



The Exemplary Lives of Christian Heroes as an Historical Construct

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In this text I examine how leading theologians within the Church of Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century elaborated on historical men as heroes in public speeches and in their works on the history of Christianity. The Christian hero as a prototype for contemporary Christians was emphasized within an evolving nationalistic discourse. The historical hero was of crucial importance for the idea of society as an organism and the conception of history and its development which some of the leading theologians within the Church of Sweden fostered. By analyzing the hero we can also elucidate the theologians' view of manliness and masculinity. Thus the role of the heroes can be found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism and gender.

Background

This article is part of my ongoing Ph.D. project on the so-called Lund High Church Movement within the Church of Sweden during the second half of the nineteenth century. The men who formed this movement had a conservative ecclesiology, a conservative political agenda, and a major influence on Swedish intellectual and academic discourse. From a broader perspective the aim of my project is to analyze the interaction between religion and the construction of masculinity in Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

It is clear that the theologians I investigate tried to protect the dominating and normative position that the Church of Sweden, a state church with a Lutheran confession, had held in Swedish society from the end of the sixteenth century up until the mid-nineteenth century. They directed severe criticism towards the modernization of society, the abolition of class society and the incipient female emancipation. They opposed liberal reforms and defended the very strict laws regarding religious worship. The moral and ethical standards of society were dependent on the protection of the family as an institution.

Since like-minded persons were appointed to positions of authority at the theological faculty in Lund during the mid-nineteenth century this faculty's influence upon theology in Sweden grew strong. This coincided with major changes in leading positions in the Church of Sweden, which strengthened the influence of the men at the Faculty of Theology in Lund even more. The plan of action put forward by the

Lund High Church theologians, which comprised both theological and political aspects, was distinguished by its conformism and was presented to the public in *The Swedish Church Journal (Swensk kyrkotidning)* between 1855 and 1863.

The position of the theologians can be regarded as a comprehensive European religious tendency, which was a reaction against the progress of liberalism and an augmented secularization of society (McLeod, 2000a, pp. 3–12, 285–289; Blückert, 2002, p. 115; Lehmann, 1997, pp. 10–13; McLeod, 2000b). This conservative program had an influence on the theologians' view on gender and masculinity. By studying High Church theologians Wilhelm Flensburg (b. 1819, d. 1897), Anton Niklas Sundberg (b. 1818, d. 1900) and Ebbe Gustaf Bring (b. 1814, d. 1884), my intention is to give an example of the conception of manhood, ideals of masculinity, friendship and the role of women, as well as the interrelationship of the church and Swedish society.¹

Aim and Questions

In this paper I aim to analyze how the theologians within the Lund High Church Movement used history and the concept of the historical hero. Obviously they were influenced by the concept of the hero as elaborated on by Luther and Hegel (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 80–137), but how did they apply this idea? Did they use historiography to further their political and theological aims within the Church of Sweden? It is my intention to describe how Flensburg, Sundberg and Bring interpreted history in a way which gives legitimacy to a certain kind of Lutheran faith and social order. In this paper I analyze the articles in *Swensk Kyrkotidning* which, by other scholars, have been considered examples of the theologians' view of the concept of the Christian hero and how this hero could promote a moral and religious social order. By looking at the text from a gender perspective and analyzing the characters of the heroes, I go further than previous research. In addition to this, I also scrutinize two speeches held in an ecclesiastical context: 1) a meditation held by Sundberg in the Riddarholm Church in Stockholm on the remembrance of the king Gustaphus II Adolphus in 1882, and 2) a sermon by Bring in the Cathedral of Linköping 1883 in commemoration of the reformer Martin Luther.

A hypothesis of this paper is that the heroes presented in the material were used to express a certain ecclesiology, the distinctive historiography of the Lund High Church Movement, a nationalistic conviction, and a sex-typing ideology formed by the Lutheran system of *tabula oeconomica* (the idea of three estates). Thus the hero of the theologians is found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism and gender.

To get a clear focus on the question of the use of history and gender, I explore the concept of history as articulated by the theologians, and how they depicted the heroes which they described in their works on ecclesiastical history. On a theoretical level I am inspired by the current debate among historians about the uses of history and historical consciousness. The Swedish historian Peter Aronsson relates historical relics (historic culture) with the use of history and historical consciousness. The historical relics are different kinds of source material: statements, traditions and so forth that make it possible to connect the past with the present and the future. Use of history occurs when parts of the historical relics are used to form an historical consciousness. Thus, use of history means manipulating

historical relics to form specifically meaningful and action-based entities. Accordingly, historical consciousness is the sum of different uses of history or, in other words, the perception of the relationship of the past, present and the future which exists at any given time. Aronsson argues that the use of history and the reinterpretation of history are intensified during periods characterized by a revolutionary or subversive stance (Aronsson, 2004, pp. 7, 17–19).

From the theories outlined by Aronsson, and in connection with the assumption that the nineteenth century was a second confessional age, I argue that it would be relevant to speak of a confessional use of history (Blaschke, 2000 pp. 38–58; Blaschke, 2002, pp. 7–9, 13–18; Jarlert, 2003). In such a use of history, historical relics are activated to support confessional aims. I consider it important to include religion as a category of analysis. Unfortunately it has been common to exclude religion within historical research and especially when discussing the use of history (Karlsson, 1999, pp. 57–61). In addition to the discussion of the use of history, the gender perspective and the question of masculinity are of major interest in my work on the Lund High Church Movement. The historian Mary Spongberg has emphasized that ideals of masculinity were an immanent part of the historiography of the nineteenth century and that history writing was used as a tool to foster men (Spongberg, 2002). Clearly the historiography of the time was male gendered and reproduced a patriarchal system. It would thus be reasonable to consider ideals of masculinity as a constituent part of a confessional use of history.

In his book *Chosen Peoples* Anthony D. Smith argues that nationalism and national identity have their roots in religion. Consequently, ethnicity and religion are key concepts to understanding nationalism and national identity. Smith argues that the ideas of the nation as a chosen people, the hero and the golden age were constitutive for national identity. As to the heroes, Smith argues that they were models of conduct, and that they exemplified true virtue and thus were worthy of emulation (Smith, 2003, pp. 1–25, 41). According to the Swedish theologian Kjell Blücker, an ecclesial type of nationalism grew stronger within the Church of Sweden during the nineteenth century as a response to sectarian movements and changes towards a multi-ideological society. The purpose of this ecclesial nationalism was to “preserve, reconstruct and develop a lost unity”. Blücker also emphasizes that a pronounced ecclesiology and a touch of nationalism was central in Church history writings of the period (Blücker, 2002, pp. 106, 159–161; in addition to this see Thorkildsen, 2006).

From the works of the historian George L. Mosse it could be argued that there also is a connection between nationalism and masculinity (Mosse, 1985). Blücker argues that both the national and the ecclesial discourse of the nineteenth century were male gendered (Blücker, 2002, p. 105).

The Concept of History in Svensk Kyrkotidning

According to theologian Erik Wallgren, German idealism and the philosophy of history accentuated by Hegel had a vast influence on the Lund High Church Movement. From this ‘right-wing’ Hegelianism the theologians could make a critical judgment of contemporary ideas such as rationalism, liberalism and pietism. A central point of departure for them was the conviction that history should be judged not from the abstract terminology of the present time, but rather seen as an

organically evolved entity. The concept of personality was closely related to the idea of society and history as an organism. This concept was not interpreted in the narrow sense of our time. For these theologians it referred to larger entities such as the nation and the people, and it was these larger entities that shaped history (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 80–83; Beiser, 2005, pp. 261–281).

In this structural system the freedom of the individual was restricted. It was only in interplay with the organically evolved social order that the individual had the possibility to create something new. Thus the concept of history and social order was an essential component of a collectivist way of thinking in which individualism and autonomy were strictly prohibited. Within society the individual was assigned to a certain position and function as a part of the organism. This theoretical superstructure corresponded well to the Lutheran teachings of the three estates, which was crucial for the theologians (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 83–84).²

Hegel's philosophy of history had a theological touch, since divine intention was said to manoeuvre historical development. The goal for this development was complete liberty, and was fulfilled when divine intention was brought to perfection. The goal was the victory of the divine spirit in all human domains. This predetermined development could be seen as an explanation of the insistence of the theologians on a certain Lutheran social order and uniformity. It could also help to explain the maintenance of what the theologians considered to be a God-given social order and their frenetic criticism of what they considered to be dissolving tendencies within society. The upholders of the ideas articulated within the Lund High Church Movement considered the Church to be an essential part of social progress. Accordingly, the Church should avoid isolation and express its divine message on all level of society (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 85–101).

Earlier Research on the Hero Theme in Svensk Kyrkotidning

Closely related to this concept of history was the idea of the hero. This doctrine could even be considered a condensate of the concept of history accentuated by the theologians. As mentioned above, divine spirit was seen as the creator of, and the driving force in, history. Progress occurred when the intention of this holy spirit was made fully manifest within the human social order (according to the theologians within the three estates) and in different individuals (Wallgren, 1959, p. 103).³ But in addition to this, God could further mankind's development in a resolute way. By choosing different persons in which God planted his intention for history and the future, God made further development possible. The men which were chosen were described as heroes. Initially God intended to let his spirit be active through all humans, but this plan was overthrown by mankind's sinful nature. In contrast to other humans, these heroes could grasp God's true intention as reflected throughout history (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 99, 102–104, 112–114).

The heroes distinguished themselves by their capacity to establish new epochs. They also had the gift to articulate the characteristics and ideas of a new epoch and they could transform these ideas into action. In this they symbolized, and actually were, the ideas of the new epoch incarnated. Thus, most of the heroes could be identified during historical periods which the theologians considered to be foundational. These periods were seen to be prophetic and they were normative prototypes for all other periods in Christian history. If contemporary times seemed

chaotic, these historical periods and their heroes could help with advice and guidance.

In his solid survey of the theological system of the movement, Erik Wallgren has shown that Flensburg was the one among the three theologians who, on a theoretical level, emphasized the role of the heroes most fervently. He viewed them as leaders and educators. The theologians held the opinion that society in general and the Church in particular were characterized by the work and progress of these great men. These manly heroes illuminated divine guidance in the history of the Swedish nation. According to Wallgren the theologians were of the opinion that a salubrious people should look to the exemplary lives of their great men. It was in these heroes that the idea of the nation was incarnated (Wallgren, 1959, pp. 104–106, 109–110). Thus Wallgren sees the connection between the nation and the historical hero in the work of the theologians, but he does not connect these ideas to the fervent nationalism of the latter nineteenth century. Written in 1959, Wallgren's research also leaves out the question of gender.

According to *Swensk Kyrkotidning*, heroic efforts were most common during the apostolic period and the Reformation. The apostolic period was considered to be a prototype for the Church in all times. In the Reformation, the hero Martin Luther appeared and reunited the Church with the lost principle of the apostolic time. It is important to note that Flensburg made a distinction between the earthly heroes who fostered the causes of religion and morality, and Jesus Christ who was seen as the absolute hero of all times. While earthly heroes try to restrict the sin of humans, Christ had defeated sin once and for all.

The Concept of the Hero in Swensk Kyrkotidning

The theme of the hero occurs in several essays in the *Swensk Kyrkotidning* (1855–1863). One example is an article about the relation of the sectarian movements to the Church published in 1855. According to Flensburg a sectarian tendency can be traced within every ecclesiastical community. The reason for this tendency is that the ideas and convictions of the Reformation tend to be defused as the Church is organized with a constitution, an established dogma and cult. This results in a spiritual slumber. In this situation certain men with a reformatory personality appear in order to restore the Church. Despite the heroic character of these men there seems to be some flaws:

The endeavors of these men are easily to be regarded as something separatist since they are considered to oppose the permanent social order of society. This feeling is even more supported since they often are afflicted with the character of humans to refrain from revolutionary tendencies. (Flensburg, 1855, p. 216, translation mine)

Thus, according to Flensburg, certain elected men, the heroes, could restore the Church according to its true nature. In times of crises and hardship these men stand out with their reformatory personalities. Like prophets they promote an alternative order which contrasts with the prevailing order. But as the quotation above shows, these men also have their flaws. They may even abandon the good

cause because of the temptation to receive earthly recognition by giving way to revolutionary tendencies.

In a review of the book *Die Zeichen der Zeit* of the German liberal theologian C. C. J. Bunsen, Sundberg surveyed the ecclesiastical situation in Sweden and emphasized the organic concept of history which was of crucial importance for him and the other theologians.⁴ Sundberg emphasized how the divine spirit worked in the present time and manoeuvred the further development of moral ways of life. However, the divine spirit itself seldom interfered in history. Instead God used different institutions in society and humans as tools to bring the divine plan to fulfillment. This caused a problem since there was a discrepancy between the intention of God and what actually occurred in the human domain due to mankind's weak character and sinful nature. In that sense the spirit of the times was a mere caricature of divine intention. Luckily there were certain humans that had a better understanding of divine intention:

A chain of witnesses for the truth could be found in history. In defiance of the flaws of humanity they are the tools through which God's intention in different times is executed. This task is not performed with the consent of the majority, but rather in strong opposition to it. (Sundberg, 1856, pp. 113–114, translation mine)

Once again we see that the hero (in the quotation referred to as a “witness of truth”) was a man who gave utterance to the divine message and thus stood in opposition to society. The quotation shows how the theologians regarded different individuals as divine tools.

In another book review, Flensburg discusses three books of the German church historian Karl Rudolph Hagenbach. It is interesting to note that Flensburg appreciates the books of Hagenbach due to the fact that they go beyond the general trends within the history of the Church. According to Flensburg the book is worthy of appreciation since Hagenbach paid great attention to the important Christian individuals of different periods. Flensburg is of the opinion that such a biographical historiography is of great value when it comes to describing the endeavor of the true Church throughout history:

It is not sufficient for the author to give a general and thus rather colorless account of the state of the Church during different epochs. Instead the innermost thought of the Church, its intention and strife during different periods appears in individual form in its magnificent characters. In men such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen, as Athanasius, Augustine and Chrysostom, as Luther and Melancton and Zwingli and Calvin, as Johan Arndt and Paul Gerhard, as Spener and Schleiermacher the Church has a concentrated revelation of the divine spirit which leads the Church in truth and righteousness. The inner thoughts of these individuals are the examples brought to our attention by the author. We will forget ourselves to live and fight and suffer with them, we take joy in their courage of faith, we take part in their interest, we take great joy in their victories. In connection with the men mentioned here and their equals, the survey of the author presents us

with a sky full of holy witnesses. They have all sealed the truth of Christianity and the Reformation with their blood or renounced the happiness and welfare of the present time to plant the Cross of Christianity in surroundings where the name of Christ wasn't mentioned before. Surely, it's difficult to imagine a more marvellous gallery of holy pictures. (Flensburg, 1857, p. 95, translation mine)

The innermost thought of the Church became obvious in great Christian legendary figures. As we can see in the quotation, Flensburg exemplifies this with some acknowledged priests or theologians throughout Christian history. Since the theological position differed among these great theologians it seems that the theological standpoint was of minor importance for Flensburg. Rather he seems to have considered their faithfulness towards the Church and the confession of the Church as the most important part of their heroic conduct. Flensburg considers these men to be role models and sources of inspiration for all Christians. With their lives and conduct these men were regarded to be holy witnesses of the faith. There are also other examples of Flensburg emphasizing the role of the heroes as a prototype and encouragement for high morals among other Christians (Flensburg, 1868, p. 13).

It is somewhat strange that Flensburg seems to regard all theologians or priests mentioned in the quotation above as guardians of the truth brought about by the Reformation since most of them were dead by that time. How then should one interpret Flensburg in this quotation? Could the emphasis on some of the great fathers of the Church be seen as if Flensburg himself belonged to another time, a time of upheaval from the Christian order? Perhaps great men of history and golden ages of the Church were inspirational for Flensburg in a time when the Church was being scrutinized. It is obvious that Flensburg regarded the way that Hagenbach surveyed history almost as a religious tract. In some sense edification seems to have been the most important part played by the historical heroes. According to Flensburg the exemplary lives of the heroes gave Christian leaders the strength to resolve the most critical ecclesiastical problems (Flensburg, 1857, p. 95).

In the passage quoted above, Flensburg also discusses the character of the great men of the Church. To have good, moral character was a major theme in the discourse on masculinity within the bourgeoisie and other groups during the nineteenth century (Tjeder, 2003). The characters of the heroes were marked by their courage of faith and their willingness to give their lives for the Christian faith if necessary. The quotation above also verifies that stated earlier in this paper: divine spirit and intention were expressed through certain chosen people, and obviously they were all men.

In another review, Sundberg discussed some published lectures by the Swiss theologian Jean Pierre Trottet. Amongst other things Sundberg reflected upon the first Christians, their community and ideals. At the outset of the review Sundberg stated that the apostolic period was normative for the Church in all times and he also considered it to be the age of Christian heroes. For Sundberg these heroes served as a model for everyone in all times. Since they were the Disciples of Christ they were fully aware of divine intention. The apostles were to be regarded as the pillars of the Church and its most distinguished teachers. Their great work during the

foundation of the Church rendered them a good example for the whole Church throughout history (Sundberg, 1857, p. 161).

Once more we can conclude that heroic conduct was reserved for men. As we have seen, Sundberg regarded these men to have a special position in the history of Christianity. The apostolic period was a normative epoch and Sundberg even claims that in this age the seed was planted for everything that was to happen later in the history of the Church. This position was motivated for Sundberg with the idea that at the beginning of each new epoch there were brave men who could designate the direction which should be taken in the future. Accordingly there were men other than the apostles who had this gift, though the influence of the apostle was not only restricted to the apostolic period but was to give guidance to all future generations (Sundberg, 1857, p. 161).

In another article Flensburg discusses the relation between the individual and divine spirit. At some point a person becomes aware of the will of the divine spirit. When this occurs the individual receives real freedom. He is then fully aware of the will of God. It is only when such a relation occurs that the spirit begins to influence the individual and use the person as a divine tool. The heroes are examples of individuals with such an understanding of the will of divine spirit. It is the hero who possesses the most sincere and highly developed personality. Divine intention takes its uttermost expression in the hero (Flensburg, 1859, pp. 19–21).

With regard to this quality the heroes are considered by Flensburg to play a certain role within society that can be likened to being the eyes, reason, leaders and educators of other humans. According to Flensburg some people adapt to this order and follow the heroes faithfully. Others dismiss the ideas of the heroes, and this insubordination causes consequences for all of society (Flensburg, 1859, p. 112–114). In this regard Flensburg has his contemporary Swedish context in mind—especially the current difficulties of the Church of Sweden. The hero in Flensburg's article is the defender of the existing order against tendencies of religious separatism. In accordance with the Lund High Church Movement the hero defends the social order based on the Lutheran teaching of the three estates. Thus the hero is important as the promoter of the political and the ecclesiastical agenda of the Movement.

The use of the hero to provide answers to contemporary difficulties also becomes obvious when Flensburg makes a comparison between the sectarian movements of his own times and the Reformation. Flensburg dismissed the idea that there were any similarities between these two. Even if the Reformation could be regarded as something new, it was not the intention of Martin Luther to abandon the principles of the Church as the contemporary sectarian movements were about to do. The only intention of Luther was to purify the Church from false tradition and to restore faithfulness to God. It was this subordination to God and his eagerness to work for the salvation of all people that drove him to lead the work of the Reformation with a submissive mind. This, Flensburg considered an act of a true Christian hero (Flensburg, 1859, p. 374). Thus, Flensburg used Luther to counteract the ecclesiastical initiatives in his own time which he rejected.

The obedient Lutheran had a true Christian faith and he made great sacrifices to bring other Christians to salvation. This is one of the most important characteristics of the Christian hero according to Flensburg, though it would be going

too far to say that the hero of the Reformation was able to fulfil his mission by himself or due to his good character. According to Flensburg, Luther and the other reformers doubted if they should overthrow the old system. For these heroes the Reformation meant sorrow and spiritual agony beyond words. In this difficult situation “the true and holy spirit” came to rescue them and gave them the courage to complete the work of the Reformation (Flensburg, 1859, p. 375). Thus, a hero was in need of divine support to succeed.

An important aspect of Flensburg’s hero ideal is the division he makes between the heroes of this world and Jesus Christ, who he regards as the ultimate hero. While earthly heroes merely restrict sin, Christ totally defeats it. Thus the position of Christ is unique and Flensburg considers him to be the only true hero of freedom. Compared to this, the achievements of earthly heroes are but momentary (Flensburg, 1859, p. 116).

The Exemplary Lives of Two Great Christian Heroes

Gustavus Adolphus

The Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus (1594–1632) occupies a special place in Swedish nationalist historical writing. Traditionally he has been regarded as the great king who gave his life for the cause of Sweden and Protestantism during the Thirty Years’ War. Some decades after his death on the battlefield close to the German city of Lützen he was considered to be a hero. At a commemoration on 6 November 1882 Archbishop Sundberg held a meditation during a sermon in the Riddarholm Church in Stockholm.⁵ In this meditation Sundberg spoke from the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt 16:25). This Bible passage refers to a certain demand on the Christian disciple where Jesus says that the one who saves his life will lose it and the one who loses his life for the sake of Christ will find it. According to Sundberg, Christ refers to two different attitudes. On the one hand is the selfish person who only seeks to satisfy his/her earthly needs. According to Sundberg such an attitude negatively affects the person’s relationship with God. Sundberg also emphasizes that selfishness has had devastating effects on both individuals and nations throughout history (Sundberg, 1882, pp. 3–4; Oredsson, 1992). On the other hand the latter part of the gospel speaks about the opposite kind of personality. In this case the passage refers to:

...those people who wander the roads of the Lord, those people who ignore their own needs and take the cross and follow Him, those who realize that the gift of life is *His* gift and that this is a gift that should be managed for eternal purpose and thus not be used arbitrarily. Instead it should and *must* be sacrifice, to honor his name when it’s requested. (Sundberg, 1882, p. 4, translation mine)

Sundberg states that the self-sacrificing human bears his cross and follows Christ. Such a person took his vocation very seriously and was even prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Christian faith if necessary. Such a person was like Christ himself and the martyrs of the Church. A Christian had to walk the narrow path of Christ to be able to win his own life. In doing so, a Christian gained the

greatest victory of all; when arriving at the end of their earthly life, they could defeat the power of death (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5).

The theme of putting one's life in the hands of God was a current one on the 250th anniversary of the death of Gustavus Adolphus. Since the subject of the commemoration was the foremost king of Sweden who died for a divine cause, Sundberg considered the day to be most important (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5). According to Sundberg, Gustavus Adolphus was a hero chosen by God who was given the task of glorifying His name. Thus, Gustavus Adolphus held a unique position in Swedish historical accounts:

Could there be any Swede—man or woman—who rejects to recall the glorious memory of the brief legend of his short life? Is there anyone who isn't called upon to send a sincere prayer of gratitude to God for the unconquerable force he bestowed upon the hero? In a difficult time he was elected to glorify the name of God. (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5, translation mine)⁶

For selecting the king as a divine tool, God deserves all the thanksgiving. It is God alone who makes the king a hero, with the purpose of glorifying His holy name. In that sense the king reminds us of the biblical story of Jesus.

In his résumé of the situation in Sweden during the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, Sundberg is eager to emphasize that the country faced major challenges in both the political and ecclesiastical domains. He especially considered the threat against the ideas of the Reformation to be evident. According to Sundberg the strengthened position of the Roman Catholic Church together with the alliance of this church and the emperor, threatened to overthrow liberty within both the domains of society and religion. All that had been won during the Reformation was now under attack (Sundberg, 1882, p. 5). In this difficult situation Gustavus Adolphus came to rescue the liberty won by the Reformation:

Without considering the risks for his life he entered, he won victory and fell. 'The best precautionary measure is to put trust in God,' he was recalled to have said on a previous occasion. In accordance with this humble and noble-minded idea of his *heart* he acted. This idea was the foundation for when he decided upon, and when he accomplished, his great achievements to defend the faith and the fatherland, which in his mind were *one* and the same. (Sundberg, 1882, p. 6, translation mine)

Here we can see clearly what characteristics Sundberg ascribes to Gustavus Adolphus. His reason to enter the Thirty Years' War and all of the political efforts of the king were a result of his humility and noble mind. For the king the major task was to defend both the Lutheran faith and the fatherland, which he, according to Sundberg, considered to be the same thing. In this respect the king had the same conviction as the Lund High Church Movement theologians. Sundberg was also of the opinion that the duty of the king to intervene in the European conflicts of the time was more important than listening to critics who considered the war to be a reckless undertaking.

It was Sundberg's opinion that the campaign of Gustavus Adolphus was marked by self-denial and outspoken confidence. According to Sundberg the success of the king during the war was a consequence of his Christian faith, and especially his devoted prayer life. Sundberg meant that the sincerity of the prayers of the king were the core reason for—and also the best way to portray—the success of the king and the Swedish people (Sundberg, 1882, p. 7). Sundberg also sees the intense prayers of the king as evidence of his altruistic intentions.

From accounts of the king's endeavors on the battlefields of Lützen on 6 November 1632 we gather that Sundberg was of the opinion that the king's political aims coincided with the protestant cause. Sundberg also had the opinion that the king sacrificed himself for the cause of the Christian faith and thus gained immediate entrance to the Kingdom of God. In this regard it is worth mentioning that Sundberg connected the act of the king with the condition of the Swedish people. Even if the war occurred on the European continent, the actions of the king had repercussions for those living in the fatherland. As a consequence of this, the entire population mourned the death of the king. Due to the symbiosis between Gustavus Adolphus and his subjects, the Swedish people were part of his extraordinary act of sacrifice (Sundberg, 1882, pp. 6–8).

At the end of the meditation Sundberg raises the question whether or not the listeners had lived up to the heritage of the king. Were people faithful to the confession of the Church and the fatherland in the same way as the king had been? By this emphasis on the close relationship between thanksgiving and critical self-examination Sundberg thus uses the hero as a corrective role model. Is the audience prepared to make the same sacrifice as the fallen hero? Sundberg seems to be of the opinion that the people of Sweden had inherited a great country from the heroes of previous epochs, but that they had forgotten to uphold the same moral standard for which the heroes gave their lives. Instead, Swedes of the nineteenth century tended to behave contrary to the heroes of earlier periods. According to Sundberg the people of contemporary times seemed to prioritize the needs of the individual instead of the good of society as a whole. As a result it was possible to disregard things that during earlier periods were considered holy and inviolable (Sundberg, 1882, pp. 8–9). It is obvious that Sundberg used history to promote a social order that he cherished. In this case an historical confessional event becomes normative for the duties of the Swedish citizen.

Martin Luther

If Sundberg meditated on a national hero, the bishop of the diocese of Linköping had another perspective when preaching about Martin Luther. At a memorial service in connection with a Luther jubilee in the Cathedral of Linköping on 10 November 1883, Ebbe Gustaf Bring speaks from the Book of Proverbs (10:7). This Bible passage says that the memory of the just is blessed. According to Bring this passage reminds us of the fact that there are phenomena and ideas which last in a world that is mostly perishable. If God supervises the act of a person, the consequences of this act can go beyond the lifetime of this particular person. Bring refers to the Lutheran teaching of the three estates and emphasizes that all persons, without regard to class, can strive within the domains of his or her vocation to promote the intention of God further than one's own lifetime. However, such individuals chosen by God are few and

therefore more important in this respect. These divine tools are leaders and pioneers on the road of righteousness (Bring, 1883, p. 5–6).

In his sermon Bring speaks about one of these selected men—the reformer Martin Luther. But Bring finds it important to emphasize that the jubilee and the sermon should not be seen as a cult offering to a genius, or as praise to Luther for having an unimpeachable theological standard. The thanksgiving should be directed to God and not Luther, since God was the one to choose Luther as a divine tool. Throughout his life Luther was brought up by God to become a reformer of the Church and according to Bring it was God who planted the ideas of the Reformation in Luther (Bring, 1883, pp. 10–11).

From Bring's point of view it is obvious that God used Luther for divine purposes. In some sense the intention of God is incarnated in Luther. Therefore, it is important to be careful with the tribute to the hero, since it is not the hero but rather God within the hero who accomplishes the good things. A sincere faith is a prerequisite to being a hero. According to Bring it was when Luther became aware of the importance of the principles of the Reformation that he was able to commence the fight for evangelical emancipation (Bring, 1883, pp. 11–12).

In his sermon Bring also reflects upon the concept of liberty and he argues that Luther was an advocate of freedom but that he had to fight misleading concepts of freedom. According to Bring he had to do this since there was a widespread misuse of the concept of evangelical freedom in his own times. Such false understandings of freedom caused some people to misinterpret divine intention and threaten the social order established by God. Since Luther, according to Bring, was faithful to the word of God, he could avoid such misinterpretations. Thus Luther purified the Christian faith but also defended the established social order (Bring, 1883, pp. 15–17). It is clear that Bring criticized certain trends within Swedish society in the late nineteenth century by preaching about these issues. As mentioned above, he and the other Lund High Church Movement theologians considered the established social order to be challenged by a dissolution promoted by religious movements who considered themselves faithful to the gospel.

Like Sundberg, Bring ends his sermon by emphasizing that gratitude toward God and Luther must include penance and soul-searching. Everyone had to ask themselves whether he or she had administered the heritage of Luther correctly. The question was if a person was truly Lutheran. Even if the purpose of a sermon is rather different from the purpose of historical writings, this sermon by Bring can be seen to be another example of confessional use of history. If this use of history is implicit in the first part of the sermon it becomes explicit at the end. Bring takes the example of Luther's adversaries to emphasize that even in the nineteenth century there were many people who searched for a false freedom not supported by the Bible. Many people are also only searching for their own success and welfare in the world. In accordance with his picture of Luther, Bring repudiates the widespread tendencies in his period to ignore the Church of Sweden for the sake of other religious communities. Even if these communities claimed to represent the Christian message and freedom, they resembled the false doctrines that Luther had to fight. Both then and now such communities formed a threat to the established social order (Bring, 1883, pp. 18–19). It is clear that the question of social and ecclesiastical order and the definition of freedom are central to Bring's use of history. In connection with

Aronsson's terminology, Bring uses historical relics to form an historical consciousness that promotes his ideology. To this end and to strengthen his argumentation, he used the great Martin Luther.

Conclusion

The idea that God chooses certain men to serve as a model for other Christians and to impel social change is an essential part of the concept of history held by the Lund High Church Movement. In research on nationalism it has been argued that the idea that certain countries were chosen by God, who furthered the development of that particular nation, was an important component in the nationalistic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century. This investigation also shows that the idea that certain men were chosen was widespread (Hutchison & Lehmann, 1994). It is of interest to note that nationalistic fervor played a prominent part in the rhetoric of the theologians. In the Swedish context it has been common to regard fervent nationalism as a phenomenon which had an impact on a broader scale and at all levels of society primarily in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

At an earlier stage the nationalist discourse was confined to the upper strata of society and among academic historians (Edqvist, 2001, pp. 17–18). Among the theologians within the Lund High Church Movement a nationalistic rhetoric and the promotion of Christian ideals were already interwoven during the mid-nineteenth century. Thus the texts analyzed contained a distinct nationalistic pathos. To take Flensburg as an example, he seems to have held the opinion that a nationalistic ideal was an inherent part of people's mentality and that this idea is epitomized by the chosen hero (Flensburg, 1858, p. 52; Flensburg, 1859, p. 24). It is clear that the Lund High Church Movement theologians expressed what Blücker refers to as "ecclesial nationalism". It is also evident that ecclesiology and nationalism was a central theme in the history writing within the Lund High Church Movement.

The theologians regarded the chosen men, i.e. the "heroes", as tools of God, having as their main task the defense of the Christian faith. This position often meant an exposure to criticism from people who offended the faith. The high ideals that the heroes expressed were often in opposition to existing trends within society. It is my conviction that the aim of the heroic deeds as articulated by the theologians, was that they would serve as role models. The hero symbolized a good Christian. He was characterized by his trust in God, his religious zeal and his willingness to refrain from the success and the wellbeing of this world to promote the cause of the Christian faith. Like Christ, he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the benefit of the salvation of his Christian sisters and brothers. Due to his faithfulness and strong belief he was the perfect example and source of inspiration for Christians in all times. Since the hero was well acquainted with the intention of the spirit of God he was considered an obvious leader and educator. He could subordinate himself to the will of God and was humility and self-denial personified. In a traditional Christian context these men were generally Christian paragons of virtue, but during the nineteenth century they often became associated with femininity.

Although the Christian hero was in possession of all these exemplary virtues he couldn't accomplish anything without the help of God. The Christian worship of the hero was strongly restricted and on several occasions the theologians emphasized that the hero was only a divine tool and thus the gratitude and the glory

was God's alone. Obviously it was impossible to focus only on the hero within an orthodox Lutheran context.

The Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus was considered to be a true hero. Like Christ he bore the burden of the cross. The fallen king had taken his vocation seriously since he had not hesitated to sacrifice his life for the sake of the faith. For Sundberg the king was an imitator of Christ and with his act of sacrifice, he like Christ, glorified the name of God. As to Gustavus Adolphus as a hero, it is important to note that Sundberg emphasized the importance of prayer for the king. Sundberg regarded this as the most important explanation of Gustavus Adolphus's success as king. It is also interesting to reflect upon the fact that his heroism was intensified by his death on the battlefield. According to Sundberg this heroic act—to give one's life for the faith—rendered the king even more glorious and gave him direct entrance to the Kingdom of God.

Looking at the two speeches held to honor the memory of Gustavus Adolphus and Martin Luther it becomes apparent that the myth of the hero was used as a corrective device for the people who listened to or read the speeches. To me, positioning the hero as an ideal role model seems to be the most important function of the myths about these brave men. In both speeches the question is asked whether or not the listener is prepared to make an equal sacrifice for the faith and the nation. In this regard one should note that the historical heroes were used to promote the nationalistic discourse of the nineteenth century. This is most obvious when considering Sundberg's description of the heroic king Gustavus Adolphus. In this king, the Christian hero and the national hero merged into one. In the case of the king, his deeds should be considered equal to the highest sacrifice of losing one's life for the Christian faith and the fatherland.

In the sacred roots of nationalism the hero as corrective and exemplary was very important, according to Anthony D. Smith. The sacred past stimulates emulation and results in an eagerness from the public to adopt the virtues of the hero. It is, as Smith emphasized, not the person of the hero which is important, rather their virtues, conduct and qualities (Smith, 2003, pp. 41, 171).

In connection to the discussion above concerning the use of history it is interesting to note that Smith (2003) says that, "Documents and artefacts and oral traditions could be used by nationalist movements, under the influence of Romanticism, to seek and recover a golden age for the designated nation, and to draw from it the moral lessons needed to mobilize and unify the people." (p. 190). Such a description fits very well with the actions of the Lund High Church Movement.

Even though the Christian hero often held a high moral standard, he did not have to be perfect. Even a hero could yield to a temptation and in his zeal for the Christian faith go too far. Christ was considered by the theologians to be the only perfect hero. He was the only one who had defeated the sinfulness which held humanity as a whole imprisoned. Thus, Christ was the only true hero of freedom (compare Throughton, 2006). Tine Van Osselaer (2008) has emphasized that Christ as the supreme hero was a distinctive feature of the Catholic Sacred Heart Devotion; thus the same role was given to Christ within both a Catholic and a Lutheran context. However, the strong emphasis on the grace of God within Lutheranism made this idea more obvious within this confession. If the grace of God was more salient within Lutheranism this confession lacked the devotion of the Mother of Christ which was

so important within Catholicism. This difference may be one of the reasons why heroism within Catholicism could be achieved also by women, while the heroes in the current material were only men.

The countertype of the hero was the person who only strove for success and wealth in the world. According to the theologians such selfishness had consequences, not only for the individual but also for the people surrounding them and sometimes even for nations as a whole. In some ways the ideals accentuated by the theologians seem to be in opposition to the middle-class ideals so strongly emphasized during the end of the nineteenth century (Tjeder, 2003, pp. 199–232).

Even if the context has a distinct character, the speeches made by Sundberg and Bring in remembrance of Gustavus Adolphus and Luther could be considered evidence for an opinion that certain men brought about historical change. However, the actions of the heroes depicted by Sundberg and Bring include contradictions. Sometimes the historical hero is honored because he upholds an existing social order, and sometimes the hero's contribution to societal change is emphasized. The hero is considered the upholder of the social order at the same time as he founds a new era.

According to the theologians one of the more important tasks for the hero was to protect the freedom of the church. As an example, a hero like Luther prevented the church from becoming a sectarian group. Thus, the hero ensured that the church remained faithful to its divine mission. As such a guardian, the hero personified the pure essence of the true Church. The hero also was considered to be a watchman for a certain ecclesiastical and social order, and the heroes that occur in the material analyzed in this paper closely mirror the ecclesiastical and political agenda propagated by the theologians of the Lund High Church Movement. Therefore, it is relevant to regard their efforts as a confessional use of history in this context. For example, it is clear that Bring utilized Martin Luther's life history to criticize contemporary phenomena to which he was opposed.

In relation to the work by Van Osselaer on ideals and heroes within the Sacred Heart Devotion we can see that heroes such as Gustavus Adolphus and Martin Luther are used to illustrate a confessional contrast. The most obvious example is of course Luther and how he's depicted as the guardian of the true church. In spite of these clearly defined confessional antagonisms the characteristics of the heroes are rather similar if one compares the results put forward by Van Osselaer and the ideals accentuated by the Lutheran theologians in my research. However, one difference between the heroic ideals described by Van Osselaer and those described by me is that the Catholic heroes focused more on pious activity, while the heroes described by the theologians within the Lund High Church Movement focused on defending the social order as it is formulated in the Lutheran teaching on the three estates.

Neither Bring, Sundberg nor Flensburg mentions women when speaking or writing about heroic deeds. In this regard I have not found any heroines in texts written by the Lund High Church Movement theologians. Despite this fact, it is not impossible that women could possess heroic qualities. However, I will have to include more material in order to shed light upon this question. Thus it is with some uncertainty that I argue that the confessional use of history only included masculine connotations. But from the texts analyzed in this paper it would be accurate to

consider the confessional use of history as an expression of masculinity. In accordance with Blücker and Spongberg I also argue that both the national and ecclesial discourse and historiography during this period were male gendered.

Gender is seldom expressed explicitly in the material. However, we can conclude that it was men—and only men—who founded new epochs, gave voice to new ideas and showed how the concepts behind these ideas should be interpreted. Even if gender is a subordinate theme in the texts, the theologians chose to emphasize men as heroes in a time which they considered to be revolutionary. Because they regarded the ecclesiastical order in Swedish society to be under attack, they used the exemplary lives of different heroes to “save” the Church and the orthodox Lutheran faith and society. In so doing they formulated a Christian masculinity which, to some extent, was in contrast to normative middle-class ideals. Furthermore, the theologians who wrote about these heroic men were men themselves. Certainly this must have had an impact on the view of history and heroic conduct.

The concept of history was fundamental to the theologians’ views on ecclesiastical and societal order. For example, the idea of previous golden ages can be seen in the material of the theologians. The idea of certain epochs in history as cultural models and a source of inspiration was a feature in both nationalist and ecclesial discourse. These periods were considered “extraordinary, canonical and sacred” according to Smith (2003, p. 171). Important and normative periods in the past and central figures from the past were used to put emphasis on the indispensability of the political and ecclesiastical agenda of the Lund High Church Movement.

An historian takes a risk if claiming that decades like the 1860s and the 1870s were times of unrest more than any other time. Is there any time which has not in some way been regarded as a period of transition and upheaval? Nevertheless, from the perspective of Bring, Sundberg and Flensburg this period, and especially the ecclesiastical context, was characterized by a paradigmatic shift. The intense philosophical/religious debates of the times could be regarded as the reason for an intensified use and reinterpretation of history. From the perspective of the Lund High Church Movement theologians one could regard the times and the future as uncertain. In such a situation, they believed it was wise to look for guidance from the exemplary lives of the heroes, even if that in many ways was an historical construct. With this survey I have illustrated that the heroes of the Movement could be found at the intersection of ecclesiology, historiography, nationalism and gender.

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Notes

¹ Biographical information: **Ebbe Gustaf Bring** (b. 1814, d. 1884), minister in the Church of Sweden 1837, professor in Lund 1848, member of parliament, bishop of the diocese of Linköping 1861; **Anton Niklas Sundberg** (b. 1818, d. 1900), minister in the Church of Sweden 1845, professor in Lund 1852, member of parliament, bishop of the diocese of Karlstad 1864-1870, archbishop of the Church of Sweden 1870–1900; **Wilhelm Flensburg** (b. 1819, d. 1897), minister in the Church of Sweden 1849, professor in Lund 1858, member of parliament, bishop of the diocese of Lund 1865.

² The *tabula oeconomica*, which were a part of Luther's Catechism, constituted three fixed classes, *ecclesia*, *politia* and *oconomia*. Privileges and duties differed in this system, though all Christians are equal. The idea of the state as an instrument to infuse Christian standards and morality led the theologians to repudiate all utterances of religious freedom that were introduced during the mid-nineteenth century.

³ The inspiration for the idea of the hero came from both Luther and Hegel. Luther used the concept *virii heroici* when he spoke about the hero. More on this in Gustaf Wingren (1942, pp. 166–170, 223–238). Hegel speaks about the hero and *heroenzeit* in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

⁴ In relation to the Lund High Church Movement, Bunsen represented an opposing view in theological matters. In *Die Zeichen der Zeit* Bunsen assailed the anarchy existing in political, religious and intellectual life, advocating toleration and liberty of conscience, and opposing the doctrines of Stahl and Kettler. The former of these two scholars was of vast importance for the Swedish theologians.

⁵ The Riddarholm Church is the final resting place of the Swedish kings. Almost all succeeding rulers of Sweden from Gustaphus II Adolphus († 1632) to Gustaphus V († 1950) are buried in the Riddarholmen Church.

⁶ Similar comments in A. N. Sundberg (1893, pp. 98–99). Also here Sundberg speaks of the king as a hero, though he emphasises that "solii Deo Gloria".

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