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Race and Religion

*The Construction of Race in a Pro-Nazi Christian Association
in Interwar Sweden*

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to scrutinize how *Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund* (Swedish Association of Religious Reform), a pro-Nazi Christian association in interwar Sweden, constructed the concept of race during the years 1929–1940. Using hermeneutic content analysis and a theoretical approach based on “biopolitics” and “political theology,” I examine the construction during three identified periods: 1929–1933, 1934–1937, 1938–1940. Liberal theological in orientation, the association applied a historical-critical exegesis based on late-nineteenth century German *Kulturprotestantismus*, seeing culture and religion as inseparable components. Also stressing the need for a “religious rebirth” of the Swedish nation, the association pursued a regenerative return to the religious-ethical characteristics of the country’s alleged heroic Germanic past. First using cultural and biological arguments separately in the construction of race, the association would due to its emerging pro-Nazi orientation become influenced by Nazi German theologians, hence incorporating elements of *völkisch* ideology.

Keywords: Sweden; interwar period; pro-Nazism; race; Christianity; liberal theology; *völkisch* ideology; *Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund*.

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Uppsala, morning of New Year's Eve, 2018

Gustaf Forsell

INTRODUCTION

On 12 May 1929, clerics, theologians, and laity met at the Church of St Claire, located in central Stockholm. The purpose of the meeting was to establish an association based on an undogmatic exegesis whose primary characteristic is a historical-critical approach to the Bible where reason is superior to revelation, herein defined as liberal theology. The association was labelled *Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund* (the Swedish Association of Religious Reform; SRR). Its acts stated that the association would strive to gather Swedish men and women, correlate to Swedish culture, and work in faith of the future and interest of the Swedish people.¹ Partly inspired by theologians in Nazi Germany, SRR integrated notions of national and racial rebirth into its theology and is by that a case of what herein is categorized as a pro-Nazi Christian association.²

SRR was established during a time in European history recognized as the emergence of fascism (herein used as a generic concept whereby national socialism is considered a fascist tradition, see my discussion in the section on terminology) and the socio-scientific peak of race biology. Neither of these existed everywhere across Europe, but all were present in interwar Sweden. The first national socialist party was founded in 1924; two years earlier, on New Year's Day, the Swedish State Institute of Race Biology opened its gates in the city of Uppsala.³ The institute was the first of its kind in the world and its opening was in line with the contemporary Swedish societal mindset, shown by the fact that the Swedish coalition government supported its inauguration – from Left to Right.⁴ The connection between fascism and race biology is well-known,⁵ yet it is uncertain to what extent this connection was integrated into the religious landscape. Given that interwar Sweden was more reliant on the Church of Sweden and Christian faith than the present twenty-first century, a scrutiny of how the concept of race can be constructed through pro-Nazi theology may reveal how a religious belief system related to fascist ideology in the light of interwar societal perceptions.

¹ Emanuel Linderholm, "Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds tillkomst, stadgar och styrelse," *Religion och kultur* 1 (1930): 6–8.

² Lars Gunnarsson, "Kyrkan, nazismen och demokratin: åsiktsbildning kring svensk kyrklighet 1919–1945" (Doctoral Dissertation, Stockholm University, 1995), 56–58, 125–128.

³ Heléne Lööv, *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979: pionjärerna, partierna, propaganda*, new ed. (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2016), 13; Gunnar Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning: en historik över Rasbiologiska institutet* (Lund: Mediatryck, 2002), 11.

⁴ Gunnar Broberg & Mattias Tydén, *Oönskade i folkhemmet: rashygien och sterilisering i Sverige* (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2005), 38.

⁵ E.g., Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 315–318; Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to analyze how the concept of *race* was constructed within the Swedish Association of Religious Reform from 1929 until 1940. With this aim, I hope to contribute to (1) the field of research of how race can be constructed through religion, and (2) a discussion of the linkage between race, religion, and pro-Nazi sentiments.

The central question of this study is:

- *How did the Swedish Association of Religious Reform construct the concept of race?*

Taking this central question as my point of departure, I have broken it down into three subsidiary questions. These will be used to highlight the aim of this study. The subsidiary questions are:

- In what way did the association's liberal theological position affect its construction of race?
- How did the association's connection between race and liberal theology construct a conceptualization of the Swedish people?
- Did the association's construction of race change over time, and if so – how?

Significance, Demarcation, and Disposition

Fascism never obtained political hegemony in Sweden and remained a politically marginalized ideology throughout the interwar period. Still, fascism is a vital part of Sweden's contemporary history. To understand its influence in Sweden, then, one must move beyond the political sphere and enter adjacent social landscapes. One way is to analyze its relationship with religion.

SRR's construction of race and how it corresponded to religion during the interwar period was ambiguous. On the one hand, the association argued that Christianity should return to the "original gospel" (*urevangeliet*), the words of Jesus; on the other hand, that the original gospel was held to reflect Germanic tenets. Whereas they emphasized the peaceful teachings of Jesus, heroic characteristics of Vikings and warrior monarchs allegedly elevated by Christianity were uplifted. Meanwhile believing that Germanic characteristics were rooted in a pre-Christian faith, the association considered Christianity to be the only true religion. Scarcely applying race in terms of biology to religion, the association claimed that the Nordics' racial characteristics were divinely sanctioned. Answering these ambiguities or, at least, presenting suggestions on how to conceive them may give some clues to future research on how to approach the relationship between race and pro-Nazi theology.

The demarcation is between 1929, the year of SRR's foundation, and 1940. Two exceptions in the material bring us to 1941 and 1943.⁶ I have decided to follow the evolution of SRR's construction of race until 1940 – which does not belong to the interwar period, given that the outbreak of the Second World War was in 1939 – because I want to see if the construction changed during the early years of the war, when the nature and military capacity of Nazi Germany were revealed, or if it maintained a similar position.

The disposition of this thesis is as follows. In Chapter 2, the design of the study is discussed. I start with a presentation of the material, method, and theoretical starting points, followed by a few words on terminology. The terminology section clarifies how I conceive core

⁶ See my discussion in the section "Material" in Chapter 2.

concepts like race, fascism, ultra-nationalism, radical conservatism, and pro-Nazism. Then, I turn to previous research in relevant fields. The final section of the chapter presents a background to SRR and some of its core members as an introduction to Chapter 3, where I scrutinize the material chronologically, broken down into three periods. The first period marks the years 1929–1933, from the founding of SRR until the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) seized power. The second deals with the years 1934–1937, from the emergence of the German “church struggle” (*Kirchenkampf*) until the passing of Emanuel Linderholm (1872–1937), initiator and chairman of SRR, and professor of church history at Uppsala University. The third examines the years 1938–1940, that is, whether SRR’s construction of race changed after the passing of Linderholm – resulting in that theologian Herman Neander (1885–1953) became chairman and theologian Gustaf Brandt (1883–1972) editor of SRR’s organ, the quarterly *Religion och kultur* (Religion and Culture) – and in the light of the outbreak of the Second World War. The thesis ends with Chapter 4, which contains the final conclusions.

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RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I discuss the design of the study. I start by introducing the material. Then, I explain my method and the theoretical starting points of the study, thus constructing a framework and design for the subsequent analysis. After the design has been construed, I clarify some decisions regarding terminology. This section is followed by key research on interwar and wartime fascism and pro-Nazi theology as well as its relation to race. I end this chapter with a brief background of SRR and some of its principal figures.

Material

The material mostly consists of articles published in *Religion och kultur* during the years 1930 and 1940. Since I intend to conduct an in-depth study of SRR's construction of race, every issue of this period (a total of almost 2 900 pages) has been surveyed. Articles addressing the concept of race have subsequently been selected for a thorough analysis.

In general, an issue of *Religion och kultur* entails about sixty to seventy pages, and the topics are mostly contiguous to SRR's liberal theology, e.g. how Christians should relate themselves to Jesus, the role and significance of theology in Swedish society, and the meaning of being a socially oriented Christian. Contextually rooted topics are also mentioned, such as race biology and cultural issues. Many articles from the first two periods (1929–1937) which are within the frames of this thesis are authored by chairman Emanuel Linderholm. That I often will cite Linderholm is thus not a case of selective reading on my part but reflects the fact that he wrote a clear majority of the articles in *Religion och kultur* during its first years. Every issue ends with a few pages about prayers, poems, and book reviews. Since the aim of this thesis is to examine SRR's construction of race, I am apt to focus on articles dealing with this issue more closely, be it in terms of biology or culture. Regarding *Religion och kultur*, I have at one point decided to include an article from 1941. The author is vicar Douglas Edenholt (1898–1971), a core member of SRR who pursued a doctorate at the faculty of theology at the University of Jena, Germany, in the early 1940s with Wolf Meyer-Erlach (1891–1982), professor of practical theology at the faculty, as supervisor.⁷ Edenholt's article, whose title is "Germanskt och kristet," has been selected because it deals with the imagined racial nature of Jesus and the correlation between a Nordic-Germanic heritage and Christian theology. For the same reason, I have also included Edenholt's dissertation itself, published in 1943. In it, he elaborates on the concept of "racial soul" (*Rassenseele*) in *völkisch* oriented manners to show that Christianity is the most suitable religion for people being part of the Nordic-Germanic race.

⁷ Historian of religions Susannah Heschel labels the faculty "a self-proclaimed bastion of National Socialism" during the NSDAP regime. Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 201.

Edenholm's dissertation was published quite late. It may thus be questioned why it is included in this thesis, considering the demarcation. In 1941, Edenholm held a lecture at a theological conference in Weißenfels, Germany, dealing with his dissertation topic. It was published two years later as part of an anthology, edited by distinguished Nazi theologian Walter Grundmann (1906–1976), professor of new testament at the University of Jena, from whom Edenholm received additional guidance when writing his dissertation.⁸ Given that the content is similar, if not identical, I have decided to analyze Edenholm's dissertation instead since I will be able to follow his arguments at length. Edenholm himself has been chosen due to his importance to SRR. He was a member of the association from its very beginning, subsequently becoming its vice chairman. Since he pursued his doctorate at Jena, he is a good example of how the fascist doctrine of Nazi Germany also reached Sweden theologically.

On an annual basis, one issue of *Religion och kultur* functions as a summary of its recent conference. An exception is the summary of its first conference, taking place in Stockholm in late-September 1931. This conference was published in 1932 as an anthology with Emanuel Linderholm as editor. The conferences in general, the first in particular, are of historical interest because they complement articles in *Religion och kultur*. Analyzing the conferences do not only enable me to get a picture of how *individual members* understood and elaborated with the concept of race – I can also delve into how the topic was discussed within SRR itself. Linderholm's private collection, accessible at Uppsala University Library, has been used to collect the association's membership numbers and extend the material to not only *Religion och kultur*.

Another core member of SRR is pastor Nils Hannerz (1866–1951). His texts, in *Religion och kultur* or elsewhere, treat what he labels “Evangelic Nordic Faith.” Hannerz' thesis is that Christianity reflects Germanic tenets. He argues that such a faith is “true” Christianity since it unveils its inner essence. Hannerz only wrote one article in *Religion och kultur* during the demarcated period. To penetrate his belief system, I have analyzed two pamphlets – published in 1934 and 1936 – written within the frames of the ultra-nationalist *Samfundet Manhem* (Manhem Society), of which he was co-founder. I have decided to include Hannerz' pamphlets since their content is in consonance with his article in *Religion och kultur* which in turn enables me to dig deeper into his theology.

I have included texts by Edenholm and Hannerz, written outside of SRR forums, because they complement the rest of the material. Their views may not be representative of the SRR as a whole, yet they might contribute to a more comprehensive picture on how SRR members differed from each other and, hopefully, function as a spectrum of how the concept of race was constructed within the association.

The empirical material is written in Swedish and German, translated by me into English. Naturally, I have during the translation process tried to make the quotations as accurate as possible. Even though it is possible to mediate the spirit of the content, I believe that translations in a strict literal sense are not possible but mere interpretations. Therefore, the original quotations are found in the footnotes. Biblical passages in English are from *King James' Bible*.

⁸ See Douglas Edenholm, “Das germanische Erbe in der schwedischen Frömmigkeit,” in *Die völkische Gestalt des Glaubens*, eds. Walter Grundmann, Hugo Odeberg & Wolf Meyer-Erlach (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1943), 221–237.

Method

The chosen method is hermeneutic content analysis, a combination of content analysis on the one hand and hermeneutics on the other. I have turned to content analysis because it endows structure in terms of making me stay close to the material, meaning that I can systematically manage and summarize large quantities of relatively unstructured information through their historical and cultural settings.⁹ After reading the texts (a total of about 3 500 pages), I have situated them in their historical contexts, predominately in the light of the NSDAP's seizure of power in 1933, the emergence of the German *Kirchenkampf* the same year, and the death of Emanuel Linderholm in 1937. With these contextual aspects in mind, I have divided the material into three chronological periods (1929–1933; 1934–1937; 1938–1940) for reasons proposed in the section of “Significance, Demarcation, and Disposition.” My next step in the process has been to “unitize” patterns of how SRR members constructed the concept of race within and between each period.¹⁰ A prerequisite to do so is not only to examine the “manifest,” or surface, content of the texts but also their “latent content.”¹¹ The texts' latent content is important in order to identify aspects which at the time may have been taken for granted. To grasp these “taken for granted”-aspects it is not only central for me to stay close to the *texts* but also to their *context*,¹² for which I use relevant secondary literature. I place the texts in a broader historical and cultural context because it endows insight into *how* and *why* the association members wrote what they did about things connoted to the concept of race. By so doing, content analysis allows me to see how contextual scenarios have part in the development of the content of the texts.

A challenge with content analysis is that it depends on mere interpretations. In a way, therefore, content analysis also is a sort of hermeneutics – hermeneutics herein meaning “both a method and a philosophy of interpretation.”¹³ The reason why I have added the method of hermeneutics as a prefix to content analysis is because my analysis to large extent is part of what is called the “hermeneutic circle.” According to one version (of many) of the hermeneutic circle, the reader moves back and forth between the text and its context.¹⁴ In that way, it consists of two moments: understanding and explanation. During the research process, I have obtained an understanding of the material which becomes an explanation of it resulting in increased understanding in a never-ending interpretive circle.¹⁵ Thus, a hermeneutic content analysis is of high significance for this thesis as it enables me to 1) systematically manage and summarize large quantities of relatively unstructured information through their context, 2) examine the manifest and latent contents of the texts, and 3) unitize patterns of how the concept of race was construed within and between each identified period, which are all part of a 4) hermeneutic circle.

⁹ Chad Nelson & Robert H. Woods Jr., “Content Analysis,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 111.

¹⁰ Nelson & Woods Jr., “Content Analysis,” 113.

¹¹ Nelson & Woods Jr., “Content Analysis,” 116.

¹² Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, “Hermeneutics,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 276.

¹³ Gilhus, “Hermeneutics,” 276.

¹⁴ Gilhus, “Hermeneutics,” 276.

¹⁵ Björn Vikström, *Den skapande läsaren: hermeneutik och tolkningskompetens* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005), 26–28.

Theoretical Starting Points

Historians Marius Turda and Maria Sophia Quine argue that a prerequisite for interwar agents to engage in discussions about nation and race was “to focus on physical descriptions, and consequently on the nation as a physical entity – as an object – existing in and through its exchanges with other nations and races.”¹⁶ If the nation is considered to be *organic*, an entity with its own life, an inevitable possibility is that the nation can also die. When SRR members talk about degeneracy, then, it can mean three different things: (1) the ongoing expiry of the race; (2) the ongoing expiry of the nation; (3) the ongoing expiry of both. The most suitable way to approach this “discourse of expiry,” I would argue, is through *biopolitics*. Michel Foucault (1926–1984) examined the biopolitical paradigm as an extension of the western modernization process, the democratic revolution, and the emergence of welfare states in several studies.¹⁷ Biopolitics is difficult to summarize into a one-line definition. Foucault himself described “bio-power” as a collection of mechanisms through which the fundamental biological characteristics of mankind enter politics, political strategies, or overarching power strategies internally.¹⁸ In other words, to paraphrase historian of religions Mattias Gardell, the biopolitical shift turned life into an object of politics, and the legitimacy of the modern state came to be formulated in terms of its ability to produce, support, and administer biological life, from the cot to the grave.¹⁹ Looking at SRR’s construction of race biopolitically enables me to distinguish their discussions as an existential administration – a pursuit to “heal” the race and/or the organic nation by attempting to make a religious-cultural synthesis the spine of society.

Biopolitics is of high significance in its capacity to explain the practical repercussions of what the agents believe are the outcome of national and/or racial degeneration. Nonetheless, it is insufficient by its inability to explain how SRR members combined a belief in a divine subject with an almost ontological perception of the nation as an organic entity. In biopolitics, it is politics alone that produces, supports, and administers biological life, leaving no room for theology. To solve this lack, biopolitics will be complemented with the concept of *political theology*, launched by German political theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) in a book with the same name.²⁰ According to him, “it is precisely the organic doctrine of the state that is theology.”²¹ Saying that the conception of God in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries adhered to the idea of “transcendence vis-à-vis the world,” Schmitt suggests that all the identities

¹⁶ Marius Turda & Maria Sophia Quine, *Historicizing Race* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 59.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002); Michel Foucault, *Övervakning och straff: fängelsets födelse*, trans. C. G. Bjurström (Lund: Arkiv, 2003); Michel Foucault, *Säkerhet, territorium, befolkning: Collège de France 1977–1978*, trans. Kim West (Hägersten: Tankekraft, 2010); Michel Foucault, *Biopolitikens födelse: Collège de France 1978–1979*, trans. Gunnar Holmbäck & Sven-Olov Wallenstein (Hägersten: Tankekraft, 2013).

¹⁸ Foucault, *Säkerhet, territorium, befolkning*, 23.

¹⁹ Mattias Gardell, “Folkhemsislamism,” in *Islam och politik*, eds. Göran Larsson & Susanne Olsson (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2011), 179.

²⁰ It should be noted that Schmitt joined the NSDAP in May 1933, became the president of the National Socialist Jurists Association in November of that year, and published several works that were supportive of the Nazi Party. Nonetheless, his ideas (especially those dealing with theories of sovereignty) have been influential to the disciplines of political science and legal history throughout the twentieth century. Political scientist Tracy B. Strong notes that Schmitt “appears to us as the author of some of the most searching works of political theory in the last century, books whose appeal has over time covered the political spectrum from Left to Right.” Tracy B. Strong, “Foreword,” in Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), xi.

²¹ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 40.

that recur in the political ideas and in the state doctrines of the nineteenth century were governed by conceptions of “immanence,” from the democratic thesis of the identity of the ruler and the ruled to the organic theory of the state and sovereignty.²² Schmitt argues that the only way for the concept of God to survive into the twentieth century (*Politische Theologie* was originally published in 1922) is in terms of an immanence philosophy which “draws God into the world.”²³ This may contribute to how to theoretically comprehend SRR members’ construction of race and how it corresponds to the notion of the nation as an organic entity: the former transcendent God has become partly immanent, living within and through nations and human races. By saving the most superior of these entities, God himself will be rescued. If it fails, he will die with them.

A Few Words on Terminology

The understanding of race in interwar Sweden is linked with the social history of Sweden, so the terminology used herein might need some clarification. I understand *race* “as a group of people who share common descent and genealogy and whose biological and[/or] social realities have been shaped by culture and[/or] environment.”²⁴ Historian of ideas Johan Sundeen suggests that culture can be characterized as a “totality concept” (*totalitetsbegrepp*) – including components such as education, political organization, science, art, and technology, whereby the concept is given a meaning close to the term “society.”²⁵ Such an understanding of culture helps us distinguish that race provides man with his inner essence, shaped by biological and/or cultural determinants. However, as Gardell observes, “To a racist, the importance of race goes beyond race as a social fact or construct generated by an essentialist reading of racial classification – for a racist, race determines how people *are*.”²⁶ This does not necessarily imply a racial hierarchy in terms of “superior” or “inferior,” although this has often been the case. Race is a vital part of the holistic worldview(s) of fascists, national socialists, and radical conservatists, yet not everyone pursuing a national and/or racial rebirth arrives at the same conclusion when reflecting on the social, political, and cultural implications it has on society. But since SRR members had at least one thing in common, a belief in God, *religion* (herein used in a strict Christian sense) pervaded their construction of race. In that way, racial categories are divinely sanctioned, herein understood as a Nazi-inspired “form of *incarnational theology*, centrally concerned with moral and spiritual issues, but insisting that the spiritual is incarnate in the physical.”²⁷ Incarnational theology traditionally means the theological affirmation of Jesus as the human expression of the second person of the Trinity. Its Nazi-inspired form, on the other hand, means that preservation of the purity of the different races is respecting divine will. Effectively, it marks a distinction between the biological or physical nature of human bodies and the levels of alleged degeneracy *inherent* in those bodies. It focuses onto the latter whereby the distinction between different races is not physical appearances, but spiritual and moral qualities incarnate in the physical.

²² Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 49–50.

²³ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 50.

²⁴ Turda & Quine, *Historicizing Race*, 1.

²⁵ Johan Sundeen, “Andelivets agitator: J A Eklund, kristendomen och kulturen” (Doctoral Dissertation, Lund University, 2008), 21.

²⁶ Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 29. Italics in original.

²⁷ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 286. Emphasis added.

Nazi-inspired Christianity must be understood through *völkisch* ideology. Emerging in late nineteenth-century Europe, *völkisch* ideology combined contemporary ideas of nationalism, anti-liberalism, cultural pessimism, and racism into a coherent ideological system. Historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke has, following historian George L. Mosse, commented on the spiritual connotations of the German word *Volk* (“people”) as the core of the ideology. *Volk* denotes “the national collectivity inspired by a common creative energy, feelings and a sense of individuality. These metaphysical qualities were supposed to define the [imagined] unique cultural essence of the German people.” Further, Goodrick-Clarke states that the ideological preoccupation with the *Volk* arose for two reasons: “firstly, this cultural orientation was the result of the delayed political unification of Germany; secondly, it was closely related to a widespread romantic reaction to modernity.”²⁸ In general, components of the SRR’s pro-Nazi theology, incorporating elements of *völkisch* ideology and divergent interpretations on incarnational theology, is shown in how its members simultaneously could proclaim the *racial* superiority of Aryan²⁹ man and the *theological* inferiority of Roman-Catholicism.

As for the epithet “fascism,” I use it as a generic concept. Fascism scholar Roger Griffin proposes a generic definition of fascism, considering it “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.”³⁰ This ideal-type definition of fascism is based on the consideration that its ideological “minimum” is a *palingenetic ultra-nationalism*, ultra-nationalism herein defined as a form of nationalism which goes “beyond” (from the Latin *ultra*) and hence reject anything compatible with liberal institutions and a democratic civic order.³¹ The fascist minimum casts light on the linkage between “radical conservatism,” “national socialism,” and “pro-Nazism,” for all the minimum is a central theme. As for radical conservatism, its name indicates that it basically is about conservatism being radicalized, meaning conservatives finding it necessary to use radical means to safeguard conservative values like tradition, religion, and nation.³² It differs from fascism in its rejection of a New Order, or “alternative modernity.”³³ As for national socialism, there need be no contradiction between it as the most extreme manifestation of fascism and recognition of its “own unique characteristics within this category, which can only properly be comprehended within the framework of German national development.”³⁴ Thus, to treat national socialism “as a form of fascism is not to deny its uniqueness, but to claim that some of its causal factors and empirical aspects are thrown into relief if it is seen as a permutation of a generic phenomenon called ‘fascism’.”³⁵ In this respect, the national socialism of the Hitler regime, whose main distinctiveness in relation to other fascisms was its atrocious racism, is understood herein as a unique element within the framework of generic fascism. As for “pro-Nazi” (sometimes used interchangeably with “Nazi-influenced”), finally, I mean persons, groups, and organs that were not self-proclaimed national socialist but expressed sympathies

²⁸ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 2–3.

²⁹ The epithet “Aryan” is herein used synonymously to Germanic and Nordic.

³⁰ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 26; cf. the substantiated Griffin-criticism in Michael Mann, *Fascists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12–13.

³¹ Griffin, *Nature of Fascism*, 37.

³² Göran Dahl, *Radical Conservatism and the Future of Politics* (London: SAGE, 1999), 2.

³³ Dahl, *Radical Conservatism*, 3. On fascism’s alternative modernity, see Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*.

³⁴ Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), 37.

³⁵ Roger Griffin, “Part II. Fascism in Germany: Introduction,” in *Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 93.

for the national socialist ideology, Nazi Germany, and/or the Nazi “New Order.”³⁶ As the pal-ingenic ultra-nationalism was shared by all three, the SRR’s radical conservative members also could become pro-Nazis. For an overarching categorization of the association, I consider it to be a pro-Nazi theological association. I discuss this further in the section “Background.”

Previous Research

Swedish interwar and wartime fascism has been extensively mapped the last decades, especially in the last years. Seminal studies by historians Victor Lundberg and Heléne Löw and historian of ideas Lena Berggren show that fascism was an influential phenomenon in Sweden’s social domains.³⁷ These studies have been complemented with inquiries of how Swedish interwar and wartime fascism and pro-Nazism organized, recruited, proliferated, and vanished (ostensibly and literally) on a local level.³⁸

Less has been written about Swedish pro-Nazi theology. The lack of research can be compared to international studies about the phenomenon in Germany and Italy, which has produced many studies during the last decades. So many, in fact, that it would be impossible to list them all.³⁹ The growing field of what elsewhere has been labelled “clerical fascism” has been added with historian Jan Bank and church historian Lieve Gevers’ Europe-wide summary of churches and religion in the Second World War.⁴⁰ Bank & Gevers’ contribute is valuable in terms of scope but lacks due to the absence of Scandinavian actors. An important exception from this historiography is the anthology *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe* that gives an overview of how the phenomenon was expressed in European Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox contexts.⁴¹ Thus far, it is only here that Swedish pro-Nazi theology is mentioned in international research. The anthology’s Swedish contribution is authored by Berggren. She focuses on *Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund, Kyrkliga Folkpartiet* (Clerical People’s Party; KFP),

³⁶ Bengt Åhsberg, “Pronazismen i Sverige under 1930-talet: ideologiska och mentalitetsmässiga grunder,” *Scandia* 65 (1999): 225–226; cf. Sverker Oredsson, *Lunds universitet under andra världskriget: motsättningar, debatter och hjälpinsatser* (Lund: Lunds universitetshistoriska sällskap, 1996), 9–10.

³⁷ Victor Lundberg, *En idé större än döden: en fascistisk arbetarrörelse i Sverige, 1933–1945* (Möklinta: Gidlunds, 2014); Löw, *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979*; Lena Berggren, *Blodets renhet: en historisk studie av svensk antisemitism* (Malmö: Arx, 2014).

³⁸ See Oredsson, *Lunds universitet under andra världskriget*; Magnus Alkarp, *Fyra dagar i april: påskkravallerna i Uppsala 1943* (Lund: Historiska media, 2013); Johan Perwe, *Mörkläggning: nazismen och motståndet i Norrköping 1933–1945* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2016).

³⁹ On research about the relationship between Italian Fascism and the clergy, a landmark was made by historian John Pollard in his *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929–32* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Pollard’s work has most recently been complemented with historian Jorge Dagnino’s excellent study of the university sector of *Azione Cattolica* in his *Faith and Fascism: Catholic Intellectuals in Italy, 1925–43* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). On Germany, see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*; Christoph Strohm, *Die Kirchen im dritten Reich* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2017); Dirk Schuster, *Die Lehre vom “arischen” Christentum: das wissenschaftliche Selbstverständnis im Eisenacher “Entjudungsinstitut”* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

⁴⁰ Jan Bank & Lieve Gevers, *Churches and Religion in the Second World War*, trans. Brian Doyle (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

⁴¹ Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda & Tudor Georgescu, eds., *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

Samfundet Manhem, and pastor Nils Hannerz in order to survey the Swedish pro-Nazi theological landscape.⁴² Despite unconvincing elaborations about the term “clerical fascism” and exaggerated interpretations of SRR, Berggren’s analysis is well-argued but more a summary of the current state of the research field in Sweden than an actual result of studies conducted in the archive. For example, no references are made to the acts of SRR or KFP. Thus, her study ought to be complemented with case studies. Currently, two of that kind have been made. The first has been conducted by Lööv in her examination of KFP.⁴³ The second is my own study about SRR’s perception of the alleged decline of Swedish culture.⁴⁴ I argue that the association’s position can be explained by its views on exegesis, race, and Jews. These were in turn driven by what I call a “radical liberal theological project,” characterized as a pursuit for an original and untainted Christianity indicating a religious rebirth of Swedish culture. Even though my article partly deals with how SRR constructed the concept of race, it is largely based on the material I investigated in my bachelor thesis, meaning that I only analyze one issue of *Religion och kultur* every five years during the years 1930–1950.⁴⁵ In this thesis, I intend to conduct a more thorough investigation since I will analyze every issue during a more demarcated period.

Apart from these contributions, Swedish pro-Nazi theology has either been treated tendentiously,⁴⁶ briefly,⁴⁷ or passingly.⁴⁸ Two exceptions are the studies by theologian Anders Gerdmar and historian Lars Gunnarsson. Gerdmar examines German-Swedish theological and academical cooperation from a transnational point of view.⁴⁹ Gunnarsson has in his seminal doctoral dissertation from 1995, which to this day must be considered a landmark in the field, studied the relationship between “Church, Nazism, and Democracy” during the years 1933 and 1945 – with an important overview of the Swedish pro-Nazi theological landscape as a result.⁵⁰

Research about the relationship between interwar and wartime pro-Nazi theology and race is scarce. When mentioned, it is often part of a larger and more comprehensive study, summarized in a few pages.⁵¹ An exception is historian Terje Emberland’s brilliant study about neo-Paganism (*nyhedenskap*) and national socialism in Norway 1933–1945.⁵² Emberland concludes that neo-Paganism was a faith in consonance with the future. It was a “reality religion” (*virkelighetsreligion*), aimed to achieve a new order where the normlessness, uprooting, and chaos of modern society would be overcome, where science, politics, and religion would enter

⁴² Lena Berggren, “Completing the Lutheran Reformation: Ultra-nationalism, Christianity and the Possibility of ‘Clerical Fascism’ in Interwar Sweden,” in *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, eds. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda & Tudor Georgescu (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 91–102.

⁴³ Heléne Lööv, “The Social Structure of a Small Right-Wing Religious Party in Western Sweden: Kyrkliga Folkpartiet in the 1930’s,” in *Classes, Strata and Elites: Essays on Social Stratification in Nordic and Third World History*, eds. Magnus Mörner & Thommy Svensson (Gothenburg: Department of History of Gothenburg University, 1988), 51–68.

⁴⁴ Gustaf Forsell, “‘I tro på släktets framtid’: klerikal fascism, Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund och den svenska kulturens förfall,” *CHAOS* (forthcoming).

⁴⁵ See Gustaf Forsell, “Klerikal fascism: en deskriptiv innehållsanalys av Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund, 1929–1950” (Bachelor Thesis, Uppsala University, 2017).

⁴⁶ Martin Lind, “Kristendom och nazism: frågan om kristendom och nazism belyst av olika ställningstaganden i Tyskland och Sverige 1933–1945” (Doctoral Dissertation, Lund University, 1975); Sverker Oredsson, “Svenska teologer under nazitiden,” *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 73 (1997): 167–178.

⁴⁷ Anders Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm som kyrkohistoriker* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1987), 168–174.

⁴⁸ Åhsberg, “Pronazismen i Sverige,” 257–259; Lööv, *Nazismen 1924–1979*, 359–362.

⁴⁹ Anders Gerdmar, “Germanentum als Überideologie: Deutsch-schwedischer theologenaustausch unter dem Hakenkreuz,” in *Die völkische-religiöse Bewegung im Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Uwe Puschner & Clemens Vollnhals (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 265–284.

⁵⁰ Gunnarsson, “Kyrkan, nazismen och demokratin.”

⁵¹ E.g., Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 18–23; Dagnino, *Faith and Fascism*, 74–75.

⁵² Terje Emberland, *Religion og rase: nyhedenskap og nazisme i Norge 1933–1945* (Oslo: Humanist, 2003).

a higher unity, and where the Nordic-Germanic man would find safety, belonging, and purpose within his religion and race.⁵³ Emberland's study aside, this is the first work – in Swedish research at least – to conduct an in-depth study of how a pro-Nazi Christian association constructed the concept of race in interwar Sweden.

Background

Before entering the analysis, it might be useful to provide a brief overview of SRR and some of its principal figures. SRR was founded in May 1929 and was dedicated, as has been recalled, to gather Swedish men and women, correlate to Swedish culture, and work in faith of the future and interest of the Swedish people.⁵⁴ SRR was part of the Church of Sweden, Lutheran in confession, and adhered to the position regarding the “folk church” (*folkkyrka*) as national institution – a common stance in each of the Scandinavian states. Ethnic in orientation, Scandinavian folk churches linked population and Church together. They did not apply the vigorous racism like the Nazi-styled *Volkskirche*. Rather, the link made the folk church a state-church in terms of being the result of an evolved bond of dependence between the state, the citizens, and the (Lutheran) Church.⁵⁵ What singled out SRR from the moderate view of the folk church was its self-proclaimed revivalist mission and proclamation of a radical revivification of the Church. This was shown in the ambition to initiate a “new Reformation,” to complete what Martin Luther had begun through a new awakening, a new evangelical faith, and a new evangelical ethics.⁵⁶ Masculinizing Jesus that elevated his humanity and ethical-religious doctrine, a common exegetical practice in early twentieth-century Swedish theology,⁵⁷ and rejecting the Trinity were part of this ambition.⁵⁸ SRR rejected the Trinity on the grounds that it was considered to be an antiquated remnant of “Hellenistic” Roman-Catholicism, a deliberate anti-Catholic stance elsewhere described as a “cohesive” element within Swedish Protestantism up to the 1960s.⁵⁹ From the association's anti-Catholicism and pursuit for a new Reformation, interest in Nordic-Germanic ancestry arose. This was crucial in the association's ambition to achieve a religious rebirth. These instances should not, however, immediately be interpreted as evidence for SRR

⁵³ Emberland, *Religion og rase*, 406.

⁵⁴ Linderholm, “Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund,” 6–8. For an English version of the acts, see Emanuel Linderholm, “The Religious Reform Society of Sweden,” *Religion och kultur* 1 (1930): 67–69.

⁵⁵ Bank & Gievers, *Churches and Religion in the Second World War*, 4–5.

⁵⁶ Emanuel Linderholm, “Inledningsföredrag. Reformförbundets syfte och Kongressens program,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 18; Torsten Lundberg, “Vad skall kyrkan göra?” *Religion och kultur* 6 (1935): 229.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Sundeen, “Andelivets agitator.” A representative example is the priest meeting in the city of Skara 1915 when bishop Hjalmar Danell (1860–1938) held a lecture on the need for more masculinity in Christianity, especially in the realm of patriotism, stressing a stronger connection between masculine Christianity and patriotism: “Mera manlig kristendom behöfva vi äfven på *fosterlandskärlekens* område, starkare förbindelse mellan manlig kristendom och fosterlandskärlek, ja, ett uppväckande af den domnade fosterlandskärleken medelst tillvaron af mera manlig kristendom.” Hjalmar Danell, “H. H. Biskopens hälsningsord och föredrag,” in *Prästmötet i Skara 1915* (Skara: Västergötlands Boktryckeri-Aktiebolags Tryckeri, 1916), 29.

⁵⁸ See Emanuel Linderholm, “Det religiösa tidsläget,” *Religion och kultur* 1 (1930): 13–14; Christian Duhne, “Jesusbildens förnyelse,” *Religion och kultur* 3 (1932): 34. An informative first-hand summary of SRR's theological approach and rejection of the Trinity is Christian Duhne, “Några synpunkter på den kristna gudsuppenbarelse,” *Religion och kultur* 5 (1934): 199–210.

⁵⁹ Yvonne Maria Werner, “Den katolska faran’: antikatholicismen och den svenska nationella identiteten i ett nordiskt perspektiv,” *Scandia* 81 (2015): 41.

applying a nazified exegesis, although their historical and socio-theological position could (and for some of its members, would) be grafted onto a nazified Christian theology.⁶⁰

The liberal theology of SRR had a distinguished cultural outlook. This was the result of a pan-European, mostly German, theological interest in Christianity and culture during the late-nineteenth century – an aspect that must be understood through the process of modernity. Accelerating scientific, technological, social, and cultural transitions drastically changed the socio-cultural position of Christianity and the Church, but also how it was regarded by the laity. As the Church had to show its modern relevance and adaptability to social transformations, voices were raised to reformulate the Christian message and the Church.⁶¹ The German Protestant position during these turns of events, which would have major influence on SRR's theology, converged religion and culture, normally called *Kulturprotestantismus*. The most important period of *Kulturprotestantismus* was during the period 1870–1914 and its ideas influenced religious-cultural syncretical views presented in the Nordics to great extent.⁶²

Apart from the influences of nineteenth-century *Kulturprotestantismus*, SRR's approach to Scripture and Christ would be partly inspired by *Deutsche Christen* – a pro-Nazi faction within the German Protestant church seeking an Aryanized Christianity – after its establishment in 1932. Some of SRR's core members, such as Douglas Edenhalm and Nils Hannerz, were part of the network of theologian Hugo Odeberg (1898–1973) which maintained contacts with the *Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben* (the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life), founded in 1939 as a thriving achievement of *Deutsche Christen*.⁶³ Chairman Emanuel Linderholm too appears to have supported and been influenced by *Deutsche Christen*. In 1934, during the German church struggle, he published its acts, proclaiming that Sweden had got an “*extremely biased* view of the German church struggle.”⁶⁴ SRR also found commonalities with *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*. Founded in 1933, the movement was neo-Teutonic and attempted to philosophically legitimize and modernize the *völkisch* conception of religion so it would correlate with the new political situation in Germany.⁶⁵ The commonalities are shown by the fact that Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881–1962), founder of the faith association, expected its members to cooperate with Protestants and Catholics.⁶⁶ Nils Hannerz uttered that no religious party or movement in Germany could find a leader more knowledgeable and honorable than Hauer.⁶⁷ Linderholm, while troubled to believe in “the future of this neo-Germanic religion,” hoped that *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* would be a part of a new Reformation.⁶⁸

Three principal figures who deserve certain attention are Emanuel Linderholm, Douglas Edenhalm, and Nils Hannerz. A few words on each one of them may offer further insight into the ideas which pervaded SRR.

⁶⁰ Cf. Berggren, “Completing the Lutheran Reformation,” 97.

⁶¹ Sundeen, “Andelivets agitator,” 16–17.

⁶² Sundeen, “Andelivets agitator,” 17.

⁶³ Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 3.

⁶⁴ Emanuel Linderholm, “Akte till kyrkostriden i Tyskland,” *Religion och kultur* 5 (1934): 186. “[I Sverige har vi fått en] ytterst ensidig syn på den tyska kyrkostriden.”

⁶⁵ Emberland, *Religion og rase*, 36–63.

⁶⁶ Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 14.

⁶⁷ Nils Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord: grundlinjer för evangelisk nordisk tro* (Stockholm: Svea Rike, 1934), 19.

⁶⁸ Emanuel Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris,” *Religion och kultur* 6 (1935): 208–209. “[...] denna nygermanska religions framtid.” See also Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 173–174.

Emanuel Linderholm was born in the parish of Hakarp near Jönköping in 1872, into a family of middle class that was active in the Pentecostal community in the areas of Jönköping. When he was three and a half years old, his mother died which affected him deeply. According to himself, he had been given the intellect of his mother and the disharmonious state of mind of his father.⁶⁹ At the age of 20, Linderholm moved to Uppsala where he received his education at the Church of Sweden-run *Fjellstedtska skolan* with the intention of becoming ordained. He would, however, soon become interested in exegesis from a historical-critical point of view.⁷⁰ Linderholm started an academic path – he was not ordained until 1918 – which subsequently culminated in him becoming professor of church history at Uppsala University in 1919, a position he held until his death in 1937. Developing a historical perspective that was on the one hand “national-universal,” on the other hand “idealistic-critical,”⁷¹ Linderholm concluded that religion and theology cannot be liberal but must be either radical or conservative. This pervaded his attempt to reform the Church, which SRR was an instant product of – Linderholm was both radical and conservative.⁷² These radical and conservative aspects were mostly theological and exegetical components in his approach the Bible. Notwithstanding, they would also be used in his pursuit for national and racial rebirth. From his interest in history Linderholm developed a deep sense of nationalism at an early age – as he said himself, “a strong, albeit dreamy, but seriously intended and fully-aware love for the native soil and a strong patriotic and nationalistic sense of mind.”⁷³ This would later result in collaborations with the fascist *Nysvenska rörelsen* (New-Swedish Movement) and membership in *Samfundet Manhem*. According to Lars Gunnarsson, Per Engdahl (1909–1994), the leader of *Nysvenska rörelsen*, was grateful for Linderholm’s valuable contributions on how the movement should position itself on religious issues.⁷⁴ Linderholm’s later political affiliations and emerging pro-Nazi position indicates a radicalization of his conservatism. Hence, I consider him as radical conservatist.

Douglas Edenhalm was born in Gothenburg in 1898, into a middle-class family.⁷⁵ While still living in his family home, he found interest in theology and biology which together laid the basis for his liberal theology. As for the theological, he read works of Adolf von Harnack, Viktor Rydberg, and Nathan Söderblom. As for the biological, he was interested in the theories of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Ernst Haeckel. After the death of his father in 1915, he felt a calling to become ordained. In 1919, he began studies in theology at Uppsala University where he soon was acquainted with Emanuel Linderholm.⁷⁶ Their approaches to theology corresponded to great extent and they united in Linderholm’s aim for a renewal of Christianity within the frames of SRR.⁷⁷ Apart from Linderholm, he was also influenced by Gillis Petersson Wetter (1887–1926), professor of new testament at Uppsala University, who

⁶⁹ Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 18.

⁷⁰ Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 22.

⁷¹ Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 104–118.

⁷² Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 117.

⁷³ Linderholm in *Dagens Nyheter* 1922 6/2. Cited in Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 21. “[...] en stark, visserligen mycket svärmisk, men allvarligt menad och fullt medveten kärlek till fosterjorden och ett starkt fosterländskt och nationellt sinnelag.”

⁷⁴ Gunnarsson, “Kyrkan, nazismen och demokratin,” 56.

⁷⁵ On biographical notes on Edenhalm, I follow Per Lindh, “Radikal liberalteologi i praktiken: Douglas Edenhalm som teolog och församlingspräst åren 1928–1970” (Master Thesis, Uppsala University, 2015). Even though it should be treated with great caution as a church historical publication – e.g. his suggestion that Edenhalm’s faith was “almost pantheistic” (p 37) is a startling misunderstanding of his theology – it is to my knowledge the only study that deals with him in such detail.

⁷⁶ Lindh, “Radikal liberalteologi,” 15.

⁷⁷ Lindh, “Radikal liberalteologi,” 16–17.

proposed that there was an apparent distinction between the historical Jesus and the later “Hellenistic missionary church.”⁷⁸ Edenhalm would later combine these ideas with new theories emerging in Sweden and Germany which speculated about the racial descent of Jesus and how it connotes to Nordic-Germanic virtues. Edenhalm elaborated extensively on the topic in his 1943 doctoral dissertation *Das germanische Erbe in der schwedischen Frömmigkeit*, to which I will return at the end of Chapter 3. He served as vicar in the parishes of Närtuna and Gottröra, not far from the city of Uppsala, from 1932 until his retirement in 1965. When appointed, he had already taken on an indicative theological position whereby he surely can be placed among the representatives of liberal theology in Sweden.⁷⁹ Not being member of any fascist or national socialist organization to my knowledge, Edenhalm was deliberately pro-Nazi, shown in his Nazi-influenced *völkisch* Christianity formulated during the early 1940s.

Nils Hannerz, born Persson, was born in Långaröd near Malmö in 1866 as the child of yeoman Per Andersson and Elna Persdotter. After studies at the University of Lund, from which he achieved a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in 1889 and degrees in theoretical theology (1891) and practical theology (1893), he studied in Berlin (university unknown) from 1892 until 1893. Knowledge about his whereabouts from 1893 until the early 1930s are limited and hence merely anecdotal. In 1895 he married Agnes Josefina Lundborg. The same year he was ordained in Lund, but he would mostly work as a secondary grammar school teacher – first in the region of Skåne in southern Sweden, then in Stockholm.⁸⁰ In 1909, he gained some recognition in Swedish theological circles due to his statements in the “Devil Feud,” a dispute within the Church of Sweden on how the devil would be conceived, where he blatantly stated that his religious faith does not need a devil.⁸¹ He co-founded *Samfundet Manhem* in 1934 and the pro-German *Riksförbundet Sverige-Tyskland* (National Society Sweden-Germany) in 1937. In 1941 he founded *Samfundet för germansk kulturforskning* (Society for Research of Germanic Culture).⁸² Nazi theologian Walter Grundmann wrote in the preface of the anthology *Die völkische Gestalt des Glaubens* that the publication was the result of a workshop of Hannerz’ Germanic Culture Society and his own *Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Germanentum und Christentum* (German Society of Teutonism and Christianity).⁸³ As for Hannerz’ activities in *Samfundet Manhem*, it was he who together with the chairman of the society, epidemiologist Ernst Bernhard Almquist (1852–1946), set the tone regarding its views on religious issues.⁸⁴ During the 1930s, he also functioned as the society’s “keeper of religion.”⁸⁵ He wrote and spoke extensively on religious topics and it was in these forums his Evangelic Nordic Faith, which will be given certain attention in Chapter 3, was designed. Founder and member of several movements both national socialist and pro-Nazi in orientation, I categorize Nils Hannerz as national socialist.

⁷⁸ Lindh, “Radikal liberalteologi,” 17.

⁷⁹ Lindh, “Radikal liberalteologi,” 53.

⁸⁰ “Nils Hannerz,” in *Vem är det: Svensk biografisk lexikon. 1925*, ed. Göran Lindblad (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1924), 284. Accessed October 18, 2018, <http://runeberg.org/vemardet/1925/0290.html>; Berggren, *Blodets renhet*, 243.

⁸¹ Sven Thidevall, *Kampen om samhällsreligionen: Dagens Nyheters djävulskampanj 1909* (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma, 2016), 104.

⁸² “Nils Hannerz,” in *Vem är det: Svensk biografisk lexikon. 1943*, ed. Unknown (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1942), 320. Accessed October 18, 2018, <http://runeberg.org/vemardet/1943/0320.html>.

⁸³ Walter Grundmann, “Vorwort,” in *Die völkische Gestalt des Glaubens*, eds. Walter Grundmann, Hugo Odeberg & Wolf Meyer-Erlach (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1943), i.

⁸⁴ Almquist’s theological views, very similar to those of Nils Hannerz, are presented in his *Lutherska reformationen kräver fortsättning* (Stockholm: Svea Rike, 1932).

⁸⁵ Berggren, “Completing the Lutheran Reformation,” 98.

To conclude this chapter, it might be useful to provide some basic data regarding SRR. Present throughout Sweden, mainly in the southern and more populated areas of the country, the association was small, male-dominated, and elitist. In 1935, about 240 persons were members.⁸⁶ Two years earlier, about 120 persons were subscribers to *Religion och kultur*.⁸⁷ The few women I have encountered in the material seem to have become members solely due to being someone's wife. Considering the social positions of the association's members (theologians, pastors, doctors, reverends, engineers, professors, etc.), one finds that they exclusively belonged to the upper- and upper-middle-classes. SRR appears to have been influential in the theological and ultra-nationalist landscapes of Sweden. As for theology, a majority of its members were pastors, vicars, or reverends. In addition, Emanuel Linderholm was professor of church history. Douglas Edenhalm states in his dissertation that *Religion och kultur* was the most read theological journal in Swedish public libraries at the time,⁸⁸ although the validity of this statement obviously can be questioned. As for ultra-nationalism, Linderholm and some others were members in various ultra-nationalist movements, such as *Nysvenska rörelsen* and *Samfundet Manhem*.

⁸⁶ Emanuel Linderholms samling (ELS), vol. 146, Jc5, "Förteckning över medlemmar i Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund," Uppsala universitetsbibliotek (UUB).

⁸⁷ ELS, vol. 146, Jc4, "Förteckning över prenumeranter på tidskriften Religion och Kultur," UUB.

⁸⁸ Douglas Edenhalm, "Das germanische Erbe in der schwedischen Frömmigkeit: eine Studie über den Einfluss der nordischen Seele auf das religiöse Leben, Theologie und Kirche in Schweden mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des althergebrachten Brauchtums der schwedischen Julfeier" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Jena, 1943), 237–238. "Die Zeitschrift dieses Bundes [*Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund*] heißt 'Religion och kultur', die in den letzten Jahren die am meisten gelesene theologische Zeitschrift in den öffentlichen Bibliotheken gewesen ist."

3

RACE AND RELIGION

In this chapter, the research question of this thesis will be examined through an in-depth scrutiny of the material. The first section deals with SRR's construction of race from its founding in 1929 until NSDAP's seizure of power in 1933. The second examines the period 1934–1937, from the emergence of the German “church struggle” (*Kirchenkampf*) until the passing of chairman Emanuel Linderholm. Subsequently, the third section treats the period 1938–1940, where I scrutinize whether SRR's construction of race changed after the passing of Linderholm – resulting in that theologian Herman Neander became chairman⁸⁹ and theologian Gustaf Brandt editor of *Religion och kultur* – and in the light of the outbreak of the Second World War. The association treated the concept of race most deliberately during the second period and will therefore be given certain attention.

SRR and the Construction of Race, 1929–1933

SRR's first year of existence was a time of finding economical resources and preparing the first issue of *Religion och kultur*. Hence, there are no official SRR documents from this year, except for some administrative documents in *Emanuel Linderholms samling* not within the frames of this thesis.⁹⁰ The first four volumes of *Religion och kultur* (1930–1933) focus on setting its theological agenda. The result is that topics outside of the theological realm are rarely mentioned. I categorize only 5 out of 91 articles in these volumes of *Religion och kultur* (5,4%) to either entirely or partly treat the concept of race. The relevant articles are written in academic exegetical fashion, treating a religious-cultural genealogy – within which race is latently imbedded – supposedly originated in a Germanic ancestry. Combined with biological constructions of race presented during the conference of 1931, the association viewed the Swedish nation as an organic entity vital to maintain as cultural purity was considered central in implementing Christian doctrines. These early SRR articles offer clues on how to comprehend later and more deliberate elaborations on the concept of race.

Religion, Culture, and Germanic Ancestry

In the very first article in *Religion och kultur*, chairman Emanuel Linderholm explains not only the mission of SRR but also the necessity that religion (Christianity) and European and Swedish culture must be kept together. The key, he affirms, is the name of the journal, “Religion and

⁸⁹ Neander was succeeded by linguist Hugo Jungner (b. 1881) in 1940. As Jungner died the same year, vicar Karl Sandegård (1880–1968) was designated as SRR's new chairman in 1941.

⁹⁰ ELS, vol. 146, Jc1, “Handlingar rörande Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds bildande,” UUB.

Culture.” It was “as a cultural religion that Christianity once conquered and overcame the cultural world of Antiquity and then all of Europe.”⁹¹ Only as a cultural religion can Christianity save itself from destruction. “Without culture, religion becomes superstition and without religion culture becomes bestiality and pointless [...] It is about keeping religion and culture together, without sidestepping the experiences of knowledge or the bravery of faith.”⁹² From this starting point, he elaborates further by saying that if religion and culture cannot be interlaced it seems “as if the Ragnarök of Christianity, high culture, and religion as a whole awaits.”⁹³ Religion and culture thereby become two sides of the same coin. Thereto, Christianity does not refer to the entire Christian religion but to Protestantism alone. Catholicism is one factor to the alleged decline of Christianity. During the 1931 conference in Stockholm, Linderholm raised the danger that Protestantism may be swallowed by “Rome” (i.e. Roman-Catholicism) and devour itself.⁹⁴ The warning was added with the statement that the “inner weakness of Protestantism is its half-ness. It has not consistently developed its essence and its faith but remained half-Catholic.”⁹⁵ This anti-Catholic discourse also is visible when Ragnar Liljeblad (1885–1967), engineer and treasurer of the association, discusses “the Church of the Future” in *Religion och kultur*. Arguing that the foremost attempt to break up with the ethical and moral limitations of Christianity – caused by the “delusions of Catholicism” – was the Reformation, Liljeblad stresses that the Reformation was “the revolt of the Germanic spirit against Orientalist duress and pervert Orientalist unnaturalness.”⁹⁶ The reason why the Reformation failed was due to lack of masculine virtues. To initiate a new Reformation, these virtues must be implemented in order to “unite the best of Orientalist Christianity with the best of the ancient Germanic spirit,” as well as modern western science and philosophy.⁹⁷

The religion-culture synthesis of the association was rooted in liberal theological issues regarding the revival of both Christianity and culture. This synthesis, shown in the association’s reflections on history and current events, outlined a theologized cultural essence of the Swedish people ought to be understood in the light of the prevailing institutionalized state-church “folk church.” The SRR’s revivalist mission and proclamation of a radical revivification of the Church indicate that a Christianity united with a Germanic spirit is a vital component in the maintenance of the nation as an organic entity. The religion-culture synthesis may therefore be interpreted as the most fundamental component in SRR’s construction of race. Four aspects of this synthesis can be identified. First, it builds on a religious-cultural genealogy, “an unbroken apostolic succession of poetic knowledge from the authors of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the

⁹¹ Emanuel Linderholm, “Uppgiften,” *Religion och kultur* 1 (1930): 4. “Det var såsom kulturreligion kristendomen en gång segrade och erövrade antikens kulturvärld och sedan hela Europa.”

⁹² Linderholm, “Uppgiften,” 4–5. “Utan kultur blir religionen vidskepelse och utan religion blir kulturen bestialitet och meningslöshet [...] Det gäller att hålla samman både religion och kultur, utan att väja för vetandets rön eller för trons vågsamhet.”

⁹³ Linderholm, “Uppgiften,” 5. “Kan detta icke förverkligas och en tid för tid hållbar ny syntes av tro, vetande och etik skapas av släktets klarast och modigast tänkande, renaste och starkaste andar, så torde både kristendomen och överhuvud taget religionens och den högre kulturens ragnarök stunda.” See also Vilhelm Grönbech, “Den religiösa världskrisens innebörd,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 22.

⁹⁴ Linderholm, “Inledningsföredrag,” 18.

⁹⁵ Linderholm, “Inledningsföredrag,” 18–19. “Protestantismens innersta svaghet ligger i dess halvhet. Den har icke konsekvent utvecklats sitt väsen och sin tro, utan har förblivit halvt katolsk.” See also Emanuel Linderholm, “Svenska kyrkans katolska problem,” *Religion och kultur* 2 (1931): 55–68.

⁹⁶ Ragnar Liljeblad, “Framtidens kyrka,” *Religion och kultur* 1 (1930): 31.

⁹⁷ Liljeblad, “Framtidens kyrka,” 31–34, quotation on 34. “[Det gäller att] förena det bästa i den orientaliska kristendomen med det bästa i den gamla germanska andan.”

poets and prophets of the Old Testament and from Homer to the biggest, although not most famous poets of our days.”⁹⁸ Second, there are contemporary examples of the outcome when culture and religion separate. Emanuel Linderholm uses “Russia”⁹⁹ as an example of what happens when one withdraws from the culture of European Christendom. The Communist-Bolshevik order introduced “unrivalled barbarism” (*barbari utan like*) without historical parallels, thereby a striking example of “the first consequences of pure irreligiosity implemented in politics and society.”¹⁰⁰ To this it can be added that he was positive to the fact that Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), leader of the Italian National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*), had “banned every faction of the Soviet Russian impiety movement.”¹⁰¹ Third, a prerequisite for maintaining the organic nation through its intrinsic need of religion depends on the youth. This issue was vehemently emphasized by SRR members, but they were simultaneously troubled that youths seemed more concerned with shallow things, such as material comfort, alcohol consumption, and premarital sexual relations.¹⁰² Fourth, finally, Linderholm uplifts Gustav II Adolf (1594–1632), King of Sweden from 1611 to 1632 and credited for the founding of Sweden’s “Great Power Era.” Through the religion-culture synthesis, Linderholm addresses this part of Swedish history with affection and national pride. Gustav II Adolf brought the small, remote, hard-tempered Swedish people out of political and cultural isolation. His victories on the battlefields saved Protestantism and he became its primary guardian “until Cromwell’s England and then Prussia completed the harsh struggle against the political supremacy of Rome.” These heroic struggles saved the political, national, and spiritual liberty of the evangelic peoples.¹⁰³

The way Emanuel Linderholm uses Gustav II Adolf to construe a national identity based on religion and culture should not be overemphasized. Even though the monarch has been important to the “mythology” of Swedish ultra-nationalist groups throughout the twentieth century,¹⁰⁴ it is not necessarily a case of ultra-nationalism when someone writes about him. After

⁹⁸ Oscar Bjurling, “Kulturens grundval,” *Religion och kultur* 3 (1932): 13. “Det går en obruten apostolisk succession i poetiskt kunnande ifrån Gilgamesheposets författare, Gamla Testamentets diktare och profeter och från Homeros till våra dagars största, ehuru kanske ej mest kända poeter.”

⁹⁹ It is unclear if Linderholm refers to the Soviet Union, or Russia as geographical territory within the Soviet Union.

¹⁰⁰ Emanuel Linderholm, “Inför korsets 1900-årsminne,” *Religion och kultur* 1 (1930): 47. “Det är den renodlade irreligiositetens första konsekventa förverkligande i politik och samhällsliv, med fador över alla fador.” Rütger Essén (1890–1972), diplomat who apart from the SRR also was member of several other fascist and pro-Nazi movements (including *Nysvenska Rörelsen*), finds one historical parallel – the emergence of Islam in the seventh century: “The Bolshevik gospel appears to attract primitive people, which strikingly reminds of the first Islamic sermon.” Rütger Essén, “Asiens kulturkris,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 194.

¹⁰¹ ELS, vol. 58, B 70, “Italien,” UUB, 4. “[Mussolini har] förbjudit hvarje gren af den sovjetryska gudlöshetsrörelsen.”

¹⁰² Sten Selander, “Nutidsungdomen och modern primitivitet,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 40–42. One possible solution proposed during the conference was a profound revision of religious education.

¹⁰³ Emanuel Linderholm, “Åt minnet av Gustaf II Adolfs gärning,” *Religion och kultur* 3 (1932): 195. “I det avgörande ögonblicket räddade han genom sina segrar den eljes förlorade protestantismen och gjorde den av honom grundade, svenska stormakten och stormaktskyrkan till protestantismens främsta skyddsmakt, tills Cromwells England och sedan Preussen mäktade fullfölja den hårda kampen mot Roms väldiga politiska övermakt. Genom allt detta räddade han åt den västerländska kulturens evangeliska folk den politiska, nationella och andliga friheten.”

¹⁰⁴ See Heléne Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 1980–1999: den rasistiska undergroundrörelsen: musiken, myterna, riterna*, new ed. (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2016), 488–489; Andrés Brink Pinto & Johan Pries, *Trettionde november: kampen om Lund 1985–2008* (Lund: Pluribus, 2013), 6–7.

all, Gustavus Adolphus Day (*Gustav Adolfsdagen*), celebrated annually in Sweden on 6 November – Gustav II Adolf’s day of death – is a general flag day in Sweden.¹⁰⁵ Notwithstanding, it was Linderholm’s radical conservatism, wherefrom a pro-German position erupted, that eventually culminated in his pro-Nazi sympathies.¹⁰⁶ Church historian Anders Jarlert emphasizes the central role of Gustav II Adolf to Linderholm’s religious-cultural sense of history and elucidates that Linderholm considered the mission of the Swedish monarch to be a “redemption” of German Protestantism, whereby he becomes the fundament of modern culture.¹⁰⁷ These notions pervade Linderholm’s study *Kristendomen och kriget* (Christianity and War) published in 1916.¹⁰⁸ In the final chapter of the study, focusing on the future role of Swedish Christendom during a possible war, Linderholm states, “Race, religion, and culture in relation to geographical location is what has determined our national calling and has done so with marvelous clarity.”¹⁰⁹ What emerged after the heroic actions of Gustav II Adolf, however, was a case of “national dissolution” (*nationell upplösning*) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this respect, it is up to the Germanic “tribe” (*stam*) to either stand or fall as no one or nothing – e.g. Roman-Catholicism or “Americanization” – should be able to “silence the voice of the blood.” Nothing “is punished as hard as betrayal against one’s own people, tribe, race.”¹¹⁰

While this reading exemplifies how Linderholm’s radical conservatism on the one hand sustained his intermixing of nationalism and race, and how it was deliberately motivated by an alleged intrinsic connection between religion and the nation-state on the other, it should not be interpreted as evidence for pro-Nazism for two reasons. The first, obviously, was that the NSDAP did not yet exist in 1916. The second is the context of pre-fascist Europe. Before the advent of the NSDAP, it was neither radical to express pride for the Germanic race nor fear for its future. For the majority of the Swedish population, terms such as “race,” “people,” and “nation” had positive connotations.¹¹¹ In this respect, Linderholm’s radical conservatism may rather be seen as a precursor to what would later evolve into pro-Nazi sentiments. Jarlert, for instance, claims that Linderholm’s pro-Nazism was unilaterally attached to his hope for a religious reformation.¹¹² When the NSDAP did seize power, Linderholm seemed quite fond of Adolf Hitler since he, it was said, did not intend to persecute Christians.¹¹³

As for the SRR’s religion-culture synthesis, it was largely based on Emanuel Linderholm’s application of the liberal theological tradition of nineteenth-century *Kulturprotestantismus*. It was grounded in Enlightenment thinking through which “Christ becomes a figure to be treated in terms of personhood, modern views of what constitute human nature, and notions of identity.”¹¹⁴ This aspect more clearly illustrates Linderholm’s radical conservatism

¹⁰⁵ A seminal study on the historiography of Gustav II Adolf is Sverker Oredsson, *Gustav Adolf, Sverige och Trettioåriga kriget: historieskrivning och kult* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁶ Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 106–107, 172–174.

¹⁰⁷ Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 107.

¹⁰⁸ Emanuel Linderholm, *Kristendomen och kriget: i historisk och principiell belysning* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1916).

¹⁰⁹ Linderholm, *Kristendomen och kriget*, 322. “Ras, religion och kultur i förening med geografiskt läge är det, som bestämt vår nationella kallelse och gjort det med sällspord klarhet.”

¹¹⁰ Linderholm, *Kristendomen och kriget*, 337–338. “Blodet är dock tjockare än vattnet, och ingen bör i längden tysta blodets röst. Ingen gör det heller ostraffat, ty intet straffar sig självt så hårt som förräderi mot eget folk, *stam, ras*.”

¹¹¹ Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning*, 10–11.

¹¹² Jarlert, *Emanuel Linderholm*, 173.

¹¹³ ELS, vol. 58, B 71, “Nationalsocialismen och rasfrågan. Förföljelse av kristna i Tyskland 1934,” UUB, 12–15.

¹¹⁴ Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 4; Sundeen, “Andelivets agitator,” 16–18.

connection between religion, nation, and race than instancing pro-Nazism. Yet, such views could turn into pro-Nazism. One scholar has proposed that the palingenetic ultra-nationalist vision of German national socialism was not inevitably connected to a liberal theological construction of race, nation, or identity, but could easily be grafted onto liberal Protestant theology.¹¹⁵ The association's religious-cultural genealogy – stretching from the Nordics' Germanic spirit, personified in Gustav II Adolf's heroism, to the role of Roman-Catholicism in the defilement of Christianity – laid the ground for how the concept of race would evolve during the second period. Europe was portrayed as an intrinsically Christian continent, the Nordics as a heroic people, and Protestantism to reflect the characteristics of a Germanic heritage. In short, the Nordics are ascribed high moral qualities and a heroic nature. The notion of the nation as an organic entity is not explicit but can be identified in the association's overarching revivalist mission and proclamation of a radical revivification of the Church united with an alleged Germanic spirit. To grasp the association's linkage between race and maintenance of the organic nation, its views on race biology are of significance.

Organic Nation, Race, and Biology

During the period 1929–1933, elaborations on race in terms of biology only were conducted during the conference of 1931. A systematic overview of the conference program shows that 14 lectures were held. Half of these treated biblical and theological topics, the other half “general topics” of which two treated the imagined linkage between race, biology, and the organic nation. Seemingly, not much was produced on the topic. Still, a representative example is the lecture “The Origin of Mankind” held by the association's secretary Ivar Broman (1868–1946), professor of anatomy at the University of Lund. The second lecture, held by Ragnar Liljeblad who elaborated on “the church of the future” in the first issue of *Religion och kultur*, dealt with “inferior” elements *within* the Swedish population, the danger in people moving from the countryside to the cities, and the necessity to present race biology as the most important social issue of the century.¹¹⁶ As I have only come across the views Liljeblad presents this one time, it neither was important to SRR's construction of race nor representative to the racial views of the association and has therefore been excluded from this discussion. Ivar Broman's lecture is considered representative because SRR members embraced modern science in their attempt to interpret Scripture from a historical-critical point of view. Its significance is shown in two ways. First, Broman's theories were applied elsewhere in *Religion och kultur*, for instance by Finn-Swedish author Rolf Nordenstreng (1878–1964), founder of theories on the East Baltic race.¹¹⁷ Second, chairman Emanuel Linderholm's introductory presentation of the lecture stressed its importance to the “new religious anthropology” since the old one, relying on Genesis, had lapsed. “The mission to establish a new religious anthropology certainly is one of the hardest tasks for contemporary theology but also one of the most urgent.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Heath A. Spencer, “Kulturprotestantismus and ‘Positive Christianity’: A Case for Discontinuity,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 22 (2009): 548.

¹¹⁶ Ragnar Liljeblad, “Våra socialtiska spörsmål och uppgifter,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 27–37.

¹¹⁷ Rolf Nordenstreng, “Hur den nyare biologin ser på utvecklingsläran,” *Religion och kultur* 7 (1936): 163–188. On Nordenstreng's racial theories, see Aira Kemiläinen, *Finns in the Shadow of the “Aryan”*: Race Theories and Racism (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1998), 152–182.

¹¹⁸ Emanuel Linderholm, “Tredje dagen. Fredagen den 25 September,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm

Ivar Broman begins by affirming that to conceive the origin of mankind, the theory of evolution – combined with molecular biology – is the fundamental starting point. Due to mutation, new races or species are created.¹¹⁹ His core concept is *urvarelser*, a concept difficult to translate literally into English but can be described as something like “original creatures.” According to Broman, these *urvarelser*, directly emerged out of lifeless matter, explain the “parallel forms” (*parallellformer*) which arose in different parts of the globe or within the same zone.¹²⁰ This brings him to the evolution of human races, “This is of great interest to us. It points out the possibility that *the three grand human races*, the white, the yellow, and the black, could have their own private pedigrees and thus – despite the physical conformities – not be genealogically related but merely *unrelated parallel forms*.”¹²¹

Broman’s evolutionary thesis presents his understanding of biological anthropology and theology. Anthropologically, his parallel-forms-theory proposes that it is merely rational that the three main races originated independently from each other on different locations on the globe – e.g. one in Europe, one in Asia, and one in Africa.¹²² Theologically, he rejects that God intervened when lifeless matter turned into living beings. The life-less *urvarelser* were endowed with potential life which subsequently evolved into vibrant life. “We thus have no reason to believe that any particular, supernatural force blew life into matter when the original generation occurred.”¹²³ This does not necessarily reject the existence of God. Rather, it seems that Broman adheres to a form of deism – shown in that his identified *urvarelser* were “endowed” (*ustrustat*) with potential life – meaning that a metaphysical entity intervened in a distant, pre-life past. This means that race in terms of biology not only is holistic and universal – it also surpasses and, more importantly, precede national and cultural realms. Broman’s parallel-forms-theory implies that there is not *one* generic mankind but in fact *three* evolutionary and thus racially different mankinds, indicating that miscegenation will contaminate evolutionary structure and that every race belongs in its natural habitat. Maintaining an organic nation hence mostly is about maintaining the purity of the race. As God, according to Broman’s deism, no longer intervenes in his creation this maintenance also is about the survival of God. If the race, being both God’s creation and the entity through which he lives, degenerates and subsequently wanes it literally means the death of God.

Summary

To summarize SRR’s construction of race the period 1929–1933 I am only able to turn to two of my three subsidiary questions. The third question asks if their construction of race changed over time and is impossible to answer at this point as I have only treated one period. Regarding

(Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 179. “Uppgiften att skapa en ny religiös antropologi är helt viss en av de svåraste uppgifterna för den nutida teologien, men också en av de angelägnaste.”

¹¹⁹ Ivar Broman, “Människosläktets uppkomst,” in *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 180–183.

¹²⁰ Broman, “Människosläktets uppkomst,” 187.

¹²¹ Broman, “Människosläktets uppkomst,” 187–188. Italics in original. “Detta har för oss i detta stort intresse. Ty det pekar hän på möjligheten, att *de tre stora människoraserna*, den vita, den gula och den svarta, skulle kunna hava var sitt privata stamträd och alltså – trots de stora byggnadsöverensstämmelserna – ej vara genealogiskt besläktade utan endast *obesläktade parallellformer*.”

¹²² Broman, “Människosläktets uppkomst,” 190.

¹²³ Broman, “Människosläktets uppkomst,” 191. “Vi hava sålunda ej anledning att tro, att någon särskild, övernaturlig kraft blåste liv i materian, när uralstringen skedde.”

the first two questions – if the association’s liberal theological position affected its construction of race and how the association’s connection between race and liberal theology constructed a conceptualization of the Swedish people – some themes are distinguishable.

First, the liberal theology of the SRR was crucial in how the concept of race was constructed. Widely influenced by late nineteenth-century *Kulturprotestantismus*, added with notions of Germanic ancestry, the association regarded Europe as an intrinsically Christian continent and that Protestantism reflects the Germanic heritage of the Nordics. This point was further motivated by anti-Catholicism and anti-Communism. As SRR members embraced modern science, biological constructions of race were taken into consideration. In this respect, Ivar Broman’s lecture argued for evolutionary differences between the human races. A plausible interpretation of it is that intermixing must be prevented in order to preserve the qualities of the race. Maintaining race and nation serve the same cause – to save God from extinction.

Second, the association’s construction of a conceptualization of the Swedish people through its connection between race and liberal theology was rooted in a religious-cultural genealogy. Stressing the Swedish people’s Germanic ancestry, its heroic characteristics peaked with Gustav II Adolf. Sweden’s post-Great Power Era initiated a national dissolution process. The association’s liberal theological struggle for a religious rebirth of Swedish culture implied a return to the imagined heroic characteristics of their Germanic ancestry which were lost in the death of the monarch.

SRR and the Construction of Race, 1934–1937

The period 1934–1937 was most concerned with the concept of race. I categorize 11 out of 83 articles in these volumes of *Religion och kultur* (13,2%) to either entirely or partly deal with the concept of race. The last period, that of 1938–1940, dealt more with the concept in terms of percentage, but more in passing. In contrast, the concept was more deliberately discussed this period. It also is possible that there could have been more articles on the topic, but due to the passing of chairman Emanuel Linderholm in the summer of 1937, a clear majority of the articles from the last issues of 1937 – including the entire third issue of 1937 – are written in memory of him. Another factor was that SRR member Torsten Lundberg (b. 1871), vicar in the town of Glimåkra in southern Sweden, was accused of illicitly changing the confession in 1936.¹²⁴ The Lundberg issue was vehemently treated throughout the following issues of *Religion och kultur*. In geopolitical terms, this period, compared to the other two, arguably is the most important one due to prevailing paligenetic mentalities in Italy and – in this case, especially – Germany. By 1934, Nazi Germany continued to take shape, *Deutsche Christen* and *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* had existed for a few years, and the German *Kirchenkampf* emerged. These happenings in Germany, the last in particular, were important to SRR on how it positioned itself in relation to socio-political events and ultimately how the concept of race was constructed. As recalled, Linderholm published the acts of *Deutsche Christen* in *Religion och kultur* during this period.¹²⁵ The fact that it had not been controversial to express pride for the Germanic race no more than a decade, not even a few years, ago, was by now overshadowed by the NSDAP’s

¹²⁴ According to Linderholm’s summary of the issue, the report to the Chapter of Lund stated that Lundberg’s confession is “scatty” (*virrig*) and that his sermons, which often are “sneering” (*hånfulla*), could herald that one should not obey Jesus. See Emanuel Linderholm, “En kättardom i Lunds Domkapitel. Kyrkoherde Lundberg i Glimåkra varnad för avvikelser från Handboken,” *Religion och kultur* 7 (1936): 195–210.

¹²⁵ Linderholm, “Akter.”

political hegemony in Germany. This indicates that the meaning of such expressions, deliberately or not, had changed. Even though many articles in *Religion och kultur* still focus solely on theology, SRR had at this point designed its theological mission. This meant that the association could elaborate on other topics. One of the most stressed was the notion of Sweden's Germanic heritage, building on what had been established during the first period. The topic is important to survey within the frames of this thesis as it constructs a Swedish-Christian identity rooted in perceptions of a Germanic ethnos. I begin by focusing on how the SRR used culture to construe the concept of race and how it was affected by influences of German *völkisch* ideology. Then, I focus on how the association regarded race biology as a necessary societal instrument to uphold the organic nation. Before summarizing this period, emphasis is put on the Evangelic Nordic Faith of pastor Nils Hannerz to show how a Christian belief system influenced by *völkisch* tenets could look like in regard to race in SRR forums.

Culture and Influence of Völkisch Ideology

Like the first period, and in accordance with the liberal theological tradition, most articles in *Religion och kultur* apply cultural rather than biological arguments in the construction of race. Writing about the prevailing social, economic, and spiritual crisis of Europe and Sweden, theologian and *Religion och kultur* board member Gustaf Brandt (1883–1972) affirmed that “for an increasing amount of people” who believe in the gospel of Jesus and that Christianity is the path towards salvation for mankind, the Christian religion enables “something *new*, which we should not avoid,” whereas there also is “something immutable, large and holy *old*, which we must not forfeit at any price.”¹²⁶ Brandt does not explain what he means by “new” and “old.” Notwithstanding, instances of what they may denote are found elsewhere in the material, written by other SRR members. Indications of what he means by “new,” for instance, is when one SRR member elaborates on “Laity Perspectives on Culture, Church, and Christianity in Our Country” during the association's summer conference in the city of Katrineholm 1935, wherein it is claimed that Christianity exists for the sake of culture. There should be an interface between church and culture, the latter being superior to the former. This would culminate in perfection in all areas, the spiritual included.¹²⁷ Only through a Christianized culture the Kingdom of God is within reach.¹²⁸ In that sense, SRR's nostalgic expectations of the future seems to be a revitalized Swedish-Christian society which will purify and refine the spirit of the Swedish people.

Suggestions on what the “old” is were more vigorous. In 1935, Emanuel Linderholm wrote an article in *Religion och kultur* on the crisis of Christianity.¹²⁹ This article formed part of the anti-modern stances of his intellectual itinerary, characterized as a wholesale rejection of the theology and doctrines of Roman-Catholicism. What singles out this publication from his previous articles in *Religion och kultur* is its attempt to show the historical *causes* of the crisis of Christianity, not only its *effects*. Linderholm considers the crisis to have escalated

¹²⁶ Gustaf Brandt, “Det nya, som vi icke kunna undgå, och det gamla, som vi icke vilja mista,” *Religion och kultur* 5 (1934): 68. “För växande skaror av människor, som dock i Jesu evangelium och den kristna religionen fortfarande se mänsklighetens räddning, står det klart, att det arbetar sig fram något *nytt*, som vi icke skola kunna undgå, på samma gång som det finns något tidlöst, stort och heligt *gammalt*, som vi icke till något pris vilja mista.”

¹²⁷ C. O. Lönnqvist, “Lekmannasynpunkter på kultur, kyrka och kristendom i vårt land,” *Religion och kultur* 6 (1935): 172–173.

¹²⁸ Lönnqvist, “Lekmannasynpunkter,” 173.

¹²⁹ Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris.”

with the advent of modernity, but that it originated in the crucifixion of Jesus. He shows this by distinguishing two main epochs in the history of Christianity: the first stretches from the crucifixion to Martin Luther, the other from Luther until the present. Highly theological in style, the article stresses that Lutheran Protestantism is vital to the renewal of Germanic characteristics.

Linderholm argues that almost immediately after the crucifixion, Jesus began to be referred to as the Messiah, Son of God, Lord, Logos, and Redeemer – epithets Linderholm considered contradictory to the teachings of Jesus. According to Linderholm, this subsequently resulted in farfetched and obscure theological doctrines, the Trinity amongst others, complemented with the construction of martyrs and saints as semi-divinities. Then, “sacramental magic” (*sakramentsmagin*) and “white magic” (*vit magi*) entered the domains of the Church, from Egypt arrived “pagan asceticism” (*hednisk askes*) with its alleged egoistic convents, and with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth “sexual desires were sharpened.”¹³⁰ Furthermore, Linderholm maintains that the elevation of Peter as the biblical origin of the papacy (Matt. 16:18) eventually resulted in papal greed due to its claimed authority of both earth and heaven.¹³¹ In sum, Linderholm’s conclusion of the first main epoch is that Roman-Catholicism historically chose a theological path that contradicts that of Jesus. Thus, “Rome” is the root of everything depraved in contemporary Christianity since it absorbed every non-Christian element in its surround throughout its first 1500 years of existence.

The second main epoch was represented by Martin Luther. Luther is chosen because Linderholm believes that he embodies the first turning point in the history of Christianity. Through his five *solas*, Luther purified and cleansed Christianity from primitive doctrines and questioned the political power and spiritual authority of the Church.¹³² However, his mission was never completed. To Linderholm, this means that Christians must initiate a new Lutheran Reformation and by that return to the original teachings of Jesus. By so doing, he acknowledges that there is a lot to learn from the lives and characters of “our Germanic ancestors,” much of which still is imagined to be preserved within the Nordic peoples.¹³³ Some of these Germanic characteristics are found in Jesus himself, such as ethical virtues but above all courage and heroism.¹³⁴ Linderholm elaborates further on the issue in one of his personal notes, writing that the essence of Christianity is similar to that of the Germanic race and therefore both ethically and religiously superior to the Jewish and Orientalist spirits.¹³⁵ In this respect, Linderholm agrees with Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, founder the neo-Teutonic *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*, that it is important to face and emphasize one’s Germanic heritage, even though Linderholm rejects Hauer’s non-Christian path. Linderholm also opposes Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946), influential ideologue in the NSDAP regime, and his major work *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Acknowledging that they have some important ideas, he emphasizes the notion that the SRR had taken the right path towards a religious renewal of Christianity.¹³⁶

How Emanuel Linderholm stresses the existence of Germanic remnants in Christianity was supported and maintained by other SRR members. Writing a dual obituary shortly

¹³⁰ Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris,” 203. “[...] med läran om jungfrufödelsen skärptes den sexuella driften.”

¹³¹ Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris,” 203–204.

¹³² Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris,” 204.

¹³³ Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris,” 208; ELS, vol. 58, B 72, “Nygermansk religion. Några korta anmärkningar,” UUB, 25. “Visst är det mycket att lära av våra germanska förfäders liv och karaktär, – mycket som dess bättre ännu är bevarat hos oss.”

¹³⁴ Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris,” 209; cf. Torsten Lundberg, “Hos Gudmund Schütte på Eskiær,” *Religion och kultur* 7 (1936): 62–63.

¹³⁵ ELS, vol. 58, B 72, “Nygermansk religion. Några korta anmärkningar,” UUB, 21.

¹³⁶ ELS, vol. 58, B 72, “Nygermansk religion. Några korta anmärkningar,” UUB, 22–27.

after the deaths of Linderholm and German theologian Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), theologian Herman Neander (1885–1953), new chairman of SRR, distinguishes the emergence of two different evangelical types of Christianity. The first is the ecumenical, supposedly pervaded by Anglo-Saxon Anglicanism. The other is the Germanic, whose preeminent names according to Neander are Otto and Linderholm. To cement Linderholm's Germanic Christianity, Neander mentions that Linderholm throughout the recent vicissitudes of German Christianity consistently sympathized with *Deutsche Christen*.¹³⁷

From these examples, it seems as if the “old” that Gustaf Brandt does not want to forfeit latently refers to a mere Germanic ethnos, not religiosity. The aspect of ethnos was previously expressed by Linderholm when elaborating on the crisis of faith.¹³⁸ Quoting German theologian Kurt Leese's (1887–1965) book *Rasse, Religion, Ethos* (1934),¹³⁹ he argues that the cause of the crisis is not the spirit (Logos) but life (Bios) itself. The quotation is an attempt to stress that numerous components are incorporated into Bios in order to separate it from Logos. Consequently, Logos can be saved from accusations of being insufficient in bringing meaning to mankind. Leese's quotation states that Bios entails:

All life, earthly life, body, sex, blood, race, instinct, soul, unconsciousness, urge for life, impulses, senses, affections, passions, feelings of sympathy, Eros [...] Dionysus, or expressions with which one would always like to point to the pre-existent, life-and-soul polarized reality of life.¹⁴⁰

Following this quotation, connected with the theologically motivated culture-religion synthesis, Linderholm continues on how a religious rebirth is important to the maintenance of the organic nation:

A far more profound and widely-spread cultural crisis is thus also a religious crisis and starts as such. We see it in the dissolution of late Antiquity and ancient national cultures, and this dissolution of the bond between nation and religion gives much to think of. An overall moral decay of a people, particularly among its higher social strata, is a definite sign that the previous religion has lost its power over their lives.¹⁴¹

In these quotations, Linderholm unequivocally refers to biology *and* culture. The differences between these entities is that the former (Bios) is the cause of the crisis of faith of the individual

¹³⁷ Herman Neander, “Rudolf Ottos insats för Reformförbundets idéer,” *Religion och kultur* 8 (1937): 174–175.

¹³⁸ Emanuel Linderholm, “Den kristna trons inre kris,” *Religion och kultur* 7 (1936).

¹³⁹ Leese would in August 1940 be deprived of teaching. In a statement of reasons from April 1941, the *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* (Reich Ministry for Science, Education, and Public Education) proclaimed that his writings were “incompatible with the national socialist world-view, e.g. in the race question.” In German, “Diese Gewähr vermag ich bei Ihnen nicht zu bejahen, nachdem Sie in Ihren Schriften Meinungen vertreten haben, die mit der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung nicht in Einklang zu bringen sind, z.B. in der Rassenfrage.” Cited in Rainer Hering, “LEESE, Kurt Rudolf Hermann Anton, Pastor und Philosophieprofessor,” in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 17, ed. Unknown (Herzberg: Traugott Bautz, 2000).

¹⁴⁰ Leese, *Rasse, Religion, Ethos*, cited in Linderholm, “Trons inre kris,” 12. “Alleben, Erdleben, Leiblichkeit, Geschlecht, Blut, Rasse, Instinkt, Seele, Unbewusstes, Lebensdrang, Triebe, Sinne, Affekte, Leidenschaften, Sympathiegefühle, Eros [...] Dionysos, oder mit welchen Ausdrücken man sonst immer auf die vorgeistige, nach Leib und Seele gepolte Lebenswirklichkeit hinweisen will.”

¹⁴¹ Linderholm, “Trons inre kris,” 12–13. “All mera djupgående och omfattande kulturkris är därför tillika en religiös kris och börjar som en sådan. Det se vi i senantiken vid de gamla nationella kulturernas upplösning, och denna upplösning av bandet mellan nation och religion ger mycket att tänka på. Ett allmännare sedligt förfall hos ett folk, synnerligast hos dess högre samhällslager, är ett säkert tecken till att den tidigare religionen förlorat sin makt över dess liv.”

self, whereas the latter (Logos) covers the decay or dissolution of an entire cultural-religious nation. Given that Linderholm in this case seems to position himself in between biology and culture, he absorbs other SRR members' ostensibly divergent opinions on the concept of race. One SRR member claimed that life self-evolves organically and that there is an interconnection between a man's individual soul and culture as a whole.¹⁴² In other words, an immanent link between microcosm and macrocosm. Another member suggested that the period from 1740 until the present (i.e. the 1930s) is a time of spiritual regeneration.¹⁴³ What combines them is the notion of a religious rebirth of Swedish culture. Linderholm understood the notion of rebirth almost millenarian, stressing that it is obvious "that we now face a new epoch in the 2000-year history of Christianity, a decisive turn to stagnation or regeneration."¹⁴⁴

Like the first period, SRR's construction of race primarily is rooted in its liberal theology. The revival of culture, identity construction, and a somewhat theologized nationalist sense of history marked a contemporary cultural crisis, even though such utterances in general were not uncommon to Swedish Christian theology at the time.¹⁴⁵ However, what had changed in Sweden in relation to previous decades was the current political situation in Germany. With the political hegemony of German national socialism, the meaning of previously undisputed concepts altered. One example is how the Germanic race was considered. As recalled, it was not controversial to proclaim adherence to the Germanic race in early twentieth-century Sweden. However, exegetical works conducted by theologians in Nazi Germany integrated Germanic motifs into a new theological framework, customizing a Germanized Christianity based on a connection between Christianity and *völkisch*-Germanic mythos.¹⁴⁶ Since the members of SRR were not isolated from the rest of society it is not an exaggeration to say that their own understanding of a Germanic race, alluded to a self-proclaimed Germanic Christianity, may have altered. Aspects of German Nazi theologians' Germanic motifs were incorporated into the association.¹⁴⁷ In a letter possibly addressed to Linderholm in May 1934, Nazi architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869–1949) and Nazi jurist Falk Ruttke (1894–1955) presented the new journal *Rasse* (Race) on behalf of the *völkisch* movement *Nordischer Ring* (Nordic Ring),¹⁴⁸ ended with the words "Mit Nordischem Gruß/ Heil Hitler!" (With Nordic greetings/ Heil Hitler!).¹⁴⁹ An envelope in the same archival volume as the letter, containing almost 60 separate cards with Nazi literature on politics and race¹⁵⁰ – including several issues of *Rasse* – indicates

¹⁴² Clemens Åhfeldt, "Om utvecklingens lag i andens värld," *Religion och kultur* 5 (1934): 70.

¹⁴³ Giovanni Lindeberg, "Poul Bjerre om religion och kristendom," *Religion och kultur* 7 (1936): 51.

¹⁴⁴ Linderholm, "Trons inre kris," 26. "[...] vi nu stå inför en ny epok i kristendomens 2,000-åriga historia, inför en avgörande vändning till stagnation eller regeneration."

¹⁴⁵ Sundeen, "Andelivets agitator," 317–318.

¹⁴⁶ See Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: BRILL, 2009), 415–576, esp. 538–553; Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*.

¹⁴⁷ See Gunnarsson, "Kyrkan, nazismen och demokratin," 126–127.

¹⁴⁸ On a brief introduction to the *Nordischer Ring*, see Lionel Gossman, *Brownshirt Princess: A Study of the "Nazi Conscience"* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013), 71–77.

¹⁴⁹ Schultze-Naumburg & Ruttke to possibly L 1934 31/5, ELS, B 70, "Om nationalsocialismen i Tyskland. Utkast och material," UUB. The letter does not clarify who it is addressed to. It does not have a formal greeting introduction as is normally the case. A possible explanation is that identical letters were sent to other scholars, either as "spam" or recommendation to scholars with genuine interest in the topic. Given that the letter is found in Linderholm's private correspondence, I do not have any other explanation than that it was to Linderholm it was sent.

¹⁵⁰ E.g., Gerhard Kittel, *Die Judenfrage* (1933); Per Engdahl & E. G. Westman, *Folkresningen i Tyskland* (1933); Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*; Hermann Mandel, *Nordisch-arische Wirklichkeitsreligion* (1934); Hermann

albeit not confirms that Linderholm found interest in the journal and pro-Nazi topics related to the issue of race.¹⁵¹ Pastor Nils Hannerz – to whom I will return shortly – heralded that heroism and honour are everlasting Christian ideals. He also uplifted the national conception of *Volk* in German-Christian theology and considered Germanic traits of characters to be divine creations.¹⁵² Herman Neander expressed similar opinions in an article for the conservative newspaper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*.¹⁵³ Neander would however revise his position in 1936, most likely due to the accentuation of the German *Kirchenkampf*, when he combined sympathies for the Nazi state with rejections of *Deutsche Christen*'s attempt to nazify the church.¹⁵⁴ Elaborations on sustaining the organic nation are implicit. To find arguments on how the association's construction of race relates to the linkage between an organic nation and Germanic ancestry, race biology once again must be taken into consideration.

Race Biology and Maintaining the Organic Nation

Only one article in *Religion och kultur* entirely treats biological determinants of race during this period. Despite the lack of texts on the topic, this article entails myriad components on how to comprehend the SRR's biological arguments on the construction of race, relating to the triad organic nation-Germanic ancestry-religious rebirth in this period. A rhetorical question asked by psychiatrist and SRR member Poul Bjerre (1876–1964) pinpoints how to approach the synthesis: “Dare we hope, that the by all of us embraced peoplehood we call our fatherland one day through its church also will be an all-encompassing spiritual home – a God community?”¹⁵⁵

The only article treating biological determinants of race during this period is pharmacologist C. G. Santesson's (1862–1939) elaboration on race biology and life renewal.¹⁵⁶ Starting in a prevailing academic clash among race biologists regarding whether environment or hereditary genes is the most decisive element for racial characteristics, Santesson positions himself in the latter category. However, he argues that one should not be indifferent to the former. A destructive or overall depraved environment can vitiate good genes whereas a healthy environment can be prosperous to the development of good genes.¹⁵⁷ Following Herman Lundborg (1868–1943), professor and president of the Swedish State Institute of Race Biology, most plausibly his 30-pages pamphlet *Degenerationsfaran* (Danger of Degeneration),¹⁵⁸

Güntert, *Der Ursprung der Germanen* (1934); Gottfried Feder, *Das Program der N. S. D. A. P. und seine Weltanschaulichen Grundgedanken* (1933).

¹⁵¹ Envelope in ELS, B 70, “Om nationalsocialismen i Tyskland. Utkast och material,” UUB.

¹⁵² Nils Hannerz, “Revolutionär religion i Hitlers Tyskland,” *Religion och kultur* 5 (1934): 23–26. It was however not a one-way street on the issue. Walter Grundmann used SRR member and professor of history of religions Wilhelm Grönbech's (1873–1948) major four-volume study *Vor folkeæt i oldtiden I-IV* (1909–1912), translated into German in the late-1930s as *Religion und Kultur der Germanen* (1937–1939), as one instance of non-German science which has prepared for the “German revolution of science.” See Walter Grundmann, “Die antike Religion im Lichte der Rassenkunde,” in *Die völkische Gestalt des Glaubens*, eds. Walter Grundmann, Hugo Odeberg & Wolf Meyer-Erlach (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1943), 28–29.

¹⁵³ Herman Neander, “Ett ovädersmoln över kyrkan,” *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* 1934 21/7.

¹⁵⁴ Herman Neander, “Stat och kyrka i Tyskland,” *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* 1936 31/8.

¹⁵⁵ Poul Bjerre, “Barnatro och livstro,” *Religion och kultur* 8 (1937): 81. “Skall vi våga hoppas, att den oss alla omfattande folkgemenskap, vi kalla vårt fosterland, en dag genom sin kyrka också skall bli ett alla omfattande andligt hem – en gudsgemenskap?”

¹⁵⁶ C. G. Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” *Religion och kultur* 5 (1934): 234–248.

¹⁵⁷ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 234.

¹⁵⁸ See Herman Lundborg, *Degenerationsfaran och riklinjer för dess förebyggande* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1922). Samples from the pamphlet are available in Maja Hagerman, *Käraste Herman: rasbiologen Herman*

Santesson claims that the relationship between environment and hereditary genes is vivid when studying the dissolutions of Persian, Greek, and Roman (i.e. supposedly Aryan) civilizations. These were not caused by impaired environment but the outcome of continuous racial deterioration. He stresses that race biology is an important field of research due to its methods on counteracting the destruction of the race – and thereby, culture – in order to achieve a nobler and more powerful mankind.¹⁵⁹

To apply the topic to the religious sphere of society, Santesson proposes that nature-given aspects ought to be complemented with morality. Race biology, he suggests, is a long-term project. To meet its long-term goals, short-term solutions must be added. These short-term solutions, which will prevail solely to uphold racial characteristics, are moral. The most important of these moral laws are “self-control” (*självbehärskning*) and “austerity” (*självtukt*). These will keep the population away from greed, satisfaction in profit, and unrestrained sexual desires.¹⁶⁰ Santesson presents sexual desires as a particular undesirable element in modern society. The reason is that he not only wants to maintain moral laws – he also believes that there currently are too many humans.¹⁶¹ If the number of humans is reduced, living conditions can be strengthened. He writes:

The purpose of modern race biology is, for example, its pursuit to prevent reproduction of bad offspring, and L. [Herman Lundborg] lists, as we recall, which sorts of individuals – vagabonds, imbeciles, criminals, and others – who preferably should not reproduce but do so anyway and deteriorate the race. [...] [W]hereas preferable classes due to numerous factors devote themselves to the limitation of children, this is not the case with population groups whose offspring is not desirable. And the more people of the latter kind increase in numbers in relation to the desirable, the more the people weaken physically, morally, and economically.¹⁶²

To Santesson, the outcome of “desirable” reproduction over “undesirable” within a population is that children can grow up in families altered by self-control and austerity. From this, kindness to other people, love of family and home, and affection for the fatherland will prosper.¹⁶³ According to this theory, Santesson sees a danger in the unmarried who are occupied with temporary relationships.¹⁶⁴ From a health and moral point of view, he states that these relationships are not only unpleasant to themselves but to society too, given that they can “get in touch with the worst dregs of society.”¹⁶⁵ That means they can give birth to undesirable offspring in the future. The point Santesson wants to put forward is that race biology cannot solve the ongoing danger of racial degeneration alone. It must be complemented with institutionalized moral laws.

Lundborgs gåta, pocket ed. (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2015), 207–209. Broberg & Tydén, *Oönskade i folkhemmet*, 34, call the pamphlet the “gospel of race hygienics” (*rashygiens evangelium*).

¹⁵⁹ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 234.

¹⁶⁰ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 236.

¹⁶¹ Santesson does not precise whether there are too many humans in the world, in Europe, in Scandinavia, or in Sweden, but it is probable that he means Sweden alone.

¹⁶² Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 238, 240. “Till den moderna rasbiologien hör bl.a. att söka motverka tillkomsten av en dålig avkomma, och L. uppräknar, såsom vi erinra oss, vissa slag av individer – vagabonder, imbecilla, förbrytare m.fl. – som helst icke borde få fortplanta sig, men som opåttalt göra det och försämra rasen. [...] [M]edan de värdefulla folkklasserna på grund av allehanda beräkningar hängiva sig åt barnbe-gränsningen, så är detta i regel icke fallet med befolkningsgrupper, vilkas avkomma ej alls är önskvärd. Och ju mer detta senare slag av människor ökas i antal i förhållande till de önskvärdas antal, desto sämre blir hela folket fysiskt, moraliskt och ekonomiskt.”

¹⁶³ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 241.

¹⁶⁴ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 244.

¹⁶⁵ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 244. “[...] beröring med samhällets sämsta drägg.”

Regarding the revival of the race, he summarizes that it boils down to a collective sense of responsibility about the future of the race, combined with romantic affections of its past.¹⁶⁶ How this is going to be implemented is proposed in the last sentence of the article. There is only one way for such a responsibility – it is about an awakening, “*a profound religious rebirth.*”¹⁶⁷

Contextually speaking concerning race biology and the political situation in Nazi Germany, C. G. Santesson’s article shows how elements of Nazi *völkisch* Christianity were incorporated into the SRR and how its racial pursuit for a regeneration of the organic nation was conducted. His emphasis on a religious rebirth of the Swedish nation reminds of the “fascist minimum” (palingenetic ultra-nationalism) whereby the morality and theology of contemporary Nordics become part of an inherent Germanic ethno-spirit. Theologian Anders Gerdmar has a similar elucidation. Explaining Nazi theologian Walter Grundmann’s views on the German Total State wherein religion is a concern of the *Volk*, Gerdmar writes, “Because racial biology and racial hygiene secure the race, a national religion must be placed on a racial foundation.”¹⁶⁸ In this respect, C. G. Santesson proposes a view where biology and morality (which include the religious-cultural synthesis) are two sides of the same coin. They accomplish different aspects in order to fulfil the revival, or rebirth, of the Nordic-Germanic race. As will be more palpable in a later section, Emanuel Linderholm had in terms of chairman and initiator of SRR a major part in how this theological sense of history, identity, and, ultimately, race was construed. Still, cultural and biological arguments in the construction of race proposed within SRR forums were not synthesized but merely two different solutions on how to accomplish a religious rebirth of the Swedish nation. The only coherent example from this period of how culture and biology may be interlinked is the Evangelic Nordic Faith of pastor Nils Hannerz, which deserves certain attention.

Nils Hannerz and Evangelic Nordic Faith

Nils Hannerz has much in common with other SRR members during this period, but also differences. Rather than separating cultural arguments from biological in the construction of race, I propose that Hannerz construes a Christianity based on notions of *völkisch* ideology. Culture is nonetheless the starting point on how he approaches the concept of race. For instance, to find the cause of the failure of Christian churches, Hannerz believes one should recall how Christianity was either taught in school or preached in church during one’s childhood. The picture of Christianity presented to youngsters, Hannerz says, focuses too much on “the insignificance of the world” (*det världsligas intighet*), “the sinfulness of the body” (*det kroppsligas syndighet*), and “the darkness of reason” (*förnuftets mörker*).¹⁶⁹ What has been left out in education and sermons is according to Hannerz the fact that culture is created through reason and power, by the work of mankind’s mind and hand.¹⁷⁰ His view on culture as something defiled, interlinked with the alleged decline of Christianity, is given anti-modernist content. Opposed to further urbanization and industrialization, Hannerz adheres to the notion of “Blut und Boden” (Blood and Soil), coined by NSDAP minister of agriculture Walther Darré (1895–1953), to connote his

¹⁶⁶ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 248.

¹⁶⁷ Santesson, “Rasbiologi och livsförnyelse,” 248. Italics in original. “[...] *en genomgripande religiös pånyttförelse.*”

¹⁶⁸ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 544.

¹⁶⁹ Hannerz, “Revolutionär religion,” 29.

¹⁷⁰ Hannerz, “Revolutionär religion,” 29.

belief in an esoteric link between the Nordic race and the soil.¹⁷¹ This *völkisch*-oriented Christianity is further expressed in his pamphlets written within the frames of *Samfundet Manhem*. Therein, he extends his idea of a Nordic Evangelic Faith, an undogmatic belief system which synthesizes Christianity with notions of “Blut und Boden” and pre-Christian mythology. Due to its esoteric nature, it is a challenge to grasp. Yet, even though a complete elaboration on Hannerz’ theology is not within the frames of this thesis, a short summary of it is in place to make his construction of race more comprehensible.

Hannerz distinguishes three world-views to illustrate the necessity of his Evangelic Nordic Faith.¹⁷² Euphemistically, he calls them “Wittenberg,” “Rome,” and “Epa”¹⁷³ which compete against each other.¹⁷⁴ By Wittenberg he means Protestantism, characterized to shape free characters, uplifting honor and conscience, and maintaining pious behavior. Hannerz himself adheres to the Wittenberg world-view. “Rome” is considered to have reached some perfection in Roman-Catholicism and wants to develop Jesuitical “carcass obedience” (*kadaverlydnad*) in the name of humility and love to the poor. In reality, Hannerz says, it has been done as “a service to a power greedy hierarchy,” plausibly the Vatican. “Epa,” finally, refers to Jews, whose influence on society is considered to have brought European civilization into chaos. Epa, Hannerz claims, is a “materialistic individualism” whose priests are the “banksters” (*börsjobbarna*) of Stock Exchange, and its salvation is the capital of world trade.¹⁷⁵

The “Wittenberg” world-view not only affirms its consonance with Protestantism, it is the world-view of those heralding a *completion* of the Lutheran Reformation. Protestantism and the actions of Luther are a Germanic mission to renew forgotten racial characteristics. Hannerz believes this renewal of race is interlinked with a regeneration of Christianity. “Sadly, neither the Aryan myth nor the evangelical words of Jesus have been applied to [contemporary] life.”¹⁷⁶ This shows not only the historical vitality of Martin Luther, but a *völkisch*-Christian proclamation, too: “The Jews have Judaized, the Greeks Hellenized, the Romans Romanized the gospel. The German mysticism and the young Luther have made a new attempt to *Germanize* it.”¹⁷⁷ He synthesizes Luther with pre-Christian mythology to show this:

Even the pre-Christian faith among the Nordics felt the realm of evil, which was a personal guilt that must be either individually or collectively redeemed. It does not confess any evasions, yes, even with the doom before his eyes the

¹⁷¹ Hannerz, “Revolutionär religion,” 30.

¹⁷² The Swedish words Hannerz uses are “livs- och världsåskådningar” which I have translated into world-views. He does not define world-view but given that *livsåskådning* was a common term in cultural, religious, and social debates in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Sweden it seems to signify a teaching with a message about the nature of the world and meaning of life as well as carved perceptions of mankind and society. Sundeen, “Andelivets agitator,” 19.

¹⁷³ “Epa” is either an abbreviation or acronym of some sort. It is not explained in the material and I have been unsuccessful in finding an explanation of its meaning.

¹⁷⁴ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 13.

¹⁷⁵ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Nils Hannerz, *Evangelisk nordisk tro och världsåskådning: Manhemsbetraktelser* (Stockholm: Svea Rike, 1936), 22. “Tyvärr har varken den ariska myten eller det evangeliska Jesusordet fått tillämpning på livet.”

¹⁷⁷ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 10. Italics in original. “Judarna ha judaiserat, grekerna helleniserat, romarna romaniserat evangeliet. Den tyska mystiken och den unge Luther ha gjort ett nytt försök att *germanisera* det.”

Nordic joins the combat, to Ragnarök. It is this spirit that speaks through Luther's words to Melankton [*sic*] before the journey to Worms: "If I do not come back, I tell you: Continue our work! It does not matter what happens to me."¹⁷⁸

To strengthen his thesis, Hannerz rejects the Catholic heritage of the Nordics, arguing that one certainly can speak of Nordic faith and Nordic piety before the arrival of Christianity. He questions whether the Nordics ever were Catholic other than in name given that God arrived in the Nordics long before the Pope.¹⁷⁹ The validity of this statement might seem obscure *prima facie* due to his separation of God and Pope. From Hannerz' point of view, however, the distinction is fully comprehensible. To him, these epithets are not physical entities but metonyms. God represents religion as a whole, Pope only Roman-Catholicism. Hannerz' rejection of the Pope is thus only a rejection of Roman-Catholicism, not of Christianity. God, Hannerz says, appeared all over the world at different times with the same message. Due to differences in culture and language, God was given multiple names. In ethnopluralist manners, each culture should have their own beliefs, but each are racially and geographically based. In this respect, Hannerz thinks in similar ways as Walter Grundmann. Grundmann, adapting a different interpretation of the Lutheran two-kingdom model, formulated an intrinsic relationship between national socialist ideology and Christianity. Gerdmar summarizes the view, "God said, 'Let there be a *Volk*,' and there was a *Volk*; similarly, the *Deutsche Christen* struggle for the creation of a Church among the people, a *Volkskirche*."¹⁸⁰ In short, Christianity is according to Hannerz a Nordic-*völkisch* representation of a world-wide divine appearance; Roman-Catholicism is an inferior world-view unnatural to and separated from the heroic characteristics of the Nordics.

Adhered to the *völkisch* Christianity propagated by *Deutsche Christen*, Hannerz' theological ethnopluralism also draws him to *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* due to its pursuit for an Atlantic-Nordic faith.¹⁸¹ The arrival of Christianity was nothing new to the Nordics but merely the same divine message in a different form.¹⁸² To Hannerz, this means that Christianity reflects Germanic tenets. Convinced that he uses pre-Christian mythology, he turns to the *Oera Linda Book* (Ura-Linda-Chronik), a manuscript considered to be a Frisian chronicle that first came to public awareness in the 1860s and highly influential to Nazi occultism – in reality, a translation of a nineteenth-century Dutch novel.¹⁸³ Still, Hannerz does not question its validity. He uplifts Wralda, a gender-neutral deity mentioned in the *Oera* but not part of the Nordic pre-Christian mythological pantheon,¹⁸⁴ as the creator of time and everything else.¹⁸⁵ Wralda placed man naked into the world, made him righteous, and taught him how to deal with evil. At this

¹⁷⁸ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 7. "Även den förkristna tron bland nordborna kände det ondas verklighet, vilken som personlig skuld måste sonas av envar eller av alla gemensamt. Den erkänner inga undanflykter, ja, även med undergången för ögonen går nordbon till kampen, till ragnarök. Det är denna ande, som talar ur Luthers ord till Melankton före resan till Worms: 'Kommer jag inte tillbaka, så besvär jag dig: Fortsätt vårt verk! Det gör ingenting hur det går med mig.'"

¹⁷⁹ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 5.

¹⁸⁰ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 544–545. Italics in original.

¹⁸¹ Hannerz, "Revolutionär religion," 27–28.

¹⁸² Cf. Natanael Beskow, "Vad kräver den religiösa förkunnelsens förnyelse?" In *Handlingar till Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbunds första religionsvetenskapliga kongress i Stockholm den 23–25 sept. 1931*, ed. Emanuel Linderholm (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1932), 147.

¹⁸³ Göran Dahl, *Radikalare än Hitler? De esoteriska och gröna nazisterna. Inspirationskällor. Pionjärer. Förvaltare. Åttringar* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006), 100.

¹⁸⁴ After a quick Internet scan to see how present-day race and ethnic oriented pagans conceive Wralda, it seems as if Wralda and Odin (or Wotan, to use the Germanic word for Odin) are considered to be the same deity. Though Hannerz is silent on the issue, it is not an exaggeration that he may have thought in similar ways.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Genesis 1:1–2:4.

point, Hannerz introduces race as an explanation for the development of mankind, meaning that mankind according to his understanding of pre-Christian mythology only refers to whites. Man is punished if divine restrictions are not obeyed. This will make him wise and strong. If not, he becomes a domesticated sheep, an easy prey to wolves found among the yellow and black peoples. Nevertheless, the foreigner, or stranger (*främlingen*), should be treated gently, but maintaining racial purity remains the most important task.¹⁸⁶

Hannerz' identified competing world-views do not refer to race *per se*. Yet, they contain specific traits of characters. An example is when he speaks of the "Mediterranean man" (*medelhavsmänniskan*), an embodiment of Roman-Catholicism and hence of his second world-view, who has put his mark on the Christian faith. To Hannerz, it is therefore not surprising that the Nordic man "feels like a stranger" within contemporary Christendom since the souls of Nordic and Mediterranean men are incompatible.¹⁸⁷ The Nordic is free and close to nature; the Mediterranean is imprisoned by dogmatism. He cites Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), propaganda minister of the NSDAP regime, to exemplify the undogmatic, liberated faith of the Wittenberg world-view: "God is will. Will loves God. My God is the God of will. He dislikes the smoke victims and disgraced creep of the herd. I stand before him with proudly supported head and confess my love and freedom to him."¹⁸⁸ Regarding the third world-view, "Epa," Hannerz seems to be sure that a secret Jewish world conspiracy exists. He accuses Jews of having orchestrated the First World War. It was caused by "the true enemies of the people, who calculate economic profit of the need that war always entails."¹⁸⁹ That the true enemies of the people refers to Jews is clear, given that Hannerz states that Epa has the First World War as its "High Mass" and the world need as its "evensong."¹⁹⁰ What seems to distinguish the second world-view from the third is that Epa is all-pervading, the former belongs only to the religious-cultural realm. In that sense, it permeates every aspect of society whereby it turns into a ubiquitous Jewish menace so fundamental to the mindset of modern anti-Semitism. Says Mattias Gardell, "Jews are typically portrayed as the archenemy of Aryan man. Bestowed with semi-divine powers, the Jew as imagined is construed as a metaphysical entity of evil."¹⁹¹ Hannerz presents greed to illustrate this Jewish ubiquity. Greed is described as ineradicable and a precondition for the advancement of culture, "invented by greed itself." Therefore, he affirms that there is an evangelic and Nordic mission to help the development of natural capabilities.¹⁹² A prerequisite to do so is to "eradicate the ancient Jerusalemic temple service, which now goes under the name Stock Exchange."¹⁹³ Thereto, he considers greed to be a "toxic mushroom" (*giftsvamp*) infiltrating society, creating need and subsequent wars and revolutions, ultimately indicating "the destruction of culture and the entire white race."¹⁹⁴ To solve the ongoing degeneration created

¹⁸⁶ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 5–6.

¹⁸⁷ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 12. "[...] känner sig som en främling."

¹⁸⁸ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 12–13. "Gud är vilja. Viljan älskar Gud. Min Gud är kraftens Gud. Han tycker inte om hopens rökoffer och vanärade kryper. Jag står inför honom med stolt uppburet huvud och bekänner mig glad och fri inför honom."

¹⁸⁹ Hannerz, *Evangelisk nordisk tro*, 19. "[...] av de verkliga folkfienderna, som beräkna att vinna ekonomiska fördelar av den nöd, som krig alltid medför."

¹⁹⁰ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 13.

¹⁹¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 102.

¹⁹² Hannerz, *Evangelisk nordisk tro*, 16.

¹⁹³ Hannerz, *Evangelisk nordisk tro*, 17. "[...] förinta den gamla jerusalemiska tempeltjänsten, som nu bär namnet Börsen."

¹⁹⁴ Hannerz, *Evangelisk nordisk tro*, 17. "[...] kulturens och hela den vita rasens undergång."

by the second and, predominately, third world-views, Hannerz argues that a culture struggle is an evangelic duty since eternal truths must be fought for.¹⁹⁵

Nils Hannerz' *völkisch*-oriented Christianity is based on what he considers to be racially-based Germanic virtues: courage, magnanimity, and faithfulness. They all derive from honor.¹⁹⁶ These traits, in turn, are found in the heroic actions of Jesus who "lived as a hero and died as a chieftain" without gratitude and recognition from any human. All he had when he died on the cross was a "strong faith in God after completing his duty on the working field of the heavenly Father."¹⁹⁷ This is in consonance with Walter Grundmann who portrayed Jesus as "a mere moral preacher or hero of virtues."¹⁹⁸ To die for one's own people, or race, is in Hannerz' words not only heroic and desirable – it is a religious cause. This creates a *völkisch*-Christian two-way street. On the one hand, Christianity reflects Germanic tenets; on the other hand, the Germanic reflects the heroic nature of Jesus. Essentially, God becomes what Hannerz labels an "internal force" (*inneboende kraft*), the origin of an organic world-view.¹⁹⁹ The divine becomes a sort of "immanence," meaning that God partly has left the realm of transcendence to live within the soul of the Swedish nation through its racially pure people. In this light, it is possible to identify how Hannerz acknowledges the nation to be an organic entity and how it inevitably links to race:

Man is an organic unit, the body is the vehicle of the soul, the soul is the noblest flower of natural life. A natural consequence hereof is the belief that also the soul is conditioned through race and germplasm. These inherited capabilities are not [...] a punishment of sin but the eternal's words to us. [...] Original sin is an insult to Germanic decency, since it paralyzes the noblest powers of man. Thus, we do not believe in the "Fall" of Man, but in his "rise," which remains his constant mission.²⁰⁰

Summary

It would be farfetched to stress in definite terms that the Evangelic Nordic Faith of Nils Hannerz either is plainly similar to or entirely different from SRR's construction of race during this period. As Hannerz has the most elucidated theology found in the material where the concept of race is linked with a Germanic Christianity, one can only speculate which parts of his belief system were supported or rejected – if his texts were even read as they were published within the frames of *Samfundet Manhem*. The material neither confirms nor rejects these statements more than the fact that his texts are not referenced by other SRR members in *Religion och kultur*. Evident, however, is that elements of Hannerz' ideas are distinguishable among the association's members if seen from my research questions.

¹⁹⁵ Hannerz, *Evangelisk nordisk tro*, 28.

¹⁹⁶ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 28–29.

¹⁹⁷ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 24. "Jesus levde som en hjälte och dog som en hövding ensam, utan tack, utan erkännande från något mänskligt håll men i den fasta gudsförtröstan att ha gjort sin plikt på den himmelske Faderns arbetsfält."

¹⁹⁸ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 545. See also Grundmann, "Die antike Religion im Lichte der Rassenkunde," 85–86.

¹⁹⁹ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 29.

²⁰⁰ Hannerz, *Den levande gudens ord*, 29. "Människan är en organisk enhet, kroppen är själens uttrycksmedel, själen är det naturliga livets ädlaste blomma. En naturlig följd härav är tron, att även själslivet betingas genom ras och arvs massa. Dessa nedärvda anlag äro ej [...] ett syndastraff utan den eviges ord till oss. [...] Arvsyndsläran är en förolämpning mot germansk sedlighetskänsla, helst som den förlamar människans ädlaste krafter. Vi tro således icke på ett människans 'fall', utan på hennes 'uppstigande', som förblir en ständig uppgift."

First, the association's construction of race changed from the first period as *völkisch* elements were incorporated into its theology. SRR members' elaborations on what they themselves called a Germanic Christianity and the vitality to return to the characteristics of their alleged Germanic ancestors likened arguments presented during the first period. Nils Hannerz' adherence to notions of "Blut und Boden" and Emanuel Linderholm's articles on the topic of race and orderings of Nazi literature indicate that a pro-Nazi theological shift was undertaken.

Second, the association's liberal theological position had high significance in its construction of race. Like the first period, SRR claimed an intrinsic relationship between religion and culture. Stressing a Germanic ancestry, its members argued that Protestantism reflects the Germanic characteristics of the Nordics. Embracing modern science, race biology was taken into consideration, complemented with aspects of morality. As with the first period, the biological arguments in the association's maintenance of race and nation served the same purpose – to save God from extinction. What singled out this period from the former was influences from Nazi theologians which sustained their arguments with *völkisch* content.

Third, finally, the association's connection between race and liberal theology clearly constructed a conceptualization of the Swedish people. Only a Christianized culture could perfect and, in a sense, purify the spirit of the Swedish people and Swedish society and that institutionalized moral laws would result in short-term solutions for long-term race biological goals. Apart from the association's spiritualized sense of an imagined Germanic ethnos of the Swedish people formulated during the first period, an intrinsic relationship between biology and morality was portrayed. This illustrates the association's attempt to bring past and future together.

SRR and the Construction of Race, 1938–1940

The period of 1938–1940 was in terms of percentage the one that dealt most with the concept of race. Apart from the article "Germanskt och kristet" (Germanic and Christian), published in 1941 by the association's secretary Douglas Edenholt, I categorize 8 out of 54 articles (14,8%) and one book review in these volumes of *Religion och kultur* to either entirely or partly deal with a construction of race. What singles out this period from the previous two is how the topic is utilized. Most articles during this period, which are within the frames of this thesis, allude to it in passing. Hugo Jungner (1881–1940), history-oriented linguist and part of the board of *Religion och kultur*, omitted references to culture when he wrote that the mission of SRR in its upcoming second decade of existence is to make Christian teachings more substantial.²⁰¹ Many articles published thereafter oppose the emergence of the Second World War and propagate "religious internationalism" over "religious nationalism."²⁰² Moreover, the topics are more related to philosophy of religion with traits of history of ideas – for instance, pathologist Alfred von Rosen's (1872–1962) two-part scrutiny of the theology of bishop Esaias Tegnér (1782–1846) and how it converges with idealism.²⁰³

Taking these aspects into consideration, the death of Emanuel Linderholm in 1937 seems to have initiated a shift in the socio-theological agenda of the association. While this is

²⁰¹ Hugo Jungner, "Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund inför sitt andra decennium," *Religion och kultur* 10 (1939): 63; cf. Linderholm, "Uppgiften."

²⁰² Lars Yngström, "Några reflexioner i ofredstider," *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 29–35; W. R. M. Noordhoff, "Religiös internationalism – nu!" *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 36–37.

²⁰³ Alfred von Rosen, "Tegnér och teologien. I," *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 19–28; Alfred von Rosen, "Tegnér och teologien. II," *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 123–135.

partly true, remnants from the Linderholm era persisted like the view that religion and culture are inseparable components to maintain the nation. While sole biological arguments were not used, probably due to the decreased influence of the State Institute of Race Biology,²⁰⁴ cultural arguments still were maintained. Influences from Nazi German *völkisch* ideology continued, most deliberately used by Douglas Edenholm and I will therefore put certain emphasis on him.

Race in the Post-Linderholm Era: A Case of (Dis)Continuity

SRR never left the *Kulturprotestantismus* view on the inseparability between religion and culture. Like previous periods, the connection was important to maintain the nation as an organic entity. In 1938 Herman Neander, who became chairman of SRR after the death of Emanuel Linderholm, echoed his predecessor, stating that Christianity is in the midst of an ongoing cultural crisis and that it is vital to build on his legacy.²⁰⁵ Others proclaimed that the current world situation is nothing but a symptom of a spiritual crisis erupting from the inner depths of the peoples' soul, and that race and culture are vital components to renew and safeguard European civilization, which boil down to actions of the individual self.²⁰⁶ The fact that Edenholm's 1941 article was published substantiates the argument that SRR maintained its views these years, but that they were embedded into articles with less controversial topics. Tentatively, the association's "shift" at large was ostensibly deliberate to reserve themselves from political statements considered too controversial or radical while some of its members truly rejected the racial policies of Nazi Germany.

That said, examples of utterances similar to the Linderholm era exist, albeit not as explicit. Jungner may have uttered goals for SRR somewhat different from Linderholm, yet his view on culture strikingly reminds of the previous periods. In an article in *Religion och kultur* from 1938, he focuses on the first encounters between Christian missionaries and pre-Christian religion and whether their religious and moral resources differed.²⁰⁷ He argues that the pre-Christian "Swedish priest" had to offer sanctity and inviolability because of his position; he encouraged humanity and sacredness of life as a functionary at the holy place; he was the religious hub in a pre-Christian parish. He concludes that, in accordance with what had previously been presented in SRR, the religious and moral resources of pre-Christian faith often have been underestimated.²⁰⁸ In line with this way of thinking, Jungner emphasizes the greatness of the Nordics' Germanic ethnos whose purity enables due to the eternal ubiquity of God, an argument he strengthens with biblical references, "Even in Nordic countries one can find evidence for the deeper meaning in a word of Malachi (I: II): 'For from the rising of the sun even unto

²⁰⁴ After the retirement of Herman Lundborg in 1934, a complicated path to recruit a new professor to the institute of race biology – in many ways an ideological conflict – began. Geneticist and anti-fascist Gunnar Dahlberg (1893–1956), formerly one of Lundborg's assistants, was officially appointed in 1936. With Dahlberg, the aim of the institute shifted from studying biological and cultural degeneration to dealing with diseases and statistical theory. Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning*, 60–68.

²⁰⁵ Herman Neander, "Till Reformförbundets vänner!" *Religion och kultur* 9 (1938): 3–4.

²⁰⁶ Karl Sandegård, "Mörka och ljusa tecken i det kyrkliga nutidsläget," *Religion och kultur* 10 (1939): 85; Giovanni Lindeberg, "Litteraturanmälan: Grönbech och Bjerre. Några randomanmärkingar vid jämförande läsning," *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 167–168.

²⁰⁷ Hugo Jungner, "När kristendom och fornsvensk gudatro möttes," *Religion och kultur* 9 (1938): 70–75.

Jungner presented his findings in numerous academic publications stretching from monographies to co-edited books and journals. On Sparlösa rune stone, which his *Religion och kultur* article treats, see e.g. Hugo Jungner, "Sparlösa stenen: Västergötlands rök – ett hövdingamonument från folkvandringstiden," *Fornvännen* 33 (1938): 193–229.

²⁰⁸ Jungner, "Kristendom och fornsvensk gudatro," 75.

the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles.”²⁰⁹ C. G. Santesson – who wrote about race biology, life renewal, and institutionalized moral laws in 1934 – proposes a similar view when he elaborates on the idea that the spirit of Christ most probably revealed itself in different forms across the globe, also to humans who did not know the historical Jesus.²¹⁰ From this, an ethnopluralist pattern from Nils Hannerz’ Evangelic Nordic Faith is vivid – namely, that God appeared all over the world in different times with the same message. Due to differences in culture and language, God was given multiple names.

Examples of cultural arguments of race thus were recurrent also during the post-Linderholm era. Skepticism regarding the current national, cultural, and religious order pervaded the stances put forward in *Religion och kultur*, in which the association’s notion of a religious rebirth was a vital component.²¹¹ SRR’s pursuit for a religious rebirth largely revolved around purifying the Swedish peoplehood, a point stressed by principal Hjalmar Montelin (1890–1962). In a *Religion och kultur* article, he included a section about “Folkgemenskap” (peoplehood), the Swedish equivalent of the German word *Volksgemeinschaft*.²¹² Instead of trying to synthesize Christianity and race, Montelin argues that there is not any wisdom in Christianity – it solely brings a stream of uncertainty, misgivings, and doubt. Thereto, Christians nowadays do not portray Jesus Germanic enough.²¹³ He uplifts *Deutsche Christen* as an instance of failed attempt to racialize Christianity. Its mission was unsuccessful because it overlooked proficient men of Romanticism who had discovered the superior meaning of blood and race. Faith, therefore, neither can nor should contradict the blood of the people. “The value of man is not found in his belief or disbelief but in his inherited blood. That is what determines what is good or evil.”²¹⁴ The Church still has magnificent buildings, churches, and vicarages, Montelin acknowledges, but it lacks faithful believers. Currently, Christians only visit High Mass out of tradition – the same sense of tradition that makes the clergy “lose its free humanity and the force, which emerges from blood and soil, which alone is the womb of faith and receiver of the seed of faith.”²¹⁵ Here Montelin adheres to the *völkisch* mindset of “Blut und Boden,” emphasizing the Swedish population’s esoteric link to the native soil and thereby the connection between race, religion, and organic nation. Once the race is purified from its degenerative surround, an essentially religious project, morality and honesty in faith will be renewed and the organic nation will be preserved.

During this period, Montelin’s article is the most startling one due to its apparent criticism of Christianity *as a religion*. Douglas Edenholm is critical of Christianity too, but as an *institution*. He follows earlier *Religion och kultur* articles when he writes that the tragedy of the Church and historical Christianity is that it has absorbed teachings and rituals of vanquished, primitive stages. The spirituality and ethical-religious forces of the gospel – that is, the original,

²⁰⁹ Jungner, “Kristendom och fornsvensk gudatro,” 75. “Även från Nordanlanden kunna hämtas förkristna bevis för den djupa innebörden i ett ord hos profeten Malaki (I: II): ‘Från solen uppgång ända till dess nedgång är ju mitt namn stort bland folken.’” Jungner refers to Mal. 1:11, not 1:2.

²¹⁰ C. G. Santesson, “Några lekmannatankar om religionen,” *Religion och kultur* 9 (1938): 156.

²¹¹ See e.g. John Lagerkranz, “Ärkebiskop Eidems förslag till revision av den svenska kyrkohandboken,” *Religion och kultur* 9 (1938): 105.

²¹² Hjalmar Montelin, “Vid vägskälet,” *Religion och kultur* 9 (1938): 167–170.

²¹³ See also Nils Hökby, “Han på korset, han allena,” *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 5–7.

²¹⁴ Montelin, “Vid vägskälet,” 169. “Människans värde ligger nämligen ej i hennes tro eller icke-tro utan i hennes medfödda ärvda blod. Det är det som avgör om något är gott eller ont.”

²¹⁵ Montelin, “Vid vägskälet,” 168. “Det är samma traditionsbundenhet, som gör, att man även inom prästerskapet förlorar sin egen fria mänsklighet och den kraft, som stiger ur blod och mark och som ensam är trons moderssköte och mottagarinna av trons säd.”

untainted words of Jesus – have been unheeded.²¹⁶ This reminds of stances recurrent throughout the history of SRR. However, I would suggest that these words mean something more to Edenhalm. More vigorously than in SRR's liberal theological religion-culture synthesis, Edenhalm racialized Christianity not just in a pro-Nazi way but through a deliberate *völkisch* frame of Nazi Christianity. Edenhalm's theology is of importance in terms of race since it firstly shows how pro-Nazi sentiments could be grafted onto liberal theology, secondly how he retained the liberal theological basics of SRR while elaborating on the concept of "racial soul." To show this, one must turn to his *Religion och kultur* article "Germanskt och kristet" (1941) and his doctoral dissertation from the University of Jena (1943).

Douglas Edenhalm and Völkisch Christianity

To grasp Douglas Edenhalm's thoughts on the concept of "racial soul," one first must turn to his thoughts on the need to heroize and racialize Jesus in order to distinguish how he links these aspects to a Germanic race. To begin with, Edenhalm affirms that the issue concerning the need to unveil the Germanic aspects of Christianity has gained renewed actuality. Saying that it solely is the topic's religious-ethical side that is to be examined and that political affiliations should be taken out of consideration, Edenhalm notes that the topic primarily has been possible to discuss due to the ideology of German national socialism with Alfred Rosenberg as front-runner.²¹⁷

Before elaborating on the Germanic-Christian synthesis, Edenhalm claims that the current Christianity has declined spiritually. Christianity in its Lutheran form has become sterile and stiff, meaninglessly dealing with symbolic trivialities and dogmatic antiquities, resulting in that Christianity has lost its heroic traits. Thus, there ought to be a break-up with the Catholic Christ mysticism and evangelic pietism, instead uplifting the "original essence" of the gospels. From there, heroic-masculine characteristics associated with an imagined Germanic ethnos will emerge.²¹⁸ To accurately reproduce the true image of Jesus, theologically and historically, Edenhalm says that Christians must combine his "heroic" and "soft" sides. Jesus was good and strong, mild and strict, weak and brave. His spirit was so strong that it could absorb any contradiction in life. He could weep over Jerusalem (Luk. 19:41) but also drive out changers of the temple (Joh. 2:15).²¹⁹ But since Christianity currently preaches Jesus' soft side alone, Edenhalm is apt to mention biblical examples as an attempt to restore his heroic character. To him, Jesus looked at the Pharisees with anger, distressed by the obduracy (*förstockelse*) of their hearts (Matt. 3:7); he came to send fire on the earth (Luk. 12:49); he came not to send peace, but a sword and thereby excite disunion (Matt. 10:34–35); he encouraged the disciples to not be fearful (Matt. 8:26, 10:31); he presented the highest goal of human desire – the Kingdom of God – and was ready to bravely work and struggle and sacrifice himself for mankind, finally being alone and abandoned, without complaining or being defeated by his inner bitterness or grudge towards his executioners (Luk. 23:32–34).²²⁰ Edenhalm suggests that SRR should take

²¹⁶ Douglas Edenhalm, "Nathan Söderblom som reformteolog," *Religion och kultur* 11 (1940): 116; cf. Linderholm, "Kristendomens kris," 208–209.

²¹⁷ Douglas Edenhalm, "Germanskt och kristet," *Religion och kultur* 12 (1941): 176.

²¹⁸ Edenhalm, "Germanskt och kristet," 179–180.

²¹⁹ Edenhalm, "Germanskt och kristet," 185–186.

²²⁰ Edenhalm, "Germanskt och kristet," 180.

the lead in re-heroizing Jesus and thereby initiate a religious rebirth that will result in a renewed Swedish nation close to its Germanic heritage.²²¹

Douglas Edenholm's elaboration on the heroic and soft sides of Jesus is important to the construction of race as it emphasizes the issue of whether his imagined racial origin can be traced to the Nordic-Aryans. Referring to by then preeminent race scholars like Rolf Nordenstreng, who introduced theories on the East Baltic race, and Hans F. K. Günther (1891–1968), who popularized Nordenstreng's theories, Edenholm claims that certain historical findings show that Jesus socio-politically belonged to the Jewish people. In terms of race, however, he was not a “full-blood Jew” (*fullblodsjuden*).²²² This remark is substantiated with historical-biblical arguments added with racial content. In 734 BC, Edenholm claims, Galilee became an Assyrian province resulting in miscegenation. Instances of race-mixing are found in the Bible, he adds. 1 Maccabees 5 mentions pagan populations in Galilee, Matthew 4:15 speaks of – in relation to Isaiah 9:1 – “Galilee of the Gentiles,” and in John 8:48 Edenholm interprets that the Jews say that Jesus is of a foreign race since he is a Samaritan, given that they supposedly were a racially mixed people.²²³

To these arguments, Douglas Edenholm adapts a sort of race history in order to prove the alleged Germanic descendancy of Jesus. Jesus himself denied that he is a descendent of David and thus of the Jewish people (Matt. 22:41–46). His grandfather, Pandera, supposedly was of Greek descent and Herod placed “cavalier veterans” (*ryttarveteraner*) – some of whom allegedly were Germanic in origin – either in or adjacent to Galilee, meaning, says Edenholm, not only that it is possible that Jesus spoke and understood Greek but also that his blood was Greek-Nordic. The racial question of Jesus is substantiated with the argument that “northern Palestine since ancient times has been exposed to both Aryan and non-Aryan racial influences.”²²⁴ As a result, Jesus' way of life corresponds to the Germanic-Nordics. His subdued heroic side must be emphasized whereby Jesus will become an Aryan ideal, not an incarnation of the divine.²²⁵ Like Walter Grundmann, Edenholm seems to believe that faith in Jesus does not mean “destruction of race, but perfection of it.”²²⁶ Naturally, this affects how Edenholm conceives Christian theology. As only one half of Jesus' character – his “soft” side – currently is theologically applied, Christian religion declines. Edenholm affirms that this has serious repercussions on partly the racial characteristics of the Nordics, partly Christianity as an essentially racial religion. As he in terms of member of SRR acknowledged the *Kulturprotestantismus* view of religion and culture as two sides of the same coin, maintaining the race also meant maintaining the nation through which it is possible to find God. Having negative opinions of the contemporary “impious” civil order of liberal modernity, Edenholm addressed a theologized national rebirth.²²⁷ These challenges are addressed in his doctoral dissertation.

Stating that the Swedish people belong to the Nordic race, relying on studies by racial anthropologist Gustaf Retzius (1842–1919) and Herman Lundborg, Edenholm claims that a comparison with the other Scandinavian peoples shows that the Swedes are the most racially pure of them and thus of all the Germanic peoples.²²⁸ To him, this does not mark a contradiction

²²¹ Edenholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 178.

²²² Edenholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 182.

²²³ Edenholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 183–184.

²²⁴ Edenholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 184–185.

²²⁵ Edenholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 186–187.

²²⁶ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 545.

²²⁷ Edenholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 186–187.

²²⁸ Edenholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 4–5.

between pre-Christian Germanic descent and Christianity, quite the opposite. Adding the pal-ingenic and protochronic (from the Greek for “earliest time”) myth of Viking ancestry – which has played a key role in Scandinavian fascisms²²⁹ – Edenhholm notes, “Christianity undoubtedly has the rough, unruly Viking soul.”²³⁰ He also uplifts Sweden’s alleged glorious warrior past, e.g. the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648), to show that Christianity is important to Swedish racial characteristics, inevitably connected to what he considers to be the country’s magnificent national history.²³¹

Edenhholm’s construction of race, linked with religion, involves culture and geography. Speaking of “religious culture” (*religiösen Kultur*), possibly a remnant from the Linderholm era of SRR, Edenhholm elucidates that the culture of a country is a result of racial determinants (*Rassenbestimmtheit*) and geographical and historical milieus.²³² This means that despite the decaying process of modernity, the de-heroization of Jesus, and mainstream (Lutheran) Christians’ sole focus on ancient and unjustified rituals (e.g., the communion), the Germanic spirit remains untainted within racially pure Nordics.²³³

As with pastor Nils Hannerz’ Nordic Evangelic Faith, Edenhholm believes that Christianity reflects Germanic tenets. The Germanic purifies Christianity from tainted Jewish and Hellenistic elements, and Christianity gives the Nordic man an ultimate goal, ideal aim and trust in God.²³⁴ The most important aspect to Edenhholm, however, is the “racial soul” (*Rassenseele*) that he considers permeates them both:

The Germanic in Christianity is not just something more or less antiquarian or museic [...] it is rather something living, a source of constant inner renewal, a ferment that has the power to constantly penetrate and transform Christianity. This source, this ferment, can be found in the “racial soul” itself in its interaction with nature and history.²³⁵

The mutual exchange between the Germanic and Christianity makes them thrive. Edenhholm affirms that the essence of Christianity “norm” is found in the “real” Jesus and his gospel. But the Germanic is supposed to keep watch over their heroic-masculine natures and to prevent the Church from becoming otherworldly, unimportant, and harmless.²³⁶ On this point, Edenhholm uplifts the vitality of the Germanic heritage. He says that the transition from paganism to Christianity occurred on a later stage in Sweden *vis-à-vis* other Scandinavian countries, and that it was a natural process without sudden, violent shocks. In contrast to southern Germanic civilizations, therefore, the relationship between pre-Christian spirituality and Christianity is racially

²²⁹ Roger Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 75–76.

²³⁰ Edenhholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 38. “Das Christentum hat zweifellos den rauhen, unbändigen Wikingergeist.”

²³¹ Edenhholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 18, 31.

²³² Edenhholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 13; cf. Linderholm, *Kristendomen och kriget*, 322.

²³³ Edenhholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 56.

²³⁴ Edenhholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 51–52.

²³⁵ Edenhholm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 37. “Das Germanische im Christentum ist nicht bloss [*sic*] etwas mehr oder weniger Antiquarisches und Museales [...], es handelt sich vielmehr um etwas Lebendiges, eine Quelle ständiger innerer Erneuerung, ein Ferment, das die Macht hat, das Christentum immerfort zu durchdringen und umzugestalten. Diese Quelle, dieses Ferment, ist in der ‘Rassenseele’ selber in ihrer Wechselwirkung auf Natur und Geschichte zu finden.”

²³⁶ Cf. Edenhholm, “Germanskt och kristet,” 186–187.

nutritious. “The Germanic heritage as well as the continual influence of the ever-living Nordic spirit is considerable up to the present day.”²³⁷

Inspired by *völkisch* ideology, Douglas Edenhalm is convinced that the Nordic man can reach his potential once a spiritual comradeship between his Germanic “racial soul” and Christian belief is established. Concomitant with former SRR chairman Emanuel Linderholm’s 1935 article in *Religion och kultur* on the crisis of Christianity, Edenhalm emphasizes the importance of Martin Luther’s Reformation, even though it seems as if Linderholm and Edenhalm differed on what this particular “importance” is.²³⁸ Linderholm believed that the actions of Luther mark the rebirth of Christianity; Edenhalm that they mark the rebirth of Nordic man. With Luther, Edenhalm stresses, Christianity will in time regain its original masculine strength, liveliness and primordial health, sincerity and honesty, depth and intimacy, senses of reality and the necessity of work and the fulfillment of duty.²³⁹ To concretize his elaboration, Edenhalm elucidates that a racial “folk church” (*Volkskirche*) must be established in Sweden, influenced by the great fortunes of Swedish history, especially the periods of the Reformation and the Great Power Era.²⁴⁰ The church should pervade every aspect of Swedish society in order to produce, protect, and administer biological life through theological tenets based on race – what Walter Grundmann in *völkisch*-Christian manners termed a *Volksreligion*.²⁴¹ Through the concept of “racial soul,” Edenhalm emphasizes the need for a *völkisch* oriented Swedish folk church through a symbolic heroized connection between Christianity and the Swedish flag:

The Swedish flag dates from the time of the Crusades. Her cross has the golden color of the sun at the blue sky. Thus, it is for us a symbol of Nordic love of nature, Nordic urge for free horizons, Nordic longings of light, all hallowed by the Christian cross. But the flag tells us something more. Just as the Christian cross bears on itself the golden color of the sun, in Sweden the connection between the ancient Nordic religion and Christianity has been as intimate.²⁴²

Summary

The period of 1938–1940 in many ways diverged from the previous two. After the death of Emanuel Linderholm, the SRR at first glance seems to have shifted its socio-theological agenda. While there surely are texts that point in that direction, I have argued that the association’s “shift” was deliberately ostensible to reserve themselves from political statements considered too controversial or radical, although some members seem to have rejected the racial policies and paligenetic ultra-nationalism of Nazi Germany. I also proposed that the reason why they did not use biological arguments in their construction of race partly was because the influence of Swedish race biology decreased drastically after the retirement of Herman Lundborg in 1934.

²³⁷ Edenhalm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 290–293, quotation on 293. “Das germanische Erbe sowie der fortwährende Einfluss des immer lebendigen nordischen Geistes ist bis in unsere Tage beträchtlich.”

²³⁸ Cf. Linderholm, “Kristendomens kris.”

²³⁹ Edenhalm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 197.

²⁴⁰ Edenhalm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 206–211. See also Douglas Edenhalm, “Kyrklig disciplin och liturgisk frihet,” *Religion och kultur* 8 (1937): 208–209.

²⁴¹ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 545.

²⁴² Edenhalm, “Das germanische Erbe,” 294. “Die schwedische Fahne stammt aus der Zeit der Kreuzzüge. Ihr Kreuz hat die goldene Farbe der Sonne am blauen Himmelszelt. So ist sie für uns ein Symbol nordischer Naturliebe, nordischen Dranges nach freien Horizonten, nordischen Lichtsehens, alles geheiligt durch das christliche Kreuz. Aber die Fahne sagt uns noch etwas mehr. Wie das christliche Kreuz auf ihr selbst die goldene Farbe der Sonne trägt, ebenso innig ist in Schweden die Verbindung zwischen der alten nordischen Religion und dem Christentum gewesen.”

The result was that Nazi-inspired *völkisch* elements on how to conceive Christianity and race were incorporated. Only from these remarks, my research questions can be answered.

First, the association's liberal theology remained important to its construction of race. Cultural arguments were vital to stress the point that a culturized religion was quintessential in order to maintain the organic nation and the population's morality. Douglas Edenhalm both is representative to and divergent from this position, speaking of "religious culture" in his elaboration on "racial soul" but stressed the point to an extent that only Nils Hannerz did. Edenhalm not only masculinized Jesus in a way common to early twentieth century Swedish theology – he Aryanized his "heroic" characteristics through *völkisch* notions of Germanic blood. By so doing, he could stress that only those with "pure" Nordic-Germanic blood are able to live up to the characteristics of Jesus.

Second, the association's connection between race and liberal theology partly constructed a conceptualization of the Swedish people this period. The role of their liberal theology was found in the emphasis on culture. Hugo Jungner stressed the greatness of the Nordics' Germanic ethnos whose purity enables due to the eternal ubiquity of God. Douglas Edenhalm, in turn, claimed that the connection between the ancient Nordic religion and Christianity has been just as intimate in Sweden as the Christian cross bears on itself the golden color of the sun. Edenhalm's argument that the entire Swedish history can be explained by its "racial soul" was a dual product of Nazi German theology and the theological landscape of SRR, as is shown in ideas presented in *Religion och kultur* these years and his own article in 1941.

Third, finally, what had changed in the association's construction of race was that they did not longer apply mere biological arguments. Instead, the concept of race was by now comprehended from a *völkisch* point of view, supported by (religious-)cultural arguments. This gave the concept of race heroic content in a way that had not been the case during the previous periods. Seemingly, SRR used ideas from earlier periods but complemented them with *völkisch* notions imported from Nazi Germany.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to scrutinize how *Sveriges Religiösa Reformförbund* (Swedish Association of Religious Reform; SRR), a pro-Nazi Christian association in interwar Sweden, constructed the concept of race during the years 1929–1940. Having taken this aim as my point of departure, it was broken down into three subsidiary aims: (1) how the association’s liberal theological position affected its construction of race; (2) how the association’s connection between race and liberal theology constructed a conceptualization of the Swedish people; (3) if SRR’s conception of race changed over time. As large quantities of texts have been analyzed and interpreted in the light of their cultural and socio-political context, a hermeneutic content analysis has been vital to achieve this task. Biopolitics and political theology have been central to the theoretical approach to the empirical material – that is, a theoretical starting point stressing that the association considered its attempt to “heal” the race to be an existential pursuit by regarding the nation as an organic entity but also that this pursuit not only was about a construction of race. SRR’s construction of race relied on a deliberate spiritual maintenance of the nation whereby the linkage between construction of race and maintaining the organic nation culminated in that God himself would be rescued as he was believed to live within his creation through nations and human races. To be able to propose my final results on how SRR constructed the concept of race, the subsidiary aims first must be addressed.

First, the association’s liberal theological position was crucial in how the concept of race was constructed. Undogmatic in biblical-exegetical orientation, SRR stressed a view of theology that aimed for mankind to act in consonance with what its members perceived to be the *human* Jesus’ religious-ethical nature. Seeing Jesus simply as a human and not as an incarnation of the divine, this may have affected the association’s views on the nation as an organic entity and subsequently on the need to maintain the race. If God has left his realm of transcendence to live within his creation as an entity of immanence, the nation – and hence the race – becomes a fountain of this divinity. Preserving the nation and/or race thus also means preserving the existence of God. This gives further insight into why the association applied theories of race biology during my first two identified periods. Liberal theology enabled the SRR to embrace modern science. Still, the association did not solely adapt modern science, in which race biology was part, because such models were part of context – it mostly was due to its contribution on how to maintain the organic nation and race. The most pervasive aspect of the association’s liberal theology, however, was influences from late-nineteenth century German *Kulturprotestantismus* considering religion and culture as inseparable components. This affected how SRR considered the history of Sweden whereby also the incorporation of *völkisch* elements was enabled. The association sought a historical linkage between cultural Christianity and heroism, and it was imagined that the peak of this symbiosis occurred during the reign of Gustav II Adolf and Sweden’s Great Power Era. After the death of the monarch, the cultural influence of Christianity supposedly decreased resulting in that a national dissolution process was said to

have begun. Through an undogmatic faith, the association's aim for the future was that the Swedish nation should return to the heroic characteristics of the monarch, culminating in a palpable linkage between nation, culture, and religion. In short, through the association's liberal theology its somewhat "modernist" pursuit for a religious rebirth could unite with traditionalism in the form of a nationalist message, marked by an emphasis on Jesus' allegedly ideal human nature.

Second, the association's connection between race and liberal theology and how it constructed a conceptualization of the Swedish people mostly relied onto the association's sense of history. Stressing an undisputable Germanic ancestry, the association considered the Swedish population to be intrinsically heroic, pious, and righteous. These Germanic ideals were said to have peaked with Gustav II Adolf, to which the Swedish population must return through a religious rebirth in order to find one's imagined inherent, albeit hidden, traits of characters. As Nazi Germany took shape from 1933 onwards, *völkisch* elements were easily compatible with such notions. Elaborations on a *völkisch* Christianity were most common in the theologies of Nils Hannerz and Douglas Edenhalm. Hannerz emphatically adhered to a "Blut und Boden" conception of the esoteric link between a Nordic-Germanic race and the native soil; Edenhalm used the epithet "racial soul" (*Rassenseele*) as a key concept in his doctoral dissertation. Chairman Emanuel Linderholm also seemed to have been influenced by *völkisch* notions of Christianity, even though he did not adapt this theological model as clear as Hannerz and Edenhalm. Yet, Linderholm's radical conservatism, intertwined with pro-German sentiment, seems to have turned into a pro-Nazi position during the period 1934–1937. He continuously sympathized with *Deutsche Christen* in the German *Kirchenkampf*, he ordered Nazi literature on politics and race, and he claimed that certain components supposedly quintessential to the Germanic race were found in Jesus himself. After his death in 1937 he was remembered as one of the most preeminent names of what a self-proclaimed Germanic Christianity. From the Swedish population's alleged Germanic ancestry, SRR portrayed a religious-cultural genealogy stretching from proficient but now dissolved civilizations (e.g., Greek, Roman, Persian) to the present in which there also was a vehement emphasis on the need to dissociate oneself from Communism and Roman-Catholicism, both considered contradictory to Germanic characteristics. In short, notions of heroism and an imagined esoteric linkage between race and soil that allegedly emphasized Germanic traits of characters – enabled due to the association's undogmatic liberal theological sense of history – were central in how a conceptualization of the Swedish people was constructed.

Third, finally, it is evident that the association's construction of race changed during the demarcated research period. The issue of *how* it changed must be explained through the emergence of Nazi Germany. Due to the association's adherence to a religious-cultural view influenced by German *Kulturprotestantismus*, culture and religion were synthesized through which a religious rebirth of the Swedish nation would be achieved. Before the NSDAP seized power in 1933, the association used cultural and biological arguments separately in the construction of race. As the German national socialists had seized power, the SRR systematically incorporated *völkisch* elements into its theology. This meant that a distinction between culture and biology was left behind. Sole biological arguments ceased and ultimately came to an end after the NSDAP's seizure of power. Instead, the association portrayed a deliberate "Blut und Boden" inspired linkage between a Nordic-Germanic race and the Swedish soil.

Taking these results into consideration, suggestions on how to comprehend the aim of this thesis – how the SRR constructed the concept of race during the years 1929–1940 – can be presented. The result is based on two intertwined aspects: ideological-theological and

context. As for the ideological-theological, the association adapted a historical-critical exegesis rooted in late-nineteenth century German *Kulturprotestantismus*, seeing culture and religion as inseparable components. From this starting point, the association stressed the need for a religious rebirth of the Swedish nation, based on the pursuit for a regenerative return to the religious-ethical characteristics of the country's alleged heroic Germanic heritage. As for context, the association first used cultural and biological arguments separately in the construction of race. Apart from its liberal theological religion-culture synthesis, this must be understood through the social and political hegemony of race biology (at least during the early 1930s) and the fact that it was not controversial to express pride for the Germanic race in Sweden in a pre-fascist age. As the German national socialists seized power in 1933, the association adapted a pro-Nazi orientation, shown in how it propagated for a self-proclaimed Germanic Christianity and consistent support for *Deutsche Christen*. As a result, previous harmless elaborations on race turned into a construction of race based on the incorporation of *völkisch* elements into its theology.

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