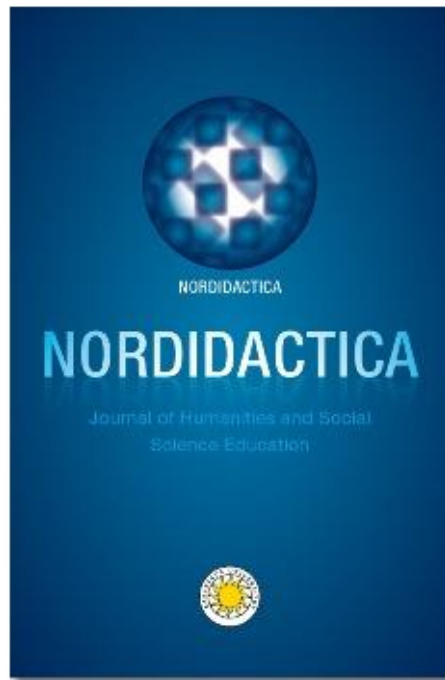


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Cultural Protestantism and Nordic Religious Education: An incision in the historical layers behind the Nordic welfare state model.

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Abstract: Is there a Nordic model for Religious Education? The article explores how Cultural Protestantism and Liberal Theology influenced the ways in which Religious Education developed in Sweden, Denmark and Norway from the late 19th century until the mid-20th century as part of the transformation of the relations between church and state. Situated between history of education and curriculum, church history and transnational welfare state history, the article focuses on three transnationally acting theologians, early historians and psychologists of religion and public debaters who involved themselves in the question of education, namely Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931), Edvard Lehmann (1862-1930) and Eivind Berggrav (1884-1959), who serve as prisms for the transnational historical analysis of what takes place between states and social fields. The article suggests that Nordic Cultural Protestantism contributed to a model of religious education which in complex ways combines secularization in the meaning of division of the church-state relation with sacralization of the state and its so-called culture.

KEYWORDS: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, CULTURAL PROTESTANTISM, LIBERAL THEOLOGY, THE NORDIC MODEL OF EDUCATION, HISTORY OF EDUCATION, CURRICULUM, TRANSNATIONAL AGENTS, WELFARE STATE HISTORY, CHURCH HISTORY, THEOLOGY

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A Nordic model of Religious Education?

The Nordic model – usually referring to a specific Nordic model of welfare state crafting – has often been described as a model with five exceptions: Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, the five states usually included in the predicate being each an exception (Christiansen et al., 2006; Hilson, 2008). The same can be said about the policies and institutional organization of religious education in the Nordic states. In Finland, for instance, the model is to some extent comparable to the one in Germany, where religion as a school subject is taught along confessional lines (but with a non-confessional content). On the other end of the spectrum, Sweden has not only an allegedly non-confessional model mandatory to all pupils, but has also been among the pioneers in drawing on comparative religion in the teaching of religion in schools (Ubani & Tirri, 2014; Osbeck & Skeie, 2014).

The analysis of these five countries' policies and institutional organization of religious education becomes all the more complicated when taking into consideration the intertwined histories of the Nordic states, for instance the question of colonial relations in 'the North', including the North Atlantic. Greenland, for example, was a colony of the Kingdom of Denmark for centuries and has to this day not achieved full independence, but merely so-called self-government, including a school curriculum of its own. Nevertheless, even before home rule (1979), where e.g. educational matters were 'taken home' ("hjemtaget"), and self-government (2009), the church- and school history and thus the history of religious instruction in Greenland differed in many aspects from that in Denmark. For instance it may be argued that the scientification movements in North European theology from especially the late 19th century onwards, e.g. Biblical Criticism which also influenced the development of the teaching of religion, did not have the same impact in a Greenlandic context until the 1940s at the earliest (Kjærgaard, 2010, p. 128; Kjærgaard, this issue). The five Nordic states in question furthermore have a history of being – in different ways – in colonial relations to each other. These historic relations complicate any ambition of diagnosing a model across the Nordic countries of how to handle religion in relation to schooling, with the teaching of religion as a central feature. The historic relations also, however, implicate intertwined histories of state, church and schooling across what is today the modern nation-states of Norden, 'the North', and thereby encourage such diagnosis. While maintaining an ambition of diagnosing and explaining common features, rather than sketching out an ideal typical model a possible path of inquiry could be to explore transnational connections and patterns of exchange in specific historical periods as a basis for considering and pointing to such common features. With this approach, 'The Nordic' and 'a Nordic model' becomes a question rather than a result.

Cultural Protestantism – a historical layer behind Nordic RE. Purpose and thesis

By means of a specific incision in the historical layers behind Nordic RE as it developed in the era of the welfare state during the 20th century, namely the influence of so-called Cultural Protestantism, this article takes a closer look at how it came to be that the ways in which especially three Nordic states, namely Denmark, Norway and Sweden, today organize the school subject of religion share important features. Common to the curricular policies on religion in these states is that religion, including Christianity, is to be taught according to academic knowledge – meaning objectively and non-confessionally – but simultaneously Christianity is framed as a central part of the culture and values of the nation (I will detail this later in the article). Without excluding other possible historical explanations and layers, this article suggests that the idea of Christianity as culture and value articulated in these curricular texts can be traced to the Cultural Protestant ideas of Christianity as culture and ethics and as such connected to the state. Such ideas became powerful as well as highly contested across Sweden, Denmark and Norway from especially 1900 onwards, for instance as part of the discussions on how to maintain and/or renew the relation between church and state.

Historically, Lutheran Christianity has occupied the position of state church in all three states, and still today the so-called Evangelical Lutheran People's Churches (or Folk Churches) constitute the biggest faith community in each of the countries (this is also the case in the other Nordic countries mentioned). As pointed to by e.g. Markkola and Naumann, since the reformation the Lutheran churches gradually integrated with the state, and in local communities the clergy represented both the church and the state (Markkola & Naumann, 2014); an integration which was increasingly questioned from the late 19th century with school as one of the battlefields.

Another common feature is that in Denmark, Norway and Sweden the Social Democratic Party has been the central political force during the 20th century, where the so-called Nordic welfare state model – which in the words of the British historian Mary Hilson comprised “between liberal capitalism and state communism” – was developed, including a state-financed educational system (Hilson, 2008, p. 19). As this article will point out, Social Democracy also played a central role in creating a ‘third way’ in the question of secularization, in the sense of separating state and church.

The article suggests that modern university theologians of Cultural Protestant affiliation – often with a political stance in young Conservatism and sometimes even harboring a fascination of fascism, but also cooperating with Social Democratic state crafters – played an important role in reform work concerning the role of religion in the school curriculum in the Nordic states from the late 19th and early 20th centuries up until WWII. My thesis is that an exploration of the Cultural Protestant reform ideas about religion, education and state can contribute to the understanding of the transformed relation between religion and state in the Nordic welfare states as such, and that the reform ideas and reform work on religious education formed an important part of that. An exploration of the Cultural Protestant impact on reforming Religious

Education can thus also contribute to painting a more detailed and precise picture of the impact of Lutheran practices and ideas in crafting the welfare state in its many layers: A need which historical welfare state scholarship, such as the work of Markkola and Stenius, has pointed to (Markkola, 2011, 2008; Stenius, 1997).

A transnational history of Nordic welfare state religious education. Methodological framework

The article draws on and is part of a research project which has been further developed within the framework of NordWel, Nordic Centre of Excellence: The Nordic Welfare State – Historical Foundations and Future Challenges.¹ A purpose of the NordWel program has been to explore the relation between forms of Lutheranism and the multiple historical layers behind the Nordic welfare state model. My work more specifically deals with the role of Cultural Protestantism in educational questions in the Nordic countries from the late 19th century up until the 1930s and its possible impact on the later development of welfare state institutions and mentalities. The stately instruction of religion – in international research most often called Religious Education regardless of the name of the national school subject(s) in which religion is at the center of the curriculum (Bråten, 2014) – is in this context an interesting case, where the borders between stately and churchly upbringing was intensely negotiated particularly from the late 19th century. The disciplinary field of the study is thus situated between transnational welfare state history, church- and theology history – and as such the history of ideas – and the history of curriculum. Methodologically, I draw on the Bernstein-inspired tradition of social curriculum history and the concept of recontextualization, where knowledge and social structure in the field of education are studied as relocated and transformed from other social fields. Curricular forms of knowledge and identities are understood as social categories, and the social transformation of knowledge categories, when transferred to the field of education, thus becomes central to the understanding of the social character of schooling and the role of the state and its school in relation to each other (Bernstein, 1990, pp. 165-218; 2000, pp. 41-63). It also means that knowledge comes to the fore when trying to grasp the social and historical character of schooling (Goodson, 1988; 1992; Lundgren, 1981).

In my application of the term, however, processes of recontextualization are not to be viewed as merely a matter of transfer and transformation between social and

¹ As such the article draws on my work sketched out in the following NordWel working papers: Buchardt, Mette (2013). Religion, education and social cohesion: Transformed and traveling Lutheranism in the emerging Nordic welfare states 1890s-1930s. In: M. Buchardt, P. Markkola & H. Valtonen (eds.). *Education, state and citizenship. A perspective in the Nordic Welfare State History. NordWel Studies in Historical Welfare State Research 4*, pp. 81-113 and Buchardt, M., Markkola, P. & Valtonen, H. Education and the making of the Nordic welfare states, *ibid.* pp. 7-31. About the objectives of NordWel: <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/nord-wel>.

societal fields with a certain relation to state bureaucracy, e.g. the academic field, the church field and the field of education, but also as a matter of transfer and transformation of forms of knowledge and strategies between states and different national contexts. Agents whose activities traverse these arenas become prisms in the methodology with which I choose to grasp these processes. The focus of the research project that this article draws on is on Nordic Cultural Protestant scholars involved in the questions of science, culture and education conceptualized as agents of recontextualization (Buchardt, 2013b; Kettunen, 2011; Kettunen & Petersen, 2011).

As prisms in this article I mainly use two collaborating Cultural Protestants, theologians and historians of religion: The Swedish scholar and later Archbishop Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931) and the Danish scholar Edvard Lehmann (1862-1930). Both became influential across the Nordic states, for instance in Norway – not least through their pupil, the Norwegian theologian, pedagogue and later bishop Eivind Berggrav (-Jensen) (1884-1959) – and both were involved in attempts to reform Religious Education.

Secondly, to widen the perspective, I draw in Eivind Berggrav, representing the second generation and thus the recontextualization and transformation of the Cultural Protestant legacy in a Norwegian as well as in a Nordic context. Berggrav became a central agent in terms of recontextualizing activity pedagogy in the Nordic, especially the Norwegian context, not least inspired by the work of Lehmann. He also contributed to reforming religious education through production of a new type of textbook: A bible history and a revised catechism. The case of Berggrav shows how the Cultural Protestant legacy was continued and integrated in the DNA of the modern Nordic school-state-church relation, but Berggrav's oeuvre also exemplifies how the Cultural Protestant and Liberal Theologian project was abandoned by its own pupils when the historical situation changed: Berggrav, for instance, distanced himself from Cultural Protestant bodies of ideas later in life, not least as a consequence of his experience with the National Socialist state during the German occupation of Norway 1940-45. Though the contributions of Berggrav are not the core content of this article, his life and work thus represent an important perspective with regard to the Cultural Protestant impact on education in 'the North'.² In this article the emphasis will be on his textbook production on Religious Education, more specifically his bible history (1934) which also displays a connection to the Danish context and another second-generation reformer, namely professor of Old Testament Professor Aage Bentzen who played a central role in implementing Biblical Criticism in the Danish school curriculum.

The source material consists of these agents' participations in reform work and public debate, their lectures, popular science books and articles, handbooks for

² About the role of the Cultural Protestants in the development of the field of education in 'the North': Buchardt, 2013b. Especially with regard to labor- and activity pedagogy in the Nordic context, Berggrav played a significant role. About e.g. Berggrav's attitude to WWI, see for instance Buchardt, 2014a.

teachers, textbooks, editorial work, applications for positions, etc. Their letters, especially the ones exchanged among them, are an important source for mapping their network and exchange.³

In order to answer the key research question – how Cultural Protestant theologians and their ideas influenced reform work concerning religious education – the source material is selected and processed in relation to two thematic and often overlapping sub-incisions: *The battles over whether or not the history of religion and Biblical Criticism should be included in the Danish and the Swedish school curriculum from 1890s-1930s*, where not least the Social Democrats were the political force that brought about change. And the *Cultural Protestant influence on school books for teaching religion and new biblical histories for school and home*. In light of this, the broader ideas of state, church and schooling among Cultural Protestant theologians will be discussed, as will their possible impact on the status of Christianity in stately instruction of religion and the changing relations between state and church, or perhaps rather state and religion in general.

The Nordic model of comprehensive education and the question of religion

The Social Democratic Party held office in Denmark, Norway and Sweden for the main part of the 20th century and has thus been a pivotal force in the governing of the Nordic states as such in the development of “the Nordic model”. Coming from a socialist workers’ movement in the Marxist tradition, Social Democracy during the first part of the 20th century gradually replaced class conflict with class cooperation,

³ Letters to Edvard Lehmann from friends and scientists, and letters from Edvard Lehmann to his wife Karen Lehmann, née Wiehe, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen (KB-CPH), see also: Alkjær, Bo (2001). *Iraniker, ireniker, ironiker. Lehmann i brevform*. In: E. Reenberg Sand & J. Podemann Sørensen (eds.). *Edvard Lehmann og religionshistorien. Et symposium ved fagets 100-års jubilæum i Danmark*. København: Institut for Religionshistorie, Københavns Universitet, pp. 89-105.

Letters to Nathan Söderblom from Edvard Lehmann, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek (UUB), see also: Runestam, Staffan (2004). *Nathan Söderbloms samling i Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek. En översikt*. In: S. Runestam, *Söderblomsstudier*, Studia Missionalia Svecana XCIV. Uppsala: Svenska Institutet for Missionsforskning, Uppsala Universitet, pp. 231-275.

Letters and papers after Eivind Berggrav(-Jensen) (EBa), Private Archive, Riksarkivet [National Archive], Oslo (RA-O) and papers regarding Eivind Berggrav (-Jensen), and in Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo [National Library], (NB-O).

My warm thanks and gratitude goes to historian of religion Bo Alkjær, the Royal Library of Copenhagen, for sharing his impressive overview of the material and his extensive knowledge with me. Moreover, I am indebted to his registration and collection of manuscripts related to Lehmann. Also my warm thanks goes to church- and welfare state historian Aud Tønnessen, Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo (Blindern), for encouraging me to add the study of Eivind Berggrav to my study of his mentors Söderblom and Lehmann and thus graciously inviting me into her own field of research, and for inviting me to Blindern as a visiting scholar in January 2013, making it possible for me to work with Berggrav’s papers at Riksarkivet in Oslo and much more.

and the Social Democratic parties simultaneously softened their attitude towards religion and church, thus moving away from a radical rejection of religion (Sejersted, 2011; Hilson, 2008). The Italian historian Paolo Borioni has e.g. shown how the Danish Social Democratic politician K. K. Steincke, who as a Minister of Social Affairs (social minister) was the architect behind the social reform in 1933, developed a more positive attitude towards Christianity and Christian philanthropy (Borioni, 2014).

The Nordic welfare state model which was crafted not least under Social Democratic rule can be characterized by its way of distributing universal social rights through state institutions while still maintaining a private sector. A central institution has been the educational system which from the late 19th century aimed at including the whole population in a comprehensive system free of charge from elementary to higher education level. The so-called Nordic model for a comprehensive school has often been defined by a goal of creating social mobility through education, and by an aim of schooling citizens into a mentality of equity and equal participation, suitable for the welfare state (Antikainen, 2006; Telhaug, Mediås & Aasen, 2006; Tjedvoll, 1998; Thuen, 2010; Esping-Andersen, 2005; Buchardt, Markkola & Valtonen, 2013).

Already from the late 19th century the so-called social question – how to handle poverty and social difference – became central in the development of this comprehensive model. However, questions of how to include different classes while still maintaining class difference often intertwined with questions about how to include cultural and religious difference while still maintaining social cohesion. Not least the question of the role of religion in the state and its school formed part of this discussion (Buchardt, 2013b).

In three of the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, this led to the development of unique but also complicated models for the secularization of the school system while religion was maintained as a formative force in developing citizenship and creating social cohesion. In this process, religious instruction became a central field of debate and intervention.

Around 1900, Denmark, Sweden and Norway all had a model where religious instruction according to the teaching of the evangelical Lutheran state churches was taught as a subject in primary and lower secondary school. Today, religion still forms part of curriculum, but in different ways in the three countries (Larsson, 2006; Bråten, 2009; Buchardt, [2006] 2011; 2014b; Osbeck & Skeie, 2014; Skeie & Bråten, 2014).

In Sweden, the school subject *Religionskunskap* (official translation: *Religion*) is no longer tied to a specific confession, but evangelical Lutheran Christianity is still a central part of curriculum.⁴ Norway has a similar model, but the school subject

⁴ Curriculum for “Grundskolan” *Religionskunskap* (official English translation: *Religion*): “Människor har i alla tider och alla samhällen försökt att förstå och förklara sina levnadsvillkor och de sociala sammanhang som de ingår i. Religioner och andra livsåskådningar är därför centrala inslag i den mänskliga kulturen” and “Undervisningen ska även ge kunskap om och förståelse för hur kristna traditioner har påverkat det svenska samhället och dess värderingar.” [http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amnen-och-](http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amnen-och)

retained Christianity as part of its name until 2008 when an international verdict contributed to its replacement by ‘religion.’⁵ In Denmark, the school subject is called *Kristendomskundskab* (official translation: *Christian Studies*).⁶ Like in the Nordic neighboring countries, world religions form part of curriculum, but evangelical Lutheran Christianity has kept the most prominent place.⁷

Common to the models is that religion, including Christianity, is to be taught according to academic knowledge – as objective and non-confessional – but simultaneously Christianity is framed as a central part of the culture and values of the nation, and as such not only something to learn *about*, but also as something *to be learned*. Despite criticism from especially conservative church circles and revivalist movements on the one hand, and Marxist and liberalist circles critical of religion on the other hand, this model has developed throughout the 20th century, with agents from the originally anti-religious Social Democratic parties as central political forces

[kurser/grundskoleutbildning/grundskola/religionskunskap](http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=SV&ar=1213&infotyp=24&skolform=11&id=3886&extraid=2087), accessed February 1, 2015. The previous curriculum, valid up until 2011, in addition contained wording such as “Ämnet bidrar till förståelse av traditioner och kulturer och ger därmed en grund för att bemöta främlingsfientlighet samt utvecklar elevernas känsla för tolerans” and “En förståelse av det svenska samhället och dess värderingar fördjupas genom kunskaper om de kristna traditioner som dominerat i Sverige.” <http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=SV&ar=1213&infotyp=24&skolform=11&id=3886&extraid=2087>, accessed August 13, 2013, now see <http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amnen-och-kurser/grundskoleutbildning/grundskola/grundskola2000/subjectkursinfo.htm?tos=GR2000&subjectCode=RE>, accessed February 1, 2015. About the wording ‘kunskap’, see the footnote on the Danish school subject below.

⁵ Curriculum for *Religion, livssyn og etikk* (official English translation: *Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics*) states about the teaching of Christianity in the school subject: “Hovedområdet *kristendom* omfatter kristendommen i historisk perspektiv og hvordan kristendommen blir forstått og praktisert i verden og i Norge i dag, Bibelen som kilde til kulturforståelse og tro og kristendommens betydning for samfunn og kultur.” <http://www.udir.no/kl06/RLE1-01/Hele/Hovedomraader>, accessed August 15, 2013, February 1, 2015.

⁶ In Danish, the school subject is called *Kristendomskundskab* with the official translation: *Christian Studies*, <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Primary-and-Lower-Secondary-Education/The-Folkeskole/Subjects-and-Curriculum>, accessed August 15, 2013, February 1, 2015. To translate with ‘studies’, however, is not unproblematic: “Kundskab”, similar to “kunskap” in the Swedish school subject, could also be directly translated as “knowledge about...”, but is closer to the German “-kunde”, (e.g. *Lebensgestaltung-Ethik-Religionskunde* in the German state Brandenburg, <http://www.mbjs.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php/120349>, accessed August 15, 2013, February 1, 2015), used about especially school subjects. In a rationalistic understanding, ‘kundskab’/‘kunskap’ – not least in a school context – implicates an instrumental perspective: knowledge being toolled or made useful. It might be worth a discussion whether ‘kundskab’/‘kunskap’ in the context of religion as an area of knowledge can be understood as independent of applied perspectives, opposite ‘studier’ (studies), which are often used about school subjects in English language contexts.

⁷ Namely as the so-called “main area of knowledge”, *Act on the Folkeskole of 1993 (The Danish Primary and Lower Secondary School)*. Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Education, 1994.

(Moberger, 1961, 1962; Bugge, 1979; Buchardt, 2013a; Oftestad, 1989; Harbo, 1989). What might be just as important to note is that academic theologians of Cultural Protestant affiliation have been highly engaged in this development. The latter contributed with developing new forms of Christianity made useful for ‘the culture’ by means of science and thus provided a scientification of religious knowledge. Also – as the Swedish and the Danish development from the late 19th century and up until the 1930s shows – they were either directly involved in political reform of religious education and/or their pupils were.

German Cultural Protestantism and the Nordic reception

Cultural Protestantism and Liberal Theology, also called Neo-Protestantism, originated from German universities and became – especially from the 1890s and up until the 1930s – an inspiration among university theologians in the Nordic countries. A central element was that Christianity should be understood as an ethical idea and a cultural phenomenon which was to form an active part of society. Christianity as ‘religion’ was to be culturalized and put to work for state and society, in for instance education.

Central resources in the Nordic reception were Biblical Criticism, the critical academic study and historization of biblical texts, and the new academic discipline History of Religion, later Comparative Religion. German ‘Christian socialism’ represented by figures such as church- and dogma historian Adolf Harnack and the priests and politicians Paul Göhre, Adolf Stöcker and Friedrich Naumann were also central sources of inspiration. This political movement was a social as well as a nationalist response to socialism and the lack of ability to handle the social question among the traditional right wing and the church. The movement also harbored political anti-semitism, represented by Stöcker and his wing, as well as its more politically liberal opponents, e.g. Naumann (Grane, 1980; Schjørring, 1980; Lanwerd, 2005; Skogar, 2000; 1993; Hammar, 1999; Hammar, 1972; Graf, 1989; 1990; Tønnessen, 2000).

In 1900 Edvard Lehmann published a Danish version of Adolf Harnack’s *Das Wesen des Christentums* (The Essence of Christianity), a series of lectures which became a landmark in the new theology; it was the same year as the original German version came out, and as Nathan Söderblom published a Swedish edition in Stockholm (Harnack, 1904).⁸ In his preface, Lehmann describes what he sees as “the Theology of our Time” and identifies Harnack – together with the Old Testament professor Julius Wellhausen and the church- and dogma historian Albrecht Ritschl – as “the Founder of this Movement” (Harnack, 1900, p. V). This meant that in Lehmann’s recontextualizing, Harnack’s dogma historian project, where historical studies become a central tool to reaching the goal of “endow[ing] Christianity with renewed growth and a new cultural legitimacy” (Harnack, 1900, p. VIII) was equated with the Biblical

⁸ First Swedish edition published in Stockholm 1900.

Criticism deriving from Wellhausen who questioned the basic assumptions of the historicity of the bible, for instance the assumptions of a direct relationship between the context of the origin of the Old Testament texts and the events they described. Historization of the bible as well as of church and dogma was thus seen as connected and as a way to make Christianity relevant to the modern human being and ‘the culture’, and to make it into culture.

As pointed to by for instance the Danish church historian Poul Juul Foss, in the German context the friction between the different wings of this new science-based⁹ cultural theology for the modern time and the modern human being became visible in not least the 1910s, for instance between Ritschl followers such as Harnack on the one hand and the so-called school of history of religion on the other hand (Foss, 1990; Nicholaisen, 1964). In the Nordic reception, the different types and schools in the Cultural Protestant wave seem to have been mixed and not all that clearly positioned in relation to each other, as is the case in the German context. More likely, in the Nordic context, it makes sense to look at how different agents – agents of recontextualizing of the new theology – draw on different elements in the Cultural Protestant landscape and put them to work as answers to concrete challenges in the their different national contexts in the North, but in cooperation with and parallel to one another.¹⁰ The involvement and interventions in the teaching of religion by Cultural Protestant scholars such as Lehmann and Söderblom and their pupils, the next generation, are examples of that.

Lehmann’s and Söderblom’s cooperation dates back to 1900, the year they both introduced Harnack’s lectures on the essence of Christianity to a Nordic audience, and where Lehmann was appointed reader in the History of Religion at University of Copenhagen. The year after, Söderblom defended his doctoral dissertation and was appointed Professor in Theologian Prenotions and Encyclopedia in Uppsala, covering what today would be called history of religion as well as dogmatics/dogmatic theology and the philosophy of religion. They were thus both pioneers in the discipline of comparative religion and are widely recognized as such (Reenberg Sand & Podemann Sørensen, 2001; Sharpe, 1990). Lehmann’s and Söderblom’s relation began with an extensive exchange of letters and developed into a friendship as well as to a partnership covering academic as well as social and cultural issues, a relationship they maintained until Lehmann’s death in 1930. Individually and together they had a large international network of actors from the young and upcoming discipline of comparative religion and the new theology. Adolf Harnack was for instance a central

⁹ ‘Science’ is my translation of ‘Wissenschaft’, ‘videnskab’, ‘vetenskap’, ‘vitenskap’, etc. – terms which in a German and Nordic context were and still are used about science as well as the arts. In the context of Cultural Protestantism and Liberal Theology it is important to stress that what was at stake was exactly a *scientification* and thus a rationalization of Christianity (and of theology) in order to make it relevant to modern man, culture and society.

¹⁰ I draw here on the Finnish historian and pioneer of transnational welfare state history, Pauli Kettunen’s conceptualization of welfare state strategies as a transnational construction of formulations of and answers to national challenges, e.g. Kettunen, 2011, pp. 16-40.

connection for both of them. Not least the dissemination and promotion of history of religion, not only as academic discipline but also as a way to reform other societal areas, e.g. education, became a central area of intervention and exchange.

Among the common projects of the two scholars is a related textbook production introducing history of religion in school, high school and higher education (e.g. Söderblom, 1912;¹¹ Lehmann, 1918). Also, they exchanged ideas of the question of Catechism vs. (religion-)historical source reading in Religious Education in school and how to pursue these ideas. A common idea – significant to Liberal Theology – was that great personalities (for instance Luther, Zoroaster) should become formative contents of schooling. History of religion, they thought, was no threat to Christianity: Christianity would in any case reveal itself as the morally sublime and the highest level of culture. Related to this, but with broader ambitions, was a common interest in reforming the teaching of religion in schools.

Söderblom and the Fehr-Fries circle: Reform work concerning the teaching of religion in Sweden

In the making of the school reform in Sweden in 1919, Nathan Söderblom, at time the Archbishop of Sweden, cooperated with the Social Democratic minister Värner Rydén, resulting in the abolition of the Catechism as the mandatory basis for instruction of religion. Moreover, a result was the introduction of the history of religion into the Religious Education curriculum in Sweden as the first country in ‘the North’. This meant a new and softer stance in the question of religion on the part of the Social Democrats who until then had argued for the removal of all confessional ties between school and church, but it also meant that the Archbishop of the Swedish state church became involved in softening, though not removing, the confessional boundaries between the church and the school of the state (Moberger, 1961, 1962; Salqvist, 1947; Skogar, 1999).

This was, however, not the first time Söderblom got involved in the question of religious education. Since the beginning of the 1890s, a Cultural Protestant and Liberal Theologian milieu around the Stockholm-based publishing series *I religiösa och kyrkliga frågor* (In Religious and Ecclesiastical Matters) had developed, where also the young Söderblom got involved. A key figure in the series was the Stockholm-based priest Frederik Fehr (1849-1895) who was inspired by the historically-oriented German Biblical Criticism. Fehr was a Ritschl follower and a personal connection of him and of Harnack (Skogar, 1993, p. 246). Despite the fact that neither Fehr nor his follower Samuel S. Fries (1867-1914), who continued the series after Fehr’s death, achieved a university position, they managed to produce a prolific amount of academic writings: In Fries’ case, this was within Old Testament studies where he was one of the first in Sweden to take up Wellhausen’s work. During the 1890s Nathan Söderblom also became a part of the circle and contributed extensively to the journal.

¹¹ Later Swedish editions in 1914 and 1919, Danish editions 1918, 1921.

In short, Fehr's reform ideas were to transfer his Ritschl-inspired pledge for 'a new reformation' to a field where it could reach the modern cultural human being. He claimed that Christian Ethics should be at the center of the taught curriculum instead of the dogma which distanced modern man from Christianity. Fehr unfolded this in *Undervisning i kristendomen i anslutning till Luthers lilla katekes* (Teaching of Christianity in connection with Luther's Small Catechism, 1894) which received a very positive review from Söderblom in *Pedagogisk tidskrift* (Journal of Pedagogy) (Söderblom, 1895, pp. 143-155). For Söderblom, this was the starting point of an involvement in what became a heated political struggle during the following decades (see also Söderblom, 1915). As was the case with Cultural Protestant and Liberal Theologian circles in Denmark, religious education became a field of investment for the Fehr-Fries circle. The Swedish historian of Theology Björn Skogar assesses that from the late 19th century and onwards, Fehr's ideas began to influence important agents and decision-makers, such as Fridtjuv Berg – the politically liberal MP and Ecclesiastic Minister (1905-1906 and 1911-1914) as well as a Teachers' Association leader and school teacher – and Värner Rydén, the school teacher and Social Democratic Ecclesiastic Minister (1917-1919) who became a main figure in the removal of Luther's Small Catechism from the curriculum in 1919 (Skogar, 1999, p. 307).

Publishing *Religionen och staten* (Religion and State) in 1918 was Söderblom's attempt to mediate the positions at stake in the debate leading up to the final decision in 1919 on whether or not to keep the Catechism as a part of the Religion curriculum in school. The book also represents Söderblom's approach to a modern relationship between religion and the state where he explicitly posits the school and its instruction in Christianity as the most important question, and as a task for the modern theologian to get involved in.

In the essay "Undervisningen i religion i statens skolor" (Religious instruction in the schools of the state) printed in *Religionen och staten* based on Söderblom's previous articles from newspapers, etc., academic theology (the experts of biblical studies and the scientific study of religion) is seen as harboring the expertise needed to craft a curriculum and an instruction book for the subject matter. At the same time he puts forward the needs and conditions of the children as a key criterion for curricular development and reform (Söderblom, 1918, pp. 17, 29, 39).

The essay and the articles behind it were written in relation to the battle around the status of the catechism in the Swedish school, where the main combatants and approaches included a religiously conservative state church approach wanting to keep Luther's Small Catechism as a part of the instruction and the Teachers' Association wanting to remove it with the main argument that it was not suitable for instruction of children. The latter approach found allies among the Social Democrat and Liberal MPs who wanted to abolish the confessional foundation of Religious Education. The landscape of positions also included Christian revivalist positions from outside the state church as well as radical Liberal Theologian approaches, including claims that religious education should be based on the history of religion (Thelin, 1981, pp. 64, 152ff; Moberger, 1962, pp. 161f.).

What makes Söderblom's answer in the debate all the more interesting, as the Swedish church historian Karin Moberger has shown, is that it became an important element in the final solution of the question, due to contact with the Social Democratic minister Värner Rydén who shifted from an almost anti-religious and anti-religious-education stance to the broader argument for a historical and scientific, but not anti-confessional, religious education. In final political decisions, the catechism was removed, but a historical as well as a religious school subject was retained (Moberger, 1962, pp. 178-189; Larsson, 2006, pp. 118-125; Johansson & Florin, 1995; Salqvist, 1947; Tegborg, 1969; Thelin, 1981).¹²

Söderblom based his solution on the notion that Christianity in a cultural and national sense is connected to the state, combined with a neo-Protestant interpretation of Christianity as a historical phenomenon – also with regards to revelation: An interpretation which draws on Ritschl's and Harnack's ideas. This historical approach to the teaching of Christianity sought to compromise between the majority of the state church's pledge for a dogma-based religious education with Luther's Small Catechism at the center and the socialist claim for a non-confessional and "propaganda-free" education (Moberger, 1962, p. 178). At the same time, it was directly in line with the ideas in the Fehr-Fries circle; ideas which were also at stake in the parallel environment in Copenhagen in the 1890s and 1900s.

Lehmann, Buhl and their pupils: Reform work concerning the teaching of religion in Denmark

In Denmark, reform work with similar features had been proposed since the late 1890s when Liberal Theologian scholars such as Old Testament scholar and proponent of Biblical Criticism Franz Buhl and his colleague and pupil J. C. Jacobsen had unsuccessfully tried to pave the way for implementing the results of Biblical Criticism in the teaching of religion (Nørr, 1979). Inspired by Welhausen, Buhl was a pioneer of Biblical Criticism in academic biblical studies in Denmark, challenging the traditional theologian readings of the bible as well as the approach developed in Pietism and the awakening movements.

During the 1900s, Edvard Lehmann became an active agent in this debate and cooperated with for instance Franz Buhl and his pupil Johannes Pedersen. A main goal was to replace the Catechism with biblical text readings and thereby introduce the results of Biblical Criticism into the school curriculum.¹³

This reform work included textbook production and lobby work, but did not gain parliamentary support until the Social Democracy came into office in the 1920s. It

¹² In the context of this paper I will leave out the discussions of a possible instruction book to either replace or support the teaching of Luther's Small Catechism; a process during which also Söderblom wrote a suggestion with Lehmann as a discussion partner (Söderblom, 1919).

¹³ Letters, Edvard Lehmann (KB-CPH); Letters to Nathan Söderblom from Edvard Lehmann (UUB); Nørr, 1979.

was thus not figures such as Buhl and Lehmann who carried the project through but their pupils; the next generation of science-oriented Biblical Criticism theologians. In 1933, a ground-breaking report, authored by a commission appointed by the Danish Social Democrat Minister of Education Frederik Borgbjerg, suggested the replacement of a confessional basis of the school subject with so-called “objective teaching”. The report became a central foundation of the later changes to the school subject that followed in 1937 and 1975.

The commission’s main architect of a new religious education was the Buhl pupil and Old Testament Professor Aage Bentzen (Bugge, 1968, 1979, pp. 61ff; Buchardt, [2006] 2011, pp. 232-245). In his framework, Christianity and the bible were conceptualized as part of the culture of the nation. This idea was indebted to his academic fathers; the work of the first generation of Liberal Theology and Cultural Protestantism in Denmark, for instance Buhl and his circle, something to which Bentzen explicitly refers (e.g. Bentzen, 1933; see also Buchardt, 2013a). The same circles, Lehmann was part of.

Cultural Protestantism and Liberal Theology in the Danish context, especially with regard to Biblical criticism, dates back to the late 19th century, but became visible through not least the foundation of *Ny theologisk Forening* (New theologian Association) in 1905, or, as it was also called, *Ny theologisk Forening for fri Forskning og positiv Kristendom* (New theologian Association for free Research and positive Christianity). Edvard Lehmann, later professor in Berlin and Lund, but at the time reader in the History of Religion in Copenhagen, was one of the founders and key public figures. “Fri Forskning og positiv Kristendom” (Free Research and positive Christianity) was also the name of Lehmann’s later published opening lecture (Lehmann, 1905). The formation of the association can be understood as a culmination of a liberal turn which had already been going on for decades around the Faculty of Theology in Copenhagen. Among the older supporters of the association was Frants Buhl.

In the 1900s endeavor to reform religious education, Lehmann used his contact to Söderblom who contributed information about the development and ongoing discussions on the subject in Sweden – information which Lehmann forwarded to high-ranking contacts within the Kultus Ministry (at the time the name for the Ministry of Education and church matters).¹⁴ This part of Lehmann’s efforts appears to have been futile.

A more concrete result was the publication of two books, one of them being a school and home bible. In one of the books, published in the publication series of *Ny theologisk Forening* from 1906, Lehmann spoke against the catechetic approach to religious education and stated that it made the Danish population unable to read the biblical texts by themselves. Lehmann argued that the need of changing this was not so much a question of Church and piety, but rather an effort for and a benefit to ‘the

¹⁴ Letters, Lehmann to Söderblom, December 23, 1906; February 7, 1908, March 13, 1908 (UUB).

culture'. The bible should "[...] not only be a popular book ("folkebog"), but a peoples' book ("folkenes bog"¹⁵) because it sets the destiny of a [specific/MB] people as a symbol for all the others [...]" Herein lay, he stated, its usefulness and usability, "[...] partly as a foundation, partly as a tool of the nurture." (Lehmann, 1906, pp. 11-12).

The other concrete result of the circle's efforts was Lehmann and Pedersen's 1909 publication of the so-called *Bibelbog for Skole og Hjem* (Bible book for school and home) with text selections and translations in accordance with the new scientific results. The previous work of Fehr also served as inspiration for this book.¹⁶ When Lehmann in 1912 was working out a German version of *Bibelbog for Skole og Hjem*, his co-editor on the project was Peter Petersen, one of the central figures of the German Reform pedagogy, who in the 1920s became an important point of reference to this movement in Denmark (Lehmann & Petersen 1912). Petersen had studied religion under Lehmann in Copenhagen, and the collaboration between Lehmann and Petersen continued with further publishing in the popular history of culture throughout the 1920s (Kluge, 1992, p. 75). The book was illustrated by Ephraim Lilien, an Art Nouveau graphic artist related to the Jugend movement, famous for his photographic portrait of Theodor Herzl, and part of Zionist circles (Finkelstein, 1998, p. 195). Petersen was also politically engaged, namely in Christlich-Sozialen Volksdienst (CSVD), a party on the Christian Social Right, from 1933 support party of and dissolved into the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP). It is a much contested matter in German Petersen scholarship whether Petersen's membership of the National Socialist Teachers Union should be interpreted as conviction or pragmatism, but there is no doubt that Petersen was to be found on the Christian Völkish right (Ortmeyer, 2009; Retter, 2009). What was at stake among the participants in the German version of the bible book project was in other words political-ideological investments which would seem non-compatible decades later, but this non-compatibility moved along distinctions that in the 1910s had not yet been clearly carved out. Quite the contrary, the bible book emerged as an equally Völkish, scientific and vitalist Modern project, also with regard to the aesthetic appearance in the form of not least Lilien's Jugend images.

In a letter to Lehmann in 1909, Söderblom gave high praise for the newly published Danish version of the bible book for its aim to "educate and direct an entire people." However, he made the point that he did not see Lehmann and his book, *Opdragelse til Arbejde* (Learning to Labor), which had also just been published in Stockholm, as pedagogy (Lehmann, 1909b). This was most likely meant as a compliment, since it was Söderblom's opinion that pedagogy had spoiled or confused the work with a Swedish equivalent to the *Bible Book*,¹⁷ but also remarkable since the book argued for an activity-oriented pedagogy, especially the benefit of manual labor

¹⁵ The Danish word for 'people' (folk) is used in the plural.

¹⁶ Letters, Lehmann to Söderblom, January 24, 1908; March 13, 1908 (UUB).

¹⁷ Letters, Söderblom to Lehmann, Uppsala, October 12, 1909 (KB-CPH).

in schooling. *Opdragelse til arbejde* was later published in new and extended editions in Danish, German, Finnish and Norwegian as well in Swedish language (Lehmann, 1909a; 1909b; 1910; 1914; 1918; 1920a; 1920b) and gave Lehmann a name as being a pedagogue as well: “A chief [hövding] for Nordic pedagogues,” the Old Testament scholar Knut Tallqvist called him in a newspaper article paving the way for Lehmann’s lecture tour in Helsinki and Turku/Åbo in 1920; Tallqvist’s laudatory words were hardly accurate, but that Lehmann himself sought recognition as a pedagogue is beyond doubt.

Cultural Protestantism and ideas of religion as culture and the state

Opdragelse til Arbejde may be viewed as Lehmann’s pedagogical principal work, but is also one out of many publications about pedagogy and schooling from his hand. In the case of Söderblom, the transformation of Christianity and religion in relation to culture, society and the state takes place especially when dealing with methods for teaching Christianity in school. In Lehmann’s educational writings the same transformative feature mainly unfolds in works with a more general scope, connected to other forms of education; not least in *Opdragelse til arbejde* where his labor- and activity pedagogy and his broader cultural vision of schooling, the state and social cohesion are unfolded. The main idea is the so-called “Gospel of labor” which Lehmann draws from the writings of Thomas Carlyle and transforms into a pedagogical concept for mass schooling (Lehmann, 1920c, pp. 56ff). The idea is that manual labor as a new gospel should be primary to academically oriented knowledge in school. Learning to labor is an ethical goal which should replace sheer academic goals and thus be a school contribution to civilizing the human into ‘the culture’. Forms of education and teaching methods suggested when translating this idea into schooling include practical work, woodwork and drawing as well as the reading of biblical texts instead of learning dogma.

Among other core elements of the framework are ideas from Herbert Spencer’s social Darwinist liberalism and scientism, Frederick W. Taylor’s “science of labor” and industrial pedagogy and the anarchist philosopher prince Pjotr Krapotkin’s idea about the lack of valuation of the labor of the hand as a societal problem. In contrast, references to e.g. Luther, Grundtvig or other central figures in a Danish Protestant context seem remarkably scarce (Lehmann, 1910, pp. 107-110; 1920b, pp. 6-8). Nevertheless, it is fair to say that when Lehmann transforms Christianity into culture and human activities, and thus labor, it resembles a Lutheran thinking of labor as vocation.¹⁸ In Lehmann’s Gospel of labor the culture of labor is to be learned, on the

¹⁸ Markkola’s research on gender and vocation in relation to the impact of Lutheranism and the emerging welfare state has served as an inspiration for this interpretation (Markkola, 2000a, 2000b, 2008, 2011).

one hand as an ethical goal and on the other hand as the only way to gradually move up in culture. Labor is what makes society cohesive as well as sacred.

Söderblom is more explicit in his references to Luther, but draws Luther into his educational thinking in a most concrete and pedagogizing manner: Luther should be included in the curriculum as an important figure in the history of religion “in our Christianity and cultural area.”¹⁹ In a concrete political sense this meant that the catechism could, whether it was kept as an instruction book or not, be part of religious education as a historical text. The benefit of such a solution should not only be seen as pragmatic, but as a recontextualization of central Liberal Theologian ideas: personalities and religious texts should be the key content in religious education in order to connect the historical dimension with the persons as ethical models. Making religion historical requires historical-critical science (e.g. Söderblom 1918, pp. 36ff). However, revelation as well as culture, nation and state are in the view of Söderblom embedded in historical science. In other words, religion as revelation and religion as a complex of culture, nation and state respectively are seen as interwoven. A Christianity revealed in the history and as such also embedded in culture, nation and state is foregrounded in Söderblom’s thoughts of religious education as the core of the state-church relation, whereas the church as an institution of dogmas and special interest claims is put in parentheses.

But what does it implicate to view Christianity as culture of the state and nation, a common feature for Lehmann and Söderblom? In the case of Söderblom, Religious Education is, as pointed out, central as a key element in an elaborated relation between church and state. The future importance of religion/Christianity was not as institution and dogma, but as culture of the state:

“This living religious organism [Christianity] is so interwoven with Swedish culture and the nation’s history that only ignorance or infatuation can see anything arbitrary in the fact that it and nothing else possesses a special relationship with the governance of the nation,” he states in *Religionen och staten* (Söderblom, 1918, p. 5).²⁰

The church becomes the nation’s inner core, but is, as institution, dissolved and subordinated to the will of the state (e.g. Söderblom, 1914). A parallel to this can be found in Lehmann’s pedagogical authorship, where, at its most radical points, the state is perceived as the new church:

In Lehmann’s educational work, religion as culture is, as we saw, linked to *labor culture* and *education into labor*. When Lehmann envisions a “Gospel of labor” as a pedagogical concept and strategy which aims at bringing the individual up in ‘the culture’, his main vision is to improve social cohesion through maintaining the division of labor (Buchardt, 2013a).

¹⁹ Quoted after Moberger, 1962, p. 172.

²⁰ Historical science in curriculum was therefore not a threat to Christianity, but rather a strengthening of its cultural role.

He furthermore envisions the state as a sacred body that can create cohesion between classes and finds the redemption of his ‘Gospel of labor’ in Mussolini’s “new Italy” where, he states, labor becomes the common substance in a society in which class contradictions are removed while (class) difference is preserved, and the state takes the form of “a church... which eventually grows together with the people and the bourgeoisie and gives the whole society its inner firmness” (Lehmann, 1928, p. 191).

The Cultural Protestant and Liberal Theologian idea of creating a modern gospel and making Christianity relevant to culture and society thus seems to dissolve Christianity into the state and ‘the culture’, but simultaneously a new and persistent space for Christianity is created in secularized society, namely for Christianity to function as culture. This space for Christianity can, among other places, be observed in the way the models for Religious Education were developed and formulated in the educational policies of Denmark, Norway and Sweden: A retooling that, as stated in the beginning of this article, is still ongoing. This duality – that Christianity is dissolved and yet revitalized as culture of state and nation – seems to be what made the ideas workable to Social Democrat reformers (e.g. Rydén, Sweden and Borgbjerg, Denmark).

It is in this context worth noticing and commenting on the complex political-ideological character of Söderblom’s and Lehmann’s oeuvre. Söderblom’s political basis was on the one hand in young national Conservatism. He was a central figure and inspiration in *Ungkyrkorörelsen* (‘Young church men’) which pledged for a people’s church (folkkyrko) and a particular Swedish Christianity under the motto “the Swedish people – a people of God” and for the Swedish church becoming a “culture church” (Tergel, 1969, 1974, 1998). This movement was grounded in young Conservatism, e.g. the conservative student association *Heimdal*, of which Söderblom was also a member. Söderblom was on the other hand connected to the Christian social movement. He published – and wrote about – the ‘left’ part of the German evangelical social movement, meaning in favor of figures like Naumann, Göhre and Harnack and against the more conservative and anti-semitic wing, of which Adolf Stoecker was a front figure (Naumann, 1903; Söderblom, 1897).²¹ From early on, Söderblom was also open to cooperation with the labor movement, something which was unusual in his young conservative circles at the time (e.g. Söderblom, 1892).

Lehmann politically turned more in the direction of social Conservatism and even right radicalism: Besides his Mussolini celebration, he was also connected to, fascinated by and drew inspiration from the Völkisch Liberal Theologian (later pro-National Socialism and neo-paganist) and novelist Gustav Frenssen and his philosophy of life, in which peasant culture and the agrarian life is celebrated as the antipode of the perverted life in the cities. In 1914 Lehmann dedicated the German version of *Opdragelse til arbejde* to Frenssen and called him “the friend of life”.

²¹ About Stoecker’s anti-semitic project, see e.g. Stoetzler, 2008.

Lehmann also, however, found inspiration in anarchist philosophers such as Prince Kropotkin, and thus drew on left-radical thoughts.

In both cases, Social Democrat ministers became the ones who embraced central parts of their ideas; for Söderblom it happened through the concrete cooperation with Verner Rydén (1919). With Lehmann, it was only through the second generation that the new theology became partly implemented under the Social Democrat Minister of Education Frederik Borgbjerg (1933-37); this delay should also be seen in light of the fact that the Social Democratic Party took office later in Denmark than in Sweden. The idea of Christianity as culture, partly indebted to at the time a young and modern right-wing ideology, was in other words established – state institution-wise – by not least Social Democratic ministers.

A second-generation perspective: Berggrav and textbook production in a Norwegian context

The Cultural Protestant legacy has not, however, been unchallenged. Though from the outset attacked by pietism and awakening circles as well as radical atheists, during the 1920s the inspiration from the dialectical and existential theology in Germany, which was less confident in progress and culture after WWI than the liberal project, reached the Nordic countries and became a critical voice speaking out against ‘the new theology’. The pupils of the Cultural Protestant generation not only brought forward the heritage, but also developed in opposition to the assumptions of their teachers. The new theology did not seem so new anymore. The Norwegian publicist, folk high school teacher, teachers college educator, priest and later Bishop Eivind Berggrav (-Jensen)²² (1884-1959) is one example of this. He became the co-editor of Thv. Klaveness’²³ journal *For Kirke og kultur* (For church and culture²⁴) in 1909 and published Lehmann and Söderblom, thus distributing ‘the new theology’ to a Nordic audience.

Berggrav considered Lehmann and later Söderblom among his mentors. Lehmann functioned as an academic supervisor to Berggrav, not least based on a common interest in history of religion and psychology of religion, particularly the pragmatism in the authorship of William James (an interest he also shared with Söderblom). Lehmann published James, and Berggrav used James’ work in his doctoral dissertation which also draws on the work of Lehmann and Söderblom. Lehmann is among other things quoted for an anti-institutional critique of the priesthood as often

²² Originally baptized Jensen, Berggrav later added the name Berggrav, and later again deleted the name Jensen.

²³ Klaveness’ relation to Norwegian Liberal Theology is complex. From being seen as a proponent, he later distanced himself from the liberals. *For Kirke og Kultur*, which he founded in 1894 together with Christopher Bruun, was a central organ in both cases. Berggrav approach the impact of Bruun and Klaveness in the Norwegian theology and church in Berggrav, 1946, pp. 7-39, 41-83.

²⁴ From 1919: *Kirke og Kultur* (Church and Culture).

“religious[ly] stagnating” whereas the figure of the prophet symbolizes “religious progress” (“religiøst fremstøt”). In Berggrav’s psychology of religion there is thus a hint of criticism of the church as institution (Berggrav, 1924, p. 218). But it was not least as a pedagogic author that Berggrav drew on and recontextualized Lehmann’s ideas in a Norwegian context. According to his biographer Gunnar Heiene, this brought him ahead of the Norwegian debate as one of the first to introduce thoughts from what was later to be known as reform pedagogy, which many saw as being in opposition to Christianity. Berggrav thought differently. In line with his ideas inspired by Lehmann, Berggrav saw the nation/nationalism as the sail on the ship, and Christianity as the wind (Heiene, 1992, p. 102; Berggrav-Jensen, 1912a, p. 533).²⁵

Not least during his years as a folk high school teacher at Eidsvold Folk Highschool (1909-1914), Berggrav worked on implementing an activity pedagogy, for which Lehmann was one of the sources, at the school as well as in public speaking and writing (Berggrav, 1913). The investment in activity pedagogy seems to be a persistent element in Berggrav’s educational thinking and practice. In the lecture notes of the theologian student Torkell Arnold Tande (later parish priest and MP for the Liberals of which Berggrav was also a member) from Berggrav’s lectures in Pedagogy in Practical Theology (most likely) in 1928, Lehmann’s ideas on activity pedagogy are thus referred to, explicitly as well as implicitly. “The failure of the school is that the skills [evnerne] are only [seen as] located in the brain,” it says in the notes, and then “drawing, woodwork, gymnastics” are noted, most likely to be understood as the solution to the problem of the school.²⁶ Again the church is subject to criticism when the Cultural Protestant pedagogue and psychologist voice of Berggrav is quoted by his student: “The church did not care much about gymnastics and woodwork (it was implemented in 1910, most likely it will not be a reality before 2010)” the notes state ironically.²⁷ For Berggrav as well as for Lehmann, woodwork, not least in Otto Salomon’s version as practiced in Nääs, was an object of high expectations, as a method to practice the Gospel of labor in the school institution. Berggrav also initiated the publication of Lehmann’s selected pedagogical works (“Ungdommens ret”, The prerogative of the Youth) in Norwegian – among them *Opdragelse til arbejde* in which woodwork plays a prominent role – that came out in Kristiania in 1920 (Lehmann, 1920a).²⁸

With regard to the teaching of Religion, Berggrav seemed slightly less engaged during the first parts of his career, but that was to change in 1934, when he – at the

²⁵ The metaphor after Lars Eskeland, (Berggrav-Jensen, 1912a, p. 533). About Edv. Lehmann: p. 520, see also (Berggrav-Jensen, 1912b).

²⁶ Note page 40, Eivind Berggrav: Lectures about Practical Theology, referred by mainly Torkell Arnold Tande during the 1920s, National Library, Oslo, Special collection (NB-O). It is my estimate that only the lecture in pedagogy is held by Berggrav, and that the year could very well be 1928 based on dates of another lecture in the notebook. The notes to Berggrav’s pedagogy lecture are altogether 49 handwritten note pages.

²⁷ Ibid. Note pages 2-3.

²⁸ Pocket book with so-called “study notes”, front page dated “Göteborg 1916”; Letters and papers after Eivind Berggrav, Private Archive, National Archive, Oslo (Box K0023).

time bishop in Hålogaland in Northern Norway – published a bible history: *Bibelhistorie for folkeskolen* in Oslo. This also echoed in Denmark, where Professor Aage Bentzen – at the time member of the commission that was about to pave the way for implementing Biblical Criticism in the Danish RE curriculum – reviewed it most positively.²⁹ The bible history was illustrated by Joakim Skovgaard’s graphics where vitalism meets inspiration from the Arts and Craft movement, the English counterpart to the German Jugend movement and the Danish Skønvirke of which Skovgaard also was part (Bach-Nielsen, 2006).³⁰ As a novelty, the history of Jesus was central to the selection and organization of the content, meaning that the Old Testament’s historical parts, undermined by Biblical Criticism – was not told as a chronological history in its own right, but in light of Jesus. According to Gunnar Heiene, Berggrav’s biographer, this could appeal to Pietist circles as well as it could promote a central Liberal Theologian proposition, but instead resulted in resistance of a magnitude that took Berggrav as well as the publishing house Gyldendal Norsk Forlag by surprise. Among the opponents was Karl Vold, the dean from Menighetsfakultetet (Directly translated: the Parish Faculty, today the translation is Norwegian School of Theology), an independent more orthodox flavored faculty of theology which was established in 1907 after split from the Theologian Faculty at University of Oslo due to conflicts with the Liberal Theologians. Karl Vold’s criticism targeted what he saw as a history of religion and humanizing tendency at the expense of a theocentric perspective. The book also elicited criticism from the Theologian Faculty as well as from teachers (Heiene, 1992, pp. 268-269). In *Norsk Skuleblad*, residing chaplain Eystien Poulsen noted that the prominence given to the history of Jesus did not play well when taking the children’s poor sense of chronology into account, meaning that the bible book would lead to misperceptions. For this reason he maintained an argument for keeping the Old Testament as chronological history (Poulsen, 1935, pp. 745-747). Nevertheless, in 1935 15 municipalities used the book which was published in new editions up until the 1960s (Heiene, 1992, pp. 270-271). Berggrav’s biographer in *Store Norske Leksikon* describes the Bible History as “widely used”.³¹

Among the proponents was as described Bentzen who praised Berggrav for openly using the result of Biblical Criticism and declared that Berggrav’s principles for the selection and creation of the bible history was, in light of this, almost identical to his own, e.g. that:

²⁹ Berggrav, 1934; Bentzen 1935. The copy of the book at the Royal Library in Copenhagen has belonged to the Buhl pupil J. C. Jacobsen, who as previously mentioned was part of the 1890s reform attempt with regard to implementing the result of biblical criticism in the religious education curriculum, and it contains some of his markings. This includes a reference the Bentzen’s article in *Folkeskolen*.

³⁰ Skovgaard’s illustrations in Berggrav’s bible history seem to have been selected from Skovgaard’s work *Bibelske Billeder* (1923-25), where the Grundtvigian Folk high school teacher and founder and head of Frederiksborg Højskole (Frederiksborg Folk High school, since 1937 Grundtvigs Højskole Frederiksborg), Holger Begstrup had authored the text that – so to say – illustrated the graphic images (Skovgaard 1923-25).

³¹ Eivind Berggrav. *Store Norske Leksikon*. https://snl.no/Eivind_Berggrav. Retrieved October 30, 2014.

“[o]nly as the book of the Revelation may the Bible history be the book of the elementary school. Our task is not to remove content of secondary significance; forms and words which often are characterized by their human and time-specific origin, but to allow God’s revelation to radiate so powerfully that all other things become the servants of this light.” (Bentzen, 1935, p.478)

Bentzen thus in Berggrav’s bible history found his own project mirrored: A combination of historization and thus ‘negative theology’ (something that the liberal project was often accused of in church circles, referring to critical science-based theology) and a positive sacralizing theology. Biblical Criticism and revelation were not opposites, since Biblical Criticism was a precondition for the modern human being’s potential access to revelation. Science becomes the servant of the sacred light, something which is supported by Skovgaard’s illustrations in which halos are placed on Jesus and even Peter (Buchardt, 2013a).

Similarly, lived life and functionality seem to be a criterion for selection of texts, which Bentzen finds support for in Berggrav’s work:

“[h]istorical details are less significant when they are solely historical and have not proven to contain anything important to Christian life through the experience of generations” (Bentzen, 1935, p. 478).

In 1932 the Norwegian bishops adopted Berggrav’s proposal that a new modern Catechism text which should serve as the authorized Catechism should be authored. Berggrav took the task upon himself, which should ensure that schools would use the same wordings and understanding, and thus clean up the Religious Education landscape in which many catechisms flourished (Heiene, 1992, pp. 271-272). Berggrav’s suggestion was circulated for comments in 1936 and was highly contested (Berggrav, 1936). Nevertheless, Berggrav’s catechism was sent out in 1939 and published in many editions, the latest in the 1960s.

In Berggrav’s motivation for his Catechism suggestion in 1936 he described his principles for the revision in a way that made Klaveness represent a radical liberal position, whereas he posited himself as a moderate pulling in the same direction, but only to some extent:

“If the book is to be placed on a school table in 1936, severed from time and context of the origin, severed from what at the time made every word living, many difficulties will occur, yes indeed, one will do injustice to Luther. Then one will put forward a mummy instead of a life. At the time I was horrified of Thv. Klaveness’ words: ‘We will never have a suitable children’s instruction of Christianity as long as we are saddled with Luther’s explanations on everything.’ – This judgment is still in my opinion much too categorical and basically incorrect. But I admit that it points to our responsibility vis-à-vis the way in which we present Luther’s book to our children” (Berggrav, 1936, p. 21).

Berggrav who from 1937 was the bishop of Oslo – thus in reality the primus inter pares, and as such part of (the top of) the church institution establishment – was

continuously by some considered radical and liberal. Professor O. Hallesby from Menighetsfakultetet was in 1937 cited in the Danish Christian daily *Kristeligt Dagblad* for a reminder of, as he phrased it, Berggrav's liberal past, which Berggrav never distanced himself from.³² Hallesby pointed to what he called Berggrav's tribute to "the biggest Liberal Theologian of the North, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom." Not only did Berggrav praise Söderblom as a person, but also his theology, Hallesby stated; most likely referring to Berggrav's book about Söderblom from 1931 following the death of Söderblom the same year (Berggrav, 1931).

The German occupation of Norway, followed by a dictatorship of Nasjonal Samling (Directly translated: National Gathering), the Norwegian National Socialist Party, nevertheless changed the picture a few years later, turning old enemies into allies. Not least the years of occupation contributed to Berggrav's explicitly critical attitude to the welfare state and the Social Democratic project. During the NS period, e.g. Berggrav and Hallesby came together to fight the NS attempt to implement new textbooks, bypassing the bishop's approval, and the NS attempt to use the school as tool in the National Socialist project. The pastor and dean (in Norwegian e.g. "prost") Sigmund Feyling, who after the war was convicted as a traitor for taking a leading role in the Ministry of Education and Culture under the NS regime, was one of their main counterparts.

As church- and welfare state historian Aud Tønnessen has shown, Berggrav in his post-WWII writings increasingly viewed the state as authoritarian (Tønnessen, 2000). The state, it had turned out, was the biggest threat after all, whereas the church institution proved able to serve as protection against totalitarianism. Opposite the state, Berggrav sees the church as well as the school and upbringing in general as so-called life groups ("livsgrupper"). He can thus be said to articulate an idea of civil society as the core content of the societal community, whereas the state should be minimal (Berggrav, 1945, e.g. pp. 139ff; Tønnessen, 2000; see also Heiene, 1991). To sum up, Berggrav's position was originally that he saw the relation between nation and church as interwoven and thus the state as unproblematic, whereas his pedagogical writings held a critical stance to the church. Later he moved into a position in which the idea of the state as the frame of society was explicitly abandoned, and replaced with the idea of 'life groups', including church and school, as independent and vital forces that held together society as a community. Interestingly, Christianity was by Berggrav still invested with an important task in relation to the state, namely the task of contributing to what he called the humanizing of the state:

"The representatives of Christianity can undoubtedly help pave the way (åpne veien). This does not rely on what they [the representatives/MB] can

³² Professor Ole Hallesby in *For Fattig og Rik*, 23.5. 1937, organ for Det norske lutherske Indremissionselskap (Norwegian Lutheran Inner Mission Society) of which Hallesby was the chairman, cited in NN, "Biskop Berggrav bliver modtaget forskelligt", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, May 24, 1937. The article in *Kristelig Dagblad* emphasize that the Inner mission of Oslo is slightly more positive to the appointment of Berggrav.

claim, but on what they can provide. It requires participation on a broad basis in societal life [samfunnsliv] and politics (without to exude into political Christian Pharisaism). It requires empathy in the historical and factual circumstances. But above all, it requires a powerful [kraftig] Christianity.” (Berggrav, 1945, p. 65).

Where political Christian involvements such as Christian political parties are rejected as “political Christian Pharisaism,” Berggrav’s ideas about the relation between state and Christianity still demand that Christianity engage ‘broadly’ and empathetically, but now based on the distinction that Christianity should be more divine (guddommeligg) and not humanized; instead the state should be humanized by Christianity. The Christian engagement in the state thus relies on distinctions between state and church in order for a Christian to be involved. The traces of Cultural Protestant ideas about disseminating Christianity into the culture are thus still visible. However, Berggrav has abandoned reason and thus the humanizing of Christianity. The divine is to be taken home to the Church if Christianity is to act in society.

Though Berggrav’s oeuvre can be said to have distributed and contributed to sustaining the Cultural Protestant ideas in not only a Norwegian, but also a Nordic context, his involvements also work the other way around: in a critique of the authoritarian elements in the modern celebration of state, and thus also a critique of Conservatism, Communism, Social Democracy as well as of National Socialism, and of Cultural Protestant ideas, as articulated by e.g. Lehmann and Söderblom.³³ This critique, however, was never explicitly directed against them.

Conclusion: The Cultural Protestant impact on secularization vs. sacralization through education

The question of how to teach religion in school has been an important part of transforming and reworking the state-church relations in the Nordic state. Here Cultural Protestantism, in the shape of circulating ideas as well as in the shape of concrete involvement of Cultural Protestant agents, was prominent primarily in the first half of the 20th century, but lingers on throughout the 20th century and up until today. The model for teaching religion in schools in Denmark, Norway and Sweden cannot be understood without addressing the relation between church and state as it developed in light of ideas of a social state and later a welfare state, and this relation is impossible to understand without addressing the question of the impact of Cultural Protestantism.

When considering this impact it is, however, important to consider the fact that not only concrete reform ideas of religion in schools are of importance, but also the broader ideas of Christianity and the state should be considered as part of shaping models for how to teach, and maybe not least for how to argue for the teaching of religion. In other words, the broader Cultural Protestant ideas, including how to make

³³ “It is naive to believe that the evil dates from 1933 or so.” (Berggrav, 1945, p. 13)

Christianity useful for the culture, should be considered, and here education in general was an important field of intervention. As was common for Cultural Protestants in the period, Lehmann's and Söderblom's educational thoughts share the implication that Christianity and religion are to be merged into state and society and thus to some extent be dissolved into the state body. In the late part of the oeuvre of their pupil Eivind Berggrav, this turns into a distinction between church as life and state as distinctly different from it, but in a framework where Christians nevertheless on a wide and empathetic basis should act upon the state. The Cultural Protestant legacy is thus contested, but can also be said to be sustained.

On the one hand, the Cultural Protestant involvement in education contributed to secularization in the sense of a growing division between state and church matters. Based on the analysis of the agents in this article, this is in various ways the case for what I have called the first generation of Cultural Protestantism as well as for the second generation. On the other hand, Cultural Protestants contributed to a transformed sacralization of the state and a renewed cultural relation between Christianity and the state.³⁴ Despite this element being highly contested, also from within, as in the case of Eivind Berggrav, this element seems to have been persistent. The culturalization of religion on which sacralization relies seems to be partly the basis for dividing church and state matters and partly a way to maintain religion as a resource for creating cohesion between citizens and the state body.

Cultural Protestantism in the Nordic states has thus, among other forces, contributed to the independence of modern schooling from the church institution. But it has also contributed to the fact that state schooling in the Nordic welfare states as they developed throughout the 20th century cannot be understood as independent from meanings and forms of knowledge from the religious field. As such it might make sense to speak of a Nordic model of secularization with religious education models at the center, developed with Cultural Protestant ideas as not the only, but nevertheless a pivotal force.

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³⁴ The secularization thesis has been challenged in other scholarly work concerned with religion, school and state; work with which my research is in dialogue and indebted to (e.g. Baader, 2005; Baker, 2009; Lindmark, 2011; Popkewitz, 2011; Reeh, 2006; 2009; Jacobsen, 2011; see also Buchardt 2013a).

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CULTURAL PROTESTANTISM AND NORDIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: AN INCISION IN THE HISTORICAL LAYERS BEHIND THE NORDIC WELFARE STATE MODEL

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