

ENGLISH SUMMARY: HALVARD JOHANNESSEN'S *SEKULARISERINGENS SPIRITUALITET*.

Halvard Johannessen's interdisciplinary reading of the publication *The Church approaching the Spiritual Longing in our Times* (*Kirken i møte med den åndelige lengsel i vår tid*), leads to questions concerning the cultural conditions for religious life and experience in a secular age.

This publication was written in 1999 by the Lutheran theologian Tore Laugerud, on behalf of the Church of Norway National Council. The document is a reflection on the relevance of the Church's spiritual life in a culture characterized by growth of "spiritualities of life" on the one hand, and a decline in Church attendance and traditional religious beliefs on the other. The experiential aspect of the Christian faith, it is argued, is pivotal in contemporary culture. Approaching this cultural situation, the document advances a vision for Christian spirituality based on individual spiritual practices that is claimed to enhance religious experiences.

The document quickly gained public and academic attention when it was published. On the one hand it was criticized by academic theologians claiming that the document's anthropology departed from Lutheran core teachings. On the other hand, social science scholars pointed out that the spirituality advocated by the document followed the trend in contemporary religion, and argued it could be seen as part of a general turn to "spiritualities of life". The reception of the document left questions unanswered: did the document signal that the Church was sliding away from established teachings towards contemporary spirituality? Was it a sign of secularization within the church itself? Were the theological assumptions of the document incompatible with Lutheran theology and practice?

In the dissertation, Johannessen explores these questions through an interdisciplinary approach. The approach is derived from a branch of practical theology called public theology (Don Browning), and also uses resources from the hermeneutical study of Christian spirituality (Sandra Schneiders). The dissertation is organized in five parts. The first lays out the theoretical and methodological foundation of the study. Here, the object of the study is identified as the document's conception of the relation between humans and God. More specifically, Johannessen singles out four key aspects of the relation to the divine, arguing that it becomes manifest in the

document's underlying conceptions of a) authority, b) nature, c) knowledge, and d) practices. The second part describes the context and content of *The Church approaching the Spiritual Longing*. It also describes the effect it had on the Church's official attitude towards contemporary spirituality, and the academic discussions that followed. In part three, the document is analyzed as an expression of contemporary religion, using a typology of religion in modern times developed by religious studies scholars Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas. The analysis concludes that the document must be regarded as an expression of "spiritualities of life" but with some significant traits of "religions of difference", and claims it to represent a combination-type of contemporary religion. In part four, the results of the analysis is interpreted in relation to a cultural-historic context, as depicted by Charles Taylor's philosophical studies of secularization – *A Secular Age* (2007) most notably. This reading reveals that the conceptions of authority, nature and social practice expressed by the document, resembles conceptions that are characteristically secular according to Taylor. Most importantly, they give overarching priority the immanent. As such, the document expresses a spirituality of secularization. However, the document diverges on one important point: it frames the immanent as self-transcending, pointing towards a transcendent reality. From this basic position, the document criticizes "closed", purely immanent versions of secularity, as well as those strands of modern Christianity that conceives of the divine as purely transcendent. The reading concludes that the document is an implicit adaption *and* response to contemporary culture.

Lastly, in part five, the document's theological concept of religious longing is discussed in relation to Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich's concept of *eros* and *agape*, and in relation to Eucharistic practice. It is argued that the document's concept of immanent spiritual longing, and practices related to it, is not necessarily theologically illegitimate. A theological problematic nevertheless arises when this is done at the expense of the concept of a transcendent gift of grace. From this position, Eucharistic practice, which arguably embodies both *eros* and *agape*, is finally discussed as a possible resource in the Church's encounter with contemporary culture.