

PILGRIMAGE, PAST AND PRESENT.  
NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVES WITH EMPHASIS  
ON SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA\*

ROGER JENSEN

The Pilgrim Centre of Oslo

ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4061-1060>

HANS MORTEN LØVRØD

The National Pilgrim Centre in Trondheim

ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1331-8600>

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PILGRIMAGE, PAST AND PRESENT. NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVES  
WITH EMPHASIS ON SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

ABSTRACT

In this article, we discuss the phenomenon of pilgrimage from a Norwegian perspective, exemplified by the past and present role and significance of Santiago de Compostela as a holy site and destination for pilgrims. By taking a historical view, the transformation of meaning and role is stressed. In the Middle Ages, Santiago was an important pilgrimage destination for people living in Northern Europe. Following the subsequent Protestant Reformation and the era of confessionalization, Santiago came to exemplify all the problems and challenges related to pilgrimage and the name of the city became a derogatory word. From this background, the present-day rediscovery of pilgrimage in Norway and the role of the city of Santiago, as the foremost example of the renaissance of the pilgrimage phenomena in present day postmodern times, are discussed. It is argued that the “rehabilitation” of Santiago and the new interest in pilgrimage in Norway were made possible due to the redefinition of pilgrimage that has taken place on what can be characterized as an ideological level. It is a redefinition that reflects the postmodern renaissance of pilgrimage and which is documented in recent social scientific empirical studies on the Camino.

KEY WORDS: Pilgrimage, Protestantism, Luther, Confessionalization, Nidaros, St. Olav

PEREGRINACIÓN, PASADO Y PRESENTE. PERSPECTIVA NORUEGA  
CON ESPECIAL ATENCIÓN A SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analiza el fenómeno de la peregrinación a Santiago de Compostela como lugar santo y meta de peregrinaciones desde una perspectiva noruega. Además, la transformación de su papel y significado queda más claro desde un punto de vista histórico. En la época medieval, Santiago era una importante meta de peregrinación para los habitantes del Norte de Europa. Tras la reforma protestante y la división religiosa de Europa, Santiago ejemplificó los problemas y rechazos relacionados con las peregrinaciones y el mismo nombre de la ciudad se convirtió en algo peyorativo. Teniendo presentes estos antecedentes, se analiza el redescubrimiento actual de la peregrinación en Noruega y el papel que juega Santiago de Compostela como máximo ejemplo del renacimiento de las peregrinaciones en el mundo posmoderno actual. Se sostiene que la “rehabilitación” de Santiago y el nuevo interés por las peregrinaciones en Noruega han sido posibles gracias a la redefinición del concepto, que se ha dado a un nivel que podríamos considerar ideológico y se basa en recientes estudios empíricos del ámbito de las ciencias sociales realizados sobre el Camino de Santiago.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Peregrinación, Protestantismo, Lutero, Iglesias nacionales, Nidaros, San Olav de Noruega.

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RESUMO

Neste artigo analízase o fenómeno da peregrinación a Santiago de Compostela como lugar santo e meta de peregrinacións desde unha perspectiva norueguesa. Ademais, a transformación do seu papel e significado queda máis claro desde un punto de vista histórico. Na época medieval, Santiago era unha importante meta de peregrinación para os habitantes do Norte de Europa. Tras a reforma protestante e a división relixiosa de Europa, Santiago exemplificou os problemas e rexeitamentos relacionados coas peregrinacións e o mesmo nome da cidade converteuse en algo peyorativo. Tendo presentes estes antecedentes, analízase o redescubrimiento actual da peregrinación en Noruega e o papel que xoga Santiago de Compostela como máximo exemplo do renacemento das peregrinacións no mundo posmoderno actual. Sostense que a “rehabilitación” de Santiago e o novo interese polas peregrinacións en Noruega foron posibles grazas á redefinición do concepto, que se deu a un nivel que poderíamos considerar ideolóxico e baséase en recentes estudos empíricos do ámbito das ciencias sociais realizados sobre o Camiño de Santiago.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Peregrinación, Protestantismo, Lutero, Igrexas nacionais, Nidaros, San Olav de Noruega.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The christianisation of Norway started relatively late compared to continental Europe. People living in the northern parts of Europe had contacts with Christian areas further south dating back to the migration period and through the Viking age. Christian impulses and ideas were gradually adopted and Christian faith was strengthened through the Norwegian Christian kings Haakon the Good (920-961) and Olaf Trygvason (960-1000). The christianisation of Norway was in many ways completed with the martyr king Olaf II Haraldson (995-1030), later St. Olav, as he was vital in introducing Christian laws into the country.

### *Pilgrimages – and the importance of Santiago*

Textual sources of medieval pilgrimages in Norway or of Norwegian pilgrims going abroad are scarce compared to what one's got on continental Europe. The oldest historical references of classical pilgrimages that are found in Norway date back to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In these references, Jerusalem is the most important pilgrimage destination, followed by Rome and Canterbury,<sup>1</sup> The Norwegian king Sigurd the Crusader is reported to have visited Santiago de Compostela in 1109 on his way to Jerusalem. The scallop shell, the traditional emblem of St. James and the city of Santiago, has been found in the Norwegian cities of Trondheim, Bergen, Hamar, Sarpsborg and Tønsberg. As a decorative element, it has been found on rings and coats of arms. We know of several medieval churches dedicated to St. James, particularly in the western parts of Norway, however, today only Eidfjord Church dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century remains. A gravestone in the choir says that a lady called *Rike-Ragna* (Ragna the Wealthy) built the church. According to tradition, she had caused her husband to drown by leaving him on a rock in the fjord to be taken by the tide. As penitence, she was to go to Santiago on a pilgrimage. But instead, she bought herself free

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<sup>1</sup> Ragnhild BJELLAND, *Bot og bedring. Den norske pilegrimstradisjonen i middelalderen. Hovedfagsoppgave i historie*, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2000, pages 39-43; 96-101.

from doing the pilgrimage by building this church for St. James.<sup>2</sup> The frequency of how often Santiago is mentioned as a pilgrimage destination in Norwegian sources is particularly high in texts dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Statues and paintings of St. James were present in several Norwegian medieval churches, either alone or together with the other apostles. One example is the so-called *Skjøl-Jakob* from Hovland stave church in the county of Buskerud. The nickname “skjøl” originates from the Old Norse word for “protection”.<sup>3</sup> On the ancient Norwegian calendar stick, the day of St. James, the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, is marked with a pilgrim hat, in folklore being interpreted as a rainhat. Thus the day was called “Jakob Våthatt” (James with the wet hat). In Norwegian folklore, rain on St. James’s day was believed to foretell a wet autumn.<sup>4</sup> Remnants of the tradition of St. James is also to be found in toponymy. Even today there are a few local places in Norway that carry names reflecting pilgrimages to Santiago, like “Jaksland” (the land of Jakob/St. James) south of Oslo.<sup>5</sup>

The most comprehensive overview of important pilgrimage destinations in late Middle Ages from a Nordic perspective is probably the letters of Queen Margaret I of Denmark-Norway and Sweden. She was the founder of the Kalmar Union, which united the Scandinavian countries for over a century. In the year 1411, when she was severely sick and knew that she would not have long to live, she gathered noblemen and ecclesiastical authorities around her to give them what has later become known as *Queen Margaret’s*<sup>6</sup> In these letters she orders pilgrims to be sent to pilgrimage destinations all over the Christian world to pray for her soul. In total, about 130 pilgrims were sent to more than 50 holy sites. Each destination in the order of the list is also to some degree an expression of the importance of the actual place. The first destinations, to which six pilgrims were to travel, are Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Seven pilgrims were to travel to Rome, nine pilgrims to Aachen, three pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela, three pilgrims to Paris, three to Canterbury, one pilgrim to the Orkney Islands, three pilgrims to Cologne, three to Alsace, three to Assisi, etc. In the second half of the letter Nordic pilgrimage destinations are listed: One pilgrim was to be sent

<sup>2</sup> KIRKESØK KIRKEBYGGDATABASEN, (NORWEGIAN CHURCHES DATABASE), *Eidfjord Gamle Kyrkje* [on line], available at < <http://www.kirkesok.no/kirker/Eidfjord-gamle-kyrkje> > [Consulted on 01/02/2017].

<sup>3</sup> TERRA BUSKERUD – HISTORIEBOKA (THE HISTORY BOOK), *St. Jakob-statuen fra Hovland Stavkirke i Eggedal* [on line], available at < [http://www.historieboka.no/Modules/historiebok\\_tidsepoke\\_tema\\_artikkel.aspx?ObjectType=Article&Article.ID=2237&Category.ID=1392](http://www.historieboka.no/Modules/historiebok_tidsepoke_tema_artikkel.aspx?ObjectType=Article&Article.ID=2237&Category.ID=1392) > [Consulted on 22/05/2017].

<sup>4</sup> STORE NORSKE LEKSIKON (GREAT NORWEGIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA), *Jakob Våthatt* [on line], available at < [https://snl.no/Jakob\\_Våthatt](https://snl.no/Jakob_Våthatt) > [Consulted on 22/05/2017].

<sup>5</sup> ROGER JENSEN, *Pilegrim. Lengsel, vandring, tenkning – før og nå*, Oslo, Novus Forlag, 2014, pages 121-126.

<sup>6</sup> AARHUS UNIVERSITET, *Danmarkshistorien* [on line], available at < <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/margrethes-testamentariske-gaver-1411/> > [Consulted on 01/02/2017].

to Vadstena in Sweden (Sta. Birgitta), one to Nidaros/Trondheim in Norway (St. Olav), one to Uppsala in Sweden (St. Erik) one to Odense in Denmark (St. Knut) and others to several smaller sites.

The Letters of Donations show the importance of Santiago as one of the most important pilgrimage destinations from a Nordic perspective in the late Middle Ages. The Queen's letters are also a vivid expression of the spirituality connected to late mediaeval pilgrimages. The fear of what awaited in the afterlife existence in purgatory represented to many people – royal as well as common – an important reason for taking on the daunting task of going on a pilgrimage to a place far away, with the hope that one's time in purgatory would be shortened. Queen Margaret I died the following year.

### *The rejection of Santiago<sup>7</sup>*

Throughout the history of the Church there has been a continuous criticism of the practice of pilgrimage and the theology related to it. Central historical characters like Gregory of Nyssa (331-394/5), Saint Jerome (347-420), Berthold of Regensburg (1220-1272) and Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) have raised such critique. The critique of pilgrimage reached a new level when reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century attacked it in a severe manner. From a Nordic perspective, the critique raised by Martin Luther is of special interest.

In analysing Luther's critique of pilgrimage, several key arguments can be found related to the understanding of holiness and holy sites, to greed and economic interests, to the lack of morals amongst pilgrims and in the Church's teaching on pilgrimage, as well as the abuse of ecclesial authority. The two major arguments used in criticizing pilgrimage in general, and Santiago as a prominent example in particular, are related to *theology and ethics*.

Martin Luther's critique was directed to the fact, in his understanding, that pilgrimage had become one of the "good works/deeds" that were deemed meritorious or advantageous before God. This had created the notion that such works could justify man before God and merit eternal life and redemption from sin and death. In the popular mind at least, pilgrimages undertaken as penance or as part of or to fulfill a vow were seen as meritorious work that would be rewarded with grace and reduce one's time in purgatory. To Luther, from a pastoral perspective, this way of understanding and promoting pilgrimage was harmful. The want and longing for such grace had become an important reason

<sup>7</sup> R. JENSEN, *Pilegrim...*, pages 131-152; Graham TOMLIN, "Protestants and Pilgrimage", in Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (eds.), *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, pages 110-125.

for undertaking a pilgrimage-journey.<sup>8</sup> Luther gives an example of how the pious need to run to Santiago de Compostela (he writes: “sanct Jacob”), Rome and Jerusalem, from one place to the other, to pray at the different sites, fast at the specified days, confess one’s sins – constantly being anxious and uncertain about salvation, *never being at rest*.<sup>9</sup> According to Luther, the Church had made pilgrimage part of the problem it was supposed to solve, by relating pilgrimage to merit (*meritum*) and the satisfaction of deeds (*satisfactio operis*) before God. Man was left anxious and uncertain about salvation. There was no end to the good works man had to do for his and her salvation. Pilgrimage could not solve, it rather became an expression of this problem.

According to Luther, the Church had defined good works to be what was meritorious and advantageous before God. Accordingly, Luther and the reformers now *redefined* the meaning and content of good works, pointing exclusively to the benefit of the neighbour. “Good works” *are not* some service to God or for the sake of God, good works are exclusively service to one’s neighbour in everyday life. Hence, Luther turns the traditional argument around saying, “if you do works to please God or the saints, or yourself, and *not* in favour of your neighbour, then know that *it is not* a good work!”<sup>10</sup> The time, effort and money used on pilgrimages were accordingly criticized severely. Likewise, the economical greed of the church related to penance and pilgrimages, from the perspective of the reformers, was criticized. In a sermon, from the pulpit, Luther exclaims, “What the hell am I to do in Santiago de Compostela? Should I look

<sup>8</sup> “...wenn du sie fragist: Wie thutt man recht, das man gott gefalle unnd selig werde?, ßo antwort sie: Ey, du must kirchen bawen, glocken giessen, meß stifften, vigilien lassen halten, kilch, monstrantz, bild, kleynod machen, kertzen brynnen, ßo vil beten, Sanct Katarin fasten, Eyn priester oder munch werden, tzu Rom und S. Jacob lauffen, herend hembd tragen, dich peytschen und dergleychen, das sind gutte werck, rechte wege und stend tzur selickeyt.» WA 10.1. 532, 1-6. *Weihnachtspostille* 1522.

<sup>9</sup> «Alszo einn Christe(n) mensch / der in diser zuuorsicht gegen got lebt / weisz alle ding / vormag alle dingk / vormisset sich aller ding / was zu thun ist / vn(d) thuts alles frolich vnd frey / nit vmb vil guter vordinst vnnd werck zusamlen / szondern das yhm eine lust ist / got also wolgefallen / vnd leuterlich vmb sunst got dienet / daran benuget / das es got gefellet. Widderumb der mit got nit einz ist odder tzweyffelt dran / der hebt an / sucht vnd sorget / wie er doch wolle gnugthun / vnd mit vil wercken got bewegen. Er leufft zu sanct Jacob / Rom / Hierusalem / hier vnd dar / bettet sanct Brigitte(n) gebet / ditz vnd das / fastet den vnd dissen tag / beicht hie / beichte da /...» StA 2, 21, 9-18.

<sup>10</sup> «Findistu eyn werck an dyr, das du gott odder seynen heyligen oder dyr tzu gutt thuest und nit alleyn deynem nehisten, ßo wisse, das das werck nit gutt ist. Alßo soll eyn man seynem weyb und kind, das weyb dem man, die kinder den eltern, die knecht den herrn, die herrn den knechten, die ubirkeyt den unterthan, die unterthan der ubirkeyt, und eyn iglicher dem andern, auch den feynden, zu lieb und dienst, leben, reden, thun, horen, leyden und sterben, das ymmer eyniß des andern hand, mund, auge, fuß, ia hertz und mutt sey; das heysen recht Christlich, naturalich gutte werck, die on unterlaß, alle tzeytt, an allen ortten, gegen allen personen geschehen mugen und sollen. Daher sihestu, das die werck der Papissten ynn orgelln, singenn, kleyden, leutten, reuchen, sprengen, wallen, fasten &c.. sind wol schone, grosse, viele, lange, breytte unnd dicke werck, aber es ist keyn gutt und nutzlich odder hulfflich werck drunder...» WA 10. I. 2. 41, 5-17. 2. Band, *Adventspostille* 1522; *Roths Sommerpostille* 1526.

for my neighbour in Rome? No, I have my neighbour exactly here where I live, my wife, children, poor people.”<sup>11</sup>

The critical arguments made by Martin Luther and the other reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were complex and multi-faceted. The focus was mainly on the doctrinal aspects of the Church as they related to pilgrimage, i.e. how the Church regulated the lives of contemporary man, and the many ethical and economic consequences, as pointed out above. To the reformers, Santiago de Compostela exemplified the problems associated with pilgrimage and the name of the city became a derogatory word.

Yet it is important to understand that it was not the pilgrimage *in itself* that was the problem for Martin Luther, but rather *the doctrine of the Church* and *the ethical challenges* associated with pilgrimage.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Luther argues that if one wants to go on a pilgrimage in order to see the world that would be fine.<sup>13</sup> As long as one does not go on pilgrimage in order to comply with the doctrine of the Church, as an expression of penance ordered by the Church, then it was no problem.<sup>14</sup> – And as long as those back at home do not suffer. As the reformers experienced that the traditional ways of understanding, and reasons for setting out on pilgrimages, lived on, that the praxis would not easily be reformed, they became increasingly more critical to pilgrimages. Yet, in a letter from 1529/30, Luther writes that he does not despise (“verachte”) pilgrimages, but rather that he loves to read and hear about pilgrim travels. Furthermore, he says that, although not necessary, he would personally very much like to go on a pilgrimage if he only could, which of course he could not.<sup>15</sup> At the Diet of Worms in 1521 he had been excommunicated by the Pope and condemned as an outlaw by the Emperor. Hence, leaving the territory of Saxony would easily result in him being arrested.

This differentiation in understanding pilgrimage that we find in Luther was lost in the ensuing decades and centuries among his followers. The one confessional writing of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that came to unite all Lutheran territories, and which is still today one of the confessional writings common to all Lutheran Churches, is the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*). Emperor Charles V of the

<sup>11</sup> «Was zum Teufel hab ich zu S. Jacob zu schaffen? sol ich meinen nechsten zu Rom suchen? Es sind nechste gnug bey und umb mich als weib, kinder und andere arme leute» WA 37, 530, 6-8 (*Predigten* 1533/34, Dominica XIII. post Trinitatis).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. WA 6, 437, 1-12.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. WA 6, 437, 38-438, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. WA 12, 157, 23-158,3.

<sup>15</sup> “Jch wuendsche aber, das solch und der gleichen buchlin euch wol gefallen, und das ewr hertz eine besser, seliger walfart drinnen finde, denn die jhenige, so jr zu Jerusalem etwa gethan habt, Nicht, das ich solch wallen verachte, Denn ich moecht selbs solche reise gern thun, und nu ich nicht mehr kan, hoere und lese ich doch gern davon, wie ich denn euch auch newlich mit lust so gern und vleissig zu hoeret” WA 31. I. 225b,30-. *Psalmenauslegungen* 1529/32.

Holy Roman Empire, called on a number of German rulers and free cities to explain their religious convictions at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. The goal of the emperor was to restore religious and political unity in the Holy Roman Empire. In the confession presented by the protestant German rulers and free cities, pilgrimage was also one of several issues that were criticized as being “childish and needless works.” It is the understanding of good works – i.e. the question of ethics – that lies at the centre of their argument. Instead of focusing on the needs of the neighbour in everyday life, as was the ethical concern of the reformers, the Roman Church had “urged certain childish and needless works; as, keeping of holidays, set fasts, fraternities, *pilgrimages*, worshiping of saints, the use of rosaries, monkery, and such alike things.”<sup>16</sup>

### *The role of pilgrimage in the Age of Confessionalization*

The rejection of Santiago on theological and ethical terms came to be a part of secular rule and hence an expression of the ensuing confessionalization. In understanding the European Reformations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and its implications, “confessionalization thesis”<sup>17</sup> has shed new light on the role of the territorial rulers. According to this thesis, it is too narrow to view the Reformation only in terms of theology or the history of religion, i.e. to understand what happened only through the development of dogma or religious culture. According to the confessionalization thesis the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century territorial rulers identified themselves closely with the forms of confessional Christianization that had developed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thus promoted them in their territories. The policy of promoting these forms of Christianity was closely connected with centralization and statebuilding as simultaneous processes. Hence, an alliance of secular and ecclesiastical authorities promoted stricter forms of religious and moral discipline. The thesis underscores how this alliance of secular and ecclesiastical authorities resulted in “social disciplining,” i.e. more obedient subjects, and

<sup>16</sup> See CHRISTIAN CLASSICS ETHEREAL LIBRARY, *Confessio Augustana* (article XX) [on line], available at < <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.iii.ii.html> > [Consulted on 01/02/2017].

<sup>17</sup> The “confessionalization thesis” was pioneered by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard from the mid-1980s. Heinz SCHILLING, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1981; Heinz SCHILLING, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1992; Heinz SCHILLING, “Confessional Europe,” in Tomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman and James D. Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, vol. 2, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995, pages 641-670; Heinz SCHILLING (ed.), *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland: Das Poroblem der ‘Zweiten Reformation’*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1986; Wolfgang REINHARD, “Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Early Modern State: a Reassessment”, *Catholic Historical Review*, 75 no. 3 (1989), pages 385-403; Wolfgang REINHARD and Heinz SCHILLING (eds.), *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, Gütersloh and Münster, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995; John M. HEADLEY, Hans J. HILLERBRAND and Anthony J. PAPADAS (eds.), *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700*, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate, 2004.

that the result of religious reform and state formation was lasting social change. The confessionalization took different forms, both Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran. Thus the “confessionalization thesis” show how reformation and Counter-Reformation are best understood as parallel movements, and not only as opposing forces.

What has not been sufficiently emphasized is how pilgrimage came to be an important aspect of confessionalization.

### *How pilgrimage was promoted in Roman Catholic areas*

The decline in pilgrimage in Europe is visible even prior to the Reformation. Many medieval pilgrimages that were in decline in the Roman Catholic areas were rekindled during the era of confessionalization, often as a way of relating the holy site to the Virgin Mary.<sup>18</sup> One example of how this happened is the pilgrimage to Trier in present-day Germany, which was once the capital of the Roman Empire and where, according to legend, St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, had brought the body of St. Matthias, the disciple that according to the Book of Acts in the Bible was elected in the place of Judas. This pilgrimage (German: *Wallfahrt*), which dates back to the Middle Ages, has been a living praxis since the rediscovery of the alleged St. Matthias relics in 1127, but was further strengthened during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the establishment of lay St. Matthias-brotherhoods as part of the Counter-Reformation.

New holy sites and places of pilgrimage were also created. Pilgrimage as a renewed praxis was not only associated with older pilgrim destinations and ancient relics, as in the case of Trier. Take, for an example, the establishment of a new pilgrimage destination in what is presently the town of Kevelaer in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany, on the border with the Netherlands. The story of Kevelaer is directly related to the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648), the confessional wars that raged in Europe for several decades, and a pious salesman called Hendrik Busman. Living in an area devastated by the war, Busman heard in 1641 the voice of the Virgin telling him to build her a chapel. Following this experience, his wife had a vision one night where she saw the picture of Our Blessed Lady of Luxemburg, a popular copper impression at the time. Busman managed to acquire such a print. Hence, a chapel was built and the engraving was given a prominent position to be venerated as a *Gnadenbild* (a miraculous image). The first procession and subsequent pilgrimages to Kevelaer started in 1643. Today, Kevelaer is visited by 800,000 pilgrims every year and is the most popular Roman Catholic pilgrimage destination in North-Western Europe.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Norbert OHLER, *Pilgerstab und Jakobsmuschel. Wallfahren in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Düsseldorf, Patmos, 2003.

These two examples show how pilgrimage came to be used in Roman Catholic areas during the age of confessionalization as a means to strengthen religious and cultural identity in times of unrest and war. In northern parts of Europe, i.e. in the areas that came to be Protestant, events went in the opposite direction: *pilgrimage was prohibited*.

#### *How pilgrimage was prohibited in Protestant areas*

In 1380, Norway was in union with Denmark, ruled from Copenhagen and dominated by the Danish political elite. The union lasted for more than 400 years until 1814, when Norway was ceded to Sweden after the Dano-Norwegian defeat in the Napoleonic wars. The young Danish prince Christian was present at the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Empire held in Worms in 1521, at a time when the Empire comprised Spain, with Emperor Charles V presiding. At the Diet, Martin Luther was challenged to renounce his teachings and critique of the Church, which Luther did not. The meeting with Martin Luther made a lasting impression on the young prince, who became King Christian III of Denmark and Norway in 1534. In the year 1537, the *Church Ordinance* (NO: “Kirkeordinansen”) was completed, a practical-theological document and guidebook describing how the new Evangelical-Lutheran Church should be organized.<sup>19</sup> – The Church Ordinance was also presented to and approved by Luther himself. The ordinance criticized the worship of saints, fasting, mass for the dead, celibacy *and pilgrimage*, all of which were considered Roman Catholic nonsense. Although there is no mention of actual pilgrimages or pilgrim destinations in the ordinance, Santiago is often referred to in theological writings from the time as a prominent example of an “erroneous praxis.” Focus should be on preaching the gospel in the vernacular tongue. Neither the Church Ordinance, nor any other relevant document, says anything about the death penalty with regard to pilgrimage, which is often claimed.<sup>20</sup>

The policy of the Lutheran King was to prevent Calvinists and Catholics from settling down in the kingdom. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, fear of the Jesuits led to stronger religious regulations after reports of Lutheran clergy being crypto-Catholics with known cases of Jesuits working “undercover” for the Counter-Reformation in certain areas of Norway.<sup>21</sup> – The Jesuits were a central part of the Counter-

<sup>19</sup> The original text was published in Latin in 1537, a Danish version was published in 1539.

<sup>20</sup> E.g.: The article by Daniel Schneider in Planet-Wissen, an internet-site developed by the National German Broadcasters (ARD) to promote knowledge and understanding, cf. Daniel SCHNEIDER, *Pilgern* [on line], available at < [http://www.planet-wissen.de/kultur\\_medien/religion/pilgern/](http://www.planet-wissen.de/kultur_medien/religion/pilgern/) > [Consulted on 01/02/2017].

<sup>21</sup> Of special interest here is the story of “Klosterlasse” (“Convent-Lawrence”), a Jesuit priest working undercover as a Lutheran minister fighting Lutheranism. See: Oskar GARSTEIN, *Klosterlasse: stormfuglen som ville gjenerobre Norden for katolisismen*, Oslo, Aschehoug, 1998. Another example dates from 1613, when four prominent Norwegian Lutheran priests were ostracized from Norway in the so-called Gjerpen-trial,

Reformation of the Roman Catholic church, their purpose as monastic order, founded in 1540, was to reform the Catholic church from within and to fight and counter the reformation movement, hence gaining a most negative reputation in protestant areas. Local pilgrimages continued among people also in modern times in certain areas. These were in particular related to churches located close to springs that according to popular beliefs were known to have healing powers, some related to St. Olav, so-called “St-Olav Springs”. – We know today that many of these springs were popular also in pre-Christian times. The role and meaning of these springs in Norway have to a lesser degree been studied. The first Lutheran bishops in Norway were not critical to the popular devotion and pilgrimages related to these springs, i.e. the belief in the healing powers of the water in the springs. There seemed to be rather an increase in the devotion related to the springs following the reformation. The popular focus on healing is also seen with regard to the famous sweating and healing cross in the small rural mountain village of Røldal in western Norway, where local pilgrimages were tolerated until mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. We know from their writings that the Lutheran priests considered this praxis a superstition, yet they allowed it to continue. The fact that relics in many occasions had been removed from the churches, and those left had lost their function and significance through the reformation, and that no Roman-Catholic priests were present to administer penitence and indulgences, leads to the conclusion that such popular beliefs and praxis’ were tolerated because they were not understood as dangerous to the crown and only understood as popular superstition among the Lutheran clergy, not as Crypto Catholicism.<sup>22</sup>

Generally, one can see how King Christian III and his successors wanted to treat religious issues with a certain caution, and he instructed the bishops likewise. A policy that managed to prevent parts of Denmark-Norway from turning into a “Scandinavian Ireland.” In the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 all parties recognized the principle that each prince would have the right to determine the religion of his own state, the options being Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism (the principle of *Cuius regio, eius religio*), a principle that was upheld in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years’ War. According to this principle, people living in principalities where their denomination was not the established church, were given the right to practice their faith in regulated ways. At times

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proof having been found that they had been members of an underground jesuite conspiracy aiming to infiltrate the Norwegian and overthrow the Norwegian government, cf. DEN KATOLSKKE KIRKE (the Roman Catholic Church in Norway), *Mot-reformasjon I Norge – katolsk motstand på 1600-tallet* [on line] available at < <http://www.katolsk.no/tro/tema/historie/artikler/mot-reformasjon-i-norge-katolsk-motstand-pa-1600-tallet> > [Consulted on 01/02/2017].

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Anne ERIKSEN, *Lovekirker i Norge etter reformasjonen*, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 1986; Olav BØ, *Heilag-Olav i norsk folketradisjon*, Oslo, Det norske samlaget, 1955; Øystein RIAN, *Vestfolds historie*, Tønsberg, Vestfold fylkeskommune, 1980.

religious groups could be forced to give up lands and leave the principality or territory, as happened to Catholics in Denmark-Norway.

Pilgrimage came to be a central aspect of the process of confessionalization. In Roman Catholic areas it was rekindled and promoted as a central aspect of Roman Catholic identity. Likewise, as a central aspect of Protestant identity, the practice of pilgrimage was banned in Protestant areas.

#### PRESENT-DAY PERSPECTIVES

The present revival of pilgrimage, i.e. the walking on foot for many days or several weeks to traditional historical pilgrim destinations in Christianity, as once practiced in the Middle Ages, started in Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in many ways with Santiago de Compostela as the driving force. The renewed interest in pilgrimage in Scandinavia that followed this European trend is also related to a renewed interest in saints and holy sites that began in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

##### *The renewed interest in saints and holy sites*

In Norway and Sweden there was a renewed interest in saints and holy sites in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The patron saints of Norway (St. Olav) and of Sweden (Sta. Birgitta), both their legends and holy sites, attracted a renewed interest. The focus on and understanding of history in the Romantic era is one way of understanding why this took place. It has further been convincingly argued that this renewal is best interpreted as a part of the processes of national identity formation and nation building that took place at that time, and less as an interest in saints and holy sites from a religious point of view.<sup>23</sup> Neither a simultaneously renewed interest in medieval theology relating to saints, rites or holy sites (this is only found among marginalized groups), nor a wider interest in or emphasis on continental historic pilgrim destinations *per se* can be documented at this time.

The interest in saints, holy sites, and gradually in pilgrimage in Scandinavia, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward is related to the question of national and historical identity. In Norway, St. Olav was promoted as a vital part of Norwegian history and identity. That the veneration of St. Olav and the practice of going on

<sup>23</sup> Ingemar LINDARÄNG, *Helgonbruk i moderniseringstider: Bruket av Birgitta och Olavstraditionerna i samband med minnesfirande i Sverige och Norge 1891-2005*, Linköping, Linköpings universitet, 2007 (Linköping Studies in Arts and Science, 392). Cf. Arne Bugge AMUNDSEN, "Naturvandring eller indre reise? Moderne norske pilegrimer i et ideologisk dobbeltlys", in Anne Eriksen, Jan Garnert, Torunn Selberg (eds.), *Historien inn på livet*, Oslo, Nordic Academic Press, 2002, pages 147-172.

pilgrimage to Nidaros/Trondheim had ceased long ago, and had been prohibited by the Danish-Norwegian king ruling Norway from Copenhagen, was popularly used in portraying the time of union between Denmark-Norway as a *night* lasting 400 years (NO: “400-års natten”). The story of St. Olav as a Norwegian hero was important for establishing a national Norwegian identity and freedom from Denmark.

One prominent example of that comes from the famous Norwegian author, and the first Norwegian Nobel laureate, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910). In 1882 and 1897 he gave a famous speeches celebrating and promoting the history and mythology of St. Olav, proclaiming that the objective of St. Olav had been to free the country from all foreign oppression. Hence the legacy of St. Olav was once more lifted up and promoted to establish a national Norwegian identity. In doing so, Bjørnson also indirectly criticized the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Norway for not giving sufficient room for the veneration of St. Olav as a medieval saint.<sup>24</sup>

The renewed interest in saints and holy sites as part of the national identity and nation building process in Scandinavia parallels in some ways the renewed focus on St. James in Santiago. The excavations in the cathedral of Santiago started in 1879 and led to the rediscovery of the tomb of St. James, which was confirmed by Pope Leo XIII in 1884 (cf. the papal bull *Omnipotens Deus*). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dictator Francisco Franco (1892-1975) promoted St. James as a Spanish national patron, giving specific attention to the legends from the *Reconquista* when St. James is depicted as a soldier of Christ (*Miles Christi*) and as the Moor Slayer (*Santiago Matamoros*).<sup>25</sup>

In both Spain and Norway these saints and their holy sites were used as part of national identity and the nation-building processes, which served to differentiate between “us and them.” Both the stories of St. Olav and St. James combine on one hand, nationalism and violence and on the other hand the peaceful and universal currents or tenets that have been used and promoted in different ways throughout history. Hence the promotion of St. Olav and St. James is a question of *memory policy* and constitutes an example of how our *cultural memory* works selectively.

According to the German researchers Jan and Aleida Assmann, common or collective understanding of our memory (memories) is present when a group shares a certain perception of history and how it is told and disseminated. When

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the master theses from University of Oslo of Arne Hveem ALSVIK, *Stiklestadmyten "...en propagandamagt, som selv det norske flag ikke har maken til." Fire scener i utviklingen av en nasjonal minnerite*, thesis of University Oslo, 2010 [on line], available at < [https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26625/ArneAlsvik\\_master.pdf?sequence=3](https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26625/ArneAlsvik_master.pdf?sequence=3) > [Consulted on: 01/02/2017].

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Robert PLÖTZ, “Auf den Spuren der Jakobspilger”, *Epos* 2 (2010), pages 28-33.

we study the history of cultural memory, we study the ways in which memories are transformed and revised throughout history. Actual memories are both personal and collective. Groups and persons may perceive them as one's own, but at the same time, they may be socially and culturally constructed: memories live in the community and from communication.

Memories can be revealed through a variety of cultural expressions. Memories are created and nursed by communication. "Wherever people join together in larger groups they generate a connective semantics, thereby producing forms of memory that are designed to stabilize a common identity and a point of view that can span several generations."<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is crucial to reflect upon which memories and what kinds of memories are transmitted at different times in history, in particular with regards to holy sites and saints. Which identities do these memories stabilize? What is their function today and what do they tell us?

#### CHANGES AT THE TURN OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – GENERAL REMARKS

The Norwegian society underwent great changes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as did Europe as a whole. Not only the two World Wars and the establishment of the EU, but also the new circumstances of living in a *globalized world* at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have redefined questions of both borders and of national and religious identity.

The standard of living in the last 50 years underwent a rise not previously seen in the history of Norway. Greater wealth for the individual Norwegian citizen has allowed for travel and thus seeing and experiencing the world in new ways. Package tours via charter airlines became popular in the 1960s, with growing popularity in the following decades, and allowed Norwegians to discover the Mediterranean countries, especially Spain and the islands of Majorca and Gran Canaria, and the Greek Isles. Seeing and experiencing not only a different climate and another cuisine, but also other ethnic, cultural and religious traditions, contributed in gradually creating a new openness for and acceptance of diversity among Norwegians. Simultaneously, there were important developments among the churches of Europe, where a new ecumenical interest and identity resulted in inter-confessional meetings and talks over traditional confessional borders, a process that began already in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Leaders of different confessions – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches – met and mutual agreements were gradually made. The establishment of the free movement of labour forces within Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the

<sup>26</sup> Jan ASSMANN, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2006, page 11.

growing challenge of refugees at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have contributed to redefining Norwegian society from a mono-cultural and mono-religious society into a multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

According to the confessionalization thesis, as seen above, the territorial rulers of the late-16<sup>th</sup> and early-17<sup>th</sup> centuries identified themselves closely with specific forms of confessional christianization and promoted them in their territories. We have also seen how the policy of promoting confessional christianization was closely connected with centralization and state building as simultaneous processes. National borders were also often religious borders. During the last centuries these borders have gradually softened and to some degree been challenged. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the aforementioned aspects of world wars, the establishment of the EU, the rise in living standard with the possibility to travel, and finally the ecumenical development among the churches of Europe, have gradually redefined borders, and both national and religious identity.

#### THE REDISCOVERY OF PILGRIMAGE AND OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

This greater backdrop is vital to understanding how Santiago, in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, became again an ideal in Norway— Santiago de Compostela was rediscovered as a pilgrimage destination.

##### *The birth of a renewed pilgrimage*

The first groups of pilgrims coming to Trondheim in modern times date back to the late 1950s when small groups of people came from Sweden travelling by bus. In the 1970s ministers of the cathedral in Trondheim reported people coming to the cathedral and describing themselves as pilgrims. The late dean of the cathedral recalls how they as protestant ministers were not well versed with pilgrimage, lacking knowledge both in theology and praxis.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Norwegians also started travelling to Santiago de Compostela in order to experience the modern phenomenon of pilgrimage. Inspired by having experienced the Camino and Santiago de Compostela, the book *In the pilgrim's footsteps* was published in 1992, a book that presented the mediaeval pilgrim routes in Norway for a Norwegian audience.<sup>28</sup> A few years later the author of the book, Mr. Eivind Luthen, founded the Norwegian St. James confraternity of Santiago pilgrims, inspiring and giving

<sup>27</sup> Knut ANDRESEN, *Olsok i Nidaros Domkirke: en historisk gjennomgang*, Trondheim, Tapir akademisk forl., 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Eivind LUTHEN, *I pilegrimens fotspor til Nidaros*, Oslo, J.W. Cappelens Forlag, 1992. See also the website of the Norwegian branch of St. James Confraternity, available at < <http://www.pilgrim.no/page.php?id=1367170979> > [Consulted 01/02/2017].

guidance to Norwegians considering to make a pilgrimage.<sup>29</sup> – The confraternity, under its passionate leader Mr. Luthen, came to be an important force promoting pilgrimages to people well into the first decade of the new millennium.

Gradually local church congregations organized pilgrim walks to Trondheim. Another factor was that Norway and Lillehammer hosted the Olympic Winter Games in 1994. When the Games were over the tourism industry began looking for other ways to make use of the available accommodation capacity. They came to focus on the old medieval pilgrim route through Gudbrandsdalen valley, the old inland route used by travellers in Norway throughout the centuries on their way from Oslo to Hamar and Trondheim, and thereby contributed to the renewal of the pilgrimage tradition of walking to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim.

Towards the end of the 1990s it was decided to signpost the route from Oslo through the Gudbrandsdal valley as well as the route from Sweden via Stiklestad, which both end up in Trondheim at a total distance of 930 km. The initiative came from people in county municipalities in collaboration with the bishop of Hamar (the first female bishop in the Church of Norway, Ms. Rosemarie Köhn), inspiring the Minister of Environmental Affairs in Norway, Mr. Thorbjørn Berntsen (Labour). The signposting of the first official pilgrim route was funded by public money and opened by the Norwegian Crown Prince Haakon in July 1997.

At the request from the Minister for Cultural and Church Affairs, Mr. Trond Giske (Labour), a report on how the tradition of pilgrimage could be developed and renewed in Norway was commissioned and submitted in 2008/09.<sup>30</sup> On one hand, the report suggested a large-scale economic investment on behalf of the state for pilgrimage, with continued signposting and the establishment of lodging and pilgrim centres – investments that to this day have only been partially realized. On the other hand, the report created both enthusiasm and a belief that it would be possible to rekindle the pilgrim traditions in Norway on a large scale. The report was inspired in particular by Santiago and gave vivid reports of present-day pilgrimages on the Camino. Experiences from Santiago showed the potential for business development related to pilgrim tourism in both rural and urban areas. These aspects have been important factors in triggering the government's focus on pilgrimage in Norway. The overarching vision of the report was that Trondheim in 2030 would be one of the most important pilgrim destinations in Europe. – The year of 2030 will be the 1000-year commemoration of the battle of Stiklestad, a small place north of Trondheim, where Olav Haraldsson was slain, canonized

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Lisbeth, MIKAELSSON, "Gjenfødelse på caminoen til Santiago de Compostela", *Din* 1-2 (2011), pages 94-108.

<sup>30</sup> THE GOVERNMENT OF NORWAY, *Rapporten "På livets vei. Pilegrimsmotivet - et nasjonalt utviklingsprosjekt"* [on line], available at <<https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumenter/pa-livets-vei-pilegrimsmotivet---et-nasj/id545507/>> [Consulted at 01/02/2017].

the following year and later venerated in the Nidaros/Trondheim cathedral as St. Olav. In the popular perception of the history of Norway the year of 1030 came to signify *the* year of christianization of Norway.

One of the many recommendations in the report, which is of special interest from a historical point of view, was the idea to establish a local Holy Year (“Anno Sancto”) in Nidaros. This recommendation is of special historical interest because the concept of a Holy Year is a theological concept deeply rooted in Medieval theology, and related to the teaching of plenary indulgences and belief in purgatory. The report shows no knowledge of this historical or theological basis and points only to the present-day Holy Year in Santiago when the number of pilgrims coming to the cathedral multiplies.<sup>31</sup> In the Norwegian report it was suggested that the first Holy Year in Trondheim could be celebrated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2012, suggesting that a realistic number of pilgrims coming to Trondheim that year would reach 1 million. Furthermore, the report pointed to the fact that the Camino received the status of “European cultural route” from *The Council of Europe* in 1987, becoming the first cultural route in Europe. The importance of working toward achieving a similar designation for the St. Olav Ways is stressed in the report, an effort that eventually succeeded in 2010.

After having received the report, the Minister of Cultural and Church Affairs, Mr. Giske, gave a speech in 2009 pointing out the further direction of the governmental work on pilgrimage in Norway. In this speech, he pinpoints the reasons why the Norwegian government is involved in pilgrimage. He points to the contemporary trends of *spirituality* (cf. Woodhead & Heelas below), *simplification* and *ecology*, as driving factors behind the present-day pilgrimage renaissance. From this point of view, he envisions the government’s work on pilgrimage to be part of an answer to these trends, underlining that commercial interests in pilgrimage are secondary.<sup>32</sup>

Only a small number of suggestions in the 2008/09-report were implemented. However, the most important undertaking has been the establishment of pilgrim centres and support for continuous signposting. In 2010, the government established five regional pilgrim centres along the path from Oslo to Trondheim, the same year that one succeeded in receiving the *European cultural route* status, as well as a national pilgrimage centre in Trondheim. The suggestion of making

<sup>31</sup> Whenever St. James’s day (25 July) falls on a Sunday, the cathedral declares a Holy or Jubilee Year according to mediaeval tradition. Depending on leap years, Holy Years occur in 5, 6 and 11 year intervals.

<sup>32</sup> “I don’t think it is possible – or even desirable – to make much money on pilgrimage.” / “Jeg tror ikke det er mulig – eller ønskelig – å tjene mye penger på pilegrimer.” Mr. Trond Giske in the 2009-speech, , available at < [http://www.regjeringen.no/nn/dep/kud/aktuelt/taler-og-artiklar/ministerens-taler-og-artikler/kultur-\\_og\\_kirkeminister\\_trond\\_giske/2009/strategi-for-pilegrimssatsingen.html?id=572452](http://www.regjeringen.no/nn/dep/kud/aktuelt/taler-og-artiklar/ministerens-taler-og-artikler/kultur-_og_kirkeminister_trond_giske/2009/strategi-for-pilegrimssatsingen.html?id=572452) > [Consulted at 01/02/2017]

a Holy Year in Trondheim 2012 was not acted upon. The suggested number of pilgrims was over optimistic; although the statistical data is poor, there is a growing number of pilgrims coming to Trondheim every year.

#### THE CONTINUED INTEREST OF THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT IN PILGRIMAGE

There are certain similarities to what happened in Spain with regard to the Norwegian government being involved in the renewal of pilgrimage. Not only taking part in promotion of pilgrimage, the Spanish government also took part in the establishment and running of *albergues* etc., i.e. through the municipalities. Yet, the situation in Norway is different from Spain and most other European countries in the fact that the government is deeply involved not only in the establishment but also the maintenance and further development of pilgrimage.

#### *What is the Norwegian government's overall strategy on pilgrimage?*

The government's highly anticipated strategy on pilgrimage was published in November 2012.<sup>33</sup> The strategy document points to the fact that pilgrimage is an important part of European cultural heritage and at the same time represents a unique opportunity to experience Norwegian nature, national heritage sites, culture, faith and people. Four areas are pointed to as central to the strategy: *Environment, Business, Church and Culture*. Included in these areas are the dissemination of history and culture, public health benefits, the establishment of businesses along the pilgrim's routes and the promotion of the St. Olav Ways as an attractive product for national and international tourists. Of special interest from a historical point of view is what is said under the heading "Church". At this point it is underscored that the revitalization of pilgrimage is also to contribute to the continuation of Christian faith and tradition as an important source of identity and belonging for people today. It is emphasized that this is of mutual ecumenical interest uniting all the Christian churches.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore it is underlined that this Christian heritage, which is also characterized as "St. Olav's Heritage" (No: *Olavsarven*), shall not have an exclusionary effect in how pilgrimage is promoted with regard to other beliefs and worldviews. The work in this regard is to be inclusive with regard to different interests and motivations.

<sup>33</sup> "Strategi for pilegrimssatsing. Etter at saken har vært drøftet i Regjeringskonferanse, har Fornyings-, administrasjons- og kirkedepartementet, Kulturdepartementet, Landbruks- og matdepartementet, Miljøverndepartementet og Nærings- og handelsdepartementet fastsatt denne felles statlige strategien for pilegrimssatsing. Oslo, november 2012" (Oslo, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> "Revitalisering av pilegrimvandringene skal gi bidrag til at kristen tro og tradisjon forblir viktige kilder for menneskers identitet og tilhørighet. Den norske kirke, sammen med Den katolske kirke og andre kristne trossamfunn, har en felles motivasjon for å engasjere seg i fornyelse av pilegrimstradisjonen."

In this way, the government of Norway has unfolded a strategy that is historically rooted, yet renewed and adapted to the multi-cultural and multi-religious society of present-day Norway. Pilgrimage is promoted as an inclusive praxis of identity formation, along cultural, historical and religious lines. Yet, we also see complex and potentially contradictory and conflict creating positions in the question which role economic interests and commercialisation should play in the area of pilgrimage, hence reflecting past lines of conflict from reformation times.

#### THE UNDERSTANDING OF PILGRIMAGE – PAST AND PRESENT PERSPECTIVES

The understanding of pilgrimage, in this article exemplified by the role of Santiago de Compostela, has changed dramatically through history from a Nordic perspective. From being an important place in western Christendom, a place of travel, longing and salvation, it came to be ridiculed and rejected by the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent age of confessionalization. When analysing the present-day opinions on pilgrimage, it is highly interesting to see that the current interest in Santiago does not parallel the one of the Middle Ages. The theological foundation of medieval pilgrimage, as criticized by the reformers, is hardly visible for today's pilgrims walking the Camino. Only a remnant of this history is visible to pilgrims coming to Santiago during a Holy Year when posters are put up in the pilgrims centre promising plenary indulgences under certain circumstances, just as in the Middle Ages. The same goes for the strong nationalistic aspects of St. James and Santiago as seen in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, aspects that are hardly visible today.

That the present-day phenomenon of pilgrimage differs from the Medieval one is also the conclusion of the current research on European practices of pilgrimage. The largest empirical study done on the Camino, published in 2012, shows clearly that the motives of present-day pilgrims have changed compared to the ones of the Medieval pilgrims<sup>35</sup>. Today the Camino is to a large extent a place for spiritual longing and searching. The reason why people set out on a pilgrimage is not primarily to reach the destination or the holy site, as in the Middle Ages, but rather to experience walking, being under way, as a process. Although the majority of pilgrims on the Camino are roman-catholic, the pilgrimage has become

<sup>35</sup> Markus GAMPER and Julia REUTER, "Pilgern als spirituelle Selbstfindung oder religiöse Pflicht? Empirische Befunde zur Pilgerpraxis auf dem Jakobsweg", in Anna Daniel, Frank Hillebrandt, Hans Wienold (eds.), *Doing Modernity – Doing Religion*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2012, page 205-231; Patrick HEISER and Christian KURRAT (eds.), *Pilgern gestern und heute. Soziologische Beiträge zur religiösen Praxis auf dem Jakobsweg*, Berlin, LIT-Verlag, 2012. The same tendencies are also discovered in the Swedish empirical study: Anna Davidsson BREMBORG, *Pilgrimsvandring på svenska*, Halmstad, Arcus Förlag, 2010.

a *transconfessional* phenomenon, to some degree even a phenomenon that exceeds systems of faiths and world-views. These significant research findings express the difference between current and historical pilgrimage practices.

In this article, we have argued that it is exactly this change in the phenomenon of pilgrimage that has allowed the renewed development of pilgrimage in Norway, and which has allowed Santiago to yet again become the ideal of what pilgrimage could be in a *positive* sense. From a critical historical perspective the suggestion of inventing a Holy Year in Trondheim seems more than peculiar: First, it would mean rekindling medieval theology in a postmodern Lutheran context. Second, only the Pope – and not the Norwegian government or tourist industry, not even the Church of Norway – can proclaim a Holy Year. The lack of understanding for these implications is best understood as an expression of the secularization of pilgrimage.

Today the practice of pilgrimage is to a large extent redefined. What was once a *practice of separation* or *differentiation*, between sinfulness, penance, piety, and salvation in the Middle Ages, between different confessional positions in the confessional era – and promoted by or prohibited by the rulers depending on whether they were Catholic or Protestant – is today promoted as practice of openness and unity, tolerance, respect for others, for freedom and solidarity. – The present-day practice of pilgrimage is not easily defined within traditional Medieval theological categories.

Attempts to rekindle traditional Medieval practices and interpretations of pilgrimage can, with contemporary typologies from the British researchers Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, be characterized as *religion of difference*. In a religion of difference, authority is attributed to something transcendent and external, e.g. in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Today's practice of pilgrimage can be characterized as a *spirituality of life* where divinity and authority are located within the self and the nature. This is documented by the latest empirical studies and with a corresponding typology from the same researchers<sup>36</sup>.

A third understanding of pilgrimage is explicitly articulated in the *Declaration of Santiago de Compostela* from 1987, the declaration that founded the *Program of Cultural Routes* of the Council of Europe:

*May the faith which has inspired pilgrims throughout history, uniting them in a common aspiration and transcending national differences and interests, inspire us today, and young people in particular, to*

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Linda WOODHEAD and Paul HEELAS, *Religion in Modern Times*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000.

*travel along these routes in order to build a society founded on tolerance, respect for others, freedom and solidarity*<sup>37</sup>

This understanding focuses on both the power of humans to change and uphold society and to faith as a motivation for working for the case of humanity. Here, we see traces of the third typology of religion found in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religions of Humanity*. Here authority and power are attributed to human beings and human goodness is appealed to.

The renewed interest in pilgrimage in Norway from the Norwegian state in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the opening of the St. Olav Ways and the following establishment of pilgrim centres, is best understood along identical lines: as a means of promoting a new identity marked by tolerance, respect for others, freedom and solidarity. Simultaneously this of course is a question of memory policy. “St. Olav’s Heritage” (No: *Olavsarven*) is likewise to be understood and interpreted along the lines of these ideals, thus becoming a meaningful ideal for a multi-cultural and multi-religious Norway. The violent and/or nationalistic aspects of St. Olav’s heritage are played down, as is the case with St. James as the Moor-Slayer in Santiago.

The present-day practice of pilgrimage echoes to some extent the Medieval one. Yet it is the postmodern man, living in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society in search of meaning, that undertakes the daunting task of setting out on a pilgrimage for several weeks. In this regard, the present-day phenomenon does not equal the phenomenon of the Middle Ages. And exactly this difference allows for Santiago to once again be an ideal of spiritual longing and praxis, also from a Norwegian perspective.

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