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(Re-)Placing Pentecostalism

Swedish Mission and the idea of the Baltic

I draw on fieldwork based in the Word of Life Ministry, Sweden, to consider how these neo-Pentecostals have constructed the Baltic as a landscape of both action and imagination. One part of my argument states that we must see the ministry's attitudes to Sweden and the wider Baltic region in terms of its desire to situate itself within Swedish revivalist history. I also argue, however, that we can fruitfully draw on Bakhtin's notion of the 'chronotope' to trace how the Baltic constitutes a potent spatio-temporal context for the construction of a narrative which encourages Word of Life members to see their missionary role as being contained within, but also looking far beyond, the Baltic Sea region.

IN THIS ARTICLE I want to consider Pentecostalism, and especially neo-Pentecostalism in the Baltic Sea region, in both an ethnographic and a theoretical sense. The ethnography comes from my fieldwork in Sweden on the Word of Life (Livets Ord) foundation, while the theoretical frame emerges from considering how Pentecostal representations of the landscape and associated geopolitics of the Baltic might help to constitute religious forms of self-understanding and mission.

I'll start with a specific time and place. When I first came to do fieldwork in Uppsala in the mid-1980s I remember attending a meeting at which the local, well-established Pentecostal congregation was celebrating its seventieth birthday. Church members gave illustrated talks looking back on the history of the congregation in the city with an evident sense of pride in what its members had achieved over the years. For me as a visiting anthropologist the event was fascinating, but in my mind I could not help framing it in terms derived from another local

congregation I was studying in the city; that of the newly-formed Word of Life foundation. At the time, the Word of Life and especially its head pastor Ulf Ekman were busily attempting to shake up the Swedish religious landscape, and central to some of what they were saying was a particular view of time and history. The Word of Lifers liked to contrast what they were doing with the activities of other churches, which they regarded as being trapped in predictable and involuted routines (Coleman 2011). They felt that the new ministry, the new revival, cultivated the life of the Spirit, whereas worship elsewhere, with its lack of discernible energy and movement, was sometimes likened to activity in a cemetery. So I suspect that the Word of Lifers might not have viewed a seventieth birthday party with unalloyed joy. But that did not necessarily mean that members of the new ministry in town were claiming that what they were doing was entirely original. After all, many had come from other churches – Lutheran, Methodist, Swedish Mission Covenant, and indeed Pentecostal – and their idea of a revival (*väckelse*) retained within it the metaphor of reawakening something that had previously existed; putting new wine, as it were, into older organisational and worshipful wineskins. The hope was that this revival would be the very last one before Jesus' return, even as it joined the great chain of reawakenings that had punctuated missionary history in Sweden and elsewhere. Of course, many of the more established Pentecostals in Sweden denied that the Word of Life had very much to do with them or their religious sensibility, but the new group was nonetheless making a performative assertion, claiming the privilege of representing the future while locating itself within the idiom and genealogy of an earlier Swedish revivalism. This aspiration implied a complex temporal-

ity, bringing together scripture, culture and ritual; a recalling of the 'first days' of the biblical Church alongside the history of revivalism in Sweden, combined with an increased urgency and intensity of eschatological expectancy at the prospect of the imminent 'last days'. Such an 'upping the ante' might be expressed in terms of anything from especially loud and almost gabbled tongues to extensive proselytisation. And just as the Word of Life ritual and mission partially echoed, partially extended classic Pentecostal forms of activity, a looking forward also meant a looking back, a measurement of itself in relation to the revivalist past and not a pure rejection of that past.

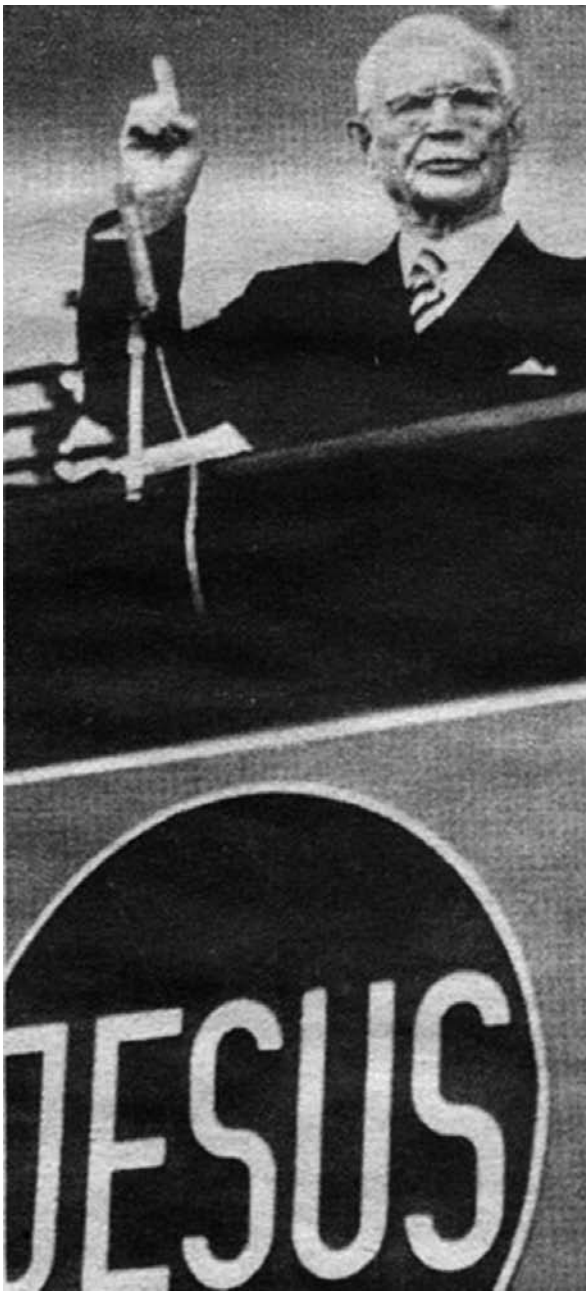
The Word of Life has lasted long enough to develop a history of its own in Uppsala and beyond (even though, with a recent change of leadership, its future is currently somewhat uncertain). I was intrigued a few years ago when I observed the ministry celebrating a quarter of a century of activity in Uppsala and beyond, marking these years with evident pride by enumerating numerous achievements in a glossy article, complete with timelines. Such playing out of the past as a Geertzian story which the group was telling itself about itself (Geertz 1975: 452) approximated to a replaying of the very historical consciousness that I had seen in the Uppsala Pentecostal church decades earlier. This event seemed to be a case not just of history repeating itself, but also of ambiguously linked revivalist historiographies echoing each other over the years.

What I have just described can of course be viewed through classically Troeltschian lenses (e.g. Troeltsch 1992). Influenced by his colleague Max Weber, the German Protestant theologian and philosopher Ernst Troeltsch was concerned with observing the intertwining of history with theological categories and ideals, and understanding the ways in which ecclesiastical forms such as churches and sects reflected differing responses to the wider culture while embodying the inevitable evolution of religious organisations over time. However, what I want to explore in this article goes beyond the Troeltschian narrative in at least two ways, both of



Map of the Baltic Sea.

which take me towards the theme of Pentecostalism in the Baltic Sea region. First, I want to inhabit these generic revivalist categories with some specific history, albeit recent history, covering the years during which I have been studying the Word of Life. In other words, I want to look at how the ministry has developed during the period between the time of its inception as a new revival and the time when it could consciously construct its own history – a history that has both emerged from, and provided a commentary on, the much longer story of revivalist movements in Sweden and beyond. Second, however, I want to see what happens if we extend the underlying metaphors through which we comprehend such revivalism. What if we view it not only through *temporal* frames, but also through *spatial* ones (or possibly both combined)? What if we see the Word of Life not only as 'reviving' what it perceives as Swedish Christianity but also as 're-placing' it? And I do mean



Lewi Pethrus in the 1950s. *Världen idag*, 17.1.2011.

re-placing here, not replacing. In other words, I do not mean a removal of other forms of worship but rather an attempt to locate activities in certain spatial frames that constitute a geographical and not just a theological or temporal language of revival.

Again, there are historical resonances here. We might, for instance, think of the Protestant Reformation in England as one of the most striking examples of a re-formation, a re-locating, of the spatial framing of Christian worship alongside the creation of a nation-wide, Tudor landscape of governance. We

must also acknowledge the powerful spatial imageries of established Pentecostals, including those in Sweden. Jan-Åke Alvarsson (2011: 22) has noted that T. B. Barratt, such an important figure in the early Swedish movement, might also be regarded as the first *European* Pentecostal leader. A prized possession on my bookshelves is a copy of a book containing contributions to the European Pentecostal Conference held in Stockholm in 1939, complete with foreword by Pastor Lewi Pethrus, but also with a map of all the countries represented both on the front cover and on the inside pages (Pethrus *et al.* 1939). My interest is in how a more recent revival uses an idiom of spatiality to complete those of temporality and of course spirituality as part of an attempt to take over the baton in leading a religious transformation. In speaking of the geographical language of a Swedish revival in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries I am of course referring to a process which is occurring on rather different scales and in different media to those of Reformation England or pre-Second-World-War Europe as I focus on the close intersections of a wide range of observable neo-Pentecostal spatialities. The vocabulary of this geographical language of revival will include more obvious categories such as the kinaesthetic qualities of worship and church architecture, but also ways of inhabiting and walking through city space and representations of landscape, cartography, and regionality. In turn, my geographical focus, combined with historical awareness, will take me to the idea – or rather *an* idea, a Word-of-Life idea – of the Baltic.

Imagining the Baltic as a Pentecostal landscape

Let me expand on my point about geography before coming back to the Word of Life. How to think about Pentecostalism in relation to – and emerging out of – space, place, and region? From one perspective this might seem like a strange question to consider. I remember being told many years ago at a conference on Christian pilgrimage that Pentecostals were different from Roman Catholic or Orthodox pilgrims because their ecclesiology had no theology of place – no systematic, theological working-through of the significance, the value, the ontology of space in relation to worship (see also Percy 1998: 285). Admittedly, such a remark does have evidence to support it: we are dealing with a religious discourse that tends to speak much of the free workings of the Spirit, that

practices forms of glossolalia which are supposed to reach beyond semantic or cultural limitations, that is often promoted by churches whose names are linked to an international or biblical rather than a local landscape. Indeed the idea of *transcending* space and place fits well with the triumphalist narratives of expansion that have marked both believers' and scholars' descriptions of neo-Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity in recent years. We read, for instance, of 'a religion that is made to travel' in the subtitle of one edited volume (Dempster *et al.* 2011), which takes the phrase from the theologian Harvey Cox (1994). In my own discipline, anthropology, the worldwide growth in influence of Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical forms of Christianity in the last few decades has been an important catalyst for the emergence of an entire new sub-field of the anthropology of Christianity, and a key question for that sub-field has been whether and how Pentecostalism challenges conventional ethnographic methodologies of focusing on the local and the small-scale.

Even so, that remark about the lack of a theology of place runs the risk of ignoring much that is 'central' – to use a spatial metaphor – to the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal congregations that I have observed, in the Baltic or elsewhere. In the work that I have done on the Word of Life the languages of the body, of architecture, of maps and flags, of photos, have all pointed me towards thinking not only about space, place, and region, but also about scale, perspective, and orientation. There may or may not be an overt theology of place evident within these practices; but such neo-Pentecostalism is undoubtedly articulated through a moral and visual geography that is constituted through land but also *landscape*, with the latter implying the representation of land through historical, aesthetic, even ritualised lenses. This is a geography that asks fundamental questions about where the believer is located in relation to that landscape and how they may be constituted through such relations. We also have to bear in mind the extensive discourse of spiritual warfare that has paralleled and to some extent reinforced the growth of neo-Pentecostalism, both thematising and problematising questions of the moral status of territory and motivating the use of imageries of conquest and re-taking spaces on a variety of levels in order to promote or restore spiritual wellbeing. While it is certainly significant, the dramatic imagery of such warfare does not quite capture the full range of spatial practices that might

contribute to a moral geography in my terms. The anthropologist Kristine Krause (in press) expresses this idea well when in a recent piece on West African Pentecostals in London she talks of how evaluating physical city space goes along with and contributes to cultivating inner space in the person. Geography and religious subjectivity relate to each other in intimate ways. In writing about Catholic charismatics, Thomas Csordas (in press) refers to what he calls a global geography of the Spirit, expressed through cartographic self-representations and the experiential transformation of domestic, civic and wider spaces through transnationally-oriented activities. Csordas asks whether we can perceive the charismatic Catholic landscape 'using an analytic of geography and the simultaneity of spatiality as an alternative to history and sequentality of temporality' (*ibid.*), but also sees such an approach as a way of exploring complementary relations between history and geography.

You might ask, what does any of this have to do with the place of Pentecostalism in the Baltic? Notice from the start that the very category of the Baltic is placed, in terms of scale, between notions of the individual and the local on the one hand, and the global on the other. It already prompts questions about the role of *region* in relation to a Pentecostal geography. I suggest that there are at least four interrelated ways of thinking about the geographical notion of the Baltic in these terms. In doing so, again I want to take my theme literally as well as metaphorically, considering what is meant by 'around' the Baltic Sea. So in the following list I parse the adverb 'around' by breaking it up into the four 'prepositional orientations' that I think it contains, and which relate to my four Pentecostally-oriented ways of thinking about geography.

My first way is simply to see the Word of Life as inhabiting a country that forms one of the nations situated around the Baltic Sea. Here, the salient frame is most likely a national one. So here my key preposition is *in*: the Word of Life is in Sweden and therefore in the Baltic Sea region.

In a second and more complex sense we can start to ask about the Baltic Sea *region* as a physical space containing countries that, owing to their proximity, have interacted and affected each other over time. We might consider here the influence of, say, the Hanseatic League, the territorial competition between Sweden and Russia over Livonia, and so on. The political scientists Marko Lehti and David Smith (2003: 1) refer to how the end of the Cold War

‘drastically altered the European spatial imagination’, leaving open the question of whether the Baltic Sea area might become a ‘New Northern Europe’, but they also (*ibid.* 2) note the longer-term ambiguity of the Nordic states, which have constituted themselves into a distinct regional entity ‘between’ East and West. The positive view of this region sees it as playing a vital bridging role; but the negative one perceives ‘the Baltic Sea area as a whole ... as a “blind alley on the outskirts of Europe”’ (*ibid.* 2). We might also reflect on how the notion of sea constitutes a certain kind of fluid space: one that touches on, is shared by and conjoins all of the nations that might come under a Baltic rubric. It blends borders just as much as it might reinforce them. Overall, in this second sense, then, the key preposition, I think, is *of*: to what extent is a ministry such as the Word of Life ‘of’ the Baltic region, influenced by and part of its complex and shifting culture and history, even if in very implicit ways?

In a third sense the Baltic Sea region can be seen as a particular kind of *moral* space: for instance it seems to represent a liminal space of hidden threat, as revealed by the frequent sightings reported in the press, justified or not, of the presence of Russian submarines, indicating hidden depths, fears and neuroses among some inhabitants of the region, including those in Sweden. In terms of a neo-Pentecostal moral geography that I have detected within the Word of Life during fieldwork from pre-1989 days onwards, the region touched by that sea has increasingly embodied an opportunity to reach out across its spiritually but also politically charged space. The group has certainly worked in neighbouring Nordic countries, but a notable feature of the Baltic is how its geopolitics can be translated into a concern with Soviet and post-Soviet religious landscapes. For instance in my first bout of fieldwork in 1986 and 1987 I remember attending sermons in which visiting missionaries, celebrating the penetration of geopolitical space by the Word, would tell stories of smuggling Bibles across the Iron Curtain. Overall, the Baltic Sea region presented a potent juxtaposition of two forms of secularity that needed to be challenged: there were the secular forces within Nordic countries, but then there were also those unleashed by the repressive Soviet regime. Certainly, the incursion of the Word was interpreted as having contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, prompting an expansion of Word of Life missionary activity that I shall refer to later.

More speculatively, in thinking about this sense of the Baltic Sea as moral space, a space whose meaning comes in part through it being traversed, a space framed by land but mixed up at its centre by flowing waters, I am also reminded of the literary scholar Paul Gilroy’s (1993) well-known description of the ‘black Atlantic’, a geographically but also morally charged space, constituted by forms of travel and exchange. In his analysis of the making of this black diasporic context, Gilroy borrows from the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) the notion of the *chronotope* – a term whose etymology brings together time and space. Through using this hybrid term Bakhtin thus describes how different literatures represent conjoined temporal and spatial relationships in different kinds of ways, so that for instance the adventure time of the ancient Greek novel is different from that of the chivalric romance, and so on (see also Brandão 2006: 133). Similarly, while in ancient Greek romances there is a lack of fundamental historical change or biographical emergence, by contrast change is fundamental to the modern realistic novel of ‘emergence’ (Wang 2009: 1). Adapting the notion of *chronotope* to a very different context, that of contemporary Melanesia, David Lipset (2011: 20ff.) adds that just as a *chronotope* is a unit of analysis ‘that constitutes and organizes the meaningful ordering of events in the space and time of narrative texts’, so it may also invoke certain notions of agency in time and space, indicating the extent to which narrativised heroic figures are able to prompt significant historical change in the spatio-temporal contexts within which they work.

Chronotopes can thus work as condensed, organising metaphors, such as the frequently-used literary notion of the road, which translates abstract concepts of time and space into more concrete narrative terms suitable for the novel or the poem or other kind of narrative. In his discussion of the black Atlantic, Gilroy employs the image of the sailing ship as a striking *chronotope* that can evoke aspects of the black Atlantic, incorporating notions of both passage and crossroads alongside the idea of a locality that can travel within and outside national boundaries and aid the circulation of ideas, people and artefacts. In using the idea of the *chronotope* in relation to the black Atlantic Gilroy is thus attempting to characterise certain intersections of space in time in the context of an ethnically-charged history and diaspora, but on a much smaller scale I suggest we might see the Baltic Sea region through a neo-

Pentecostalist frame where revivalist temporality and geography come together, and where instead of sailing ships we might focus, for instance, on representations of travelling missions and missionaries – narrative ‘heroes’ who traverse and remake what was formerly secular space and time as they move, speeding up but also extending and re-placing revival as they do so. Bearing in mind that my focus is on how the Baltic becomes constituted and represented by Swedish Word of Lifers – how it becomes part of that narrative they tell themselves about themselves – my key preposition here becomes *on*: how these Christians reflect *on* the Baltic as chronotopic context and thereby translate it into a powerful catalyst for spatial and historical action.

My fourth and final way of thinking about the Baltic Sea region, again looking partly through Word of Life lenses, is to see it as one region among many that make up a global composite, a global whole. In this sense the Baltic is to be defined in relation to other regions of the world that are open to the mission, such as Africa, the Middle East, and so on. Its salience expands in one sense by being allowed to contribute to the larger unit of the globe, and it is important to point out here that, almost from its inception, the image of the globe has been much deployed in Word of Life circles, not least to suggest the idea of the church encompassing all the regions of the world with its mission. In this sense the idea of a region such as the Baltic is seen as generative so long as it does not suggest a limiting of one’s horizons to a specific area.

Thinking of the global in relation to the regional should also prompt us to think quite carefully about what we mean when we talk of neo-Pentecostalism as both a transnational and a global movement. It is too easy to conflate the terms global and transnational, to think of them as synonyms. If the idea of the global does not overtly favour or orient oneself to any part of the world, that of the transnational contains the possibility of establishing specific links and relationship between two or more states. In this sense the Baltic might constitute a specific kind of transnational region or hub within a neo-Pentecostal imaginary. Cartographic and other representations of mission can indicate how this, a missionary division of labour, can work. Thus Ekman has predicted for instance that ‘the Lord’s glory’ would come from all the cardinal directions, including the north (Sweden), south (South Africa), east (South Korea) and west (the USA) (Coleman 2010). Word of Life mapping thus encap-

ulates various forms of Pentecostal aesthetic at once: the presentation of both generic, global space and particular areas where moral geography has particular resonance. In any case, by asking us to reflect on how the Baltic relates to a notion of the globe I introduce a final preposition: that of thinking ‘beyond’ the Baltic as another way of thinking about it.

The Word of Life ‘in’ Sweden and ‘beyond’

With these reflections on the intersections of geography and history, nation, region and the globe in mind, I now turn to the Word of Life during its three decades or so of history. My aim is to see how it represents and mobilises categories of time and space, as well as history combined with geography, in relation to revivalist aims that are aimed at fellow Swedes and beyond, including countries mostly to the east across the Baltic Sea.

The Sweden of the early 1980s into which the group first emerged was clearly not the same as the Sweden of the second decade of the twenty-first century. The scale and character of immigration were not what they are today; the Swedish Church was still the state religion; the Social Democrats were still seen by many as the natural party of power. Sweden had a strong Pentecostal movement and had experienced various waves of Pentecostal revivalism but not generally of the neo-Pentecostal-Charismatic variety of Christianity that has now emerged. Jessica Moberg’s (2013) work on contemporary multicultural charismatic Christianity in the extremely socially mobile region of greater Stockholm acts as a fine ethnographical index of how far the country has come. When I started work in the 1980s Sweden presented as something of a paragon of stable, relatively homogeneous, secular modernity in much of the literature. For me as an anthropologist, the apparent lack of a fertile ground for Pentecostal expansion, by contrast with the United States, Africa or Latin America was, in certain respects, precisely what I was looking for. With the perversity of many in my discipline I was interested in the cultivation of Pentecostalism in a context where, given what I had read at the time, it would seem to be something which was quite out of place.

An important influence on my original motivation to do the research was the work of the British sociologist David Martin, a figure whose writing helped me initially to place the religio-political con-

text of Sweden in relation to other North American and Northern European countries. One of the foundations of Martin's work is his keen sense of the spatial, cultural and historical patterns of religious practice over the long as well as the short term. He thus provided me with a wider, macro-historical frame in which to place the mini-histories of how Swedish revivalists drew from and distanced themselves from each other. His magisterial and religiously musical *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978), a kind of sociological fugue where the theme of the secular is introduced and then repeated with numerous variations, placed Sweden at the opposite end of the spectrum to the United States in relation to a religio-political range of Western, broadly Protestant, democracies. Writing in the late 1970s, he saw the Scandinavian countries as being characteristically cultures with inclusive state churches, largely without Protestant dissent, by contrast with the USA as a culture where the principle of dissent had been universalised and competing denominations were to be found under an overarching umbrella of general religiosity (*ibid.* 111). In this interpretive frame, the flexibility of the US and the lack of a state church allowed all groups to find their religious personae in contrast to the more religiously moribund Lutheran countries of the far north of Europe. Martin's vision of Sweden resonated in some respects with that of a writer from a much earlier period – Marquis Childs, arguably Sweden's Alexis de Tocqueville. Childs it was who in 1936 published his book *Sweden: The Middle Way*, having explored the emergence of the virtual hegemony of the Social Democratic movement that would last for over half a century in that country. The 'middle way' for Childs was situated between a marketised US and a Communist Russia, emerging from a society that combined high levels of civil participation and cooperation with active management of the economy. This was a book that helped to form a particular vision of Sweden on the international stage and indeed encouraged President Roosevelt to send a special commission abroad to study European cooperative systems.

In the 1980s I felt that Martin's model of Sweden as Western, secular, relatively undifferentiated Protestant democracy had not taken sufficient account of what looked like an anomaly in his general theory, namely the strong Swedish Pentecostal movement. Looking back on his book now, I am also struck by his relative emphasis on the importance of national

historical and political frameworks to explain spirals and other patterns of historical development, as he demonstrates how the secular is filtered through very different religio-political frames. It is notable that in Martin's much more recent *Revised General Theory*, published in 2005, we see a number of key shifts in the analysis: not only is there much more of an orientation towards religion in the global south and to some extent in Eastern Europe, but also prominence is given to Pentecostalism as an agent of modernity and expansion, which in Martin's words is 'closely related to emergence of a global society' (Martin 2005: 26).

Reflecting on the Word of Life in relation to both macro- and micro-historical frames, I think its historical trajectory points us towards some of the shifts that we see in the gap between Martin's general theory of 1978 and that of 2005. As is well-known, the group was much criticised, especially in its early years, for its alleged authoritarianism, brainwashing of the young and its over-emphasis on becoming rich, among other things (Coleman 2000). But applying Martin's frames we can also see it as embodying a form of revivalism that transplanted an American model of universalised Protestant dissent into a Swedish setting. Ekman had of course studied at Kenneth Hagin's Rhema Bible Training Center in Tulsa as he left the Swedish Church and set up the ministry. We also know how the American model of nonconformist dissent is echoed in a great deal of American political discourse where the rhetoric speaks of a desire to both control government and to remove it; to both desire and despise power. This model combines a deep nationalism, an association of the nation state with a divine calling within and, beyond its borders, with an equally profound mistrust of a monopolising and centralising state control over religious, political and economic practice. I think depictions of the Word of Life as simply being an expression of American capitalism are far too simplistic, but it is fair to say that the model of religious pluralism and entrepreneurship adapted and nurtured in the United States was being applied in a rather different context, where it attracted both opprobrium and praise precisely for its anomalous qualities, and not least its challenge to the peaceable Swedish model of private secular-ity combined with religious *politesse* in the public sphere. This was a ministry that took on political as well as religious resonances in its revivalist aspirations, and did so through idioms of organisation

that challenged a centralised model of ecclesiastical, educational or bureaucratic governance. The Word of Life was soon busy setting up endlessly ramifying networks, new congregations and multiple conferences that helped to scatter its supporters centrifugally across the country and beyond.

I would say that what is striking about such developments and debates in the 1980s and 1990s is how often tropes of place and space became part of the rhetoric of supporters and denigrators of the 'new faith' message. 'Which Sweden Do You Want?' asked Pastor Ulf Ekman (1985) in one of his most notorious sermons of the 1980s, preaching just before a general election, no doubt knowing that a wider public might be listening while claiming that the Devil was undermining Swedish patriotism with 'faulty political, economic and ideological internationalism that doesn't build on Christian foundations' (*ibid.*). Ekman's message of what he then saw as true patriotism was dismissed by secular commentators as mere nationalism, but it demonstrated the power of such religio-political language to invoke but also to invert the religious, political and cultural imagery of its rivals: instead of the 'secular religions' of socialist or social-democratic states Ekman was offering to re-sacralise the nation and its government, and such an attitude expressed quite well the ability of Pentecostalism, as discussed by scholars such as Joel Robbins (2007), to invoke rupture by means of deploying but also re-valourising the cultural categories of ideological rivals. Ekman's words – expressed in a sermon, remember – also came close to projecting what Ruth Marshall (2009: 3) has referred to as 'a magico-materialist ontology of spiritual power' in the national realm, expressed in language both descriptive and performative: Ekman was not merely asking a rhetorical question, he was also intoning a spiritual language over Sweden. Note also Ekman's invocation of faulty internationalism: this might have referred to anything from Marxism to the European Union, or to any example of how over-centralisation might repress the potentiality of a God-given nation, but it certainly did not imply a rejection of mobility beyond national borders as a practice.

From the 1980s until his defection to Catholicism in 2014, Ekman himself became a neo-Pentecostal icon; a so-called 'worldwide man of God' who embodied and personalised the ability to create a landscape of Swedish neo-Pentecostal influence, including but also extending far beyond the

Zac Allan, Wikimedia Commons



Ulf Ekman during his annual meeting in Moscow, Russia, summer of 2006.

country itself. In this sense, he himself became the hero of a Pentecostal chronotope, a condensed symbol of a movement and agency travelling across time and space, and one who produced his own narratives of success while becoming assimilated into the narratives of others. His ministry also managed the tricky task of simultaneously seeking to put down roots in Uppsala and reaching out into much wider realms by combining the development of a congregation with other, more explicitly mobile, institutional forms, most notably regular conferences and an international Bible School, where the world could be seen to be coming to Uppsala as well as Uppsala to the world. Thinking of how 'congregational' and 'conference' culture has evolved over the years at the Word of Life I think that we might even say that these two have co-existed through an emphasis on two slightly different models of the coming together of time and space within a revivalist idiom. After all, scholars ranging from E. P. Thompson (1967) to E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) have called on us to be aware of the socially and spatially inflected production of temporality. Over the past three decades, and certainly compared to its early days, the Word of Life congregation has increasingly gathered rites of passage to itself; has acknowledged the circular passage of time through incorporating obituaries, the passing of the seasons, much more into its services; and has rooted itself more deeply in local institutions and in explicit social engagement; at the same time that conference time (and perhaps also missionary time) has continued to reach out beyond the local. Or perhaps



Livets Ord in Uppsala on 23 April 2014.

we can think of it as time-space in its celebration of the scaling-up of activity and broadening of horizons through its producing encounters between Christians across transnational lines.

Here I come back again to the Baltic: more geographically proximate to Sweden than much of the world, but often religiously and ideologically separate from its brand of neo-Pentecostalism and institutionalised dissent. I mean the Baltic as moral space, and one that is translated in faith idioms into a region that includes the legacy of Soviet governance. Word of Life activity and self-narrative has therefore played powerfully into two 'socialist' landscapes, not only what remains of a Social Democratic state in Sweden, but also into what remains of the post-Soviet landscape in the countries adjacent to it. Pre-1989 the Soviet bloc was not only a land of atheism, of a realised eschatology of communist salvation rather than the future salvation of the born-again, but in neo-Pentecostal terms also one that could be presented precisely as blocking mobility – of missions, of markets – and organised through coercive redistributive economic policies rather than encouraging decentralised entrepreneurship. Subsequently, it has become a landscape more directly inscribable by evangelical agency, mediated through the efforts of preachers and missionaries, and certainly

representable as being part of powerful narratives that can be reflected upon in Sweden, no matter what the success or otherwise of a mission might be. A Word of Life publication from October 1990 contained a piece entitled 'East Germany Today: Marx is Dead – Jesus Lives' and quoted a young German pastor who indeed claimed that 'The Berlin Wall fell because of goal-oriented and effective prayer in the Holy Spirit' (Selbekk 1990) – a depiction of a combined political and spiritual rupture where the results of prayer had a specific material referent. In the same year, Ekman and the leader of his East European mission, Carl-Gustaf Severin, walked around Red Square itself, 'binding' the spirits over the city, an act of spiritual warfare that was followed in subsequent years by the investment of millions of *kronor* in Bible centres in Russia, the Ukraine, Albania, and so on.

Decades later, the mission in Eastern Europe has remained a vital part of the Word of Life global imaginary, and forms an important part of the group's self-representation. A recent version of the Word of Life website (2012) includes an expandable map with the title 'Explore the Word of Life's Worldwide Missionary Work' ('*Utforska Livets Ords Världsvida Missionsarbete*'). Sweden occupies the top-right (north-west) corner, while the rest of Europe as well as parts of Asia and North Africa are also depicted.

The map's key divides relevant activities into centres, Bible schools, congregations, pastors' training, media work, and humanitarian operations. Flashing text provides impressive statistics about the group's mission, noting for instance that it supports 45 full-time missionaries in the field, and the previous September alone enabled 140 people to graduate from its pastors' course in Moscow. But what is perhaps most notable are the regions and nations highlighted: Sweden, the Baltic, Central Europe, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Albania, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, India, China and Vietnam. So while expansion of Word of Life influence within Sweden may have effectively ceased, the post-Soviet landscape allows for among other things a penetration by the mission as well as gifts of a previously 'diabolical' space of 'immobility' and by movements of people in and people out – constituting a space through which the entrepreneurial self can constitute the self in the imagination.

I suggest further that we can see a remarkable example of a chronotope, or rather a cluster of chronotopic elements, in a Word of Life project that has brought multiple models of time, space and mobility together in way that has incorporated but also extended beyond the Baltic as a space for the mission. In effect, it has narratively and ritually conjoined the Baltic with a wider, charged, spatio-temporal landscape. The ministry's increasing focus on Israel clearly expresses the group's construction of an image of the globe experiencing the End Times, but also provides a clue to the Eastern Europe-centred focus of its mission. An ambitious scheme called 'Operation Jabotinsky' has enabled up to 20,000 Jews to return to Israel since its inception in 1993. Jabotinsky was a Zionist Russian active in the first half of the twentieth century, who worked on plans for the evacuation of Jews from Eastern Europe in the 1930s. The contemporary *aliyah*, or return of the Jews to their homeland on behalf of the Word of Life and other supporting ministries, is said to form one of the necessary conditions for Jesus' return (along, for instance, with the granting of the opportunity for all peoples around the world to hear the Gospel message). It also serves to link Eastern Europe, Sweden and the Holy Land in a neo-Pentecostal landscape of action as Russian Jews are identified, possibly use Sweden as a transit country, and then move to Israel. As Kristian Steiner (2013: 38) puts it, we see here an 'instrumentalization' of the Jewish people, and if so

it is in relation to an often implicit but nonetheless palpable Messianic schema that locates the end of time in relation to two significant spaces: the 'Gog' that may be Russia and the Holy Land that signifies salvation. We might also recall Gilroy's image of the black Atlantic sailing ship when we reflect on the fact that for a time in the 1990s the group actually used a ship called *Restoration* for some of its passages – an embodiment of mobility, of the traversal of space, but also an indication of revivalism as a heroic restoration of history in fulfilling and completing a biblical script. This vessel points to and enacts a powerful chronotope, a bringing together and remaking of space and time on a scale that includes but also transcends both Sweden and the Baltic, and which forms a narrative which the group are writing for themselves not only in words, but also in multiple forms of mobility that now include buses, trains and planes.

Concluding remarks

This article has been about the power of the Pentecostal rhetorical and geographical imagination. The Word of Life's narrative of constant expansion hardly stands up to close examination, in Sweden at least: its active congregation is about the same size as it was twenty years ago (under 3,000), and many of those who have participated in its activities have come from other denominations. Yet the Baltic region translated into a post-Soviet landscape provides the perfect foil to this rhetoric, allowing penetration by mission and gifts of a previously 'diabolical' space of 'immobility', as well as movements of people in and people out – constituting a space through which the entrepreneurial self can constitute the agentive spiritual self in the imagination. In another, practical, but not insignificant sense, the Social Democratic landscape of Sweden in which the group has emerged has succeeded in providing the prosperous economic conditions through which a comparatively small ministry from the far north can have such influence: relative affluence, not deprivation, provides impulses and opportunities of its own.

I have also sketched a Pentecostal imagination that works through the various prepositional stances that I referred to towards the beginning of this article. I have tried to locate the Word of Life *in* Sweden, but also in some sense *of* a Baltic environment that has a combination of two forms of secularity to be challenged, namely democratic Lutheranism and post-

Soviet policy. The group's challenge is shaped and motivated by its construction of a moral geography that provides it with an orientation, a reflection *on* the Baltic region which identifies it as being in need of mission but also as one part of the world – a world that always requires the ambitious believer to look *beyond* the immediate horizon of action.

This imagination fits into a form of revivalist history-making that deploys a spatio-temporal vocabulary of expansion and mission claiming a kind of rupture from previous revivalist movements, even as it uses some of the same idioms. In a real sense the initial history of the Word of Life, the first phase of its life as a movement, recently experienced its own rupture with the departure of Ulf Ekman himself not only from the role of leader but into the arms of the Catholic Church, along with his wife Birgitta and one of their children. It remains to be seen how the ministry will fare without its 'great man of God'. But I am also interested in how Ekman's actions relate to the remaking, once again, of history. For one of the arguments Ekman now tends to put forward is that the Church needs a permanent reformation, although one does not need to begin from scratch each time there is a need or call for change: division is to be repaired by means of reconciliation with a Roman Church that reaches further back than even the Swedish Church, and incidentally one whose global reach is much greater. Perhaps what Ekman is showing once more is his ability to create the new by re-deploying old categories, and to respond to a Swedish political landscape that is far from being characterised by the homogeneous secularity that it was presented as in the 1970s. In the new chronotope that Ekman is creating and embodying, moreover, we might see a different Baltic emerging, and one where Orthodox as well as Catholic churches no longer belong to the cemetery, but to what he now describes as the 'rich heritage' of a Christianity that he was aware of before he even started on the road that would lead to the foundation of the Word of Life. ■



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