

Curt Dahlgren (ed.)

Religionssociologisk mångfald: Texter till minne av Berndt Gustafsson, grundare av religionssociologi i Sverige [The diversity of the sociology of religion. Texts in honor of Berndt Gustafsson, the founder sociology of religion in Sweden.]

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Michael Brixtofte Petersen

Ph.D. Fellow, Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, Denmark

michaelj@ruc.dk

This edited volume consists of 11 chapters in honour of Berndt Gustafsson (1920–1975), who founded the Institute for Sociology of Religion (RSI) in Stockholm in 1962. The publication commemorates the 100th anniversary of Gustafsson, who would have turned 100 in 2020. The book opens with a text on Gustafsson’s academic life, and the book ends with an overview of his published work. Both texts are written by Berndt Gustafsson’s successor at RSI, the late Göran Gustafsson, who passed away in 2018.

Some of the book’s chapters directly dialogue with Berndt Gustafsson’s work. For example, Jonas Bromander’s statistical analysis of the Church of Sweden’s demographic changes in the last 20 years (Chapter 3), Jørgen Straarup’s chapter on everyday religion and church attendance (Chapter 8), Maria Klingenberg & Mia Lövheim’s study of women in leadership positions in religious organizations (Chapter 5), and Erika Willander’s on religion and gender studies (Chapter 9) offer an application and a critical re-examination of Gustafsson’s work.

Other chapters cover topics such as the conflicts and controversies connected to the academic study of Scientology by Jonas Alwall (Chapter 2), a comparative analysis of obituaries between two sociocultural environments in Sweden by Curt Dahlgren (Chapter 4), a review of the early studies of religion and migration in RSI by Magdalena Nordin, (Chapter 6) and a theoretical examination of the role of class analysis and the lack thereof in the sociology of religion by Pål Repstad (Chapter 7).

Through Berndt Gustafsson’s academic life, the book gives an interesting presentation of the development of the academic institutionalization of sociology of religion in Sweden and its relation to other disciplines such as theology and church history. Berndt Gustafsson’s work within “church sociology” was connected to initiatives by the Church of Sweden in the wake of the cultural and social changes within Christianity and Swedish society at the time.

Gustafsson's sociological analysis of church attendance, gender dynamics, and everyday religion is presented as crucial studies in the sociology of religion in Sweden, but also as a sort of guidance counselling for the church on enhancing and improving church communities at the time. In the wake of this analysis, Berndt Gustafsson mentioned the risk of the sociology of religion being reduced to a "scientific aid" for the state church. This discussion is in many relevant for the social scientific study of church matters in the Nordic countries today.

While the volume has many qualities, I wish to highlight some of the chapters that point to future engagements with the conceptual and theoretical topics that Gustafsson himself worked with. Pål Repstad investigates the role of class analysis in the sociology of religion, its relevance, and surprisingly little attention today. Repstad's chapter poses an interesting question. Why is it that some of the classical and most important theories in social science include the concept of class – Marx, Weber, Bourdieu, Giddens, to name a few – while the concept is relatively understudied in the sociology of religion today? One of the several reasons Repstad gives is the scepticism towards classist reductionism within the sociology of religion. Repstad refers to this idea as the fear of a "nothing-butness" approach where religion is reduced to a mirror of social deprivation.

According to Repstad, the response to this phenomenon has often been a *lived religion* approach, where the intersubjective and everyday experiences of the religious life is in focus instead of references to class or socioeconomic status. Repstad connects this concept to Berndt Gustafsson's work on the class and church attendance in his work *Kyrkoliv och samhällsklass i Sverige I 1880* (1950) and his doctoral work on the relation between the Social Democratic movement and the Church of Sweden. Gustafsson extended his studies on everyday religion in *Svenska folkets religion* (1969). This theme is echoed in Jørgen Straarup's chapter, in which he explores Gustafsson's work on everyday religion outside the institutional frames of the Church of Sweden in more detail, showing how Gustafsson, in many ways, practised a "lived religion" approach before the term existed. There is an underlying question in these chapters worthy of future elaboration, namely, how studies within the sociology of religion can combine class analysis and a lived religion approach. Also, Erika Willander elaborates on Gustafsson's work on church attendance across and between genders by incorporating data from the SOM – analysis on church attendance between genders between 1988 and 2018. Willander concludes the chapter by pointing to relations between the sociology of religion and gender studies that go beyond common approaches, such as notions of female deprivation or oversimplified analysis of female socialization as being more "prone" to church attendance. These chapters give great overviews of the subjects of, class, everyday religion and gender, but they also point to future debates within the field. They are connecting the past, present and future of the field in an engaging manner.

While Gustafsson's work was dedicated to Christianity and its many levels in Swedish society, I still missed references to work on other religions while reading the book. Apart from Jonas Alwall's interesting chapter on Scientology, all chapters engage with some aspect of Christianity. It would have been even more fascinating to discuss the relevance and utility of the themes and methods in Gustafsson's work and legacy in different arenas today. The volume does not have much to say about the study and growth of non-Christian religious diversity since Gustafsson's era.

Nevertheless, *Religions sociologisk mångfald* is an interesting overview of Gustafsson's academic life and influence, and the history of the sociology of religion in Sweden. The result is an intriguing collection of well-written articles with rich empirical material. I will recommend the book for several reasons. The volume provides excellent and important scholarly work on topics of great relevance for anyone interested in the sociology of religion in

the Nordic Countries and in general. The chapters cover a wide range of topics connected to Gustafsson's work and legacy, and through this, the volume shows the intellectual history of the sociology of religion in Sweden in a stimulating way.

References

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