

REDISCOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL  
RITUALS WITHIN A NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN SWEDEN:  
THE OASIS MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Swedish Oasis Movement (*Oasrörelsen*), which considers itself to be part of the worldwide charismatic movement, was started in 1984. This work refers firstly to occurrences in the Oasis Movement and how it has changed until the present time. An insider perspective and empirical reality are thus essential. And secondly, this work refers to the argumentation or discourse (questions of the ideal) within the Oasis Movement concerning both innovations and retentions of specific points of view. The Oasis Movement is not a static organisation, but one in continuous change. Some new rituals have arisen suddenly and spontaneously, but their roots are firmly planted in biblical examples. There is an obvious continuity in this regard. If something new begins, it is willingly accepted as a sign of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An obvious basic principle in the Oasis Movement is the idea of renewal on an historical foundation. This concerns transforming history for a new age: adhering to the basic fundamentals of the Bible (and of Luther) and bringing them into a new age. There is in this way an oscillation between continuity and change.

**Keywords:** Charismatic movement, continuity, individualization, liturgical independence, the Oasis Movement, transformation of religious rituals.

INTRODUCTION

The Oasis Movement (*Oasrörelsen*) was originally a charismatic renewal movement associated with the Swedish Lutheran Church. Until 2000 the Swedish Lutheran Church was the established state church of Sweden but has since become independent. The Oasis Movement, which considers itself to be part of the

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worldwide charismatic movement, was started in 1984 as the Reference Group for Spiritual Renewal in the Swedish Church (RAF) and re-named Oasis in 1989. The Swedish movement was inspired by the Norwegian Oasis Movement (OASE). The Norwegian Oasis Movement is older, having been established in the 1970s. Its first summer meeting was held in 1980 in Kristiansand, Norway (<http://www.oase.no>, Jørgensen, 1999). In the first issue of the RAF publication for 1984, Swedish Oasis' first leader until 1997, the clergyman Carl Gustaf Stenbäck, wrote, "Many Swedes have returned from these OASE meetings renewed and grateful at finding that such sound charismatic revival and openness for spiritual gifts of grace could be combined with Lutheran professions of faith and the church's divine service. The RAF hopes to maintain and develop its contacts with the OASE Movement in Norway" (RAF Blad, 1984/1). It should be noted that Stenbäck emphasizes "Lutheran professions of faith and the church's divine service", in other words an obvious concentration on both traditional declarations of faith and on liturgical aspects. Bishop Bertil Gärtner of Gothenburg, Sweden (1970–1991) was a professor of New Testament Exegetics in USA in the 1960s and while there became inspired by the American charismatic movement. He summoned the clergyman Gustav Börjesson to a meeting in 1971. There Gärtner told Börjesson how inspired he had been by the charismatic movement in USA. "It will continue. It will be strong. And it is important. We must take heed of it. We must follow it, we must grasp it. That's what he said", Börjesson stated in a eulogy for Gärtner in 2009 (Oasblad, 2009/4).

"Oasis" suggests a fresh-water spring in the desert, thus referring to the biblical oases in desert areas. The Oasis Movement stresses a "sound spiritual revival" as its goal. "Sound" in this context means non-extreme.

A charismatic movement emphasizes the presence of the Holy Ghost and the so-called spiritual gifts of grace (of the Greek *charisma*), which refer to the prophecies, speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and the gift of curing the sick with reference to Paul's words in Rome 12: 6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12: 4–11 (<https://www.ne.se>, Karismatisk rörelse). A movement of this kind does not advocate the creation of new churches but wishes to influence existing churches. This concurs with the Oasis Movement's goals.

#### QUESTIONS AT ISSUE

1. Which historic basis forms the grounds for whatever is to be renewed or rediscovered? It is in this regard that the many new liturgical rituals gain interest. These are communion, songs of praise, dances, flags, confession, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), healing, intercession, anointment with oils and pilgrimages.

2. How does adjustment to a new era in the present occur? The question of oscillation between continuity and change is basic.

3. How does the Oasis Movement use its own history? How is it manifested?

This work refers firstly to occurrences in the Oasis Movement and how it has changed with time. An insider perspective and empirical reality are thus essential. And secondly to the argumentation or discourse (questions of the ideal) within the Oasis Movement concerning both innovations and retentions of specific points of view.

#### SOURCES

Sources for this study consist primarily of the newsletter *Oasblad* from 1990 on and the *RAF Blad* for 1984–1989. They contain information about the spiritual message or the discourse conducted in the movement as this has been clarified by theological advisors and inspirators. In addition they contain notices about coming events, advice on beneficial literature etc. In some cases participants write about their experiences at Oasis meetings. This author has been an observer at both the large summer meetings held between 2011 and 2015 and at some smaller meetings held in the autumn and spring in various parts of Sweden and has also interviewed leading persons in the Oasis Movement. These include the inspirator Berit Simonsson, who has been an active member of the movement since the 1980s. The clergyman Åke Danielsson, who started the healing worship services, has also been interviewed (see below) as has the paediatrician Anna Aronsson. She has long been a member of a so-called caring group during such healing services. In addition the dance leaders Kristina and John Egil Rage were contacted.

At the 2015 summer meeting in Jönköping, a questionnaire was distributed to people who work as volunteers in the Oasis Movement. The questions dealt with personal commitment and experiences of both a positive and critical nature. Eight answers were sent in electronically allowing for the sender to remain anonymous.

The Oasis Movement uses digital media diligently to spread its spiritual message and information. It has a comprehensive and always up-dated website <https://www.oasrorelsen.se>. The *Oasblad* newsletters have been posted on this website since 2009.

#### THE OASIS MOVEMENT'S ORGANISATIONAL AND ECCLESIASTIC/POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

##### ECUMENISM

The Oasis Movement has successively acquired a more ecumenical emphasis in Sweden and is no longer concerned solely with the Swedish Church as at its start. Representatives for the free churches, especially for the Pentecostal Movement, are now members. The Oasis Movement works closely with the Evangelical Fatherland Foundation EFS, a movement associated with the Swedish

Church. The religious movement called Word of Life was not accepted originally. As Carl Gustaf Stenbäck wrote in an issue of the *RAF Blad* for 1989 (1989/3) and an *Oasblad* for 1990 (1990/4), the Oasis Movement disapproved of the theology on which Word of Life based its work. Started in 1983 in Uppsala with the former clergyman Ulf Ekman as leader, it has been marked by a theology of prosperity that considers Christian faith as being a route to success in all phases of life (<https://www.ne.se>, Framgångsteologi). A change occurred in Word of Life in 2005 when they invited the Oasis inspirator Hans Weichbrodt to be a speaker, something that the Oasis Movement accepted. It was the first time that an ordained clergyman had spoken to Word of Life. The Oasis Movement responded by inviting Ulf Ekman to speak to them. Cooperation has continued since then, although criticism was originally raised in some Oasis circles. In the 2010s, the Oasis inspirator Berit Simonsson lectured to Word of Life in Uppsala while the present leader of Word of Life, Joakim Lundqvist, was one of the speakers at the 2015 summer meeting in Jönköping. Ulf Ekman, who converted to Catholicism in 2014, preached at one of the four worship services televised by the Oasis Movement in 2014.

Collaboration with the Catholic Church was at first non-existent. Contacts were established by Lillemor Hallin, a prominent figure among charismatic Catholics from 1973 to 2008 (Dagen, 11 March 2008), who spoke at several Oasis meetings. Collaboration increased even more due to contacts with the Swedish Catholic bishop Anders Arborelius starting in 1998. He preached at one of the four services televised by the Oasis Movement in 2014. Charles Whitehead, who is a leading figure in the charismatic Catholic movement, was one of the keynote speakers in Jönköping in 2015, as he had been at a number of earlier summer meetings such as Hässleholm 2005 (*Oasblad*, 2005/2). The Pope's preacher and spiritual advisor, Raniero Cantalamessa, has participated at several summer meetings, most recently in Söderhamn in 2015.

Ecumenism also involves the Orthodox Church. The priest Irenaeus from the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Belfast was a keynote speaker at an Oasis meeting in Borås in 2009. Here Berit Simonsson's son Mikael was inspired to become an Orthodox deacon on the way to ordination. He has since participated in this capacity in recent Oasis summer meetings.

In connection with the summer meeting in Jönköping in 2015, the Christian journal *Världen idag* published an article entitled "Church distinctions are conspicuous by their absence at Summer-Oas" (*Världen idag*, 24 July 2015). Similar affirmative statements about ecumenical contributions were made by other delegates who had been interviewed by journalists (*Kyrkans Tidning*, 31/32 2015) and who were quoted in the *Oasblad*. After the summer meeting in Borås in 2009,

Hanna Håkansson pointed out that the Oasis Movement “had taught me that the essence was to focus on similarities rather than differences” (Oasblad, 2009/3).

One discussion that arose in the summer of 2015 showed that ecumenism did not include Islam. Five clergymen from Stockholm had written an article entitled “Our church must be tolerant of other religions” in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* for 19 August, which demonstrated acceptance for holding church services or other spiritual gatherings where a minister and an imam served alongside each other in a joint service. On 21 August the parish priest Björn Gusmark, who is a board member in the Oasis Movement, published a critical insertion on his blog entitled “False tolerance” (<http://bjorngusmark.blogspot.se/2015/08/den-falska-toleransen.html>). He received instant support on Facebook from other leading Oasis Movement personages. Berit Simonsson wrote: “Well written by the vicar Björn!” The clergymen Åke Danielsson, who started the healing worship services (see below) emphasized “that’s the way it is”. A previous Oasis leader, Leif Nordlander, expressed his agreement with the brief word “Amen!”.

#### EVERY AGE AND EVERY SOCIAL CLASS

The Oasis Movement focuses deliberately on every age and social class. It is seen as being of extreme importance that everyone feels welcome at the meetings. Hierarchy is not allowed. One question discussed in the Oasis Movement is why the leadership sits on a raised platform in sports arenas during the large meetings, at which lecturers and vocal groups also appear. Berit Simonsson raises the question “Why are you sitting on that platform?” in three issues of the *Oasblad* published in 2001, 2005 and 2011. It is obvious that the Oasis leadership wants to keep this question alive with an eye towards new members. The articles for 2001 and 2005 are identical. As Berit Simonsson emphasises, “We are not on that platform to ‘increase our importance’ – really, quite the opposite” (Oasblad, 2001/1). The reason that they sit on the platform is instead to “help, support, encourage and pray for speakers, meeting leaders and participants”. Another argument is that “many eyes are necessary in order to see and understand whatever happens in the hall as the meeting progresses. Things the speakers or meeting leader might not discover. Paying close attention to anything the spirit of God desires and what happens in the hall is our joint responsibility”.



**Figure no. 1** – The Oasis Leadership sitting to the left on the platform. A hymn-singing dance group performs in the centre with a vocal group to the right at the summer Oasis meeting in Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

In order to maintain equality regardless of age, a children's group called Children's Oasis was established in 1999 with Lennart Henricsson engaged part-time from the start. In recent years, the name Youngsters has replaced Children's Oasis (<http://www.youngsters.se>). The Youngsters group is aimed at children and young people up to the age of confirmation. Young people older than that belong to Youth Oasis (<http://www.ungdomsoas.se>). Children and young people are expected to have their own plan of activities and also participate in portions of the larger meetings. Meetings for children and young people combine games and fun with detailed Bible instruction. Concentrating only on play or only on instruction is not acceptable. The children and young people are not to feel bored by Oasis meetings but look forward to attending them. The Oasis Movement emphasizes that entire families and their children are welcome. One reason for this is the movement's manifest goal of encouraging future interest among Christians in the various congregations. The leadership of Youth Oasis wrote in 2005 that "our prayer is that the Lord shall foster a young generation in Sweden who believes in the Gospel of Jesus" (Oasblad, 2005/4).



**Figure no. 2** – Children being instructed by Lennart Henricsson in Nässjö in 2015.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**



**Figure no. 3** – A lot of children in front of the platform singing for the audience in the beginning of a large meeting in Jönköping 2015.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**



**Figure no. 4** – The Youth Oas-group being instructed by Lennart Henricsson.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**

Youth Oasis arranges both summer camps and New Year's camps. Spiritual instruction and songs of praise are combined with sports and various forms of entertainment. The invitation to a youth camp in Kungsbacka in the summer of 2012 offered such enticements as "lots of new friends, Jesus, songs of praise, sport, instruction, party tent, praying, music... simply lots of fun!" (Oasblad, 2012/1). Reflections on arousing future interest are also the basis for Youth Oasis decision to start arranging their own confirmand instruction at a four-week-long camp. Since 2014, the camp has taken place at the Helsingborg Folk High School in Gothenburg diocese. Here, too, amusement is combined with intensive instruction. The invitation to the camp for 2016 reads, "Here you'll have four weeks of learning more about God, meeting new friends, laughing a bit, maybe crying a bit, discovering new things about yourself and getting memories that will last a lifetime. We want your confirmation period to be a time when we get closer to Jesus and discover the life He wants us to lead". Photos of the confirmands are published on the website. The happy atmosphere that is evident among the confirmands is heightened by the frolicking clergyman on *Figure no. 5*.



**Figure no. 5** – Oas-confirmeds in 2015 at the Helsjön Folk High School. Note the happy atmosphere that is accentuated by the frolicking clergyman.

Source: <http://www.ungdomsoas.se/konfirmand> (retrieved 7 July 2015).

The Oasis Movement has recently begun to become interested in socially vulnerable people who are encouraged to take part in the annual summer meetings at a greatly reduced price. The initiative for activity came from the clergyman Ingo Söderlund who experienced a vision from God about it. He presented the idea for the leadership of the Oasis Movement, who immediately consented to it. The inspirator Hans Weichbrodt writes, “I can still remember how fascinated I was when Ingo Söderlund shared his vision about this initiative with me”. Söderlund established a foundation and got sponsorship so that the guests can be offered board and lodging for a symbolic sum at a drug-free, non-alcoholic camp. This initiative started in 2013 under the name “Broken Camp”. Social engagement is always combined with spiritual guidance for these people’s future. Hans Weichbrodt notes that, “The main focus is on inviting everyone at the camp to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and also being inspired to allow prayer and the Bible accompany them on their way through life” (Weichbrodt, 2015).

#### *ECCLESIASTIC/POLITICAL STANDPOINTS*

The Oasis Movement’s leadership has kept a low profile in questions of ecclesiastic politics “because we feel that it is not our business” (Oasblad, 2009/3). One obvious exception concerns the question of gender-neutral marriage between same-sex couples, which was approved by the Swedish Church in 2009. Before the

decision about this had been reached, the Oasis Movement's leadership sent a protest letter to the Synod of the Swedish Church. It referred to both the biblical grounds and the church's own traditions. "This is a serious deviation from the biblical and ecclesiastical tradition on which the Swedish Church is based, since the word of God as it has been manifested for us in the Holy Writ has been normative for us through the ages" (Oasblad, 2009/3). The inspirators Hans Weichbrodt and Berit Simonsson continued this criticism when the so-called right of refusal for clergymen in the Swedish Church began to be questioned in 2014. This right meant that clergymen could not be forced to marry same-sex couples against their will (Weichbrodt and Simonsson, 2014).

The Oasis Movement has not issued an official statement concerning the question of women ministers. On the other hand, no women ministers have ever been keynote speakers or participants in communion masses. This has led to some external criticism. Women ministers have, however, participated in Oasis Meetings. The minister Ingegerd Carlsson from Aneby, Småland Province, wrote very enthusiastically about her experiences at the Summer Oasis Meeting at Hässleholm in 2004. "Thanks to all you gifted ministers! ...How fantastic to stand (or sit) there with several thousand other people and sing songs of praise to glorify and exalt God for what He is and what He has done for us. Amazing that the roof of the meeting hall didn't take off!... The high mass was an absolutely high point when we all accepted the Lord in the bread and the wine". (Oasblad, 2004/3) Ordained women deacons do however serve regularly at communion masses.

Representatives for the Norwegian OASE Movement have noticed that clergymen and their duties in the rediscovered liturgical rituals are far more obvious in the Swedish Oasis Movement than in the Norwegian (<http://www.oase.no>).

The main intention in this analysis is to study the Oasis Movement from the inside. Therefore, any external critical opinions and reactions, primarily from representatives for the Swedish Church, are of less interest for this analysis. External criticism is seldom mentioned in the *Oasblad*. Carl Gustaf Stenbäck wrote in his historical account from 2002 that clergymen in Gothenburg initially criticized the early movement for being "soulfully fanciful, meaning that it was based on emotions. They could not understand why the usual worship services where the word of God was preached could not suffice" (Oasblad, 2002/3). This criticism was aimed at its charismatic trend. Such criticism has, however, lessened with time.

#### ECONOMY

The economy of the Oasis Movement is based exclusively on voluntary donations of cash given during the collection and gathered in large plastic buckets, and via credit card terminals and swiping at the meetings. In addition, there are about 250 regular monthly contributors who mostly pay by direct debit from their

bank accounts. Voluntary contributions are very common at the large five-day summer meetings. Participant fees for the meetings are also used to pay for the hire of meeting rooms and for other expenses. The Movement employs two inspirators, namely the theologian Berit Simonsson since 1997 (originally at 25%) and the clergyman Hans Weichbrodt since 2001. Two part-time inspirators are also employed to guide the Youngsters Lennart Henricsson and Hanna Simonsson. The Oasis Movement does not own its own meeting places and has no real members, only supporters who receive the four annual issues of the *Oasblad* free of charge. It has been published since 1990. The large summer meetings are always held at different places in Sweden. One meeting is usually held in northern Sweden and one in the southern part of the country.

### REDISCOVERY OF THE ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS

The reintroduced liturgical rituals include the rediscovery of communion, confession, dance, flags, intercessional prayers including the laying on of hands and anointment with oils, healing services, speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and songs of praise. This in many cases takes place in combination with lifted hands, personal testimony, prophetic messages and music played on modern instruments. The experience of joy in the presence of God and Jesus is obvious at these meetings in comparison to the obvious solemnity and sorrow in older pietistic revival movements. Joy is shown with happy laughter from the audience at the lectures held by inspirators or other speakers. The atmosphere is not at all sad. Day-to-day Christian life is not especially mentioned in the Oasis Movement, in contrast to earlier Free Church and pietistic revival movements (Gustavsson, 2012). Individuals are helped indirectly through Oasis Movement instruction on guidelines for daily life. A relationship to God and Jesus as expressed in the liturgy is seen as being most essential in the Oasis Movement.

### COMMUNION

Communion is celebrated daily at the large Oasis Movement's meetings, in contrast to the pietistic revival movements of earlier years. Then warnings were given against taking communion too often with reference to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 23–29 and to habitual communion takers during the 1800s when communion was obligatory. The theological advisor and clergyman Staffan Ljungman from Osby, published an Oasis booklet in 2014 entitled "Communion – Spiritual Nourishment", now posted on their website. He writes in a section entitled "So often ...", "It is very odd to think that Communion can be taken too often. As if it was a stimulant and not a foodstuff. There is no reason to put Jesus' friends on a starvation diet. That's not how it was at the beginning". Reference is made to Acts

2: 46 which reads, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God”. Margareta Wahrenberg from Vaggeryd in Småland Province related with great satisfaction about the Oasis-days that took place at Flämslätt in Västergötland Province in 1999. She exclaimed, “Just imagine celebrating mass every single day!” (Oasblad, 1999/2). That same year Agneta Flodin from Asklanda in Västergötland expressed a similar opinion after the Oas-meeting in Varberg, “Just imagine being able to take communion several times in the same week!” (Oasblad, 1999/3). People who participate actively in the Oasis Movement have reported that they prefer to attend divine services where communion is celebrated. Criticism about celebrating communion too often has not surfaced. Each individual in the Oasis Movement can choose for themselves how often they will take communion.



**Figure no. 6** – Clergymen and deacons waiting to take communion at the Festive High Mass in Kungälv in 2014.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**



**Figure no. 7** – Long queue to the communion at the summer meeting in Jönköping in 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

### *CONFESSION*

Like communion, confession has also been rediscovered. This is dated to the summer meeting in Varberg in 1997. The clergyman and theological advisor Bengt Pleijel at the Åh diocese centre in Gothenburg diocese wrote in a later issue of the *Oasblad* that he was assigned to be the “confessor” and to sit in a “confessional”. He was surprised over the huge numbers of people who came to confess. He was unable to allow more than five or ten minutes to each. More and more clergymen were summoned to this confession service to avoid having people wait too long. “I couldn’t count them all. I think there must have been about forty every day. I usually devote enough time to hear a confession. It takes time before the ice thaws and begins to melt. But here the speeches and the Bible walks had done the basic work. God’s holy presence was so strong in Varberg. During the confessional moment, everything that had been hidden just rushed forth. ...It felt like a torrent of sin”. (*Oasblad*, 1998/3)

Confession was mentioned in several subsequent *Oasblad*. Other writers in addition to Pleijel told about its content and theological motivation. In 1999, the clergyman Björn Fyrlund and his wife Katriina from Varberg, discussed confession as being “a word with an ancient history, but still so unfamiliar”. He related about how at an Oasis meeting in Varberg in 1998, several confessionals had been set up for the clergymen who were to be “confessors”. Through confession, the individual becomes conscious of “personal guilt in the presence of God” and is given an opportunity to confess it. Fyrlund emphasises that what is unique in confession is “a direct and tangible notice of forgiveness”. The clergyman functions both as “the ear of God” and as “the mouth of God”. Secrecy is fundamental. (*Oasblad*, 1999/3) This article does not consider confession’s historic source. In a later article from 2001, however, Fyrlund discusses Luther’s view of and emphasis on confession. “Living with confession and pastoral care is emphasised by Luther as living out one’s baptism, as realizing in one’s daily life the lifelong withdrawal from sin that begins with baptism”. (*Oasblad*, 2001/3) Before the summer Oas-meeting in 2005 in Borås, the Oasis Movement published a folder on confession and distributed it to the participants. It had been written by Björn Fyrlund and the clergyman Niklas Adell from Landeryd in Linköping diocese. In this booklet, confession’s New Testament foundation was stressed through Jesus’ promise to the Apostles, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are then forgiven”. (John 20: 23) Confessor clergymen wear a purple armband as a token of their duties.

#### HEALING WORSHIP SERVICES

At a summer meeting in Värnamo in 2003, the clergyman Åke Danielsson from the town of Helsingborg felt encouraged to start healing worship services together with a clergyman from Värnamo, Håkan Sunnliden. He had had a vision about curing invalids by letting shadows fall over them. This had been described in Acts 5: 15 as “Insomuch that they carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some one of them”, although Danielsson made no mention of it. The fact that healing worship services began in connection with this precise summer meeting in Värnamo is still mentioned in the invitation to the 2015 Oasis Meeting in Jönköping. This is another example of how the Oasis Movement chooses to describe the start of a new ritual and how it could happen suddenly without any preceding plan. This is a way to use history and the belief in the leadership of the Holy Spirit to inspire the activities of the present.

The first time healing is mentioned in the *Oasblad* is in 2000. In that year the Anglican bishop Graham Dow (born in 1942) was invited to be the keynote speaker at an Oasis meeting for clergymen and associates held at the diocesan centre Flämslätt. His speech was summarized by two women named Cecilia and

Maria. Dow told of the healing rites he based on Jesus' command to missionize. All baptised believers can begin to offer up prayers for the sick. "We cannot promise results to any of them we pray for, but we can say: Jesus loves to heal". Participants at this meeting had several opportunities to pray for each other using words that Bishop Dow dictated. "Many of those suffering from back pains felt that their pain disappeared or was lessened", as the two women wrote (Oasblad, 2000/2). This is an example of how influence comes from countries outside Sweden. Speakers from England have often been called in and have been important inspirators for new rituals (see below concerning dance).

At such healing services, caring groups consisting of three persons lead the healing intercessions. These three are a clergyman, a layman and a doctor. One caring group, consisting solely of women, can be chosen by anyone. The clergyman Åke Danielsson and paediatrician Anna Aronsson have borne the main responsibility. At the summer meeting in 2015 thirteen different intercessional groups were active and 346 people had applied ahead of time for intercession. To control the size of the queues they had been issued tickets whose numbers appeared on a screen. Three daily healing worship services were held while several hundred people received personal intercession every day.

Åke Danielsson defended the presence of three people in the caring groups by saying that the clergyman diagnoses spiritually and the doctor diagnoses physically and psychically. The third person prays continually for the one seeking to be cured. Occasionally the doctor will diagnose a psychiatric casus that can only be treated medicinally and not through intercession. It is obvious that prayers for healing are seen as being complementary to and not as substitutes for medical treatment. This is guaranteed by the presence of a doctor in the caring group. Anna Aronsson justifies her participation by saying that there are limits to scientific achievements and that God is greater than humans. He can therefore accomplish the unforeseen. Jesus' example is quite obviously the basis for these healing worship services in the Oasis Movement. In the invitation to the summer meeting for 2015, mention is made of "laying of hands on the sick according to the precepts of the Bible", exactly as was expressed by Bishop Graham Dow in the year 2000.

Anna Aronsson was actually reported by a private individual to the medical disciplinary board after a summer Oasis meeting in Hässleholm in 2004 for her statements to the media about how "my scientific expertise is limited, but God's comprehension involves us all. After all, He created us". The objector believed it was unsuitable that a licensed physician could say that religion is superior to medical science. (Göteborgs Tidningen, 14 August 2004) The complaint was later withdrawn without legal proceedings and Anna Aronsson retained her medical license.



**Figure no. 8** – Healing intercession to the right behind the hanging textile with the Jesus figure and the text “Lord, our Healer”. The ticket number 256 fastened on a long pole, Sofia Church, Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

“Prayer cloths” are also available for use by sick persons who cannot come to Oasis Meetings. The caring groups pray for healing over these cloths and coat them with oil. Relatives then take the cloths home with them and place them on the invalid who is thus provided with intercession even at a distance. The biblical example given by the theological advisor Staffan Ljungman is Acts 19: 11–12 in which a cloth that had been in contact with Paul’s body was laid on the sick. According to Ljungman, such usage was an exception because “a personal meeting provides better opportunities for pastoral care than a dispatched cloth”. (Oasblad, 2010/2) This symbolic usage is supposed to have started quite suddenly at a summer meeting in Varberg in 1997, when bedsheets had to be bought and cut into pieces. This took place before Graham Dow’s visit to Sweden in 2000 and Åke Danielsson’s revelation in 2003.

Even though the Oasis leadership has emphasised that it is impossible to know or to promise anything about the effects of healing prayers (see above quotation from Graham Dow and Berit Simonsson’s statement in Oasblad, 2011/2), personal testimony from people who claim to have been healed has been printed in

the *Oasblad*. Two women named Birgitta and Margareta tell of how they were healed at the Oasis-days held at Munkviken camp in Västerbotten province. Birgitta had had a painful knee for many years but during an intercession, she had experienced intense heat in that knee. “Later that evening I was able to bend and twist that knee in a way that had not been possible for many years. The pain had disappeared!” Margareta had had sciatic pains in her right side for several years. She attended intercession in some uncertainty because of suffering from social phobia. There she experienced a feeling of “a burning coal in my right hip. I didn’t dare say anything because I didn’t think it was true. The feeling moved out to my hip and took away all the pain”. (Oasblad, 2002/1) A woman from Skövde, who had suffered from streptococcus bacteria in 2014, received an oil-soaked cloth and is said to have been cured in a way medical science could not explain. The most important task for a cultural scientist is to study the personal experiences of the involved persons without attempting to give an explanation of whether pain really disappeared or if sickness was really cured. Such explanations exceed humanist scientific competence.

#### INTERCESSION

Intercession is not exclusively linked to prayers for healing. Any individual can approach the intercessors wearing orange neckbands and standing in pairs around the meeting hall. The Oasis Movement places great emphasis on having two intercessors, both for their own and for the prayer receivers’ protection. Those who approach them may wish for personal intercession for a special reason or situation or in order to offer thanks for something. The intercessors first listen to the wishes and problems expressed so softly that no other nearby person can hear them. After this they ask if they can lay hands on the person’s head just as is done during healing worship services. Those who desire intercession are allowed to stand with their backs to the meeting. Intercession is short and can be concluded with the words “Go in the Lord’s peace”. In 2006, specific rules for intercession were published and later revised in 2009. They are posted on the Oasis Movement’s website.

Approaching for individual intercession did not emerge in the 2000s, however, but has taken place during the whole of the Oasis Movement’s history. As early as 1984, the clergyman Lasse Nilsing, then a member of RAF’s leadership, wrote, “Intercessional worship services are above all warm and safe spiritual surroundings where partakers can support each other as is shown in Mark 2”. (RAF Blad, 1984/2) The spirit of community at the meetings is emphasised as being a New Testament spirit. At one renewal worship service held in Gothenburg in 1984, it was noted that “intercessors stood at the foot of the choir stairs with groups of worshipers gathered around them. There was a buffet-style communion table and then intercession for all who desired it”. (RAF Blad, 1984/3) The Oasis

Movement's leadership have intentionally allowed the intercessors' positions to be easily seen in the meeting hall. When individual participants see others go forth for intercession, confession or healing, this can inspire them to do likewise and lessen their shyness. The Oasis Movement has had great success in using this arrangement.

Intercessors are chosen after being recommended by other active members of the Oasis Movement. In an article published in 2011, "Personal intercession", the deacon Inger Gustavsson from the town of Helsingborg discussed the question of why one should seek intercession. "God already knows everything". She justifies intercession by referring to biblical texts, especially Matthew 18: 19–20. (Oasblad, 2011/2) The ritual of intercession is therefore entirely based on the Bible.

Large numbers of people usually approach to receive intercession. The Christian newspaper *Världen idag* reported that after a speech at the 2015 summer meeting in Jönköping, "people rushed in to receive intercession. Shyness does not seem to be characteristic of Oas' followers. People rushed up at the evening meeting on the second day as well to receive intercession. It felt as if the entire congregation rose up to go forth". The reporter Sara Andersson noticed an obvious collective feeling of affinity in her conversations with the participants at the meeting. Several had said, "One gains such strength from gathering together". (*Världen idag*, 24 July 2015) This feeling has also been noticed at the meetings and obviously explains why people do not draw back from seeking intercession in others' presence. Children also go forth to receive intercession as the writer Charlotta Ljungdahl noted at the 2009 summer meeting in Borås. (Oasblad, 2009/3)

#### ANOINTMENT WITH OILS

Anointment with oils is not only done during healing worship services but also during other forms of intercession, as shown in the previous section. The Pentecostal evangelist Birger Skoglund described an experience he had in 1998 at a mission station in northern India where a pastor held a large flask of oil used for anointing in his hand. He justified this by using examples in the Old Testament. Skoglund also mentions his participation at an anointment at Åh diocese centre (Oasblad, 1998/4) The real breakthrough for this ritual was at the 2000 summer meeting in Lysekil. A station was set up where the clergyman Bengt Pleijel sat. Such long queues resulted that extra clergymen had to be brought in from other stations both indoors and outdoors. This is another example of how new rituals arise spontaneously and impulsively without previous planning. This also occurs, as has been seen, with confession and healing worship services.

The Oasis leadership was inspired by this spontaneous interest for anointment with oils. In 2002, Berit Simonsson noted how the Oasis leadership had devoted itself to theological deliberation about the usage, "how, where, by whom and why it should be employed". The clergyman Johan Herbertsson from Lund presented a

long historical summary about this use in the same issue. He emphasised that oil has a deep symbolic value in the Bible, “partly for the spirit of God but also for life, health and blessing”. Jesus’ apostles anointed the sick with oil to cure them (Mark 6: 13 and James 5: 14). Luther also stressed the importance of anointment with oil and believed in its effect on health. He even worried about a lack of expectation in the result. (Oasblad, 2002/3) This historic foundation for the usage is seen as being very clearly confirmed both in the Bible and with Luther.



**Figure no. 9** – Intercession and laying hands on the persons’ head in Sofia Church Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**



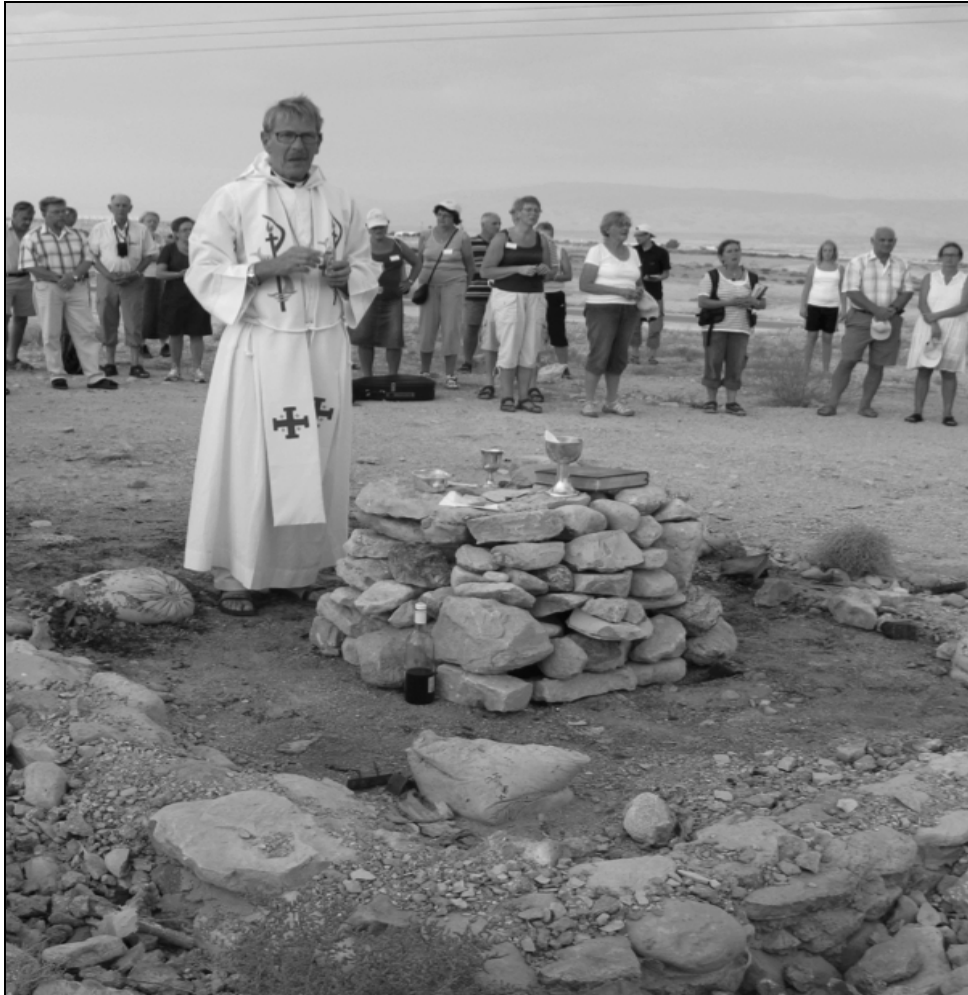
**Figure no. 10** – In the first row several clergymen are anointing participants with oil in the forehead at the summer meeting in Kungälv, 2014.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

#### *PILGRIMAGES*

The pilgrimages arranged by the Oasis Movement to Israel “in Jesus footprints”, to Egypt in Mose’s footprints or to Turkey to follow Paul’s footprints are meant to strengthen the participants’ personal experiences of biblical events in these places. History thus becomes even more vivid and influential on the participants’ future lives. As a writer named Åsa reported after a trip to Israel in 2013, “Now that I’m back home again in Gothenburg, I give thanks to God for that week in Israel. The week has strengthened my relationship to God and has given me a greater desire to wander in Jesus’ footprints here at home too”. (Oasblad, 2013/4)

An invitation for a trip to Israel in 2015 stresses “Bible instruction, daily mass and prayers”. One does not travel merely to see or hear about biblical sites but also to conduct religious rituals in this area. Outdoor communion is celebrated in a slightly primitive manner. Standing in the River Jordan, participants affirm their baptism when a clergyman blesses them. By the healing pools of Bethesda, prayers are offered for sick people who are anointed with oil. Pilgrimages of this kind are arranged each year by the Oasis Movement and the travel agents King Tours, with Oasis inspirators and Åke Danielsson as guides (<https://www.kingtours.se>). Youth Oasis arranges its own trips to Israel.



**Figure no. 11** – The clergyman Åke Danielsson leading communion service in the desert on a pilgrimage to Israel, in 2008.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**



**Figure no. 12** – Participants in a pilgrimage in 2008 affirming their baptism in the River Jordan in Israel.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

Through pilgrimages the Oasis Movement join a recent trend in Sweden and abroad. (Ahlbäck, 2010; Margry, 2008) A national organization, “Pilgrim in Sweden”, has been founded to “further Swedish pilgrimage tradition in a Christian perspective” (<http://www.pilgrimisverige.se>). A pilgrimage centre in Vadstena has also been established (<http://www.pilgrimscentrum.se/>). The Oasis Movement thus adopts the popular term “pilgrimage” while giving it a content of its own. Whereas modern pilgrimages outside the Oasis Movement try to reconstruct and follow mediaeval ideals from Scandinavia and Europe, the Oasis Movement emphasizes the experience of being at biblical sites. To do that, one must travel to Israel, Egypt and Turkey, the “Lesser Asia” of the New Testament.



**Figure no. 13** – Berit Simonsson giving instruction in Nasaret from the Bible during a pilgrimage to Israel, in 2008.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

#### *PROPHECIZING AND GLOSSOLALIA*

The ability to proclaim prophetic speech is specified as one of the spiritual gifts of grace in 1 Corinthians 12: 4–11 and 14: 4–5 and 29ff. When the clergyman and theological advisor Bengt Pleijel wrote in 2008 about the prophetic calling, he was precise about affixing to the Bible. Because both false and true prophets exist (Mathew 7: 15), they must therefore be verified. (Oasblad, 2008/3) In keeping with what is written in 1 Corinthians 14: 29, the Oasis Movement has set up a “prophecy verification group” who wear green neckbands. Anyone wishing to proclaim a prophecy is required to contact this group who then decides whether or not to allow

public proclamation of the message. At the 2015 Jönköping meeting, two prophecies were presented by being read aloud by a member of the “prophecy verification group”, and not by the person who presented the message. A prophecy is considered to be a greeting from God but does not necessarily deal with the future.



**Figure no. 14** – “Prophecy verification group” with green neckbands in Jönköping, 2015.

**Photo: Anders Brogeby.**

Prophecies can be linked to glossolalia (speaking in tongues) although Paul does not accord them the same respect as prophecies. (1 Corinthians 14: 4–5) Glossolalia is in Sweden no longer seen as being specific to the Pentecostal Movement since Paul describes it as one of the gifts of grace. In an issue of the *Oasblad* Bishop Bo Giertz (1949–1970), who was held in great esteem in conservative and High Church circles, points out that this Gift of Grace played a large role in the ancient church. He emphasised that “when it is real, it adds to the certainty of belief, intensifies a love of God and the joy of salvation”. “We should rather plead than fear it”. (*Oasblad*, 2003/3) The theological advisor Staffan Ljungman posted an article, “What is spiritual baptism?” on his website, noting that this often, but not always, ties in with glossolalia as discussed in the New Testament’s Apostles’ Acts. Glossolalia cannot be controlled nor concerns all. “Some few are given palpable signs of spiritual confirmation through glossolalia or other Gifts of Grace, while others receive additional joy and candour in faith”.

### SONGS OF PRAISE AND FLAGS

Songs of Praise are established fixtures at all Oasis meetings to express joy in the presence of God and optimism for the future. Obvious emotions are expressed in song and movement. As Berit Simonsson emphasised in 2013, “songs of praise are among our most important activities as Christians! They are not merely an ‘introduction’ to sermons. We never sing a song of praise because we want to or are in an extra good mood”. Songs of praise are instead based on the New Testament’s Revelation 4: 11 and 5: 12, namely that “The Lamb is always worthy of praise and thanks! And therefore how you feel at the moment does not matter!”. (*Oasblad*, 2013/2) One should note that songs of praise are given equal status as preaching, previously of more importance in revival circles. This was because the Word was considered fundamental rather than humans achievements as in the form of Songs of Praise.

Songs of Praise are led by a song group on the platform with participants at the meeting taking part, often with raised hands. Because the focus of a Song of Praise is on God and Jesus, this is not a performance by the song group but instead it is a collective manifestation. Therefore these songs and music are not applauded, as has become more usual in the Swedish Church after performances of song and music. Applause in the Oasis Movement can, however, occur after a lecture or to thank those who have arranged meetings and conferences.



**Figure no. 15** – Singing songs of praise at the 2015 summer Oasis Meeting in Jönköping. Many participants lift their hands.

Source: <https://www.oasrorelsen.se/nyheter/605-sommaroas-i-joenkoeping> (retrieved 1 September 2015).

While singing Songs of Praise many participants wave large flags fastened to long poles. Handkerchiefs were used before flags became popular. The first time participants were able to order their own flags in both adult and children's sizes was in 2003. (Oasblad, 2003/3) As early as 2001, the dance leader Kristina Andersson (married Rage in 2004) wrote about using flags in "the rehabilitation of dancing", as she put it. (Oasblad, 2001/1) Such rituals arise simply. The different colours symbolize spiritual and liturgical significance. Berit Simonsson states that green means growth, red flags emphasise Christ's atonement, gold symbolizes the heavenly world, blue describes penance and white means purity. A large flag bearing a symbol of the biblical Lion of Juda is considered a tribute to Jesus. The colours are thought to correspond to those in the Tabernacle as described in the Old Testament (Exodus 26 and 28) according to the dance leaders Kristina and Norwegian born John Egil Rage. The New Testament also mentions waving with palm leaves (see reportage with Kristina and John Egil Rage in the Christian paper (Dagen, 22 July 2009). Kristina Rage has enlarged on flags and dancing in an issue of *Oasblad*, 2009. A banner is a sign or a symbol. Psalms 20: 6 describes the raising of a banner as a symbol of victory from God. (Oasblad, 2009/2) Waving flags is thus seen as being not a recent idea, but firmly established on biblical examples. Flags can be used by any participant in the meetings. Nothing is considered to be correct or incorrect when flags are used or color symbols are interpreted in keeping with the basic Oasis principle about individual's free choice (see below).



**Figure no. 16** – Many, but not all participants wave large flags of different colours during singing of Songs of Praise at the Kungälv summer meeting in 2014.

**Photo: Anders-Petter Sjödin.**

Shoulder bands in different colours are not linked to the liturgy and relationship to God as are the flags' symbolic colours. They are instead practical aids to orderliness at the various rituals. Orange indicates prayer leaders, red shows worship hosts, and green the "prophecy verification group". Lilac indicates "confession pastors" and "oil pastors". These bands are not described in the *Oasblad* and need not be historically established since they do not have an expressed spiritual or liturgical meaning.

#### DANCE

Dance, flags and Songs of Praise are closely linked to one another. The Oasis leader Carl Gustaf Stenbäck wrote in the first *RAF Blad* about the two-week-long visit of Dawid Watson's dance team from England in the spring of 1984. "This team presents the Christian message in song, drama and dance. It is neither a performance nor an appearance. The team leads the congregation in song. The dance is like the soprano voice in a choir. It lifts the Song of Praise and makes it richer and more beautiful". (RAF Blad, 1984/1) This is a clear indication of how dance is not a performance for an audience, as has always been declared by the Oasis Movement. Dance is instead related to the glory of God and inspiration from the Holy Ghost.

Another choir from York in England visited in the fall of 1984. Its congregation had experienced revival and renewal during the previous fifteen years. This included dance as an element in Songs of Praise. A partaker in Gothenburg described his meeting with the English choir thus: "The seminar I attended worked with dance. We learned how to prepare a sacred dance. Dance, like all other congregational work in York, was combined with prayers and phrases from the Bible. We began by praying together". Each partaker was given a biblical text from the Book of Psalms and then assisted to shape its content. "Praising God in movement was a fantastic experience". (RAF Blad, 1984/3)

After 1984, dance was not discussed again until 1994. The dance pedagogue and deacon Mia Rydberg from Gothenburg wrote an article entitled "Dancing to the glory of God". She showed there that dance is not unknown in the Old or the New Testament. Several biblical texts were quoted as proof, such as Exodus 15: 19–20 and several texts in Psalms. Luke 6: 23 was also quoted. Using her own experience of different forms of dance in the church since 1987, Rydberg said that "the movement begins in my heart, within me, and is expressed by the body in order to praise the Lord. Movement and dance can also help me to open up my inner being and take part with the whole of myself in Songs of Praise and worship". (Oasblad, 1994/4) "The Christian Dance Fellowship of Sweden" was formed in 1993 and has several points of contact with the Oasis Movement. (Oasblad, 1997/4) In 2001, the dance leader Kristina Andersson (married Rage in 2004) wrote a lengthy article entitled "The rehabilitation of dance". It is not "adding something new to make the church more attractive and gain new members". She regretted that "dance had been neglected in Western worship

services for nearly the past 500 years”. She pointed to the positive statement by the Church Father Augustinus (354–430) about dance in a spiritual perspective. This was affirmed by the dance historian Eva Helen Ulvros who also pointed out that Augustinus in addition described degenerated version of dance. The Church Fathers in the ancient church saw dance during worship services as an expression of the adoration of God, referring to angels’ dance in Heaven. (Ulvros, 2004: 52 p.) King David also spoke often about dance in Psalms. (Oasblad, 2001/1) These opinions expressed by Kristina Andersson/Rage are typical for the Oasis Movement. Something new is never created for its own sake. Instead, there is a wish to return to and rehabilitate rituals that are deeply established within older biblical and church tradition.



**Figure no. 17** – Dancing, singing and waving hands on the platform at Jönköping, in 2015.

**Photos: Hanna Simonsson.**

Kristina Rage wrote in 2009 and 2010 two detailed articles on the liturgical dance to the glory of God. She referred to the “dances of praise” mentioned in both the Old and the New Testaments, although most of her examples are taken from the Old Testament. “Approval of songs of praise, music and dance is found in Psalms 149 and 150”. According to Kristina Rage, all forms of dancing should be free and unregulated in order to suit different people who wish to dance. “When we dance before the Lord, we can use all the steps, hops and movements we know or can be inspired to”. (Oasblad, 2009/2, 2010/2) This follows the Oasis Movement’s often expressed ideal of freedom.



**Figure no. 18** – Dancing hand-in-hand and singing in Jönköping, in 2015.

**Photo: Kristina Gustavsson.**

#### *INDEPENDENCE*

A distinctive feature of the Oasis Movement is contained in the expression liturgical independence. No regulation is advised except for that found in the individual’s own decision and choice. Photographs often show some participants raising their hands during Songs of Praise while others do not. (*Figure no. 15*) Some wave flags or take part in holy dances and others refrain. In 2003, Berit

Simonsson wrote of the concept of independence in the article “Independence is the best feature” where reference to biblical sources is a vital part of historical validation. She writes, “The Bible is unusually fresh and innovative about such matters too. Independence means belonging to Jesus, and yes, independence is won by being His slave”. (Oasblad, 2003/3)

A ritual in which independence is especially noticeable concerns the sign of the cross, which the theological advisor Staffan Ljungman commented on in 2009. Making the sign of the cross is confirmed by Luther who speaks of using this sign during personal devotions morning and evening. At the same time, Ljungman points out that “one is not a better Christian by making the sign of the cross or a poorer one by not doing it”. (Oasblad, 2009/3) It is thus a spiritual aid but not decisive for personal Christian belief.

### THE OASIS MOVEMENT’S OWN HISTORY

Thus far this work has shown how the Oasis Movement seeks to point to historic origins for its theology and for the rituals that have been rediscovered and reintroduced. This history ranges back to biblical texts. To a certain extent, Luther is also held up as a model concerning confession, glossolalia and the sign of the cross, which have been excluded by the Swedish Church.

What importance has the Oasis Movement’s own history then and how is this manifested? An obvious feature, as has been previously shown in connection with confession, healing, flags and anointment with oils, is that the first example of a new ritual’s appearance is often emphasized as being spontaneous and without conscious planning. The idea is to show that anything can occur quickly and spontaneously due to the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. It is not a matter of coincidence.

A more complete two-part history, “The Oasis Movement – how did it start?” was written by its first leader Carl Gustaf Stenbäck. (Oasblad, 2002/2–3) He began by asking, “How long has the Oasis Movement existed?” Charismatic revival in the Swedish Church began to grow in the 1970s without any historic founder. An important inspiration in Sweden was G72, an ecumenical meeting held in Gothenburg in 1972. It was led by the bishop of Gothenburg, Bertil Gärtner, and the leader of the Pentecostal Movement, Lewi Petrus. This meeting resulted in the founding of many prayer groups in various parts of Sweden where Stenbäck encountered the revival movement. In the late 1970s, Bishop Helge Fosséus retired and returned from South Africa. Having encountered the revival movement, he supported a proposal to found the Reference Group for Revival in Gothenburg diocese, called REF 1983. Stenbäck was the convenor. Bishop Bertil Gärtner then asked REF to arrange revival weekends in Gothenburg diocese. The first Nordic leadership conference was held at the Åh diocesan centre in 1983 with around

100 participants. There the Reference Group for Spiritual Revival in Sweden, or RAF, was founded. A leadership group of seven persons was appointed with Stenbäck as chairman. The Norwegian OASE Group was clearly influential, as is shown in my introduction to this paper. In 1984, the English clergyman Dawid Watson was invited to Gothenburg with his song, dance and drama group. Stenbäck affirmed that "its fruits are present in the excellent singing and dancing at Oasis meetings". Individual historic events do have obvious consequences over time when a seemingly insignificant start-up manages to thrive and develop. This history continues in today's society.

At a Nordic leadership conference held at Åh diocesan centre with the Norwegian OASE Movement, it was decided to call the Swedish association Oasis too. This took place at the turn of the year 1989/1990 (Oasblad, 1990/1). The Norwegian OASE movement has, in other words, inspired the Swedish Oasis Movement in several ways. The Oasis Movement had its greatest contact area in Gothenburg diocese to begin with. This was partly due to Bishop Bertil Gärtner's support and partly to the clergyman Bengt Pleijel's efforts at Åh diocesan centre. This has been and still is an important meeting place for smaller Oasis Movement meetings in the fall and spring. The first summer meetings were held for several years in Hunnebostrand, Varberg and Lysekil on the West Coast.

After Stenbäck's historic survey, which covered the period up to 2002, the leader of Children's Oasis/Youngsters Lennart Henricsson wrote a similar historical review in 2009 at the tenth anniversary of the Children's Oasis/Youngsters. He looked at the past and also peered into the future. "It is gratifying to see that God has set a certain 'change of course' for Children's Oasis/Youngsters. We used to play mostly for children who were believers. We will, of course, continue to do that but now we also play in places where very few know about Jesus. At many of our concerts over 70% of the audience comes from 'non-believing' settings. Sometimes we play at the marketplace in some town. There we meet even more who as yet don't know about Jesus. It's so wonderful! When we give concerts at a marketplace etc. we usually call this 'Cross-fire'. We think it sounds a bit tougher. Cross-fire is also a website for children". (Oasblad, 2009/2) This external change which reaches new groups of listeners is the reason for changing the name from Children's Oasis to Youngsters and Cross-fire. "A name like Children's Oasis is one that a cool guy or girl think sounds a bit corny so they choose to stay home instead, and we don't want that. When a name keeps people from learning about Jesus, then that name has to be changed" (<http://www.youngsters.se>). Willingness to change external details in a new age is obvious even when the inner spiritual core remains unaltered. "The spirit in everything we do is and will continue to have Jesus as its star, as is very clear in our texts," says Henricsson at the end of his presentation. (Oasblad, 2009/2)

### OSCILLATION BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The Oasis Movement is not a static organisation but one in continuous change. Some new rituals have arisen suddenly and spontaneously, often at summer meetings, but their roots are firmly planted in biblical examples. There is an obvious continuity in this regard. If something new begins, it is willingly accepted as a sign of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Changes are obvious in the ecumenical focus where boundaries have successively widened to include different Christian movements and churches, but not Islam. The faith movement Word of Life was not accepted at first. Nor was the Catholic Church included, but in this case a gradual development towards more cooperation has taken place both in Sweden and internationally.

Children's Oasis was started in 1999 to answer children's needs and in that way strengthen the goal of future interest among newcomers who adopt the Christian faith. Openness and willingness to adjust to the surrounding modern society was shown when the name Children's Oasis was changed to Youngsters and Cross-Fire to strengthen the preconditions for and the likelihood of appealing to modern children and youths. The idea of future engagement is also a reason for the Youth Oasis beginning to arrange its own confirmand instruction. Activities for children and young people indicate optimism for the future, rather than sorrow over negative spiritual developments due to secularisation. Interest in including socially vulnerable people and offering them spiritual guidance at meetings became more noticeable with the start of "The Broken Camp" in 2013.

The Oasis Movement aims to use modern technology with the continuous emergence of new media for spreading the spiritual message. These include rich use of modern musical instruments, the Internet, web-radio, web-TV, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and swiping for collection payment. These new methods help create networks and contacts between the meetings. In 2014, 2,200 people "liked" the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/oasrorelsen>). Four televised worship services gave an excellent opportunity for reaching out to a wider audience in 2014. Bible instruction was posted on the Internet several years ago with Bengt Pleijel as instructor (<http://www.bibelskolan.com>). He presented this instruction for the first time in an *Oasblad* published in 2000. (Oasblad, 2000/3) Sound bites from previous Oasis meetings can be accessed digitally. Berit Simonsson and Hans Weichbrodt's lectures on Old Testament figures have later been presented for sale on CDs. Berit Simonsson has been especially interested in female figures such as Ruth and Esther. All lectures held at the summer meetings are also available on CDs and are sold after these meetings. Sound bites from previous meetings are also available.

An obvious basic principle in the Oasis Movement is the idea of renewal on a historical foundation. This concerns transforming history for a new age: adhering to the basic fundamentals of the Bible (and of Luther) and bringing them into a

new age. There is in this way an oscillation between continuity and change. In an interview Berit Simonsson stated that since the Swedish Church has abandoned its traditional theological policy and departed from its historical basis, the Oasis Movement takes over and protects previously accepted values. In addition, the movement rediscovers older rituals now disregarded within the Swedish Church and whose roots are found in the Old and New Testaments. The independence emphasised by the Oasis Movement for its members concerning the practicing of various rituals (see above) suits contemporary individualism that resists coercion and conformity.



**Figure no. 19** – Great emphasis is placed on using the modern musical instruments set up on the platforms of major meetings of Adult Oas, Youth Oasis and Youngsters, in 2015.

**Photo: Hanna Simonsson.**

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