

## Sweden and the Five Hundred Year Reformation *Anamnesis*

### A Catholic Perspective

Talk by Clemens Cavallin at the *The Roman Forum*, Summer Symposium, June 2016, Gardone, Italy.

#### To Remember the Reformation

According to *Collins Concise Dictionary*, “Commemoration” means, “to honour or keep alive the memory of.”<sup>1</sup> It is weaker than the wording “Reformation Jubilee,” which generated 393 000 hits on Google, compared with merely 262 000 for “Reformation Commemoration.”<sup>2</sup> According to the same dictionary, the meaning of “Jubilee” is “a time or season for rejoicing.” For a Swedish Catholic, there is, however, little to rejoice about when considering the consequences of the reformation; instead, the memories that naturally come to mind are those of several centuries of persecution, repression and marginalization.<sup>3</sup>

The rejoicing of a jubilee is, hence, completely alien for a Swedish Catholic when looking back to the reformation, but it is also difficult to acquiesce to the weaker meaning of “honoring” the reformation, as implied by the notion of commemoration. The reformation in Sweden was not especially honorable.

The second part of the meaning of commemoration “to keep alive the memory of” is more suitable, but then in a form of a tragic remembering; we grieve over what we have lost. In the village where I live, for example, there is a beautiful white stone church from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was thus Catholic for five hundred years before the reformation, but has since then been a Lutheran Church. Instead, I have to travel by car for half an hour to attend mass in the Catholic Church, which is a former protestant Free Church chapel from the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> All the priests are Polish, and so is, I guess, half the parish.

The Catholic Swedish memory of the reformation and its consequences is then one of rupture, of a loss of connection between, on the one hand, the national and local identity, and on the other hand, Catholicism: the universal Church. Every time I see my village church on the hilltop overlooking a little lake, I remember what could have been, what actually once was natural, but which now is looked upon often with suspicion, or at least seen as something strange.

It is important to emphasize that for a Swedish Catholic the living memory made present by a consideration of the reformation is that of the Middle Ages; the imagination then stretches out to reach behind the period of five-hundred years, to what preceded them, and tries to reconnect. For this purpose, the old traces, the material remains of the medieval period are vital, especially churches and convents. Perhaps even more the ruins than the buildings taken over and modified by the Lutheran Church. They speak to us as living memories, or perhaps more correctly as dormant or repressed memories.

When I was a child, we lived on the large island Gotland, situated in the middle of the Baltic Sea, which is full of medieval church ruins; it is therefore called the Island of the Hundred Churches. I remember walking into one of them one day, looking up and seeing that still some of the vaults of the ceiling remained and that around me all of the walls were intact. I instinctively looked for the holy water font into which to dip my fingers, but, of course, I could not find it. The next place my eyes searched for was where the tabernacle would have been. I saw a cubic hole somewhere in the chancel; and in my imagination, the old stone structure came to life – once again, it had a beating heart.

It startled me, when toward the end of writing this paper, I found how central the Eucharist was to my act of remembering. The divine sacrifice had grown in strength during my reflections, as the organ in Oliver Messiaen's work *Apparition de l'église Eternel*, which slowly, powerfully – and, as it seems, filled with pain – moves to a crescendo.

With the Eucharist, my commemoration moved from the theme of human memory and history, to that of divine presence and sacrifice. The Greek word *anamnesis*, “remembrance” which lies behind the command of Jesus translated into English as “Do this in remembrance of me,” both deepened my historical reflections and brought them into the heart of Catholic Lutheran controversy.<sup>5</sup> The main question became the interconnection between different understandings of human history and of the Eucharist. And the word *anamnesis* proved to play a central role.

### [The Relevance of Sweden](#)

The particular Swedish history is, I believe, not only of relevance for us living in Sweden. The form that Lutheranism took in our country and the form of modernization that emerged when this was relaxed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have wider significance.

Sweden is, in a sense, the test case for a more or less complete modernization and marginalization of religious belief. It is a secularist, welfare state utopia, which, however, is showing signs of stress. Dangerous cracks have appeared in the edifice.

The canonization of Elisabeth Hesselblad (1870–1957) this year, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Swedish convert to Catholicism, points to a competing story, that of the return of the Catholic Church to Sweden. In October, this will be reinforced by the unprecedented “Joint Ecumenical Commemoration of the Reformation” in Lund, Southern Sweden. The particular significance of the latter event is due to that Pope Francis himself will participate and together with Swedish Lutheran bishops lead a “communal liturgy” based on the document *The Common Prayer*.<sup>6</sup>

### The Complete Nature of Lutheranism in Sweden

If one looks at a map of early post-reformation Western Europe, it is apparent that the reformation was mainly a North European phenomenon. Moreover, in countries like England, or what later became Germany, the Catholic Church did not disappear completely. The Nordic Countries are special by the thorough transformation of their societies in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, made possible by the ideology of Lutheranism.

In Sweden, Lutheranism fused with the early modern state created by Gustav Vasa, who became king in 1523; a process which continued with some twists and turns until the end of the century.<sup>7</sup> With the emergence of the Swedish empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Lutheranism became the state ideology, and it was, consequently, punishable by death from 1617 until 1781 to become Catholic – after that year one was merely expelled from the country.<sup>8</sup> Only at foreign embassies, as those of France and Spain, Catholic chapels and priests could exist, protected by diplomatic immunity.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, there is also the extraordinary event of the conversion to Catholicism of the Swedish queen Kristina in 1654, which I, however, cannot treat at length in this talk. Suffice to say, that she is symbolic of a longing for European culture (the classical Catholic synthesis as incarnated in the city of Rome) and dissatisfaction with the austere restraint of the cold and sparsely populated North. She managed to draw Descartes to Stockholm, but he suffered in the cold climate and died after merely a few months in pneumonia. So far, this is the most substantial Swedish contribution to “continental” philosophy.

From 1781 immigrants were allowed to keep their Catholic faith and build churches, but Swedes were not allowed to become Catholics, or even enter a Catholic Church.

It was only by new laws in 1860 and 1873 that the government decriminalized leaving the Church of Sweden, that is, if you left for another acknowledged Christian faith.<sup>10</sup> One important factor was that the queen, Josefina, that is, the wife of the Swedish king, Oscar I, was Catholic. Furthermore, in 1858, six female Catholic converts had been expelled from the country, causing an international uproar.<sup>11</sup> But, anti-Catholicism did not die easy and in 1910, the liberal and “ecumenical” archbishop of Sweden Nathan Söderblom wrote that Jesuitism was the most dangerous enemy of modern civilization, and in 1924, the bishops of the Church of Sweden issued a warning of the papist danger.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1950s, during the discussion of a new law providing more extensive religious freedom, which was introduced as late as 1951, some social democrats warned that Catholicism was anti-progressive and reactionary and that it was incompatible with the democratic values of the Swedish society.<sup>13</sup> Before the new law in 1951, a Catholic could, for example, not be a teacher nor a nurse. And it was only in the 1970s that the parliament abolished the restrictions remaining on founding monasteries. In Sweden, the Catholic-phobia of Lutheranism combined with the liberal and socialist view of the Catholic Church as the bastion of the old order and the main adversary of the new modern world emerging.<sup>14</sup>

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sweden developed from a protestant nation-state with the king as its guarantor, to the welfare state of the social democratic period, which stretched from 1932 to 1976, when it suffered its first electoral loss. Its idea of a Swedish modern society was built on a strong paternalistic state ruled by the Social democratic party, and was empowered by high taxes. It knew what was best for you, and in return you were provided with security and a basic level of material wellbeing. The state had monopoly in many fields such as television, radio, postal services, health care, education, and railroads.<sup>15</sup>

The goal was to build a brave new society that had cut its roots to old traditions and inequalities.<sup>16</sup> During the 1960s, many of the old buildings of Swedish inner cities were torn down to make place for modernist architecture. Functionalism was the aesthetic ideal.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the new Swedish state ideology was, then, modernism itself and though it created a decisive break with history, with the tradition of Christian civilization, the Lutheran state church, being at the mercy of the government, had to follow suit.

The first electoral loss of the Social Democratic Party (SAP) in 1976 broke the interdependence of party, unions and a strong state, but the socialist vision crumbled more decisively in 1989 with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

The struggle to have more than two (state) television channels was ended in the 1990s when the government had to admit defeat. When I was a child, no commercials were allowed on TV. Besides news, entertainment and documentaries, we could only see information from the government and its agencies. These small info-films on the necessity of wearing a life jacket and not to drink while driving a boat, or to remember to submit your income tax return form in time, was the closest we came to commercials.

To illustrate this mentality with one more example, when satellite dishes were introduced in the 1980s, a social democratic politician, Maj Britt Theorin, argued that private persons should be prohibited from owning such dangerous devices.

Give the children a chance, for heaven's sake; let them be spared advertising on television. Our party should no longer crouch in the wind of the right and commercialism; we must go on a counter attack against the exploiters of freedom of speech, whatever seductive guise they appear in.<sup>17</sup>

Severe restrictions were also the method proposed in the late 1980s by the new environmentalist party, everything for the purpose of protecting the children they said. However, in 1993, the radio monopoly was abolished.<sup>18</sup> Before that there was a pirate radio station in Sweden sending from a boat in the Baltic Sea, and a Swedish Television channel (TV3) broadcasting from London.

It is vital for a discussion of religion in Sweden to understand that the country has just emerged from this rather totalitarian state of affairs. And, I would like to add, conscientious objection in health care is not recognized, nor is, for example, homeschooling.<sup>19</sup>

Even after the state church system in several respects was dismantled in the year 2000, the political parties have kept a tight grip on the Church of Sweden. The members of the church assembly together with local and regional assemblies are appointed through general elections. In these, the political parties have their special groups of which the Social democrats is the largest in the Church assembly, but the former communist party is also represented as well as the new nationalist party, The Sweden Democrats. The Church is, therefore, thoroughly politicized and, furthermore, dependent upon the state for its financing. A social democrat politician recently even publically admitted that she was not a believer, but that the Church stood for good values, and therefore she was entering church politics as a candidate.<sup>20</sup>

This development has not been without criticism. An example of individual high profile protest is when Eva Hamberg, a professor of theology, and priest in the Church of Sweden and member of its highest teaching committee, in 2013 left the Church and her assignments.

She deemed it no longer possible to be a member due to the level of internal secularization within the church, she said. The last straw was the public questioning of candidates for the office of archbishop, something which is part of the regular election procedure. Antje Jackelén, who that year became the first female archbishop, could not answer clearly whether Jesus or Mohammed provided the best image of God, and, Hamberg noticed, the archbishop even considered that the virgin birth was metaphorical.<sup>21</sup>

However, no strong organized opposition of modernization in the name of tradition seems possible; as, in a sense, the Swedish tradition is, contradictorily, modernization itself.

At the same time, the Church of Sweden is losing members in what looks like an inevitable decline. The percentage of Swedes being members is falling precipitously. In 1972, 95.2 percent of the population were members: in 2015, it was down to 63.2 percent.<sup>22</sup> And of those only approximately three percent go to Sunday service every week.<sup>23</sup>

The function of Lutheranism in Sweden as state ideology did not abruptly end, ushering in the creation of a modern liberal secular state. The two ideals of a strong state (Lutheranism and the Welfare State) walked together during the 20th century. The social democrats have been adamant on not letting go of the control of the Lutheran Church, as the kings before them. This very close connection between state, modernization and religion (that is, ideology) colored the form of modernity and secularity emerging in Sweden (The Swedish Model) and is an important feature when discussing the legacy of Luther, considering that it was in the Nordic countries that Lutheranism was most completely put into practice.

### Swedish Modernism

Building on the ideological and social system enabled by Lutheranism, a particular form of modernism (modernist consciousness) emerged in Sweden during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which in a global overview seems extreme. This comes out clearly in the World Value Survey 2015 chart, which has two axes: Traditional vs. Secular Rational Values, and Survival vs. Self-Expression values.<sup>24</sup>

*Secular-rational values* have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable.<sup>25</sup>

*Self-expression values* give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, and rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life.<sup>26</sup>

The countries most influenced by Lutheranism are all present in the upper right corner with Sweden as the most extreme case, combining the level of secular rationality of Japan with the Self-Expression value of Canada.

The level of importance given to religion by Swedes, also a part of the World Value Survey, is not encouraging, that is, if you are sincere believer. For example, seventy-eight percent of people below twenty-nine years old considered religion as either not at all important (51%) or not very important (27%).<sup>27</sup> Only 6.2% considered religion very important.

One can understand the culture shock experienced when coming from North Africa, in the lower left corner, to Sweden. The ideological distance is immense.

### Canonization of Elisabeth Hesselblad

My anamnesis up to this point has indicated how complete the break with Catholicism became after a few generations, and how in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lutheranism, as managed by the state church, became infused with the modernist ideology underlying the social democratic welfare state.

The direction of my argument is simply that what Sweden is, other parts of the Western World might become; Sweden is on a trajectory of modernization that many other nations and countries seem determined to travel. The end point is a more or less complete break with the idea of tradition. This was initiated by the reformation and perfected by secular ideologies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, with the return of the Catholic Church in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a discourse of resistance that had Archimedean points outside of the Swedish nation state was introduced: instead of the revolutionary principle inherent in Protestantism, it rested on the idea of an unbroken tradition and on the papal magisterium standing outside and above secular governments. It was, as I have said, looked upon with suspicion, as it was, by its very nature, subversive to the closed Swedish society.<sup>28</sup>

I believe that the Swedish situation points to processes, some necessary, some possible, and some impossible, when not only the Catholic tradition has been decisively broken, but the very idea of tradition. In Sweden, the Catholic tradition had to be reintroduced, but what then to make of “Swedish” Catholicism, as these streams of tradition had flowed through the history of other nations, and were distinctively colored by other cultures and languages?

In Sweden, a scenario of nationalist Catholicism is completely unrealistic and this Swedish situation is, I want to emphasize, more instructive for the future of the Catholic Church, than the dying national churches, of let us say Italy, France or Ireland. In these countries, one can dream of a return to a unified national culture and with it a rebirth of Catholicism. To become a true Italian would then also mean becoming, once again, a true Catholic. Presently, when becoming a member of the Catholic Church, a Swede enters into a multiethnic *mélange* of languages and cultures.

However, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was not so, and the Catholic Church was still very small. In 1940, there were just five thousand two hundred Catholics in Sweden.<sup>29</sup> Of these half were born in Sweden, while in 1995, those born in Sweden made up less than ten percent of all Catholics.<sup>30</sup>

One of the Swedish converts to Catholicism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was Elisabeth Hesselblad, who was canonized June 5, 2016. Her life-story illustrates in an illuminating way, how the Swedish, the universal, and the international combine.

Due to the poverty of her family in Sweden, Hesselblad emigrated to USA in 1888 and trained and worked as a nurse. Meeting many Catholics, she became interested in the faith, and in 1902 she was received into the Catholic Church. At the same time, she became sick with what she thought was a fatal illness: a bleeding ulcer. Therefore, she did not finish her studies to become a doctor, but travelled to Rome, to die, as she thought, in the holy city. Instead, she experienced a calling to bring back the Brigittine order to Rome, to the house in Piazza Farnese, where St Brigid (1303-1373) had lived. At that time, Carmelite nuns were staying there, and in 1906 she was received into the Carmelite order, but wearing a Brigittine habit. Nevertheless, in 1911, she managed to found a small community of Brigittine nuns in the *Casa di Santa Brigida*. And in 1923, she also established a convent in Sweden, but due to the anti-monastery legislation it had to be designated as a sanatorium.

The mission of St Elisabeth Hesselblad was to work for Christian unity, and that mission was carried out by a particular act of anamnesis, both remembering and making alive Swedish Catholic history, establishing a link to the Middle Ages and St Brigid. At the same time, it was international, receiving its inspiration from both the United States and Rome.

A telling incident from the saint's life was when she, a priest, and a few Catholics sneaked into the Blue Church, the old church of the Brigittine motherhouse monastery in Vadstena, Sweden, very early in the morning of July 24, 1923, to celebrate a Catholic mass in secret. It



was the first mass for almost four hundred years in that church, and now with a Brigittine nun present once again. In Hesselblad's own words:

It was a moving moment in the silent morning hour. The holy words of the priest echoed throughout the spacious church; at that moment, the whole atmosphere changed; the once cold and desolate sanctuary was filled with a richness that no human words can describe.<sup>31</sup>

In this episode, commemoration is central: to honor and enliven the memory of the medieval Catholic Church in Sweden was combined with the anamnesis at the heart of the Eucharistic sacrifice. By this reconnection over several centuries, anchored by the transcendent axis, the Lutheran period was seen as a gap, a deplorable hiatus, which was closed, and with it, the fabric of tradition restored.

In this event, the central role played by the religious orders for a Swedish Catholic culture is also highlighted. Therefore it was natural and inevitable for the reformation in Sweden to abolish the convents, and so necessary for the return and revival of Catholicism that these were reinstated and reinvigorated.<sup>32</sup>

### Post Babel Church

However, the Catholic Church that took shape in Sweden from the 1960s onward was of a different character.<sup>33</sup> With the Second Vatican Council, the Church as an alternative to modernity was weakened. As experienced by some intellectual converts, also in, for example, England, this was a shock. The alternative one had turned to, instead surprisingly embraced modernity at the height of modernist frenzy in the 1960s, moving closer to Protestantism in many respects. Instead of reconnecting to the dormant heritage of medieval times, the gaze became directed toward the bright future of the western world.

Furthermore, the new practice of celebrating the mass in the local language had unfortunate consequences in Sweden; as, at the same time, large groups of Catholic immigrants arrived, and the diocese (there is just one in Sweden) was transformed into an umbrella for this multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual mix of peoples. As Swedish was not their primary language, many of them naturally instead went to, for example, the Polish, Croatian, or Philippine mass. Presently, there are over 80 different nationalities and 80 percent of the priests are born outside of Sweden.<sup>34</sup> The Swedish mass therefore cannot function as an anchor to a national identity or make the liturgy easy to understand for most of the parishioners. In a way, the Swedish language points toward the Swedish secular society and

the Lutheran Church, while the primary languages of most parishioners are connected to Catholic customs and songs.

Latin, on the other hand, could have provided unity among all these languages and cultures; moreover, it points back to the Middle Ages, the natural anchor of a Swedish Catholic identity, which as well provides a healthy cultural distance to the surrounding Swedish society. The latter is important as the parishes right now function primarily as temporary buffers for the cultural shock suffered when arriving in Sweden, and in two or three generations most are lost to the Church. To become Swedish is to become secular.

### [Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation](#)

On the last day of October this year, in Lund in Southern Sweden, a unique inauguration of the reformation commemoration year of 2017 will take place, led by Swedish Lutheran bishops and the pope, in an expression of ecumenical good will.

The pope's choice of coming to Sweden has singled out the country as the focal point for his attempts at making peace with the reformation and the protestant world. It also brings together the themes of my anamnesis into one event, as during the first half of the twelfth century, Lund was the Metropolitan Archdiocese not just for Sweden, but also for Norway and Denmark. That the pope comes there is, therefore, significant for Swedish Catholics.<sup>35</sup>

Still, how are we to understand this event, and what is the intention of the pope? Does he realize the importance of Swedish history, or is he more intent on a Lutheran/Catholic convergence in the process of modernization and *aggiornamento*? Naturally, it is difficult to discuss this, as the event has not yet transpired, and negotiations about concrete details are under way – still there are documents at which we can look in order to gain a clearer picture of the nature and intended meaning of the event.

On October 31, as part of a day of ecumenical meetings and gestures, there will be a common worship service based on the Catholic-Lutheran “Common Prayer” liturgical guide. This, in its turn, is based on an almost one hundred pages long joint study document named *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. I cannot provide you with a thorough analysis of the contents of the two texts, but it will suffice to point out some tendencies relevant to the theme of this talk.

The first impression is the very positive view of Luther that runs like a red thread throughout *From Conflict to Communion*. Its background assumption is the thesis that more unites than

divides Lutherans and Catholics.<sup>36</sup> The year of 2017 is seen as an opportunity to discuss the person and thought of Luther and, “to develop perspectives for the remembrance and appropriation of the Reformation today.”<sup>37</sup> The text paints a picture of Luther as a religious hero who found the way to a more true form of Catholicism, “The breakthrough for Catholic scholarship came with the thesis that Luther overcame within himself a Catholicism that was not fully Catholic.”<sup>38</sup>

The combination of “remembrance and appropriation” nicely brings forth the ideas of honoring and of making present inherent in the notion of commemoration. We are not only to remember in a neutral way the reformation, but also to appropriate its vital principles, I suppose here in the meaning of taking them to our heart.

In the liturgical guide, the *Common Prayer*, the positive image of Luther is even more strongly worded. The section called Thanksgiving, is intended to express, “our mutual joy for the gifts received and rediscovered in various ways through the renewal and impulses of the Reformation. After the prayer of thanksgiving, the whole assembly joins in singing thanks for and praise of God’s work.”<sup>39</sup>

In both the Lutheran and Catholic “reading” part of the thanksgiving section, it is Luther and his works toward which thanksgiving is expressed. First the Lutheran, “Lutherans are thankful in their hearts for what Luther and the other reformers made accessible to them”<sup>40</sup> and the Catholic reading is concluded with, “The ecumenical journey enables Lutherans and Catholics to appreciate together Martin Luther’s insight into and spiritual experience of the gospel of the righteousness of God, which is also God’s mercy.”<sup>41</sup>

One of the two “presiders,” then concludes this section with the following prayer of gratitude for the reformation.

Thanks be to you O God for the many guiding theological and spiritual insights that we have all received through the Reformation. Thanks be to you for the good transformations and reforms that were set in motion by the Reformation or by struggling with its challenges. Thanks be to you for the proclamation of the gospel that occurred during the Reformation and that since then has strengthened countless people to live lives of faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

After a section of repentance and expressions of regret for the mutual exaggeration and caricature on the part of Lutherans and Catholics in the sixteenth century (and physical and psychological violence) there is a sign of peace, the reading of the gospel on the true vine (Jn 15:1-5) and a common sermon, delivered by the two presiders. The instruction emphasizes

that the sermon should focus on Christ as the center and on the commemoration of the Reformation, which should be a celebration of Jesus Christ since the reformers saw their main task in pointing to Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life” and calling people to trust in Christ. Christ should be celebrated as Martin Luther and the other reformers only sought to be “witnesses to Christ.”

Then “the five imperatives” are ritually read by young people. Between these readings, young children or Catholic/Lutheran families light successively one of five large candles, either on the altar or close to it. The five commitments are: to always begin from the perspective of unity; to let ourselves be transformed in the encounter with each other; to seek visible unity; to rediscover the power of the gospel for our time; and to give witness together to the mercy of God. Then a song of light is sung.

In the view of the quotes above, it is no surprise that the council of Trent is presented as primarily a reaction to *perceived* protestant errors, and therefore as not quite authentic. With the Second Vatican council, *From Conflict to Communion* states, the church could, however, correct its infelicitous defensive and confessional approach – which is not suitable for an ecumenical conversation where the emphasis is on what unites not what divides.

This narrative comes to a critical point under the heading “Catholic Concerns regarding the Eucharist.” As regards the notion transubstantiation the text says, “This concept seemed, in the Catholic view, to be the best guarantee for maintaining the real presence of Jesus Christ in the species of bread and wine and for assuring that the full reality of Jesus Christ is present in each of the species.”<sup>42</sup> To use the verb “seem” clearly indicates that this has not objective value for Catholics and that other notions could be used for the same purpose and perhaps even with better effect.

When it comes to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, this theme of conceptual insecurity is continued in that Catholics of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are portrayed as having struggled to express the Eucharist as a sacrifice, but that due to lack of “adequate categories,” they had to wait until Vatican II for the concept of commemoration (*anamnesis*).

As a result of the loss of an integrative concept of commemoration, Catholics were faced with the difficulty of the lack of adequate categories with which to express the sacrificial character of the eucharist. Committed to a tradition going back to patristic times, Catholics did not want to abandon the identification of the eucharist as a real sacrifice even while they struggled to affirm the identity of this eucharistic sacrifice with the unique sacrifice of Christ. The renewal of sacramental and liturgical

theology as articulated in the Second Vatican Council was needed to revitalize the concept of commemoration (*anamnesis*).<sup>43</sup>

In *From Conflict to Communion*, the notion of commemoration, consequently, provides a crucial link between the Eucharist and the Reformation Year of 2017. This interpretive key signals not only the intention of the text to honor the Reformation and the act of keeping its memory alive, but also that this form of remembering points the way to a common understanding of the Eucharist; a development enabled, it says, by the Second Vatican Council.

Consequently, under the heading, “Convergence in understanding Eucharistic sacrifice,” the tool put forward is the very notion of anamnesis, which is supposed to unite the different approaches of Catholics and Lutherans in a common understanding of the Eucharist. This convergence, however, must be zealously enforced.

The liturgical form of the holy meal must, however, exclude everything that could give the impression of repetition or completion of the sacrifice on the cross. If the understanding of the Lord’s Supper as a real remembrance is consistently taken seriously, the differences in understanding the eucharistic sacrifice are tolerable for Catholics and Lutherans.<sup>44</sup>

This principle requires interpretation, because what is “an impression” if not something existing in the eye of the beholder. Why not simply dissuade from repetition or completion themselves? A focus on appearance and impressions can be used to dilute a Catholic understanding of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic, and with it the sacrificial role of the priest. That the text also adds the remark that the practice of Eucharistic adoration should not diminish the meal character of the Eucharist indicates a protestant tendency.

These passages about the Eucharist are central as among the questions regarding the visit of the pope that are listed on the webpage of the Church of Sweden, one can read, “Is there an effort/dream of becoming a united Church again?”<sup>45</sup> The answer is as follows:

What we foremost wish is that the common celebration of the Eucharist will be officially possible. This is especially important for families where members belong to different denominations. The prayer of Jesus that we all may be one is a guide for us. The visible unity (which is automatically not the same as organizational unity) so that the world will believe is our mission and our goal. (my translation)<sup>46</sup>

The theme of a common Eucharistic celebration is also emphasized in the article “Divided Christianity Travels together toward the Future” by the present archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Antje Jackelén.<sup>47</sup> Her act of commemoration is self-critical and even mentions

Luther's antisemitism, but it ends by first quoting Pope Francis on the reception of the Eucharist in mixed Catholic/Lutheran marriages.

The Pope recently was asked by a Lutheran woman married with a Catholic how they could receive the Eucharist together instead of separately each in their own church. The Pope reminded the woman that we have the same baptism and that the spouses walk a common road. "And you should also teach your children that, irrespective if it is done in a Lutheran or Catholic way", he said. Regarding differences in the view of the Eucharist between Lutherans and Catholics the Pope pointed out, "Life is larger than explanations and interpretations! Think always of the baptism. One faith, one baptism, one Lord, that is what Paul tells us. And draw your conclusions from that...Pray to the Lord and walk the way forward." (my translation)<sup>48</sup>

Then the archbishop quotes Cardinal Walter Kasper on that ecumenism and catholicity are two sides of the same coin: that the complete realization of Catholicism is possible only through ecumenical exchange. In the same spirit, the Cardinal is also to have said that ecumenism does not mean the conversion of one church to another, but the conversion of everyone to Christ.

I suppose more detailed insights into the mind of Cardinal Kasper on this issue can be found in his recently released book on Luther (with the subtheme of mercy), *Martin Lutero: Una prospettiva ecumenica*.<sup>49</sup> (It will appear in English in December 2016.)

With the last two years intense confrontation on mercy and the reception of the Eucharist in mind (including an apparent approval by the Pope of intercommunion in precisely the kind of case that the Church of Sweden mentions as especially important), it is not wholly surprising if a similar gesture, and ensuing controversy, will take place in connection with the visit of the pope to Sweden.<sup>50</sup>

### Final thoughts

As I said in the beginning, I was somewhat surprised that the theme of the Eucharist increased in strength as I worked with this talk. In the notion of commemoration, anamnesis, the central act of the Eucharist and my historical exploration came together.

The perfect symbol of this is the mass that Elisabeth Hesselblad and her fellow Catholics celebrated in the Blue Church in 1923, reestablishing the link with the medieval church through both the Eucharist and the physical building of the church.

In this way, divine presence and sacrifice enriched the human act of remembrance and provided it with transformative power.

In the documents written for the Lutheran Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation, the notion of anamnesis is also used as the connecting link between the historical imagination and the Eucharist. However, in Sweden the danger is that this form of anamnesis instead turns into amnesia, as in 2014 when the Uppsala diocese of the Church of Sweden celebrated its 850-years jubilee. In the exhibitions and brochures connected to this jubilee, the organizers presented the Church of Sweden (a name coined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) as if it had a continuous history back to the ninth century. In protest, twelve Swedish Catholic university professors wrote the article “The Church of Sweden tries to monopolize history.”<sup>51</sup>

This view of history is also present on the Church of Sweden’s homepage.

During the Middle Ages, the Church of Sweden was part of the Roman-Catholic church. Then many of the churches in which we celebrate mass were built. /.../ During the Middle Ages the Church in Sweden was under the authority of the Pope. This was changed during the reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Then an autonomous Swedish national Church took form with an Evangelical-Lutheran confession and the king as the head of the national Church. (my translation)<sup>52</sup>

The continuity thesis of the Church of Sweden and the institutional form of memory it creates stands in tension to that of Swedish Catholics, who see themselves as the exiled church that has returned.

Therefore, for me and, I think, for many “native” Swedish Catholics, the best symbol for the Catholic Church is the medieval church ruins, where the rupture is so obvious; where the Eucharistic sacrifice has not been celebrated since the Middle Ages. In those places, our anamnesis becomes almost a physical experience of presence; one can sense the sleeping potential of a rebirth made possible by the sacrifice of the Mass.

And perhaps this is the main relevance of the Swedish situation for the worldwide Catholic Church. It speaks of a period after complete rupture, when nothing seems to be left; it speaks about the possibility of once again celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice in the old stone ruin, with its gothic arches and the sky as roof.

To this one could add that Swedish history provides a witness of the danger of being too closely connected to a national identity or a state – it points to the importance of the universal Church and of a lingua franca.

Finally, I would like to tell you that when the Catholic Church in the 1980s got permission to build a new church on Gotland within the medieval city walls of its capital, Visby, the archeologists, when doing their obligatory excavation, found a house structure. Amazingly,

the position of its walls matched exactly those on the blueprint of the proposed new church, which was then symbolically built on top of the old structure. They also found a head of a Christ figure and some rosary beads. Therefore, half of the church is old and beneath the ground, while the other half is new and above ground.

At least to me, this is a powerful sign of hope for the future. But, I hope, *Deo volente*, we may not have to wait four hundred years this time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Collins concise dictionary Plus*, chief ed. Patrick Hanks (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1989), s.v. “commemoration.”

<sup>2</sup> The search was done 2016.05.28.

<sup>3</sup> A good example of this mode of remembrance is Magnus Nyman’s overview of the reformation and Swedish Catholicism during the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in his book *Förlorarnas historia* [The history of the losers]. He writes, “This book has slowly grown as the result of my interest in what took place from “the perspective of the losers” during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Sweden. The losers are for me primarily the Swedish Catholics and their customs and a culture that since centuries had so deeply formed Swedish mentality. Through the victories of the reformation, Sweden was in many ways placed outside the mainstream of European culture, and many of the spiritual values that had been so laboriously built up during the Middle Ages were destroyed. How could this happen? Was really the late medieval Church and culture doomed to destruction?” Magnus Nyman, *Förlorarnas historia* (Uppsala: Katolska bokförlaget, 1997), 19–20.

<sup>4</sup> From 1961 to 1971, it belonged to The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden.

<http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/vastragotaland/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/publikationer/2014/2014-34/bilaga-5-alvsborg-3.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> For example, Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press), 243–247.

For Plato anamnesis was a remembering of what one already knew: the eternal truths. When recapturing a tradition that seemed dead and extinct, but which slumbered under the surface, or which had taken a meandering way outside of the nation, this meaning is appropriate, as in a consideration of the reformation and the Catholic Church in Sweden. Also, the medical meaning of anamnesis is applicable to this talk. By posing questions to the patient, the doctor probes his or her memory for information on the sickness and its course. In the same way, I am to pose certain questions to our collective memory, to our history, to understand what went wrong, why, and what we can do about it.

<sup>6</sup> Liturgical Task Force of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, “Common Prayer: From Conflict to Communion Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017” (2016), [https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/dtpw-lrc-liturgy-2016\\_en.pdf](https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/dtpw-lrc-liturgy-2016_en.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See, Martin Berntson, *Klostren och Reformationen* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2003), for an account focusing on the dissolution of the monasteries.

<sup>8</sup> However, in his article, ”Myten om enhetskyrkan” [The myth of the unitary church], Martin Berntson, associate professor of the history of Christianity, criticizes this picture of a homogenous Sweden and state church. He probes the opposite perspective, that the hard rules and regulations put into place are symptoms of increasing pluralism during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. His argument is made in relation to the present teaching of history in Swedish schools and the necessity of confronting the emerging nationalism that sees immigration as a threat, and as a recent phenomenon, destroying an earlier homogenous Swedish Society. Martin Berntson, “Myten om enhetskyrkan: En diskussion om historievetenskapliga perspektiv i religionskunskapsämnet,” in ”Det historiska perspektivet,” ed. Hans Albin Larsson, special issue, *Aktuellt om historia*, no. 2–3 (2015): 133–153.

<sup>9</sup> Nyman, *Förlorarnas historia*, 229.

<sup>10</sup> Per Dahlman, *Kyrka och Stat i 1860 års svenska religionslagstiftning* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Yvonne Maria Werner, *Katolsk manlighet i Skandinavien Katolsk manlighet: Det antimoderna alternativet – katolska missionärer och lekmän i Skandinavien* (Göteborg: Makadam förlag, 2014 ), 46.

<sup>12</sup> Yvonne Maria Werner “Den katolska faran” *Scandia* 81: 1 (2015), 48.

<sup>13</sup> Yvonne Maria Werner, *Katolsk manlighet i Skandinavien Katolsk manlighet*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> Yvonne Maria Werner, “Den katolska faran,” 40–61.

<sup>15</sup> Sven Aspling, *100 år i Sverige : vägen till folkhemmet* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Karl-Olov Arnstberg, *Miljonprogrammet* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2000).



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- <sup>17</sup> [https://sv.wikiquote.org/wiki/Maj\\_Britt\\_Theorin](https://sv.wikiquote.org/wiki/Maj_Britt_Theorin). See also, <http://data.riksdagen.se/fil/6348FA5E-5E99-4F97-B8BF-EDB9E5B52D3D>
- <sup>18</sup> Still, if you own a television set you have to pay a special fee that goes to SVT, the state television.
- <sup>19</sup> Anna Heino et al., “Conscientious objection and induced abortion in Europe” *European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care* 18, no. 4 (2013): 232.
- <sup>20</sup> Magnus Jarefors, “Margareta Winberg (S) på väg in i politiken igen,” *Östersunds-posten*, June 7, 2013, [www.op.se/jamtland/ostersund/margareta-winberg-s-pa-vag-in-i-politiken-igen](http://www.op.se/jamtland/ostersund/margareta-winberg-s-pa-vag-in-i-politiken-igen).
- <sup>21</sup> Richard Ringqvist, “Ledande teolog går ur Svenska kyrkan,” *Dagen*, October 10, 2013, [www.dagen.se/ledande-teolog-gar-ur-svenska-kyrkan-1.106846](http://www.dagen.se/ledande-teolog-gar-ur-svenska-kyrkan-1.106846).
- <sup>22</sup> “Svenska kyrkans medlemsutveckling år 1972-2014” [www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1470789](http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1470789).
- <sup>23</sup> Jan Strid, ”Tro, religion och kyrkobesök i Göteborg,” in *En region för alla? Medborgare, människor och medier i Västsverige*, eds. Annika Bergström & Jonas Ohlsson (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet SOM-institutet, 2013), 219.
- <sup>24</sup> [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/images/Cultural\\_map\\_WVS6\\_2015.jpg](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/images/Cultural_map_WVS6_2015.jpg)
- <sup>25</sup> [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp)
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> “F00001433-WV6\_Results\_Sweden\_2011\_v\_2016\_01\_01.pdf” [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp)
- <sup>28</sup> Of course, Catholicism can also become a kind of national ideology, but such variants of Gallicanism always lives in a fundamental contradiction with the universal nature of the Catholic Church, and its petrine office.
- <sup>29</sup> Gärde, Johan, *Från invandrarkyrka till mångkulturellt samfund: En kyrkosociologisk analys av katolska kyrkan i Sverige från 1970-tal till 1990-tal* (PhD thesis Uppsala University, 1999), 92.
- <sup>30</sup> Gärde, *Från invandrarkyrka till mångkulturellt samfund*, 97.
- <sup>31</sup> Björn Göransson, *Maria Elisabeth Hesselblad: Ett helgon från Sverige* (Ängelholm: Catholica, 2016), 133.
- <sup>32</sup> See Berntson, Martin, *Klostren och Reformation*, Norma, Skellefteå, 2003; Nyman, Magnus, *Förlorarnas historia*, Katolska bokförlaget, Uppsala, 1997.
- <sup>33</sup> Hans Hellström, ed., *Stockholms katolska stift 50 år* (Stockholm: Veritas, 2003).
- <sup>34</sup> Gärde, *Från invandrarkyrka till mångkulturellt samfund*, 226.
- <sup>35</sup> Nowadays, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden resides in Uppsala; and the Catholic bishop in Stockholm.
- <sup>36</sup> The Lutheran World Federation & The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017, Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity* (Leipzig, Bonn: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Bonifatius, 2013) §1, §17.
- <sup>37</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, §3.
- <sup>38</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, §21.
- <sup>39</sup> Liturgical Task Force of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *Common Prayer: From Conflict to Communion, Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (2016), 6–7, [www.lutheranworld.org/content/joint-common-prayer-lutheran-catholic-common-commemoration-reformation-2017](http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/joint-common-prayer-lutheran-catholic-common-commemoration-reformation-2017).
- <sup>40</sup> *Common Prayer*, 13.
- <sup>41</sup> *Common Prayer*, 13.
- <sup>42</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, §149.
- <sup>43</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, §151. The basis for passages on the Eucharist is *The 1978 Lutheran-Roman Catholic Final Report on the Eucharist*.
- <sup>44</sup> *From Conflict to Communion*, §159.
- <sup>45</sup> ”Frågor och svar om påvebesöket i Lund,” last modified May 11, 2016, [www.svenskakyrkan.se/lundsstift/fragor-och-svar-om-pavebesoket-i-lund](http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/lundsstift/fragor-och-svar-om-pavebesoket-i-lund).
- <sup>46</sup> “Det som vi främst önskar är att gemensamt nattvardsfirande blir officiellt möjligt. Det är viktigt särskilt för familjer där medlemmar tillhör olika samfund. Jesu bön om att vi alla må bli ett är vägledande för oss. Den synliga enheten (som inte automatiskt är detsamma som organisatorisk enhet) för att världen skall tro är vårt uppdrag och vårt mål.” Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Antje Jackelén, “Delad kristenhet reser gemensamt mot framtiden,” *Svenska dagbladet*, January 24, 2016, <http://www.svd.se/delad-kristenhet-reser-gemensamt-mot-framtiden>
- <sup>48</sup> ”Påve Franciskus fick nyligen från en luthersk kvinna gift med en katolik frågan om hur de tillsammans kan ta emot nattvarden istället för var och en i sin kyrka. Påven påminde kvinnan om att vi har samma dop och att makarna går en gemensam väg. ‘Och det ska ni också lära era barn, oavsett om det sker på ett lutherskt eller ett katolskt uttryckssätt’, sade han. Om skillnader i nattvardsuppfattningen mellan lutheraner och katoliker

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konstaterade påven: 'Livet är större än förklaringarna och tolkningarna! Tänk alltid på dopet. En tro, ett dop, en Herre, så säger Paulus till oss. Och dra era konsekvenser ur det ... Be till Herren och gå vägen framåt.'" Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Kasper, *Martin Lutero: Una prospettiva ecumenica* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2016).

Cindy Wooden, "Focus on mercy is Catholic-Lutheran common ground, says Kasper," *The Catholic Register*, May 19, 2016, <http://www.catholicregister.org/faith/faith-news/item/22348-focus-on-mercy-is-catholic-lutheran-common-ground-says-kasper>.

<sup>50</sup> For an indication that something of the sort is intended, see the translation of part of Giancarlo Pani's article in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, on Sandro Magister's blog *Chiesa*, July 1, 2016, "Communion For All, Even for Protestants," [chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1351332?eng=y](http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1351332?eng=y)

<sup>51</sup> Anders Piltz, "Svenska kyrkan försöker ta monopol på historien" September 10, 2014, <http://www.dagen.se/debatt/svenska-kyrkan-forsoker-ta-monopol-pa-historien-1.92453>

<sup>52</sup> "The history of the Church of Sweden" <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/historik>, last modified April 24, 2016.