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Religious Actors on the Debate Pages of Aftonbladet

– A study of how mediatization and deprivatization contribute to a shift in religious authority.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how frequently religious actors participate in public debates, on what subjects and with what arguments. This is done by studying the debate pages of Sweden's largest tabloid: Aftonbladet. Furthermore, the aim is also to study what forms of authority and arguments the religious actors use while participating in the public sphere. In order to answer the research questions the author takes an abductive approach and uses the theories of deprivatization and mediatization to conduct a sequential mixed method study of Aftonbladet's debate page between the years 2001 and 2011. The results show that very few religious actors participate in public debates in Sweden, and that the small sample of articles signed by religious actors are dominated by the Church of Sweden. The Christian groups are represented by religious authorities to a much larger extent than the Jewish and Muslim groups. However, the arguments used by all groups are predominately secular, which would indicate an acceptance of the secular norm in the public sphere.

Keywords: deprivatization; mediatization; authority; public sphere; debate pages; Aftonbladet.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Half a decade ago German-American social theorist Hanna Arendt made the statement that we should ask ourselves not what authority is, but rather what it was (Arendt 1954). By this statement she meant to shed light on the crisis of authority that began to develop in the post war Western world and which is still very much present in contemporary society. Even though Arendt's prediction that authority would vanish completely as society becomes fully modernized seems unlikely to become reality, it is clear that traditional forms of authority have lost ground. The theories of secularization and mediatization both seem to suggest that a shift in authority is taking place in modern society, and this is perhaps especially true in the case of religious authority. One aspect of secularization is the structural differentiation of society, which leads to more actors competing for authority in a variety of fields; this undermines the traditional authority so characteristic for many forms of established religion, placing religious institutions in just another differentiated sphere, fighting for legitimacy and for its place in modern society. Mediatization of society on the other hand turns media into the main source of information on religion, and traditional religious authorities have to go through the media in order to get their views out to a broader audience. This line of reasoning is supported by for example Henrik Reintoft Christensen (2012) who argues that secularization and mediatization of religion in the public sphere may lead to the questioning of the legitimacy for certain forms of religious authority.

Apart from this shift in authority that these theories seem to indicate there has also been an increased visibility of religion in the public sphere. This fact, and its consequences, is something that has been widely discussed within the sociology of religion (cf. Knott, Poole & Taira 2013). This 'public sphere' in which religion is becoming more visible is to a large extent dominated by the media, as media today is the primary way to distribute and exchange information. This new visibility of religion is mostly represented by what Stig Hjarvard terms *journalism on religion* and thus media coverage of religion is predominately from a secular point of view (Hjarvard 2012:31ff). It is also in relation to journalism on religion most contemporary research on religion in media has been conducted, as will be shown in Chapter 2. Therefore, in these times of shifting authority patterns and increased religious visibility in the public sphere, I am interested in how the religious actors themselves participate in the public sphere and if signs of these shifting authority patterns can be found in this participation.

When it comes to religious actors participating in the public sphere, José Casanova and Jürgen Habermas has developed theories related to the way in which religious actors may do so without compromising the basic premises of modernity

and democracy. These theories, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2, are centered on the legitimate subjects religious actors may discuss in the public sphere, and what arguments religious actors ought to use in public debates. Therefore it is not just the frequency of religious actors' participation I am interested in but also what subjects and what arguments this participation includes. As for the proposed shift in authority, some contemporary theorists, including but not limited to Lynn Schofield Clark, Heidi Campbell and Tanni Haas, will be used in an attempt to distinguish whether alternatives to traditional religious authority are used by these religious actors. As the arena to study participation in the public sphere I have selected the debate pages of Sweden's largest national newspaper, *Aftonbladet*.

Before formulating the aim and research questions of the study some elaboration on religion, media and newspapers in Sweden is in order. Below a brief description of the Swedish religious landscape and how the major religious organizations are structured will be given, followed by the role of media in Sweden, particularly the role of printed press.

Religion in Sweden

It should come as no surprise that religion is viewed as a predominately private matter in Sweden, and that Sweden is highly secular compared to other parts of the world in terms of religious belief and practices (Inglehart 2007). Furthermore, Sweden scores among the highest in the world on the secular-rational scale used by the World Value Survey (Inglehart 2007:16ff), which indicates an opposition towards the importance of religion, deference to authority and absolute moral standards, which are all characteristic of traditional institutional religion. There is also evidence of Sweden being an example of a country where Grace Davie's concepts 'believing without belonging' and 'belonging without believing' are both applicable (Davie 2000). Swedish people are likely to consider themselves religious without belonging to a specific congregation, but at the same time the opposite is true as well, since the majority of the Swedish population are members of the Church of Sweden without regularly participating in religious services.

Despite recent religious diversification, the religious landscape in Sweden is dominated by the Church of Sweden with a membership of 6.5 million, or 67% of the population. However, the Church of Sweden is the former state church of Sweden (separated from the state in 2000) and up until 1995 anyone with at least one parent who was a member of the Church of Sweden automatically became a member as well. According to Bromander (2011) only about 300 000 of the members attend services regularly. The organization has a clear and centralized hierarchy with the archbishop as the formal spokesperson and the church meeting (kyrkomötet) as the highest decision-making body. Directly under the archbishop are 13 bishops that together with the archbishop represent the 13 episcopates. There is also the church secretariat of Uppsala, responsible for questions on a na-

tional level regarding education, ecumenical relations, international missionary, the setting of norms within the organization and so on.

Apart from Church of Sweden there are three major Christian churches in Sweden, each with approximately 100 000 members (Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund 2011)¹; these are the Catholic Church of Sweden (Katolska Kyrkan), the Pentecostal movement (Pingströrelsen), and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (Svenska Missionskyrkan). The Catholic Church, internationally headed by the Pope, is represented in Sweden by the Catholic episcopate of Stockholm, which, as the only Catholic episcopacy in Sweden is more or less synonymous with the Swedish Catholic Church. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is divided into 8 districts and has a yearly church conference as its central decision-making agency. The Pentecostal movement is more charismatic in nature and lacks a clear hierarchy. There is a common network, 'Pentecostals – free congregations in cooperation', but far from all congregations stand behind this initiative.

On a par with these Christian groups in terms of participation in religious services is the practicing Muslim population in Sweden². The Muslim group has an umbrella-like organization called Islamiska Samarbetsrådet (The Islamic cooperation council) with the main function of distributing funds from SST to 6 national Islamic organizations in Sweden. Two of these organizations are represented in the material of this study (Svenska Islamska församlingarna (The Islamic congregations in Sweden) and Sveriges Muslimska Förbund (The Muslim Alliance in Sweden)). Furthermore, there are other umbrella organizations, such as Sveriges Muslimska Råd (The Muslim council in Sweden), under which organizations such as Sveriges Unga Muslimer (Young Muslims in Sweden) and Islamiska Informationsföreningen (The Islamic Information Union) can be found. Some organizations represented in the material do not belong to any larger organization, such as Muslimska Mänskliga Rättighetskommittén (Muslim Human Rights Committee), which is a reactionary movement often in conflict with other Muslim organizations (cf. Melin 2009). One explanation of the apparent disarray in the organization of Muslims in Sweden is that just because these organizations are 'Muslim' per se it does not mean they are engaged in the same questions or were created with the purpose to promote the Muslim faith. There are almost half a million Muslims in Sweden but only a fifth attend religious services regularly. It is thus only natural that Muslim organizations should be more diverse than their fellow Christian minorities³.

¹ Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund (SST) is a governmental agency handing out state funds to faith communities.

² It is important to note that Sweden has about 450 000 people with roots in Muslim-majority countries (PEW 2010), and that the number 110 000 is from SST and does not include organizations not getting state funds.

³ As has been shown above, combining the PEW and SST statistics, few Muslims in Sweden are 'religious' in the sense that they attend religious services. It is unlikely that the same can be said about, for example, the Pentecostals or the Mission Covenant Church (for a discussion on this cf. Lövheim & Bromander 2012).

The last group to be mentioned here is the Jewish population. According to Judiska Centralrådet (The Official Council of Jewish Communities) there are approximately 20 000 Jews living in Sweden, of which about 8000 are connected to a Jewish congregations. The reason the Jewish group is brought up here is that despite the relative smallness of the group, they still represent the third largest group of contributors in the material. The Jewish group is organized through The Official Council of Jewish Communities, consisting of Jewish congregations in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

To summarize, most of the groups presented here are governed by a central traditional authority, the exceptions being the Pentecostals and the Muslims. In Chapter 5 the way the different groups are organized will be compared with how the representatives of each group express authority in an attempt to find any similarities between the two.

Media and newspapers in Sweden

According to Lövheim & Hjarvard (2012:10) the Nordic countries are characterized by a high degree of public interest and intervention. Furthermore, the Nordic countries are all good examples of democratic-corporatist media systems with widespread newspaper readership⁴ and strong public service media (Hadenius et al. 2011:138). Apart from the strong presence of public service and conventional newspapers there is also a high presence of ‘new’ media (e.g. internet, mobile media) intermingling with the ‘old’ ones. What is also characteristic of the Nordic countries is the non-confessional nature of the national newspapers, which consequently makes secular media the main source of information about religious issues (Lövheim & Hjarvard 2010:10). In Sweden there are four national newspapers, two morning papers (Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet) and two tabloids (Expressen and Aftonbladet). The morning papers are generally regarded as having higher credibility than the tabloids (MedieAkademin, 2013), as well as creating the news flow rather than merely following it as the tabloids tend to do. Tabloids are also reader funded to a higher degree, and do more advertising as well as focusing more on sensations, celebrities and crime than the morning papers (Hadenius et al. 2011:79).

Aftonbladet

The Swedish tabloid Aftonbladet is the largest national newspaper in Sweden, reaching, with paper copies, mobile services and various internet services combined, about 2,8 million people each day, or approximately 30% of the Swedish population (Aftonbladet i siffror 2013). It was founded in 1830 as a reaction to the dominant elitist newspapers of the time and expressed clear anti-royalist opinions,

⁴ Sweden is ranked fourth in the world when it comes to newspaper circulation per citizen, with only Japan, Norway and Finland having higher circulation (TU, Swedish Media Publishers’ Association, 2012).

valuing to write about things ‘everyone’ would want to read about, such as international news events, theatre and culture (Hadenius et al. 2011:63; see also: Jacobson 2002). In the 1950s, Landsorganisationen i Sverige (LO) bought *Aftonbladet*, and gave it a clear, though politically unbound, social democratic agenda. Today the paper is owned by Schibsted, a Norwegian media concern, but LO, still owning 9% of the paper, retains the right to appoint the editors for the debate, editorial, and culture pages, and thus still controls the political orientation of the paper (Hadenius et al. 2011:72, 169f).

Debate articles in Sweden

That public debates takes place within mass media is a natural development in modern democratic societies, as it is a place to share and discuss various issues or policies (Lindström 1996). Internationally, the value of debate pages as arenas for democratic communication are often questioned, as it is in general the least tolerant citizens that engage in such public debates (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002:185; Rein-toft Christensen 2010:48). However, in Sweden and the rest of the Nordic countries the debate article is one of the central arenas for these democratic debates. The debate article as a category, together with the editorial and culture page, is the central part of the national newspapers in Sweden. They act as a medium for politicians, organizations and private actors to get their voices heard. The submission of articles is open to anyone, but in regard to the national newspapers the debate pages are a de facto elitist arena, especially in the two major morning papers *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* (cf. Lindström 1996; Axner forthcoming). The following section will discuss the debate page of *Aftonbladet*⁵.

The purpose of *Aftonbladet*’s debate page is to give space for opinion material from outside the paper and act as an arena for contemporary public debates on questions relevant for the readers of the paper. The editorial staff works closely with the news-editors to pick up what will be the general focus of the paper and current topics that might be a subject for an upcoming debate article. What articles that get published is almost exclusively related to their newsworthiness; they have to be related to current events and have a clear angle, such as a demand or wish directed to someone or a new solution or stance on a particular question. About 90% of the articles submitted to the paper are rejected, generally because they lack one or several of these criteria. The articles are either sent in on the initiative of the signatory, or they might be written at the request of the paper, that is, the editorial staff will ask someone involved in a current social issue to write about it. Because of the angle of this study, the debate editor was also asked if the editorial staff had any specific policy or relation to religious groups, or if any effort was put into giving voice to minorities in general. The answer to all these questions was no, no outspoken policy regarding minorities, including religious ones, exists. Regardless of this, the newspaper’s power to decide what articles are published

⁵ The information has been obtained by an e-mail interview with the current debate editor Anna Andersson. The full interview can be found in Appendix X.

gives them a role of gatekeepers, who at least to some extent have agenda-setting capacity (Reintoft Christensen 2010:48).

The place of this study

In the light of the abovementioned Nordic context, this study belongs to a field in which little research has been conducted. Though studies on media and religion have been done since the beginning of the 1990s, the general focus has been on popular culture rather than news media. In recent years more thought has been given to news media and the presence of religion therein (cf. Christensen 2010; Lövheim & Lundby 2013; Knott, Poole & Taira 2013), but these studies tend to focus on different forms of ‘visibility’ or presence of religion in the media, rather than on religious actors themselves and their contribution to public debates. It is to this Nordic field of studies on religion in news media, and on newspapers in particular that this study relates to and to which I hope to contribute.

The epistemological starting point of the study

One last thing will have to be developed before formulating the aims and research questions, and that is the ontological and epistemological stances taken in this study. I will refrain from making any ontological assumption on whether there is such a thing as an ‘objective’ reality. It is sufficient to settle for the epistemological statement that we cannot gain any meaningful knowledge about any kind of reality without the use of language and the influence of culture, experiences, norms, or other social constructions (Beckford 2003:4). Thus, from a social constructivist point of view that this study takes, all that we can study is subjective, social realities. The tree outside my office window may or may not exist regardless of language and social constructions, but in naming it a tree, with all the connotations of that word in my particular context, I have in a sense placed it in a socially constructed reality.

Aims

What will be focused on in this study is the presence of religious actors in public debates, in this case through a case study of debate articles in the newspaper *Aftonbladet*. What I will investigate is first and foremost to what extent religious actors participate on the debate pages of *Aftonbladet*, which religious groups that are represented, and on what subjects they write. As mentioned above, *Aftonbladet* is the largest single national newspapers in Sweden, reaching almost 3 million people daily, and though not as prestigious as the national morning papers, the sheer number of people it reaches makes its impact considerable. Thus, representing one of the main arenas to debate issues of both politics and civil society, what room is given to/taken by religious actors?

Furthermore, I am interested in who these religious actors, who manage to get published on the debate pages, are? Are they spiritual leaders, professionals or laypersons writing as members of a particular faith or community? What does the distribution of the signatories' positions within the respective communities say about the authority structure within the said community? Are the arguments and motivations for their authority different between the types of signatories, as well as between the religious groups? Another question is whether or not religious arguments are used to legitimize the signatory's authority, or if they stick to secular arguments while debating in the public sphere. These questions and the relation between authority, deprivatization and mediatization are central in this study. The goal is to deepen the understanding of how religious actors negotiate their place in society through the media, and how different kinds of members carry out this negotiation in different ways.

Research Questions

- (1) To what extent did religious actors participate on the debate pages of *Aftonbladet* during the years 2001-2011? What religious denominations were represented; who represented each group; what subjects did the respective religious groups debate; and were there any major differences between the groups?
- (2) What different forms of authority can be distinguished within the respective religious groups represented in the material, and by what arguments are they legitimized? How can these forms of authority be explained in relation to the authority shifting effects of deprivatization and mediatization?

Limitations

First of all, a few very broad limitations have had to be made. The study is limited to Sweden and the Swedish context. As shown by Casanova (1994) religion will evolve very differently depending on the social, cultural and historical context, and I would argue that this most certainly includes what role religion takes in the public sphere of any given country⁶. Also, the study is limited to news press, thus excluding other traditional media such as television, radio and magazines as well as various forms of new media, including but not limited to forums, blogs, twitter, movies, comics and social websites. Ideally the entirety of the debate page material of the Swedish printed press would have been investigated to give a complete overview of how religious actors participate in the Swedish public debates. Unfor-

⁶ Casanova writes about 'public religion' but does not lean on media-related theories or empiric studies within media contexts. I will develop why his theory may still be useful in a study focusing on media in Chapter 3.

Unfortunately the time allocated to this study and how much material can be included are not unlimited and certain choices had to be made. I chose to focus on one newspaper over a longer period of time rather than several over a shorter period. The benefits of this are that it will protect my material from being influenced too much by specific events (e.g. elections, trials, natural disasters, wars). At the same time, these very elections, disasters and wars will be covered in the material, making it more diverse. It will also be able to give an indication if the said potential events will in any way affect the number of religious actors that participate in the material, or if there is any sign of a general increase or decrease of religious actors in the newspapers over the time studied. The downside is that the study, on its own, will not be able to say much beyond the newspaper in question, and is exposed to the particular *modus operandi* of said newspaper. This downside is somewhat mitigated by the possibility of placing the study in a larger context and comparing the results with previous research.

In relation to the theories used on authority, especially the ones by Heidi Campbell and Lynn Schofield Clark, it would have been interesting to include some form of reception study in this thesis. Their theories are perhaps best suited for a more interactive environment than printed press. I must again refer to the need to limit the material to fit the scope of this study, and it is sufficient to say that a reception study has been considered and that it may well be something I embark on as a follow-up study in the future.

The newspaper chosen for this study is the national tabloid *Aftonbladet*, Sweden's, at least in the time-period this study will examine, largest newspaper. The reason for choosing *Aftonbladet*, and particularly the debate page, for this study is twofold: first, there are benefits of using naturally occurring data in studies of this kind, rather than using interviews or surveys, since it increases the possibility of intersubjectivity, as well as the validity of the study. Interviews and surveys will always have the 'trace' of the researcher on them, since someone has formulated the questions, conducted the interviews, transcribed them and so on. Secondly, what I want to investigate is how often, on what subjects and in what ways religious actors participate in public debates, and I would argue that the debate pages of the most read newspaper in Sweden is a productive place to look. I do not, however, in any way make the claim that *Aftonbladet* is representative of Swedish mass media in general, nor that the opinions expressed in debate articles should be seen as representative sample for all opinions in society.

Another limitation lies in my choice of perspective. As a sociologist of religion I have a particular set of ontological and epistemological assumptions of the world. There are innumerable aspects of the material that could have been studied, from a myriad of different perspectives. The results of this particular study derive from the chosen research design, the selected theories and the social constructivist perspective.

Definition of terms

Clarity and transparency are vital in any scientific study. In this study three concepts are especially problematic and thus require some extra attention. The first is the definition of religion, the second is what I mean by religious actors and the third is what I mean by authority. In the following, note that I do not make any essentialist or universalistic claims regarding my definitions, it is not for me to say what religion *really* is or what constitutes a religious actor per se.

Religion as a discursive reality

... as social scientists and scholars of religion, we have a disciplinary obligation to be as analytically clear as possible about the manifold and very different discursive ways in which we today in our contemporary global age use the category of religion, namely what counts and does not count as religion, to which kind of diverse phenomena (beings as well as things, groups and institutions, beliefs, practices and experiences) we may attach the attribute or qualifier “religious”. (Casanova 2010:35)

This quote by Casanova stresses the importance of a clear definition of religion. In *Religionssociologi: En introduktion* (2005) authors Inger Furseth & Pål Repstad dedicates an entire chapter on the importance of defining religion, and the benefits and downsides of choosing either a substantive or functional definition. However, though having clear analytical benefits, the use of a single clear definition of religion often limits the scope of a study to certain kinds of material and certain fields, and compromises the possibility to work interdisciplinary. What Casanova suggests is that religion instead be viewed as *a discursive reality* and as *a system of classification of reality* and that its existence is *an undisputable social fact* (Casanova 2010:34-35). This is the definition I will use in this study. This is very similar to the arguments James Beckford has given on how religion should be considered as primarily a social phenomenon, and that any thought of finding a ‘real’ or ‘essential’ religion must be abandoned (Beckford 2003:2, 20).

However, because of the nature of the analysis, (trying to make statements on whether an argument is religious or secular, or if a signatory draws on religious authority or not) it is necessary for me to have a tentative operationalization of religion. Thus, without taking any stance on what should be considered ‘religious’ or not in general, in the analysis of this study religion will be defined as institutions, traditions, practices or symbols that are somehow connected with the perceived existence of a transcendent reality or supreme being (Robertson 1970). I am well aware that this is a very limited and substantive definition that would exclude countless people who consider themselves religious, in this case this operationalization will not exclude any articles from the material. Its purpose is to enable me to distinguish between when authority is drawn from ‘religious’ sources, and when it is based on secular, non-religious sources. Though I recognize the somewhat paradoxical nature of the following statement, I would like to make clear that I do not believe in the concept of ‘religious arguments’ in the

sense that people who consider themselves religious are fundamentally different from people who do not, and would thus always base their arguments on different grounds than non-religious people. The differentiation between religious and secular arguments is in this case only based on how the arguments are explicitly motivated.

In sum: the term ‘religious’ will be used in two ways in this study, in the quantitative part in terms of ‘religious actors’ (which will be described below) and in the qualitative part in terms of ‘religious arguments’, indicating that arguments related to the perceived existence of a superhuman reality are being used.

Religious actors

This is perhaps the most central category in the study and also the most problematic. It is one part of a dichotomous pair together with ‘secular actors’, and while these categories most likely overlap in reality, from my analytical perspective they do not. However, I make no claim that a religious actor is necessarily ‘truly’ religious or that a secular actor cannot hold some sort of faith. The distinction is based on whether the signatory of an article is *labeled* as adhering to a religious denomination or creed. It is how the discursive reality or concept we call religion is constituted in the public sphere that is in focus, and thus the individual character of each signatory’s faith is of little relevance.

In the analysis the religious actors will be divided into three categories depending on their position within their respective religious communities. The categories are based on what sources their authority is based on and can either be *religious* (e.g. bishops, imams, rabbis), *professional* (e.g. spokespersons, editors of religious press) or *laymen* (self-proclaimed adherent of a faith). How these categories were used concretely in the analysis will be described in Chapter 3, where the use of these categories will be problematized further.

Authority

Authority is a complex concept that can be negotiated in a number of ways. In this study a fairly broad definition of authority will be used. The reason for this is that part of the goal of this study is to find differences in how various kinds of religious actors construct their authority. A fixed definition would therefore possibly favor either the one or the other ‘form’ of authority. Thus it is sufficient to say that, in line with Schofield Clark (2012:115), authority is given by people to someone or something who can formulate what they hold most valuable and meaningful. Note that I am not making any claims as to whether or not the authority someone expresses or trying to legitimize in various ways actually *exists*. Since I am not making a reception study I can say nothing about whether or not the authority someone seeks is given to them, or is completely ignored. A more in-depth discussion on the various forms of authority will be given in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 Previous research and theory

In this section, previous research relating to the research question will be presented. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this study (moving between the fields of sociology of religion, media studies, and studies on authority) the amount of research that has been done that relates to this study is vast. What follows will be a short review of the research within each field that clearly connects to the research question and to the specific context of the study.

From secularization to religious change

In a nutshell, the sociology of religion concerns itself with the place of religion in society. Traditionally the focus has been on religious decline, as predicted by the classical secularization theory (cf. Berger 1969; Weber 1963). In recent decades however, there has been a paradigm shift from religious decline to religious change (cf. Davie 2007; Furseth & Repstad 2005). It is in the light of this change of focus that I pose the first research question of this study; if religion is changing rather than disappearing, then how is it changing and what expressions does it take? However, even if the secularization theory is less dominant today than it was in the 1960s, it does not mean it has lost its relevance; in fact, it plays a central part in this study. Below I will give a brief history of the secularization theory and how it came to be adapted to better suit the current paradigm.

As stated above, the secularization theory was absolutely central to the sociology of religion from its formation in the late 19th century up until the late 20th century (Davie 2007). Religion was bound to give way to modernity; it would first become ‘invisible’ (Luckmann 1967) and eventually disappear completely. Inherent in this idea was the notion that religion as such is incompatible with modern life (Davie 2007:48), derived from the idea that modernity must begin with the breakdown of all traditional legitimations (Eisenstadt 2002:5). This view was shared by almost all the founding fathers of the social sciences, among them Karl Marx, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, and was so dominant that empirical evidence was barely needed; everybody *knew* that it was true. In the wake of the enlightenment and the scientific triumphs of the industrial age it was all too clear, religion had no place in this world (Casanova 1994:17). It is thus not remarkable that the critique David Martin put forward in his *A General Theory on Secularization* in 1978 concerning the lack of empirical evidence for the then claimed global religious decline got very little attention by his contemporaries. What *is* remarkable is that some twenty years later a substantial portion of the previously zealous defenders of the theory had discarded it as a myth (Casanova 1994:11). José Cas-

anova however claims that the theory still is relevant, given that it is used with conceptual clarity (cf. Casanova 1994; 2006; 2011). Casanova's thoughts on secularization, and his concept of deprivatization in particular, will be further developed in the theory section below.

It is worth noting that the Nordic countries are by no means an exception when it comes to how the secularization paradigm has shifted. Both the previous overconfidence in the secularization theory and the shift towards the idea of social change is very much applicable to academia in Sweden and the Nordic countries as well (cf. Furseth & Repstad 2005; Bäckström, Edgardh Beckman & Pettersson 2004).

Religion and media

It is difficult to speak about 'public religion' without considering the medium through which religion 'goes' public⁷. With the increasing importance of the internet and various forms of mass media, religion can now be found anywhere, at any time, by anyone. That information regarding religion becomes available to a broader audience opens up the possibility for increased understanding, but also for conflicts (cf. Lynch, Mitchell & Strhan 2012; Marsden & Savigny 2009; Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012).

In recent years Stig Hjarvard's mediatization theory has received a lot of attention in the Nordic context. Hjarvard uses the concept of mediatization to describe the powerful role of media in contemporary society (cf. Hjarvard 2008; 2011). This theory has been widely debated and criticized for being western-centered, having an unproblematic view on the relation between modernity, media and religion, and that it ascribes too much power to the media, leaving religion passive and without agency (cf. Lövheim & Lynch 2011; Hjarvard 2011; Lynch 2011; Morgan 2011). Despite the criticism the theory is widely used in Nordic studies, and as stated above it will be used in this study as well.

There is a strong interest in the relationship between religion and different forms of media within the Nordic countries. To name but a few studies, research has been conducted on religious texts in new media (Sjöborg 2006), religious identities online (Lövheim 2004) and religion's role in the Swedish public service television (Lövheim & Axner 2011). There has also been some research done on religion in national newspapers in the Nordic countries. Niemelä & Christensen (2013) conducted a study on news coverage of religion over time in the five Nordic countries. 14 newspapers of various formats (leading daily, tabloid, regional paper and one additional newspaper for each country) were studied in two-week periods before Christmas, Easter, Eid as well as control period of two weeks during the autumn. The years of 1988, 1998 and 2008 were selected in an attempt to find changes in religious presence over time. One of the problems with studies

⁷ Though Casanova does a good job of doing just this, that is, not discussing the media (cf. Christensen 2012:67).

like this is that they are susceptible to temporary fluctuations in the media, and thus have problems proving a long term increase or decline in medial interest for religion. The predicted results of the study were according to the authors, assuming that contemporary theories on religion are correct and that that Nordic societies are becoming more and more religiously diverse, that articles on Christianity ought to decline, and that holidays such as Eid would get more attention. However, neither of these assumptions had much support in their material.

The study I found that is most similar to this one in terms of methodology and scope is an ongoing dissertation by Marta Axner (forthcoming). Axner has studied the debate pages of three national Swedish newspapers, Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet and Expressen between the years 2001-2011 with the aim of investigating to what extent, on what subjects and with what arguments religious actors participate in public debates, and if their participation can be understood in terms of Casanova's public religions. Her results indicate a very limited presence of religious actors on the debate pages of these newspapers, and that only the Church of Sweden completely fills the criteria for being a public religion in Casanova's sense. A comparison between the results of Axner's study and this one will be made in Chapter 6.

Religion and authority

Max Weber was one of the first modern sociologists who wrote on authority. He defined the three 'classical' forms of authority: *traditional authority*, *charismatic authority* and *rational legal authority* (Weber 1978:215). These will be elaborated in the theory section, for now it is sufficient to say that religion historically has been characterized by traditional authority. However, since the middle of the 20th century it has been widely recognized that with the modernization of society, the way authority is gained, expressed and maintained is shifting in various ways (cf. Arendt 1954; Seligman 1990, 2000; Giddens 1990; Campbell 2007, Schofield Clark 2011; Chaves 1994).

Heidi Campbell has studied how the concept of authority can be defined online and draws the conclusion that it is not enough to say that traditional authority is challenged by the internet but that researchers must define what form of authority is being challenged or affected (Campbell 2007). Lynn Schofield Clark has explored the concept of consensus based authority, based on Seligman (2000), as a way of explaining how seemingly unlikely people may gain authority within a certain community. She argues that in the 'remix culture' we live in, anyone who is able to formulate what we hold most dear may gain the authority to speak on our behalf, and may continue to do so as long as they have our consensus (Schofield Clark 2011). The thoughts of Campbell and Schofield Clark will be developed further in the theory section below.

Presentation of theory

In this study the theories will be used as a lens that will guide which aspects of the material are being focused, and what questions are posed (Creswell 2009:49). Some of the theories presented will also be ‘tested’ in the sense that the analysis may or may not prove that some of the theories are more or less suitable for the kind of material chosen for this study.

The focus and main line of argument in the study, and in this chapter particularly, is that mediatization and deprivatization bring about a shift in religious authority. Therefore, this chapter will first give theoretical background on what deprivatization (with its root in the secularization theory) and mediatization are and how they can be related to shifts in authority, as well as several possible theoretical views on authority itself. The chapter will be concluded with an operationalization of the theories.

Secularization and deprivatization

When *Public Religions in the Modern World* was published in 1994 it challenged contemporary sociological theories in two major ways. Firstly, it presented empirical evidence that went against the claims of the classical secularization theory, and secondly it challenged the normative claims of religion’s place in modern society held by most of the founding fathers and the intellectual elite at the time (Casanova 2012:28). Casanova claims that we are now witnessing a deprivatization of religion by which religion re-enters the public sphere, but that religion must still be considered a private matter per se.

To elaborate, Casanova claims that religion has to be considered a private matter because (1) the freedom of religion is closely related to the freedom of conscience, which is a precondition to all modern freedoms, and (2) freedom of conscience is linked to ‘the right to privacy’ in the sense that privacy means freedom from governmental intrusion or ecclesiastical control (Casanova 1994:40). This is a normative statement, since claiming that certain freedoms are constitutive of modernity is one thing, while claiming that religion has to be private to ensure these freedoms is quite another.

So how should this deprivatization of religion be handled if religion must be considered a private matter? Casanova’s argument is that religion does not have to be anti-modern or anti-democratic in every public form. In certain forms, exemplified in *Public Religions*, religion is quite compatible with modern universal values. Casanova gives three examples of instances where de-privatized religion may re-enter the public sphere:

- (1) To protect modern freedoms and rights, not just of their own group but everyone’s, against absolutist or totalitarian states.
- (2) To question the ethical or moral basis of politicians, for example the morality of nuclear policies, capitalism or arms dealing.

- (3) To protect the traditional life-world from political or judicial penetration.
(Casanova 1994:57f)

Apart from being limited to subjects related to the abovementioned criteria, Casanova also argue that in order to further ensure modern values religion has to be differentiated into its own sphere, just like the rest of society is being structurally differentiated (Casanova 1994:212ff).

To sum up, Casanova sees religion as a private matter in modern societies, but also argues that certain differentiated forms, on the level of civil society, may find ways to co-exist with secular society. Though this normative stance on the place of religion may seem harsh, in Casanova's defense he has recently stated that he never meant that the deprivatization he speaks of is universal or the only form of religious transformation. He also states that just because some forms of religion are re-entering the public, it does not mean that the general trend of privatization cannot continue simultaneously, or that other theories, such as Luckmann's 'invisible religion' may still be relevant. It is, according to Casanova, a purely empirical question which theory is best suited for which context (Casanova 2012:28f; See also Casanova 2006).

How then can this be linked to authority? Assuming that Casanova's theory is correct, placing religion in a differentiated sphere will in itself challenge traditional religious authority. Religious institutions become but one of a myriad of societal institutions fighting for legitimacy in various arenas (Davie 2007:4f). Furthermore, as mentioned above, Casanova claims that religion may only re-enter the public sphere on certain conditions. If these conditions are not met, two options are available for religious institutions: (1) to stay out of the public sphere, and hence forfeit any public authority or (2) enter the public sphere and risk having its authority questioned or denied completely. In either case, deprivatization clearly poses a challenge to religious authority.

Many of Casanova's thoughts on religion are related to the public sphere. Therefore, the following section will be devoted to a problematisation of the concept of the 'public sphere' and how it can be understood from a selected number of theories.

The public sphere

The empirical research of this study is conducted on a tabloid newspaper, but to understand what is actually being studied one would have to consider that this tabloid can be understood differently depending on the theoretical perspective used. I would like to begin with a quote by the British anthropologist Mary Douglas concerning the use of binary distinctions:

Binary distinctions are an analytical procedure, but their usefulness does not guarantee that existence divides like that. We should look with suspicion on anyone who claims

there are two kinds of people, or two kinds of reality or process. (Mary Douglas 1978: 161)⁸

The reason I bring this up is because the *public* sphere necessarily indicates the existence of a *private* sphere, and assigning certain attributes to one part of a dichotomous pair necessarily have implications for the other. This, I would say, is vital to bear in mind throughout any study that at least to some degree relies on binary distinctions. Too often we get stuck in the old-school philosophy that all things operate in an either-or basis. Seyla Benhabib states that ‘distinctions can enlighten as well as cloud an issue’ (1992:73), and I could not agree more. As I shall argue below, the public/private distinction can well be useful as two opposites according to which one might try to ‘grade’ just how public or private a certain phenomenon is, but at the same time, to claim that a certain issue is either private or public may have serious consequences in regards to how the said issue is viewed in society. Below a brief explanation of the public/private distinction will be given, as well as a discussion of the concept ‘public sphere’ as it is used by Jürgen Habermas, followed by critiques by Seyla Benhabib and Tanni Haas.

The public/private distinction

In *The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction*, Jeff Weintraub summarizes the public/private distinction in the following way:

The public/private distinction, in short, is not unitary, but protean. It comprises, not a single paired opposition, but a complex family of them, neither mutually reducible nor wholly unrelated. These different usages do not simply point to different phenomena; often they rest on different underlying images of the social world, are driven by different concerns, generate different problematics, and generate very different issues. (1997:2)

Despite the inherent heterogeneity of the matter, Weintraub states that a few broad categorizations can be made to clarify what one means by public and private in a certain context. There are two fundamentally different understandings of what public and private may refer to. One is ‘visibility’, which separates between what is *hidden or withdrawn versus what is open, revealed or accessible*. The second is ‘collectivity’, which distinguishes between what is *individual, or pertains only to an individual, versus what is collective, or affects a collectivity of individuals* (Weintraub 1997:5). Though these may flow into each other on certain occasions they are fundamentally different.

These are the broad strokes of Weintraub’s theory, and though he goes into further detail on the various ways the distinction has been used in social and political analysis, in relation to this study we need go no further.

⁸ This quote is also the opening statement in Weintraub’s *The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction* (1997).

Different understandings of the public sphere

One of the most prominent advocates of the concept of the public sphere is German sociologist Jürgen Habermas. His view of the public sphere derives from what Weintraub termed the ‘republican-virtue approach’, which is a version of the abovementioned ‘collective’ approach to the public/private distinction (Weintraub 1997:34). This essentially means that the household and all things related to it is in the private sphere, while the ‘political community’ is what comprises the public sphere.

According to Habermas, an adequate public sphere is characterized by the *quality* of the discourse and the *quantity* of participation. Anyone can participate and it is the quality of their arguments rather than who they are that counts. In terms of religious actors’ participation in the public sphere, Habermas states that religious people ought to be able to express and justify their convictions in religious terms, as long as they accept that all political decisions must be formulated in a language equally accessible to all citizens, and that they must be motivated in the same language (Habermas 2006:12). Religious citizens would therefore have to ‘translate’ their religious arguments into secular ones. The concept of translation brings up some problems regarding essentialism and inherent differences between religious and non-religious people and for these reasons I will refrain from using the concept in my analysis, but translation aside, what Habermas, and indeed Casanova, both point to is that in modern societies we ought to see a decline in religiously grounded arguments in the public sphere. If this is the case, and religious actors have lost the ability to use religious arguments publicly, new forms of arguments and ways of expressing authority among religious actors should become visible.

However, Habermas’ concept of the public sphere gets problematic in relation to my material. First, Aftonbladet can hardly be said to represent the ‘elite’ form of discourse Habermas is implicitly referring to. As stated in the section on the characteristics of Aftonbladet, it is a newspaper intended to work as a contrast to the elitist approach of other major Swedish newspapers, such as Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet (Hadenius et al. 2011). Second, as mentioned above, making a distinction between public and private has implications for the way certain issues are viewed. As Seyla Benhabib notes, there is a clear feminist critique to the normative stance Habermas take on what should be allowed into the public sphere. In classical Western thought, the ‘female’ spheres of household, reproduction, nurture and taking care of the sick and elderly have all fallen into the private sphere, and therefore issues revolving around any of these subjects have been labeled a question of ‘the good life’ and thus outside the scope of justice (Benhabib: 1992:89f). Furthermore, the private sphere is ‘privileged’ in the way that it is outside the reach of societal interference, which means that sexual divisions of household labor and other power relations within the private sphere has been treated as if they do not exist (Benhabib 1992:93). What Benhabib argues for is not to overthrow Habermas’ concept of public and private, but to separate the public/private distinction from the discourses of power that bind it to the division

between the 'the good life' and 'justice'. If not, the public/private distinction will continue to serve as a legitimation for the repression of women.

This critique of what Benhabib calls the 'discursive public space' is grounded in the perception that this way of thinking is highly normative in regards to who are allowed to participate, and as to what issues should be considered worthy of entrance, in the public sphere. An alternative to what a public sphere could look like, and how to create one, can be found in the notion of 'public journalism'.

Public journalism is a multifaceted concept, simultaneously representing (1) an argument on what the press should be doing, (2) a set of practices on how the press should be working, and (3) a movement concerned with the possibilities of reform (Haas 2007:1). According to its advocates, journalism and democracy are closely linked, if not mutually dependent on each other. Conventional mainstream journalism's lack of interest in citizen participation has led to a withdrawal of citizens from the public sphere, and thus from the democratic processes therein, as shown by the declining participation in political elections and in newspaper readership (Haas 2007:2-3). In the eyes of public journalism, the public sphere should be open to anyone, focus on issues relevant for ordinary people, by interacting with and including the people in the media. Media should also take a more subjective stance in their reporting, and actually care about public life, rather than being detached, objective conveyers of information. Public journalism challenges the way the people have become consumers of democracy rather than participants in it, and thus seek to tackle the same problem as Habermas, but in a rather different way. Rather than trying to reestablish the ideal Kantian public sphere (Calhoun 1992:1-2), public journalism offers a way to create a 'new' public sphere that would actually *consist* of 'the public' rather than just representing it.

Someone who has analyzed attempts to include the people in the public by giving media texts a more populist voice is critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough. He distinguishes between official and colloquial discourse, where official discourse refers to the tone and vocabulary that is established in relation to a certain topic, and colloquial discourse referring to journalistic attempts to place a topic closer to the reader by using a less formal vocabulary (Fairclough 1995:70ff).

Though the journalistic mindset of Aftonbladet can hardly be said to be the epitome of public journalism, the notion of the public sphere presented by the advocates of public journalism is an alternative to Habermas' view, and could well be a fruitful perspective to use when discussing Aftonbladet.

Mediatization

Apart from deprivatization, the other main theory of this study is the mediatization theory as developed by Stig Hjarvard (cf. Hjarvard 2008; 2011; 2012). I will begin with a short description of the theory, followed by a discussion on how it relates to authority.

Mediatization is characterized by two main developments which are closely related. First, media has become an autonomous institution rather than, as was common in the early twentieth century, being in the service of some other societal institution, such as a political party or movement (Hjarvard 2011:122). Second, media has come to possess a role in society where almost every other institution to some degree has to rely on the media in communicating both with each other and with the public (Hjarvard 2011:122). Because of this privileged role, an unbalanced relationship is created, where institutions have to adhere to the logics of the media. This ‘media logic’ is described by Hjarvard as:

The institutional, aesthetic and technological *modus operandi* of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources and operate with the help of formal and informal rules. (Hjarvard 2011:123)

Hjarvard acknowledges that media logics are not uniform and that the specific form of media must be taken into account when discussing these logics, tabloids operate in certain ways, with certain differences and similarities to morning papers, while blogs and other forms of online media have different logics, with a wide variety of internal logics. When it comes to the mediatization of religion, Hjarvard notes three distinct transformations:

- The media become an important, if not primary source of information about religious issues. Mass media are both producers and distributors of religious experiences, and interactive media may provide a platform for the expression and circulation of individual beliefs.
- Religious information and experiences become molded according to the demands of popular media genres. Existing religious symbols, practices and beliefs become raw material for the media’s own narration of stories about both secular and sacred issues.
- As a cultural and social environment the media have taken over many of the cultural and social functions of the institutionalised religions and provide spiritual guidance, moral orientation, ritual passages and a sense of community and belonging. (Hjarvard 2011:124)

This increased importance of different media as both a source of information about religion, but also as new forums for discussing religious issues, challenges religious authority, since the power to define and frame religious issues are partially transferred from religious institutions to the media. The *places* (e.g. churches), the *representatives* (e.g. ministers and other office holders) and *texts* (e.g. the bible) are no longer the central places from which the public gain their knowledge of religion, and they are no longer necessarily the main sources of authority to which members of a religious institution adhere (Hjarvard 2011:125).

Authority

The interest in authority is far from recent, not least because of its close relationship to power. Hence, a comprehensive summary of the history of authority-

related research will not be possible here. This section will instead focus on how authority can be understood, given, maintained and legitimized in different ways, primarily by referring to Weber, Campbell and Schofield Clark. However, before going into the specifics of the respective theories, I will give a general discussion on the concept of authority and how it is approached in this study.

As mentioned in the introduction, it has been over fifty years since Hannah Arendt stated that authority is something of the past, and what little authority remains is bound to vanish eventually (Arendt 1954). Though claiming that authority in all its forms are to vanish may be a bit drastic, more recent researchers tend to agree that authority does indeed not sit well with modernity (cf. Seligman 1990; 2000, Giddens 1990).

However, it is not sufficient to speak about authority in a general sense. There are various forms of authority, and to say that authority per se is hostile towards modernity is no more accurate than saying that 'religion' as such is not compatible with modern society. Thus the concept of authority must be problematized. I will start with Weber, who coined the classical categorization of authority as divisible into three distinct forms. These are the *traditional authority*, *charismatic authority* and the *rational legal authority* (Weber 1978:215). The traditional authority is legitimized by reference to customs, traditions or conventions. This is the category in which traditional established religions almost exclusively. Charismatic authority is based on the perceived superhuman powers or qualities possessed by a single leader and the followers' devotion to said leader. Charismatic authority is often claimed to be revolutionary, as it de-legitimizes traditional authority (Schofield Clark 2012:114). The third form of authority, the rational legal one, is also the most complicated. It rests on Weber's concept of 'natural law', which is a form of non-religious morality. People have certain expectations on each other, and when these expectations are met repeatedly they create a normative order, which is then codified as laws (Weber 1978:215).

Though different in form, Weber's three categories of authority share the same basic premise: that authority is something given and legitimized by the people. However indirectly and unknowingly, people will not follow an authority they do not find suitable. A scholar claiming the opposite is Richard Sennett, who states that authority has nothing to do with the people legitimizing it, but that it is rather about possessing a certain set of qualities: 'assurance, superior judgment, the ability to impose discipline, the capability to inspire fear' (Sennett 1993:18). In this study authority will be viewed in Weber's perspective, that is, that authority is maintained by consensus, a perspective supported by several other researchers (cf. Foucault 1978; Lukes 1974; Schofield Clark 2012, Seligman 1990).

Religious authority in mediatized societies

Recently it has become clear that the three classical forms of authority stipulated by Weber are no longer sufficient to explain how authority is exercised in the media saturated societies of the late 20th and early 21st century (Schofield Clark

2012:114). One of the scholars who has written on this subject is Heidi Campbell. Though Campbell's main focus is religion online, I would argue that her thoughts on authority are valid in other media contexts as well. In the article *Who's got the power?* (2007), Campbell argues that it is not enough for researchers to simply state that the internet *transforms or challenges traditional authority*, but that one needs to clarify what type or types of authority that are being challenged or transformed by a certain form of media. These types of authority are divided by Campbell into four layers; hierarchy, structure, ideology and text (Campbell 2007). Depending on the religious tradition in question, media may serve as a threat or as an opportunity to or for any of these layers of religious authority. The use of new media technology in itself may be seen as a threat in some religious traditions (e.g. Amish, Ultra-Orthodox Jews) while other traditions will only criticize 'bad' use of the internet, such as visiting immoral websites. Others still may use online services to create global networks or preach the words of their sacred texts (e.g. mainstream Christianity). What can be concluded from Campbell's research on authority is that media may challenge or serve as an opportunity for religious authority on several levels, and that clarity concerning which level that is being challenged, and in what way, is vital.

Another scholar who has recognized the need for new theories concerning how our media-saturated society poses a challenge to traditional religious authority is Lynn Schofield Clark. She has developed the thoughts of Seligman (1990) and has begun using the concept of consensus-based authority as a possible explanation of who gets to speak for a certain religious group and not (Schofield Clark 2012). This concept, also called consensus-based interpretive authority, is not new. As Seligman notes in his article *Moral Authority and Reformation Religion* (1990), this kind of interpretive authority dates back at the very least to the puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries. The puritans refused to accept the traditional authority of the church, believing rather in the fundamental equality of members and ministry before God. Thus, a puritan minister had to rely on the consensus of the congregation, since losing it would mean being replaced (Seligman 1990). What Schofield Clark argues is that this form of authority needs to be taken seriously, especially in the remix culture we live in today. Remix culture, or participatory culture, basically means that our 'likes and dislikes' have become increasingly vital in the shaping of authority⁹. No longer will a small cultural elite decide what is desirable and not. Instead digital media has given a vast number of people the ability to not only consume but to participate in creating and defining cultural systems (Schofield Clark 2012:118f).

This form of authority can be said to stand outside (and perhaps above) the bonds of 'regular' authority. If an official representative of traditional authority gains the approval of a large group of people s/he will be accepted as an authority.

⁹ 'Likes and dislikes' is a reference to the rating system used on the popular video-sharing website *Youtube*, where viewers can chose to 'like' or 'dislike' a video. The amount of likes and dislikes is displayed, together with the total number of views, to everyone who watch the video, giving an

If, however, this representative loses the consensus of the people, his/her 'official' authority will become an empty shell, and the people will turn to someone who can better formulate what they hold most meaningful, truthful and valuable (Schofield Clark 2012:115). This may produce some unlikely authority figures within certain contexts. Schofield Clark's primary example is how comedian and talk-show host Stephen Colbert has become an authority within Catholicism in the U.S., without holding any formal authority within the Catholic community¹⁰.

One thing to note about these theories is that both Campbell and Schofield Clark are writing about digital media, while this study is focusing on debate articles in the printed press. While this could be seen as a problem, I would argue that the general message of their respective theories is applicable to my material. Campbell's call for conceptual clarity concerning the ways in which religious authority can be challenged is just as relevant in the study of debate articles as it is in online contexts, and Schofield Clark's consensus based authority can be applied to media in general, since the printed press is just as dependent on the consensus of their readers to gain and maintain authority. Furthermore, both theories, regardless of their point of origin, serve to highlight the main theoretical focus of this study, that is, that we witness a shift in authority in modern society, and that this shift, as will be argued below, can be traced back to mediatization and secularization.

Summary of secularization and mediatization in relation to authority

To sum up, the theories of secularization and mediatization both contain aspects concerning authority, and more specifically aspects that challenge traditional forms of authority in various ways. Secularization obviously reduces the societal power of religious institutions, thus diminishing their authority. Deprivatization, which at first glance could be seen as a phenomenon strengthening religious authority also have a reversed effect in that it compels religious representatives to act and formulate themselves in certain ways, lest they be dismissed as fringe or extremists. Mediatization causes a shift wherein information on religion can be found, and thus who has the right to define what religion is and what religious institutions stand for. Common to all these trends/theories are their pluralizing effects on authority. More actors both claim and gain authority in more varied forms than before, and thus even if deprivatization and mediatization both may increase the visibility of religion in society, they will at the same time transform the way in which religious authority is created, maintained, and expressed.

indication on how popular said video is. Similar rating-systems are commonly used in various communities all over the internet.

¹⁰ It should be noted that Colbert in his show *The Colbert Report* plays a role of, in his own words, 'a well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot', making it even more interesting that he has gained such authority among young Catholics (Solomon 2005).

Application of theory

As previously stated, the point of departure for this study is the assumption that deprivatization and mediatization leads to a shift in religious authority. The theories presented above are meant to serve as a lens through which the material will be viewed and to give a foundation to the area in which the study takes place. In this section I will return to the research questions and explain how the theories discussed above will be used to answer them. As stated in Chapter 1, the research questions are:

- (1) To what extent did religious actors participate on the debate pages of *Aftonbladet* during the years 2001-2011? What religious denominations were represented; who represented each group; what subjects does the respective religious groups debate; and were there any major differences between the groups?
- (2) What different forms of authority can be distinguished within the respective religious groups represented in the material, and by what arguments are they legitimized? How can these forms of authority be explained in relation to the authority shifting effects of deprivatization and mediatization?

In fact, little theory is needed in order to answer the first research question, as it is very descriptive in nature. The first question is not subordinate to the second, but rather an essential precondition for it, since it is based on the results of the first question that the analysis of the religious actors' authority structures will be made. Hence the main focus here will be on the second question.

To distinguish what forms of authority that can be found in the material, and what sources are drawn upon to legitimize this authority, Weber's division between traditional, charismatic and rational legal authority will be used, as well as Habermas' thoughts on religious and secular arguments. Though these theories will serve to crystalize the broad tendencies in the material, the analysis will be more specific than that. Haas' concept of public journalism will be used to analyze who the signatories turn to in their articles. Campbell's four layers of traditional authority (hierarchy, structure, ideology and text) will be used to further analyze what forms of religious sources that are drawn on. Finally, Schofield Clark's concept of consensus based authority, together with Fairclough's concept of official and colloquial discourses, will be used to see when authority is legitimized by an attempt to create consensus with an article's intended audience, by, for example, references to common values, use of colloquial or formal language, or if the intended reader is addressed as being located in the private or the public sphere. All this will finally be connected to Casanova and Hjarvard. From Casanova's perspective, if a deprivatization of religion is indeed taking place, one might expect a shift in authority in terms of who represents religious groups, and what arguments they use to legitimize their authority. From Hjarvard's media per-

spective, a shift in authority might be explained by the fact that religious actors conform to the media logics and the secular norm within the Swedish media context.

Chapter 3 Material and method

As previously stated, the aim and research questions of this study are divided into two parts. The first part aims to map the *presence* of religious actors in the material, while the second part employs a more analytical approach, attempting to discern various forms of authority within the material. Because of this, more than one method will have to be used in this study. The first research question will be answered by the use of a quantitative content analysis and presented in a descriptive manner. The second question will be answered using a qualitative content analysis and will be presented thematically. This approach is very similar to what Creswell (2009:121ff) describes as a *sequential mixed method approach*, where an initial quantitative study is followed up by a qualitative one. I will begin this chapter with a description of the material and the process of gathering it, followed by how the coding was conducted.

Material

The gathering of the material was the very first step in this study. It was gathered during the winter of 2012-2013, using microfilm, since no structured digital archive that allowed for searches on a specific kind of article existed. The copies of all issues of Aftonbladet between 2001 and 2011 were found in a microfilm archive. In each newspaper copy the debate article was located and if it filled the criterion, the year, date, title and signatory/s were saved to an excel file. The criterion was that the article should be signed by at least one religious actor, meaning that it should be clear either from the introduction, the signature or otherwise *explicitly* stated in the text that the person/persons wrote in the capacity of his/her personal faith or from a position in a religious community. The word ‘explicitly’ is central in this case, since two articles may be signed by the same person, who only signs with his/her religious affiliation or position in one of the articles. In that case, only the article where some form of adherence to a religious faith is expressed will be included. This is motivated by the fact that it is the ‘visibility’ of religious actors that is being investigated, and if a writer chooses to withhold his/her religion, then that article is not part of the group of ‘visible’ religious actors in the public sphere.

A problem of the category ‘religious actor’, apart from the previously mentioned indication that the actor is ‘religious’ per se, is that the Jewish group is both an ethnic and a religious group (Judiska Församlingen i Göteborg 2007), meaning that anyone who signs an article with a name and the title ‘Jew’ may refer to their ethnic and cultural heritage rather than their religion. In regard to this the answer

is once again that the religiosity of the individual is not my interest here, nor does it affect the results of my study. It is the visibility of religion through articles signed by the conceptual category ‘religious actors’ that are in focus in this part of the study, nothing else.

There were 4017 copies of Aftonbladet published between 2001 and 2011 and the total number of articles that filled the criterion was 135. These 135 articles were consequently retrieved from digital archives¹¹ and saved in full to a text file.

The quantitative content analysis

The question of how the material should be coded was the first methodological decision that had to be made. I opted for an abductive approach (Bruhn Jensen 2002:263ff) in the sense that some pre-defined categories were used, while others were formed during the coding process. The pre-defined categories were created by Axner (forthcoming) and can be found in Appendix II together with the categories that were added during the coding process. These categories have not been viewed as a rigid framework but rather as a template that has been modified in the coding process. Far from all of Axner’s categories were used, and several categories were added in cases when the pre-defined categories proved insufficient. The actual coding was made using the qualitative coding software Nvivo 10. All articles were coded with publishing date, signatory, organization, religion as well as for the issues touched in the article. The results of the coding will be displayed in Chapter 4.

What this process can be described as is a quantitative content analysis, as the focus is primarily on *frequency*, in this case the frequency of religious actors and of various topics (Esaiasson et al. 2007:223ff). Frequency is a determiner of importance and centrality, meaning that things that are very frequent are more important than things that occur less frequently, which is also a central part of qualitative text analysis, and discourse analysis (Esaiasson et al. 2007:223ff). Quantitative content analysis is common in studies of this kind and several of the studies mentioned in Chapter 2 has quantitative content analysis as their method (cf. Lövhelm & Lundby 2013; Niemelä & Christensen 2013).

The coding has been done in line with what Bruhn Jensen calls *Thematic coding* (Bruhn Jensen 2002:247), as the material has been sorted abductively into various concepts, headings or themes, i.e., a theoretical foundation has been the point of departure, but the categories used are dynamic and open to change. This, according to Bruhn Jensen, is a widespread approach within media studies (2002:247). It is important to note that the process of thematic coding is very much a process of interpretation. Though I partly used a template, what goes into which category is still highly subjective and it is thus important to problematize my role as a researcher, which will be done in a separate section below.

¹¹ The archives used were Mediearkivet [<http://web.retriever-info.com/services/archive.html?>] and when necessary Aftonbladet’s own digital archive [<http://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/>]

The qualitative content analysis

With the quantitative part of the study done, and the first research question answered, a qualitative content analysis was done on a selection of the articles in order to answer the second research question; what different forms of authority can be distinguished within the various religious groups represented in the material, and what arguments do they use? This part of the study is closely linked to the theories of public journalism, consensus based authority and Campbell's layers of authority, and thus take a more deductive approach, where certain questions will be formulated from the theories and then applied to the material. Qualitative procedures are, according to Creswell (2009:173ff), characterized by a continual reflection about the data, and according to Bruhn Jensen (2002:245) by that key concepts are defined and redefined as part of the process itself. I have thus opted to be flexible and adaptable in the coding, being careful not to 'force' the material into specific categories. One could call this approach abductive as well, since theories guide the questions posed, but the material is still central and can influence the categories.

Selection of articles and groups to analyze

The three major groups found in the material were Christians, Muslims and Jews, and these are the three groups what will be analyzed. The Christian group includes the Church of Sweden, the Catholic Church and the Free Christian denominations, and these will be treated as one group on most occasions in this study, for several reasons. First, the Christian churches, with the exception of the Mission Covenant Church, have very similar authority structures. Second, the subjects they wrote on were very similar, as were the distribution of laypersons, professionals and religious authorities within the groups. Third, including the Christian denominations as a separate, or several separate categories, would have made the respective samples smaller, and thus possibly affected the validity of the analysis.

The signatories within each group will be divided into three categories; *laypersons*, *professionals* and *religious authority*. As mentioned in Definition of terms (Ch. 1), a layperson is defined as someone not holding any official position within a religious community but still adhering to their faith or creed, typically represented by signatories simply signing an article with 'Muslim', 'of Jewish heritage' or 'believing Christian'. A professional is defined as someone having some form of official position within a religious organization, for example an editor of a religious magazine or a spokesperson speaking on behalf of, for example, the Church of Sweden. Finally, someone categorized as a religious authority is a person holding an official religious position within a religious community, typically represented by imams, priests and bishops. This distinction is made in an attempt to detect differences between how members of various statuses express authority within or on behalf of their particular community.

I have elected to analyze all the Muslim articles ($n = 14$), all the Jewish articles ($n = 13$), and a sample of the Christian articles based on a representative selection

of the population (n = 14). By representative I mean that the number of laypersons, professionals and religious leaders are in line with how the Christian group in general is represented in the material and that representatives of the major Christian groups (Church of Sweden, the Mission Covenant Church, the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal movement) are included.

Operationalization of the theories into a model of analysis

As mentioned earlier the theories that will be used for the analysis are the ones presented by Weber (1978), Habermas (1989), Campbell (2007), Schofield Clark (2012) and Haas (2007). These theories have been operationalized into four questions that will be directed to the selected articles. In order to answer the third and fourth question some supportive concepts have been borrowed from Jeff Weintraub (1997) and Norman Fairclough (1995). Weintraub contributes to question three with the public/private distinction referred to in Chapter 2, to specify who the articles are aimed at. Fairclough contributes with the concepts of official and colloquial discourses to be able to analyze whether the signatories use a particular sort of language to make the reader identify with them.

The questions are as follows:

- (1) What forms of authority are drawn upon by religious actors (rational legal, charismatic or traditional authority), and to what extent do religious actors use arguments based in religious sources or secular sources? (Weber 1978 & Habermas 1989).

Example: an argument based on the Quran will be considered as a religious argument based in traditional authority, while an argument referring to Swedish law is considered a secular source legitimizing a rational legal authority.

- (2) In instances where traditional authority is present in an article (that is, when religious sources are used), is it present on the level of hierarchy, structure, ideology or text? (Campbell 2007).

Example: *Hierarchy* can be referred to by reference to religious leaders, *structure* by referring to patterns of practice or how a community is structured, *ideology* by drawing on beliefs and ideas of a religious faith and finally *texts* would be exemplified by, for example, references to the Bible, the Quran or the Torah.

- (3) To whom are the articles aimed? Is the intended audience located in the private or public sphere? (Haas 2007, Fairclough 1995 & Weintraub 1997).

Example: An article may be aimed at the public sphere, for example at politicians, or it may be aimed at the private sphere, for example at parents or ‘people at home’ an indication that an article is aimed at the private sphere may be the use of colloquial discourse.

- (4) To what extent do religious actors attempt to form consensus with the intended reader of the article, either by trying to establish common values or in other ways identifying with the reader, or by using an official or colloquial discourse? (Schofield Clark 2012; Fairclough 1995).

Example: Using inclusive pronouns like ‘we’ and ‘us’ in relation to the message of the article is an example of inclusion and an attempt to create consensus. Using a colloquial discourse in order to identify with ‘the people’ is another.

These questions will guide the analysis of the selected articles. A thematic analysis will be done by reading each article and sorting them into themes based on the questions above. An example of what an analyzed article could look like is given below.

Table 1: Example of thematic analysis for one article.

Question:	Answer:
Signatory of the article?	Professional (spokesperson for Church of Sweden).
Sources for arguments and authority?	Religious (reference to ideology of Christianity).
Attempts to form consensus?	Yes, by use of inclusive ‘we’ and colloquial discourse.
Aimed at whom?	The public sphere (the Swedish government).

A decision that had to be made here was when to classify the arguments in an article as based in religious sources. I decided that if any reference to my operationalization of religion were made to support an argument, the article as a whole has been marked as using religious arguments. If no references are made to religious sources, the article has been marked as using ‘secular’ arguments. To be absolutely clear, the fact that ‘religious’ in this case is the opposite of ‘rational’ does not mean that the signatories of the articles marked as religious are not using rational arguments as well. No article in my sample is *solely* based on religious sources. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Credibility and ethical considerations

When one asks whether or not the results of a study are credible, it is often answered in terms of reliability and validity. According to Bruhn Jensen, reliability

refers to the *consistency of descriptions and interpretations over time* (2002:267). This has to do with the possibility of intersubjectivity, i.e., would similar results have been reached if the study had been done by someone else, at another time? Validity on the other hand refers to if the 'research instrument' actually measures what it is supposed to measure (Bruhn Jensen (2002:267). Since there are two research questions and two methods, the question of the study's reliability and validity will have to be divided into two parts.

For the quantitative part of the study, I would argue that the reliability is high for two reasons. One, the quantitative process has been, simply put, about counting occurrences of certain types of signatories, organizations and subjects, and though someone might have coded a certain article as 'peace questions' while I coded it as 'international conflicts', it would not have had a huge impact on the results of the study, since the focus is on general trends rather than exact numbers in this regard. Two, I have had the opportunity at an early stage to compare my results to similar studies (Lövheim & Lundby 2013, Axner forthcoming), and as will be shown the results of my study align very well with what has previously been shown by these authors. As for validity, the intention of the quantitative study was to measure the presence of religious actors on the debate page of *Aftonbladet*. What might be questioned here is that I have not been able to include in my material any article by someone who considers themselves religious, but did not sign the article in such way. I would respond to such criticism that one has to stay within the frames of what is methodologically possible. Within the frame of this study some kind of operationalization had to be made, with all the benefits and deficiencies that come with it.

For the qualitative part of the study, I would argue that the possibility of intersubjectivity is high, because of the theory-guided questions posed to the material. On the other hand, the material could certainly be interpreted in other ways if other theories and models of analysis were to be used. The question of validity is harder to answer in this case, since further research is necessary in order to validate the results, and in the absence of such studies it is to present theories the results will be compared. The theories in this case indicate that mediatization and deprivatization, and secularization in general for that matter, ought to cause a shift in authority, away from traditional forms and towards more innovative ones, and the results of this study will be able to give a tentative indication if this seems to be the case in this particular Swedish context.

Ethics

A researcher needs to anticipate and address ethical dilemmas that may arise in relation to their research (Creswell 2009:88). This is especially important when working with interviews or surveys where participants have been promised anonymity and when sensitive information is involved (Creswell 2009:89ff). In this study the material consists of public documents and there is thus no need to edit the material in order to protect the signatories. Furthermore, the aim of the study

is not to analyze how individual people act in the public sphere but rather how religious groups are constituted, so even if the names of the signatories are present in my material, they are not in any way essential and no criticisms are directed towards any of the signatories. The debate editor on Aftonbladet with whom a background interview was made was advised against saying anything she did not want to become public knowledge, personally or on behalf of the paper.

One ethical consideration relevant for this study is my role as researcher. As a male ethnic Swede, born in the 1980s and raised in a non-religious middle class family, I have formed a certain understanding of religion and its relation to society. Furthermore, my interest and education in the sociology of religion have given me certain expectations of the results of this study which are hard to disregard. Though I could claim that I will try to be as objective as possible, such promises are quite pointless. What I can offer is conceptual clarity and high transparency throughout the study, as well as a clear anchoring in previous research.

Chapter 4 Results

In this chapter the quantitative results of the study will be presented. The first section will be mainly descriptive, as charts and tables will be used to answer the first of the two research questions, that is, how many religious actors were found in the material and on what subjects they wrote. In the second part further attention will be given to who represented each group, and how the theories on authority may be used to explain the results. Note that in the tables below, one article may be coded to several nodes, and may thus appear several times. The same goes for the signatories, who may have signed several articles. This explains why the total number of subjects or signatories is higher than the total number of articles in each table.

Quantitative overview

The total number of articles in the sample was 4017. Out of these articles 135 were signed by religious actors. This represents approximately 3.4% out of the total sample. How the articles were distributed over the years is shown in the chart below.

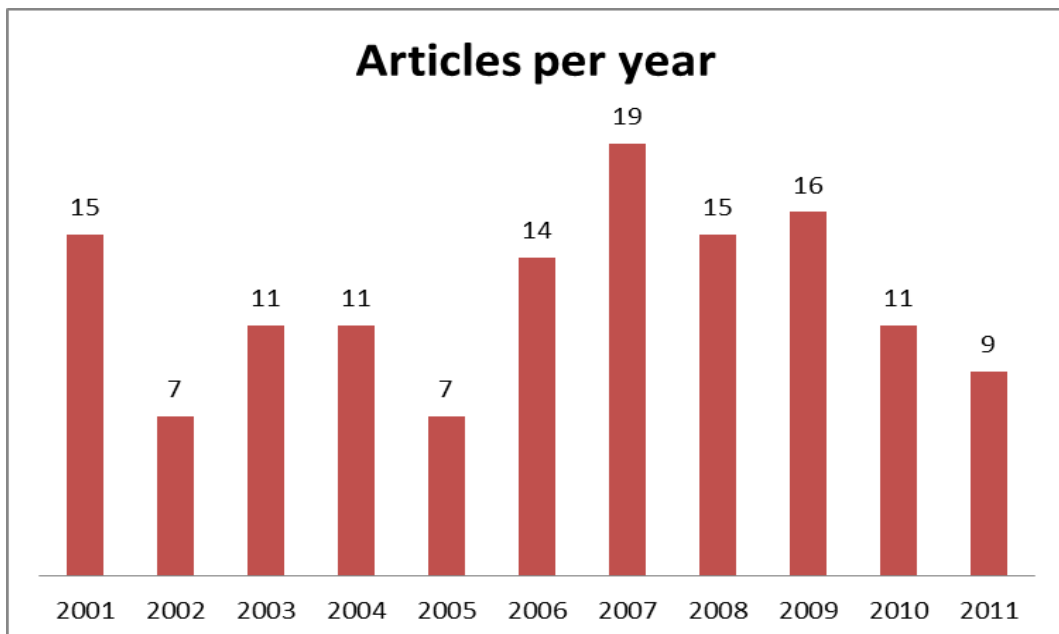


Chart 1: Total number of articles per year between the years 2001 and 2011 (n = 135).

As can be seen clearly from the chart, there is no indication of a linear development in the presence of articles signed by religious actors on the debate page. 2002 and 2005 have the lowest number of articles and 2007 has the highest. A

slight increase can be noted if comparing the first half decade with the second. Between 2001 up until mid-2006, there were 58 articles published, compared to the 77 articles published between mid-2006 and 2011, an increase of 33%. However, it is clear that this is due to the high number of articles between years 2007 through 2009, and the number of articles decreases markedly after that¹². I will therefore be cautious about drawing any conclusions regarding a general increase in religious actors participating on the debate pages.

As for the religious affiliations of the signatories we can see from the chart below that representatives from the Church of Sweden completely dominates the sample with 51% of the total number of signatories. Muslims, Jews, Christian denominations and Christians who did not specify their affiliation are quite evenly distributed. It is notable that there is only one single signatory identifying him/herself as an Orthodox Christian. In terms of membership the orthodox tradition is slightly bigger than for example the Catholic Church in Sweden, but in the material they are still outnumbered 9 to 1.

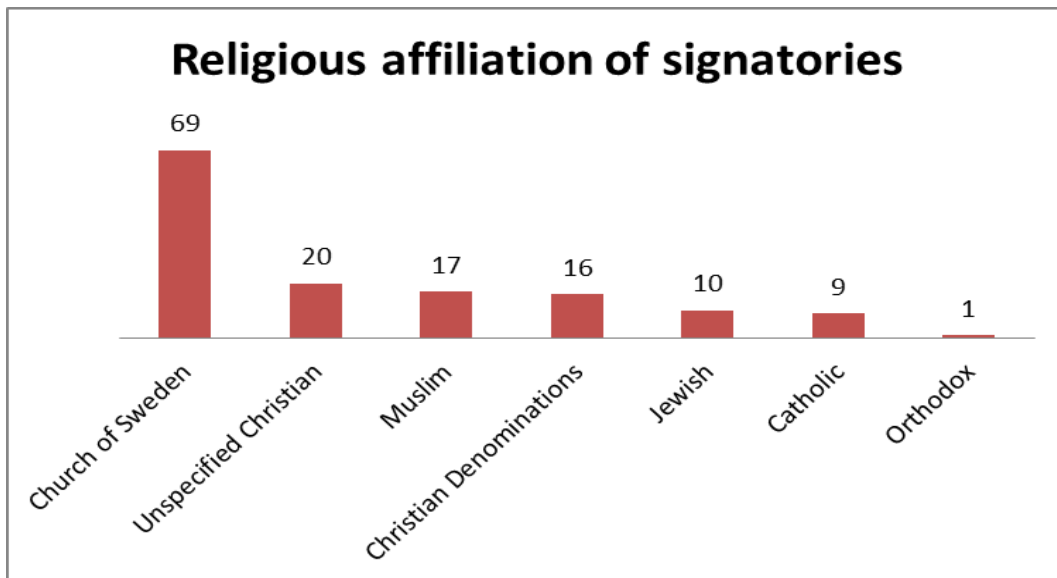


Chart 2: Religious affiliation of the religious signatories participating on the debate pages of Aftonbladet between the years 2001 and 2011 (n = 145).

Themes in the articles

Here the themes and specific questions touched upon in the articles for each religious denomination will be described. In the total sample, the themes are very diverse, covering a multitude of topics, both religious and secular. As will be shown below, the Christian group is the main source for this diversity.

¹² No apparent reason for why the years 2007-2009 yielded so many articles has been found. No particular medial event that would have attracted the attention of religious actors took place, and nothing said in the interview with the debate editor of Aftonbladet indicated any policy shift around this time.

Christians – The Church of Sweden

As stated above the Christian group is by far the most diverse in terms of the themes and subjects covered. Prominent themes include questions of asylum politics, immigration and integration, international peace and justice, international poverty, medicine-ethics, equal rights (e.g. gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion) and weapon export. Less prominent, but still present in the sample are questions of alcohol consumption, theology, culture, internal conflicts within Christian denominations and religious tolerance. One explanation for the diversity is likely to be that the group of Christians is larger than the other groups combined (96 articles) and thus naturally covers more subjects.

Christian denominations and the Catholic Church

This group (15 articles) is less diverse in regards to the themes of the articles than the Church of Sweden, but more diverse than the Muslim and Jewish groups. Though writing on topics such as culture and the real-estate market, most topics concern issues like abortion, sexuality, alcohol, freedom of religion and questions directly related to their respective faiths, such as explanations of what the Pentecost represents, or what the essence of their faith is. The signatories are in general negative towards homosexuality, gay marriage and abortion, but for abstinence and freedom of religion.

Muslims

The Muslim group is small in number (14 articles in total) and therefore naturally has quite a narrow scope. However, it is clear that this group prioritizes issues ‘closer to home’ and to the well-being of their community. Over half the articles are about immigration, integration or equal rights for Muslims, or attempts to explain what Islam ‘really’ is. Almost all articles concern subjects where Muslims are directly involved, the only exception being an article about the excessive consumption of alcohol during the Swedish holiday Valborg¹³ (AB 2003/04/30).

Jews

The Jewish sample is just as small as the Muslim one, containing only 13 articles in total. The themes covered are equally limited and almost exclusively concern either the Israel-Palestine conflict, or anti-Semitism. However, the opinions on these matters, and especially concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict, are not uniform. Official Jewish organizations tend to defend Israel, while Jews acting on their own are more likely to criticize Israel, or promote peace through negotiations (e.g. AB 2001/02/18). Worth noting is that the size of the Jewish group in Sweden is less than a tenth of the Muslim group, but their contribution in terms of the number of articles is still very similar to the Muslim group. The reason for this will be elaborated on in Chapter 6.

¹³ Valborg takes place the 30th of April each year and is notorious for the underage drinking and general misbehavior accompanying it.

The writers

So far the groups have been treated quite homogenously without regard to who the signatories are, apart from their religious affiliation. This section will contain how the positions of the signatories were distributed, first for the entire sample and then for the respective religious groups.



Chart 3: Position of religious signatories on the debate page of Aftonbladet between the years 2001 and 2011 ($n = 150$).

As can be seen in the figure above, there is no position that completely dominates the material. Dividing these positions into the analytical categories that will be used in the qualitative analysis, we can see that Professionals, i.e., elected officials, directors, general secretaries and similar ‘official’ positions are the largest group followed by Religious authorities, i.e., clergy, denominational or spiritual leaders and bishops. Members (Laypersons), though a relatively large group in itself, are by far the smallest group of the three analytical categories. The distribution between the religious groups, after having divided the signatories into the three analytical categories is displayed in the table below. Note that in the table below the Christian numbers represent the articles that will be used in the qualitative analysis, and are thus based on a representative selection of the Christian articles. This is done to make the comparison between the groups easier to grasp.

Table 2: Distribution of the analytical categories within the religious groups.

Category \ Religion	Layperson	Professional	Religious authority
Christianity	1	7	6
Judaism	3	9	1
Islam	4	8	2

The Christian signatories

The Christian group has quite an even distribution of signatories classified as religious authority or professionals, 6 and 7 respectively (out of the total 14 articles). The majority of the signatories within the religious authority category are priests, ministers or bishops, primarily from Church of Sweden but also from the minority churches. The signatories classified as professionals are typically official representatives of various Christian humanitarian organizations, (e.g. Lutherhjälpen (The Luther Aid)), political organizations (e.g. Broderskapsrörelsen¹⁴ (Christian Socialists)) or organizations involved in pastoral care (e.g. Diakonia (Diaconia)). Notably, the number of signatories classified as members is very low, with only one of the articles being signed by someone simply signing with some variant of 'Christian'.

The Muslim signatories

The majority of the Muslim signatories (8 out of 14) are what I have described as professionals, elected or in other ways holding a non-religious position, writing on behalf of an organization of some sort, such as Sveriges Unga Muslimer (Young Muslims in Sweden, Muslimska Mänskliga rättighetskommitén (Muslim Human Rights Committee), or the Muslim magazine *Minaret*. There is huge variety within the organizations and it is rare that the same organization occurs more than once in the material (the three examples above are the only examples of such organizations). Four of the signatories (less than one third) signed simply as adherents to the Islamic faith and the remaining two (less than one sixth) are imams.

The Jewish signatories

Similar to the Muslim group, the majority of the Jewish signatories (almost two thirds) are professionals, holding non-religious positions within various organizations. The spread of organizations are, however, very small, with only four organizations represented in total; the magazine *Judisk Krönika* (Jewish Chronicles), a peace organization called Judar för Israelisk-Palestinsk fred (Jews for Israeli-Palestinian peace), and the Jewish congregations in Stockholm and Gothenburg. Notably, the signatories from the Jewish congregations are not rabbis but administrators, and the only example (less than one tenth) in this sample of religious authority is a 'spiritual leader' within the Jewish congregation of Gothenburg. The remaining three (less than one fifth) are signatories who simply identify themselves as 'Jew' or 'of Jewish heritage'.

Comparison between the groups

The Christian group stands out from the other two groups in two major ways. First, the presence of clergy and denominational leaders is huge compared to the other two groups (almost half of the Christian articles are signed by religious authorities compared to the much lower numbers in the Muslim and Jewish groups

¹⁴ Broderskapsrörelsen is since 2011 known as Socialdemokrater för tro och solidaritet (Religious Social Democrats of Sweden).

(less than one sixth and one tenth respectively). Second, the number of laypersons writing from the Christian group is comparatively small, about one in twenty articles, compared to approximately one in five of the Jewish group and one in three of the Muslim group.

The most distinctive feature of the Muslim group is the variety of organizations in the sample. The Christian group has Church of Sweden and the Jewish group has the Jewish congregations of Stockholm and Gothenburg which completely dominates the respective samples, the Muslims lack such a dominant organization. Without making any claims about whether or not these centralized hierarchical organizations represent Christians or Jews in general, the Muslim sample is clearly disunited, which mirrors how the Muslim population in Sweden is organized in general. In contrast to the Muslim group, the most distinguishing feature of the Jewish group is how uniform it is, with really only two camps, the pro-Israel side, represented by the Jewish congregations, and the pro-peace and negotiations side, represented by a peace organization and individual Jews.

Conclusion of the quantitative content analysis

To conclude, the first research question was to what extent religious actors participated on the debate pages of Aftonbladet during the years 2001-2011? What religious denominations were represented; who represented each group; what subjects do the respective religious groups debate; and were there any major differences between the groups?

Out of the 4017 debate articles published in Aftonbladet between the years of 2001 and 2011, 135 articles were signed by religious actors. This equals about 3.4% of the total number of articles, or approximately one article a month. The Church of Sweden dominated the sample with signatures on 96 articles, followed by the Christian denominations (15 articles), the Muslim group (14 articles) and the Jewish group (13 articles). The Christian groups write on a broad range of subjects but are primarily concerned with peace questions, poverty, starvation and national and international social issues. Very few signatories are simply members of Christian churches but rather the group is represented by a quite even number of religious authorities and professional authorities. The Muslim group writes mainly on issues of immigration and integration in Sweden as well as on Islamophobia and racism. Though a few signatories simply signed as 'Muslim', and two Imams wrote as religious authorities, the majority of the Muslim representatives are professionals writing on behalf of various Muslim organizations. The Jewish group writes almost exclusively on anti-Semitism and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Most signatories were professional representatives of Jewish organizations or congregations, very few signatories simply signed with 'Jewish', and only one of the Jewish signatories identified himself as a religious authority.

Qualitative material overview

Because of the nature of the material it is not possible to separate the qualitative part of the study into separate results- and analysis-sections. Therefore, a brief overview of the material selected for the qualitative study will be displayed below, while further analysis of the material will be done in Chapter 5.

Table 3: Qualitative material overview in percentage¹⁵. Note that the columns do not add up to 100% since articles can be counted more than once in the analysis.

Religion Category	Christianity	Judaism	Islam	Total sample
Religious arguments	43%	8%	30%	27%
Secular arguments	57%	92%	70%	73%
Consensus based	29%	23%	43%	32%
Use of colloquial discourse	57%	54%	36%	49%

As can be seen clearly from the table above, the results of the qualitative analysis show that the religious actors all draw primarily on secular arguments in the articles. The Christian group is the most frequent user of religious arguments, while the Jewish group uses religious arguments the least.

Attempts to create consensus with the readers were most common in the Muslim sample, where inclusive words such as ‘we’ were often used to refer to either all Muslims or all people. The Christian and Jewish groups also made use of this way to establish authority, though not to the same extent. The use of colloquial discourse was common in all groups, but slightly less so in the Muslim group.

The question of which sphere the intended reader is located in has been left out of the table. The reason for this is that making a clear distinction between public and private proved problematic, both in terms of definition (what should be considered public or private) but also in terms of how the articles were formulated; many were either aimed at both spheres, or did not seem to have any specific intended reader. This will be elaborated further in the next chapter.

¹⁵ To give an overview of the qualitative material I have elected to use percentage in the table above. Note that the table in itself does not constitute the qualitative analysis but simply displays the frequency of the categories stipulated in the analytical instrument created in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 Analysis

In this chapter the results of the study will be analyzed by the use of the selected theories. The chapter is structured in the way that the quantitative results will be analyzed first, followed by an elaboration of the qualitative results given in Chapter 4, and an in depth analysis of these results.

It is important to clarify here that the overarching theories of this study offer two quite different perspectives on how religious actors are, can or should participate in public debates. Casanova's theories very much take the religious actors' point of view, discussing how these specific actors can re-enter the public sphere on certain premises. Hjarvard's theory on the other hand takes the perspective of the media, with media logics as the main reason for how religious actors act in the public sphere. Thus the religious actors, who are the focus of this study, are affected both by being religious actors and by acting within the media context. How these two positions interplay is one of the questions this chapter will attempt to answer.

Analysis of the quantitative data

The first research question was to what extent religious actors participated on the debate pages of Aftonbladet during the years 2001-2011. What religious denominations were represented; what subjects the respective religious groups debate; and if there were any major differences between the groups?

These questions are based on the perceived resurgence¹⁶ of religion and that an increasingly deprivatized religion might become a more relevant part of public discussions (Casanova 1994). Hence, if the prediction made by Casanova is true, it would not be surprising if an increase of religious actors' presence in the public sphere, albeit slight, would show in the results of this study. As has been shown, this was not the case. The number of articles varied considerably between the years but stayed comparatively low (2-5% of the total sample). One explanation of the perceived resurgence of religion could be that journalism on religion, which Hjarvard (2012) argues is the dominant form of religious visibility in the media, may increase, while the participation of religious actors in the public sphere remains unchanged.

On what subjects the religious actors wrote is related to Casanova's (1994:57) criteria for the legitimate subjects public religions ought to concern themselves

¹⁶ By resurgence I do not imply a factual resurgence of religious practice or belief, only the *perceived* resurgence of religion into the public sphere, manifested, for example, by increased journalistic coverage of religious issues.

with. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Casanova mentions three instances where religion may re-enter the public sphere:

- (1) To protect modern freedoms and rights, not just of the own group but everyone's, against absolutist or totalitarian states.
- (2) To question the ethical or moral basis of politicians, for example the morality of nuclear policies, capitalism or arms dealing.
- (3) To protect the traditional life-world from political or judicial penetration. (Casanova 1994:57f)

Here the results are mixed. In the Christian group there are examples of all these criteria, with signatories writing on issues connected to civil society, social issues and solidarity. The Jewish and Muslim groups however act more from a minority perspective, keeping the issues of their articles closely related to their own respective groups. The Muslim groups often defend human rights, but it is the human rights of marginalized Muslims in Sweden that are in focus. The Jewish group debates almost exclusively the Israel-Palestine question and anti-Semitism, aiming their articles at the government, imploring them to take action in their favor.

Thus, it is mostly Casanova's second point (and in the Muslim case, part of the first point) that the two minority groups concern themselves with. These groups do not 'protect modern freedoms and rights, not just of the own group but everyone's', nor do they seek to protect the 'traditional life-world'. From the minority perspective of Jews and Muslims this is not surprising. With the limited amount of media attention minority groups can expect to get, a focus on topics relevant for their own group is to be expected. Also, minority groups constantly have to negotiate their place in society, and it is thus difficult for these groups to focus on, for example, point one on Casanova's list. So even if all three religions mostly stay within what Casanova stipulates as legitimate questions for public religions, it is clear that these criteria favor majority religions.

Analysis of the qualitative data

The qualitative analysis is intended to answer the second research question: what different forms of authority can be distinguished within the respective religious groups represented in the material? And how can these forms of authority be explained in relation to the authority shifting effects of deprivatization and mediation? The four questions posed to the material in the analytical model will be analyzed in the light of the theories used in this study.

Forms of authority

The first question directed to the qualitative sample was what forms of authority are drawn upon by religious actors, and to what extent do religious actors use arguments based in religious or secular sources? As has been shown in Table 3, the

amount of religious arguments used in the material was limited. It is also clear that the Christian group was most prone to use religious arguments, while the Jewish group was least prone to do so. This immediately leads to the question if this was the case because the Christian sample contained more articles written by religious authorities than the Jewish group. As shown in Table 2, this is certainly the case, and it is clear that the higher number of religious authorities the sample has, the more religious arguments are present.

In the Christian group the majority of the religious arguments were made by religious authorities. Only one of the professionals used religious arguments, and notably the only layperson present used religious arguments as well. In the Muslim group, one of the two imams in the sample used religious arguments, as well as one of the two laypersons. The two remaining articles with religious arguments were signed by professionals. The Jewish group stands out by only having one single article where a religious argument was made, this being a spiritual leader at a Jewish congregation encouraging interreligious dialogue by arguing that Jews, Muslims and Christians are all children of Abraham (Aftonbladet 22-01-2007). Apart from this, all articles, signed by individual Jews or by representatives from various organizations used exclusively secular arguments.

Based on these results, the reason religious actors establish their authority primarily by the use of secular arguments comes into focus. According to Habermas (2006) religious actors may enter the public sphere and express their opinions in religious terms as long as they accept that for their arguments to bear political weight, they must be translated to secular terms. Habermas theory would indicate that the religious actors are following the conditions for entering the public sphere set by a modern secular state, that arguments are legitimate only if they are equally accessible to all members of society. The debate page of Aftonbladet is a secular arena and therefore most religious actors (just like any other actors) use the accepted way of expressing themselves in such a context, that is, with more or less well-grounded arguments, formulated in a rational legal manner.

Religious sources

The second question intends to investigate the instances where traditional authority is present and on what level (hierarchy, structure, ideology or text) religious authority is motivated or questioned. Out of the 11 articles containing religiously grounded arguments the majority were references either to sacred texts or the general ideology of a religious faith. A typical example of a reference to a religious *text* is:

On several occasions both the Quran and the prophet Muhammad talks about the importance of sincerity, fervor and personal conviction. (Aftonbladet, 08-01-2008)
Translation by the author.

A typical example of a reference to religious *ideology* is:

According to the Catholic Church sexual intercourse has its given and exclusive place within the bounds of marriage. In accordance with this conviction the Church actively participates in various initiatives which educate people in a responsible sexual life. (Aftonbladet, 11-10-2003) Translation by the author.

The *hierarchy* or *structure* of a religious institution is never used as a source of a religious argument, but on one occasions the hierarchy within Islam is criticized by the use of Quran-references, giving an example of inter-religious conflicts where both parts use their religion as an argument for their authority, in this case a debate on female imams (Aftonbladet, 24-11-2003). Structure is also referred to on a single occasion, in an article about Easter, regarding the Church's role in conveying life quality to body, soul and spirit, as well as social relations, heavenly mercy and earthly justice.

There are no noticeable differences between the religious groups or within the analytical categories as to what forms of religious arguments are used, apart from the almost complete lack of religiously based arguments from the Jewish group, which has been noted earlier.

Aimed at whom and in which sphere?

The third question: to whom the articles are aimed and in which sphere the intended readers are located turned out to be somewhat problematic to answer. As mentioned in Chapter 2, binary distinctions sometimes poorly reflect reality, and the attempt to divide the intended reader as located in either the public or private sphere proves this. On several occasions the position of the intended reader was so vague that there simply was no way to classify it, while other articles explicitly addressed both people in their homes (private sphere) and politicians (public sphere). Despite these difficulties though, it has been possible to categorize the majority of the articles into *primarily* addressing a reader located in either the public or the private sphere, and quite clear patterns within the religious groups have been found.

The Christian and Jewish groups mainly address readers located in the public sphere, assuming that the definition of the public sphere is the political community (Weintraub 1997). In these articles the intended readers are often politicians or various instances of the government, e.g. the Equality Ombudsman or the Prime Minister. Using this definition, most Muslim articles would by default fall out of the public sphere, as they do not turn to politicians or the government to the same extent. However, the Muslims often turn to the Swedish people in general, which is a category neither bound to the political community, nor the household (the household being the private sphere using this definition). Thus, using this definition, the Muslim group turns to the private sphere to a larger extent than does the other groups, often addressing the Swedish people in a general sense. 3 out of 13 articles were specifically aimed at 'the people', and another 4 articles being aimed at recipients in both spheres. Politicians and the government are among the recipients as well, though far from as often as in the Christian and Jewish samples. In-

terestingly, the 'political community' that constitutes the public sphere are according to Habermas (1989) created by people leaving the private sphere of their homes and come together as a public. In this sense, turning to 'the people' could just be another way of turning to the public sphere.

That this is the case may have several explanations. First, the Christian Churches as well as the Jewish community are well established in the Swedish intellectual elite and have clear hierarchical structures, placing them in a position where they can address the government 'directly' with questions or demands. The Muslim group does not have the same presence within the intellectual and cultural elite and lacks a central organization to express the opinions of a unified group¹⁷. Furthermore, a deciding factor as to who the signatories turn to may be demographic. To elaborate, in relation to what was stated in the introduction about the characteristics of the major groups in the material, it is safe to assume that the majority of Christians and Jews in Sweden were born and raised in Sweden, which makes it likely that they are highly accustomed both to the political culture and to the Swedish language. Within the Muslim population on the other hand it is more likely that the signatories are either immigrants or have at least one parent who has emigrated from a country with another political climate and speaks Swedish as a second language. This may be one of the factors contributing to the differences between the Muslim group and the other two.

Another possible explanation is the subjects on which the religious groups write. The Muslim group primarily writes on topics such as racism, integration, tolerance and immigration. These issues involve the private sphere in the sense that the articles often try to inform the people of what Islam stands for or appeal to the people to show tolerance. Thus these articles are not aimed at the 'political community' but rather towards the households (Weintraub 1997:34). The Jewish group primarily demands that the government takes a stance in their favor, most often for or against Israel. The Christian group, with its huge range of subjects, most often demands that the government do something about, for example, national or international social or humanitarian issues.

Viewed from Haas' theory of public journalism (2007) it seems like the Muslim group is the only one attempting to include 'the people' in the public sphere. Even if only half of the Muslim articles address the private sphere, it is still much more than either the Christian or Jewish group. In this sense the Muslims can be said to encourage the people to democratic participation in public debates, rather than just 'consuming' the opinions of the elite actors that generally partake in these debates (Haas 2007:2f).

¹⁷ One must not make the mistake of believing that a strong hierarchical structure means that the group is necessarily unified. On the contrary, the material shows a quite different picture. However, in this media context the ability to make demands or raise issues with a strong organization at your back will certainly strengthen your position.

Consensus based authority

The fourth question was to what extent religious actors attempt to form consensus with the intended reader of the article, by trying to establish common values or in other ways identify with the reader, for example by using colloquial discourse.

About half the articles had instances of what Fairclough calls colloquial discourse mixed within the official discourse of the subject the article was written on (Fairclough 1995:70f). An example:

For Ung Vänster¹⁸ the contribution to PFLP was a strategy to get attention and *appeal* against the UN, who finally had dared to take a stance against one of the organizations that has done most to create hostility between Israelis and Palestinians. (Aftonbladet, 31-12-03). Translation and italics by the author.

Here the use of jargon is mixed with the official Israel-Palestine conflict discourse in order to give the article a more populist voice and make the content more accessible. Though this approach of mixing the official discourse of a subject with colloquial words or phrases was common in the material, it seems that the Christian and Jewish groups were more likely to use colloquial discourse than the Muslim group. Again, this may have demographical reasons, as the Christian and Jewish signatories are more likely than the Muslims to have extensive knowledge of the Swedish language and culture. On the other hand, it may also be out of fear of being perceived as the uneducated stereotype of Muslims in Sweden that these signatories refrain from using colloquial discourse. However, the difference between the groups is small and the samples are limited, and I will thus refrain from drawing any conclusions based on this.

Attempts to create consensus with the readers by referring to perceived similarities between signatory and reader were most common in the Muslim group, which made frequent use of inclusive pronouns such as 'we', referring to, for example, all Muslims or all Swedes. An example:

Today *we* become silenced by intellectuals and so-called 'humanists' in the press, who analyze and disrespect *our* thoughts and standpoints. (Aftonbladet, 02-11-06). Translation and italics by the author.

Here the signatory attempts both to create consensus by claiming his opinions are representative for all Muslims, and by victimizing the entire Muslim group in a *you* have to stop oppressing *us* kind of manner. The Christian and Jewish groups also made use of this way to establish authority, though not to the same extent.

The essence of consensus based authority is that authority is given to someone or something that can formulate what people hold most valuable and meaningful (Schofield Clark 2012:115). That the Muslim group is the group most frequently attempting to create consensus is possibly related to the fact that there are so many

¹⁸ Ung Vänster (Young Left) is a youth-organization connected to the Swedish political party Vänsterpartiet, which is the Left-Wing party of the Swedish government.

Muslim organizations striving for authority, i.e., that each Muslim organization is actively trying to formulate what Islam is and what being a Muslim is all about in order to gain authority. The Christian and Jewish groups already, in a sense, have the consensus of their respective populations through having a long history and well established institutions in Sweden. This is not to say that differences within these groups are non-existent, only that these groups, as mentioned in the introduction, have more established structures of authority in Sweden.

Conclusions

Here the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative results will be concluded. The descriptive parts of each research question, containing relevant numbers and frequencies of analytical categories were given in the end of Chapter 4 and will hence not be repeated here.

The results of the first research question were analyzed in the beginning of Chapter 5. The conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis are that all religious groups represented in the material, to varying degrees, stick to the legitimate questions stipulated by Casanova (1994:57f). There are most likely several reasons for the Christian group to fit best into Casanova's concept of public religions; one being its majority status in Sweden, placing it in an excellent position to defend everyone's freedoms and liberties, not just their own (Casanova 1994:58); another reason may be Casanova's predisposal to the majority Catholic churches of his case studies in *Public Religions*, which are more similar to the Church of Sweden than to the Judaic and Muslim organizations in Sweden.

The second research question was what different forms of authority can be distinguished within the respective religious groups represented in the material, and by what arguments are they legitimized. How can these forms of authority be explained in relation to the authority shifting effects of deprivatization and media-tization? In the entire sample analyzed in the qualitative content analysis (41 articles), there were 23 articles signed by professionals, 11 by religious authorities and 8 by laypersons. The Christian group had the most cases of religious authority and the fewest cases of laypersons. The Muslim and Jewish groups were represented by more laypersons than religious authorities, but both these groups were predominately represented by professionals.

The most common way to legitimize one's authority by far (the case in 30 of the 41 articles) was by secular arguments, for example by reference to science, humanism, or modern common values of freedom and equality. The remaining 11 articles, which contained arguments drawn from religious sources, were quite evenly distributed between the Muslim and Christian groups (4 and 6 respectively), while only one article within the Jewish sample contained religious arguments.

Apart from the arguments used in the articles there were other ways by which the signatories attempted to gain or maintain their authority. The theories used in

this thesis indicated that this could be done by for example identifying with the reader by referring to common values or by using a colloquial discourse in order to give the article a more populist voice. References to common values were most common in the Muslim group (6 out of 14 articles) which made frequent use of the inclusive pronoun 'we', referring to for instance all Muslims in an attempt to include the Muslim readers and indicate that the signatory expresses values common to all Muslims. There were instances of these consensus-creating attempts in the other two groups as well, though they were less frequent. Interestingly, in the three samples combined, the use of inclusive pronouns to establish/show consensus was more common than references to religious sources.

About half of the articles (20 out of 41) made use of some form of colloquial discourse. The Jewish and Christian groups made frequent use of this, while the Muslim group stayed to the official discourse to a larger extent. Finally, the Jewish and Christian groups turned primarily towards the public sphere in their articles, asking questions or making demands of individual politicians or the government. The Muslim group on the other hand turned to the people to a larger extent, which could be interpreted either as the private sphere, or just as another form of public sphere. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6 below.

Chapter 6 Discussion

In this chapter the results of the analysis will be discussed in relation to the theories of this study and to previous research. Special attention will also be given to a comparison of my results and the results of Axner's dissertation on public religions in Swedish media. This is both because of the similarities between our studies, and the fact that I used her coding template in the initial coding of the material. After discussing the results some reflections on the theoretical and methodological choices of the thesis will also be made.

Discussion of results

The most striking result of this study is probably how few religious actors actually participated on the debate pages of Aftonbladet. For all the talk of religious resurgence one might expect that there would be a substantial presence of religious actors in public debates, but if the results of this study are any indication, this is not the case. The 135 articles signed or co-signed by a religious actor amount to only 3.4% of the total number of articles, with no indication of an increase over the time studied. This shows that religious actors, contrary to popular belief, have a marginalized role in public debates.

The Christian group was by far the largest contributor to the material, especially the Church of Sweden. This is not surprising considering the amount of members and how well established the Church of Sweden is in Swedish society. If excluding the Church of Sweden however, there is little evidence that the number of members has anything to do with the number of articles a religious group contributed with. The Jewish group has comparatively few members but still produced the third most articles, while the Orthodox Church were virtually non-existent in the material even though they have some 130 000 practicing members in Sweden. It would rather seem that establishment and history in Swedish society are what determines how active a religious group is in public debates, which makes sense if religious groups are seen as any other actors in a differentiated society, having to use the same methods as everyone else to get public attention, such as having established relations with other institutions, having a well-functioning organization able to respond quickly to issues involving them, having high public credibility and so on.

What these results indicate are that mediatization and deprivatization both seem to affect how religious actors participate in the public sphere. As has been shown, religious actors in the material act in the way Casanova (1994) and Habermas (2006) suggests they should, sticking to legitimate questions and a limited

number of religious arguments. However, the resurgence of religion that deprivatization indicates shine with its absence in the material, and this is where the results are more in line with mediatization theory than with deprivatization, since the way religious actors express themselves seems to be in line with Hjarvard's theory (2011), but the frequency is very low and does not increase over the time studied. When almost all messages between religious institutions and the public has to go through the media, religious actors has to adapt to the *modus operandi* of the media, taking into account what 'works' and what to write in order to get published (Hjarvard 2011). Here the gatekeeping role of Aftonbladet becomes central, since it is really the media rather than religious institutions that decide how much and what kind of publicity a certain group gets (Lövheim & Lundby 2013). Examples of this in the material is for example that the Church of Sweden is given plenty of space, though considering the number of members they are still underrepresented, while the Jewish community are vastly overrepresented. Thus the number of religious actors present in the public sphere seems to have less to do with deprivatization, and more to do with mediatization.

These conclusions are similar to those drawn by Marta Axner (forthcoming). As briefly described in Chapter 2, Axner investigated the three national newspapers in Sweden that are not part of this study (Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet and Expressen). The presence of religious actors in these papers averaged to about 3.5%, which is almost identical to my results. Just as in Aftonbladet the Christian groups, and particularly the Church of Sweden, were dominant overall. This division is also similar to what Niemelä & Reintoft Christensen (2013) found in their study on the coverage of religion in the Nordic countries, which further strengthens the conclusions that (1) religious presence in the media does not seem to be increasing, and (2) that media logic influences the religious actors' participation in the public sphere. If little is written about a certain minority religion, there is little chance that anyone from that religious minority is given the chance to get published on a national debate page.

The subjects of the articles

As stated, the subjects of the articles varied considerably between the groups. Notably, the Church of Sweden was the group writing on subjects most in line with what Casanova lists as the legitimate questions for public religions. The Muslim and Jewish groups very much focused on questions related only to their particular groups, while the Church of Sweden was more prone to defend other religions and minority groups. Still, even though Casanova's (1994:56f) legitimate questions seemingly favor the Christian majority, the minority groups did stick to these questions, albeit to a limited selection of them. While some possible explanations as to why this is the case were given in Chapter 5, here I would like to focus on the role of mediatization. As shown above, the distribution of religious actors in my material corresponds fairly well with the distribution of religious groups when it comes to coverage of religion (Niemelä & Reintoft Christensen 2013), or to use

Hjarvard's term, journalism on religion (2012). This would indicate that what is highly valued in terms of news value also corresponds to the subjects religious actors write about in their articles¹⁹. Thus, from this perspective, the subjects of the articles become less related to the interests of the various groups, and more related to what is considered 'news' in society at large, although these aspects are most likely related. Thus, if the Israel-Palestine conflict and cases of anti-Semitism are the instances in which society at large take an interest in the Jewish group, it is in relation to these questions that they are most likely to get debate articles published. Though these questions may well be important questions for Jews in Sweden, the diversity and heterogeneity of the group may be lost because of the media logic.

Authority and arguments: secular or religious?

A clear trend in the material was the relatively infrequent use of religious arguments as operationalized in relation to Habermas, i.e., references to religious sources not equally accessible to all people. That the Christian group were the most frequent users of religious arguments may be explained by their established role in society, and that they therefore do not have to try as hard as minority religions to be accepted in public debates. Christianity has a long history in Sweden, and references to Jesus and the Bible are less likely to stand out than references to the Torah or the Quran. Also, the Christian group had by far the highest percentage of signatories classified as religious authorities, and the majority of the religious arguments present were, not surprisingly, expressed by these signatories. One must not forget however, that the distinction made between religious and professional authority is not the same as religious and secular. Both the religious and the professional authorities are, at least as operationalized in this study, religious actors. Hence, the groups combined, only a fourth of the articles written by religious actors contained *any* religious argument, and when they did, they were combined with secular arguments. What this seems to indicate is an acceptance of the secular context in which the debate takes place, and possibly also a general acceptance of pluralism, since the religious actors, by the exclusion of religious arguments, broadens their scope to include both secular citizens, and members of other faith communities. The predominant use of secular arguments and lack of totalitarian claims based on religion may also be an attempt by the religious actors to prove that their opinions, and indeed the very existence of their communities are compatible with modern western values (cf. Lövheim & Axner 2011).

Two questions immediately arise in relation to this conclusion. First, we have no way of knowing if these results should be attributed to the accepting personalities of the signatories in the material, or to the media logic of the debate article. It is possible that the signatories feel obligated to write in a certain way to get published at all. Second, even if the signatories chose to argue in a certain way, we do

¹⁹ This also corresponds to what the debate editor of Aftonbladet stated about newsworthiness being the deciding factor if an article gets published or not.

not know if the arguments expressed on the debate pages are the same arguments expressed *within* the group. This inside/outside perspective has not been possible to investigate in this study, but is a question closely related to Habermas notion of translation (Habermas 2006) in the sense that religious actors may have religiously based reasons for certain opinions, but are unable to use these arguments publicly since they are too overtly religious. There are plenty of examples in the material of religious authorities not using any references to religion, the most telling perhaps being when an administrator of the Pentecostal movement writes on why same-sex marriages are harmful, exclusively using references to psychological research (Aftonbladet 25-10-2007). The Pentecostal movement probably has faith-based reasons not to recognize same-sex marriages, but these are nevertheless not mentioned in the article. This begs the question to what extent religious actors can be honest in the public sphere about values that may not be compatible with what is perceived as modern Swedish values. As has been shown by for example Lövheim & Axner (2011), certain kinds of religion are more likely to be accepted in the public sphere, and religious actors using religious arguments to express anti-modern or anti-democratic values (e.g. that homosexuality is a sin) are unlikely to be accepted, while religious actors using secular arguments to argue everyone's equal value would fit well into the public sphere. Somewhere in-between these 'right' and 'wrong' forms of religion lies the abovementioned example of the Pentecostal representative arguing that same-sex marriages are wrong because it may harm the children involved. It is an attempt to argue for the 'wrong' values, but in the 'right' way.

Theoretical and methodological reflections

The two main theories of this study are the secularization theory, with focus on deprivatization, and the mediatization theory. Though they were meant to be given equal attention it is clear that deprivatization has had a more concrete role in the study. Mediatization is still important since it in a way 'sets the scene' for the study, but because of the limited time and space allocated for this thesis I could not develop as much on media logics and other aspects of the theory as I would have liked. Instead, as the study progressed from the descriptive to the analytical part, Habermas' theory on what arguments religious actors may and may not use in the public sphere became more central than originally intended, since it gave a theoretical distinction between religious and secular arguments. Regardless of the slight shift in theoretical focus, I would argue that the main theories have been satisfactory. Though Casanova and Habermas both are normative in their approach to what role religion has or ought to have in secular society, this study takes no such normative stance. I make no assessment on whether religious actors present in the material act within or outside their designated sphere, or if the use of religious references to legitimize their authority is 'right' or 'wrong'. What I have done is use Casanova's theory to see if his thoughts on what public religions

should concern themselves with in the public sphere seems to correspond to what the religious groups present in the material wrote on. As for the mediatization theory, it indicates that media is now the main source of information on religion and thus that information previously gained from more traditional sources (places, representatives or texts) now has to be adapted to the *modus operandi* of the media (Hjarvard 2011). Hence the mediatization theory, though not gaining a ‘hands on’ role in the analysis, is one of the reasons my research question is even valid.

Perhaps more problematic is the use of the theories regarding authority. Though they were selected because of their insightful perspectives on religion and authority, one always runs the risk of finding only what one is looking for. Hence it is possible that what I have been able to study is if signs of authority, based on a selected number of theories, were present in my material, and that some forms of authority may have been left out. Another criticism might be that this study is susceptible to bias because of the gatekeeping role of Aftonbladet (in this case the debate editor’s role as gatekeeper), and that what has been measured is really how much room religious actors get/take in one specific tabloid. In both these cases I will have to refer to the earlier comparison of my results to those of Axner (forthcoming) and the NOREL programme²⁰ (cf. Lövheim & Lundby 2013).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, some of the theories I have used are meant for more interactive forms of media, such as forums and blogs, where reactions and responses to perceived authorities can be studied. The consequence of this, especially in regard to Schofield Clark’s theory, is that I simply did not find as many cases of consensus based authority as I had thought. Since religious ideology and common western values are often quite similar, both, for instance, proclaiming the importance of freedom (cf. Lövheim & Axner 2011, Woodhead 2009), I had expected that religious actors would have tried to circumvent the implicit prohibition on religious arguments by referring to common values, trying to identify with the readers. This was rarely the case though. However, it is possible that the fact that *ideology* was used more frequently than *text* is an indication of this (Campbell 2007). Since the ideology of all the Abrahamic religions is based on texts, the ideologies of these religions should entail the similar messages as the texts. However, because of the hostility within Swedish media towards explicit religious content (cf. Lövheim & Axner 2011) it is possible that religious actors favor references to their ideology, since this is less likely to provoke the secular norm so dominant in western societies (Woodhead 2009). This can also be connected to Habermas’ and Casanova’s theories on public religions, as reference to ideology might be considered more accessible to ‘outsiders’ since it is less likely to entail explicit religious references. Also, texts stay the same over the years while ideology changes, and thus it is more likely that the ideology of a religion is formulated in ‘modern’ terms. This may be one reason that the religious actors seem to prefer to express their beliefs by reference to their ideology rather than their sacred texts.

²⁰ For information on the NOREL-programme, please see the official website: www.religioninpublicsphere.no

Finally, the public/private distinction demands some attention. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the use of this distinction proved problematic. Though I used a tentative definition of these concepts for the entire study in order to be able to write about them at all, this definition proved insufficient in the analysis. Rather than trying to rework the definition I would argue that this study has shown just what Weintraub (2007), Benhabib (1992) and even Mary Douglas (1978) argue, that is, how problematic binary distinctions can be. With several different understandings of the public and the private spheres, and none comprehensive enough to classify all articles of this study as either public or private, using one single definition throughout this study would have been, if not impossible, at least unpractical.

Further research

Whatever the strengths of this study, it has only been able to study how authority is expressed, not how it is received by the intended audiences of the articles. We have yet to explore how religious and secular citizens in Sweden react to the articles analyzed in this study, as well as how the signatories of the articles reasoned when writing the articles. This could be investigated in two ways. The first question could be answered through a reception study with the research question being how people from various faith communities react to articles written by religious actors. The second question could be answered by an interview study with a number of frequent signatories, investigating the various aspects that are involved in the writing of a debate article, for example, why and when a bishop chooses to use only secular arguments. Studies like these would not only contribute to the development of my results, but also give further insight in the role of both deprivatization and mediatization in shaping how religious actors participate in public debates.

Another alternative would of course be to widen the scope and turn to other forms of media. As indicated in the theoretical reflections, some of the theories used in this study would probably work better with more interactive media, such as forums or blogs. I am thinking mainly here about the theories of Campbell (2007) and Schofield Clark (2012), but interactive, online media is also a good example of how religion may be deprivatized in new ways, in a context where different forms of media logics apply than in the traditional printed press.

Summary

Based on the perceived increase of religion in the public sphere in Sweden, the aim of this study has been to investigate to what extent and on what subjects religious actors participate in public debates, more specifically on the debate pages of Aftonbladet. Furthermore, in relation to the authority-shifting effects of deprivatization and mediatization, I was also interested in what forms of authority the signatories represented, and if they used religious or secular arguments to legitimize this authority. The research questions were the following:

- (1) To what extent did religious actors participate on the debate pages of Aftonbladet during the years 2001-2011? What religious denominations were represented; who represented each group; what subjects does the respective religious groups debate; and were there any major differences between the groups?
- (2) What different forms of authority can be distinguished within the respective religious groups represented in the material, and by what arguments are they legitimized? How can these forms of authority be explained in relation to the authority shifting effects of deprivatization and mediatization?

To answer these questions, a sequential mixed method approach was used. An initial quantitative content analysis was conducted to answer the first research question, followed by a qualitative content analysis in which the patterns of authority and arguments used in the material were analyzed.

The theoretical perspectives used were primarily Casanovas version of the secularization theory, with emphasis on deprivatization, and Hjarvard's mediatization theory. These theories were the foundation of the study, and their indication of changing authority patterns in modern societies is the reason the study focused on authority. In the analysis additional theories were used in order to analyze the way authority was expressed and what kinds of arguments that were used.

The results of the study show a very limited presence of religious actors on the debate pages of Aftonbladet (an average of 3.4% of the total number of articles) and no indication of an increase over time. The main religious groups present were, in descending order: Christians, Muslims and Jews. The subjects on which the groups wrote varied, but generally speaking the Jews and Muslims wrote about issues directly related to their own groups, while the Christians took on more of the 'public religion' role, defending modern liberties and delivering moral critique to the state on behalf of all people, not just Christians. These results are to

a large degree in line with what Marta Axner (forthcoming) has found when conducting a similar study on the other three national newspapers in Sweden.

Furthermore, the Christian group was represented by religious authorities and used religious arguments to a much larger degree than the Jewish and Muslim groups. Apart from this difference between the groups, the combined material showed that only a fourth of the articles contained any religious arguments. Combined with the subjects of the articles, the use of secular arguments may indicate an acceptance of the secular norm in public debates, and possibly also an acceptance of pluralism, since no claims are made of one religion's superiority, and the use of primarily secular arguments enable people of all faiths to participate in the debate on equal terms.

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Interviews

Anna Andersson, debate editor, Aftonbladet. Interviewed by email 2013/04/16.

Appendices

Appendix I: Interview guide

Interview guide: debate editor (translated from Swedish by the author).

Short introduction of the project.

Short explanation of the terms of the interview.

Questions:

1. What would you say is the purpose of the debate page in your newspaper?
How do you cooperate with the editorial staff and the other section of the newspaper?
2. How do you decide what is to be published on the debate page? Do you have any particular policy?
3. Approximately how many articles are submitted to you? How many are refused and for what reasons?
4. Do you ever contact people or organizations and ask them to write an article for you?
5. Do you run any statistics as to which groups are published?
6. Do you have any ambition to emphasize minority groups, including religious ones, on your debate page? If so, how?
7. Do you, or the staff in general have any particular relation to religion and its place in the public sphere? Do you have any feeling as to whether there has been an increased religious presence on your debate page in recent years?
8. Is there anything else you would like to say about how you work with your debate page?

Appendix II: Coding template

This appendix will give an overview of all nodes coded to the articles. Note that the signature MA indicates the node was present in the coding template borrowed by Marta Axner. The signature MB indicates that the node has been added by the author during the coding process.

All organizations present in the material:

Organization	Number of articles	Node created by:
Svenska kyrkan	62	MA
Hjälp, bistands- och fredsorganisationer	32	MA
Diakonia	12	MA
Ersta diakoni	4	MA
Kristna Fredsrörelsen	4	MA
Lutherhjälpen	4	MB
Hela manniskan	2	MA
Stockholms stadsmission	2	MA
Svenska missionsradet	2	MA
PMU Interlife	1	MA
Caritas	1	MA
Judiska grupper	12	MA
Judiska församlingen, Göteborg	5	MA
enskilda judar	3	MA
Judiska församlingen i Stockholm	2	MA
Judar för Israelisk-Palestinsk fred	2	MA
enskilda muslimer	5	MA
Sveriges unga muslimer	3	MA
Svenska islamiska samfundet	1	MA
sveriges muslimska forbund	1	MA
svenska islamiska församlingarna	1	MA
Frikyrkor och huvudsakligen frikyrkliga organisationer	10	MA
Pingstkyrkan och pingstförsamlingar	4	MA
Evangeliska frikyrkan	3	MA
Svenska missionskyrkan	2	MA
Svenska Baptistkyrkan	1	MA
opinion tankesmedjor politik	10	MA
Broderskapsrörelsen Kristna socialdemokrater	9	MA
Påskuppropet	1	MA
Katolska kyrkan	5	MA
Sveriges kristna rad	4	MA
Medier	4	MA
Minaret	3	MA
Judisk kronika	1	MA
Serbisk-ortodoxa kyrkan	2	MA
muslimska mänskliga rättighetskommittén	2	MB
Kyrkopolitiska partier	2	MA
Frimodig kyrka	1	MA
Islamska konventet	1	MB
Ekumeniska grupperna för kristna homo- och bisexuella	1	MB
Ekumeniska följeslagarprogrammet i Palestina och Israel	1	MB
folkekirken Nodhjalp (Danmark)	1	MB

Kirkens nødhjelp (Norge)	1	MB
Kyrkans utlandshjälp (Finland)	1	MB
Islamiska Informationsföreningen	1	MB
kyrkans själavårdscentrum	1	MB
Ersta fristad	1	MB
Churches auxiliary for social action, indien	1	MB
Kyrkornas världsråds ekumeniska vattennätverk	1	MB
Svenska Kyrkans Unga	1	MB

All subjects coded in the material:

Questions or themes	Number of occurrences	Node created by:
fattigdom - internationell rättvisa	12	MA
fredsfrågor	12	MA
terrorism	8	MA
Biståndsfrågor	8	MA
HIV AIDS	8	MA
religion som positiv social kraft	8	MA
asylfrågor	7	MA
islam o muslimer i sverige	7	MA
Barns rättigheter	7	MA
Våld mot kvinnor	7	MA
diskriminering	7	MA
islamofobi och hot mot muslimer	6	MA
homosexualitet	6	MB
mänskliga rättigheter	5	MA
kyrkliga konflikter	5	MA
vapenindustri-export	5	MA
Hatbrott och hets mot folkgrupp	5	MA
yttrandefrihet	4	MA
Ekumenik	4	MA
Alkoholpolitik	4	MB
mediekritik	3	MA
medicinetik	3	MA
Klimatfrågor	3	MA
Kulturfrågor	3	MA
religionskritik	3	MA
hemlöshet	3	MA
teologiska tolkningar el trosfrågor islam	3	MA
Muhammedkarikatyrerna	3	MA
politik (allmänt)	3	MB
religionsfrihet	2	MA
rasism - främlingsfientlighet	2	MA
antisemitism	2	MA
fattigdom och sociala orättvisor i Sverige	2	MA
miljöfrågor	2	MA
synlig eller offentlig religion	2	MA
religionsdialog	2	MA
abort	2	MA
familjepolitik	2	MA
hedersvåld	2	MA
migration och integration (ej asyl o flykting)	2	MA
Sjukförsäkring	2	MA

övergrepp i religiösa miljöer	2	MA
teologiska tolkningar el trosfrågor kristendom	2	MA
Slöja	2	MA
Val och demokrati	2	MA
Ship to Gaza	2	MA
kris och katastrof	2	MA
Green-fallet	2	MA
Sekularisering - religionens minskning marginalisering	2	MA
Sport- och fritidsfrågor	2	MB
Public service	2	MB
äktenskap	1	MA
skattefrågor	1	MA
omskärelse	1	MA
kyrkoval	1	MA
jämställdhet	1	MA
välfärd, vård	1	MA
Våldtäkt	1	MB
arbetslivsfrågor	1	MA
Knutby	1	MA
religion som konfliktskapare	1	MA
Påven	1	MA
Förföljelse el förtryck pga religion	1	MA
FN och FNs roll	1	MA
Prästutbildning	1	MB
Vård och omsorg	1	MB
mordet på Anna Lindh	1	MB
Djurförsök	1	MB
Teknologi och mobiler	1	MB
Kärnvapen	1	MB
hälsa	1	MB
Halal-TV	1	MB
medlemsskap i Svenska Kyrkan	1	MB
Länder och konflikter	33	MA
Israel - Palestina	14	MA
Irak	5	MA
Afghanistan	3	MA
Sydafrika	3	MA
Kosovo	1	MA
Thailand	1	MA
Makedonien	1	MB
Ryssland	1	MB
Tjetjenien	1	MB
Indien	1	MB
Kongo	1	MB
Colombia	1	MB
Högtider och årsdagar	9	MA
jul	5	MA
pask	2	MA
Valborg	1	MB
pingst	1	MB