

Chapter 1 : The theocratic state

The Swedish state has, over time, tied itself to a number of ideologies that have also become the Bernadotte's. In 1809 the Swede would be Christian, accept the social hierarchies & be satisfied with his lot:

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The king will always "be of the pure evangelical doctrine, such as defined in the [1530] unaltered Augsburg Confession, and [by Sweden-Finland] adopted at the Uppsala Meeting of 1593".
Order of Succession 1809 §4.

The state church

The approximate chronology is that up to the 12th century Sweden practised aesir faith & was gradually Christianized under the Catholic Church. In 1527 Sweden became Protestant and in 1593 at Uppsala it became Lutheran according to the Augsburg Creed of June 25, 1530. As head of state, the king was the church's foremost member and head, but there was no state theological control - probably due to the theological resistance to confusing secular and spiritual power, the so-called two-kingdoms doctrine. However, all church employees were state officials & in this capacity sorted under the ecclesiastical department. As government officials, they had to follow government decisions in what the state defined as non-theological points of order. The church's political opposition was therefore expressed in religious terms. During the Enlightenment, it fought against the belief in reason (neology) & against Gustaf III's 1781 tolerance edict. In this foreigners were granted religious immunity as long as they in some sense were Christian. In 1782 a limited version was extended to the mosaic faith. In 1838, Charles John extended this limited version. This became a Parliamentary issue. In 1840-42, all government ministers who had sanctioned the decision, a total of 17 people, were impeached, but acquitted after lengthy negotiations. The event has (through the chronicler Magnus Crusenstolpe) passed into popular lore as evidence of Charles John himself being of Jewish stock.

From 1809, King & Parliament shared responsibility for the church. The regent was no longer king by the grace of God, in his capacity as Lutheran had never been so, but the fake tradition continued for some time. The great news of 1809 (§16 in the form of government) was that the religious obligation would only apply to the king and to officials, not to the people, who were free to believe in whatever they wanted as long as it did not deviate too much from the pure evangelical doctrine. Religious freedom in any meaningful version, however, was not the issue until the 1860 Dissenters Act:

"The question of religious freedom was again current because of Oscar I's speech during the 1856-1858 Parliament. The King drew attention to an ongoing case where the Svea Court of Appeal in 1858 sentenced six women to exile for converting to the Roman Catholic faith. The case had been ongoing since 1851 when a notification was received that many children were raised in a Catholic school and several women had converted to Catholicism.

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The king's speech on religious freedom at the beginning of the 1856-1858 Parliament came as a surprise. The issue of religious freedom was generally no longer seen as an issue in Swedish politics, apart from the advocates of the religious minorities. The king still held some power as head of both state and church, but this power was only in consultation with the cabinet. In this speech, the king had acted alone, which showed his deep interest in the matter.

The King proposed that Parliament widen religious freedom, which he based on two arguments. On the one hand, he felt that it was in accordance with the spirit of Protestantism to be open-minded about the spiritual beliefs of others by advocating freedom of religion and freedom of religious practice, and on the other hand he marked that it was in accordance with the Constitution, i.e. §16 1809, to introduce this. The reference to §16 implies that the King was also aware that it was his task to ensure this religious freedom.”¹

The general opinion was that King Oscar I had allowed himself to be influenced by his wife, who was an active Catholic, but it has never been possible to find evidence for it. It is easier to see it as belonging to Oscar I's liberal reform agenda.

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In 2000, the church was separated from the state. Carl Gustaf was at the time asked if he wanted to change the religious requirements of the order of succession, but he preferred to let it remain as a tradition.² It's probably not as innocent as it seems. The Swedish national sentiments sometimes seem like phantom pains of the Swedish state religion:

In terms of the importance of religion, William Ramp (2014) draws parallels with the work of sociologist Émile Durkheim. Durkheim considered the king indispensable as a ”semi-religious” national symbol. Abstract concepts must somehow be anchored in a concrete reality & as a collective memory. For this the king served well. However, the weakening of religion complicated the matter. The king's unique position in modern times must also be justified by concrete achievements & balanced by ”counterstories”: He's like us, but still not.

Håkansson (2012: ss. 74-76) summarizes the Swedish religious ceremonial 1858-2012 at baptisms, funerals, coronations etc. as: Before 1973 there was a clear link between religion, the legitimization of power & the national identity. After 1973, religion had become a facade & the ceremonial (or the media's description of it) rather referred to history, tradition, family & social norms. Political scientist Cecilia Åse (2009: ss. 99-112) agrees.

With the state church gone, the royal house has changed to a form of ecumenism. Gustaf is Lutheran, but has participated in Muslim and Jewish religious ceremonies. Silvia has the same attitude. The foreword to her prayer book (2009) reads:

”This is a Christian prayer book but I would be pleased if also those of other faiths can find prayers or expressions that unite us as human beings of our country.” Accordingly, the book contained Our Father and the Lord bless us in a variety of languages spoken in Sweden: Swedish, German, English, French, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese,

¹ Hellberg 2012: ss. 27-28.

² Anita Sjöblom. ”Kungen är livrädd för alla förändringar”. Dagens Nyheter, 2004-02-22.

Finnish, North, Lule & Southern Sami, Arabic and Syriac/Aramaic. Silvia hoped that everyone would settle down in our peaceful country.³

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The Hereditary Monarchy

Starting with Gustav Vasa Swedish was a hereditary monarchy. Great effort was put into legitimizing the succession. The arguments were similar to those in Ernst Kantorowicz (1957) "The king's two bodies" about the religious roots of the inheritance monarchy. It was legally justified as the spiritual essence of the country being instilled in the king's body and inherited by the successor. Like Jesus, the king had two natures. As a natural person, he died. As a symbol he was immortal. The first hereditary king in line, Eric XIV, in that spirit crowned himself. The succession battles took over, however, and it was first Gustaf II Adolf who inherited the crown peacefully.

The secularization meant that the arguments for a hereditary monarchy had to be rewritten. In 1809, the religious requirement became a legal formality and had probably always been so. Swedish rulers have never been very religious. On his arrival in Sweden, Johan converted from uncommitted Catholic to equally uncommitted Lutheran. To the extent that he had a faith, it was the faith of the Enlightenment in a higher spiritual being.

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The Bernadotte have had at least one "theological" conflict. Oscar I's ambition to have Josephine crowned both Swedish and Norwegian queen led to discussions in both countries about whether the coronation was compatible with the Augsburg creed. The politician and bishop Hans Riddervold in Trondheim protested it in two letters to the Ministry of the Church, published in 1847 under the heading "Should the Queen be anointed and crowned in Norway? - two letters to the Royal Church Department of the Bishop of Trondhjem":

March 6, 1846, Riddervold sent a letter to the Norwegian Ministry of the Church, stating that only the regent, Oscar, had the right to be crowned. To crown the queen would give her a political role that she did not have under the Norwegian constitution. Oscar responded with a letter in which he wondered if the bishop had any religious concerns, separate from his legal concerns, since he would not have to officiate at the ceremony. The ministry also instructed historian Professor Rudolf Keyser to investigate the matter. Keyser's answer was that the coronation symbolically expressed that the Sovereign had his position of the grace of God, not of the Constitution. If the Queen were crowned, she would become symbolically complicit in the divine sanctioned power of the Sovereign. May 4, 1846, Riddervold replied that he agreed with Keyser's interpretation. The coronation was a medieval rite reserved for the Catholic Church, which was also a worldly power. Sacralization by lubrication with sacred oil contradicted the Protestant principle, as formulated in § 28 of the Augsburg Creed, that worldly and spiritual things should not be confused. On these his misgivings he was extremely verbose. I interpret his tirade as saying that despite theology he was willing to participate or at least to attend the coronation of Oscar, but not Josephine.⁴

³ Drottning Silvia red. 2009.

⁴ Aftonbladet, 1846-09-10, s. 2; Riddervold 1847.

It is unclear whether the matter was ever put to the vote in the Norwegian Parliament. Those in favour of Josephine's coronation argued that, since it had only symbolic significance, it was in the eye of the beholder what real significance it had. The negotiations continued unsuccessfully until 1853. Neither Oscar I nor Josephine was crowned in Norway. The last to be crowned were Oscar II & Sofia. According to an unclear statement, he had to pay for it himself. Gustav V & Victoria abstained, but did not justify their decision. Possibly they could not afford it. The fact that Desirée and Josephine were not crowned in Norway, but Lovisa & Sophie were, is believed to indicate that the Norwegians' refusal was entirely due to their Catholic religion, not to any Lutheran or political sophistry. The Norwegian version is that their religious scruples are rumours only. Practical difficulties intervened.⁵ Öberg (2016) refers to the coronation as a monarchic rite, which presupposed autocracy. The ritual involves Parliament swearing allegiance to the king.

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A society based on the Estates of the Realm & the Christian faith

The Swedish society based on the Estates of the Realm is usually discussed in terms of superiors and inferiors, but it does not seem to have been perceived in this way by those living in it. All had their necessary social roles:

The Lutheran view of society was based on the so-called "household code" [german: haustafel] meaning that a person was born into a position in society, which was carefully regulated in relation as to other positions according to the threefold Estates: The "spiritual estate" consisting of priests and their audience. The "political estate" consisting of societies governors and subjects. The "household estate" consisting of parents/pater familias and children/servants. Each person belonged to all three estates. The man headed the household and the woman. He was responsible for economy and civic duties. The woman's highest calling or most important task was to be a wife and mother. All people were assigned their place in society.⁶

The same ideology was advocated by Stoics such as Marcus Aurelius (see chapter 25) and has been a feature of the Bernadotte tradition of duty up to the present. Political scientist Cecilia Åse (2009: ss. 67-84) describes it as the king being assigned a superior position with he has never sought, but nevertheless demands respect. Since, in this view, no one can be blamed for their position in society, it does in fact mean that the beggar is also worthy of respect. Hierarchies are disconnected from human worth. We are all equal before God. We are all free within the limits set by God.

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The source situation being what it is, the Swedish estate society is often described as a mélange of crofters, contracted farmhands, Russian serfs & American slaves labouring away on a semi-feudal latifundium. It is difficult to know how the average worker or farmer behaved in front of his or her "betters". I have not found any "Russian" examples of people falling on their knees, but they used to remove their hat or curtsy. What is often mentioned is that people lacked the proper reverence. There were, for example, plenty of ill-mannered

⁵ Norén Isaksen 2019.

⁶ Lutherkompendiet 2016. <svenskakyrkansunga.se> (2019-01-01).

farmhands, overly familial servants & impertinent chambermaids. Familiarity breeds contempt, as the English used to put it. Political scientist Cecilia Åse & ethnologist Mattias Frihammar⁷ reason that such disrespectful behaviour can exist in parallel with a monarchic ideology. The crux of the matter is not reverence, but that a monarchist recognizes the special status of the royal family. Then the "monarchist" is free to think what he or she wants about the people themselves.

The attitude (i.e. as long as the parties recognized the hierarchy) was familial without being equal. The current equivalent "downwards" is when the officers talk about "our lads", the boss about "our lassies"; the equivalent "upwards" (not as common) is when soldiers rebuke cadets, secretaries admonish their bosses; employees laugh at smart-asses.

The mentality was especially common in the rank regiments. There is a vivid description of K2's character as a social enclave. The regiment recruited its officers from the nobility and one third of the rank and file were enlisted soldiers of the old tribe: "The discipline that characterized this regiment had nothing to do with modern mechanical obedience. It was a respectful patriarchal relationship between the squad and the commander. They were farmers from the same area, under the same piece of heaven. They were raised in a self-evident sense of subordination to their command, a distinctive sense of honour and a deep-rooted pride in the regiment to which they belonged."⁸

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Patriarchal society

The sociological term for the Lutheran view of society is patriarchalism. The term has been in use since the early 19th century, but its meaning has changed. The current meaning is "male dominance". In the 19th century, the meaning was rather "employer dominance". The 18th century meaning was more familial: The servants had the status of children in the family: "The disadvantages experienced by working people in the form of harsh working conditions and restrictions on personal freedom were offset by the security and affinity of the farm, personal care and community."⁹ The notion that the king's social role was analogous to the master's role in the extended patriarchal family - that the king had a role as "father of the country" - was part of the 20th century ideology of the "national kingdom" and is discussed in that context (see chapters 6 & 12).

The queen had a similar role as a mother of the country. Charlotte Tornbjer has in her thesis a long section about the housewife qualities that the first half of the 1900's was attributed to the women of the royal house (Sophie, Victoria, Margareta, Louise & Sibylla) as "national mothers". She summarizes:

"When the Queen was called mother of the country and represented the Swedish national community, it was not as a person, but as a public symbol. The Queen was attributed the symbolic qualities of motherhood, i.e. nursing and a conciliatory spirit. But her qualities were also made a model for the women of the country and her actions

⁷ Åse 2009; Frihammar 2010.

⁸ Lewenhaupt 1949: s. 41.

⁹ Harnesk 1986: s. 328; Pleijel 1987; Harnesk 1987.

were perceived as normative statements about how a mother would be. The Royal Family as an ordinary private family thus became a national ideal during the period. As a result, private and public blurred, not least in the weekly press' reports on the royal family. They became both part of a Swedish national community and thus a model for how people should live their lives, and a symbol for it. If a Swedish national community is perceived as a home that also includes the King and Queen as a father and a mother of the country, the concept in the Swedish newspapers is both egalitarian and patriarchal. Egalitarian because unceasing emphasis was placed on the modesty of the royals and their democratic spirit. Patriarchal because, despite the talk of equality, the king was presented as a good master, or rather a father of the country for his people."¹⁰

It has been difficult to verify this striking image. It is true to the extent that all the Swedish crown princesses had some form of housewife education, but as far as I know, no one has ever come up with the idea to praise Queen Victoria for her cooking or gentle & forgiving nature. In fact, she is (but above all her mother is) an example of how patriarchal societies sometimes delegate considerable power to women when they toe the line.

¹⁰ Tornbjer 2002: ss. 163-164.

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