in the mid-1800s were ostensibly designed to mitigate dominance of the Church of Sweden over religious minority churches and organizations. But the reality of religious pluralism due to new immigrant populations is not fully addressed even in more recent Swedish laws (Jänträ-Jareborg, 2009). Religious tolerance in Sweden has been termed a negative right: those belonging to minority religions have the right not to have the beliefs or practices of others forced upon them. These are not the same as positive rights, *i.e.*, the rights to freely engage in the practices of non-Christian religions (Alwall, 1998, 145-146; Larsson and Sander, 2007). Religio-cultural melding, however, which took place over many centuries in Sweden, renders many of these negative rights powerless. Many secondary schools, for example, continue to conduct graduation exercises in the Lutheran Church of Sweden tradition and in its convenient buildings (Jänträ-Jareborg, 2009, 3). That this debate is not about graduation exercises in non-Lutheran, minority Christian churches illustrates the continued socio-cultural dominance of the Church of Sweden. This heatedly contested practice of bringing non-Christian children and families into Christian houses of worship is a part of the ongoing debate on religious freedom. In popular parlance, this practice is described as “traditional” or “cultural,” not religious. School graduations in Church of Sweden buildings are upheld as an invitation to immigrant families to become part of Swedish tradition, framed as inclusionary, rather than exclusionary.

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<sup>106</sup> [http://www.pilgrim.nu/Nordiska\\_pilgrimsleder.html](http://www.pilgrim.nu/Nordiska_pilgrimsleder.html) Accessed March 8, 2013.

The 1951 Freedom of Religion Law finally allowed not only immigrants, but also the Sweden-born, to exit the Church of Sweden without joining another Christian denomination or indeed any religious organization (Green, 2011; Brohed, 2005). Minority religions in Sweden were already, in 1951, both homegrown and immigrant. Even greater religious diversity, dating from the early 1970s, came with waves of state-sanctioned arrivals of guest workers and asylum-seekers. Numerous Muslim guest workers came from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia in the 1970s, while numerous refugees arrived from Iran in the 1980s, and more recently, Iraq (Alwall, 1998; Bäckström, 2010). Religious freedoms and religious tolerance, based on laws formulated to accommodate exit from the Protestant Church of Sweden also allow a large degree of religious freedom for non-Christians. Islamic and Judaism practices at times, however, conflict with Swedish State law, as in the case of kosher and halal slaughter (which will be discussed in chapter six). There was, for example, no Jewish school in Sweden until post-War years when a later wave of asylum-seeking Jews arrived. A Swedish law as of 2012 is, however, now attempting to restrict homeschooling undertaken for religious reasons.<sup>107</sup> It is possible as immigrant populations in Europe grow, and far right parties gain momentum, that the outcome may be more stringent restrictions on freedoms of minority religious expression.

Those seeking work or asylum, or “involuntary pilgrims,” continue to come from both near and far. The 2011 Statistics Sweden report of foreign-born persons enumerates 209 nations of origin of persons coming to Sweden in that year.<sup>108</sup> The many varieties of

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<sup>107</sup> <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/152318#.UQA9NmcVIOQ> Accessed February 28, 2013.

<sup>108</sup> [http://www.scb.se/Pages/SSD/SSD\\_TablePresentation\\_340508.aspx?rxid=bf5fa00a-e63c-4330-a9d1-fb70ffc635](http://www.scb.se/Pages/SSD/SSD_TablePresentation_340508.aspx?rxid=bf5fa00a-e63c-4330-a9d1-fb70ffc635) Accessed March 8, 2013.

Orthodox churches in Sweden today—from Syrian to Serbian—testify to a growing immigrant-driven diversity, in terms of both national origin and denomination, even within Christianity.<sup>109</sup> Recent homegrown Christian diversity in Sweden is, moreover, exemplified by growing numbers of Roman Catholic parishes and members, and by new charismatic movements such as “*Livets Ord*,” founded, and formerly led, by Ulf Ekman. The members of *Livets Ord* make frequent, and, having decided to live there, sometimes permanent, pilgrimages to Jerusalem (Coleman, 2004, 52-53).

Though disenfranchised in the year 2000—as no longer the official State Church of Sweden—the Church of Sweden remains the majority church in Sweden. In the year 2000 its membership stood at 82.9 percent of the population and encompassed 70 percent of the population ten years later in 2010.<sup>110</sup> This number had fallen to 65.9 percent of Sweden’s population in 2013, the last year for which total figures have been gathered.<sup>111</sup> This is hardly surprising as the number of non-Christian asylum-seekers continue to make up a greater proportion of the Swedish population. The disenfranchisement of the Church of Sweden was yet another step towards greater religious freedom in Sweden and followed not long after a 1996 decision that children born to Church of Sweden members would not themselves automatically become members. These and the aforementioned changes define a new basis of religious freedom in Swedish terms. Freedom to exit, and to never join the Church of Sweden, may leave many Church employees in a precarious position. Pilgrimage is one answer to the continued employment of many church workers, as pilgrimage becomes more popular and more pilgrim centers open. As in other areas of church life, both administrators and hands-on providers of pastoral care and interaction

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.bilda.nu/sv/Snabbval/OBK/> Accessed February 28, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=645562> Accessed March 28, 2013.

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=645562> Accessed September 30, 2014.

with the laity—the pilgrimage leaders and their assistants—are needed to provide pilgrimage.

### **Pilgrimage, Health & Well-Being: Church and State as Providers of Welfare**

Health, welfare, and religion have been connected in Sweden since monks cared for plague victims, lepers, travelers, and pilgrims. The social welfare system of today is the outcome of the weakening both of the Swedish welfare state and of the disestablished state church. The role in social welfare of churches of all denominations is of greatest importance in rural areas where the reach of the welfare state now proves especially insufficient. Social welfare has thus become part of a larger voluntary social sector (Bäckström, 2001, 2004). This voluntary sector includes non-governmental union members and organizers, sports leaders and parent soccer coaches, as well as clergy and lay volunteers.

Today's Swedish pilgrimage movement is most closely identified with the Church of Sweden and the traditional Swedish Free Churches. With its genesis in the 1990s, pilgrimage today has its roots and routes most firmly established in two areas: first, those provinces or dioceses first Christianized in Sweden and, second, the mountainous areas of northern Sweden that have long appealed to serious alpine trekkers and are well-served by the tourist industry. This latter, more ecumenical strain of church-sponsored pilgrimage continues to co-sponsor pilgrimages with tourist organizations today. On the Dag Hammarskjöld Way in the Luleå Diocese of Norrland, Hammarskjöld's writings on rune stone facsimiles tie modern Swedish Christianity and its pre-Christian Nordic past together in the landscape of the indigenous Sami. Runestones were Norse in origin, but

adapted early on by Christians (Wicker, 2003, 546).<sup>112</sup> Another ingredient of this syncretism is the simultaneous acknowledgement of liminality and the imagined incursion into sacred spaces of Sami indigenous religion. This attempt to incorporate Sami sacred space into contemporary pilgrimage is an attempt to merge the identities of Swedes of different backgrounds, all tied to the land despite religious and cultural difference, by the sharing of sacred spaces (Anttonen, 2013).

In fact, many Sami are Church of Sweden members today, so sacred spaces are routinely shared by Sami and other Swedes. Some Church of Sweden parishes provide services in one or more of the Samish languages as well as in Finnish, in Meänkieli (a Finnish dialect of Northern Sweden), and in sign language.<sup>113</sup> The Bible is in the process of being translated into three of the five Swedish Samish languages. The formerly itinerant Sami lifestyle, based on herding reindeer and fishing, included travels through or past sacred sites. Some Sami trails or spaces are now Christian pilgrimage paths, punctuated by those modern-day carved rune stones, borrowed from Old Norse religion. The non-Christian is thereby recognized, as are their sacred objects and shared sacred space. Swedish pilgrimage takes Swedish ecumenism a step beyond Christian ecumenism in recognizing Norse and Sami religious traditions alongside Swedish Christianity.

## Conclusion

Lutheran Christianity has been the dominant religious force in Sweden for centuries. Though membership has decreased in terms of a percentage of the total population, the statistics, collected and published by the Church of Sweden, or *Svenska*

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<sup>112</sup> <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=660860> Accessed February 28, 2013.

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=729484> Accessed February 28, 2013.

*Krykan*, shows that 69% of the Swedish population were members in 2011.<sup>114</sup> The Church of Sweden has covered the entire landmass, or territory, of Sweden for many centuries. In keeping with this tradition, pilgrimage ways have now been created in all provinces and dioceses of Sweden.

This chapter on Swedish Christian history and pilgrimage, has, I hope, shown some of the connections of Swedish Christian history to elements of Swedish pilgrimage today. The connections are not always obvious, because much history has been written by Church of Sweden theologians. Elements of pilgrimage individualism and a belief in an unmediated connection to that which is sacred, powerful in the Pietism, are also important elements of Swedish pilgrimage today.

The medieval connection to contemporary Swedish pilgrimage is most easily drawn, as many paths, cathedrals, and destinations, Vadstena foremost among them, are the destinations to which medieval pilgrims journeyed. The monasteries and convents where pilgrims stayed are gone (other than in Vadstena, where the Bridgettine Order has new life), but the ruins of these same monasteries and convents have awakened the interest of contemporary pilgrims, so are not entirely lost. The feast days and holy days when pilgrims went to market and to their local shrines are no longer celebrated in the same manner as in the Middle Ages. Specific information about local pilgrimage by commoners is scarce, but the picture of pilgrims in pilgrim garb, traveling both far (of which more is written, especially when the pilgrim is saint or a member of the nobility or landed gentry) and near, and traveling with both sacred and secular intent, has been sketched. While penitential pilgrimage and the practice of indulgence is gone, today's pilgrimage asceticism reflects pilgrimages long past.

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<sup>114</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=645562> Accessed 2013-02-28.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### SWEDISH PILGRIMAGE AND SECULARIZATION

#### **Introduction**

By investigating Swedish pilgrimage, this dissertation calls into question whether the characterization of Sweden as the “most secular nation” applies, or whether the scenario is more complex (Zuckerman, 2008, 158). In this chapter I will examine Swedish pilgrimage in the light of secularization theory, because many aspects of Swedish pilgrimage today suggest that pilgrimage signifies a religious resurgence, if not on an overwhelming scale. Other aspects of Swedish pilgrimage suggest that pilgrimage is simply an escape from religion into Swedish nature and culture, under the cultural guise of a religious activity. The research question I will address, after providing a background on secularization theory (invoking sociologist secularization theorists Phil Zuckerman, Steve Bruce, and David Thurfjell, and also rational choice theorists Rodney Stark and Eva Hamberg) and its debates, is whether pilgrimage in Sweden signifies increased religiosity—and if so, what increased religiosity means in the pilgrimage context. On the other hand, I consider whether pilgrimage is symptomatic of individualization, and thus, in terms of classic secularization theory, a secularizing force in Sweden. Scholars Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead argue that expressing subjective or “subjective-life” religion is a sign of religious strength, not weakness, and not counter to the formation of religious communities, and so discard individualization as a valid argument for secularization: groups are formed from individuals. European sociologists Grace Davie and Danièle Hervieu-Léger, who do not fall into the category of

secularization theorists but work extensively with the concepts of secularization, argue for the continuing significance of religion in Europe, if with some variation in their theories of how significant religion remains, and what form religion now takes and is likely to take in the future. Last, together with theorists who reject secularization theory as the “core myth” of sociology, I attempt, with American sociologists of religion, Nancy T. Ammerman and Meredith McGuire, to step outside of the secularization debate, and simply observe pilgrimage, in some of its manifestations, as ordinary, lived, everyday religious practice (Ammerman, 2007; McGuire, 2008). In this view, individualization and subjectivization are not equated with secularization.

Swedish sociologist of religion Anders Bäckström is concerned that Nordic religion and Christianity may be overlooked in any social, scientific study of religion (2004, 250). Religion in Scandinavia, which Bäckström refers to as “liberal religion,” often does not meet the definition of religion as tied to belief in a transcendent power or being.<sup>115</sup> Swedish pilgrimage may, likewise, be seen as both a religious movement and a social movement. In 2006, the Church of Sweden Archbishop K.G. Hammar resigned after defining himself as a seeker rather than a believer (2007, 120). The problem of gauging religiosity by doctrinal Lutheran beliefs also applies in Denmark, where a controversy within the church arena, and within the area of employment law, occurred because a parish advertised for a pastor self-identifying as a “believer.” Since this call to fill a pastoral position with a “believing” pastor occasioned debate, one can infer that in Denmark, it is not obvious, mandatory, or even the case that all Church of Denmark pastors are Christian believers. One newspaper reporter maintains that most respondents

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<sup>115</sup> Several definitions of religion are discussed in the following chapter, as is post-Christian religion. See Morinis’s definition of pilgrimage in chapter one.

to the debate in the Danish press feel that requiring a Lutheran pastor to adhere to Christian beliefs is “totally fine.” These respondents are a self-selecting group who read a Danish Christian newspaper.<sup>116</sup> The Church of Denmark, which has not been disenfranchised, and the Danish State currently maintain a closer relationship than do the Church of Sweden and the Swedish State.

### ***Definitions of Religion***

In order to consider secularization in any given context, some common understanding of religion must be reached, and achieving this has never proven easy. I agree with Peter Berger’s constructivist view that no single definition of religion will prove satisfactory in all cases; however, two classic definitions of religion provide important background and support for the less-known definition I use. Berger (1967) defines religion as “the establishment, through human activity, of an all-embracing sacred order” (51). Berger’s substantive definition, with reference to the sacred, is more useful to his discussion of religion than would a purely functional definition be, without reference to the sacred (175). Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s oft-cited functionalist definition from his 1973 book, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, does not exclude religions lacking reference to the transcendent or sacred. Geertz writes that “*a religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in [humans] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic*” (90, his emphasis).

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<sup>116</sup> <http://www.kyrkanstidning.se/utrikes/jakt-pa-troende-prast-vallar-debatt-i-danmark> January 24, 2013. Accessed February 28, 2013.

In the case of Swedish pilgrimage, a definition that does not draw a strong distinction between substantive (reference to the transcendent) and functional (no reference to the transcendent) religion is, arguably, most useful. In *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*, Bron Taylor tentatively suggests a contemporary definition of religion that allows for understandings of religion that fall into no easily named category: “religion has to do with what connects and binds people to that which they most value, depend on, and consider sacred.” Taylor’s definition is useful for the study of Swedish pilgrimage, and thus is the definition that I will principally use. This definition neither hinges on, nor denies, the transcendental. Though pilgrims generally appear to “value” nature most, it is difficult to tease out whether the primary motivation of a pilgrim, or a pilgrimage group, is nature, health, heritage, spirituality, or the opportunity to practice traditional Christianity in a public and innovative manner.

Taylor, however, remains wary of the inherent limitations in defining, or not defining, religion. Taylor advocates Benson Saler’s “polyfocal approach” of looking at “family resemblances” in religion (Salser, 1993, 74 as quoted in Taylor, 2010, 2). A polyfocal, or interdisciplinary approach, argues Taylor, may prevent scholars from excluding religious phenomena not always recognized as such. The ongoing debate about whether secular pilgrimage should be distinguished from sacred (Post, 2008; Reader, 2007), and the debate about whether some pilgrimage is really tourism (Coleman and Eade, 2004), are examples of how pilgrimage is part of the secularization debate. Taylor further argues that a broad, multi-disciplinary, approach will not limit scholars’ ability to “focus analytic attention” on religious phenomenon. This multi-pronged approach broadens the understanding of religion by “ignoring previously constructed boundaries of

what is, and what is not, religious behavior” (2010, 2). Most important to the study of pilgrimage, Taylor explains his borrowed approach to not defining religion strictly: “the critical thing is to learn interesting things about human beings, their environments, and their earthly cohabitants” (Saler, 1993, 226 as quoted in Taylor, 2010, 3).

### *Secularization and Desecularization*

Although clearly present in the founding works of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, the secularization paradigm made its ascent among sociologists of religion in the 1970s. The publication of *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966, followed rapidly by the publication of *The Sacred Canopy* by Peter Berger in 1967, marked a new dominance of the secularization paradigm, lasting for the next two decades among Western sociologists of religion. Berger famously argued that the sacred canopy, or familiar worldview, that is, the overarching system of meaning-making that gives everything sacred meaning and context, had been torn away. In Berger’s theory the problem lies in his notion that the sacred cosmos or canopy counteracts anomy (the lack of social norms and meaninglessness): this “world of sacred order, by virtue of being an ongoing human production, is ongoingly confronted with the disordering forces of human existence in time” (51). Berger argues that disillusionment and anomy might ensue as a result of the pluralism—“the demonopolization of religious traditions” and “privatized religion”—that follow from secularization (1967, 133-135).

Berger’s early definition of secularization has been debated, expanded upon, rehabilitated, and recanted—even by Berger himself—yet has not entirely lost its explanatory power. Berger’s definition focuses particularly on the functional differentiation of spheres or fields “By secularization we mean the process by which

sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols” (1976, 107). Berger writes that a nomic, or ordered, universe is necessary to prevent a state of anomy, and that it is “...possible to speak of collective as well as of individual states of anomy” (1967, 22). Swedish pilgrimage attempts to address the perceived anomic bewilderment of some individuals and of the collective, and thus appears to be a desecularizing or socially curative force in Sweden.

Secularization has since been defined in many ways, and many of its aspects have been repeatedly examined and redefined. In 1994 sociologist José Casanova sought to disentangle the multiple elements of secularization theory: differentiation, declension (decline in numbers and influence), and privatization. In his book, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova suggested that these multiple aspects might better be considered separately, for the sake of both theoretical clarity and explanatory value. In fact, Casanova describes “Three Separate Moments of the Theory of Secularization” (19). The first moment, both historically and in importance, is secularization theory as modernization. Casanova defines “the process of modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres—primarily the state, the economy, and science—from the religious” (19). As do scholars Bäckström and Green, I provide examples of cooperation between the spheres, showing that the differentiation of secular and sacred spheres is incomplete in Sweden. Secularization is a state, as Casanova argues, in which the religious sphere is no longer dominant, and from which other social spheres have largely escaped (19).

The third moment of secularization, which is also a subthesis to the differentiation thesis, Casanova calls the “privatization subthesis.” This thesis predicts that

“secularization would bring in its wake the privatization and...marginalization of religion in the modern world” (20). Casanova calls for clarity in the historical analysis of secularization, saying that it is only by separating these three moments that clarity can be achieved (20). Casanova’s selection of words and tone suggest his skepticism about the doom-and-gloom scenarios drawn by the end-of-religion predictions.

One of the major criticisms of secularization theory is that it initially attempted to paint with too broad a brush. Secularization theorists, and sociologists of religion discussing any aspect of secularization theory, are careful to designate a specific context in which they argue that the theory has, or does not have, explanatory value. But theorists still quarrel, or perhaps merely quibble, with many of these facets of secularization theory.

### **Swedish Protestantism: Decline in Membership and Participation**

Whether Sweden is more or less de-Christianized, in the sense of institutional Christianity (the arguments for and against will be presented in the context of pilgrimage), decreased church membership and attendance numbers are potentially helpful in understanding the contemporary scene in Sweden.<sup>117</sup> But these declining numbers (immediately below), do not tell the entire story.<sup>118</sup> Pilgrimage is one type of religious expression that does not, for example, require church membership, and takes place outside of church walls and Sunday services. The Lutheran Church of Sweden, disenfranchised in the year 2000, is now no longer officially the Swedish “State Church.”

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<sup>117</sup> Falling membership and attendance numbers are typically used to support the decline-of-religion secularization sub-thesis discussed below in this chapter.

<sup>118</sup> The important and related conversation about immigration and immigrant religion in Sweden follows in later chapters.

Despite disenfranchisement, at the end of 2013 close to 66 percent of the population of Sweden, or 6.4 million people, were members of the Church of Sweden. In 1972, 95.2 percent of the population of Sweden, or 7.8 million people were members of the Church of Sweden.<sup>119</sup> But what does membership mean? The Church of Sweden today counts as members those who are baptized in the Church of Sweden, those who were baptized in another Christian denomination and have transferred membership, and those who pay a membership fee. This is how I, too, will count Church of Sweden membership, recognizing that there is a broad variation in how that membership is expressed.<sup>120</sup> The Church of Sweden, disenfranchised but with a centuries' long pedigree as the state church, is now one among other Swedish free churches. Whether or not membership equals declining religiosity, it still affects institutional religion. As discussed in the chapter above, the traditional free churches also have declining membership in common. As of a national 1999 study, however, the free churches still showed strong numbers in attendance at Sunday morning services, counted at 42 percent of members, which compares strikingly with the Church of Sweden number of 3.3 percent. (Skog, 2010, 79-80, ).

Only a small minority, estimated variously at between 3% and 4%, of members of the Church of Sweden and other Protestant denominations attend Sunday service on a weekly basis (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, 129).<sup>121</sup> It is more common to attend Church of Sweden services for baptisms and funerals than to attend weekly or even monthly. A more active group, Church of Sweden choir participants, however, has been relatively

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<sup>119</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=645562> Accessed November 19, 2014.

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=638919> Accessed October 30, 2013.

<sup>121</sup> This percentage figure is not provided by the Church of Sweden.



steady in the recorded years, 2001-2012, and holds at approximately 100,000.<sup>122</sup> Since both gross membership, as well as membership expressed as a percentage of the population, declined annually during this time, the percentage of choir participants to total membership numbers has risen from 1.3% of total membership in 2001 to 1.5% of total membership in 2012.

If spiritual-religious belief and expression are not closely tied to membership, as is the case in Sweden, where most residents are neither atheists nor church-going, then church membership and attendance may not be very relevant in the secularization conversation, as scholars Heelas and Woodhead (2005), and Eva Hamberg (2003), and Casanova (1994), argue. The Church of Sweden and other churches naturally continue to study, and publicize, membership and attendance numbers. These statistics serve practical purposes, but also seem to valorize increases and de-emphasize (or at least explain away) decreases in membership, thus missing religio-spiritual movements and expressions that aren't easily counted and may not look like religion at all, such as some forms of non-institutional pilgrimage.

In *On the Road to Being There: Studies in Pilgrimage and Tourism in Late Modernity* (Swatos, 2006), and in his chapter "Place and Pilgrimage, Real and Imagined" (2006), sociologist Lutz Kaelber considers spirituality outside of membership. Kaelber describes post-Fordist consumer values, that is "the 'politicizing' of consumption" (284-287) The post-Fordist consumer is distinguished from the Fordist consumer with the emphasis on consumption over production; the post-Fordist is concerned about the means

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<sup>122</sup> Körverksamhet 2001-2012.pdf. Accessed October 31, 2013.

of production,<sup>123</sup> or what Kaelber calls “post-pilgrim” (288-289). It is the group whom Kaelber “post-pilgrims,” “who resist a perceived profaning of a sacred place and seek new ways to appropriate it by leaving the pilgrim bubble...[and] remain, to some degree, off the beaten track and may allow for more reflective encounters with sacred place,” who are exercising their spirituality outside of an institutional frame. Using Kaelber, who invokes the pilgrims of Camino de Santiago, I theorize that post-pilgrims, who want a simpler, yet more individualized experience, are unlikely to be active members of many institutions (288). This seems, however, to be untrue thus far, in the case of pilgrims in Sweden, most of whom are members of one institutional church or another. Based on the few Swedish pilgrimage studies that exist today, and on my multi-year overview of Swedish pilgrimage on social media site Facebook, and on my participant-observation, church membership appears to be an important predictor of participation in Swedish pilgrimage.<sup>124</sup>

In addition to declining membership, declining participation in Church of Sweden rites is a sign of a socio-cultural shift away from engaged membership in any organization. British scholar Grace Davie has pointed out that the weakening of the voluntary sector in Sweden has occurred across all organizations. Davie, however, argues

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<sup>123</sup> See my longer discussions in chapters below on the work of Anne-Christine Hornberg, Anders Melin, and Cindy Isenhour on consumption and environmental concerns as these intersect with interests of pilgrims. See also the discussion on Church of Sweden diocesan work, first introduced in chapter one, and the discussion of growing connections between pilgrimage and environmentalism.

<sup>124</sup> As noted by Anna Davidsson Bremborg in her study of pilgrims, and in my own Swedish pilgrimage observations and survey results, at least one-third of pilgrims who participate in church-sponsored Swedish pilgrimage are also members of a church. All of the pilgrims in a smaller 2006 study were church members. (See discussion of Gaunitz’s smaller study in Chapter Five). The figures provided on pilgrimage and retreats (in chapter one) are newly compiled by the Church of Sweden Unit for Statistical Analysis, and thus seems to be counting pilgrims who go on church-sponsored pilgrimages or retreats, but this is not made explicit. These pilgrims may, or may not, be church members. The methodology and write-up of “Pilgrimages/Retreats, 2008-2013, has not been provided. This appears to be a work in progress, as I was thanked in personal correspondence cited above for my questions, which resulted in corrections.

that the churches have fared comparatively well when compared with the falling membership in trade, craft, and other social organizations (Davie, 2000, 50-51).

Such discussions of social welfare point to an aspect of the debated secularization in Sweden: the thesis of individualization or privatization of religion. Some theorists argue that the greater primacy of the family over community as the central unit of social organization in modern Sweden reflects the nature of secularization in Sweden. I will outline these arguments more fully in the following chapter on pilgrimage and secularization. These debates serve as a constant background to the question of why a new pilgrimage movement has arisen, and what the current potency and future potential of the pilgrimage movement may be. The pilgrimage movement in fact fortifies the church by the roundabout means of recognizing a new spiritual, individualistic-communitarian ethos. The individuals who set out on Swedish pilgrimage are almost all Swedes or Swedish residents.<sup>125</sup> Though a pilgrimage community may be fleeting, and the individual goal may be personal, the focus on the larger Swedish community and the pilgrim's Swedish identity is implicit. As Mats Kumlien queries, what is religion in Sweden today? "Maybe it covers something more...?" (2010, 14). Kumlien is suggesting that religion in Sweden today now provides comfort and support for more people than in earlier times of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. One example of an open church movement is that of pilgrimage.

To provide a portrait of participation in church rituals in Sweden, not merely of nominative membership, I use the example of confirmation in the Church of Sweden.

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<sup>125</sup> This claim is based on my own participant-observation, the fact that almost all Swedish pilgrimage promotional literature online and in print is only in Swedish (though some skeletal information may be translated into English or German online), but more importantly, that the language used in Swedish pilgrimage is Swedish, and that in her extensive descriptions of pilgrimage in contemporary Sweden, Anna Davidsson Bremborg does not once mention a non-Swedish pilgrim or pilgrimage leader (2010).

Confirmation was formerly as common as baptism within the Church of Sweden. This has changed over time. The rate of confirmations of 15-year-old members of the Church of Sweden stood at approximately 46.1% in 2012. The rate of confirmation of all Swedish 15-year-olds—members of the Church of Sweden and not—in Sweden dropped from 80.7% in 1970 to 31.3% in 2012.<sup>126</sup> Through the Church of Sweden records, we have a fairly accurate idea of the percentage of Church of Sweden participants in this time-honored Swedish ritual. Confirmation as a social ritual had a place in society similar to that of high school graduation in today's United States. As an example, my mother and her three younger siblings, born in the 1930s and 1940s, were all confirmed in the Church of Sweden, although their parents did not attend church and were agnostics or atheists. Confirmation is no longer the single, accepted path from youth to adulthood in Swedish society today. These declines in rituals are one reason that some theorists see Sweden as a paradigmatic example of secularization. Despite the momentum of the pilgrimage movement, even in confirmation pilgrimages, (youth pilgrimages which have arisen along with the larger pilgrimage movement), it seems unlikely that pilgrimage will take the place once held by confirmation.

Among well-known theorists for whom secularization is patent reality is Steve Bruce, sociologist of religion from the United Kingdom. It is always important to recognize the societal and cultural setting that a theorist is analyzing. In his book, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Bruce's analysis focuses more strictly on the European

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<sup>126</sup> The Church of Sweden began keeping records of the major rites in the Church in 1970. "Baptized, confirmed, married, and buried in the Church of Sweden, 1970-2012," "Döpta, konfirmerade, vigda, och begravda i Svenska kyrkan 1970-2012." PDF. Accessed October 30, 2013.

case than does Casanova's (2002).<sup>127</sup> Bruce lays out his perspective, and provides numbers to support his views on secularization in the UK. Bruce focuses on the decline of religion in his definition of secularization, but addresses differentiation in his first theoretical point:

In brief, I see secularization as a social condition manifest in (a) the declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious and institutions such as those of the state and the economy; (b) a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions; and (c) a decline in the extent to which people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind, and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such beliefs (2002, 3).

Determined in his adherence to secularization theory, Bruce is quite straightforward and unapologetic about his adherence to the decline-of-religion thesis, and about his dismissal of Rodney Stark's supply-side or market theory (discussed below) with regard to Europe (5). Bruce, who points to the decline of religion as the most important sign of secularization in the British Isles, is very careful to begin by stating that he writes about the social context in which he was raised, and about which he is intimately familiar. In *God is Dead*, Bruce does not pretend to have sweeping knowledge of other areas of the world. Bruce does, however, claim that the British case is of particular interest. This he argues is so because secularization in Britain was not state-imposed, as was and is the case in communist nations: secularization in Britain arose naturally. Thus, while claiming he does not look beyond the British Isles, Bruce maintains that they happen to provide the ideal scenario from which to project the future—or lack thereof—of religion in the Western World (2002, xii-xiii, 2-3). The UK, argues Bruce, is therefore a case from which a scholar might extrapolate, especially

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<sup>127</sup> Despite his Euro-centric focus, Bruce devotes much attention to the United States as well, both in refuting the supply-side theories of Starke and Finke, in *God is Dead*, chapter 11, and in his more recent work of 2011, *Secularisation: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory*.

regarding other European nations, including Sweden. Though Bruce confines his extrapolations to the West, not only Europe, his decline-of-religion thesis has met with explicit and implicit critique. Contemporary American sociologist of religion, Phil Zuckerman, lived and worked in Denmark and visited Sweden, and wrote *Society without God* about his experiences in those countries. In this book, specifically about Scandinavia, he defines secularization as “the historical process whereby religion weakens, fades, or loses its hegemonic or public significance.” In the course of interviewing informants, Zuckerman discovered that many Scandinavians are “reticent,” “indifferent,” and most surprising of all “utterly oblivious” and quite frankly uninterested in discussing religion or existential questions (2008, 96-109). As Zuckerman makes clear, many Scandinavians spend little or no time thinking about, or practicing religion. Zuckerman is not the only person to have made an observation about indifference, but not negativity, to religion among Scandinavians, and Swedes in particular. In Bäckström’s 2001 study, for which the interviews took place in 1997, an informant, who is a deacon in a rural parish of Church of Sweden, also mentions “indifference” to the Church among her parishioners. She says that she “is seldom faced with a negative view of the Church, despite a certain indifference to its content, and despite that there are ‘...those who do not reflect on the church at all’” (Bäckström, 2001, 77).

Zuckerman’s thesis is not only that Scandinavians are secular. Zuckerman also makes the case that a decent, moral, society—“a society without God”—can exist without a descent into despair or depravity, or even without unanswered existential yearnings (2008, 1-5).

Swedish sociologist of religion David Thurfjell, whose recent work has been on Pentecostalism among the Kaale Roma in Sweden and Finland, is now studying the home scene in Sweden. In his forthcoming article, “Why is it a Little Embarrassing to be Christian?” Thurfjell examines why, as Phil Zuckerman has also claimed, Swedes affiliated with the Church of Sweden and other traditional Swedish churches are somewhat embarrassed by these most common Swedish religious affiliations. Some of Thurfjell’s informants found their Christian affiliation more awkward, even embarrassing, in youth. Others are embarrassed by it long after retirement age and still try to hide it from friends and acquaintances. Thurfjell’s study is based on interviews of a randomly selected group of residents of Stockholm (9) and he does not claim to speak for all.<sup>128</sup> He likens the sensitivity to religiosity to taste in music: there is no accounting for taste, except on an individual basis. This conclusion suggests that Thurfjell adheres strongly to secularization theory’s individualization subthesis (Thurfjell, forthcoming).

In the early 1990s, Rational Choice Theory (RCT) was put forth as the new theory to dethrone secularization theory by its argument that the monopolistic churches of Europe quelled interest in religion by lack of diverse religious offerings. RCT is, however, itself a variation on secularization theories that primarily addresses the perceived causes of secularization in Northern European countries.<sup>129</sup> RCT seeks to explain religious fervor in some locations, and religious apathy in others, by market forces. A greater supply of religious product, explains Swedish theorist Eva Hamberg and

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<sup>128</sup> The interviews of this group of 70 residents of Stockholm were conducted in conjunction with a project called “Religious Studies on the Urban Scene,” (9) so is a study of Swedish urbanites.

<sup>129</sup> The Northern European nations to which this dissertation principally refers are Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and the United Kingdom. The Baltic Nations, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia (which Swedish territories in the past), Iceland, and the Faroe Islands are also Northern European nations. The latter are mentioned in a historical context, and the Baltic nations in theoretical contexts in chapters three and five.

sociologists and RCT theorists Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, will—up to a saturation point—increase religious demand. These explanations of religious supply and demand, specifically about the Swedish context, argue that the monopolistic State Church artificially suppressed supply, thus suppressing demand as well (Hamberg, 2003, 58-59; Stark and Finke, 2000, 237).

Hamberg's chapter, "Christendom in Decline: the Swedish Case," in the 2003 volume *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*, relies on European Values Study Information from 1979, published in 1981, and on later EVS surveys from 1990. Hamberg notes declines in church attendance, prayer, and Bible reading (47). Since 1990, two more "waves" of surveys have been published in 1999 and 2008. A fifth data set will be released in 2017.<sup>130</sup> In a rapidly changing Europe, this oft-cited work may, however, not represent the scenario in Sweden today, but does allow us to see trends. As a professor of migration studies, Hamberg is clearly aware of the immigration trends, and what these may mean for religion in Sweden (49) in the future.

A 1994 paper by Rodney Stark and Laurence R. Iannaccone, "A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the 'Secularization' of Europe," which includes analysis of Scandinavian countries and credits Hamberg with providing information regarding religion in Sweden, "disputes the claim that any European nation is very secularized" (231). This claim is made despite the definition of religion as "any system of beliefs and practices concerned with the ultimate meaning that assumes the existence of the supernatural" (232). The problem with Europe, argue these theorists, who discuss an economic model of secularization, is that the "goods" the people want are not being

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<sup>130</sup> <http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data-analysis/survey-data/european-values-study/> Accessed – January 15, 2014.



supplied. As described above, recent counts do not belie Hamberg's claim that fewer Swedes attend traditional Swedish Christian church services on Sundays (or express a belief in a "personal God"). Hamberg does consider whether "Possibly, the very low levels of church attendance which generally prevail in Sweden may be due less to a general lack of demand for worship services than to a lack of demand for the types of services which usually are provided" (58). Swedish pilgrimage offers (along with its inner and outer journeys) a new type of worship service, in a new setting, but with traditional liturgies, for which there is a slowly, but steadily growing, demand. So, to some extent, the resurgence of European pilgrimage bolsters rational choice theorists' specific argument that new religious goods, pilgrimages among them, will attract new participants.

### **Adaptations to Secularization Theory**

For sociologists of religion, one of the most important challenge to secularization theory occurred when Peter Berger in 1999, three decades after laying out a theory of secularization in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), retracted important elements of his theory of secularization in an essay entitled "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview." In his later position Berger stated that, with exceptions, the "world is as furiously religious as it ever was" (1999, 2). Other European sociologists, notably Eva Hamberg, Grace Davie, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Linda Woodhead, and Paul Heelas, continue to reshape and broaden the secularization conversation and to rethink the meaning of secularization as it applies to Northern and Central Europe. Part of the counter to secularization theory is that it focuses too much on an exceptional form of institutional religiosity in Europe, which Peter Berger and other theorists had thought

would be paradigmatic for the rest of the world. His recantation of 1999, mentioned above, is primarily a statement that this did not happen: the rest of the world did not follow the European pattern. Nancy Ammerman (2013), too, argues for a new paradigm that takes into account the daily lives and daily practices of religion—which secularization theorists may not recognize as religious practices (289-290). Ammerman argues that these daily practices be given separate consideration, not only consideration within the reestablished secularization conversation.

Davie, for instance, refers to *Europe: the Exceptional Case* (2002). The phrase “belonging without believing” is associated specifically about religion in Sweden, giving Sweden sociological standing as its own “exceptional case.” Davie writes that “Indeed the very positive relationships toward the state churches continue to exist—for example in the Nordic countries, where residual membership of such churches remains astonishingly high. . . despite the fact that attendance and assent to credal statements are some of the lowest in Europe” (2002, 12). Nancy Ammerman similarly makes an explicit comparison. In the concluding chapter of *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, Ammerman begins her summary of observations by writing that “English (and Swedish) citizens retain a connection to their churches that is anything but strict. They draw on religious rituals and moral guidance when it suits them, but vicarious religious presence apparently remains worth supporting” (2007, 220).

In “Pilgrimage Growth in the Modern World: Meanings and Implications” (2007), Ian Reader, in contrast, argues that it is a mistake to see pilgrimage growth in industrial nations as evidence of increased religiosity: “The assumption that just because pilgrimage numbers around the world are growing, a ‘religious’ revival in a traditional sense is

underway is therefore unwarranted.” Reader claims that “These [pilgrimage] activities have not arrested the general decline of church attendance and adherence. Indeed, one might suggest almost the contrary” (226). Reader draws a firm distinction between religion and spirituality, and describes the Woodhead and Heelas “spiritual revolution” (discussed in detail below), not as a subjective turn in religion, but rather as “a turn away from traditions towards a more autonomous, individualized and personalized spirituality” (226). The bases of Reader’s argument are the decline-of-religion and individualization subtheses of the secularization theory. Reader does not recognize spirituality in new, personalized, or subjectivized forms as religion (226). I, on the other hand, will argue (if with some caveats), that contemporary Swedish pilgrimage is indeed a new, subjectivized form of Swedish religion.

Among theories framed partly within and partly without secularization theory, is that of French sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger, author of *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (2000; French language version, 1993). In this work, Hervieu-Léger connects tradition, which she equates with a chain of memory and religion: “By placing tradition, that is to say reference to a chain of belief, at the centre of the question of religion, the future of religion is immediately associated with the problem of collective memory” (2000,123). In her chapter, “Religion Deprived of Memory,” Hervieu-Léger asserts that, in a modern society of change, versus a society of tradition, the chain of memory will be attenuated and finally broken. But, in the following chapter, “The Chain Reinvented,” she explains that this void left by the absence of tradition is filled by new, invented, and often utopic memories (141-162). *Religion as a Chain of Memory* focuses on the individual in a community defined by its heritage, and on the “transformation of

religion into a system of ethics which, taken to its extreme, can allow one to confuse it with a morality of human rights” (158). She argues that such systems and their symbols are easily appropriated for whatever serves the purpose of the appropriators (158-159). Following this argument, I suggest that pilgrimage has been appropriated by Christian churches (among other reasons) because it is easily presented as a system of normative ethics and utopic hopes for the betterment of humanity and the environment. But it is more than this. Pilgrimage in Sweden, as I will argue later, appears to be an attempt to mend the frayed chain of memory and to construct a new one by appropriating the old symbols at its disposal. This is an important and elective connection between early and contemporary pilgrimage. The old symbols must still retain power, or they would not be redeployed. So a rosary that is not a rosary, but is instead a (Pearls of Life) bracelet, clearly connects the past to the present without re-adopting the traditional rosary, a specifically Roman Catholic object. Even though the Swedish pilgrimage movement is not yet a large enough movement to fill the void left by the purported detachment from the old, monopolistic religion, the continued growth of the movement suggests that the attempt is meeting with some success. In later work, Hervieu-Léger theorizes that the “homogenization of belief,” in which religious beliefs and praxes lose distinction, but instead gain broad-based acceptance, and the “individual’s right to satisfy his [or her] subjectivity,” is not the end of Christianity, but its next phase in postmodern Europe (2006, 65). Swedish pilgrimage, despite its use of Lutheran liturgy and ritual, also provides space for the individual to exercise subjectivity, while building the chain of memory, but without the element of homogenization to which Hervieu-Léger refers.

Another view that engages with secularization theory, yet also attempts to move beyond it, is that formulated in the *Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. This 2005 book is by Paul Heelas, professor of the sociology and anthropology of religion and spirituality, and by professor of sociology of religion Linda Woodhead, both of Lancashire University, UK, with collaborators Benjamin Seal, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting (though the latter three are not listed as authors.) They argue that there are two different modes of living: “living according to external expectations, which is consistent with “life-as” religion, and “life lived according to [ones] own inner experience,” which is consistent with “subjective-life” spirituality.

The authors are unapologetically non-neutral in their definitions. “Life-as” religion is traditional, dogmatic religion with rules to follow. “Life-as” is “life lived as a dutiful wife, father, husband, strong leader, self-made man, etc.” The “subjective turn” leads to “subjective-life” (3). “Subjective-life” is “life lived in deep connection with the unique experiences of my self-in-relation” (3). Heelas and Woodhead wish to clarify that subjectivization is not “self-centered” individualization, or abandonment of community. Subjectivization is instead the whole self, realized, in community: “Subjective-life spirituality is...self-in-relation rather than self-in-isolation” (11). In their introduction, Heelas and Woodhead explain that the study and theses of sacralization (meaning to bring out of the secular sphere into the sacred), examine “whether there is growth in the territory of the sacred” as opposed to the secular (9). The “subjective-life thesis” takes issue with both the secularization and sacralization theses, and the theorists conclude that “decline and growth [are not] mutually exclusive,” but “coexist” (9-10). Heelas and

Woodhead describe the sacralization thesis as more consistent with “life-as” religion. What I have thus far described regarding Swedish pilgrimage is, similarly, neither a scenario exclusively of secularization or of sacralization. My study of Swedish pilgrimage, and by extension, religion in Sweden, also leads to a preliminary view that, in Swedish pilgrimage, the secular and sacred are inextricably intertwined and coexistent.

Heelas and Woodhead claim that “congregations of difference,” (which they characterize as evangelical), often discourage spirituality by emphasizing the conformist individual self at the expense of the subjective self (18-20). “Congregations of humanity,” on the other hand, stress “God-in-humanity and humanity-in-God.” Such congregations “tend to emphasize the importance of worshipping God by serving humans” (17). This “moralistic” self-abnegation also represses the development of the spiritual “subjective self.” The official denominational tone of the Church of Sweden today is that of a “strongly moralistic” “congregation of humanity.” The first page of its official website, for instance, emphasizes the urgent needs of the geographically and culturally distant “other.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> This characterization is based on hundreds of distinct views of the official Church of Sweden webpage, [www.svenskakyrkan.se](http://www.svenskakyrkan.se). Charitable giving in faraway lands is always included on the front page of the website. For instance, on November 4, 2013, under the rubric of “Current Events,” the second-largest photograph, beneath that explaining the mission or “brand” of Christianity of the Church of Sweden, is one of Christians of many nations including Swedes, in solemn protest and solidarity (against repression of Christians in North Korea). at the border of North and South Korea. A photograph, which has been present on the site for some weeks or months, with the imprecation to remember Syria’s children, was also on the home page and linked to a donor site, <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/syrien>. Other links (on that day) were to a guest blog post by a Swedish researcher, Sara Gehlin, in Gwanju, South Korea, on the efficacy of international ecumenism, <http://blogg.svenskakyrkan.se/ekumenik/> and a link to a film blog post by a Swedish temporary or adjunct rector, Håkan Holmlund, in Kiev, <http://blogg.svenskakyrkan.se/film/>. On November 5, 2013, the Currents Events photo on the Church of Sweden home page was changed to a photo entitled “Visions of World Peace,” by the World Council of Churches, which the Church of Sweden has been active in distributing, shows “cases of world peace” symbolized by white cranes on the world map ([http://www.skr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Worldpeacemap\\_131017\\_high\\_utfall\\_sk%C3%A4rm%C3%A4rken.pdf](http://www.skr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Worldpeacemap_131017_high_utfall_sk%C3%A4rm%C3%A4rken.pdf)) Accessed November 5, 2013.

Pilgrimage, on the other hand, nurtures what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) call the “subjective-life” needs of congregations and individual in community. The congregations which Heelas and Woodhead claim did this best in their study in Kendal were the “congregations of experiential humanity,” which “went *furthest* in authorizing subjective-life...such congregations actively encouraged individuals to forge their own unique life paths and spiritual paths in their own unique way” (21). Pilgrimage, by this definition, is like a loosely-formed congregation of experiential humanity. Pilgrimage has less to do with holding a certain set of religious beliefs, or credo than with practicing a ritual, both secular and sacred, of wholeness in human and more-than-human community, and in the individual’s subjectivity.

### **Secularization Theory: Reconsidered, Revised and Challenged**

As early as in her 1993 *H. Paul Douglass Lecture*, “Telling Congregational Stories,” Nancy T. Ammerman argued that the secularization thesis is a conversation for and among men. Women and others who are excluded from this conversation, and who have other perspectives and paradigms, should instead approach religion from a perspective of “lived religion” in daily life (289-291). She refers to secularization theory as the “core myth” of sociology of religion, and she suggests that alternate narratives exist and must be given a voice.

In their 2004 book, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, political scientists Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart lift up the vastly different scenarios of life in “rich and poor nations” (13), and the “distinctive worldviews that were originally linked with religious traditions that have shaped the culture of each nation in an enduring fashion” (17). So Norris and Inglehart do not step away from the secularization

debate, but with their thesis of existential security, enter it on the economic basis of haves and have-nots, the latter of whom—thanks to the global economic destabilization of Western industrialized nations that began in 2008—have increased in number, but who in the developing world, were already numerous. Using Sweden and other Nordic nations as an example, Norris and Inglehart argue that religious need or demand is far from constant: it rises with insecure existence and falls with a more secure existence. This fluctuation does not, in their reinterpretation of secularization theory, prevent people of religious traditions from retaining their cultural affiliations, such as to Lutheranism in the Swedish case (17). But this affiliation is a matter of habit, not what Norris and Inglehart consider “religious” affiliation. (13-21). So, from where—in the midst of such a society, in Sweden, where the young and educated are not engaged in religion—comes this sudden groundswell of pilgrimage promulgated by clergy but practiced by laity? The existential search of the pilgrim seeker would seem to confirm the implication of Norris and Inglehart’s thesis: those who feel less secure existentially, who become uncertain about the survival of their culture and worldview, if not practical survival, also seek solutions to feelings of existential insecurity. Pilgrimage provides one such answer.

### **Secularization Theory and Swedish Pilgrimage**

Demonopolization—a theory of desecularization—may have been less relevant to the Swedish case in 1967, when a higher percentage of Swedes were members of the Church of Sweden and complied with its major life rites, than it is today. But pluralism was not unknown at that time. Swedish Free Churches were officially and legally recognized in Sweden by the 1860s and had long challenged the monopoly of the Church of Sweden. Although Sweden is still numerically dominated by its institutional former



state church, that church (as Berger suggested) no longer dominates Swedish family life as in centuries past (1976, 133). The Church of Sweden retains its emphatic status as the dominant church among the four-fifths of the population of Sweden identified as “Sweden born.” If not demonopolization—the Church of Sweden is the institution that currently structures and supports most Swedish pilgrimages—how is another aspect of secularization—subjectivization or individualization—reflected in Sweden’s pilgrimage movement? Is the Pietistic strain of religion in Sweden, as described by historian of Christianity, Todd Green, and discussed in more detail below, a forebear to pilgrimage spirituality? Swedish Pietism found its voice primarily and already in the early 1700s: “The emphasis on sanctification through a personal experience of spiritual rebirth characterized Pietist beliefs in Sweden” (Green, 2007, 66). Is pilgrimage also heir to the individualization of religion expressed within the free church movements and awakenings of the mid-to-late-1880s (Green, 2011, 18-19; Bexell, 73)? Hervieu-Léger, connecting pilgrim spirituality further back in time, claims that “From the point of view of the history of spirituality, a major stage—after the radical assertion of religious individualism—can be identified in the great spiritual movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the invention of a “friendly God” (2006, 64). Today’s pilgrimage movement uses the phrase “inner journey” instead of “spiritual rebirth” to suggest that the individual is ultimately, and outside of official church doctrine, called upon to seek inner peace.

The growing pilgrimage movement challenges secularization arguments (including those tendered by Bruce and Zuckerman), which imply that European churches have faded so far that they can supply little new significance. Is cooperation

among Swedish Christian churches of different denominations a sign of their struggle against fear of fading social significance? Instead, cooperation and ecumenism, not only in pilgrimage, signifies a newfound strength in a common, continuous Christian identity in Sweden. As well as attracting a committed, church group, pilgrimage in contemporary Sweden may satisfy existential longings, and therefore may encourage the participation of some seekers who are of Christian heritage. Those promoting the pilgrimage message are largely a group of religious insiders whose occupational security stems from increased interest and participation in Swedish pilgrimage. Nevertheless, new centers would not open, and new leaders would not be anointed, if there were no eager pilgrims to serve.

As I stated in my introductory, contemporary Swedish pilgrimage is a new movement, but interwoven with and inspired by old rituals, in a nation long declared secular. Much secularization discussion, as Davie (2000) points out, centers on the saliency of belief in Sweden—is there no longer Christology in Nordic Christianity?—and on the “thinning” of belief in Sweden and Europe at large (Hervieu-Léger, 2006, 65). The “saliency” of religion or belief is a phrase used primarily by secularization theorists to point out that while people may claim to be believers, their purported belief has little effect on their daily lives. As Steve Bruce (2011) puts it, “the declining power of religion causes a decline in the numbers of religious people and the extent to which people are religious” (2). The description of belief as “thinning” is used by French sociologist of religion, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, in her contribution to the 2006 *Hedgehog Review*, “In Search of Certainties: The Paradoxes of Religiosity in High Modern Culture.” Hervieu-Léger’s *Religion as Chain of Memory* (2000) discussed earlier, like Davie’s theory of

vicarious religion, looks at the importance of heritage and culture in the perpetuation of European religion.

This study of pilgrimage focuses strongly on behavior and religious practice, moreover, and does not exclude those who claim to hold no, or very weak, religious beliefs. Thus, I do not grapple much with either the “decline of religion” aspect of the secularization thesis, or with the saliency of religious belief, when considering the question of whether pilgrimage is a sign of secularization or desecularization.

Nevertheless, some claims by the churches themselves,<sup>132</sup> perhaps made with an interest in a positive outcome for religion, have recently been made that even the memberships of some of the traditional free churches are inching back up, though not yet approaching the numbers reached in the free church heydays of the 1930s. These small increases in membership in the Pentecostal Church and the Swedish Alliance Mission Church (SAM) are the first increases in many years, and occur alongside increases in membership in Roman Catholic churches, mostly due to immigration and to the ongoing losses of the Church of Sweden.<sup>133</sup> As Grace Davie so astutely observes, using the analogy of only being able to see the smallest part of the iceberg—the part above water—religion in Sweden, and the support for the Swedish people by the Church of Sweden is correctly presumed by all parties to be immutably in place:

One way of working is to look closely at a society when something has gone seriously wrong, or (occasionally) right — a disaster or a celebration. In these circumstances you see something much more reactive, much more spontaneous. And what do you see? . . . [T]he two examples I have in

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<sup>132</sup> As mentioned, the government does not count religion in its annual census, so the churches themselves, of sociologists such as Gustafsson (1997), Ekström (2003), and Skog (2001), are most likely to report church numbers of any sort.

<sup>133</sup> <http://www.dagen.se/nyheter/ramat-for-katolska-kyrkan-och-andra-frikyrkor/> June 3, 2013. Accessed January 17, 2014.

mind are, firstly, Sweden following the sinking of the Estonia ferry about 10 years ago with a huge loss of life; the other is Britain in the week following Princess Diana's death.

So what happened when the Estonia sank in Sweden? The sinking of a ferry with 900 lives lost for the Swedes was an enormous shock – something almost unbelievable. And what did Swedish people do? They went straight to their churches. Nobody told them to, but the churches were open, partly because they are tax-funded churches. And religious professionals were there to meet them. They knew they had to be there. And the very next morning on the front of the main Swedish daily, there was an article by the archbishop putting the tragedy into a theological context and giving Swedish people a way of understanding what had happened.

The point I want you to grasp is that there was no instruction. All these assumptions were in place. The Swedish pastors knew they had to be there. The archbishop knew that he had to write the article. The churches were in place and the population came. But nothing would have happened unless there had been a disaster; all of it would have remained implicit and under the surface.

Hence an iceberg analogy: We do far too much work on the bit that sticks out, which is shrinking (that is beyond doubt); I'm interested in the bits under the water. (2006, 5).<sup>134</sup>

Though recent, characterizations of declining Protestantism in Sweden do not fully take into account the fluidity of the European situation in terms of immigration and politics. (Immigration and religion in Sweden will be discussed further in chapter six.)

Zuckerman (2008), who lived in Denmark, while doing research in Denmark and Sweden, observed that “the ever-increasing presence of deeply committed Muslim immigrants in Denmark and Sweden... could result in an increase of Lutheran piety as a contemporary expression of Scandinavian cultural defense. But that remains to be seen” (118). He further theorized that another option for “cultural defense” in these highly literate nations could “come in the form of an increased embrace and celebration of rational, democratic secularism” (118). As considered, but deemed unlikely by some scholars, (such as Zimmerman immediately above) anti-immigrant sentiment may

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<sup>134</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2005/12/05/believing-without-belonging-just-how-secular-is-europe/> Accessed April 4, 2011.

motivate a resurgence in Christian expression in general. Scholars (the Turners, 1978; Hermkens, Jansen, and Notermans, 2009, 7, 13) also consider the possibility of nativism and nationalism as a factor underlying and motivating pilgrimage in Europe. And I will consider, in chapter six, whether any connection between Swedish pilgrimage and anti-immigrant sentiment is likely or visible. To appearances the pilgrimage movement appears to be a new form of religious expression not explicitly motivated by perceived threats to Swedish culture by asylum-seeking immigrants.

Contemporary Swedish pilgrimage may thus have something in common with Sweden's nineteenth century diaconate: a concern rather than a disregard for struggling members of society. In his contribution to the debate regarding secularization in Sweden, Todd Green looks less intently at individualization or privatization than at the differentiation thesis, and the supposed subjugation of religion to the secular sphere in all things. The deaconess, as female deacons were formerly called, played a special social role in Sweden, and are the subject of Green's 2011 book, *Responding to Secularization: The Deaconess Movement in Nineteenth Century Sweden*. Green explains that deaconesses were particularly needed in times of economic hardship. Although the diaconate in Sweden is today a lower order of ordained clergy, the mid-nineteenth century deaconesses were not ordained. Though some married later, deaconesses were celibate during their years of communal living and service. They served their parish and the Lutheran faith as lay sisters, at first probationary and later consecrated, (Green, 2011, 52-64). Green argues that deaconesses acted successfully as religious actors in secular

spheres. They served as educators and healthcare workers, and they tended to the diverse needs of the poor (29-31, 35-55).<sup>135</sup>

In *Responding to Secularization*, Green considers the “vigorous debate since the 1960s over how to explain the apparent decline of religion in nineteenth-and-twentieth century Europe” (2011, 1). Green considers how and why deaconesses had a positive social impact outside the religious sphere. They were in demand both for their works and for their connection to the religious sphere (22). Green shows that the case of Swedish deaconesses demonstrates religion’s ongoing relevance in a differentiating society. Green explains that deaconesses and “religious organizations continued in many instances to carry out essential social function, both in competition and cooperation with other specialized institutions” (1). In other words, the religious and the public spheres appear not have been as strictly differentiated in the nineteenth century as secularization theorists have argued (Green, 2011, 3). This study follows Green’s line of thought, arguing (throughout), the same, that is that the religious and secular spheres in contemporary Sweden are not strictly differentiated, of contemporary Sweden.

Green debates Steve Bruce’s argument in *God is Dead* (2002, 8). Bruce argues that when religious organizations move outside of the religious sphere, they do so by performing their duties and activities much as secular actors do. Green, on the contrary, shows that in the nineteenth century “deaconesses performed social functions in an overtly religious manner” (22). Green implies that Bruce’s argument—that religious actors perform work in a manner indistinguishable from that of secular actors—is even truer today than in the mid-nineteenth century. As Green points out, how religious work

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<sup>135</sup> Though in demand as educators (114-115), by 1890 the diaconate had reverted exclusively to providing “nursing and poor relief” (116).

is performed, and how it is received, may not coincide (2011, 32). The work of pilgrimage leaders in Sweden today is often performed in an overtly and intentionally religious manner, though some pilgrims do not, adhere to Christian practices when outside of the pilgrimage experience.

Though Green's work on deaconesses in mid-nineteenth century Sweden seems to have little in common with the subject of pilgrimage in contemporary Sweden, his argument illuminates the development of pilgrimage in contemporary Sweden and its possible trajectory as a socially significant movement. Like the deaconess movement, the pilgrimage movement is a small, inner-churchly movement that has grown due to demand. Green's work also helps raise the question of who will eventually be most effectively and satisfactorily served by pilgrimage programs, now overlapping with multiple secular spheres. Green writes that "the heart of the secularization thesis deals with the *demand* for religion, and that is why my argument for the social significance of deaconesses depends primarily on demand for their services" (22). This argument holds true of pilgrimage today. Swedish pilgrimage is a movement that brings religion into the secular or public sphere, like the early deaconess movement of which Green writes. Pilgrimage programs provide for the needs of some Swedish people today, just as the diaconate filled a variety of social needs, particularly for education, health care, and poor relief, in nineteenth century Sweden. The demand for pilgrimage, with its religious leaders—both ordained clergy and lay leaders—co-exists side-by-side with competitive offerings from predominantly secular spheres. Secular spheres in competition with

pilgrimage include the spheres of outdoor sports, of preventative healthcare, and of cultural and arts tourism.<sup>136</sup>

Pilgrimages today attempt to address the existential longings Swedes may experience in personal times of stress whether there are strongly articulated or not. I observed several instances of those who struggled with specific issues including divorce, health problems, and other family issues. One pilgrim, in particular, expressed questions and doubts about Swedish social ethics. As described in chapter five, Melin (2009) also theorizes that pilgrimage may help pilgrims come to terms with existential concerns about the environment (though he also fears it may not). Pilgrimage is open to seekers.<sup>137</sup> There is, however, no requirement that participants in pilgrimage be traditionally Christian. On the contrary, the expectation is that many are not. Nineteenth-century deaconesses, who were well-versed in Lutheran tradition and well-prepared to offer religious instruction, served people in need without regard to the recipients' conformity to the Lutheran tradition (85). Similarly, the Swedish pilgrimage experience and ministry is offered to atheist, agnostic, seeker, and staunch believer alike. All give an implicit nod of acceptance to the Christian cultural-religious foundation of contemporary Sweden, whether or not their beliefs and private practices conform. Davie, for instance, refers to *Europe: the Exceptional Case* (2002). Coining the phrase “belonging without believing”

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<sup>136</sup>These topics are addressed more fully in chapters one, four, and five. Masesgården, for example, is an example of a health spa, with very little mention of spirituality on its websites. The website appeals are to the visitors' improved health and frame of mind, and also stress enjoying time in a traditional Dalarna farmyard. Dalarna is the area of Sweden where the artist Carl Larsson, famous for his illustrations of bucolic family life, lived and worked. The appeal to location—only a couple of hours north of Stockholm and accessible by public transportation—is also important from a marketing standpoint. The super and subtext are that the people visiting Dalarna are leaving a hectic and harried life temporarily behind, so spending less time in transit is important.

<sup>137</sup>In Sweden, as in the United States, expeditions that bring a group or individual into closer communion with nature may indeed fill the existential needs of hikers and climbers. For an example of a study in the United States, see Stephen Douglas Masters' M.A. thesis on the spiritual experiences of hikers of Vermont's Long Trail, “Backpacking the Long Trail: sacred ritual in Vermont's Green Mountains,” 2011, Drew University Library, Thesis Collection.



specifically about religion in Sweden, the widely-read Davie has, however, given Sweden sociological standing as its own “exceptional case” (2002). Nancy Ammerman similarly makes an explicit comparison. In the concluding chapter of *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, Ammerman begins her summary of observations by writing that “English (and Swedish) citizens retain a connection to their churches that is anything but strict. They draw on religious rituals and moral guidance when it suits them, but vicarious religious presence apparently remains worth supporting” (2007, 220).

*Postsecular Rituals and Social Change*

The pilgrimage movement may arguably be described as one sign of a nation now openly embracing the spiritual, or perhaps even postsecular. By the term postsecular, I suggest not the return of religion, as I would have if I were thinking along the lines of Berger (1999). Instead I use postsecular to signify social change, and a new time of new connections and affinities, such as we see in the pilgrimage movement. Thus, I do not read the prefix “post” as “after,” (which suggests an unqualified acceptance of secularization theory), but instead as “beyond.” This understanding of postsecular draws indirectly on the work of Jürgen Habermas as interpreted by Michele Dillon in her chapter “Jürgen Habermas and the Post-Secular Appropriation of Religion,” as well as the introduction, by Philip S. Gorski, et al., in their chapter their edited volume by the same name, *The Post-Secular in Question* (2012). The postsecular space, is ideally, a space in which religion is a valued part of public dialogue, and in which those who are religious, and those who are not, can work together for the public welfare. This postsecular space argues Dillon, citing Habermas, who maintains that religion is an

important “cultural resource” should not also require that religion also be “rational” for beneficial public dialogue to occur (2012, 255-258).

Interestingly, although the traditional free churches do not yet run the pilgrimage centers springing up around Sweden, free churches are now represented in pilgrimage leadership conferences. The leader and keynote speaker of such a conference in March, 2014, entitled “Nature and the Celts: Spirituality in God’s Free Nature,” is the pastor of a free church.<sup>138</sup> This particular conference was a cooperative effort between the Swedish Mission Covenant Church (which is a former free church, now part of Equimenia), the Church of Sweden, the pilgrimage organization Pilgrim Now, and Sensus.<sup>139</sup> As this example of an ecumenical pilgrimage conference with a free church pastor as the keynote speaker illustrates, traditional free churches appear to be regaining some relevance in Sweden as a whole through the pilgrimage movement, not only in their geographic areas of numerical strength.

A Church of Sweden web page, “Pilgrim Today,” solicits participants by noting that “people who are unaccustomed to, and possibly uninterested in, church services can experience the beauty of nature as an avenue to spiritual deepening.”<sup>140</sup> Other religious websites calls pilgrimage “a growing peoples’ movement” in Sweden.<sup>141</sup> The Vallentuna Pilgrimage Center, serving three parish churches, opened in the Vallentuna suburb of

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<sup>138</sup> <http://www.sensus.se/kurs/gavle/temadag-for-pilgrimer-om-den-keltiska-andligheten/248366> Accessed February 01, 2014.

<sup>139</sup> The Swedish Mission Covenant Church no longer exists—arguably an example of the contraction of traditional Christianity in Sweden—so it is interesting that the pastor is called “a pastor of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church,” rather than a pastor in the Equmenia Church.

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=643800> Accessed December 18, 2013.

<sup>141</sup> <http://www.bilda.nu/sv/Snabbval/BKF/Pilgrimsvandring/Pilgrimsvandring-i-Sverige/> Accessed – February 11, 2014.

Stockholm in late August of 2013.<sup>142</sup> Other pilgrimage center openings are ongoing. Meetings in 2010 and 2011 discussed first the feasibility, and then the project planning, for the Pilgrim Center in Resteröd's Parish in Bohuslän, the most westerly province in Sweden.<sup>143</sup> The opening of new pilgrimage centers are evidence, at least, of perceived growing demand for pilgrimage. Since all pilgrimage centers retain employees, it seems unlikely that new centers would open if the demand did not exist, but, as in any endeavor, miscalculations can be made, and pilgrimage centers may close if they are not needed. I have not yet read of the closing of a pilgrimage center, and there now seem to be eight pilgrimage centers in Sweden. The small pilgrimage Center in Skara did close in 2012, when a larger pilgrimage center in was Skara opened. There are also pilgrimage retreat centers, and even conference/retreat centers, at times, provide space for pilgrims.<sup>144</sup> Lund's Retreat Center, Killans Bönegård, opened in 2009, is, for instance, a retreat center, and is operated independently, but in cooperation with the Church of Sweden.<sup>145</sup> Lund's pilgrimage center, Pilgrimsplats Liberiet, has enjoyed such success that it closed in November, 2014, to reopen with renovations, in 2015.<sup>146</sup>

The Vallentuna pilgrimage example appears, at first, to contradict any suggestion that Swedish pilgrimage is, fundamentally, a religious enterprise. Unlike week-long pilgrimages, which contain overtly religious elements, the Vallentuna pilgrimages are

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<sup>142</sup> <http://www.vallentuna.se/sv/Uppleva-och-gora/Sevardigheter/Pilgrim-Vallentuna/> Accessed – January 6, 2014.

<sup>143</sup> [http://www.nutidapilgrimer.se/dynamaster/file\\_archive/110728/3a9f2c4fbe7c4adc98b647545b04a73c/12.%20fo%26%23776%3Brstudien%20a%26%23776%3Br%20klar.pdf](http://www.nutidapilgrimer.se/dynamaster/file_archive/110728/3a9f2c4fbe7c4adc98b647545b04a73c/12.%20fo%26%23776%3Brstudien%20a%26%23776%3Br%20klar.pdf) Accessed December 18, 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Åh Stiftstgård is a conference and retreat center on the West Coast on the ocean, run by the Church of Sweden. [www.ahstiftsgard.se](http://www.ahstiftsgard.se) Courses, retreats, and pilgrimage conferences/retreats are combined in the promotional material. <http://ahstiftsgard.se/category/kurs-retreat-pilgrim/> Accessed November 22, 2014.

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=640771> Accessed November 22, 2014.

<sup>146</sup> <http://www.pilgrimsvagen.se/pilgrimsplats-liberiet/> Accessed November 22, 2014.

very brief self-led pilgrimages that lead from one parish church to another, without culminating in a religious service. The pilgrimage paths are from six to nineteen kilometers long.<sup>147</sup> This is introductory pilgrimage, designed for the neophyte, and designed to avoid obstacles to participation. In a television interview, the new Vallentuna Pilgrimage Center’s organizer speaks highly of the region’s cultural artifacts, which include rune stones and even date back to the Iron Age. The byline to the TV clip is that one can enjoy “nature, exercise, and culture every weekend from now on.” The word “culture” describes pre-Christian culture as well as Christian and Swedish culture and religion. Though the short video shows pilgrims walking on paths to an old church, and some even with traditional pilgrim staffs, neither pilgrims, nor clergy, nor the interviewer, mention the three participant parishes, the Church of Sweden, or pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise. One interviewee—among those who had just participated in a pilgrimage walk from church to church—touches on the subject that others avoid: “Pilgrimage really isn’t as difficult as one might think. You just have to go, and you will probably find something on the way.”<sup>148</sup>

Nor do Swedish theologians and pilgrimage leaders who met at a conference in August 2013 appear to suggest that pilgrimage is a sign of the “reenchantment” of Sweden. This is counterintuitive, since they offer a theory and practice of ecumenical pilgrimage, wherein the sacred and secular are not easily distinguishable, which may, in fact, be seen as a form of re-enchantment. The title of the Nordic Ecumenical Pilgrim Meeting, held in August 2013, was “Pilgrim Today: Longing and Meeting.” The subtopic

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<sup>147</sup> <http://www.vallentuna.se/sv/Uppleva-och-gora/Sevardheter/Pilgrim-Vallenuna> Accessed September 2, 2104.

<sup>148</sup> <http://www.svt.se/nyheter/regionalt/abc/pilgrimsvandra-i-vallentuna> Danielson, Frida. August 25, 2013. Accessed January 6, 2014.

was “The Tension Between Holy and Secular.”<sup>149</sup> As I describe immediately below, concern was expressed at this meeting that pilgrimage might become so popular that the religious sphere would lose control and cease to be its primary provider. So, not only is there cooperation among spheres, but also competition.

Churches, nevertheless, endeavor to maintain their relevance and their control of pilgrimage. In a post-conference online follow-up to the Nordic Ecumenical Pilgrimage Meeting of August, 2013, the organization Contemporary Pilgrims shows a photo of 11 new pilgrim leaders who have completed the pilgrimage leader course at Ljungskile College, in Sweden’s southwestern province of Västra Götaland.

([www.nutidapilgrimer.se](http://www.nutidapilgrimer.se)).<sup>150</sup> The photo of these 11 new leaders, and the information that 80 people went on a pilgrimage to the conference site, shores up the group’s conclusions about pilgrimage’s growing relevance. Among conclusions reached by conference leaders—in this case all Lutheran—from as far afield as Germany, was a consensus that pilgrimage practice should not be spread so thinly, nor shared so fully with its apparently secular relatives in the realms of tourism and outdoor recreational activities. Pilgrimage practice, concluded this group of pilgrimage leaders and theologians, should retain its distinction as a product of the religious sphere. This suggests that a certain degree of differentiation of the religious from the public spheres still suits the religious community. Keeping pilgrimage principally under the organizational umbrella of religious institutions—despite cooperation from organizations founded in the spheres of heritage, tourism, hiking, and health—helps to retain its distinction as a religious movement and to promote the salience of religion in Sweden.

<sup>149</sup> <http://www.pilgrismote2013.se/medverkande/> Accessed November 10, 2013.

<sup>150</sup> [http://www.nutidapilgrimer.se/extra/pod/?module\\_instance=1;](http://www.nutidapilgrimer.se/extra/pod/?module_instance=1;)  
<http://www.pilgrismote2013.se/> Accessed December 18, 2013.

Coming full circle, deaconesses, first trained by the Lutheran Church of Sweden in the mid-1800s, now play an important role in contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. The diaconate is upheld as a model for pilgrims and leaders. The diaconal bearing, lifestyle, and relevance to Swedish pilgrimage was the subject of the 2014 Vadstena pilgrimage conference, “Seminar on Pilgrim Theology 2014: To Walk Together—Via Diaconia.”<sup>151</sup> As an inner-churchly movement, pilgrimage, while focusing on benefits to the individual, also encourages reconnecting to church rites and traditions.

Both pilgrimage’s seven key words and this focus on a diaconal, or caring, bearing are critiques of contemporary secular Swedish society. Theorists have focused on contemporary Marian pilgrimages as protests by laity against mainstream Roman Catholic Church authority. In his chapter “Abundant History: Marian Apparitions as Alternative Modernity,” in *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimages in the Modern World*, Robert Orsi highlights the element of protest in Marian pilgrimage (2009). Orsi finds much Marian pilgrimage to be part of an ongoing struggle against power inequity, both inequity between laity and clergy, and gender inequity. Sociologist of religion Jill Krebs (2011), however, finds the element of protest in a Marian visionary community in Emmitsburg, Maryland, itself a site of pilgrimage, to be quite weak. Krebs finds Catholics immersed in Emmitsburg’s visionary culture to be “conventional” Catholics, who wish to maintain their good standing within the Catholic Church. Krebs explains that this obedient Catholicism applies even to Gianna Sullivan, the visionary herself, who has stopped publishing, or in any way publicizing, her visions at the request of the local bishop. Though some of the followers of Our Lady find themselves marginalized, they

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<sup>151</sup> <http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/program-2014/seminarium-om-pilgrimsteologi-18866211>  
 Accessed December 18, 2013.

are more, not less, devoted to traditional Catholicism due to their practice on the margins (Krebs, unpublished ms, 2011, 91-92, 187-192). The Emmitsburg visionary community and the Swedish pilgrimage community appear to share a taste for remaining within the institutional fold while adhering to extra-institutional expressions of religiosity, yet at the borders, and within the confines of institutional religion. Those choosing to participate in Swedish pilgrimage are not doing so against the church, as participants in Marian visionary culture, as described above, may be doing. The marginal seems to be entering the mainstream, as Weber predicted of cultic, or marginal, religion (1978, 424-426).

Swedish pilgrimage, while attracting far fewer adherents than Catholic pilgrimages in more populous European nations is, nonetheless, growing, though not yet fully quantified. Swedish pilgrimage has both gained a following and a current social cachet from its place at the borders, outside of traditional mainstream religious ritual, which is to say outside major life rites or Sunday worship. Swedish pilgrims are often proud to publicly proclaim their identity as pilgrims, wearing objects such as the Pearls of Life bracelet, or a mussel shell, or carrying a pilgrim staff, which confirm their status as operating within the realm of Swedish Christianity, but not without creative reform to the old Lutheran order.

### **Curative in Crisis and Corrective in Calm**

British sociologist of religion Grace Davie questions how secular Sweden really is (Davie, 2000, 40). Unlike her colleague Steve Bruce, Davie does not subscribe to a view of a secular Europe (4). Discussing not only Sweden in her book *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (2000), Davie argues that, in Europe now, a “culture of obligation” (5) has been replaced by a culture of religious “consumption” or “choosing”

(6). In her book, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (2000), Davie recognizes that religion in Sweden has not plummeted off a cliff to its sudden death. Davie theorizes that the vicarious carriers of religion in Sweden are expected to uphold the Christian tradition, maintain the beautiful churches, keep them open and accessible, and be there in times of crisis (2000, 38-82). In a 2005 Pew Forum interview, “Believing Without Belonging: Just How Secular is Europe?” Davie emphasizes the importance of vicarious religion in times of crisis. Using the example of the sinking of the M/s Estonia in Sweden in 1994, and the shocking loss of 900 lives, Davie explains that not only is the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden immediately certain of his or her role as provider of consolation and nomic order when disasters occur and anomy threatens, but that the Swedish people then turn to their historic church, certain of support (2005, 4-5).

Swedish sociologist of religion Anders Bäckström, with Swedish colleagues Ninna Edgardh Beckman and Per Pettersson also argues that many Swedes respond to tragic, anomic events by finding help in the rituals, words of consolation, and community gatherings provided by Swedish clergy—first and foremost the clergy of the Church of Sweden (2004, 98-135). The examples provided by Bäckström et al. in *Religious Change in Northern Europe: the Case of Sweden*, are wide-ranging. Many are examples of mourners, who, though not active members of the Church of Sweden, turn to the Church for comfort in tragic times. For example, many Swedes, religious or not, church attendees or not, walked together, with common purpose and burden, carrying candles to their local churches and diocesan cathedrals following the sinking of the M/s Estonia ferry in 1994. The December 26, 2004 Sumatran-Andaman tsunami was a later national tragedy in Sweden—though it occurred overseas—in which the Church of Sweden took the role of



head mourner. Many Swedes from the wealthy suburbs of Stockholm perished in the tsunami. The Dean of the National Cathedral in Stockholm gathered not only mourners, but the King and Queen, and government officials, in a service of national mourning for tsunami victims. A psychiatric follow-up study showed that severely traumatized Swedes were helped by other survivors and by family at home, but were also helped by psychotherapy, visits by priests, and religious communities. The latter were of particular importance: “Existential questions are awakened in times of catastrophe . . . The religious communities were able to care for these needs of many people so affected in a fulfilling manner.”<sup>152</sup> This echoes Berger’s thesis of religion as a shield from anomie. In times of mourning, the Church is not merely a decorative head, but a leader by example. The Swedish people, as in times long past, flock to their churches and follow the examples of their religious leaders in times of national mourning. Personal relationships developed within the Church of Sweden are typically optional pastoral and congregational relationships, whereas the reach of the Swedish State into the life of the individual and community is more overt and encompasses spheres such as that of public education. But, while a portrait of general disengagement from institutional religion in Sweden exists, there are also many examples of how the Church of Sweden is part of the collective identity of hereditarily Christian Swedes. The examples above, as well as the theory and case studies of sociologist of religion Anders Bäckström (2001, 2004), who specializes in questions of social welfare, substantiate the theory of Davie and Hervieu-Léger, who argue, (unlike Bruce and Zuckerman), that religion remains relevant through links of human labor and memory, and through cooperation of the spheres of church and state.

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<sup>152</sup> <http://www.katastrofpsykiatri.uu.se/Rapport%20tsunamistudien.pdf> Accessed February 05, 2014.

## Secular Pilgrimage?

Change is coming quickly to the religious landscape of Sweden, or so it seems to those engaged in pilgrimage research, who study a movement begun in 1997 and involved one-sixth of Swedish parishes by 2002.<sup>153</sup> Are pilgrims putting their collective foot down and reaffirming their Christian ground? Or are they merely engaging in a wholesome and pleasurable outdoor activity, now made widely available in communities throughout Sweden since the mid-1990s? Is this a sign of desecularization? Or might it be a sign of secularization instead? I view Swedish pilgrimage as a desecularizing movement: it is institutionally driven from within the religious sphere, but cooperating with, and drawing in, organizations from several secular spheres.

As counter-point to my argument that the journey is of central importance in contemporary Swedish pilgrimage, I examine a geographically wide-ranging destination and shrine-oriented volume, edited by Dutch sociologist of religion, Peter Jan Margry. Margry asks a question the question (that I pose immediately above) in his chapter “Secular Pilgrimage: A Contradiction in Terms?” in the edited volume, *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*. Margry’s work is about destination-and-shrine or “cult-object”-pilgrimage, which is destination-oriented. Margry refers to journey-oriented pilgrimages without focus on the arrival at a particular destination as “transit pilgrimage.” Margry writes—almost as though describing Swedish pilgrimage—that “transit pilgrimage does not really have a beginning or an end, or at any rate they are not relevant. Moving, walking, the accessibility and freedom of the ritual, being in nature, and tranquility are all elements which have contributed to its success”

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<sup>153</sup>As cited in chapter one.

(2008, 24). Margry is, however, referring to pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in the above description, and not to Swedish pilgrimage. Margry explains that especially Santiago de Compostela, formerly a destination pilgrimage, has become a transit pilgrimage. Santiago today attracts pilgrims whom Margry describes as “spiritual seekers, for whom making the complete journey at one time is unimportant, and arrival at the tomb of St. James even disappointing” (2008, 24).

Despite his call for the “re-evaluation” of the word “pilgrimage,” Margry is loathe to call annual commemorative rituals, many of which are non-confessional, “pilgrimage.” Among Margry’s examples of visits to commemorative sites are those to the ostentatious Graceland and to the simple gravesite of Jim Morrison. Journeys to these and other “secular” sites are not considered pilgrimages in his Dutch study because “it seemed that the religious dimension would play only a very limited role in these cases” (Margry and Caspers 1997, 17 in Margry, 2008, 44, FN 7). But, in his argument against blending secular and religious pilgrimage—the former, he argues is really not pilgrimage at all—Margry distinguishes between visitors who go to Morrison’s grave as tourists and those who truly do go as pilgrims (2008, 13-45; FN 7, 44).

Unsurprisingly, Margry and I reach different conclusions about the spectrum of experiences which might be referred to as pilgrimage. Margry is reluctant not only to see the term “pilgrimage” “bandied about” too broadly but also to see the secular and sacred blended. I challenge this dichotomous separation of secular and sacred throughout my examination of Swedish pilgrimage, making the essential claim that pilgrimage is neither exclusively secular nor exclusively sacred. The Swedish case is distinguished from Margry’s wide-ranging selection of cases by the formers’ focus on the journey in nature,

and the latter's focus on a destination and shrines. In contemporary Swedish pilgrimage activity or performance at the destination, or at the ritual space of arrival, is secondary to the main event of "the inner and outer journey" that the pilgrim makes at all points along the way. Blending and blurring the secular and sacred is exactly what I argue Swedish pilgrimage successfully accomplishes.

Like Margry, Dutch sociologist of religion Paul Post also focuses on constructed, ritual, and commemorative spaces (2008, 281-296; 2011, 13-59). Post claims, as I do, that Christian rituals have not been abandoned in favor of newly constructed practices, but that the two marry well: "The boundaries separating Christian-ecclesiastic, general religious, and sacred/profane ritual appear to have become porous" (2008, 285). For example, as I have observed and noted, Swedish pilgrim participants can decline to participate in Christian ritual elements during a pilgrimage, while still participating in the pilgrimage itself. Some who are marginally religious—those who are at least nominal members of the open, undemanding Church of Sweden—at times do feel moved to participate in a Christian ritual when it is taken outside of the traditional Christian context. Thus the moveable pilgrimage church, added to the already flexible church, breaks down additional barriers between the sacred and the secular. The hybridized rituals which result cannot be claimed as heretical, non-Christian rituals by traditional Christians. Similarly, the new rituals are not rejected as reversion to earlier beliefs and practices by non-traditional spiritual seekers. Conflict about the rituals themselves are typically avoided because the settings in which they take place is changed by the act of pilgrimage, and also because most participants share the same Christian cultural background.

The contemporary Swedish pilgrimage movement especially reflects the post-agrarian society in which it has grown, suggesting a nostalgia for the more recent agrarian past, as Margry explains. This nostalgia can be observed not only in Swedish pilgrimage: Margry writes of modern pilgrimage (in general) that it is not “the invention of a tradition, but it is the reinvention of the meaning of a tradition.” Margry argues further that today’s “kind of ‘active’ pilgrimage is used as a ‘new’ pastoral instrument to revive interest in religion” (2008, 26). Some paths walked by today’s Swedish pilgrims are medieval, and some are renovated to honor medieval Swedish saints. But others are modern paths, named for places, or in memory of places or persons, such as Dag Hammarskjöld, outside of Christian hagiography.<sup>154</sup> As Margry suggests, in all of these examples, Swedish pilgrimage is a “pastoral instrument [that] revives interest in religion.” However long ago people walked a path, it is only by recent use that a path remains passable, and the recent, living memory is the pastoral.

Advancing an argument regarding modern pilgrimage liminality, Paul Post claims that “large groups of people find an adequate expression that, it may be assumed, has a place as a supplement to Christian ecclesiastical ritual rather than competing with it” (296). Post hopes to avoid the debate about what constitutes pilgrimage, and whether “post-confessional” pilgrimage fits the “pilgrimage” descriptor, by using the term “pilgrimage reference” and “ritual” to describe an annual Dutch outing to a memorial forest to commemorate cancer victims (Post 2008, 294).<sup>155</sup> Post argues that there is

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<sup>154</sup> Among diverse pilgrim paths in Sweden are the Birgitta Path to Vadstena (on which I walked), the new EU-sponsored leg of St. Olof’s Path, and the Dag Hammarskjöld paths, with new segments being added. Constructing pilgrimage is an ongoing physical enterprise.

<sup>155</sup> Post uses the term “ritual,” explaining that he elects to “focus on the ‘ritual case,’ employing what I call the ‘pilgrimage reference’... Pilgrimage from the point of view of ritual phenomenology...” (2002, 294). Within this dissertation, pilgrimage behaviors may be referred to as acts of “embodied religion.”

indeed religious relevance and resonance for participants in newly constructed, modern pilgrimages. Post further maintains that this kind of religious practice need not be compared to traditional Christian practice, nor be disparaged as less meaningful in the pilgrimage context (2008, 295-296). In so doing, Post enters the secularization debate while attempting to step around it.

Post maintains that pilgrimage to the so-called “Cancer Forest” in the Netherlands serves the religious and ritual needs of families of deceased cancer patients. These families gather annually in a special healing forest, where forest rangers help each of the 6,000 pre-registered participants to select and plant saplings in memory of their deceased loved ones. Thus the memorial pilgrimage to the “Cancer Forest” also takes place outdoors, and uses nature as a conduit to establishing meaning in life and death. Unlike Swedish pilgrimage, this pilgrimage takes place only once a year in a designated, ritual space. Like some Swedish pilgrim paths, this forest is a recently constructed space in nature, modified and adapted to carry meaning and provide accessibility.

Established in 1999 by the late Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, this forest, accessible even to people with disabilities, attracts large numbers of pilgrims.<sup>156</sup> People wait in queues or cars, while a short service is repeated three times on the annual “Cancer Forest” pilgrimage day. The service is followed by the planting of a tree in memory of each cancer victim. The ceremony is brief, but carefully constructed, and laden with symbols to provide meaning for the families who visit the forest to honor a loved one.

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<sup>156</sup> A few Swedish pilgrimages are accessible to those with disabilities or pushing strollers. These are mainly newly constructed pilgrimage paths in Southern Sweden. The terrain in the central and northern parts of Sweden is wooded, hilly, and even mountainous, requiring varying levels of physical fitness. Pilgrimage retreat center events and parish grounds pilgrimages are among pilgrimage offerings suitable for those unable to walk any distance without assistance. The largest pilgrimage center, in Vadstena, has begun to offer retreats in lieu of pilgrimage. Among those are retreats for expectant mothers and others for those who wish to dance, sing, or meditate (Pilgrimscentrum.se).

This forest was not a sacralized place before its establishment as the “cancer forest” but simply land donated to the public by the Queen of the Netherlands on her golden jubilee in 1948. As the demand grows, and new families plant saplings in memory of loved ones lost to cancer, the forest has pragmatically been expanded.

Post claims, as this dissertation argues of pilgrimage in Sweden, that nationalist, cultural, and spiritual-religious actions and feelings overlap in such a created or constructed pilgrimage. Post specifically argues that this is as true of “secular pilgrimage” as it is true of “religious” pilgrimage (Post, 2010, 281-297). Though I argue against any sweeping secular/religious pilgrimage distinction in the Swedish case, I do not maintain that this distinction does not exist anywhere. Instead, I argue that Swedish pilgrimage is a visible religious ritual with elements of the bodily everyday—also not inherently secular—inextricably embedded within it. As Post notes, however, and as Victor Turner (1978, 123-139) noted well before him, the tendency for pilgrimage to bring out regional and national affiliations seems to have long been the case, and to continue to be so, whether the pilgrimages appear to be more or less secular.

### **Swedish Pilgrimage Organizations**

This section describes the blending of groups and spheres usually considered either sacred or secular, within pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is a cooperative movement made possible by disparate organizations. These include religious, educational, environmental, tourist, and Swedish and European Union-based groups.<sup>157</sup> The Swedish Pilgrimage Organization, Sensus Pilgrim, for instance, is an off-shoot of the larger national

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<sup>157</sup> The membership list of the group formerly known as *Pilgrim Nu* (Pilgrim Now), now *Pilgrim i Sverige* (Pilgrim in Sweden) illustrates this point: <http://www.pilgrimisverige.se/medlemmar-17062541> Accessed December 18, 2013.

organization Sensus (sensus.se), which provides adult education in a variety of fields. Sensus was formed from three organizations, founded in 1929, 1930, and 1945, respectively, together with the Evangelical Motherland Congregations (*Evangeliska Fosterland Stiften*, EFS) within the Church of Sweden beginning in 1948.<sup>158</sup> The three branches of this complex organization include one that was formed within a conservative sub-sector of the Church of Sweden. The second was originally formed within the Church of Sweden, from which it broke in 1960. And the third was a movement promoting the interests of workers, especially union members. All three groups were adult education organizations aimed at furthering the education and development of working people. Sensus's pilgrimage group is one of the active arms of today's Sensus. The emphasis of both the larger organization and its pilgrimage offshoot is on success and growth within a group. Sensus has a long history of cooperation among voluntary sectors, of which the church and unions are two representative organizations. According to Grace Davie in *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (2002), it is actually the churches, among voluntary sectors organizations, that have lost the least ground in terms of membership (18-19).

Another organization commonly referred to as *Bilda*, which may be loosely translated as "Educate," was formed as a free church organization in 1947, and was then called "The Free Church Study Association." The free churches that form *Bilda* today include Orthodox Churches and Sweden's Catholic diocese.<sup>159</sup> As of October 2013, *Bilda*

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<sup>158</sup> <http://www.sensus.se/Omsensus/Sensus-historia/> Accessed October 29, 2013.

<sup>159</sup> <http://www.bilda.nu/sv/Startsidan/> ; <http://www.bilda.nu/sv/Startsidan/About-Bilda-in-english/#> Accessed November 27, 2013.



and Sensus were discussing combining the two organizations, with a merger completion projected in 2014.<sup>160</sup>

Sensus, a self-proclaimed secular group, though not church-run, upholds Christian culture in its pilgrimage group. Christian morality is identified as the guiding principle behind the group, the principle that will lead it into an even more useful position in society once it has joined its sister free church organization, *Bilda*. The Sensus Pilgrim home page explains that Sensus is a voluntary organization. The caption to the background photo on the homepage reads “Sensus Pilgrim arranges pilgrimages, small groups, courses, and lectures. We cooperate with congregations in the Church of Sweden, organizations, as well as networks.”<sup>161</sup> This is yet another example of cooperation between the religious and other spheres; in this case, the sphere of adult education.

Some pilgrimage organizations and literature attempt to frame Swedish pilgrimage as a religious and sacred undertaking apart from the daily or secular. But this is neither how most Swedish pilgrimage literature, nor how most pilgrimage organizations, portray themselves in Sweden. The most common photograph on any Facebook pilgrimage site (approximately ten of which I actively follow) is of a path into the forest, or, even more typically, a photo of the backs of a group of pilgrims walking along a forest path. A recently published “coffee table” book—a beautifully bound, highly visual volume, printed on heavy, high quality paper—is an exception. An unusual number of its international photos feature interiors of churches, medieval reliquaries, statues, and life-sized crucifixes (2012, 118). The latter is certainly not unusual of Roman

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<sup>160</sup> The practical questions of the merger of the two organizations will be discussed or actualized at an annual conference in May, 2014. This announcement was first made on October, 25, 2013, in *The Church's Magazine (Kyrkans Tidning)* and on October 28, 2013 on Sensus Pilgrim's Facebook page. (<https://www.facebook.com/sensuspilgrim?fref=ts> Accessed October 28, 2013).

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/sensuspilgrim?fref=ts> Accessed October 28, 2013.

Catholic churches, some of which are depicted. In Protestant Sweden, however, a plain wooden cross, whether in churches, or worn by pilgrims, is the norm. The photos taken in Sweden illustrate the different nature of Swedish pilgrimage, showing, for example, a scene from the Dag Hammarskjöld path in Northern Sweden (29) and pilgrims both resting and walking in idyllic outdoor scenery (4, 40, 46, 55). This impressive volume, *The Pilgrim Life: Stillness, Sore Feet and Song*, (*Pilgrimslivet: Stillhet, Skoskav, och Sång*), edited by Anna Braw, is a gilded version of pilgrimage reality that focuses on the spiritual side of the inner experience—prayers, fulfillment of personal goals—and the transcendent side of the outer experience.

Shorter pamphlets and descriptions of pilgrimage on many web pages from Church of Sweden dioceses and congregations give more accurate portraits of Swedish pilgrimage. These contain some lovely photos—most of which are of scenes in nature, and some of churches or of cathedrals—and also practical information about what to pack for the outer experience. These more practical publications even detail what degree of difficulty to expect, and what level of fitness might be required, on a particular journey. Sweden's medieval churches—appreciated by most pilgrims as both houses of worship and cultural artifacts—are indeed breathtakingly beautiful. On Swedish pilgrimages, however, pilgrims typically visit smaller parish churches, more often than the grand cathedrals portrayed in *The Pilgrim Life*, many of which are in Spain. There are thirteen cathedrals in Sweden, and few pilgrimages ever mention any other than Lund's Cathedral and the Cloister Church of Vadstena. Medieval churches and cathedrals are ill-equipped for pilgrims to stay overnight, so the churches in which pilgrims stay are often modern and unremarkable with regard to architectural beauty. But issues of dirty laundry, tired

and blistered feet—though mentioned in the subtitle—unfamiliar, unsavory, or even insufficient food, and the lack of sanitary or comfortable sleeping facilities are brushed aside (Braw, 2012). The back flap copy begins with the words “Sweden has gotten on its feet. Everywhere in our country, people pack a backpack, break in hiking boots, and select a hiking staff,” again referring specifically to Sweden. The book is divided into chapters by the seven key words of Swedish pilgrimage, but the content itself is surprisingly less about Swedish pilgrimage and landscape than these clues would lead one to suspect. The bodily is downplayed by depicting gilded statues, and soaring cathedrals, and even views of pilgrimage in the Middle East, in this attempt to paint a staid and formal portrait of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage (which is also clearly portrayed on the book’s cover), and put it back into the church from which it has escaped, whether that church is in Sweden or not. Nonetheless, the strength of the Swedish pilgrimage movement, for most—not all—pilgrims lies in that very escape. This view of pilgrimage is commonly expressed by pilgrimage leaders and participants, from Lindström down to the neophyte pilgrim.

Public debates very occasionally arise, and some pilgrims do question why nature is mentioned before spirituality in most pilgrimage invitations in Sweden. One such debate occurred in the Facebook group, Pilgrim in Sweden (*Pilgrim i Sverige*.) A pilgrim clearly wanted to draw a distinction between the bodily and outer aspect of pilgrimage—associated with nature—which she considered less important than, and separate from, the religiosity associated with God, Jesus, and the inner journey. Like most debates, this one was unresolved. But the traditionally Christian pilgrim priest, who spoke of walking with Jesus, was unpersuaded and would not assent to the reification of the body/spirit or

outer/inner dichotomy. He wrote that a rock may be an altar, and that the spirit is everywhere and in everything. The spiritual, as this priest, the head of the Stockholm Diocese's Pilgrimage Center in Tyresö, continued to state, cannot be separated from the physical. The pilgrim who protested complained that some pilgrims wish to avoid the traditional liturgical elements of worship when on pilgrimage. Though this pilgrim may see this avoidance as an expression of anti-Christian sentiment or secularization, hers is not the commonly expressed view. In the priest's view, mentioning "nature and the weather" is not ignoring the spiritual; it is "worship in and of itself. It is God who speaks to us—if we will see and hear."<sup>162</sup> That which not only pilgrim Swedes consider sacred—the everyday activity of walking in the everyday setting of the outdoors—appears to be more attractive to many Swedes than spending time in a church, where one is separated from nature by walls.

### **Pilgrimage: Promoted, Profitable and Palatable**

Pilgrim leaders, the bishops and priests of the Church of Sweden, initiated the new practice of pilgrimage, and have profited both personally and professionally, while also contributing to their church and society. Agne Josefsson, parish and pilgrim priest in Skara Diocese, is thanked for "writing the text and putting in many hours collecting relevant material" of a well-produced guide complete with photographs and maps of pilgrim paths. The producer was Project Pilgrim Skaraborg. Other cooperative entities were the organizations Pilgrim Skaraborg, with "financial support from Leader South Skaraborg" (2010, 2). The Leader organization, like the *Bilda* and Sensus organizations

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<sup>162</sup> Facebook Group Pilgrim in Sweden (*Pilgrim i Sverige*). Garlöv, Martin, post. Conversation between pilgrim Kristin Runyeon-Odeberg and pilgrim priest Per-Arne Johansson. July 22-23, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/120355154668429/>

in Sweden, is a national organization with regional branches, but with a financial, entrepreneurial, and even international focus, more than the educational focus of *Bilda* and Sensus. The Leader organization is focused on regional agricultural and heritage preservation, and its profitability. Nonetheless, like *Bilda* and Sensus, Leader (the name of which is actually the English word “Leader”) is a voluntary, or nonprofit, organization. Unlike *Bilda* and Sensus, however, Leader has international ties to the European Union, and, “through active partnership among public, private, and nonprofit sectors,” it gives support to Sweden’s Christian heritage projects as well as providing grants for entrepreneurial projects, and towards cooperation between regional governments and the Department of Agriculture.<sup>163</sup> This cooperation among so many organizations from different social sectors, seemingly dependent on one another for furthering a common cause—generally that of environmental, agricultural, or regional community and handicraft, that is, heritage preservation—as well as newer tasks of increasing entrepreneurship among women and education for those who are beyond traditional school age, is dizzying. Based on the multiple intersections, from European Union to the local, the regional, global, educational, and financial, and religious sectors do not appear as neatly divided or as able to sustain themselves without mutual support. As the differentiation thesis would suggest, these groups are not completely independent of each other, but different rules, bureaucracies, logics and authorities are present in the different interacting spheres. It is clear, however, somewhat clear by organizational affiliation and title of researchers, subjects, and organizers, to which sector each worker or volunteer belongs. The work each one does, however, often contributes to more than one sector. This overlap, now including EU-based organizations, makes it difficult to call an

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<sup>163</sup> <http://www.leaderskaraborg.se/ostra/leader.aspx> Accessed November 13, 2013.

enterprise such as pilgrimage strictly religious in nature, yet does not force pilgrimage into a secular, or a “heritage” box without concomitant religiosity either. As the Leader organization seemingly understands and promotes, since Swedish heritage is infused with Christianity, the religious and heritage strands within pilgrimage coexist and cooperate.

Openness to the hereditary Christian majority makes pilgrimage palatable for a large number of Swedes who do not otherwise participate in church activities. Some pilgrimage leaders are well known in the field and on the national religious stage. Hans-Erik Lindström, the visionary who enumerated the seven key words and key objects, who wrote *The Little Pilgrim Book*, and who created a place for pilgrimage in contemporary Swedish society, is the primary founder of today’s pilgrimage movement. Anna Alebo, a pilgrim priest from Lund, whose parish church is Lund’s Cathedral, is a pilgrim leader and vocal pilgrim spokesperson, who has become an important voice for pilgrimage as a more traditionally religious enterprise. Martin Lönnebo, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Linköping, home to Vadstena, and creator of the Pearls of Life rosary bracelet has had an important impact on pilgrimage—perhaps more as a way of life than as a particular endeavor to be conducted one way or the other. With the Pearls of Life and their popularity, Lönnebo has managed to reintroduce the concept of daily prayer as a religious ritual practice, with an outer element and object that serves as a daily reminder to pray. That many of the oft-repeated names in Swedish pilgrimage to date have come from and benefited from eminent positions within generations church hierarchy, suggests that pilgrimage is a religious enterprise, if of a new order.

Others active in pilgrimage are new trainees, or merely “leaders,” as opposed to clergy in any denomination. The participation of some pilgrimage leaders with a lower

institutional profile than that of a bishop, or even priest of a cathedral, may help lower the bar to participation in some pilgrimages. On many Swedish pilgrimage Facebook sites, one typical photograph is of newly trained leaders. These new leaders are not advertised as known personae, but rather as lay volunteers. The new leaders whom I have seen in photographs over the last few years generally number in the single digits. In keeping with Swedish desire for privacy, and leaving the construction of the pilgrimage voice to pilgrim priests and spokespersons, the pilgrimage leaders are rarely introduced, and comments—if there are any comments at all—generally do not mention new leaders by name or other feature. Pastors (or priests, as they are sometimes called in the Church of Sweden, are not private persons, so generally introduced by name, parish, or other station). New leaders are typically depicted and introduced as a group. A few “likes” are registered, and all that an outsider can gather is that several new parishes have a pilgrimage leader, or that parishes with high pilgrimage demand can now better satisfy that demand. Though a few lay leaders are employed by pilgrimage centers, most appear to be volunteers. This suggests that voluntarism is important in the religious field. One specific example within the pilgrim field is that of deacons in the Church of Sweden at the Vadstena site. Sweden is the only Nordic nation in which deacons are ordained members of the clergy.<sup>164</sup> Ewa Lund, Head Deacon and Director of the Vadstena Pilgrimage Center informed me—not without a tone of pride—that there were fourteen

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<sup>164</sup>The ordination of deacons began in the year 2000. The deaconate was originally a career path solely for women. In her chapter addressing gender and welfare in the 2012 book *Welfare and Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe*, Swedish sociologist Ninna Edgardh argues that “despite the formal parity of bishops, priests and deacons within the threefold ministry in the Church of Sweden, in reality inequities still exist” (80-81).

deacons at the Center in the summer of 2011, and that, of these, two (or three) were paid, while the rest were volunteers.<sup>165</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The strength of the Swedish pilgrimage movement appears to lie in the hoped-for escape from the routinization of spirituality in order to reach an individual spirituality, yet one that may still be expressed within the sacred canopy of Swedish culture: Christianity and love of nature—whether of God in nature, or nature as physical surroundings. Pilgrimage brings the engagement with Christian praxis to a more intense level for the traditional Christian, as well as for the unchurched. The secular individual on a week-long pilgrimage is, perforce, bound within a week of Christian ritual. No study has been conducted of the unchurched who go on week-long pilgrimages. Would they be willing to attend another pilgrimage? “Sofia,” for example, one of the pilgrims with whom I travelled, professed herself a returning pilgrim and had even been on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Sofia told me that she was agnostic, if not an unbeliever. The Christian content and rituals we performed did not appear to offend her, however, and her willingness to carry symbolic articles reflected her inculcation into pilgrimage culture. Sofia was fairly friendly and talkative. Her attitude was straightforward and unsentimental. She seemingly sought neither to achieve an epiphany, nor to overcome any trouble, but to be on the pilgrimage for the pure enjoyment of being outdoors in company. She explained that she had discovered in pilgrimage an activity that suited her, one at which she was naturally good. She was among those uncomplaining few who suffered neither from blisters, nor from any sort of stress injury typical of repetitive

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<sup>165</sup> Personal conversation. July 17, 2011.



activity like walking with a backpack. She seemed impervious to harm, worry, and insomnia, and was looking forward to a family vacation upon finishing this second week of her pilgrimage walk. About 45 or 50 years old, Sofia appeared in every respect to be the physically, socially, and psychologically sturdy, apparently secular Swede who wants something more, something deeper, but does not seek it in a traditionally religious manner. It may be that she concealed a religious belief she chose not to share, but it seems more likely that wanting to be outdoors and in the company of other pilgrims was really her reason for going on pilgrimages. Is the secular permitted to flourish within the sacred? Or is the sacred being taken outdoors and secularized? The intertwining of secular and sacred is not easily unraveled in Swedish pilgrimage, as it is not easily unraveled in the case of Sofia.

In this chapter I have shown that in the context of the debates on secularization in Northern Europe, despite declining membership and participation in Sweden's Protestant churches (see some of these statistics above in the section Swedish Protestantism: Decline in Membership and Participation), the reappearance of pilgrimage in Sweden suggests a growth in religious practice. The religion to which I refer is as defined by Bron Taylor, who writes, "Religion has to do with what connects and binds people to that which they most value, depend on, and consider sacred" (2010, 2). I differ from both secularization theorists and rational choice theorists who argue, respectively, that Sweden has become, or always was, secular. Nevertheless, I agree with one aspect of rational choice theory: new religious goods, including pilgrimage, are currently providing new opportunities for religious expression.

With Heelas and Woodhead, I have also suggested that there is a continuity from sacred to secular, rather than a dichotomous division between them. Analogously, I explain that pilgrimage, as a practice, uses seven key words and concepts that span a spectrum from secular to sacred. Pilgrimage, even as a mere daily walk, can show that the everyday can also be sacred as Nancy Ammerman (2014), and Coleman and Eade (2004) have argued.

I have shown that Swedish pilgrimage, like the nineteenth century Swedish diaconate (according to Green), represents the way in which the secular and religious spheres intertwine. In contemporary times the spheres of education, economics, and healthcare from the greater sphere of the secular continuously overlap with the sphere of the sacred. Swedish pilgrimage, which relies on tourist and economic and educational concerns (as will be elaborated in the following chapter), but which ultimately resides within, and is administrated through the religious sphere, is an example of the continuous interplay of the secular and sacred spheres from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries.

The hereditary Church of Sweden performs important functions both in times of crisis and in calm. The Swedish people continue to rely on their hereditary church as both upholder of social norms and common values in times of calm, and comforter to all when crisis strikes, and so, it is difficult for many reasons to conclude, as do secularization theorists (Zuckerman among them), that Sweden is a secular state.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE INNER AND OUTER JOURNEY: NATURE AND SPIRITUALITY

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will address Swedish pilgrimage as it negotiates the blurred boundaries of spirituality and religion. Being in nature and experiencing spiritual growth is a connection central to Swedish pilgrimage. In Sweden, the sacred may be accessible only with nature as a conduit (K. Westerlund, 2001, 175, 190). As scholars, invitations to specific pilgrimages, and my pilgrimage experience all suggest, many Swedes also associate being in nature with health. Escape from stress is probably considered the greatest health benefit of pilgrimage in Sweden (Hornberg, 2009, 111-114.) The focus on health and relief from stress is not unique to Swedish pilgrimage. Ian Reader claims that “Modern technological advances appear to have done little to quell individual unease at the state of the world. In many respects they have created the conditions in which persons wish to search for alternative modes of being and for ways of escaping, even if temporarily, from the insecurities of the economically focused orientations of the modern world” (2007, 222). I will therefore consider how health, spirituality, and religion intertwine in pilgrimage. Though health for some may be associated with the secular sphere, within pilgrimages, carried out in nature, the sacred and secular co-exist and become indistinguishable. As I discussed in the previous chapter, some participants and organizers struggle to keep religiosity or spirituality in pilgrimage. For others, these elements are already present in outdoor or “natural” space.

Based on participant observation, and my overview of pilgrimage literature, websites and Facebook pages, “nature” may mean seemingly pristine forest land, vast lakes, and inviting mountains. Nature may also mean socially constructed sites from Stone Age burial sites to pastures. Together, traditionally religious pilgrims and spiritual seekers access the sacred in nature. These categories of pilgrims are neither static nor mutually exclusive.

Another Swedish conduit to the sacred is heritage. Heritage may be highly regional and personal, or it may extend over Western Europe. But attachment to sites of Swedish heritage, and to the nature around them, is a characteristic many Swedish pilgrims share, as Bremborg (2010) and I both observed. Heritage sites vary widely, from the age-old reindeer-herding paths of the Sami people on the Dag Hammarskjöld Way, to simple walking paths, to cathedrals in which saints’ relics may lie entombed. The sites of Swedish sacred heritage in nature cannot always be pinpointed, and they may not fit every scholar’s definition of the sacred because they are not always religious buildings or shrines (Anttonen, 2013; Margry, 2009; Post, 2011).

Grace Davie, who dedicates *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (2002) to “All my Swedish friends who made it possible,” has lived and worked in Sweden (iv). She is intimately familiar with the specific Swedish circumstances within the European case. She argues that “Europeans seek and search within the framework of their historic churches, more often than not, returning “home” when they die (Princess Diana being but the most celebrated example)” (52). Davie considers how Swedes interact with their “home” or heritage church from life to death (the final journey). Davie concludes, as I discussed in the previous chapter, that Swedes, as well as Britons, turn to their churches

to find solace and guidance in times of national tragedy. Swedish pilgrimage is a movement of Swedes seeking and searching within the framework, but also pushing the boundaries, of their historic state and free churches. In these last two chapters, I will examine Swedish pilgrimage as an answer to the existential uncertainties of the living, who are perhaps overburdened by modern life, but not (typically) by great tragedy.

To see a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand And Eternity in an hour.  
--William Blake

The little flower carries a promise. It is not dangerous to see ones  
smallness. Small is not worthless.... That which is small can bear the grand  
in the wonder that holds the infinite...  
--K.G. Hammar

The contemporary Swedish pilgrimage movement to date has been shaped by many volunteers, diaconal workers, and the few leaders who began the movement in the mid-1990s.<sup>166</sup> Central among these leaders is pilgrim priest Hans-Erik Lindström, former head of the Church of Sweden-affiliated Vadstena Pilgrim Center. As mentioned in chapter one, Lindström popularized the phrase “inner and outer journey” and wrote *The Little Pilgrim Book* (1997), a pocket-sized volume widely used in Swedish pilgrimage. Lindström also selected and disseminated what have come to be called the “seven key words” of Swedish pilgrimage. Lindström’s original seven key words were: a slow pace (*långsamhet*), sharing (*delande*), a carefree state (*bekymmerslöshet*), freedom [from stress] (*frihet*), silence (*tystnad*), simplicity (*enkelhet*), and spirituality (*andlighet*.) Lindström represents the pilgrim’s interior state through symbolic objects as well as by the seven key words. These outward signs of adherence to the pilgrim life are hiking boots, the pilgrim staff, the pilgrim hat, a backpack, a tent, a cape, and the cross. Some of

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<sup>166</sup><http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/pilgrimscentrum/historik/> Accessed 2012-10-25.

these items are of practical use, connected to journeying in nature, while others symbolize aspects of Swedish pilgrimage. For example, using tents, which symbolize simplicity, is usually impractical for group pilgrimages. And wearing a cross, which symbolizes spirituality, is a personal choice. Hans-Erik Lindström and his wife, Sanna, subsequently composed another list of seven key words—departure (*uppbrott*), journey (*vandring*), resting place (*rastplats*), meal (*måltid*), prayer (*bön*), meeting (*möte*), and destination (*mål*)—highlighting even more the physicality of pilgrimage in nature (Lindström, 2010 [1997]; Josefsson, 2010, 14; Sanna and Hans-Erik Lindström, 2011).<sup>167</sup>

### **Journey and Destination**

As its emphasis on Swedish nature and spirituality suggests, Swedish pilgrimage is about both the journey and the goal. The arrival places at the culmination of a pilgrimage are sometimes grand cathedrals and sometimes mere parking lots. The moment of arrival—in Turnerian terms, reaggregation—conflates the meaning of the destination with the religio-historic nature of the pilgrimage journey (1978). Pilgrimage leaders and pilgrimage priests, perhaps particularly those from nationally revered cathedrals (such as Skara, Sweden's first bishopric), are inclined to emphasize the goal. Yet Skara diocese pilgrim priest Agne Josefsson gives equal weight to both the practical, physical daily goal and, at the end of a pilgrimage, the journey itself. He thereby emphasizes the inner structure provided by the outer destinations and goals. The churches, he writes, provide places to stop, places to worship, and therefore places to develop the state of mind that allows attainment of the inner goal (2010, 15).

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<sup>167</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=643796> Accessed 2012-10-25.

K.G. Hammar, on the other hand, former archbishop of Lund's diocese, a geographical area without medieval pilgrim paths, has written a brief spiritual guide to Swedish pilgrimage, *The Way Chose You*, which emphasizes the inner journey. Hammar's guide is based on Dag Hammarskjöld's spiritual meditations and especially on Hammarskjöld's wrestling with the immanent God (Hammar, 2011). Reflecting on seven selections from Hammarskjöld's now famous volume, *Vägmärken*, Hammar's slim guide focuses on milestones along the interior journey. *Vägmärken* is loosely translated as *Markings* in English. The literal translation of the Swedish word "vägmärken," signposts,<sup>168</sup> is, however, truer to Hammarskjöld's intent.

Hammar's meditations on Hammarskjöld's spiritual signposts contrast with Josefsson's practical guide to pilgrim paths in Skara Diocese. Hammar explains that *Markings* was published before most Swedes—still traditionally religious Lutherans—were able to comprehend Hammarskjöld's mystical understanding of God. Hammarskjöld's immanent or panentheistic God, not exterior to any creature or any part of creation, was a radical conception of God in 1963 (2010, 35-36). As Hammar explains, Hammarskjöld emphasizes that an interior journey is more profound than any journey through the universe. Hammar also points out that Hammarskjöld employs natural and geographical signs as guides to the interior journey. Hammarskjöld's journey into the mountains of Northern Sweden begins with a description of a tiny flower. Hammar interprets this passage as Hammarskjöld's invitation to pilgrims today, on a literal pilgrimage, as well as those on the figurative journey of life, who can be guided in the search for the most profound meanings within the smallest of signs.

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<sup>168</sup> Confusion may have arisen in the translation because Hammarskjöld's writings were so brief they were like marks or "markings" on a page: the pithy thoughts or meditations of one day often condensed to a sentence or phrase.

Some Swedish pilgrims focus, as in traditional pilgrimage, on the destination. The destination, whether a church or cathedral, may be perceived as holy and awe-inspiring, as “deepening” the pilgrimage experience. Other Swedish pilgrims, as my participant-observation showed, experience arrival at the destination as the anticlimactic, often hurried end, of a leisurely journey. It is during the journey, whether in appreciation of nature, through silent meditation, or by communion with fellow pilgrims, that most Swedish pilgrims experience spiritual growth. The particular destination itself is often unimportant, though a goal to strive toward is helpful when the journey becomes difficult and painful. But for most Swedish pilgrims, arrival at the destination signals the oftentimes “anticlimactic” hurried end of a leisurely journey.

Furthermore, some Swedish pilgrims neither participate in religious services upon arrival, nor enter the destination church building. The meaning of pilgrimage for these individuals may not be tied to the designated cultural-sacred spaces at which they arrive. Other pilgrims are rushed by the demands of train and bus schedules, or by waiting partners providing rides home (Bremborg, 2010, 66-68). I observed many of the pilgrims with whom I walked rushing away, participating neither in the brief pilgrim service outside of the Vadstena Cathedral upon our arrival, nor in the pilgrim mass the next morning. From their haste, I infer that for them the journey through nature was more important than the destination. Some disappeared in such haste that they did not take a farewell of the group, nor did they complete my survey. Because I later recalled some who were among the pilgrims who left without ceremony, I surmised that these were among the pilgrims who, during the course of our journey, told me they did not usually



participate in Church of Sweden services.<sup>169</sup> It seems these pilgrims were actually determined to avoid the destination.

For still other pilgrimage participants, in completely different circumstances, the destination may be so fraught with meaning that it is avoided. In “Heartland of America: Memory, Motion, and the Reconstruction of History on a Motorcycle Pilgrimage,” Jill Dubisch analyzes the annual pilgrimage of the Vietnam War Veteran bikers who ride to the Vietnam War Memorial. Some are overcome with emotion and cannot even approach the Wall. In this contemporary pilgrimage as well as in the Swedish case, some pilgrims hasten away in different directions after arrival. Dubisch writes: “There is no ritual for the return” (2004, 123). There is, in other words, neither a period of aggregation nor one of reaggregation as described by Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1977, 94). Neither a time for the pilgrims to gather with fellow travelers upon arrival, nor a time before departure or reaggregation and return to their usual social position, is observed in this pilgrimage.

Scandinavia does offer a few destination pilgrimages, of which Trondheim was preeminent in the Middle Ages, and Vadstena is the most important in Sweden (Melin, 2009, 91-92). But even renowned destinations are unimportant to some who reach them. Trondheim, Norway, where St. Olof’s relics lie, is perhaps the favorite among Swedish

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<sup>169</sup>We walked to Vadstena and to Vadstena Cloister Church in single file, as usual, while bells rang loudly to welcome us. In this already chaotic environment, and somewhat exhausted by journey’s end, we then participated in a pilgrim service along with others not from our group, and were permitted to walk into the Cloister Church through the forgiveness door. In this hectic time, in a large church with large church grounds, it was not possible to know who had left prematurely, or merely punctually, of the 25 in our group. I mentioned that one pilgrim had not taken farewell of us, but he had said “good-bye” to the leader, and possibly others of the 25 with whom we walked. There were hectic moments, when, in researcher’s official guise at long last, I tried to track down and distribute surveys to those of our group whom I could find—some of whom were about to leave within minutes—so I could only later guess who had left early, and whom I might have missed in all the hectic church and research activity immediately upon arrival in Vadstena.

pilgrims seeking meaning in the destination itself.<sup>170</sup> Trondheim may be particularly attractive to traditionally destination-oriented Roman Catholic pilgrims, for example. Roman Catholic pilgrims are, as mentioned, active participants and administrators in one of Sweden's regional pilgrim organizations, Pilgrimstid Nu, Time for Pilgrimage – Sweden ([www.pilgrimstid.nu](http://www.pilgrimstid.nu)). Vadstena is, as mentioned, home to the first post-Reformation Lutheran pilgrimage center in Sweden established in 1996, as well as to the cloister church in which the relics of Sweden's patron saint, Birgitta, are kept, and to the only cloisters in Sweden not razed during the Reformation.<sup>171</sup>

Some churches and cathedrals are of regional and national importance. Others are simply convenient destinations for pilgrims on church-led pilgrimages. Churches used for overnight pilgrimage stays tend to be of contemporary design and provide kitchens, showers, and rooms in which pilgrims may sleep. These churches may be chosen due to their proximity to public transportation, to pleasant natural pathways, or to educational historical sites.

The churches at which we pilgrims stopped for our lunch breaks were in more pastoral areas of Östergötland.<sup>172</sup> Sometimes walking just a kilometer from a town or highway brought us to dirt roads and quiet, rural fields. The centuries-old churches we visited, with their moldering headstones, provided peaceful grassy areas and trees under which to rest and to eat lunch. Eating lunch and having a short snooze on the perimeter of a Christian graveyard is neither unseemly nor inappropriate among pilgrims in Sweden.

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<sup>170</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19049130](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19049130) Accessed October 10, 2012.

<sup>171</sup> <http://www.pilgrimscentrum.com/se/pilgrimscentrum/historik/> October 25, 2012

<sup>172</sup> <http://www.pilgrimisverige.se/> Accessed September 21, 2014. This link includes a map of the provinces of Sweden, of which Östergötland is one. By clicking on a province, you are led through screens until you arrive at a link or a PDF which shows a map of the pilgrim paths in one or more provinces. See also below links to maps of Birgitta Paths and of European paths.

The exteriors of these churches in South-Central Sweden—where we journeyed through Småland and Östergötland—were often white stucco, and the interiors, with their vaulted altars, were decorated with ornate ribbons of painting in terra cotta red, robin’s egg blue, and muted spring green. Holy Eucharist was served by one pilgrim passing the cup and bread to the next rather than by having the elements handed to the laypersons by the presiding priest. Eucharist inside these churches thus celebrates Christianity and—for atheists and agnostics—communion among fellow humans, a common heritage, and the rural landscapes in which they stand.

### **Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Tourism**

People seeking to reclaim knowledge of their national or regional heritage are considered pilgrims by some scholars and tourists by others. Among renowned Swedish cathedrals, those in Lund and Uppsala are home to Sweden’s two preeminent theological institutions. Lund’s Cathedral is, furthermore, a center of pilgrimage activity in Southern Sweden. Many other larger churches have historical and religious significance due to their age or proximity to historically significant cloister ruins or to tombs of renowned Christian patrons. The Cloister Church at Varnhem is a remarkable example of both the former and latter sort: Birger Jarl, father to two Swedish kings, is entombed there. Formerly connected, and now contiguous to the church, are Cistercian cloister ruins from the early Middle Ages, situated down a spring-fed slope from the earliest known Christian graves in Sweden. Varnhem’s grounds, where I travelled after my pilgrimage week with Swedish friends from the West Coast, also house a museum and pilgrimage center. Varnhem, as I observed, is not only a destination. When at Varnhem, I recognized another week’s group of Dag Hammarskjöld PAX 2001 Pilgrimage for Peace. Varnhem

is a stopping-off point for those actively on pilgrimage tours (Nilsson, 1998, 126-128). Nearby Skara Diocese Cathedral displays renowned contemporary art as well as highly prized early Christian objects—a jewel-encrusted chalice, for example—and thus takes on museum-like qualities along with religious symbolic qualities.<sup>173</sup>

Places like Skara Cathedral attract not only religio-spiritual pilgrims, but those pilgrims also known as “heritage tourists.” Coleman and Eade write that “when mobility can be regarded as mundane, pilgrimage—as either metaphor or institution—is less likely to be seen as rigidly exceptional or set apart from society” (2004, 7). Whether or not visitors to Skara Cathedral, even if they journey with the intention of appreciating art and learning more about regional Swedish Christian history, consciously experience a spiritual reawakening during their travels, I argue that they might better be called “heritage pilgrims” than “heritage tourists.” The experience of spending time at Skara Cathedral, the Pilgrimage Center at Skara, and the Cistercian Church, monastic ruins, and museum was significant for my Swedish companions, as a trip to Rome, for example, could not have been. I did not however, observe my friends pray, or in any way suggest that they were interested in Skara Cathedral, or in Masthuggskyrkan in Gothenburg, as places of traditional Christian worship. They spent time walking around (inside) and looking at famous contemporary works of art as well as at ancient artifacts in Skara Cathedral. These native Swedes expressed great interest in the early Christian history of

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<sup>173</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> c. stained glass windows of renowned Swedish artist, Bo Beskow, depicting the Book of Revelations, are among the works in Skara Cathedral that may attract those with a greater interest in art than in religion. A recent, nontraditional, painting of the Garden of Eden by LGBT artist Elisabeth Ohlson-Wallin is also on display in the Cathedral, as are pieces from the Middle Ages and thereafter ( personal observation July 2011; <http://www.skarapastorat.se/alias/users/10001/Domkyrkan+Skattkammaren,10124.0.html>; <http://www.kyrkanstidning.se/inrikes/domkyrkoforsamlingen-i-skara-far-hbt-altartavla-som-del-i-konstkupp>.)

the province in which they were both raised, and of which they had not been so keenly aware.

David Crouch, arguing in Simon Coleman and Mike Crang's *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* (2002), does not engage in the tourist versus pilgrim debate. Crouch argues, in "Surrounded by Place: Embodied Encounters" (2002, 207-218), against objectification of place or person in the tourist experience. The tourist experience is an embodied experience, a "lived experience" (207) mediated by the space in which it takes place, and not reducible to a static gaze. Crouch writes of liminality, reflexivity, and that "The world is grasped through the body and the world is mediated through the body" (217). This argument is also made by sociologists of religion and pilgrimage theorists (Ammerman and Bremborg) and renders the line between "secular" tourism and "religious" pilgrimage all the more blurred since both pilgrimage and tourism are embodied experiences. Crang's protest against the passive tourist, objectivization of the body and the place, and against the over-emphasis on the passive gaze in favor of the experiential "knowing and doing" is a call for the erasure between the designation of tourism as a trivial pursuit and pilgrimage as a serious one (207-210). Many of the experiences and bodily attitudes whether at designated religious sites or in nature are mediated by people either reductively called "tourists," or known as pilgrims, in a similar manner. As Crouch writes, "Embodied knowledge of space would suggest an ongoing patina of flows occurring through the complexity of human activity (2002, 217).

An interesting example is that of a book by Kevin J. Wright, President of the World Religious Travel Association. Wright is not a scholar, but his book, *Catholic Shrines of Western Europe* ([1997], 2009) has a glossy and bright appearance possibly

associated with tourist literature. The distinction between a tourist and a pilgrim may be losing relevance in print and social media as well as in reality. Travelers themselves might be hard-pressed to say whether they are tourists or pilgrims, or they might choose to describe themselves in wholly other ways.

Though it also resonates with debates regarding secularization and sacralization, this pilgrimage and tourism debate resonates most strongly with the inseparable (in Europe) quests for personal knowledge and understanding of cultural heritage, religious heritage, and identity. Paul Basu argues that heritage tourists, or “roots-tourists” in search of identity, derive meaning from the semantically laden word “pilgrimage,” which they apply to their journey. Such journeys, argues Basu in “Route Metaphors of ‘Roots-Tourism,’” are not pilgrimages. “To search for ‘roots’ is after all, *already* to engage in a root metaphorical process, in which characteristics of the arboreal subsidiary subject (stasis, longevity, being anchored in time and space, receiving nourishment from the land, etc.) are imputed to the destination” [Basu’s emphasis] (2004, 156). Basu suggest that heritage-seekers employ a “light” definition of pilgrimage, “journey to a sacred shrine.” Does mixing metaphors disallow the sacrality of such travel? Travel in search of heritage and identity is, in my research and examples of Swedish of pilgrimage, an area in which the personal and the communal, and the secular and sacred all blend.

As William H. Swatos argues in *On the Road to Being There: Studies in Pilgrimage and Tourism in Late Modernity* (2006) certain very large, popular pilgrimages have “skewed” the understanding of scholars, who look at those on the road to Santiago de Compostela, for instance, and conclude that many of the individuals on that journey are more tourist than pilgrim. Swatos reminds us that not only pilgrimage, but all human

activity is conducted out of “mixed motivations.” The tourist/pilgrim distinction has some relevance, according to Swatos, who argues in “For Charles and for England: Pilgrimage without Tourism” that those journeying to the tomb of Charles I, British king and martyr, are moved by impulses characteristic of pilgrims more than tourists. Swatos argues that “around the world and across religious traditions there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of pilgrimage events and sites, primarily though never solely, occasioned by religious devotion” (2). The annual commemoration at the site of Charles’s martyrdom, “as well as the observances at scores of local shrines that have not become part of the tourist circuit” provide evidence for Swatos that while there is no “pure” pilgrim, there is “purer” pilgrimage, less trammled by commercialism (31).

In the Swedish case today, it would be difficult to identify any pilgrimage so strictly motivated by religious impulse as that to which Swatos refers, but the important point of pilgrims carrying bundles of mixed motivations on their journeys is, by all accounts and examples, true of most Swedish pilgrims. Once again, I conclude that secular and religious are not mutually exclusive categories. I also conclude that the pilgrim in Sweden is most often also a heritage pilgrim, as well as a person who simply wants to spend time outdoors moving about free from many daily restrictions. The category of pilgrim is, however, the primary identity of the Swedish pilgrim while on a journey. “Pilgrim” is the designation by which such individuals and groups are known.

Contemporary Swedish pilgrimage makes a unique claim about the sacrality of all places and beings, without truly abandoning the ingrained and revived concept that some spaces have greater sacrality than others. Or, as Victor and Edith Turner wrote in *Image and Pilgrimage*, describing pilgrimage in the context of Western Europe, “A tourist is

half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist” (1978). Despite concerted efforts of religious actors to frame Swedish pilgrimage in religious and spiritual terms, cooperation with tourism groups, and the acceptance of diverse impulses within pilgrimage, indicates a range of primary motivations among pilgrimage participants.

Why then is pilgrimage, never a Protestant practice, rapidly increasing in popularity and participation in Sweden as in the rest of Europe? What are the major factors? Are changes to the Swedish social welfare state, or to the Church of Sweden, or to the global-political European arena primary causal factors? Or might changes in the needs of contemporary Europeans for spiritual and existential expressions, which Riis and Woodhead call “religious emotion,” be advancing this new movement? (2011; 2007, 153-170). It is to answering these questions that I now turn.

### **Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Liminality**

Swedish pilgrimage is designed (and advertised) to facilitate the journey to the interior of the self through the act of a physical journey in space that is both secular and sacred. This is understood to require a transition to a different state of mind, and involves other expectations than those required by daily life, family, and career. Stepping outside of society requires entering a “liminal” state of being, according to the anthropologists of religion Victor and Edith Turner. The pilgrim, or person undergoing a religious rite of passage, must first separate from the familiar social sphere or “structure,” to achieve an unstable state of “antistructure” or “communitas” (Turner & Turner, 1978, 250-251). This instability creates a literal and emotional space in which the pilgrim may partake in meaningful encounters with nature, the self, and fellow pilgrims, in order to experience unfamiliar states of mind. The Turners describe pilgrimage participation as a “mode of



liminality for the laity.” They claim that the ideal (in Weberian terms) pilgrimage is defined by medieval European pilgrimage: “This mode was best represented by the pilgrimage to a sacred site or holy shrine located at some distance away from the pilgrim’s place of residence and daily labor” (1978, 2-4). This ideal type of pilgrimage, and the transition to a radically other state, is not necessarily the outcome or actual expectation of the Swedish pilgrim, however.

It appears that a pushback against high stress, high-speed modern life, and its technological accoutrements is among the primary factors in this complex movement (Hans-Erik Lindström; Melin, 2009). The slowness and simplicity of Swedish pilgrimage, versus the rapidity, logistical complexity, and consumerism that is the hallmark of some tourism, provides one way in which to distinguish the two cultural phenomena. Swedish pilgrimage emphasizes an escape from the daily routine, stress, and bustle of modern life. It also emphasizes escape through simplicity, even monotony, and the joy of the journey, more than the rather staid arrival at a religio-cultural, even museum-like, destination fraught with historical significance and replete with Christian artifacts or sacred relics.

Some forms of tourist or pilgrimage movement are, on the other hand, characterized by movement at the destination rather than the movement to the destination. Extreme tourism stands at the far end of the spectrum from much Swedish pilgrimage. These arrivals, as described by Claudia Bell and John Lyall in “The Accelerated Sublime: Thrill-Seeking Adventure Heroes in the Commodified Landscape” (2002, 21-37), are distinguished by rapidity, exoticism, an appearance of danger and bravado, and ongoing photo-journalistic accounts of participants’ heroics. These extreme

tourists are arguably also pilgrims who seek the borderlands of liminality for existential affirmation. Adventure-seeking tourists gain such affirmation, and teeter on the very liminal edge of existence, in death-defying pursuits.

Swedish pilgrimage engagement with the existential, however, takes place by slowing down, minimizing the dramatic, and lessening the need for travel or movement by any motorized mode. The movements of Swedish pilgrims and the movements of bungee, base, and parachute jumpers, whose radical feats in exotic locations are typically recorded by tour promoters, are radically different in their dependence on expensive equipment as well as on velocity (Bell and Lyall, 2002, 21-22). The Swedish pilgrim collects an entirely different sort of unrecorded social or cultural capital, while staying close to home, and speaking his or her native tongue. Photography (by pilgrims), videography, and any form of visual record of the pilgrims' experiences that capture their movements and voices, and are individually valorizing or distinguishing, are discouraged, if not forbidden. Most photographs of Swedish pilgrims show only their feet or their retreating backs. Swedish pilgrimage is not about public self-glorification. Like many others, Swedish pilgrimage researcher Bremborg finds defining what constitutes a pilgrimage difficult and opts for self-definition, viewing any activity that defines itself as a pilgrimage as such. Bremborg does, however, exclude pilgrimage by bus or car, and other pilgrimages that could not be defined by the Swedish word "*pilgrimsvandring*," which means "pilgrimage journey on foot" (24).

In *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (2004), Simon Coleman devotes a chapter to comparing pilgrims who go to Walsingham, England, and to Jerusalem from England and Sweden. The Walsingham, England pilgrims move slowly and deliberately

within the confines of a small area. The Swedish members of the charismatic Word of Life movement move quickly by air over the great distance from Sweden to Jerusalem. Both sets of pilgrims make these pilgrimages frequently. Some become so attached to the pilgrimage site that they move to the town of Walsingham or to Jerusalem. Coleman points out that there is not only movement to and from a pilgrimage site, but also movement within such a site. Coleman concludes “In both cases, distinctions between home and away are collapsed, as is the idea of a return to ‘normal’ life after pilgrimage” (66). This distinction between home and away is continuously “collapsed” in Swedish pilgrimage. The Swedes who go on pilgrimage in Sweden are away from their homes, but wander in their homeland, speaking their native tongue. The return to “normal” may thus be less culturally jarring, though still disconcerting for Swedish pilgrims. Swedish pilgrims do, however, bemoan both the arrival at their destination, and the often over-rapid transition from pilgrimage back to daily life (Bremborg, 66-69).

### **Major Factor Behind Pilgrimage: Spirituality**

Striving towards, if not always achieving, the liminal in pilgrimage is one expression of pilgrim spirituality. Other expressions of pilgrim spirituality are not dependent on achieving a liminal state outside of the daily realm and rhythm of quotidian human experience. Nancy Tatom Ammerman’s book of 2014, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*, examines spirituality in the everyday lives, the beliefs and practices of Americans. Its relevance to Swedish pilgrimage lies in Ammerman’s project of searching out different types of spirituality. In her chapter “‘Spirituality’ and ‘Religion’: What are we Talking About?” Ammerman has an easier time explaining what spirituality is not. “Understanding the social contours of spirituality

has often been hampered by the temptation to follow conventional wisdom in defining ‘spirituality’ as improvised and individual” (23). Going beyond the improvised and individual alone, group pilgrimage in Sweden may be characterized as structured and communal as well as “improvised and individual.” Predictable elements and practices are, as explained and illustrated in chapter one, part of most Swedish pilgrimages.

Ammerman (2014) outlines four types of spirituality in her effort not to sidestep the problem of defining the “unexamined black box” (24) of spirituality without reinforcing the tautology that she claims many American sociologists use by defining it as indefinable, or as simply “whatever religion isn’t” (24). “What emerged from all that sorting were two distinct cultural packages, I will call Theistic and Extra-Theistic, two domains of cultural discourse within which these Americans approach the notion of spirituality” (28). Complicating this are two “discursive paths” that course alongside the two other cultural packages. The first discursive path is “defined by the Ethical signpost of moral goodness” and the second is, the “contested terrain in which the politics of being ‘spiritual but not religious’ can be seen” (28). In short, the Theist and Extra-Theist are the two main types of spirituality, intertwined with which the Ethical (moral) and “Spiritual but not Religious” may exist. The “spiritual but not religious” descriptor is one by which some Swedish pilgrims describe themselves, and is a commonly used term in Sweden, even among those who are not pilgrims.

In the American context, Ammerman wants to conduct a scientific sociological analysis showing which types of spirituality might link to others. She seeks not to simplify, but to identify, quantify, complexify, or define. A slightly less complex “working definition” might make for easier reading, but it is in the details that the

relevance of American spirituality to the Swedish pilgrimage case becomes more evident.<sup>174</sup>

The common phrase, “spiritual but not religious” was echoed in the way some of my survey participants defined themselves, even though I had not thought to present this as an option in my survey. The phrase “spiritual but not religious,” is, as Ammerman (2013) points out, commonly used in Europe and the United States. She questions the usefulness of much survey data on this topic, however: “What the surveys fail to tell us is what the respondents mean by either of those terms. Nor do they tell us much about how people who claim to be one or the other or both actually live their lives” (4).

Adhering to “spirituality,” nebulous as the concept seems to remain, and rejecting the designation “religious,” is a common theme that runs through Swedish pilgrimage today. But the spiritual and religious may also co-exist. A Swedish survey respondent wrote that she “prefers to be called spiritual rather than religious,” but does not reject organized religion. More evidence of this pattern of co-extant spirituality, religiosity, and indifference to either or both can be found in many invitations to recent Swedish pilgrimage. In a 2010 flyer created by the free-church affiliated group *Bilda*, and titled “Find Yourself on a Pilgrimage” (“*Hitta Dig Självt på Pilgrimsvandring*”), Anna Björk, a priest from the Orsa Parish in Dalarna, Sweden, says that she “wasn’t exactly burned out, but perhaps a little toasted, and set out on a pilgrimage for religious and spiritual reasons.” Björk elected to go on a pilgrimage to El Camino de Compostela.<sup>175</sup> Which facets of her motivations were religious and which were spiritual is not articulated, but

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<sup>174</sup> See Ammerman, 2014, pages 25 and 26 for the eleven bullet points under the heading “An Initial Mapping.” This is followed by “Cultural Landscapes,” or “cultural packages,” page 28, and as described above.

<sup>175</sup> <http://www.yumpu.com/sv/document/view/20570192/hitta-dig-sjalvt-pa-pilgrimsvandring-free>  
Accessed February 11, 2014.

she “learned to know herself better.” The same pamphlet cites Hans-Erik Lindström: “all you need is some planning and a pair of shoes to go on a pilgrimage.” An unattributed quotation in the middle of this same four-page pamphlet states, in large font, “You don’t need to be spiritual or religious to go on a [Swedish] pilgrimage.”

A complex definition of spirituality is also elaborated by Heelas and Woodhead in *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (2004). Heelas and Woodhead write that “Most notably the term ‘spirituality’ is often used to express commitment to a deep truth that is to be found within what belongs to this world” (6). Heelas and Woodhead focus on the Northern European context. They argue (in 2004), that what might loosely be called New Age religion is taking the place of traditional Christianity. The “life-as” and “subjective-life” theoretical frame (as discussed in the previous chapter), stemming from work on New Age religion, still applies in Sweden even though New Age religion has waned there.<sup>176</sup> The Swedish pilgrimage movement is a concrete expression of “subjective-life spirituality.” Subjective-life spirituality “invokes the sacred in the cultivation of unique subjective-life” (5). Heelas and Woodhead argue that the “subjective turn” is not a turn away from community, and not strictly a desire to satisfy the existential or spiritual needs of the individual. This framing of subjectivity, as “relational as much as individualistic,” applies well to Swedish group pilgrimage (2).

The thesis of *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* is largely based on the 2000-2003 Kendal Project—the study of the English town of Kendal and surrounding community—directed by Heelas and Woodhead. As the title indicates, Heelas and Woodhead argue that “subjective-life” communities are gaining adherents, while “life-as” congregations, based on the traditional Sunday worship model

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are losing members. “Subjective-life,” (as defined in chapter three) need not necessarily be New Age religion. In fact, those “Subjective-life” communities specifically perceived to be “New Age” do not seem to have retained much traction in Sweden. Acknowledging that New Age religion may not have the same importance in Sweden as in England, Heelas and Woodhead mention in a footnote that “Löwendahl (2002) is one of the few scholars who have found evidence (in Sweden) suggesting that the ‘New Age’ might be in decline” (2004, 162). Swedish scholar Liselotte Frisk has also reached the conclusion that New Age religion waned quickly in Sweden (2007).

A similar Swedish study was inspired by the Kendal Project and began before the Kendal study was complete. The findings of this study are not entirely consistent with the Kendal study. These findings are published in a volume of essays, edited and with contributions by Kajsa Ahlstrand and Göran Gunner, *Guds Närmste Stad?: En Studie om Religionernas Betydelse i ett Svenskt Samhälle I början av 2000-talet* (2008), (*God’s Nearest Town?: A Study of the Meaning of Religions in a Swedish Community at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*). The community—the town center of Enköping, its suburbs, exurbs, and the countryside around it—was selected, in part, because the population of 38,000 in 2004 was similar to that of Kendal (13). Under the subheading of “Sweden’s Most Average Town?” the authors show that Enköping is not only easily accessible from Stockholm and other urban centers, but also a representative Swedish community in its degree of religious adherence and participation. The authors provide a 1999 figure for the Swedish population’s average weekly participation in Church of Sweden and free church Sunday services. 1 to 2.5% of the Swedish population attends either weekly Church of Sweden or free churches services, which is a combined total of

2.0 to 5.0%. Furthermore, .1 to 1.0% of the population attends an “immigrant” church service (13). Included in “immigrant denominations” were the Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, and Muslim congregations. The authors conclude that the “religious engagement in Enköping is a typical Swedish weekly service attendance rate of 2.1 to 3.9%” (13). Among the 29 survey questions, all of which participants were asked to answer, were both “How religious are you?” and “How spiritual are you?” (340).<sup>177</sup> In other words, The Enköping Study engages directly with the concept of spirituality, and the argument of Heelas and Woodhead that “spirituality” is displacing “religion.” It also raises other questions, discussed below.

### **Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Health**

The health of the individual, which is fostered by time spent in nature, is one of the primary and overt goals of Swedish pilgrimage (Hornberg, 2009). But, if the goal is only to become healthy, why choose pilgrimage instead of a spa stay or backpacking trip, which Hornberg likens to Swedish pilgrimage? Overlap between the health-and-well-being community and the pilgrimage community does exist, but the spa focus is more narrowly on the self. Interestingly, one of the translators of Martin Lönnebo’s *Pearls of Life* book into English (2006) is Carolina Welin, who is also a leader of weeklong or weekend-long spa retreats at Masesgården on Lake Siljan in Sweden. In the “about” section describing a visit to Masesgården, there is no mention of existential questions, and very little mention of nature, but a focus on exercise, proper diet and feeling well by

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<sup>177</sup> These two questions were among questions “a” through “l” of survey questions 21 that asked participants to rate a number of qualities on a scale, prefaced by the question “To what degree do you consider yourself...” Among the categories, “religious” and “spiritual” are listed, one following the other, as a pair.



caring for oneself appropriately.<sup>178</sup> The physical and psychological health focus at a Swedish spa, with no particular group ethos, less contemplative time in nature, and lacking the metaphor of the temporary journey (pilgrimage) and ongoing journey (life), clearly distinguishes the spa stay from the pilgrimage experience.

Erika Willander's chapter, "Relaxed and Touched: The View on Health and Spirituality among health-promoting Business in Enköping" ("*Avslappnad och berörd: Synen på hälsa och andlighet bland hälsofrämjande företag i Enköping*") questions mass adherence to "subjective-life" principles and actions (2008, 241-276). Willander questions Heelas and Woodhead's utopian ideas about the agency of the individual even in the industrialized, Western world. She suggests that people are not yet, nor may ever be, as free to be self-directed as the Kendal study with its focus on New Age suggests. Willander also questions whether "the spirituality apparently consistent with [subjective-life] values is strong [in Sweden]" (243). The important difference, somewhat lost in translation, argues Willander, is that claiming to be "spiritual" in English, and in the Kendal study in particular, means being "not religious." The Swedish word, *andlig*, can mean being spiritual *and* religious (246-247). In Sweden, in other words, being spiritual and being religious are not mutually exclusive categories.

Willander's findings about alternative providers of health care in the Enköping Community are unsurprising: "According to health care entrepreneurs, stress and lifestyle, above all other factors, lead to poor health." This echoes the pilgrimage message, as does the emphasis on "letting go" and "recovery" or "recuperation" (262). Willander examines the understanding of spirituality in the area of health care. In interviews conducted with some of the survey respondents, she discovers that spirituality

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<sup>178</sup> <http://www.masesgarden.se/om-masesg%C3%A5rden.aspx> Accessed February 1, 2014.

is considered a vital ingredient in a “healthy lifestyle” and that “Spiritual practitioners can increase the effectiveness of the relaxation or letting go or the process of recovery” (262-263). Though pilgrimage leaders are not explicitly mentioned, seen through this perspective they are spiritual health practitioners.

In her chapter on health and consumerism, Anne-Christine Hornberg also emphasizes the marketing message over the proven benefits to consumers. Hornberg, furthermore, suggests that the “spiritual” overlay is only a thin veneer for enterprises intent on making a healthy profit from seekers who seek better health and relief from “burnout.” New, non-traditional rituals serve the “placeless, disembedded individual, looking for meanings in inner life and not in tradition or common symbols” in Sweden (111). Hornberg argues that these disembedded individuals are without family or community and seek new traditions (110-111). Nature is the central healing force, the “framed ritual space, in which a healing life-force is generated” (113). This same nature, differently charged, still serves as an outlet for recreation, if less commonly the literal source of “one’s daily bread” in post-agricultural Sweden (113). Hornberg discusses pilgrimage only briefly, writing that “Nature is the sacred ground and the ritual is performed as a walk in this temple” (114). She quickly turns to the more overt selling of health as a commodity by spas and retreat centers. Hornberg’s picture of a disembedded Swedish individual without community (or even family) or place does not sufficiently consider authentic Swedish ties to nature, region, community, and family, all of which are part of the new Swedish pilgrimage tradition. As researchers have observed, and as I observed as a pilgrimage participant, and as pilgrimage invitations or marketing messages reflect, many pilgrims do go on pilgrimage in family or church groups. And many

pilgrims go on pilgrimage in regions to which they are already strongly attached. Others go to re-embed themselves in community and shared cultural-religious heritage. Though churches also want customers, and are, in fact, marketing a pilgrimage commodity, it is not marketed with promises of any cure. While spas may offer cures and rest and weight-loss, Swedish pilgrimage offers less tangible benefits. As such it is “marketed” with a message of hope and connection to the more-than-human world. “Go on a pilgrimage and explore nature and yourself, and make friends along the way,” is the reiterated message.

In “Pilgrimage in Late Modernity: A Comparative Study of Sweden and Japan,” Anders Melin (2009) agrees, to a point, with Hornberg. Melin, however, looks closely at pilgrimage rather than at “secular” restorative getaways. While Melin recognizes that pilgrimage is, in part, a spiritual journey, he maintains that it is foremost a quest for health. This argues Melin, is why pilgrimage is acceptable, and even popular among Swedes who have rejected Lutheranism. Pilgrimage is a “de-contextualized practice” and “no longer based on a theology of merit” (103). Melin adds that “The current pilgrimage movement...[i]s based on a certain romanticizing of nature since nature is portrayed mainly as a source of healing and health” (103). As Löfgren (1989) notes, and as I have noted above, and as Gaunitz notes in her study, the taming of nature, the literal and metaphorical smoothing of pathways, is appealing to pilgrims. Some, in fact, as discussed in chapter one, prefer pilgrimage retreats with in stunning natural surroundings, but with all the amenities of stay at a fine hotel, rather than more self-reliant, and inexpensive styles of group pilgrimage.

## Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Nature

Available sources suggest that journeying in nature is the most important feature of Swedish pilgrimage.<sup>179</sup> Pilgrimage, of course, is traditionally known as a journey in nature, so this may not seem remarkable. People arrive at destinations, such as Lourdes or pilgrimage sites in Japan, by bus, and leave by bus. Pilgrims intent on earning their pilgrim stamp or badge at Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela attempt to walk the last ten kilometers. Pilgrimages are undertaken by boat, on horseback, and by reindeer herders following migratory routes of reindeer. Only pilgrimage by car is relatively unknown in Sweden. Paved or asphalt paths of very short distances are created so that even very young, elderly, or infirm pilgrims can journey in an authentic manner. The Dag Hammarskjöld Path from Abisko to Nikkaluokta in Northern Sweden, for example, is marked by seven rocks that begin at the Abisko Tourist Lodge. From there, the first rock, inscribed with a passage from Hammarskjöld's *Markings*, is only two kilometers away on a flat path. This is designed so that almost anyone well enough to reach the northern mountains can successfully make a brief pilgrimage under his or her own power. All of the rocks are engraved in Swedish and Samish, the language of the indigenous people of the Arctic.<sup>180</sup> The intention of Swedish pilgrimage is to allow the experience of nature to lead to spiritual growth.

I bracket the above claim with two telling examples separated by eight years. The first, chronologically, is a 2006 master's thesis not written by a theologian. This is a rare

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<sup>179</sup> Support of this claim has been cited throughout, and includes citations from the work of researchers Bremborg, 2010, Gaunitz, 2006 (immediately below), Hans-Erik Lindström and other pilgrimage leaders (immediately below), bishops in the Church of Sweden, Church of Sweden diocesan webpages, and Swedish pilgrims themselves.

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=660860> ;  
<http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=665178> Accessed February 26, 2014.

find, as little is written on Swedish pilgrimage by laypersons. The second is an invitation to a pilgrimage seminar on pilgrimage and Celtic spirituality. It is an invitation to explore “Nature and the Celts: Spirituality in God’s Unrestricted Nature.” This event, which will be held in Gävle, Sweden, in 2014, is organized through the Pilgrimstid pilgrimage organization, the Church of Sweden, and Sensus, which is responsible for registration. The keynote speaker at this 2014 event will be Lars-Göran Olsson, pastor of a Mission Covenant free church.<sup>181</sup> The interesting theme of this program is not only that spirituality is accessed in “unrestricted nature,” but also that Swedes may explore Celtic spirituality in Sweden.

Worthy of some discussion (not only by virtue of its rarity) is Anne Gaunitz’s 2006 master’s thesis entitled *Simple Nature and Spirituality: A Case Study on what the Physical Milieu can Mean on a Pilgrimage (Den enkla naturen och andligheten: en fallstudie om vad den fysiska miljön kan betyda på en pilgrimsvandring)*. Gaunitz is a social worker who works in outdoor settings. Gaunitz researched nature and spirituality at the Landscape Institute of the Swedish University of Agricultural Science ([www.slu.se](http://www.slu.se)). The question she addresses in her thesis is whether the type of landscape through which a pilgrim journeys affects the pilgrimage experience.

Gaunitz’s pilgrimage case study, is, like mine, based on a pilgrimage to Vadstena through the plains, marshes and fields of Östergötland. This pilgrimage also approached Vadstena from the east, but from a shorter distance, via Skänninge and Bjälbo. The pilgrimage in which Gaunitz was a participant-observer was, however, only two days

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<sup>181</sup> Inbjudan Till Keltisk Pilgrimsdag 140301.pdf. Accessed October 30, 2014. <http://www.pilgrimisverige.se/> Accessed 2014-02-27. According to Sensus Pilgrim on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/sensuspilgrim/timeline>, 75 people are currently enrolled for the five-hour Saturday seminar. Accessed February 28, 2014.

long, and almost entirely silent. Gaunitz reports both feeling initial annoyance at the imposed silence and also being relieved at not having to answer questions about her research.<sup>182</sup> This pilgrimage was nearly gender-segregated (nine of the ten pilgrims were women). A majority of these participants were very or somewhat active in the Church of Sweden. Gaunitz does not mention the participants' ages, but the pilgrimage began on a Wednesday afternoon and ended on a Friday in April of 2006, so one may guess that some of the participants were retired persons, while others may have been unemployed, on vacation, or on parental or sick leave. Gaunitz does, however, mention being the last to go to bed, and the only person to walk before and after each day's pilgrimage. It seems likely that as a professional outdoorswoman she was more fit, and that she was also possibly younger than some of her fellow pilgrims. Time was set aside after the pilgrimage for the nine fellow pilgrims to respond to the survey, so Gaunitz had a high return rate: Seven of nine participants completed detailed surveys. Gaunitz also interviewed three pilgrim leaders before her participant-observation pilgrimage began.

Bjälbo is only a few kilometers beyond Skänninge in the direction of Vadstena. All three places were seats of power in the middle ages. This pilgrimage, albeit brief, began with sightseeing in Skänninge and then followed the medieval *Kungsleden* (The Kings Way) section of *Klosterleden* (The Monastic Path). This path leads through an area of soothing, but not dramatic, vistas. The landscape in the area is quite flat, and Gaunitz's

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<sup>182</sup> An interesting participant observation note is that while I was very comfortable discussing my research because Swedes typically hold academia in high regard. I was reluctant to answer personal questions and even surprised that they were asked. I had a sense that many participants were "bruised," so I, myself ventured no personal questions. Perhaps I was too proficient at playing the part of "hail-fellow-well-met," or was such a curiosity that a few couldn't help themselves. That a Swedish-speaking pilgrim of Swedish heritage is enough of a curiosity to make Swedes drop their customary reserve suggests how insular Swedish pilgrimage remains to this day. This regionalism persists despite the work of Pilgrim i Sverige in hosting joint Swedish-Norwegian pilgrimages to Trondheim. Of course, I listened and shared in kind when other pilgrims volunteered private stories.

informants appreciated the “flat landscape” and the ability to “see for several [Swedish] miles over the fields” (18). One respondent wrote that “big trees mean a great deal, they stand for safety and stability” (19). Only one of Gauntiz’s observers mentions that the expansive view from a promontory, or hillock, provided a spiritual experience. Gauntiz’s survey respondents specifically report enjoying the open spaces for which Östergötland is known. The stretches of even terrain, where one can walk without fear of twisting an ankle, provided an ease that Gauntiz’s respondents appreciated. Not pushing themselves to walk any great distances also apparently provided mental and spiritual breathing room, according to the reports of this small group. Nonetheless, Gauntiz sensed some resistance to her attempts to couple nature and spirituality: all seven respondents identified as Christian, and all but one mentioned God in his/her responses. Despite maintaining that churches were the most important visual objects on their journey (25), one of these pilgrims wrote that “Nature is the most important for me on pilgrimage” (23). The influence of the environment on the spiritual experiences of pilgrims is the subject of Gauntiz’s thesis, and her conclusion, that “The landscape’s form and simplicity is of greatest importance in influencing the spiritual experience from an environmental perspective,” is consistent with her informants’ responses (24).

Interestingly, though it is more often argued that pushing limits and venturing into foreign space and place brings about the authentic pilgrim experience, the responses of Gauntiz’s pilgrims gainsays conventional pilgrimage theory, like that of the Turners, based on movement over large distances. In their volume, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, contributors explore various types and dimensions of what Coleman and Eade call “meta-movement” (2004, 18). Coleman and Eade offer a pilgrimage theory

that embeds pilgrimage within the “mutually enmeshed relations . . . between ‘everyday life’ and sacred spaces” (2004, 15). They define “meta-movement” as:

the combination of mobility itself with a degree of reflexivity as to its meaning, form and function. Thus, not only do many of our authors explore movement within movement—particular styles or episodes of motion within the broader framework of a journey—they also show how pilgrimage can provide opportunities to reflect upon, re-embody, sometimes even retrospectively transform, past journeys (18).

Swedish pilgrimage on a diminutive, local, and regional scale still involves movement in a more-than-metaphorical sense. But it questions the medieval and Turnerian (1978) idea that pilgrimage must be foreign, unusual, difficult, or dangerous. Is heritage travel to religious destinations in Sweden possibly also secular? Catherine Bell argues that “For practitioners, tradition is incredibly regional, even local” (2001, 7). Much of Swedish pilgrimage, instead, encourages pilgrims to engage with local culture and to find the spiritual in the simple more than in the spectacular. And even the lengthy Dag Hammarskjöld PAX pilgrimage for Peace in 2011, for instance, following paths and highways through the lower third of Sweden, and lasting fourteen weeks, had no recorded participant, leader or pilgrim, who made the entire journey. The journey began in the province of Uppland, in the city of Uppsala, (just north of Stockholm), seat of the Church of Sweden’s archbishopric. The journey ended in Southern Sweden, in two significant destinations. The pilgrims first journeyed to Backåkra, the former home of Dag Hammarskjöld, and then continued to the nearby cathedral in Lund. Not only is Lund the other major cathedral city and center of theological study in Sweden, but Lund Cathedral is also the site of a busy pilgrimage movement, perhaps even rivaling that centered in Vadstena. This pilgrimage covered the more temperate and less mountainous—in parts extremely flat—lower third of Sweden. Though physically demanding in many ways, as I



noted in chapter one, this national pilgrimage passed through the more populous areas of Sweden and was not designed as a challenge for the extreme Alpine athlete.

Gauntiz's pilgrims had a somewhat different experience from those with whom I walked. We walked on level ground such as asphalt roads and towpaths much of the time. But we also walked in wooded areas, on boardwalks through marshes, and in gently hilly areas as well. The flats of Östergötland—known as *Östgötaslätten*—include calcareous fens, and not only agricultural land. We enjoyed idyllic pastoral settings, and breathtaking views of Lake Vättern from the peak of Birgitta's Peninsula, and even a mid-day swim in the lake itself. The variety and the beauty of nature were mentioned with many superlatives during sharing hour and conversation by pilgrims in my group. (On the other hand, the noise of our metal walking sticks on asphalt paths occasioned complaints in the group with which I walked.) Still, the concept of appreciating variety as much as monotony, ease as much as difficulties, was a practice encouraged by our pilgrimage leader who spoke in positive terms of rain and brisk breezes. Our journey took us through forested land as well as open land, so our group enjoyed a more varied landscape. Walking on natural surfaces away from traffic was much preferred by our pilgrimage group. It is, however, not clear whether variety, for its own sake, was prized.

What were the facets of nature that Gauntiz's pilgrim-participants found especially spiritual? They were surprisingly mundane, or, to use Ammerman's phrase, "everyday" (2006). The everyday becomes spiritual, or even sacred, when it is experienced with greater awareness and fewer distractions. Musing about identities and actions viewed as religious or not, sacred/spiritual or not—expectations not held in other areas of life—Ammerman (2014, 300) emphasizes that these are false dichotomies:

Religious identity is not an essentialist social category. One of the things that narrative theories of identity make clear is that identities are always multistranded and intersectional. . . . What is odd about the way we have often understood religious identities is that we have assumed that they have an all-or-nothing character that few other identities are expected to have. By this account, one either is or is not religious. An action either is or is not spiritual. A place is either sacred or profane. And so on. What I am suggesting, then, is that even as we look at the presumably individual stories I have been describing, we should expect them to be *both* sacred and profane at once, continually evolving in multiple conversations.

Because the pilgrimage was silent, the musing voice of the participant observer is most natural to Gaunitz's account. After annoyance with the sleeping arrangements and having to be silent when she did not care to be, Gaunitz hit her stride on the first day, and reports that it was the ease with which she strode that made the experience spiritual for her, as did the words of the priest.

The other pilgrims' perceptions of what in nature inspired a spiritual feeling ranged from joy over a small beach at which they stopped, to several who mentioned a distant view (and the horizon in particular), as scenes that called forth spiritual feelings. Water, spacious distance, and repetitious walking with ease were themes in these responses. Though silent during the days, dinners, and nights, the sharing hour was a time for each pilgrim to verbalize her feelings.

Gaunitz uses the definition of pilgrim leader Lindström (2005) and that of priest Lars-Åke Lundberg to help define spirituality. Lindström is consistent with his earlier and later writings, connecting nature and spirituality. In this excerpt from *Pilgrimsliv* (*The Pilgrim Life*) he writes that "everything is woven in a single piece and belongs together—organic as well as inorganic chemistry, living beings, and dead things" (Lindström in Gaunitz, 2006). Lundberg, author of *Andlighet* (*Spirituality*), (2003) "describes spirituality as Togetherness, Life, and above all else, Relationality." Gaunitz

explains that “according the Lundberg, spirituality needs not have anything to do with church . . . or be connected to religion”. Spirituality is instead to approach the living water” (Lundberg in Gaunitz, 2006, 7). “This can occur through self awareness, contact with other people, nature, or the goal of living in a more Godly orientation (Lundberg in Gaunitz, 2006, 7).<sup>183</sup> Lundberg draws a distinction between people and more-than-human-nature. This distinction appears culturally and theologically inscribed in Sweden, as it is in much of western culture and Christianity. Gaunitz echoes my observation (in chapter one) of the Swedish predilection for naming, and thus knowing, wildflowers, weeds, berries, mushrooms, trees, and birds. Despite this specific cultural knowledge of nature, Swedish environmental concern is, nevertheless, typically couched in broad, global terms.

Though Gaunitz does not provide her own definition of spirituality, she maintains that the spiritual element is foundational to pilgrimage, which, otherwise, becomes merely an excursion outdoors. In response to her questions about spirituality and nature, as well as to questions about the types of landscapes and walking surfaces pilgrims preferred, Gaunitz garnered specific responses. One of her respondents provided a typical Swedish pilgrim response, describing “nature’s grandeur, and tying into this description the terms God, the inner life, and nature” (21).

Gaunitz refers to the works of Nils Uddenberg (1995), and Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm (2001), and to her own experiences and research to conclude that for many Swedes today “nature replaces belief in God, and fills the emptiness we feel when we lack faith” (9).

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<sup>183</sup> As mentioned, most Swedish pilgrimage books and other literature, with the exception of the 2010 volume by Bremborg, are not available in the United States. The same is, naturally, true of parish or diocesan literature, some of which I picked up during my trip to Sweden. I have also been able to order a couple of books through a Swedish bookseller. The cost of the postage exceeds that of the books.

Gaunitz stops short of suggesting that spirituality in nature is a new form of religion itself. Understanding experiences in nature as religious in and of themselves is central to the Swedish pilgrimage experience today as described in this work.

### **Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Sacred Space**

If nature fosters spirituality, as argued in the previous section, is all of nature sacred in Swedish pilgrimage? The ongoing scholarly debate about sacrality, as it applies to pilgrimage, is focused on issues of sacred place and sacred space, and on how movement and motion, circularity and linearity, contribute or are irrelevant to pilgrimage and sacrality. This trans-disciplinary debate is carried out not only by sociologists. Geographers, anthropologists, ethnologists, historians, and migration specialists from around the globe have contributed. Part of their effort has been to find a common definition of pilgrimage, broader than that advanced by anthropologists Viktor and Edith Turner in 1978. The distant and arduous pilgrimages that *Image and Pilgrimage in Western Culture* highlight have provided much fodder for the debate of sacrality and spatiality in pilgrimage among later scholars including Morinis, Sallnow, Eade, Stoddard, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Coleman, Swatos, Dubisch, Post, and Anttonen.

Shorter, Protestant pilgrimages, whether historical or constructed for convenience, change the nature of what is considered sacred space. In his introduction to *Sacred Places in Modern Western Culture*, “Ritual Space in Modern Western Culture,” Paul Post discusses sacred space under the subheading “‘Basic Sacrality,’ Nature.” Under this heading fall the sacred spaces—which may simultaneously be secular—with which this dissertation is primarily engaged. Post notes that “during our studies of the triad of place/space, ritual and religion, the concept of basic sacrality has gained prominence.”

Post argues that “this tendency affects both the public domain and the contestation of (sacred) space” (2011, 7). The findings of Post’s group in the Netherlands, albeit more focused on ritual and commemorative space, may, in the area of “basic sacrality,” be applied to contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. Post brings these elements, “trees, gardens, light, sun, and earth” (7), of health and everyday life to the forefront of pilgrimage discussions.

Contemporary Swedish pilgrimage is an example of an understanding of “sacred space” that is not only territorial. Sacred space is created and encountered throughout a pilgrimage journey, and it is also located at any spot on which a pilgrim walks, stands, or sleeps. This is true of outdoor, natural spaces, and also of churches, where the sacrality is already “built-in.” Sacralization of Swedish space by pilgrims operates, as I argue below, like Bhardwaj’s concept of spatial sacralization, and, as explained by Coleman and Eade, “de Certeau’s notion that walking can be constitutive of social space in the way that speech acts constitute language” (Urry, 2000, 53; 2004, 8, 16).

### **Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Health**

While Gaunitz and Melin (2009) see potential for pilgrimage as an adjunct to promoting individual and social health, Eaton and Hornberg (2009) as well as Melin see pilgrimage as a potential cure for large-scale environmental ills. Hornberg (2009) also sees the potential for entrepreneurial financial gain within health-promoting organizations, and is thus skeptical of those health-promoting organizations that are not affiliated with a traditional religious group, as does Erika Willander. While researching alternative health in the context of religion, both Willander and Hornberg appear to place a greater degree of trust in institutional religion, possibly perceived as acting out of

humanitarian, philanthropic motives. Bremborg counters that the religious and institutional motives of self-interest are also evident: pilgrimage is a practical way for churches to keep and attract members (2010, 110).

Twelve-step programs focus both on spirituality, or a transcendent power, and on health. “Cultivating the self” would not necessarily, as Ammerman says, be recognized as spiritual practice, and would thus not be picked up in most surveys about spirituality (2014, 27). Ammerman thus advocates not only a closer, but a different look, at what constitutes spiritual practice. Swedish pilgrimage participants are invited to take advantage of the opportunity to cultivate the self. The invitation is to commune with nature and/or god, and to cultivate the self by leaving modern life behind—just as addicts must attempt to eschew the stressors and situations that might lead to resuming their addiction. Leaving the stressors and paraphernalia of modern life behind to find time for reflection and camaraderie in nature is probably the clearest marketing message of Swedish pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is like a twelve-step program in that it attempts to address existential needs of individuals and groups. Although pilgrimage literature does not mention the twelve-step process, pilgrimage seems to fit within its frame. Without offering medical or addiction assistance, pilgrimage provides a practice well-suited to individuals mildly, even moderately, affected by addiction.<sup>184</sup> It certainly fits into helping those searching for meaning in life. The twelve-step model traditionally calls on a higher power. In pilgrimage, some participants call on higher transcendental powers; others on the immanent power of the earth and more-than-human nature; and still others on the

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<sup>184</sup> Smoking, or other use of tobacco, is not addressed by pilgrimage programs. No prohibition against smoking or tobacco is mentioned in pilgrimage literature. Gaunitz, in fact, mentions, with no commentary, that one of the pilgrims in her group has gone out to smoke (2006, 15).

immanent within and among people. It may be the twelve-step model that Swedish pilgrimage emulates in allowing smoking but not alcohol consumption. Recognizing that eating unhealthy food may be considered an addiction, for which twelve-step programs also exist, Swedish pilgrims are offered a low-calorie diet mainly consisting of communally prepared meals made from scratch.<sup>185</sup> Though Bremborg points out that Hans-Erik Lindström acknowledges a debt to the twelve-step organizational model, especially with regard to the evening “sharing” element of his pilgrimage design (2010, 76), the similarities of Swedish pilgrimage and twelve-step programs are not mentioned in other pilgrimage literature, nor were they discussed during my participant observation week. Nor do pilgrimage leaders publicly acknowledge their debt to the twelve-step model. The hypothesis that Swedish pilgrimage is, in part, patterned after twelve-step addiction treatment programs is my own hypothesis based on experience, observation, and research. The “sharing” that takes place in the evening is among participants only, and not to be repeated outside of the “circle.” As in the twelve-step model, participants may share or pass during this ceremonial evening ritual. The pressure to share, versus the freedom to pass, doubtless varies from one pilgrim group and one Swedish pilgrimage type to another. The confidentiality of what was said in sharing, and the understanding that there would be no commentary, was stated only once in my hearing. So it seems to be ingrained in Swedish culture. Bremborg does not mention other twelve-step similarities, but writes that she shares neither private confidences nor anything said while sharing during her own pilgrimage participant-observations (2010, 137). All aspects of forming and maintaining a chain of memory are not verbal.

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<sup>185</sup> The twelve-step program Overeaters Anonymous has branches both in the United States and Sweden. <http://www.oa.org/> Overeaters Anonymous. Accessed 2014-09-22. <http://oasverige.org/> Anonyma Överätare. Accessed 2014-09-22.

## Major Factors Behind Pilgrimage: Heritage

Danièle Hervieu-Léger's (2000) theory of religion as a chain of memory (see earlier discussion in chapter three) may also be applied to the case of Swedish pilgrimage. Religion, argues Hervieu-Léger, is the formation of community, and the preservation of the collective memories of this community. These memories are often ritualized. The "authorized producers of collective memory" (124) stand for the "dependent participants" (124), whether or not the latter are in accord with the authorized memories thus produced. In Sweden, pilgrim paths are literal links in this chain of memory. Some links or paths reestablish old connections, and others are new, tying old memories and old ways to the new. Ontologically, the physical world is primary and builds the chain of memory, which is the foundation of the *conscience collective*, or collective unconscious. Every Swedish pilgrim is a bearer-creator of the Christian-cultural chain of memory. Pilgrimage paths, whether historical or not, are being linked to form unbroken chains of memory of Swedish heritage throughout Sweden. Some are shown on highly detailed pilgrimage maps. For example, the Vadstena Pilgrim Center provides information and maps of the three paths over which it has primary jurisdiction. Every turn on the way of the Birgitta Path, leading to Vadstena from Linköping, is drawn and described.<sup>186</sup> In restoring ancient paths of their ancestors, and creating new paths under the umbrella of the interconnected nationhood, the actions of pilgrim Swedes are somewhat analogous to (fictionalized) Australian aboriginal dreamings, as described in anthropologist Bruce Chatwin's 1987 book, *The Songlines*. In *Songlines*, indigenous Australians reconstruct and maintain their cultural past and present by walking across the

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<sup>186</sup> <http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/pilgrimsvandring/vandringsleder/birgittaleden-17047288> and Birgittaleden A4 2012 index webb-1.pdf Accessed February 18, 2014.



land. By their journeys and sung stories, localities and regions are tied together into an imagined nation, even though no one individual or group walks the entire journey, or knows the entire tale. Though their songs differ from place to place, those of neighboring regions can understand one another, so translation across larger time and space is possible. This suggests that the actions of Swedish pilgrims, most of whom, still today, travel regionally, walking the paths of their parish and ancestors, contribute to human movement and cultural sharing that is reaching into all corners of Sweden, and even into Europe. A chapter by Heather Eaton and Anne-Christine Hornberg, “Ritual Time and Space: A Liminal Age and Religious Consciousness” (2009) is not explicitly about pilgrimage (though this collection addresses pilgrimage in other chapters). This chapter from *Religion, Ecology & Gender: East-West Perspectives*, addresses time, space, and eco-crisis in the context of a new liminal age to which humankind is awakening. The definition Eaton and Hornberg use of “liminality” is borrowed from the work of Victor Turner. When in a liminal state, one is lost, without direction, and uncertain of the future (79-80). Eaton and Hornberg suggest that we, of the Western European world, are becoming communally and intensely aware of our current eco-crisis. We are transitioning into a liminal state wherein we are “neophytes” seeking direction for the future (81). Eaton and Hornberg also note the dreamtime of indigenous Australians, though in the context of eco-crisis and liminality rather than of pilgrimage. They conclude that the European liminal state, and European reflection on the present, includes both nostalgia for the past and hope, if slim, for the future (79-90). Rather than suggesting that the work of the European collective memory in restoring the past will be useful in healing the ills of the present and future, Eaton and Hornberg share a vision of constructing, or even

saving, the future through collective contemporary action to stop apocalyptic climate change. This climate change is, they argue, an ongoing felt threat to contemporary Europeans, who live in its dark shadow (83-84). This is a vision of a world green no longer, both through human action and inaction.

Organizations focusing on broader areas of Sweden, or even Europe, are careful to show the connections of one path to another. Cammini d'Europa is an economic and cultural organization tying together European Union nations for pilgrimage but also for the purpose of heritage tourism, and the consequent economic benefit to the member nations. The first map one sees on the Cammini D'Europa home page is a map of Europe, linked together from Trondheim in the north to Malta in the south.<sup>187</sup> The implicit message of these detailed maps is that territory is charted, known, and navigable. The wandering pilgrim need not be fearful of entering uncharted space. The maps also imply that so many routes are available that almost any Swedish pilgrim may begin a journey from a convenient location. The major routes may look like arteries, but the overall impression is of a linked network connected by capillary action through Sweden. Pilgrimage, as well as nature, is seemingly tamed by this mapping and linking of disparate regions and nations.

The Church of Sweden and other Christian churches are the most powerful actors among the groups sponsoring religious pilgrimage in Sweden and, like other Swedish pilgrimage organizations, emphasize ecumenism and cooperation. Social acceptance of Catholics in post-Reformation Sweden is a more recent development than the legal acceptance of other Protestant and Christian Churches, which was made law in 1851.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> <http://www.camminideuropa.eu/> Accessed February 18, 2014.

<sup>188</sup> See chapter two, Swedish Christian History, for a more detailed timeline.

According to my survey of pilgrimage participants, approximately one-quarter to one-third of the persons who go on pilgrimage in Sweden are unchurched. These numbers agree with Bremborg's larger (2010) and Gauntiz's smaller (2006) study. Many Swedish pilgrims are active church members who attend Sunday services regularly; these active churchgoers are predominately affiliated with either the Church of Sweden, with a traditional Swedish free church, or with the Roman Catholic Church in Sweden. Many pilgrims are also involved in congregational life.

Even Swedes who are not officially on pilgrimage search for meaningful experiences when they travel within Sweden (as my friends did in Skara: see above). Some of these travels are made to Swedish cultural and heritage sites. Churches work in concert with those regional groups, *hembygdsförbund* (*hembygd* = homestead; *hembygden* = the homeland), to promote regional heritage tourism. Since Swedish heritage is primarily Christian heritage, and since many of the most beautiful, well-kept, and accessible historical buildings and sites are church-owned, there is no discord but instead cooperation between tourism and church groups. Groups such as Bilda and Sensus, and their many regional branches, are economic and educational groups with religious affiliations that promote interest in Swedish heritage nature, and pilgrimage. In fact, the Swedish Tourist Association, Sweden's largest such association, provides and maintains mountain lodgings, long used by hikers and adventurers, but more recently by Christian pilgrims.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, as the pilgrimage movement continues to grow in Sweden, smaller regional pilgrimage organizations, such as Pilgrim Halland—named for its home province on Sweden's West Coast—are joining larger, national pilgrimage

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<sup>189</sup> <http://www.svenskaturistforeningen.se/sv/upptack/Omraden/Harjedalen/Fjallstationer/STF-Helags-Fjallstation/Om-fjallstugan/his/>

organizations. Pilgrim Halland has recently been accepted into the national organization, Pilgrim i Sverige.<sup>190</sup> Pilgrim Halland is also working towards membership in the European pilgrimage network. In a recent Facebook post, Pilgrim Halland describes the pilgrimage of “several thousands of Scandinavians” to the birthplace of St. Olav on his saint’s day, July 29.<sup>191</sup>

A regional path, whatever its current or historical meaning, connects one Swedish parish, community, or diocese to the next. Swedish pilgrims, whom we might imagine as Swedish cultural dreamers, thus experience smooth transitions when moving from one parish or locale to a neighboring one. Because travel is most often by foot, no abrupt transitions confront the pilgrim when movement is even further afield, that is, regional or national. Some Swedish pilgrims seem to find relief from global concerns in regional pilgrimage within Sweden.

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<sup>190</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pilgrim-Halland/108907089187451> Accessed August 12, 2012.

<sup>191</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pilgrim-Halland/1089070891874510>

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE DARK GREEN JOURNEY: NATURE AND NATION

#### **Introduction**

Regionalism in religion, folk art, architecture, and perhaps nature, above all, is celebrated alongside nationalism in Sweden. Some manifestations of nationalism, as it might influence pilgrimage or pilgrims, will be discussed in the following chapter. Nature—sovereign even above nation—is used symbolically by nationalist Swedes. This potentially negative “dark green” aspect of pilgrimage contrasts with the portrait painted in the chapter above, which focuses on the potential and ideal of pilgrimage, principally as a movement that supports communities and the individuals within them. Like pilgrims, nationalists of the growing far-right Sweden Democrats political party use nature to bolster their image as protectors and stewards of the nature and the land, the most viscerally Swedish field or sphere. In their mission statement, the Sweden Democrats write that “Sweden is unique in many ways, and we have a distinctive culture and history, of which we are very proud. We love Swedish nature with all its variations.”<sup>192</sup> Similar pilgrim dispositions may be channeled in diverse directions, some of which open avenues of humanitarian impulses and foster concern about environmental impact, and others which shut down avenues of communication among peoples and perceive environmental issues as isolationist national issues. In their introduction to *Religion, Ecology & Gender*, which focuses on women, the environment, and also pilgrimage, co-editors Sigurd Bergmann and Yong-Bock Kim write that “Religious individuals, practices, traditions,

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<sup>192</sup> [www.sverigedemokraterna.se](http://www.sverigedemokraterna.se) Accessed September 22, 2014.

and institutions might contribute to the production of environmental problems as well as to their solutions. Religiosity works in destructive as well as a constructive key” (2009, 2). Though I see more potential for positive developments in the related areas of social justice and care of the environment in Swedish pilgrimage, I will consider some of its possible exclusionary, as well as inclusionary, elements in this chapter.

In chapter five, I discussed the way in which experiences of spirituality intertwine with experiences of nature in contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. If pilgrimage, and the physical progress of Sweden’s growing numbers of pilgrims, contribute to the sacralization of Swedish land and nature, we must recognize that pilgrimage, together with related religious and cultural practices<sup>193</sup> in Sweden, has a strong national—and even, I will suggest, a nationalistic—component. In Sweden today, love of nature and connection to the land is heightened by anxiety about the pressures on the global environment due to increased consumerism, travel, and industrialization. It is likely that even Swedes who participate in pilgrimages respond in a variety of ways to pressures on their national cultural environment, pressures increased partly through demographic changes like increased immigration. Some Swedes are overtly nationalistic. The Sweden Democrats political party advocates practicing preservationist eugenics by repatriating immigrants to their original homelands. As in other European nations, this anti-immigrant party continues to gain ground, and has an ever-increasing influence in the Swedish parliament.<sup>194</sup> This isolationist far-right party seeks to preserve Swedish culture and

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<sup>193</sup> Festivals, processions, and memorial gatherings are among related practices.

<sup>194</sup> The Sweden Democrats (SD) garnered a stunning 13 percent (or 12.86 to be exact), of the popular vote in the September 2014 national elections in Sweden. The SD party earned almost six percent (5.7 percent to be exact), in 2010, and was the only party with a significant percentage increase of Sweden’s popular vote in 2014. <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/riike/> Accessed November 26, 2014.

identity by preserving the homogeneous, if fictitious, blonde and blue-eyed Swedish phenotype, as well as traditional Swedish “ways.” If nationalistic tendencies and nationalistic political affiliation grow, it is possible that pilgrimage may reflect this kind of cultural anxiety. The positive—and negative—connections between nature and nation, as expressed or implicit in pilgrimage, are the subject of this chapter.

Individual pilgrims make decisions about when and where to journey, but pilgrimage in Sweden is a cultural and physical construction and typically a group activity on a predetermined route. Swedish pilgrimage is a constitutive physical movement in a natural, national, and bounded space. Some boundaries are invisible, but most of Sweden’s national boundaries are geographically delineated.<sup>195</sup> Swedish pilgrimage takes place in Swedish landscapes—which are both provinces and “sacrosapes.” Sacrosapes (Veikko Anttonen, 2013) are places where something special has happened and has been remembered. Landscapes may be marked not only by natural but also by humanmade territorial boundary markers. I draw these insights from Anttonen, and also from the cultural geographer Surinder Mohan Bhardwaj, who describes the physical action by ““the countless dedicated pilgrims whose footprints have given meaning to India as a cultural entity,”” and who create a ““pan-Indian Holy Space”” on the Indian land (Bhardwaj 1973, 73 in Coleman and Eade, 2004, 8). I argue that pan-Swedish holy spaces are similarly constituted and are located throughout. Space is culturally sacred by virtue of land and landscape and cultural practices, both nationalistic

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<sup>195</sup> The Swedish nation has taken many shapes over the last millennium, so I intentionally write delineated, not “determined.” Many, but not all, of its national borders are geographically prompted. Sweden has been larger and smaller, but, in the recent period of which I write, its size has remained the same. The last change to its borders was in 1905 when Norway became free of Swedish rule. Sweden is no longer a colonial empire with any far-flung colonies. Vestiges of domination over some parts of Finland, which it borders, remain, and are beyond the scope of this work.

and religious. Nationalism and religiosity tend to be inseparable in a nation with a historical state church (despite its recent disestablishment in the Swedish case). Whether or not an individual is consciously or actively religious, Swedish Christianity is embedded and embodied in common cultural practices such as holiday celebrations, school graduations in Church of Sweden church buildings, and the perception of those buildings as a common cultural treasure. Furthermore, the Church of Sweden remains strongest in cases of crises as described above. Religious beliefs or spiritual feelings, while compelling motives for most surveyed pilgrims, are not necessary in order to participate in pilgrimage. Any person who walks as a pilgrim on a pilgrim path helps to clear the path, literally and figuratively, for those who follow.

Swedish pilgrimage is a reconstitutive phenomenon, born when both the state church and state welfare system were weakening. Scholar of Swedish welfare, Anders Bäckström, maintains that the values present in church and state still hold to a large degree, and are consistent and normative. His work on religion and welfare demonstrates the manner in which church and state cooperation, forced by economic necessity and scarcity of human resources, may actually strengthen communities (Bäckström 2004). Pilgrimages also help to uphold larger religious and social systems that show signs of giving way under the pressures of modernity. One modern ill that pilgrimage may, in part, be able to cure, is a sense of being part of a greater human or more-than-human community. This feeling of community may, at least, be temporarily restored during pilgrimage, and the sense of being part of a pilgrimage community even when the event itself has ended. Environmental problems have, for example, intensified, or at least the awareness and concern about them has, in modern times and in wealthy societies.



## Concerned and Conscientious Consumers

According to American ethnologist Cindy Isenhour, who lived in Sweden and studied the Swedish response to threats to the environment, the Swedish consumer believes that consumption choices lead to different environmental impacts. In her 2010 article, “Building Sustainable Societies: A Swedish Case Study on the Limits of Reflexive Modernization,” Isenhour examines the pressure put on individuals by governmental and other agencies to take responsibility for creating a sustainable society. Creating a sustainable society is, argues Isenhour, impossible even for many well-intentioned and highly determined individuals or groups to achieve without concomitant social structural change. In other words, sustainability is not only about consumerism (512-515). Swedes are willing to give up consumer goods and conveniences because of their concern with the lives of others, especially those in the third world. This is the case, argues Isenhour, in her section “Refuting Assumptions: On Risk”: even though most Swedes enjoy a strong feeling of existential security and limited personal risk due to a comparatively low threat of natural disaster, famine, or war in Sweden. Their concern, explains Isenhour, is not primarily self-interested (515-517). The actions of Swedes interviewed and surveyed by Isenhour show that most who are trying to live more sustainably” do not feel personally at risk in Sweden. “Only 21 percent of the sample felt they were being directly affected.... In contrast 76 percent were most concerned about the effects of environmental problems on those living in the Third World or on members of future generations” (515-516). Isenhour makes the connection between Swedes’ concerns about social and environmental justice, as I have done above, corroborating Rita Erickson’s 1997 research on Swedish Church and State: “My research affirms Erikson’s

[sic] argument that a sense of morality pervades Swedish culture, inspired by the values and lessons of the Lutheran Church and the humanitarian ideals of the welfare State” (Isenhour, 2010, 519). Pilgrimage may, for some, be another manifestation of Swedish concerns with the environment and social justice.

An indirect quotation from Antje Jackelén, the Archbishop of Sweden in 2014, and former Bishop of Lund’s Diocese, on a Church of Sweden diocesan webpage explains that “The question of climate change is both spiritual and existential. Jackelén drives at what more and more of the ecotheologists within the Church of Sweden are talking about: our responsibility as human beings and what we can hope for when ‘climate anxiety’ strikes. Questions of ecojustice go hand-in-hand with questions of social justice.”<sup>196</sup> (The phrases “climate anxiety” and “climate threat” are common phrases in Swedish.) This concern about others is evident on the home page of every one of the Church of Sweden’s dioceses, all of which address both global environmental well-being and social justice issues in the Third World.

Young Swedes are among the many environmentally conscientious individuals, even outside of church settings and activities. Some Swedes, explains Isenhour, view nature beneficently, but also as a resource for humans. Others, who have adopted what she calls the post-agrarian romantic view of nature, do not believe that nature can be squeezed or pressed any more, or that any new technology will come about to allow consumerism and nature to flourish side-by-side. Isenhour identifies these post-agrarians

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<sup>196</sup> <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/harnosandsstift/ekoteolog-kyrkan-formedlar-hopp-mot-klimatangesten> Gustafsson, Monica. Posted March 22, 2014. Accessed March 24, 2014. This page shows conflicting ecotheologies: the traditional view, of a God who shaped the world, and whose stewards humans are, contrasts with the post-Christian view, in which the ultimate value is not in the eternal life, but the survival of the earth, which will allow life on earth to survive and thrive. The caption under a photograph of a powerful, gushing waterfall and the rainbow that touches down on earth reflects a traditional Christian view, while the article text and ecotheologists cited, including the Archbishop-elect, speak in more earth-centered terms.

as middle-class Swedes (like most Swedish pilgrims). Citing Norwegian scholar Marianne Gullestad, Isenhour writes that “Scandinavians can have an emotional connection to the land, one that is both highly personal and spiritual” (Gullestad, 1989; Isenhour, 2010, 519). Writing about her own research and interviews, Isenhour explains that “Many Swedes felt so strongly about nature and their hopes for sustainability that they were moved to tears during our interviews” (2010, 519).

Among the choices that Swedes make reflexively are whether to vacation far away or to stay close to home to minimize the carbon impact of travel (Isenhour, 2010; Melin, 2009). A new choice for Swedes who want to have some time away, and for whom time in nature is imperative when choosing a getaway, is a pilgrimage within Sweden. Going on a pilgrimage, whether or not the pilgrim arrives by public transportation or in a private vehicle, provides at least an illusion of spending leisure time with minimal environmental impact. The environmental impact of going on a regional pilgrimage is, for example, certainly minimal in comparison to a resort vacation in Southeast Asia requiring air travel and a hotel stay. Isenhour reports that minimizing negative impact is an important goal for environmentally-aware Swedes. She argues that decisions are based not only on emotional attachments to nature, but also on the basis of rational calculations, such as those predicted by rational choice theorists (515). As I mentioned above, few pilgrims, or any Swedes other than professional pilgrims, are able to lead a pilgrimage lifestyle of simplicity, slowness, and decisions based on environmental and diaconal concerns. Bishop Emeritus of Linköping’s Diocese, Martin Lind, is an example of such an individual. He was a visionary in the pilgrimage

movement as early as 1995, and continues to practice pilgrimage as a lifestyle.<sup>197</sup>

Whether or not working people, parents, or retirees can continue to practice a pilgrimage lifestyle upon their return, the choice to go on pilgrimage rather than to partake in another type of leisure activity is, for some, environmentally motivated.

Isenhour points out that despite the predominant national adherence to the idea of making do with less, environmentally-oriented practices in Sweden result only in incremental and regional change. Sweden remains a wealthy consumer and status-oriented society (513). Hornberg (2009) and Melin (2009), when writing about pilgrimage and retreats, fear that only fleeting changes are made as a result of participation in a pilgrimage, and that follow-through on pilgrimage ideals is thin. Though nature may be valued more highly than owning additional consumer goods in Swedish culture, are the resultant changes significant? Isenhour argues that the changes of individuals are not, but at the same time suggests that the social-political-corporate complex in Sweden has taken enough positive environmental steps in concert (519) that Swedes have access to fresh, clean air and water, unlike people in many other nations (515). The mindset of Swedes, and thus their behavior as a group, may be turning towards more structural environmental changes. These changes are, in part, based on rational decisions, but stem from the underlying Swedish love of nature and from an emotional connection to the land, which is perceived to be at risk (2010).

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<sup>197</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1104556> Accessed 24-04-2014.

## Green Religion (Nature Religion)

Nature religion,<sup>198</sup> or green religion, has many faces. Some nature religions involve worship of nature itself as the source of immanent power. In *Dark Green Religion: Nature Religion and the Planetary Future*, Bron Taylor defines “dark green religion,” a phrase of his own invention, as “religion that considers nature to be sacred, imbued with intrinsic value, and worthy of reverent care.” Taylor explains, “I label such religion ‘dark’ not only to emphasize the depth of its consideration for nature (a deep shade of concern) but also to suggest that such religion may have a shadow side—it might mislead and deceive; it could even precipitate or exacerbate violence” (2010, ix). Taylor’s definition and the trope of dark green religion provide insights useful to this study. While pantheism is a type of dark green religion, Taylor did not choose to use pantheism as the defining phrase for his subject because “Its etymological roots are too intimately connected to the belief in or study of God” (223). Taylor defines pantheism as a belief system in which “the divine is immanent—the world as a whole is divine, holy, or sacred in some way.” Taylor explains panentheism as closely related to pantheism: “Panentheism adds that there is also some superordinate, creative intelligence that is a part of this divine whole, with whom it is possible to be in relation” (2010, 251, fn 21). Taylor divides dark green religion into four types: Animist and Gaian Spirituality and Animist and Gaian Naturalism (2010, 14-15).<sup>199</sup> Though these fit into Taylor’s definition

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<sup>198</sup> “Nature religion” is the phrase famously used by Catherine Albanese in her book *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990). Since that terminology has been, if not superseded, then expanded upon, and since this dissertation is not about nature religion in America, I will instead rely on Bron Taylor’s more recent phrase, or trope, “dark green religion.”

<sup>199</sup> Taylor writes that “the blurred lines between the four types indicate permeable boundaries; the types represent tendencies.” With his category of “*Spiritual Animism*,” Taylor “especially seek[s] to capture the beliefs of those for whom there is some immaterial, supernaturalistic dimension to the Animistic perception.” And about “the form...labeled *Naturalistic Animism*,” Taylor writes that “With the expression

of “dark green religion,” he also mentions deep ecology, which disavows religiosity, and the organicist view “that the biosphere and universe are analogous to a biological organism, [and] also that this organism is somehow sacred and due reverence,” which do not fit his definition (8, 251n19).

Pilgrimage appears to have some consonances with nature religion and green religion, but not entirely with Taylor’s dark green religion. Taylor’s already blurry divisions do not apply neatly to Swedish pilgrimage. Some Swedish pilgrimage expresses elements of nature religion, and some of pantheism, and some even of panentheism, both of which Taylor declines to use in his typology of dark green religion because pantheism and panentheism consider the sacred or immanent divine (223, 251). It may be an offshoot of green religion, seeking the light in the interstices of tradition and invention. Swedish cultural belief systems seem to resonate most closely with deep ecology, “a perspective said to root humans in nature rather than place them above it” (Taylor, 2010, 77). Taylor explains that this “radical environmentalism...has figures and forms that are both obviously religious and that only resemble religious characteristics without being self-consciously religious” (77). The deep ecology of Swedish pilgrimage is clearly not the aggressive, radical form, but the “more passive and/or spiritual” (77). Deep ecology,

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of *lifeforces*, I focus especially on those who are agnostic or skeptical of any immaterial dimension underlying the life-forms or natural forces with whom they may also seek to communicate” (15). Of *Gaian Earth Religion*, Taylor explains that “What I term *Gaian Spirituality* is avowedly supernaturalistic, perceiving the superorganism—whether the biosphere or the entire universe—to have consciousness...whatever name one uses to symbolize a divine cosmos....[It] is likely to draw on nonmainstream or nonconsensus data for its generally pantheistic (or panentheistic) and holistic metaphysics.” Defining *Gaian Naturalism*, Taylor writes that “It is more likely to restrict its claims to the scientific mainstream....Yet its proponents express awe and wonder when facing the complexity and mysteries of life and the universe, relying only on religious language and metaphors of the sacred (sometimes only implicitly and not self-consciously) when confessing their feelings of belonging and connection to the energy and lifecosystems that they inhabit and study” (16).

first articulated by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, might best name the unrecognized religiosity of the Swedish pilgrim who is an atheist or agnostic.

Since this is an examination of contemporary pilgrimage, and since the Swedish relationship to nature changed with industrialization and modernization, Taylor's close examination of modern perspectives does provide further insight. Taylor traces nature religion back to the Age of Reason, and to Baruch Spinoza, and to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Taylor claims that Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy led to anthropocentrism, and thus to deep ecology, while Rousseau's theory, by its rejection of deism, has led more directly to nature religion and even dark green religion (8, 10). These European thinkers also influenced Swedish theologians and other thinkers, both directly and indirectly through German philosophers. The typology and history of American nature religion seem less immediately influential in Sweden. But, as I discuss below, worldview construction with the intent to lead to changed practice among adherents is a common feature of some American nature religion and some Swedish pilgrimage.

The earth-centered perspectives and attempts, by the middle class, to create earth-centered praxes are carried forward from the eighteenth century. The tension between the middle-class, with time to enjoy leisure pursuits in nature, and working-class laborers (or peasants in earlier times), who use nature for its products, has long existed in Sweden. This, of course, is yet another false dichotomy of long-standing, as the selection from Löfgren immediately below illustrates. The nobility and bourgeoisie made gains (to the detriment of farmers) in early modern century Sweden (Montgomery, 1998, 52-54). In 1626 four estates were recognized (Kent, 2008, 81-82) and though this explicit order and form of government no longer exists, there are still today (in addition to the royal family)

nobility and bishops whose families have long hereditary connections to the State and Church of Sweden. So writing out the rulers of church and state leaves only the two lower classes, seemingly doing battle with one another. The ruling class was, and is still, often invisible, even in my telling of Swedish economy and society, when class issues are discussed. The perceived class divisions in attitudes towards nature existed long before Sweden became a nation with an official policy of inviting immigrants to work, and to stay, and to enjoy its social benefits. Orvar Löfgren argues:

...[S]acralization became a defining feature of the longing for the wilderness and the cult of nature among the nineteenth-century middle-class...this feeling for nature also became a conflict: it was questioned whether the peasantry and the working class were capable of loving nature and the landscape of their native country as completely and profoundly as they ought (1989, 205).

As Löfgren points out, regarding nineteenth century Sweden, and as this study of pilgrimage and heritage tourism attempts to show, (as does this study as well as Bremborg, 2010), leisure activities in nature, and the romanticization and taming of nature, were, and are, typically middle-class conceits.

The belief in the animation, and hence in the sacrality, of all natural objects, living or inert, carbon-based or not, fits Taylor's definition of pantheistic and panentheistic, and is also how many Swedish pilgrims, and many of the Swedish pilgrim leaders and priests discussed herein, appear to understand nature. A Swedish pilgrim's understanding of nature may most closely reflect (using Taylor's typology), what Taylor would call Spiritual Animism, "the interconnectedness of all life or *lifeforces*" (emphasis Taylor's, 2010, 15) without necessarily rejecting the supernatural. The sacred and the supernatural, I would argue (as would Taylor), are not synonymous. Not only growing



things, but also rocks (runestones, for instance), bodies of water, mountain peaks, and other landscape features, are a conduit to the Swedish sacred.

The sacred may be within the earth itself. Or the earth and its features, seasons, and organic beings may be formed by, and thus provide insights into, a monotheistic, loving, and Christian God. In his book *Markings*, Hammarskjöld, who returned to the faith of his youth, albeit as a mystic, if not as a traditional Lutheran, writes that: “The more-than-human is experienced in the grandeur of nature” (as quoted in Hammar, 2010, 11).<sup>200</sup> Without Swedish nature as an inspiration and a location from which to experience an awesome, if ill-defined, immanence, would either Hammarskjöld or former Archbishop Hammar have become a faithful “post-Christian,” to use Hammar’s own term? Hammar delivered his 2004 address in the northern mountainscape where Hammarskjöld often hiked, just before the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hammarskjöld’s birth:

Greetings from Backåkra! We travel there several times every summer. It is fascinating how similar the landscape is in flat Skåne, overlooking the ocean, and in the mountainscape. One can see that if one internalizes the language of nature in the same way. Put up no boundaries—let it be borderless and also internal. I was by Dag Hammarskjöld’s grave in Uppsala’s churchyard the other night, and that is how I can now tie it together. It is only a few hundred meters from where I now live.

It has been fascinating to come to Uppsala as a person from Lund and Skåne with Dag Hammarskjöld’s *Markings* in my pocket (K G Hammar, 2011, 28).

The notion that the agricultural plains of Skåne in Southern Sweden resemble the rugged mountainscapes of Northern Sweden is, on the surface, preposterous. Hammar,

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<sup>200</sup> Like his translators, W.H. Auden and Leif Sjöberg, in 1963, I find some of Hammarskjöld’s “markings” on the page impenetrable, but, unlike Auden, I translate as a native speaker of Swedish. I vacillated between the above translation and “The more-than-human experienced in nature writ large.” Auden translated for a different purpose than I. I do not pretend to poetic prowess, but I look for clues to Hammarskjöld’s experience of religion and nature. Hammarskjöld’s experience of nature, as I read his work, is of a God-infused, panentheistic world. And his experiences of God-in-nature, nature-in-God, and God-in self were reflected in the quotations read to us by our pilgrim leader during the Dag Hammarskjöld 2011 PAX Pilgrimage for Peace.

the (then) Archbishop of Sweden, explains that the great expanse of Swedish land has the same gifts to offer from its southernmost to its northernmost landscape. Hammar particularly notes that the two landscapes have expansiveness in common. (As we recall, expansiveness, meaning the ability to see far into the distance, especially over flat landscapes, is an inherently spiritual quality for Gaunitz's pilgrims.)

Hammar's words encourage us to briefly revisit the concept of spirituality or sacrality and expansiveness, and also that of boundaries. Hammar does his best to erase all boundaries, but goes no further than the national borders of Sweden, the boundaries covered by his Archbishopric. Hammar's speech, which is now contained in pilgrim literature, concludes by saying how incredible it is that he—a man from the flatlands of Southern Sweden—is now living in Central Sweden, within easy walking distance to Dag Hammarskjöld's grave. As the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, from southernmost Sweden in Lund, Hammar sanctifies the entire land and every Swedish landscape and cityscape in one short paragraph.

Hammarskjöld's saying, "God in me, God in everything," suggests not only pantheism and panentheism, but also, in Taylor's typology, Gaian Spiritualism, whereas pilgrims with whom I journeyed seemed to express more of what Taylor terms Gaian Naturalism. I argue, as Taylor implies, that Gaian Naturalism may be conscious or subconscious. Taylor writes that "its proponents express awe and wonder when facing the complexities and mysteries of life and the universe relying on religious language and metaphors of the sacred..." (15). The metaphor used by the pilgrims with whom I travelled was one of grandeur, or awe, before the incomprehensible. The religious metaphor used by Anne Gaunitz's fellow pilgrims, on the other hand, was a reference to

everything in nature being “woven in one piece.” Whether or not any of her fellow pilgrims recognized this expression from the Passion of Christ, several used it to explain that they no longer felt separate from the rest of creation, but part of a whole when on pilgrimage in nature (2006, 22,26). Swedish pilgrims are not easy to categorize, and perhaps Taylor’s typology with its inherent complexities has helped to confirm that.

Hammar skjöld’s *Markings* was originally a private diary. In it he reflects and wrestles with his acceptance of God. The God whom or which he ultimately accepts—he does not attach a personal pronoun to God, but writes instead “whom or what,”—is a subject and verb, active within him and in his life, rather than an object. Whether or not Hammar skjöld ever intended to publish or share his reflections is a question best left to biographers’ speculation. What is certain is that these reflections were never intended as guidance for pilgrims. Of those whom Swedes might honor, and by whom contemporary Swedes are willing to be guided in their inner and outer pilgrim journeys, why has Hammar skjöld been selected as a pilgrim guide? In his private wandering, Hammar skjöld covered the Swedish terrain from the south to north and has been posthumously added to the pantheon of Swedish pilgrim leaders. Born in the south of Sweden, Hammar skjöld spent much time walking and reflecting in the northern mountains, where a pilgrimage path—now a European Culture Way—is named for him.

Despite being the second U.N. Secretary General, devoted to peacemaking over the world, Hammar skjöld clearly held his homeland especially sacred. In the center of the meditation room of the United Nations Building in New York, surrounded by a circle of chairs, is a piece of a Swedish boulder transported there at Hammar skjöld’s request (Hammar, 2011, 34). As Dutch scholar Jorien Holsappel-Brons points out in his chapter

in *Sacred Places in Modern Western Culture*, “Space for Silence: The Interplay between Space and Ritual in Rooms of Silence,” “in Hammarskjöld’s day a room for silence was quite revolutionary” (Holsappel-Brons in Post, 2011). Most people used houses of worship as places of intentional silence until the 1970s. So, whether the small boulder in the meditation room reflects an element of panentheism in Swedish religion, or only in Hammarskjöld’s life, there appears to be a panentheist element to what is often called Hammarskjöld’s “mystical” religion. The ritual silence of Swedish pilgrimage has removed silence from a restricted location, and is an example of silence made an intentional, public act in nature.

### **Pilgrimage and Nature**

Among the questions I posed in my survey, one open-ended question merely asked “In what way was your relationship to nature changed by this pilgrimage?” I did not know when writing how little time most respondents would have to answer. But I indicated that respondents were free to skip questions or write brief replies. The pilgrims who responded said unanimously that the relationship to nature had not been changed by the pilgrimage experience. In the survey section “A Few Questions about Religion,” and in response to pre-written statements graded on a scale from one to 10 (10 indicating the highest degree of agreement), the respondents agreement with the statement “My views on religion have been formed by the following, answers about spirituality and nature varied widely. Question seven allowed the respondent to rank “My outlook on a spiritual force within nature.” These responses varied widely. The single answer at the low end of the scale (1), was that of a person with no spiritual or religious beliefs, and though Swedish-speaking, of another European background. At the other end of the spectrum,

six out of 15, or more than one-third of respondents, ranked “My outlook on a spiritual force within nature” between 8 and ten. These respondents were all of Swedish or other Scandinavian background, some frequent church-goers, some attending for life rituals only. The responses of the largest number of respondents to agreement with the statement that their religious views had been formed by their “outlook on a spiritual force within nature” fell on the lower end of the middle of the scale. Four respondents ranked the questions by putting an “x” at the line in front of number “3,” three selected number “4,” and one selected number “5.”<sup>201</sup> Most of this largest group of respondents, approximately two-thirds of total respondents, were members of either the Church of Sweden or a traditional free church, some very frequent churchgoers, and some rare or intermittent churchgoers.

While one pilgrimage leader<sup>202</sup> maintains that the experience of spirituality in nature is the basis of many conversion experiences, another maintains that the scenery and natural surroundings are not a major contribution. Interestingly, the latter pilgrimage leader’s best example of a pilgrim whose devotion was not, in her view, enhanced by natural surroundings was that of a man who did not look about him, but read from his holy text without taking note of his natural surroundings. Many Swedish pilgrims, this leader claimed, would, during the evening sharing, remark with surprise that they had not noticed the path that day had, for instance, bordered along the ocean. This leader thus concludes that the interior experience is the central one, and is clearly pushing back

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<sup>201</sup> These responses are not possible to misinterpret. It was clear that my directions had been read and understood. I asked respondents to mark their answers with an “x,” and all did so. None used any other type of mark or character, other than one survey that arrived belatedly by mail, and had not been filled in by hand, but mechanically (by a computer).

<sup>202</sup> The first was an unrecorded phone conversation; the second a phone conversation recorded with permission, both in 2012.

against the concept that pilgrimage is an opportunity to spend time in nature rather than time growing closer to God. This congregation and diocese is among those that offer completely silent pilgrimages. The silence is broken only upon arrival at the evening's destination and begins again when the walking recommences in the morning. Are silent pilgrims more interested in a traditionally religious experience, as silence traditionally demonstrates reverence? Nature is seen as an unimportant, adjunct factor by this particular priest, but this does not reflect the broader view that all Swedish nature is sacred. The elements described as essential to pilgrimage at a Church of Sweden Tyresö congregation website are nature, spirituality, and cultural history.<sup>203</sup>

Though no mention is made of pilgrimage in the Enköping Study (discussed in chapter five and below), the study does provide some insights into religion and nature in Sweden. Published in 2008, the study was created to convey a portrait of religiosity in a typical Swedish community and is thus relevant to this study of pilgrimage. How many of those surveyed perceived themselves as participants in a religious collective, and how many believed that they practice individualized spirituality? In her chapter, "Spirituality and Religious Life," Birgitta Laghé suggests that Lutheranism itself opens flexible possibilities. Even in the context of baptism and marriage, says Laghé, "It is anticipated that personal forms of expression will be integrated and coordinated with the Church's rite, whence input can be gathered from a variety of contexts" (154). Laghé interprets this paradox as a synthesis of institutional and folk religion, a common meeting ground of comfortable co-existence. Had Swedish pilgrimage been considered in the Enköping study, it would surely have been found to fit this model of individualization within the institutional frame. (2008, 137-158).

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<sup>203</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=641842> Accessed April 06, 2014.

Among the Enköping survey questions are “A Few Questions about Your Religious Life.” Of 14 possible responses to “Have you experienced the following?”—of which one could select any number—is the choice “A strong spiritual experience in nature.”<sup>204</sup> The two scholars who discuss religion and nature based on the Enköping Study findings are Erika Willander and Brian Palmer. Willander focuses on health practitioners, in her chapter, “Relaxed and Touched: Health and Spirituality from the Perspective of Health Care Practitioners in Enköping,” while the anthropologist, Brian Palmer, examines an important, recurrent pilgrimage theme—the need for less technology and undisturbed time to recover from social stressors—in his chapter, “Pull the Plug!” The Enköping Study includes a question (14), about how respondents spend their free time. Option f, of options a-t, is “Spending time in nature,” but the respondents’ relationship to nature is only indirectly addressed in the work of these researchers (316). Willander has constructed her own small survey of health practitioners, and does not work from the quantitative survey, nor does Palmer, whose work is also qualitative in nature. The interview persons in both cases were, however, contacted through the Enköping study.

Jonas Bromander, whose chapter contains the most thorough analysis of the survey responses, discusses experiences in nature in the context of supernatural or extraordinary spiritual occurrences (2008, 77-80). Forty percent of respondents report having at least one extraordinary spiritual or supernatural experience (which in itself calls the characterization of Sweden as highly secular into question). Sociologist of religion Bromander reflects that “It is unsurprising that nature is an important source of these

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<sup>204</sup> In none of the chapters are the survey respondents’ answers to question 14 provided, nor is any assignment of percentile given by any author to options a-t.

experiences of extraordinary character” (78). Approximately twenty percent of respondents have had one or more confessional, New Age, life-cycle, or nature types of supernatural experiences. These are categories unrelated to experiences in nature. All categories other than “nature” had more than one possible choice. For instance, a person of high degree of religiosity may have had confessional experiences of “God’s presence,” and in a house of worship, and in the form of answer to a prayer (79). Bromander sums up these figures, stating that “Spiritual experiences in nature were the single type of supernatural event partaken in by most people in Enköping” (80).

While nature itself, or as the basis for one’s spiritual life, goes largely unmentioned in the Enköping Study, Willander emphasizes holistic care practitioners’ and recipients’ views of what leads to good and poor health. These responses could easily have been provided by pilgrimage leaders, priests, or ordinary pilgrim participants, except that the reliance on nature as a source of healing is explicit in pilgrimage. Nature is only implicit in the idea that over-involvement in work and technology, and a stressful lifestyle without access to physical activity, quiet contemplation, or meditation lead to poor health, as the authors mention: “According to health care entrepreneurs, stress and lifestyle are the greatest contributors to poor health....Inability to wind down is perceived as one of the foremost causes of poor health” (2008, 262).

Willander discovered only intimations of a possible belief in an immanent God. Many of her health-care-practitioner respondents, however, selected a definition of God that matches that of the alternatives selected by respondents to Heelas and Woodhead’s survey in *The Spiritual Revolution*. The Enköping Study, as noted above, was modeled after the Kendal Project, conducted in England in 2000-2002. It was designed to test the



claims of Heelas and Woodhead regarding the growing importance of “spiritualities of life” and the New Age, which held and holds less significance and appeal in Sweden than in England.

When asked about their view of God, the most common responses of Enköping residents were “I don’t know what to believe,” at 29.2% followed by “God is something within rather than outside of every person,” at 24.4% . This question did not ask whether God is within every person *and* every living being, or within all of nature, both animate and inanimate. In fact, the only other questions posed suggesting a possible belief in immanent nature were too vague to indicate definitive adherence to nature religion. Of Enköping respondents, 14.4% selected the option that they believe in a God that is “an impersonal power or force.” Another 14.6% selected the survey option that they believe in “no supernatural power or force,” leaving open the possibility that they believe in an earthbound, or natural, force (2008, 265). Neither of these responses suggests that the respondents believe in a transcendent God or personal force outside of the natural world.

The questions to health-care practitioners garnered no specific responses about nature religion, leaving open the possibility that some of the respondents active in the health care field may look at nature as a healing, more-than-human power. The question about God was also posed to the health care practitioners, who were more likely to believe in “an impersonal higher power or force,” and slightly more likely to believe in a God within every person, rather than a transcendent God. Since this study leaves more questions than answers about Swedish religiosity and nature, it is important to add that among the holistic health care providers 95.9% believe that “the human body consists of body and soul.” As Willander points out, the term “soul” is undefined, and may be

interpreted differently by holistic practitioners and traditional Christians (256).

Interestingly, Willander interprets Heelas and Woodhead's "subjective-life" spirituality as "drawing no distinction between nature, the sacred, and the human" (245). So, though the respondents were likely unaware of the researcher's position, Willander states that adherents of "life-as" spirituality—which she explains as "that [spirituality] which is most closely aligned with Western individualized culture"—*value nature as highly as the sacred and the human* [emphasis mine]. Perhaps my pilgrim respondents, too, had fully-formed relationships, spiritual or not, with nature. Pilgrimage may be the expression, not the source, of a particular relationship with nature that has formed over a lifetime. Perhaps the question of the spiritual connection between human and more-than-human nature is so taken for granted in Sweden that it almost begs the question.

Other scholars suggest how the spiritual connection between the human and the natural might be viewed in Sweden. In his paper "Religious Studies as Landscape Studies: Perceptual Strategies and Environmental Preferences in Religion and Mythology," Finnish scholar, Veikko Anttonen turns to the work of a Swedish ethnologist who developed the term *mindscape* "to point out that 'all of nature is a cultural landscape'" (Anttonen, 2011, 15; Löfgren, 1989, 189). Löfgren's study of landscape and *mindscape* in Sweden suggests (as summarized by Anttonen) that "Wilderness was further developed into a sphere of harmony, authenticity, and calmness in the nineteenth century" (Anttonen, 2011, 15; Löfgren, 1989, 205). Indeed, this pastoral view of nature is even stronger among contemporary Swedes, and perhaps strongest among Swedish pilgrims. They are catered to, made safe, served, and simultaneously

made to go without some daily conveniences. They pitch in to help with housekeeping and cooking duties, and uncomplainingly suffer the weather.

In a seeming irreconcilable dichotomy, Swedish pilgrims are protected from any extremes in nature, yet asked to endure some discomfort. Nature, in other words, is both tamed and endured by the brave pilgrim who has left his or her cell phone at home (or at least turned it off). Alpine pilgrimages, which require a high level of fitness, and for which there is no transport or rescue vehicle, are an exception to this general rule. But the underlying premise is that Swedish nature is good, and that Swedish pilgrims will reap its spiritual and health benefits without undergoing serious danger or privations. The benefits of spending time in nature are stated in most Facebook posts on Swedish pilgrimage. Sociological suspicion dictates, however, that we question why the seemingly obvious is restated with such persistence. For example, an early spring 2014 post on Facebook shows ten to twenty pilgrims in South Central Sweden, in the area of Örebro—significant for its contributions to the free church movement in the nineteenth century—dressed in jackets and hats and gloves, but with no snow on the ground.<sup>205</sup> The post explains that the pilgrimage season is just now beginning. That is, while there are lone pilgrims, small pilgrim groups, or lunch-hour pilgrimages in the heart of the winter, most pilgrimage takes place during the more temperate months of the year. The “typical” Swedish pilgrim is—based on experience and many photos viewed on many websites—a middle-aged person fit enough for a day’s walk, but no alpinist. A late winter pilgrimage photo of the group *Pilgrimstid Sverige* (Time for Pilgrimage Sweden) shows a group of 10-12 pilgrims disappointed by a lack of snow that may prevent their snowshoeing

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<sup>205</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pilgrimscentrum-Tyres%C3%B6/222468154449902> Posted March 22, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2014.

pilgrimage on March 8, 2014.<sup>206</sup> Many Swedes in middle age (or later) are resilient enough to enjoy cold snowy weather, and seemingly desire to experience pilgrimage in all seasons. The pilgrims in the case above regret that the lack of snow prevents them from connecting with nature in the planned and anticipated manner. Snow, rather than being perceived as an adverse condition, is part of the natural order that the pilgrims wish to experience.

### **Church of Sweden Dioceses, Pilgrimage and Ecotheology**

The Church of Sweden Diocese of Strängnäs, home to the community of Örebro, seems to promote nature more and God a bit less, if nature and God are viewed as dichotomous. This area, one the first dioceses of the Church of Sweden, a district drawn in the 1100s (maybe even in pre-Christian times), is known for the former evangelical denomination of the Örebro Mission. The Örebro Mission is now part of the Evangelical Free Church, or EFK, also active and cooperative in pilgrimage. The Strängnäs Diocese's main pilgrimage page, in a piece composed by a parish priest, notes that "The Monks' Path was inaugurated in the year 2012. The Monk's Path organization has cooperated with several partner organizations to let people connect with nature, animals, and their own inner worlds." The same write-up on pilgrimage goes on, in the next paragraph, with a slight, but significant twist, reminding readers that "Pilgrimage is both an inner and outer journey, which holds the possibility of connecting with nature, with other people, with God, and with oneself." This list suggests an implicit worldview that "connecting

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<sup>206</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pilgrimstid-Sverige-Time-for-pilgrimage-Sweden/125767664103750?fref=ts> Posted March 3, 2014. Accessed March 3, 2014.

with nature,” other pilgrims, God, and oneself, are all worthy, non-exclusive options. It is interesting to note that “nature” is listed first, and “God” is listed third.<sup>207</sup>

In addition to the snowshoeing pilgrimage, other pilgrimages promoted on Facebook include a skiing pilgrimage scheduled for March 9, 2014, in the Uppsala area.<sup>208</sup> The element of imminent physical danger is rare, but pilgrimages that require extra effort, expense, and a high level of fitness seem to be growing more common. Pilgrimage on horseback requires extra planning and cost, as well as knowledge of horseback riding, which is not an activity available to most Swedes. Horseback riding pilgrimages, however, take place outdoors, and may be an option for some with difficulty walking, so seem consistent with the dominant Swedish pilgrimage ethos. A new trend of offering motorcycle pilgrimage suggests that pilgrimage groups are trying to reach out to a more diverse group than the middle-aged and meditative pilgrims on foot.

### **Everyday Pilgrimages**

Perhaps a public commute to and from work by bus or train, taken at the same time of day and with familiar companions, may serve the same purpose as a pilgrimage. The daily commute also takes people out of the home and into different environments. But unlike most contemporary European pilgrimages, both the lunch-hour pilgrimage and the daily “pilgrimage” commute contain the element of a return that is as important as the departure. Nevertheless, commuters may rarely, if ever, perceive themselves as pilgrims.

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<sup>207</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/orebro/pilgrimsleden-munkastigen> Accessed March 24, 2014. Lindström, Kristina.

<sup>208</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/120355154668429/?fref=ts> Posted March 3, 2014. Accessed March 24, 2014. Pilgrim i Sverige is, as mentioned a national clearing house group for pilgrimage activity. Garlöv is a priest in the Church of Sweden, and posts on this, and on his own page, on the subjects of pilgrimage and retaining/regaining Church of Sweden membership.

In order to make the pilgrim/tourist/traveler/worker/heritage-seeker distinctions, I have attempted to focus this analysis on voluntary journeys—long or short—described as pilgrimages, by those who call themselves pilgrims, for however short a time.

Everyday religious practices such as walks are sometimes also referred to as pilgrimage in pilgrimage literature. In a pamphlet published in cooperation with a pilgrimage organization associated more with traditional religiosity than nature religion, a young woman is described as making a daily “pilgrimage” to the ocean, whether or not she recognizes her daily three-kilometer walk as such or not (*Fri som en Pilgrim*, 2, [www.pilgrimsvagen.se](http://www.pilgrimsvagen.se)). Nancy Ammerman has named the practice of walking as a religious practice, as has Swedish researcher Anders Melin (2013; 2010). They argue that people who walk frequently— not only to become fit, but to maintain a connection with the land and its flora and fauna—are engaging in religious practice. Though often not recognized as such, walking and naming, recognizing the particulars of nature, are ritualistic, religious actions. Walking is a typical daily Swedish activity.

The reification of all that is considered historically Swedish whether in nature, or in folk crafts, or in festive traditions, attracts Swedes who wish to practice a simpler lifestyle with a reduced environmental impact. What many Swedes, especially those who wish to enjoy activities that were necessary for survival 100 years ago, neither recognize nor intend is that these activities can also be exclusionary.

Many Swedes romanticize recent history in the context of heritage and nature. The history Swedes read in children’s books, or see displayed at countless craft fairs in Sweden, exemplifies closeness to nature for which modern Swedes yearn. The children in story books ski to school on homemade cross-country skis (as my mother did, not so long

ago), wearing not only hand-knit mittens, but hand-woven and hand-sewn clothing decorated with embroidery. Like most Swedish women, I myself knit, crochet, embroider, and sew, though not with the speed and aplomb of my mother and her friends, now mostly in their mid-seventies. My garage is not without its pair of cross-country skis. I eschew mushroom-picking, yet whenever I visit Vermont in the summer, I scour the ditches and fields for berries and wildflowers. Unlike my mother and aunt, I cannot name all of the wildflowers. But, as a product of a society that venerates Carl von Linnaeus (1707-1778), the father of taxonomy, born in the impoverished Swedish province of Småland, but elevated to nobility and the academic city of Uppsala, I feel that it is important to try. My kitchen walls display two posters: one is of the plants of Östergötland's calcium-rich fens, and the other is of the birds of Östergötland's fields and pastures.

Professor of comparative religion Veikko Anttonen considers nomenclature and the power of naming in his paper "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion." Anttonen claims that naming places constructs boundaries, and has great and enduring power in Finnish and Swedish landscapes (2005). The psychology of naming, and the effects of naming on the thought and behavior, (some language, for instance, is simply "out of bounds," and cannot be used without an intensely provocative effect), suggest that naming is an appropriative and intimate act. Naming may nevertheless even be an act that renders the mind open to religion as defined by Durkheim. Durkheim's famous definition of religion in the translation by Karen E. Fields, may not require repetition, but is relevant here: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say,

things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (1995, 44). Much of this dissertation is an attempt to show the way in which common things acquire sacrality, yet maintain their everyday, secular functions, and are, in fact, not “set apart,” but brought into relationships, at times unexpected. Naming is both part of identifying something as special, sacred, or of value, but rather than setting that flower or mountain apart, as Anttonen might argue, naming may make a landscape feature familiar and known.

Though the Swedish heirs to the work of Linnaeus may suppose their naming of wildflowers, birds, bushes, berries, and trees is a secular enterprise, it is also a way of maintaining intimate contact with the land. While the focus of a runner is on moving rapidly from one place to another, the focus of one who walks and picks and recalls the names of familiar wildflowers is on restoring a relationship with nature. As in pilgrimage, these acts of appreciating the unexpected roadside gifts of nature are conducted with slowness and deliberation, and can constitute a ritual worship and knowledge of the land.

The tradition of von Linnaeus, however, has also benefitted those who seek to be exclusionary, as well as being symptomatic of a strong connection to the land and to more-than-human nature. Sweden’s relationship to Swedish nature may have the effect of excluding non-Swedish-born immigrants. In addition to his contributions to botany, Linnaeus developed a classification system naming human racial groups. In their chapter “Race, Ethnicity, and Religion,” in their *Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad explain that though geneticists may understand that race is a concept of limited or no scientific utility, race remains a powerful social construction. And as a social construction, race “often exists in the minds of people.” Furseth and



Repstad add that ethnicity and race may be difficult to distinguish, but that ethnicity is often associated with language, religion, and national identity by both minority and majority populations (2010, 165-166).

Sweden's age-old and powerful bureaucratic land demarcations are, as noted, both provincial and diocesan, and thus also social constructions. While the Church of Sweden promotes national and international values, each diocese interprets its relationship to its territory, as well as to the land it owns—and despite Reformation-era confiscation of bishops' property these land-holdings are not insignificant. These holdings include forest lands, in some dioceses vast acreage, which the Church maintains and harvests. In “God's Closest Town,” chapter one of the abovementioned book by the same title, Kajsa Ahlstrand, Palmer, and Willander explain that the Church of Sweden was the church of wealthy landowners and land-owning farmers, not of workers, and that these “immutable structures,” excluding the proletariat, “go back to pre-Christian times” (21). So, Church of Sweden diocesan land-holdings and membership still hold deeply ingrained social significance or, to use Bourdieu's terminology, markers of distinction, which are both sacred and secular.

### **Sacred Spaces, Sacred Places, and Sacred Motion: Territory, Landscape, and Movement**

“The religious landscape” is, as Finnish scholar Veikko Anttonen (2013) points out, a commonly used expression among scholars today. This expression is primarily employed in order to describe the social context in flux. In several of his works, Anttonen examines—in a somewhat Durkheimian project—the literal and linguistic establishment of religious landscape. As Anttonen explains in his essay on landscapes and sacrosapes,

some pre-historic and pre-Christian sacred places in the Finnish and Estonian Baltic regions are defined as territorial markers by natural contours and objects. “Natural features with symbolic content—rocks, trees, rivers and lakes—or objects such as stakes, portals or upright rocks are used as signs for making customary law visible for social agents” (2013, 5). Swedish researchers have also convincingly demonstrated that these ancient demarcations were adopted by newly Christian Swedes and still form the boundaries and borders of the provinces and dioceses of today.

Anttonen extrapolates to consider what constitutes a religious landscape in areas other than the Finno-Baltic religion in which he specializes. In his 2010 keynote address at the European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR), “Religious Studies as Landscape Studies: Perceptual Strategies and Environmental Preferences in Religion and Mythology,” Anttonen theorizes about the use of the word landscape as a heuristic device. Anttonen argues that “all forms of religion are necessarily constrained by conceptualizations of space. In recent scholarly literature in religious studies, the term landscape appears mainly as a heuristic device used to illustrate mappings of religious diversity and changing commitments in religious affiliation as well as forms of representation in specific geographical areas” (2010, 4). Anttonen argues further that language shapes not only this discussion but also our understanding of landscapes (3). The English word “landscape” does not translate directly into the two Finnish words or prefixes that signify a bounded or sacred area. Nor, argues Anttonen does the English word “landscape” directly translate to the Swedish word *landskap*, which is a word suggesting political boundaries and legal jurisdiction stemming from pre-Christian times, boundaries that are relatively unchanged today. Anttonen explains the work of Swedish scholar Åke Hultkrantz, as follows: “ecology of religion focuses on forms of adaptation

and integration of religion between the local community and the environment,” without quite clarifying whether the term “ecology” is also being used as a heuristic device. My understanding, since the discussion is about “local community and environment” is that this field of study may—to employ yet another heuristic device meant literally—refer to religion on the ground, in, as Anttonen writes, “the local community.” Hultkranz’s focus on the intersection of community and environment is consistent with the focus of this dissertation (Hultcrantz in Anttonen, 1985, 83-90; Anttonen, 2010, 5). Though I do not disagree with Anttonen’s translation of the Swedish word *landskap* as political and territorial, I must add that the word is flexible enough to encompass the English sense of the word “landscape.” *Landskap* may, indeed, signify a (pleasant) landscape upon which to gaze. Dag Hammarskjöld uses the word *landskap* in one of his poetic phrases from *Markings* to mean natural and beautiful terrain, without territorial implications.

Defining pilgrimage in Anttonen’s terms—as marked by landscapes and sacrosapes—comes close to Morinis’s and Stoddard’s views of pilgrimages that take place over a larger area rather than to the regional, heritage project as undertaken by many Swedish pilgrims today. A definition of pilgrimage from Robert H. Stoddard’s geographers’ perspective appears in the volume edited with Alan Morinis, *Sacred Places, Sacred Spaces: The Geography of Pilgrimage* (1997). Stoddard posits a working definition of “pilgrimage events” or pilgrimage as “an event consisting of longer than local journeys by numerous persons to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion” (1997, 49). Stoddard holds a standpoint close in some respects to that adopted within this dissertation. The geographic limits of most Swedish and Scandinavian pilgrimage are defined by national borders. This geographic fact, with the oft-repeated Swedish

invitation to be a pilgrim “at home,” supports the perception of Swedish nature and land as inherently sacred. This same geographic fact suggests that Swedish pilgrimage is tinged with an inescapable element of nationalism, perhaps even nativist sentiment. In his work on “sacred spaces,” however, Stoddard arrives at a definition that cannot, in its entirety, be applied to contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. For many Swedish pilgrims, the journey holds greater importance than the destination, and the words “religious” and “devotion” are not routinely applied to Swedish pilgrimages. As cited in the introductory chapter, Morinis’s definition of pilgrimage which claims that “Some sacred journeys are wanderings that have no fixed goal; the pilgrimage here is the search for an unknown or hidden goal” is more consistent with local Swedish pilgrimages, some of which end at unremarkable locations rather than at shrines of any sort, and the goal is often the hidden “inner journey” (2-4).

As Morinis also points out, the “sacred” is difficult to define. I argue that the land and the journey themselves are sacred to the Swedish pilgrim, even to the atheist Swedish pilgrim, when “sacred” is not taken to mean some transcendental other. The sacred in Swedish pilgrimage is, instead, the earthly and commonly accessible human terrain and experience. Swedish Christian pilgrimage is open to believers and non-believers alike, and is intended by pilgrimage leaders, who understand that individual motivation may vary, to be an inclusive, meaningful and meaning-making activity for both of believers and non-believers.

## Memorialization and Sacred Spaces and Places

In some cases landscape features mark the element of the sacred in a pilgrimage. At other times, pilgrimages arrive at holy sites such as churches, cathedrals, or memorial structures. Pilgrimage is often commemorative, constitutive or constructionist. Pilgrimage designed to commemorate an anniversary (for example, the day of St. Olav's death in the Middle Ages) takes place at specific times, and in more specific places, than do typical Swedish pilgrimages. In *Sacred Places in Modern Western Culture* Post, Arie L. Molendijk and Justin E. A. Kroesen analyze those modern spaces and places selected, often by fateful events, as memorial sites.

Many memorial sites have been constructed in modern times in response to tragic events. Some memorials are familiar from World War II. Other memorials--pyramids in Egypt and the Taj Mahal in India—are among well-known examples of magnificent memorial tombs for the noble and wealthy. Some of these memorial monuments pre-date Christianity; others do not. What is new today is that not only the noble, wealthy, and veterans are grandly memorialized. Burial according to means and culture has long been traditional. A new tradition, having to do with neither wealth nor fame nor religious affiliation, has arisen. Memorials started to be constructed to memorialize and honor citizens who had been killed in natural tragedies, in humanmade tragedies, or by disease (Post, 2011, 29-30). Deaths that are deemed unfair, untimely, and against communal norms are now also ritualized in processions or structures throughout the United States and parts of Europe.

Swedes and other Scandinavians have also begun to construct memorials for victims of what Margry calls “‘senseless’ death” brought about by acts of “‘senseless

violence” (2011, 236, 238). The highly developed memorial cultures in the Netherlands and in the United States serve as theoretical models for examining the newer culture of permanent memorials dedicated to innocent victims of tragedy. Shrines and sites of religious ritual, sites of territorial boundary, and sites of memorial devotion to secular, not saintly, persons, imbued by their innocence and death with elements of sacrality, have some features in common. In Northern Europe, there is not the same strong sense, as in much of Catholic Europe, that a person is best remembered in a specific and sacred place. Nonetheless, places both old and new may be imbued with national or religious sacrality also in Northern Europe. This sacrality may be historical, and bounded in national or religious tradition, or it may be recently imbued to serve those who wish to mourn or celebrate.

A place may appear to be a site of merely “national” mourning. Yet spiritual-religious impulses surely arise when the site is visited, just as religio-cultural impulses may arise when visiting Trondheim or Vadstena. Anttonen defines sacrality as do Coleman and Eade, drawing from the Durkheimian definition of “things sacred and set apart.” For Durkheim, religion is a social phenomenon, and anything intentionally set apart may achieve social power and distinction (1955, 42-44). The sacrality of all Swedish land does not prevent some level of site-specific sacrality to have resurfaced, not only at medieval sites but also at contemporary memorial sites. In “Sacrosapes” (2013), Anttonen merges the two concepts: the pre-historic markers of boundaries, whether of peoples or ownership, are carried forward into Christian parish boundaries. These boundaries contain no inherent sacrality, just cognitive distinction, in that the boundary is recognizable to other humans (2013, 16-17). And these boundaries, according to

Anttonen's theory, carry meanings not originally imputed to them. Is the sacred thus no longer "set apart" from the secular?

Memorial sites, explains Peter Jan Margry, in *Sacred Places in Modern Western Culture*, are sites dedicated to the memory of innocence desecrated (2011, 235-240).<sup>209</sup> These sites, while memorializing the sacred, simultaneously memorialize the tragic: the morally "wrong" or profane actions which led to the site's construction. This is true of memorials due to human acts of violence, or to accidents, or to acts of nature. But what is unique about recent memorials in the Netherlands, and, I would add, thus far in Scandinavia, is that nature, and natural elements are central to the memorial sites themselves. In fact, one of the "focal points and research themes" on which Post, et al. have chosen to focus is on "'basic sacrality,' nature" (2011, 7).

At some memorial sites, the human and the more-than-human nature cannot be separated. The deaths of young people in Utoya, Norway, assassinated in 2011 by a Norwegian neo-Nazi, left painful scars on the land as well as in the minds and hearts of Norwegians. The chosen memorial illustrates this principle of the inability of separating human and more-than-human nature. As the young people at Utoya were scarred, so will the land be. The ritual scarring of Utoya will take the form of cleaving a small opening at one point of the small island, through which a small boat may pass. The inaccessible—those who were taken from this world by a haunting and violent act—will be memorialized by having their names engraved in this passageway. Unlike the names at other memorials—most famously perhaps, the Vietnam War Memorial, in Washington, D.C.—these names will be visible, but out of reach. Those remembered are of this earth

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<sup>209</sup> Memorialization of civilians by silent procession is a ritual newly adopted in the Netherlands (Margry, 2011, 235-240 in Post, et al.)

but can no longer be held by human hands or touched by nature, and so they are symbolically removed from full interaction with the living. By this ecotheology, the earth suffers when humans suffer, just as humans suffer when the earth suffers natural, and especially climate-induced, catastrophes. In the case of the memorial to those who lost their lives at Utoya, harm done to the earth will reflect the harm done to humans. When this site is complete, whether or not it becomes a site of mass pilgrimage, or whether Utoya remains primarily a place for mourning families and politically active young people to gather, is not yet predictable.<sup>210</sup>

The annual pilgrimage to Holland's Cancer Forest (discussed in chapter three), is another European pilgrimage in a natural setting adapted to human needs. Silence has become a hallmark of both non-confessional protests against violence in the Netherlands, and of Swedish pilgrimage, which is confessional. The annual Cancer Forest pilgrimage attracts more participants than can be served. So the participants are limited to those who wish to plant a tree in a loved one's honor. The pilgrimage to the Cancer Forest has primarily become a pilgrimage of mourners in separate, mostly silent, solidarity. Margry describes marches of collective grief, now common in the Netherlands, in "The Silent March: A Ritual of Healing and Protest for an Afflicted Society." Margry explains that any member of society, whether or not directly connected to the victims whose deaths are silently protested, or not, and whether of any religious persuasion or not, may participate in these "collective expression[s] of grief and mourning" (2011, 235-240).

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<sup>210</sup> Utoya site. FB post March 7, 2014. <http://www.bygggnadsarbetaren.se/2013/12/sa-ska-utoya-lakas/> [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/03/05/norway-mass-shooting-memorial\\_n\\_4907109.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/03/05/norway-mass-shooting-memorial_n_4907109.html) Accessed March 7, 2014.



Whether silence is maintained in a room, a procession, or a pilgrimage, the “collective silence” Jorien Holsappel-Brons examines in his chapter, “Space and Silence: the Interplay between Space and Ritual in Rooms of Silence,” is a natural, healing ritual. Modern ritual silent space is, furthermore—as the title *Holy Ground: Re-Inventing Ritual Space in Modern Western Culture* (Post and Molendijk, 2010) suggests—reinvented, or adapted, space for the practice of ritual silence. The ritual of silence may be conducted as a ritual in place or as a ritual in motion. Silent rituals in place are observed in circumscribed spaces set apart from, yet often contained within, bustling public places, such as airports. Rituals in motion may be processions of grief and protest through a town center, or pilgrimages on paths through pastoral landscapes. As in Swedish pilgrimage, when pilgrims complain about the sound of metal staffs striking the ground, visitors to silent rooms also complain that the rooms are not really silent (Holsappel-Brons, 236). The silence is a boundary that the contemplative visitor or pilgrim must, in part, create for him or herself.

### **Boundaries and Borders**

Silent hours of pilgrimage are valued by many Swedish pilgrims. Pilgrims even report feeling an especially strong connection to those with whom they journey during times of silence. Though I have earlier argued that the exclusive use of Swedish on Swedish pilgrimage may exclude non-Swedish-speaking participants, silence thus seems to an opportunity for bridge-building among any Swedes who go on pilgrimage together. Not only is community-building, but reaffirming of individual identity an important element of much pilgrimage. Ian Reader (see below), writes: “A further factor in the growth of pilgrimage has been the search for national and cultural identity. Here the

globalizing tendencies of the modern world can be seen having a negative influence. The reaction has been a turn back to the local” (2007, 217). The desire to be in nature, silent, yet in community, is most often provided as a reason for undertaking a pilgrimage by surveyed pilgrims (as described throughout this dissertation). Since Swedish pilgrimage seems to be less about Christianity in a traditional sense than about a new pilgrimage spirituality, do the lines between an active Christian and a self-proclaimed agnostic on pilgrimage therefore blur, so that every pilgrim is “half a tourist” and vice versa? And does this suggest that—were it possible to apply a metric—that identity-construction among pilgrims in Sweden would be measured better by their national or regional than by their religio-spiritual affiliation? That is, do Swedish pilgrims identify more as Swedes from a certain part of Sweden than as Lutherans or members of another free church? This was not surveyed, and even if it were, would likely be difficult for respondents to answer. My survey responses (as well as those of Bremborg, 2010, and Gaunitz, 2006), indicate that a majority of pilgrims identify as Swedes and as Protestant Christians. Both Christian and national heritage contribute to the identity of many Swedes, on and off pilgrimage trails.

Does pilgrimage essentialize human connection to the Swedish land? Scholars caution that tying religion to nature and nation, as Swedish pilgrimages appear to do, can be troubling (Bramwell, 1985; Nordin, 2001, 107; Reader, 2007; Hermkens et al., 2009, 13; Dillon, 2009; Naletova, 2009; Orsi, 2009, 216-17; B. Taylor, 2010). This important area is not yet explored in the scant scholarly literature on Swedish pilgrimage. Bron Taylor warns that nationalist impulses may lead to “dark green religion.” By “dark green religion” Taylor means religion that has nature as its ultimate concern. But Taylor also

uses the word “dark” to suggest green religion’s “shadow side”: using green religion to valorize one’s native land and heritage (2010, ix). In Sweden, language itself can play into xenophobic constructions of “light” Swedes and dark “others,” not of Northern European origins. Although regional differences are themselves sources of pride and distinction among Swedes, regional differences in cultural practices from cuisine to clothing illustrate the diversity in Swedish culture as well as the tendency to valorize one Swedish landscape (or province) over another. Swedish pilgrimage, driven largely by the Church of Sweden, and predominantly attended by those of Northern European heritage, must avoid becoming another vehicle of dark green religion in its negative sense. Though there is no evidence that Swedish pilgrimage is such a vehicle, the religio-cultural and linguistic barriers I have described are de facto barriers to pilgrimage participation by any but highly intrepid non-Swedish-speakers, and non-Christians who would be willing to sit out three services a day, and not partake in the Birgitta prayer after every break in the journey.

One-fifth of all Swedes are of foreign background, and thus may not speak Swedish or feel connections to Swedish heritage or religion. The decline of membership in the Church of Sweden and other Swedish Protestant denominations as a percentage of total population is impacted by the ever-growing numbers of non-Lutheran and even non-Christian immigrants. The growing immigrant populations of Swedish residents include adherents of Islam, and of Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, as well as secular immigrants. For many immigrants, Swedish Protestantism, or even Christianity, is not a valued part of identity. The most commonly given number of foreign-born persons or persons with two foreign-born parents, “of foreign background,” in Sweden in 2012 was

just over twenty percent, or one in five people. This figure includes people of all legal statuses.<sup>211</sup> Statistics may only include those foreign-born residents who are “*folkbokförda*,” or registered, permanent residents of Sweden with a personal I.D. number. Though immigrants come from many nations, the largest numbers of foreign-born Swedes living in Sweden today were born in Finland and Iraq (Statistics Sweden, 2013).<sup>212</sup> This number grew three percent in 2012, and is characterized as “steep.”<sup>213</sup> The number of immigrant (not specific to nation) increased from 10.9 persons per 1,000 of Swedish residents to 12.1 persons per 1,000, or specifically from 103, 059 in 2012 to 115, 845 in 2013. Out of a total population of 9,6444,864 in 2013, the total number of Swedish residents with foreign background was counted as 2,001, 190, or over 20 percent of the Swedish population.<sup>214</sup> Unsurprisingly, the greatest number of immigrants/asylum-seekers from any country was from Syria in both 2012 and 2013 at 5,349 and 14, 357 persons respectively. According to the Church of Swedish statistics, membership as a percentage of the total population of Sweden exists in an inverse relationship to asylum-seekers, guest workers, and all immigrants as a percentage of the total population of Sweden.

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<sup>211</sup> <http://www.scb.se/en/Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area/Population/Population-composition/Population-statistics/Aktuell-Pong/25795/Yearly-statistics--The-whole-country/Summary-of-Population-Statistics-1960---2012/> Accessed February 7, 2014.

<sup>212</sup> SCB. (Statistiska Centralbyrån or Statistics Sweden). Publicerad: 2013-08-21. Nr 2013:55. [befolkning@scb.se](http://www.scb.se/befolkning@scb.se) [http://www.scb.se/Pages/Article\\_360678.aspx](http://www.scb.se/Pages/Article_360678.aspx) Accessed November 1, 2013.

<sup>213</sup> Statistics Sweden database has undergone changes. The pre-2103 datasets have expired and cannot be accessed and thus not recreated as 2013 datasets.

<sup>214</sup> SCB. <http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Befolkning/Befolkningens-sammansattning/Befolkningsstatistik/25788/25795/Helarsstatistik---Riket/26040/> Accessed November 17, 2014.

The greatest number of foreign-born immigrants into Sweden in the years 2000-2012 is from Finland.<sup>215</sup> Yet the greatest number of immigrants from a single country to Gothenburg in 2012 came from Iraq, not Finland, and they were asylum seekers rather than fellow members of the European Union, thus changing assumptions about shared culture and heritage in Sweden.<sup>216</sup> Variations in pilgrimage practices in Gothenburg may be due to its international, multi-ethnic, and multi-faith makeup.<sup>217</sup> The pilgrimage center in Gothenburg has a unique tenor. While one of the pilgrims with whom I travelled bemoaned the inability to walk the streets of his city and recognize it as “Swedish,” another, from Gothenburg, was co-author to a book revealing failures of the social welfare system in her own city and throughout Sweden. The impetus behind this authorial effort was to raise consciousness of inequality in hopes of achieving greater social equality in Sweden.<sup>218</sup> Thus social critiques among pilgrims may not be consistent.

Similarly, social critiques among the larger Swedish population are also inconsistent, at least as reflected in the 2014 quadrennial national election in which almost 86 percent of eligible voters participated. (The 2014 elections showed a large increase in the far-right political party adherence, an almost equally large decrease in the moderate party adherence, and small increases in some liberal party adherences.)<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> <http://www.scb.se/sv/Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/Finland-vanligaste-ursprungslandet-for-utrikes-fodda/> Accessed May 23, 2014. Residents of Nordic nations are not considered “foreign-born” by Statistics Sweden.

<sup>216</sup> [www.scb.se Publicerad: August 21, 2013. Nr 2013:55.](http://www.scb.se/Publicerad:August21,2013.Nr2013:55)  
[http://www.scb.se/Pages/Article\\_360678.aspx](http://www.scb.se/Pages/Article_360678.aspx) Accessed November 1, 2013.

<sup>217</sup> A Gothenburg-based Facebook group, Bön Utanför Migrationsverket, (Prayer [Meeting] Outside of the Immigration Office), meets regularly to pray for the plight of immigrants or asylum-seekers in the process of being deported due to denied claims.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/127078617405996/> Accessed July 10, 2013.

<sup>218</sup> This work is not cited, not its title provided, in order to preserve this pilgrim author’s anonymity.

<sup>219</sup> <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/rike/> *Valmyndigheten* (The Election Authority). 2014 National Election results.

Social divisions are certainly not new in Sweden. The position and care extended by both Church and State towards non-Christian Swedes of foreign background has been problematic in the past. Davie argues that the Church of Sweden excludes non-Christian others from its embrace even in contemporary times of national tragedy. Though many of the youths who perished in a 1984 Gothenburg discotheque fire—a national tragedy that occurred thirty years ago—were Muslim, Davie maintains that the Muslim community was neither approached nor offered consolation, as was the Christian Swedish community (2000, 194). Davie's work on the voluntary sectors of society, of which the European churches are a part, suggests, however, that "a 'weak' state church has opportunities for representativeness denied to its historic forebears" (2001, 102). The strength of an open church lies within its ability to enfold all in its embrace. Nevertheless, the Church of Sweden, though performing ongoing normative and intermittent curative functions for the Swedish-born population, appears as yet unable to perform spiritual labor on behalf of Sweden's foreign-born, non-Christian residents. The "other" featured on the Church of Sweden website tend to be Christian others in faraway lands rather than non-Christian others within the borders of Sweden. How is this to be resolved? How might Swedish pilgrimage, with its particularly Christian rhetoric and symbolism help? No great strides appear to have been made in making Swedish pilgrimage interreligious, but a few small steps into interreligious pilgrimage have been made by the Pilgrimage Center in Gothenburg. This carries possible risk for Protestant pilgrimage leaders, some of whom (see the discussion on secularization below) wish to reserve pilgrimage for the Christian religious sphere. Interreligious pilgrimage would, however, not move pilgrimage outside of the religious sphere, and may prove to be a growing pilgrimage subgroup. The overtly

religious Gothenburg-based Facebook group, *Bön Utanför Migrationsverket*, (Prayer [Meeting] Outside of the Immigration Office), meets regularly to pray for the plight of immigrants or asylum-seekers in the process of being deported due to denied claims.<sup>220</sup>

Tension exists between offering care and cures for psychological or physical ills primarily to practicing Christians or to all who elect to participate. Do Christians, who may fear the “homogenization of belief,” (Hervieu-Léger, 2006) buttress and support their specific dogma and practices by creating boundaries to pilgrimage participation (of which language and Christian liturgy are but the two most obvious)? Or do Christian pilgrimage organizations whole-heartedly invite all and subscribe to the ideal of a continuum of belief, in which belief may remain specific, yet not hostile towards other believers?

The social construction of ethnicity, and the part a perceived ethnicity may play in the self-selection of pilgrims, the reclaiming of their “native” lands, and the ensuing exclusion of those from other ethnic or cultural groups, was noted by Victor and Edith Turner. Scholars of diverse and geographically widespread traditions have noted the tendency for pilgrimage to become a tool for empowering a gender, national, or ethnic group. The Turners write, for example, of pilgrimage in Ireland that it “may reinforce nationalistic sentiments” through an appeal to “archaism” (what we would call roots or heritage pilgrimage today) and that, “Though class and status are here in abeyance, Irishness is not” (1978, 106, 134). Ian Reader, writing broadly of pilgrimage “from Europe to Japan,” in “Pilgrimage Growth in the Modern World: Meanings and Implications” also notes the importance of heritage in contemporary pilgrimage: “an important factor in the contemporary growth in pilgrimage has been the search for a

<sup>220</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/127078617405996/> Accessed 2013-07-10.

national and cultural identity” because “globalisation...has increased fears of cultural erosion and spurred interest in cultural and personal identities that counteract the power of the global” (2007, 217-218). In *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen, and Catrien Notermans write of Catholic Marian pilgrimage as a means of empowerment for women, but they also recognize the “interplay between Marian devotion and nation-building...worldwide” (2009, 7). Zuckerman, on the other hand, suggests that a response to the dilution or disappearance of religious heritage is not likely to be the mobilization of religious actors and events. Zuckerman instead predicts an additional step away from religion in favor of the secular worldview held by most Danes and Swedes he surveyed (2008, 118). The case of Swedish pilgrimage opens Zuckerman’s argument to critique because Swedish pilgrimage is a religious ritual taken up, in large measure, by people who have a nostalgic cultural connection to the land and by some who wish to cultivate an active connection to their religious heritage.

Opening a discussion that includes the words “ethnic” and “ethnicity” is potentially opening oneself to charges of constructing that same ethnocentrism. Nonetheless, this conversation is ongoing in Sweden and much of Europe. Ethnic tensions, however ethnicity is defined, cannot be ignored. Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad, calling on Weber (1968), and Kvisto (1993), among others, argue that ethnicity does have internal and external boundaries, which may be stretched, and shift, but which are not endlessly flexible. Furseth and Repstad explain that Weber’s understanding of ethnicity draws on history: “He looks at ethnic groups as having memories of a shared past, attachments to a territory, and certain traditions” (168). These borders or boundaries



defining an ethnic group are recognized by members of the minority as well as by the socially dominant ethnic group(s) in a given society (170). In Sweden, some pilgrims and others identify as ethnic Swedes because they have a shared history and, often, shared values, shaped, in part, by a shared religious background.

Concerns over a growing Muslim presence are provoking a crisis in European and Swedish national, regional, and individual identity (Jenkins, 2007; Larsson and Sander, 2007). Unlike the United States, where concerns about illegal immigrants dominate the conversation, most of Sweden's immigrants arrived in the latter half of the twentieth century, and are legal immigrants. What does religious "tolerance" mean in Sweden today (Alwall, 1998, 2000; Jänträ-Jareborg, 2010)? The new social context in which Swedish pilgrimage and its growth are occurring must be considered in any study of Swedish pilgrimage. Will pilgrimage provide a way for those who identify as ethnic Swedes to reify Swedish culture and mores, thereby excluding others? Might pilgrimage contribute to the construction of exclusivist or exceptionalist individual, group, and national identities? How is not only religious freedom, but also religious tolerance, developing in Sweden today?

A brief look at eighteenth and nineteenth century moves towards religious tolerance may be illuminating. Though new ideas in the arts and sciences, and even new ideas regarding religious freedom, were introduced during the Enlightenment in Sweden, Lutheran church practice did not change significantly. The freedom enjoyed by native Swedes during the Enlightenment in the mid-eighteenth century did not include expanded religious freedoms. After a brief blossoming of Enlightenment ideals, a 1766 state edict dictated that the clergy read new laws from the pulpit, reinforcing the subordination of

church to state. Despite familiarity with Enlightenment ideas, the well-educated and powerful clerical elite did not permit any religious deviation from Lutheran practice and belief (Kent, 2008, 116). However, Gustav III embraced Enlightenment ideals, even in religion, and expanded freedoms for both Jews and Catholics from 1774-1780. Equal status with Lutherans was, however, not granted to the members of any foreign confessions, and religious freedoms for Swedes were not expanded (Lenhammar, 139-150).

Religious awakening and revival arrived along with secular scientific Enlightenment thinking, and also the desire for profounder expressions of Protestant evangelical Christianity (Tegborg, 2002, 7; Tegborg, 2003, 7). This change came slowly and tentatively, and while it did not then include a pilgrimage movement, which would have held “papist” implications, it increased religious tolerance to some degree and lessened the hold of the monolithic Church of Sweden slightly. The first bearers of diversity in Sweden were primarily foreign Jews and Catholics whose communities were permitted a degree of religious freedom, such as the permission to found a Jewish synagogue in the late eighteenth century. Most of these bearers of religious diversity eventually assimilated into Swedish society (Alwall, 1998; *The Challenge of Religion*, Bäckström and Pettersson, 2010). Scholarly conversations concerned with human mobility also address pilgrimage (Coleman and Eade, 2004, 20). Though the circumstances of voluntary Swedish pilgrims is very different from those of their asylum-seeking fellows in Sweden, the connection between involuntary travel and voluntary pilgrimage is made in pilgrimage literature as far back as that of the Turners in 1978 (106, 134). This interpretation of past and present movements of peoples continues to be

relevant, and a way of understanding the continuities between past and present, during those centuries in Sweden when movement of peoples was not called “pilgrimage.”

Scholars continue to question whether Sweden is sufficiently tolerant, culturally as well as legally, to accommodate genuine religious pluralism (Alwall, 1998, 2000; Jänterä-Jareborg, 2010). The changing makeup of the Swedish population has, thus far had an almost imperceptible effect on Swedish pilgrimage practices. Pilgrimage, like most social movements, contains contradictory impulses, both reactionary and liberal. The concept of pilgrimage is not exclusionary, but the practice is, as yet, almost exclusively focused on Christian spirituality. As mentioned above, the most notable exception according to my research, is the Pilgrimage Center of Gothenburg. Gothenburg, a city in with a comparatively large Muslim population, has offered a few short pilgrimages with an interreligious focus. Gothenburg is also home to the Interfaith Center of Gothenburg since 2007.<sup>221</sup>

A pilgrim and pilgrim leader describe their experience of interreligious pilgrimage in a 2012 volume on Swedish pilgrimage (Braw, 2012). From the perspectives of both the leader, who writes of explaining Birgitta’s prayer to the assembled pilgrims, this sounds more like an opportunity to introduce pilgrims of other faith traditions to Christianity in the context of Swedish pilgrimage. The leader does not mention what, if anything, the “five Muslims and one Chinese” share about their own traditions (Liljeblad, 109). The pilgrim, who looks forward to participating in future interreligious pilgrimages, entitles her contribution describing the pilgrimage “Grand.” She also describes the emotional reading of a poem, “You who Bully,” by one of the participants (K. Hansson, 110).

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<sup>221</sup> <https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=754985> Accessed July 15, 2014.

Some “bullying”—of a more impersonal nature than that to which the Muslim pilgrim poet referred—arises out of repressive laws and inflexible cultural norms. Contentious and very physical issues of “lived religion” have beset Islamic communities in Sweden and greater Europe. Visible Islamic praxis offends groups as diverse as Swedish Humanists and Sweden Democrats (Gerle, 2002, 2010). Protests against purpose-built mosques, particularly those with minarets higher than Christian church spires, have been routinely successful in parts of Europe and have even served as the basis of an anti-minaret law in Switzerland.<sup>222</sup> Sweden, however, has not struggled as much with this issue due to its lack of purpose-built mosques and minarets (P. Karlsson and Svanberg, 1995; Green, 2010). Protests against halal and kosher slaughter of unanaesthetized animals have, however, resulted in uncomfortable compromises (Gunner, 1999).<sup>223</sup>

Another example of religious conflict in Sweden is the heated debate over parental rights to circumcise their sons without medical reasons. Some doctors in Sweden express unwillingness to perform the procedure based on the UN Convention of 1989 regarding the integrity of the body of the child.<sup>224</sup> On the other hand, some vocal religious leaders and spokespersons, among them Church of Sweden clergy, perceive denying parents the right to follow ancestral religious praxis as punitive.<sup>225</sup> Christian religious supporters of the parents’ right to circumcise male infants argue that this proposed law, like that concerning forbidding halal and kosher slaughter of animals for

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<sup>222</sup> Purpose-built mosques are built with the purpose of serving as a mosque. Most mosques in Sweden are not purpose-built, but already standing buildings acquired for use as mosques.

<sup>223</sup> <https://sverigedemokraterna.se/2012/02/29/obedovad-slakt-ska-vara-forbju...> February 28, 2013.

<sup>224</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>; <http://www.svd.se/kultur/kulturdebatt/tisdag-vi-tar-stallning-for-barnet...> Accessed February 28, 2013.

<sup>225</sup> <http://www.krykanstidning.se/debatt/jag-har-en-annan-syn-pa-rattigherter/> Accessed March 28, 2013.

food, privileges [United Nations and] Swedish law, and ethical convictions deriving from Swedish mores and culture, over the religious freedoms of others.

Pilgrimage seems to contribute identity formation at a spectrum of levels, though scholars may prioritize one level above the others as of primary importance. A classic example of how theorists view pilgrimage at the institutional level is the 1978 work of Victor and Edith Turner on Catholic pilgrimage. The Turners' focus on *communitas*, or formation of bonds within a pilgrimage group suggests a meta-level view, however (13, 250). I do not contrapose institutional pilgrimage and identity formation to group or individual identity formation, as the Turners did in 1978. Instead, I consider pilgrimage in "an attempt to map and frame some of the institutional 'territories'...and to suggest how institutional changes within pilgrimage may be linked to changes without" (1978, xxv).

Swedish pilgrimage offers obvious possibility for diaconally-oriented, tolerant human interaction. What I have begun to examine here is the less obvious question of how bodily religious praxis may be affecting, and be affected by, Swedish expressions of religious (in)tolerance. In reflecting upon these questions, one must consider what is new in Swedish culture. Swedish law-makers must realize that neither a single religious nor cultural norm, nor even legal code, is at work in pluralistic Sweden today (Mehdi and Nielsen, 2011; Arvidsson, 2011).

The institutional portrait of pilgrimage as promoted largely agrees with pilgrims' reports of what they seek in contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. Pilgrims almost invariably mention nature alongside existential seeking before other pilgrimage motives. As an interviewer of a group of pilgrims in Uppsala Diocese reports, "Most mention the

value of being able to live in touch with nature.”<sup>226</sup> Some elements of institutional pilgrimage as practiced and imposed, however, are less appealing to pilgrims who are less interested in the liturgical, Lutheran elements of pilgrimage or in adhering to strict behavioral norms. Is the institutional portrait of Swedish pilgrimage as an outgrowth of traditional religion overplayed? This may, indeed, not be the case, but the exception that applies to a minority of pilgrims. Parish pilgrimages, with parish participants appear to be increasing in popularity. Pilgrims in all three surveys discussed in this dissertation are mostly churched, but, as I have discussed, what being churched means can vary greatly.

If pilgrimage primarily reaches those who are already institutional insiders, it may be a self-limiting movement, but growth of 28 percent over five years is impressive in a nation and continent where membership in organizations has been steadily declining.<sup>227</sup> If the array of pilgrimage offerings becomes even more appealing and accessible to a greater variety of individuals and groups, as is now occurring, pilgrimage may appeal to a greater number of people not currently active in any Swedish Church. New types of Swedish pilgrimage, from pilgrimages by motorcycle and on horseback and skis, to parish-specific Pearls of Life pilgrimages, were not widely offered in 2011. In 2011, the Dag Hammarskjöld national pilgrimage promoting peace was pilgrimage news. By having the pilgrim staff blessed by the Dalai Lama, and by having the colors of the Congolese flag on its logo and promotional sites, the Dag Hammarskjöld PAX

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<sup>226</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=629021> Posted August 18, 2009. Accessed March 24, 2014.

<sup>227</sup> As explained, the figures Bremborg accumulated and I was able to confirm in my own small survey of 15 respondents out of 25 pilgrims, suggest that two-thirds to three-quarters of those who go on Swedish pilgrimage are actively involved in a church. All pilgrims in Gaunitz’s small study 2006 study of seven pilgrims, and six respondents were already active within their parish of the Church of Sweden.

Pilgrimage for Peace attempted to admit, or at least acknowledge, other religious traditions.

Perhaps in an attempt to contradict any (false) perception that only insiders participate in pilgrimages, many of the articles from webpages above feature pilgrims who have taken pilgrimage as their first step towards belief and involvement in a Christian community. Pilgrimage is not a movement seeking to render religion or Christianity irrelevant. It is a movement to keep the institutional church relevant whether those who enter it are aware or not, whether they step over a “low threshold” or enter through the “kitchen door.”

The hopes of the churches and of the middle-class in Sweden, as Isenhour so clearly shows us, are not at odds. Ammerman would recognize the daily practices of many middle-class Swedes (whom Isenhour came to know while living in Sweden with her own family and conducting her research) as religious or spiritual practices. Their spirituality or religiosity, though they themselves would probably not refer to their daily environmentally-oriented praxes as such, is focused on daily decisions involving the quotidian acts of shopping, cooking, and transportation. They know that their consistent practices, like prayer, may or may not be efficacious in achieving their goals. But, like those who pray, they feel they are making an impact, even if the outcome is not guaranteed. Their actions will not be abandoned until a larger solution is provided. These individual acts are practiced not in isolation, but in solidarity within a community for whom nature and the environment is of greatest importance. As Isenhour writes, “Still others are more civic minded, focusing on participating in environmental organizations, political parties, and public demonstrations” (2010, 516). No matter how low the

threshold, the Church of Sweden and its pilgrimage movement may not capture those individuals who are of Swedish heritage, but not already active members, particularly if they already have an outlet for environmental activism in place. Some environmental activists in Sweden are, however, active through, and perhaps not coincidentally, with support of, the church. Some of these individuals may be among the next generation to return to the churches that seeks their presence and participation.

Some Swedes depend on the cycle of manufacturing and consumption. So though shopping for the national good is not a value promoted by the government of Sweden, as in the United States (Isenhour, 2010), the unemployed, and those employed in inherently anti-environmental industries, are unlikely to advocate reduced consumption of goods. The Vietnamese, Bangladeshi and Chinese migrant workers, for example, who pick the lingonberries in the mountainous heath, are more affected by climate change than wealthier Swedes because the harvest of lingonberries and cloud berries has been sparse following warmer winters.<sup>228</sup> As Vietnamese-born Swede Thongkam Persson is quoted in the *New York Times* (2010-09-20) as saying, “The Swedes have money, so it’s just Thais, Chinese and Vietnamese who pick the berries.” Persson added “The Swedes go hiking in the forest,” suggesting that spending time in nature for enjoyment or relaxation continues to be a middle-class pursuit.<sup>229</sup>

As yet an untapped potential pilgrimage population, people with the least amount of existential security in Sweden may be open to the environmental and social messages of a church with a low threshold and a strong social safety net. Naturally, some with a

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<sup>228</sup> “Asian Migrant Workers See Exploitation in Sweden,” by Matthew Saltmarsh. 2010-09-08. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/08/world/europe/08iht-sweden.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/08/world/europe/08iht-sweden.html?_r=0) Accessed April 2, 2014.

<sup>229</sup> “Migrants’ Plight Touches a Point of Swedish Pride.” In the *New York Times*. By John Tagliabue. September 20, 2010. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/21/world/europe/21sweden.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/21/world/europe/21sweden.html?_r=0) Accessed November 16, 2014.



lower degree of security are already members of churches other than the Church of Sweden. The Salvation Army, the Pentecostal, and other traditional free churches, not to mention immigrant churches, have provided haven for many financially insecure Swedes, for many generations. If the Church of Sweden and other Swedish Christian churches continue to proselytize only to current, culturally Christian members, membership is unlikely to grow. If, however, pilgrimages become outreach programs that bring laborers and workers for social and environmental justice together, new alliances may be forged, and members from outside the Church may be added. Not only those in need of pastoral care—and of course socioeconomic status is no definitive indicator of such need—but also those interested more in what is usually conceived of as social justice and environmental issues than “religion” or “spirituality” could be a source of activist pilgrimage participants.

### **Conclusion**

The ecotheological worldview reflected in many church statements and expressed in large, organized events, as well as small group pilgrimages, is central to the Swedish pilgrimage experience today. In accord with the theorizing of Hornberg and Eaton, (and the research of Isenhour), I suggest that the ecotheological perspective is a larger Swedish cultural perspective, and not merely a pilgrim perspective. The pilgrim perspective and lifestyle in Sweden, however bureaucratized and elite, may be an organic growth out of the sentiments and religious expressions of ordinary Swedes.

Whether or not Swedish pilgrimage makes the leap across socio-economic boundaries, and boundaries of Europeanism and Christianity, remains to be seen. In this chapter I have explored how nature, the land itself below the pilgrim’s feet, is the

foundation, the nurturance, and the inspiration for those who walk. We have seen how one potential underside of the Swedish connection to the land could be what Bron Taylor describes as the “worldview affinities and historical connections between some nature religions...and racist subcultures and political movements, including extreme environmentalism.” Anna Bramwell suggests that the roots of these sentiments are in the nineteenth century, a century that, in Taylor’s words, “often had strong affinity with racist ideologies and political movements (such as Nazism)...that reject Enlightenment rationality in favor of a romantic, agrarian ideal” (Taylor, 2010, 7; Bramwell, 1985, 1989 in Taylor 7, 251fn18). The land is both the literal and the cultural foundation of Sweden, and that has both positive and negative aspects.

I have analyzed the Church of Sweden’s diocesan websites to suggest how closely they tend to link pilgrimage to what Swedish scholar Åke Hultkranz sees as a positive “ecology of religion,” one which strives to integrate religion with both the local community and its natural environment. But the northern European ecology of religion is also expressed (as I also suggested above), in newly constructed memorial sites to respond to visitors’ need to mourn, sites which typically incorporate not only a strong environmental component, but also an environmentalist component. As new goals for pilgrimage, these memorial sites encourage roots or heritage pilgrimage, as do sites from the Middle Ages, thereby combining green religion with some of the darker aspects of dark green religion. Heritage and memorial sites constructed in a Christian context encourage boundary-construction and ethnic self-identification by the ethnic majority.

However problematic the concept of ethnicity is, ethnic identities, (sometimes chosen), are recognized equally well by members of both majority and minority cultures.<sup>230</sup>

In short, pilgrims are individuals, but pilgrimage is socially and culturally constructed. If even I, a first-generation Swedish American, who has lived in Sweden, with a native competency in Swedish, had to struggle to hide my “troll’s tail,” is it any wonder that, despite its many positives, Sweden’s new minorities are generally invisible in pilgrimage in contemporary Sweden?

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<sup>230</sup> Shrines, of course, exist in all nations and cultures. There are doubtless home shrines and small shrines that represent minorities, in Sweden, and throughout Scandinavia, but the large shrines and memorials in Sweden, and those of other parts of Western Europe, such as the Cathedral of St. James at Santiago de Compostela, the grotto at Lourdes, and the shrine under construction in Utoya are shrines to members of the majority population. Since a room kept with the possession and photos of a deceased loved-one is also a shrine (and home shrines are a well-researched subject outside of the scope of this dissertation—see Karen McCarthy Brown’s *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (1991), for a study of home shrines) it is certainly only of a limited number of well-known public shrines and memorial locations (the non-confessional Cancer Forest, for instance) that I write, in part because of their connections to the natural world.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

Pilgrimage as a religio-cultural phenomenon has continued to grow in Europe and worldwide for many decades now, returning to Sweden somewhat belatedly in the mid-1990s, after an absence of four and one-half centuries. Sweden's contemporary pilgrimage movement was revived, and is still dominated, by the Church of Sweden's clergy, its dioceses, and its parishes. Pilgrim narratives and other forms of pilgrim literature almost all emanate from Church of Sweden-authorized sources, rather than from narratives by lay participants. Hans-Erik Lindström's seven key words function as a guide for many forms of Swedish pilgrimage. Lindström's *The Little Pilgrim Book*, sold at the Church of Sweden's Vadstena Pilgrimage Center (and in bookstores and online through the publisher, Verbum), functions as a virtual liturgy for most of Sweden's strictly-scheduled pilgrimages. On a typical pilgrimage day, Saint Birgitta's brief prayer is recited hourly after all breaks, even each ten-minute rest break. Though much of Swedish pilgrimage is time spent in nature, pilgrims are expected (though not explicitly required) to attend daily pilgrim mass, oftentimes held indoors. In my experience, as in that of participant-observer Bremborg (2010), the pilgrims themselves would prefer that both pilgrim mass and Holy Eucharist take place outdoors.

Swedish pilgrims, walking together at the same pace, following the group leader, are in turn followed by one of their number whose role is to ensure that no one lags behind. Some of Lindström's seven key objects, which correspond to his seven key words, are physically used or carried by participants on virtually every pilgrimage. More pilgrims carry metal hiking poles than traditional pilgrim's staffs, however, and many

now wear the Pearls of Life rosary bracelet, which is not one of the seven key objects. Swedish pilgrimage is promoted as time in nature, and pilgrims express deep appreciation for the opportunity to spend time in a natural setting, especially when they are able to walk in contemplative silence. Much of the typical pilgrimage day is meditative and silent, and, when speaking is allowed, no provision is made for those who do not know Swedish. Sharing after the evening meal follows a highly structured twelve-step model: when someone shares personal reflections, neither interruptions during those reflections nor direct comments afterward are acceptable.

Contemporary Swedish pilgrimage thus retains some strong connections to the rigorous medieval Catholic pilgrimages that were largely outlawed during the Reformation. Pilgrimage in Sweden attempts to mend the frayed chain of memory, and to construct a new one by appropriating old symbols because those symbols still have power. Some pilgrim paths overlap with medieval ones, and so do some destinations. Bremborg's and Gauntiz's surveys, like my own survey, show, moreover, that most pilgrims are not only church members but are also actively involved in church life outside of pilgrimage.

And yet, although most Swedish pilgrims today are church members, Swedish pilgrims need not hold a belief in a transcendent God. Confessional medieval pilgrims went on pilgrimage to fulfill the penitential cycle that served to remit sins. For contemporary Swedish pilgrims, however, salvation does not depend upon the satisfactory fulfillment of pilgrimage, or as part of atonement for sins. So present-day pilgrims may or may not find their experience as transformative as pilgrimage offerings on websites and from pilgrimage leaders and promotional material often suggest.

Nevertheless, the inner journey that today's Swedish pilgrims undergo is often, if not always, a transformative or attractive enough experience that many pilgrims express their willingness and intent to go on future pilgrimages.

Among the many debates in pilgrimage scholarship, one that plays an important role in the pilgrim's experience is that of the formation of community. I conclude that *communitas* (per the Turners, 1978), may develop among pilgrims during their journeys. Scheduled activities throughout the day, and the mandate that some pilgrims not outpace the others, are seemingly designed not only to instill quietude—to use another Turnerian phrase a liminoid experience—but also, to foster a diaconally-oriented, caring pilgrimage community. Of the seven key words of pilgrimage, “sharing” is upheld as the most important by pilgrimage leaders and by pilgrims who have contributed to a recent pilgrimage volume (Braw, 2012). Sharing is in itself an avenue to spirituality, which many pilgrims seek.

Sweden's pilgrimage movement relies on the support of organizations outside of the secular sphere, and so is an example of the overlapping, or only partial differentiation of the social spheres in Sweden. Tourism is an industry which may either foster additional institutional pilgrimage, or be perceived by religious institutions as unwelcome competition in an area that belongs firmly under the religious umbrella. Pilgrimage in Sweden is strongly focused on heritage, so the scholarly conversation about heritage tourism versus heritage pilgrimage does not resonate as strongly as it might in a nation in which church and state had not been so long and so firmly intertwined. Heritage and religion are, in Sweden, inseparable, whether on pilgrimage, or at school, or celebrating a traditional Christian holiday (with all its resonances of pre-Christian Norse religion).

In short, pilgrimage today also seems freer in many ways than medieval pilgrimages. Contemporary pilgrimages involve some privations but are often not physically challenging. They are more about the experiences of journey than the arrival at a destination or shrine. Most important, Swedish pilgrimage may be institutional in appearance, but the motives of pilgrims—both those I informally interviewed and surveyed, and those surveyed by others—seem as individual as the pilgrims themselves are. Whether or not pilgrimage is immediately transformative, many Swedish pilgrims have gone on pilgrimages in the past, and plan to go on subsequent pilgrimages. So pilgrimage clearly appeals strongly to many of its participants, and there is cause for optimism about the pilgrimage movement's future and its benefits.

What, then, is pilgrimage's appeal for today's Swedes? Not surprisingly, since 70% of all Swedes report having spiritual experiences in nature, much contemporary Swedish pilgrimage literature emphasizes the value of walking in nature. In fact, Church of Sweden pilgrimage is often described on the same webpage where the diocese outlines its own environmental activism, or practical ecotheology, and the two related movements appear to now be more intentionally related. It proved more difficult than I had anticipated to demonstrate adherence to immanentalism or pantheism or panentheism in the Swedish pilgrimage population, who still remain voiceless in comparison with authorized pilgrim narratives.<sup>231</sup> But well-known pilgrimage leaders like Hammar and Lindström appear to adhere to forms of nature religion that do not exclude a god image, as did Hammarskjöld, in whose honor the national 2011 PAX pilgrimage was held.

The emphasis on being in nature is also not surprising because contemporary

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<sup>231</sup> As discussed in chapter six in the section on Bron Taylor's typologies, immanentalism, pantheism, and panentheism are variants of nature religion.

Swedish pilgrimage seems a continuous interplay between the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the religious. Indeed, as I noted above, the single Swedish word “*andlig*” means both “spiritual” and “religious.” In Sweden, in other words, being spiritual and being religious are not mutually exclusive categories. In other cases, western contemporaries claim to be “spiritual but not religious.” Pilgrimage is a spiritual-religious ritual in which bodily everyday elements are embedded, and, in pilgrimage, the bodily is neither inherently secular nor sacred.

I have therefore argued throughout this dissertation for the irreducible complexity of contemporary Swedish pilgrimage. Like the proverbial wedding gown, I suggested—a garment one dons while undergoing a transformation—Swedish pilgrimage combines “something old, something new.” Swedish pilgrimage offers much that is borrowed from the past, and much that must appeal to the contemporary pilgrim whose culture and beliefs, even regarding pilgrimage, are connected to, yet radically different from, the culture and beliefs of the pre-Reformation pilgrim.

Swedish pilgrimage partly satisfies a yearning for the return of a “lost” common culture. Thus I also hypothesized a connection between pilgrimage and anti-immigrant sentiment since pilgrimage is radically land-based and plays on Swedish heritage heartstrings. The more sinister side of claiming heritage is seen in the Sweden Democrats, a nativist, anti-immigrant political party, whose percentage of the electorate has risen from 5.70% in 2011 to 12.86% in 2014.<sup>232</sup> Yet, I argue that the inherent sacrality of the land is a major factor in pilgrimage and in Swedes’ spiritual experiences in nature, which do not necessarily lead to nativist sentiments.

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<sup>232</sup> <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/rike/> Valmyndigheten. September 19, 2014. Accessed November 28, 2014.



Pilgrimage in Sweden offers a deep sense of heritage, a social experience, health and rejuvenation, and religio-spiritual fulfillment through many avenues, including that most appreciated by surveyed pilgrims: time spent in nature, walking in silent companionship. The agrarian past, though often one of poverty and privation is still not a distant past, so issues of land and environment are compelling for many Swedes. The chain of memory linking Swedes to rural life is kept alive in part through generations of re-telling histories of hunger and hardship. This is especially true of older Swedes, who comprise a large portion of the pilgrimage population. The Swedish populace as a whole seems, in recent decades, to have conducted a quiet rebellion against spending time indoors in church buildings. It is perhaps due to such recent cultural continuity with an agrarian past that space for yet another new religious movement largely conducted outdoors—modern-day pilgrimage—has opened up in Sweden.

Scholarly conversations about journey and destination also lead to conversations about the land as the context of the journey, the shrines or destinations that are reached, and the sacrality and simultaneous secularity of the land and the destinations. Along with scholars from other nations (Bhardwaj, 1973), I argue that the land itself is sacred, and that with each step, and each footprint, the land is reclaimed, and the person who is treading becomes part of a more-than-human experiences. Pilgrimages may be as simple as hour-long walks, which leads me to theorize with Nancy Ammerman (2013; 2014) that even daily walks can be pilgrimages. In a brief pamphlet, the Skåne-Blekinge pilgrimage organization in Southern Sweden depicts a young woman by the ocean, and calls her daily walks there her pilgrimage (2012). Some Swedish pilgrims attempt to adopt sustainable practices as part of a “pilgrim lifestyle,” as described by Sanna and Hans-Erik

Lindstrom (2009). A pilgrimage lifestyle is diaconal in its essence: those who practice pilgrimage as a lifestyle are concerned with both other humans and with the environment as particular recipients of this ethic of care.

Membership in the Church of Sweden remains strong (despite some losses since the long-anticipated disenfranchisement in the year 2000 and voluntary payment of substantial church taxes), and it remains a dominant institution. It is not only a dominant institution interested in promoting Swedish Lutheranism and performing life rituals, but also a voice for social justice both at home and in the world. The Church of Sweden is also arguably the sort of institution Heelas and Woodhead would recognize as encouraging the development of “subjective-life” spirituality, and, I would add, an open institution with a “low threshold” for participation and membership.

The Church of Sweden, as well as Sweden’s traditional free churches, while known for global engagement and missionization, are historically very regional institutions within Sweden (Skog, 2010). This regionalism reflects not only cultural or heritage attachment, but also attachment to the natural (and thus, financial), resources and ways of life dependent upon them. The inherent sacrality of the land, made sacred over many centuries, is continually enacted by Church of Sweden and provincial land and resource management, and by the use of land in both everyday pursuits and pilgrimages. The Church of Sweden dioceses own and manage vast acreage, including forestlands and waterways, as well as diocesan cathedrals, parish churches, and even pilgrimage paths.

The Church of Sweden has shown creativity and imagination in responding to the changing nature of religion and spirituality by expanding pilgrimage offerings, and indeed, the very meaning of pilgrimage. The pilgrimage movement in Sweden is likely to

continue to grow, as the array and number of pilgrimage offerings grows. The type of pilgrimage that seems likely to prevail in Sweden is organized and bureaucratized. Pilgrimage may not grow rapidly, however, unless new groups are brought in, and the relevance of pilgrimage is increased by making its ties to the ecotheological and environmental movements even more compelling and explicit.

The Swedish pilgrimage movement attempts to tighten its ties to ecotheology and environmentalism by its adherence to transportation by foot, by use of public transportation where possible, by insistence on vegetarianism (in many cases), and most of all, by its commitment to sustained amounts of time in nature. Together, these are efforts towards developing a more sustainable land ethic. Swedish pilgrimage is being constructed on a foundation of human interaction in nature, in the more-than-human-world, as well as in response to changes within the Church of Sweden and Swedish society. It is often difficult to separate environmentalism and ecotheology from pilgrimage, but pilgrimage does retain a firm core of environmental awareness and concern. Pilgrimage is designed for spiritual growth in nature and is related to, but not yet fully connected to, the environmental movement in Sweden. As discussed above, this connection appears to be growing stronger since the climate crisis itself is one of the stressors that Swedish pilgrims seek to escape, and that the Church of Sweden seeks to address more adequately.

Despite challenges to its dominance, the Church of Sweden remained the official state church until the year 2000, and even today the majority of Swedes (see chapter one) remain Church of Sweden members. Nevertheless, the Church of Sweden, like pilgrimage today, has become an agent of ecumenism and pluralism. Pilgrimage is a new

way to allow Roman Catholicism back into the open (as examples of pilgrimages to Norway especially show), and even hints of pre-Christian practices (an example is found on the Dag Hammarskjöld path, where his words are written on new “runestones”). Pilgrimage takes the pilgrim both backward and forward in time, and deep into an understanding of more-than-human nature, and of the eternal human quest to seek the unknown, both within and without.

### **Future Work**

As the pilgrimage and environmental movements grow in parallel, so do the organized pilgrimages and environmental festivals in Sweden. Combining past work on pilgrimage with work on festivals should prove fruitful in examining the seemingly divergent futures of Swedish pilgrimage types. A model of pilgrimage in Southern Sweden—insisting on God as holy, and on nature as a mere conduit to God—strikes out at the nature-orientation of pilgrimage, and reifies the old nature and religion dichotomy. A second kind of Swedish pilgrimage has set aside this supposed separation of sacred and secular, and experiences, and could even be said to be an expression of nature religion. Yet a third strand (aptly termed so), is growing out of a form of pilgrimage focused on the “Pearls of Life” rosary bracelet. This form of pilgrimage keeps pilgrims, who wear a string of pearls around their wrists, always in touch with their spiritual lives, whether on pilgrimage journeys or at home. Pearls of Life pilgrimages are growing in parishes around Sweden, and they appeal to those who are already church members, as well as to those who wish for a brief, self-guided spiritual outing, such as the path a person walking a meditative labyrinth might follow. The pearls, looking much like the mirrored balls on

pedestals that ornament some American gardens, are positioned on pedestals around parish grounds. Parishioners (and visitors, as well) may stop and meditate at each pearl.

Interestingly, the theme of the “pearl” appears in biblical parable and is also central in Mormonism.<sup>233</sup> The pearl’s recent reappearance as a religious symbol in Sweden may confirm Danièle Hervieu-Léger’s theory of the homogenization of belief, in which she suggests that all belief systems come to resemble one another. Hervieu-Léger writes that “This homogenization of belief clearly encourages the migrations of believers, who define and modulate spiritual courses that pay less and less heed to denominational and community boundaries (2006, 65). She refers to a “‘pilgrim-like’ form of religiosity...only slightly subject to norms...modifiable and external to the routines governing the daily lives of the individuals concerned” (65). Alternatively, the theme of the pearl may instead be seen as sign of symbolic continuity in religions worldwide, and not the blending of all into a non-descript whole. Swedish pilgrimage has fairly rigid norms in place, though these are norms more of behavior and less of belief. Swedish pilgrimage leaders are alert to the possibility that pilgrimage may be “external to...the daily lives of the individuals concerned,” and efforts are being made to draw the pilgrim into a religio-cultural complex of personal pilgrimage identity that will not be shed the moment the pilgrim’s staff is laid down after the journey. Furthermore, some Swedish pilgrimages express greater adherence to regionalism and the celebration of regional heritage, which suggests local “thickening” rather than “thinning” of behavior or praxis, if not necessarily of belief. Among the themes of this dissertation has been the many ways in which Swedish pilgrimage currently does not reify the sacred/secular dichotomy, but

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<sup>233</sup> *The Pearl of Great Price* is one of the four central texts of Mormonism.

allows for the coexistence of the sacred and secular on many levels, both recognized and misrecognized.

Additional pilgrimage fieldwork in Sweden and greater Scandinavia could provide a fuller picture of the pilgrimage movement, and of ways in which it has changed in the past three and one-half years. A pilgrimage journey as an experienced pilgrim and participant-observer would undoubtedly provide new, perhaps different, insights. Further fieldwork using surveys with questions similar to those I initially posed, might prove helpful and together, even amenable to statistical analysis. Future pilgrimage fieldwork in the form of personal interviews conducted while in Scandinavia would add depth, or “thick description,” which I now only provide in my own words.

Based on the fact that that new pilgrimage types are unfolding, differences are to likely continue to coexist within the pilgrimage movement. Pilgrimage types may reflect the dispositions of pilgrimage workers, who have a higher stake in the game, more than they reflect dispositions of Swedish laypeople. Lay pilgrims are, however, free to choose among different types of pilgrimage, and to satisfy their needs for both individual subjectivity and community by participating in a variety of pilgrimage modes. Retreats and retreat centers are growing up alongside designated pilgrimage centers. Since the former are, in most cases, not used for pilgrimage alone, the preference for pilgrimage journeys over retreats, or the opposite, may prove difficult to assess. The current numbers for pilgrimage (provided in chapter one) are for pilgrimages and retreats, counted together. Pilgrimage and traditional religion would seemingly appeal to nativist sentiments of Swedes who wish to get back to nature, and be certain that nature is

claimed as part of Swedish heritage.<sup>234</sup> The element of church-sponsored eco-festivals as new pilgrimage destinations also adds a new type of goal and mode to the primarily journey-oriented Swedish pilgrimage culture. Environmental festivals may become common destinations for Swedish pilgrims, but further research will reveal whether, as I hypothesize, Swedish pilgrimage remains focused on the experience of the seven key words and the inner and outer journey in nature.

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<sup>234</sup>This connection has not been investigated, but the electorate of the provinces of Southern Sweden continues to support the nativist Sweden Democrats political party in higher percentages than does the electorate of other Swedish provinces and communities. See 2014 election results in bar format in links below. <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/rvalkrets/14/index.html> Valmyndigheten. September 19, 2014. Accessed November 30, 2014. This particular chart shows the northeastern areas of Sweden's southernmost Province of Skåne. Over 22% of the electorate in this area voted for the Sweden Democratic party, as compared to less than 7% of the electorate in the city center of the Community of Gothenburg, a liberal electoral district. <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/kvalkrets/14/80/03/index.html> Valmyndigheten. September 19, 2014. Accessed November 30, 2014.

**Apendix A**  
**Pilgrimage Survey**

**Enkätstudie: Pilgrimsvandring i Sverige**

Följande enkätstudie om pilgrimsvandring i Sverige ställer först några demografiska frågor såväl som andra frågor om dina erfarenheter som pilgrim. Enkäten ställer också flera frågor om dina religiösa åsikter och hur dessa påverkar din natur-och-kultursyn. Det tar ungefär 15-20 minuter att fylla i enkäten om du inte skriver långa svar. Din medverkan är helt frivillig och anonym, och du får gärna hoppa över frågor du helst inte vill svara på.

Syftet med min forskning och enkäten är att bättre förstå erfarenheter och vad som motiverar pilgrimer i Sverige. Svaren kommer att analyseras gruppvis. Det är helt frivilligt att medverka, och ditt beslut att inte delta får inga konsekvenser.

Om du bestämmer dig för att delta i enkäten, var vänlig och skriv INTE ditt namn. I och med att du fyller i och lämnar in enkäten, går du med på att delta i studien.

Demografiska frågor

Jag är \_\_\_kvinna \_\_\_man \_\_\_annat kön

Jag är \_\_\_18-24 \_\_\_25-34 \_\_\_35-44 \_\_\_45-54 \_\_\_55-64 \_\_\_65-74 \_\_\_75-84 \_\_\_85 eller äldre

Jag är \_\_\_singel \_\_\_i partnerskap eller samboende \_\_\_gift \_\_\_änka/änkling \_\_\_frånskild

Under min uppväxt fanns det\_\_\_ antal medlemmar i min familj

Det finns \_\_\_ antal medlemmar i min nuvarande familj



Jag har \_\_\_svensk bakgrund \_\_\_nordisk bakgrund \_\_\_ annan utländsk bakgrund

Min etniska bakgrund definierar jag själv som:

\_\_\_svensk nordisk \_\_\_svensk samisk \_\_\_svensk nordisk och samisk \_\_\_svensk och  
 annan bakgrund \_\_\_skandinavisk nordisk \_\_\_skandinavisk samisk \_\_\_skandinavisk  
 nordisk och samisk \_\_\_euorpeisk bakgrund \_\_\_euorpeisk och annan bakgrund  
 \_\_\_asiatisk bakgrund \_\_\_mellanöstern bakgrund \_\_\_afrikansk bakgrund \_\_\_vet ej  
 \_\_\_annan bakgrund (vänligen

beskriv)\_\_\_\_\_

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### **Några frågor om religion**

Mina åsikter om religion har bildats av följande. (Vänligen välj det som du tycker

stämmer bäst, tio som högst och bäst. Markera ditt val med ett kryss.)

1. Min uppfostran \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 \_\_\_6 \_\_\_7 \_\_\_8 \_\_\_9 \_\_\_10
2. Min partner och mina barn \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 \_\_\_6 \_\_\_7 \_\_\_8 \_\_\_9 \_\_\_10
3. En kyrka, ett samfund, en religiös eller andlig rådgivare \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 \_\_\_6  
 \_\_\_7 \_\_\_8 \_\_\_9 \_\_\_10
4. Min inställning till den andliga, religiösa, eller övermänskliga världen \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2  
 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 \_\_\_6 \_\_\_7 \_\_\_8 \_\_\_9 \_\_\_10
5. Min inställning till det andliga inom människor \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4 \_\_\_5 \_\_\_6 \_\_\_7 \_\_\_8  
 \_\_\_9 \_\_\_10
6. Min inställning till naturen, d.v.s. den icke-mänskliga världen \_\_\_1 \_\_\_2 \_\_\_3 \_\_\_4  
 \_\_\_5 \_\_\_6 \_\_\_7 \_\_\_8 \_\_\_9 \_\_\_10

7. Min inställning till en andlig kraft inom naturen \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7  
\_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
8. Mitt religiösa arv och traditioner \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
9. Den religion eller religiösa rörelse jag idag har samhörighet med är (Vänligen  
nämner ett eller fler, som  
gäller) \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_2  
\_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
10. Min skolutbildning eller annat intellektuellt engagemang \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5  
\_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
11. Min engagemang och tro på den empiriska världen och universum \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3  
\_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10

### **Beskrivning av din tro och ditt religiösa engagemang**

12. Jag är medlem i Svenska Kyrkan och går i kyrkan även när det inte gäller dop,  
bröllop, eller begravning \_\_\_antal gånger om året \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7  
\_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10 och deltar regelbundet  
i \_\_\_\_\_
13. Jag är medlem i Svenska Kyrkan men går inte i kyrkan om det inte gäller dop,  
bröllop, konfirmering, eller begravning \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9  
\_\_10
14. Jag är medlem i ett annat kristet samfund, \_\_\_\_\_ och går  
regelbundet i kyrkan \_\_\_antal gånger om året \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8  
\_\_9 \_\_10

15. Jag är medlem i ett annat kristet samfund, \_\_\_\_\_ och går inte regelbundet i kyrkan \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
16. Jag har en andlig tro \_\_\_\_\_, men är inte en religiös människa. \_\_1 \_\_2  
\_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
17. Jag är inte troende, men heller inte ateist \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9  
\_\_10
18. Jag är ateist \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 \_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10
19. Jag är en icke-kristen, troende människa och har samhörighet med följande föreningar, organisationer, och samfund  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4  
\_\_5 \_\_6 \_\_7 \_\_8 \_\_9 \_\_10

### Några frågor om pilgrimsvandring

Är detta din första pilgrimsvandring? \_\_Ja \_\_Nej

Om inte, hur många vandringar har du deltagit i? \_\_\_\_

Beskriv kortfattat dina ev. tidigare pilgrimsfärder, tid, plats, distans, och

ungerfärlig

tidsåtgång \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Vad fick dig intresserad av pilgrimsvandring från början?-

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

När/hur hörde du första gången talas om pilgrimsvandringar i

Sverige? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Är pilgrimsvandring en del av din religiösa/andliga tro? I så fall, på vilket

sätt? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Varför valde du att delta i just den här vandringen?*

Geografiska skäl? \_\_\_Ja

\_\_\_Nej \_\_\_\_\_

Familjeskäl? \_\_\_\_\_Ja\_\_\_Nej

\_\_\_\_\_

Kulturella skäl? \_\_\_Ja \_\_\_Nej

\_\_\_\_\_

Historiska skäl? \_\_\_Ja \_\_\_Nej

\_\_\_\_\_

För naturupplevelsen? \_\_\_Ja \_\_\_Nej

\_\_\_\_\_

Har pilgrimsvandringen på något sätt ändrat din natursyn? \_\_\_Ja \_\_\_Nej

Vänligen

beskriv \_\_\_\_\_

Andra skäl? \_\_\_Ja \_\_\_Nej

\_\_\_\_\_

Har du kommit till varndringen ensam eller i sällskap. Om så, med vem eller vilka?\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tack för att du ville delta i denna undersökning. Om du vill utveckla och skriva mer om din syn på pilgrimsvandring i Sverige och dina erfarenheter, så använd gärna baksidan av detta blad eller lösa blad.

Hinner du inte med att fylla i enkäten innan du åker, vänligen skicka med posten till

Cecil Berit Marshall  
277 Moore Street  
Princeton, NJ 08540 USA

Vill du veta mer om min forskning eller resultatet av denna undersökning välkommen att kontakta Cecil Berit Marshall, [cmarshal@drew.edu](mailto:cmarshal@drew.edu), 001 609 924 7891, eller Dr. Laurel Kearns av Drew University, [lkearns@drew.edu](mailto:lkearns@drew.edu), eller Dr. William Rogers av Drew University, [wrogers@drew.edu](mailto:wrogers@drew.edu).

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