2 Preaching and teaching

The religious origins of Nordic teacher cultures

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One of the most obvious and historically far-reaching commonalities between the Nordic countries lies in their Lutheran heritage. The Reformation led to a unification of state and church, quite swiftly in the Danish–Norwegian kingdom, and more gradually in Sweden, where the church preserved a higher degree of autonomy (Thorkildsen, 1997).

An important expression of this Lutheran integration of state and church was the early rise of compulsory elementary education. In Denmark–Norway, this was introduced in 1739 by royal decree, reaching out in principle to every single child of the realm. In this sense, it was driven as a project of the absolutist state. The curriculum, however, was entirely religious in character from the beginning. The aim of elementary education was to prepare children for their compulsory confirmation into the church, and teachers' instruction, as well as children's knowledge, was closely monitored by ministers.

In this chapter, I will argue that Nordic elementary school teachers, who started out as the ministers' humble subordinates, developed their vocational identity in close interaction with that of the pastorate. The process whereby they, in a sense, emancipated themselves from clerical dominance and came of age as a self-conscious occupation group in the late nineteenth century could alternatively be described as the counterpart to the ministry's concurrent transformation from officialdom to a special kind of profession. A core claim is that there is historical as well as structural continuity from the role of the Lutheran minister to that of the elementary school teacher, and that this continuity is still traceable in today's Nordic teacher cultures, albeit in a somewhat indirect manner.

Nordic educational history has often been told as a grand narrative about how compulsory elementary education was progressively nationalised, democratised, and secularised, as clerical control of the school was pushed back, and new civic and national elements were included in the curriculum. According to this paradigm, teachers came of age as a self-conscious occupation group as part of this emancipation from clerical dominance.

This narrative is in one way indisputable: secularisation, in the sense of reduced clerical influence on elementary schooling, its curriculum, and its teachers, is a well-established fact, verifiable by a succession of national educational laws and curricular and teacher-training reforms from the second half of the nineteenth century into the post-Second-World-War era. However, this linear trend of

secularisation is less apparent if we turn our attention to teachers' vocational practices, self-conceptions, and ideologies. It is primarily at this level that I will search for the enduring religious sources of the 'Nordic model of education'. The focal question of this chapter can thus be formulated as follows: to what extent, and in what sense, has Nordic elementary education been enduringly infused by a religious or 'pastoral' dimension through the practices, ideals, and self-definitions of the teaching profession?

The chapter focuses on the Danish–Norwegian kingdom and its successor states of Denmark and Norway, whose histories of primary education are mostly strikingly parallel, but also, in interesting ways, subtly different. Sweden will be brought in more cursorily as a related, yet partly contrasting case.

Preaching as teaching: ambiguities of Lutheran pastoral power

As a heuristic framework for this analysis, I will draw on Michel Foucault's reflections on pastoral power and the genealogy of modern governmentality in his 1977–1978 lectures on *Security, Territory, Population* (Foucault, 2007). Here, Foucault laid out a new approach to a general problem in European historiography: the interaction between religion and politics from the mediaeval to the modern era. Instead of studying the changing relationship between church and state, he focused on the interplay of *pastorate* and *government*. The pastorate was a distinctive method of governing other people, radically different from classical notions of political power based on law or contract. Foucault sought the origins of the pastorate in ancient religious images of the shepherd and his flock, and traced variations of this leitmotif from pre-antiquity up to the early modern period. A core claim was that pastoral and political forms of power had become increasingly intertwined since the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, giving rise to qualitatively new forms of 'governmentality'.

Foucault's shift of perspective from church/state to pastorate/government has inspired the change of perspective I propose in this chapter, from approaching the secularisation of Nordic elementary education in terms of a loosening of institutionalised clerical control towards studying the (latently) religious dimension of teaching.

Foucault's reflections on the pastorate and modern governmentality are pertinent to my analysis for at least three reasons. First, the close affinity of pastoral power to teaching, also noted by Foucault (2007, p. 180), is particularly striking in Protestantism. While Foucault's notion of pastoral power tends to centre on the confession or penance, reflecting a special affinity with the Catholic side of Christendom (*ibid.*, pp. 171, 182f), Protestantism defines the minister first and foremost as a preacher of the Word and teacher of the correct doctrine. The roles of pastor and subject are thereby in a sense reversed: whereas Foucault's pastor cautiously attends to the secret truth revealed by the confessor, the Protestant minister is, rather, the truth-teller to whom parishioners must listen carefully, both as a congregation and as individual subjects (Tilli, 2019, p. 115). This kinship between minister and teacher, between *preaching and teaching*, is a basic precondition of Nordic school traditions and teacher cultures.

Second, Foucault's analysis of how pastoral and political power combined in a new governmentality provides a key to understanding how spiritual and worldly concerns interacted in the rise and development of elementary education in the Nordic countries. This intertwining of pastoral and political rationalities and practices was a crucial part of the context in which elementary education emerged and developed.

Third, compulsory elementary teaching offers a striking illustration of some of the ambiguities of pastoral power identified by Foucault: it is a beneficial power that cares both for the individual and the 'flock' (or class). It can at least partly be described as 'spiritual guidance' or a 'conduct of conduct' (ibid., pp. 126ff.; Foucault, 1982). This is a form of power that subjects pupils to strict control and discipline while at the same time transforming them into self-reflective, self-regulating subjects. Although the means and ends of teaching have changed radically, this dual nature of the teacher's assignment is still with us.

This ambiguity is particularly profound, and has a distinctive form, in the Lutheran tradition. On the one hand, Luther's doctrines of the two kingdoms and of the three estates were used to justify the subject's duty to obey all authorities and unconditionally accept its place in a God-given social order. On the other hand, the Lutheran principles of *Sola Scriptura*, of justification by faith alone, and of the universal priesthood, accentuated the equality of all believers before God, the immediate and personal nature of divine revelation, and all believers' freedom and responsibility to disseminate the Word. As argued by Finnish historian of religion Elisa Heinämäki (2017), this ambiguity has provided Lutheranism with a strong capacity to both discipline and control the individual in depth, and to constitute it as a responsible, self-reflective subject with an irrepressible inner conscience. This dual character of the Lutheran tradition comes strikingly to the fore in the history of Nordic elementary education.

Lutheran orthodoxy, state pietism, and the rise of compulsory schooling

The historical correlation between Lutheranism and the early introduction of state compulsory schooling is widely recognised. The Lutheran Reformation has been characterised as 'a quintessentially educational movement' (Witte, 2002, p. 258). Born within the university, it led to a series of educational reforms from the university down to the teaching of elementary school children. While seeing education as essential to the preservation and dissemination of the Law and Gospel, Luther insisted that the magistrate should be responsible for establishing and maintaining schools. This principle, based on the doctrine of the two kingdoms, represented an upheaval from Catholic educational culture (ibid., pp. 265ff).

While actually a protracted process involving the state and church as well as landowners and local communities, the rise of mandatory elementary schooling in the kingdom of Denmark–Norway is conventionally dated to 1739, when the rural commoners' schools were enacted.¹ This was an immediate consequence of a royal decree three years earlier, which had made confirmation a compulsory *rite de passage* to adulthood for all subjects of the realm. The schools' task was to instil in

children the religious knowledge required to pass the minister's examination before the altar. The curriculum was therefore completely dominated by catechesis, which required elementary reading skills (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003, pp. 39ff).

The commoners' schools were direct extensions of the church's religious teaching of the people and have rightly been called 'the church's daughter'. However, compulsory confirmation and schooling were introduced by the state, and the clergy that controlled the schools and their teachers was its largest and most well-educated officialdom. It is therefore difficult to separate clerical drives for mass elementary education from those of the state. The motives were complex and have been subject to different interpretations. While many scholars have emphasised the Lutheran principle that the king is obliged to care for his subjects' salvation, and particularly the Pietist demand for a deeper, more personally acquired faith, others have pointed to more worldly concerns, such as the Danish state's need to improve the quality and morale of its soldiers in order to strengthen its position vis-à-vis its arch-enemy Sweden (Reeh, 2011; Appel and Fink-Jensen, 2013, pp. 393–396).

However, there is little reason to believe that the king and his officialdom saw religion *merely* as a useful instrument for producing an obedient population. It was understood rather as the very foundation of the kingdom, and the acquisition of a correct and detailed interpretation of the official Evangelical Lutheran confession was therefore the relevant form of 'civic' education (*ibid.*, pp. 87ff). The paramount importance of religious teaching was reflected in Lutheran terminology. In Luther's doctrine of the three estates, the clergy constituted the *Lehrstand* (which could mean both the learned estate and the teaching estate), and from the 1770s onwards, the label *folk teacher* was used synonymously with minister in both Germany and Scandinavia, reflecting the rationalist ideal of the minister as a popular disseminator of both religious and scientific knowledge (Siegert, 1999, p. 62).

With the rise of compulsory education, a new, subservient echelon of the *Lehrstand* emerged: the elementary school teachers. In Denmark, teaching was often assigned to the *degn* (sacristan) of the parish. In the central parts of the country, this was sometimes a theology student or even a theological candidate waiting for a vacant pastorate. But elsewhere in the kingdom, notably in Norway, teachers were mostly recruited from the lower strata of peasant society. Here ambulatory schools, with teachers moving between farms or hamlets, dominated. These humble teachers, as well as their more educated colleagues in central Denmark, were in a quite literal sense, the ministers' subservient assistants (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003, pp. 36–52; Appel and Fink-Jensen, 2013, pp. 295–329).

In Sweden, elementary education was organised in a rather different way. The Church Act of 1686 obliged every father to teach his household to read the most basic texts of the church such as the catechism, postil, and hymnal. The parish minister would visit every household once a year to control its members' knowledge and reading skills through the so-called home catechesis (*husförhör*). While organised schooling developed gradually, a universal elementary school system was not introduced until 1842 (Westberg, 2019). The Swedish minister thus remained in a very literal sense a folk teacher, whose authority and power penetrated into every single home in his parish.

The Swedish educational scheme was created in the age of orthodox Lutheranism and remained relatively untouched by the later Pietism, which was counteracted by the Swedish church and state. The Danish–Norwegian commoners’ school, on the other hand, was inscribed with tensions between the orthodox legacy and new Pietist currents from the outset. The schism between orthodoxy and Pietism was pedagogically significant; it had repercussions on *what* all subjects should learn about religion, and not least on *how* this knowledge should be acquired and brought to bear on both their spiritual and worldly life.

Orthodox Lutheranism, which remained the hegemonic theology and worldview of the Danish and Swedish kingdoms for almost two centuries after the Reformation, was the expression of what Heinz Schilling has called confessionalisation: the systematic efforts by the church and state to obtain reverent obedience to one authoritative interpretation of the Christian faith throughout a given principality (Schilling, 1988). A primary instrument of confessionalisation, apart from preaching, was catechesis: the meticulous inculcation of authoritative texts explaining the essence of the Lutheran confession in a form that common people, notably children, were supposed to understand (Appel and Fink-Jensen, 2013, pp. 89ff).

Orthodox religious teaching was strongly disciplinary in nature. It centred on the duty to submit and obey, emphasising God’s law rather than the Gospel and grace. Submission to the law was not enough, however. Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone implied that the subject would have to interiorise the Word, which called for ‘comprehensive soul-seeking in order to align the truth of the text with the truth of the self’. Since such soul-seeking was not observable from the outside, the subject was left with an inner conscience that was impervious to others (Tilli, 2019, pp. 123ff). The Lutheran Reformation called for a deep subjective acquisition of Christianity, and has therefore been characterised as a ‘Christianisation-in-depth’ (Korsgaard, 2004, p. 64).

It was this inherent tension in Lutheranism, between external policing and the inner acquisition of religious truth, that would give rise to Pietism, a collective term for a variety of currents that shared the premise that Lutheranism had lost contact with the spirit of the Reformation and needed to be reinvigorated. Genuine Christian faith had to strike the heart and soul, inciting through repentance and awakening the believer to convert to a life of piety. Pietism thus emphasised the subjective dimension of faith, which would express itself in a pious life. The church should, accordingly, be a living community of true believers, rather than a clerical hierarchy administering a set of approved theological doctrines (Gierl, 2014).

A blend of orthodoxy and Pietism permeated the curriculum and pedagogy of the Danish–Norwegian commoners’ school that was enacted in 1739, a combination that would prove particularly resilient in the school and church life of Norway. Catechesis, in the sense of rote learning of authoritative answers to a vast number of religious questions, became the hegemonic form of elementary teaching. Bishop Erik Pontoppidan’s explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism, *Truth unto Godliness* (1737), with 759 questions and answers, was written on the king’s order and made up the core elementary school curriculum for generations of pupils. In Denmark, it was replaced in 1794 by a more rationalistic explanation.

In Norway, however, it continued to shape religious education for almost 150 years (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003, pp. 43, 66).

Compared to Philipp Jacob Spener's *Einfältige Erklärung der christlichen Lehre* (1677), a seminal text of German Pietism, the authorised Danish catechism played down the doctrine of universal priesthood as well as the hope to improve this world through pious practice. Pontoppidan's focal message, concludes Danish church historian Kurt E. Larsen (2019), was penitence and religious inner-directedness within the framework of the State Church. Thus, elementary education in Denmark–Norway long remained influenced by the orthodox heritage, with its distinctive understanding of human nature, social structure, and the role of the pastorate. The subjectifying and activist potential of Pietism was thereby subdued.

Pietism could nonetheless be seen as a mediating link between the old orthodox and absolutist order and the new dynamic world that emerged in the late eighteenth century of the Enlightenment, liberalism and, eventually, democratisation. Educational historian Ingrid Markussen has analysed Danish discussions about school reforms in the 1780s and 1790s, which led to the seven-year compulsory School Acts of 1814, as part of a wider cameralist programme: to foster the productive energies of society by stimulating and steering the industriousness of the population (Markussen, 1995, p. 62). She points to the affinities between Pietism and cameralism, emphasising, in particular, the Pietist principle that the king had a duty to care for his subjects' *Glückseligkeit*, a concept that covered both welfare in this world and spiritual salvation (ibid., p. 78f). While not referring to Foucault, Markussen analyses the interplay of religious and governmental ideas in a manner strikingly akin to his reflections on pastoral power and the rise of 'biopolitics', of which eighteenth-century cameralism and *Polizeiwissenschaften* constituted the paramount examples (Foucault, 2007, pp. 318 ff). Cameralism was a principle of governing aimed at maximising the state's resources and keeping it in good order by regulating and guiding each subject as well as the population at large. Religious and vocational education was one crucial form of such 'policing' of the state's human resources. There is a sense in which this perspective points far into the future – towards the liberal reformism of the nineteenth century and even further ahead, to the welfare state.

The rise of Nordic teacher cultures: from teaching pastors to pastoral teachers

'Our time is heading towards the point where the schoolmaster supersedes the minister, and in a sense we are all schoolmasters now'. The Norwegian author and journalist Aasmund O.Vinje (quoted in Slagstad, 1998, p. 106) wrote this reflection in 1868, at a point where the political and cultural hegemony of Norway's academic–bureaucratic elite had begun to wither, challenged by an increasingly self-assured alliance of peasants, middle-class people and academics without public office. The rise of a civil society with voluntary associations, popular movements, increasing sociocultural mobility, and, eventually, organised political factions (Seip, 1981, pp. 44 ff), coincided with, and was closely related to, the coming-of-age of

teachers as a self-conscious occupational group. While the timing and pace of these processes varied slightly between the Scandinavian countries, they all went through a 'civil revolution' (Siegrist, 1990, p. 186) which changed the meaning and boosted the importance of education. An important dimension and catalyst of this revolution was the transformation of religious life. The role of the minister as well as that of the teacher became redefined in a manner that would reduce the once-abysmal social and cultural divide between them.

The Danish School Acts of 1814 laid the foundations for the rise of a self-conscious national teaching profession. A crucial reform of the Norwegian elementary school in 1860, which introduced national and civic subjects in the curriculum and replaced ambulatory schooling with permanent schools in many rural districts, had similar effects. In 1837, Norway had about 2,000 teachers providing elementary schooling in rural areas, only 2% of whom had passed an approved teacher exam. By 1861, the number of such teachers had risen to 2,800, and a quarter had formal teacher training. In 1890, there were close to 4,000 rural elementary school teachers, and nearly all (97%) had teacher education (Hagemann, 1992, p. 37). During this half-century period, teachers had moved from the bottom of peasant society to its top, and 'the socio-cultural centre of the rural community shifted from the church house and parsonage to the schoolhouse and teacher's home' (Slagstad, 1998, p. 106).

The rise of a self-conscious culture of teachers, acting as the 'organic intellectuals' of the local community and, increasingly, in national politics, was a common trend in Denmark, Norway and Sweden in the second part of the nineteenth century. From the late eighteenth century onwards, organised elementary schools and teacher-training institutions had tended to spread northwards within the Danish kingdom, beginning in the German-speaking duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, moving on to the Danish heartland, and further to the topographically split and sparsely populated Norway. Denmark thus took off from a higher level than Norway by the early 1800s: it had a much larger share of permanent schools, teachers of a somewhat higher sociocultural standing, and a few rigorous teacher-training institutions, such as Blaagaard by Copenhagen, founded in 1791. Danish teacher education became organised in a dual manner, with a few seminaries of the Blaagaard type and numerous so-called parsonage seminaries which offered shorter and more practically oriented courses led by a minister, and aimed at training teachers from and for the rural community (Larsen, Nørr and Sonne, 2013, pp. 91–107). In both Denmark and Norway, teacher seminaries were 'total institutions' where students dwelled and were subject to constant supervision and surveillance by the warden, who was invariably a theologian (Dahl, 1959, pp. 14 ff). Christian nurturing of aspiring teachers was considered at least as important as the teaching of knowledge and skills.

In the old society, the minister had been the sole representative within the local community of the centralised state and the elitist scholarly culture. He stood at the frontline of the state apparatus and constituted a crucial link between centre and periphery – between the ideology and bureaucratic rationality of the absolutist state and the life (and death) of its subjects (Gustafsson, 2000). In a society in transition towards liberal democracy, this mediating role was partly taken over by the

up-and-coming teachers, who assumed leadership in numerous local organisations, movements, and projects.

Pivotal to the formation of modern Danish elementary education and a distinctive Danish teacher culture was the liberalisation of the schooling and teacher-training systems. Since 1739, commoners had been obliged to send their children to school, while the urban social elite sent their children to private schools or had them taught at home. The School Freedom Act of 1855, which formed part of a broader liberalisation of Danish society, allowed parents to provide their children with elementary education themselves. The progress of these privately taught pupils would be examined twice a year by the local school. The effect, however, was not a surge in home schooling, but the rise of a new, distinctively Danish institution, the so-called free schools, complemented in 1857 by a dual-track system of public and private teacher-training seminaries. The following decades saw a sprawling diversity of new free schools and seminaries across Denmark (Gjerløff and Jacobsen, 2014, p. 137; Hjermitslev, 2020).

This eruptive liberalisation and pluralisation of schooling and teacher training in Denmark, as well as the growing cultural and political influence of Norway's national-democratic movement after 1870, gradually weakened the clergy's strict control of teaching in both countries while opening the national school system to religious and cultural movements of a new kind. Danish and Norwegian teacher seminaries, in which young men of peasant and lower-middle-class origins had been subject to strict social and spiritual control by ministers and theologians, became the seedbeds of an alternative intellectual culture, which claimed to be of and for 'the people', and which defined itself in contradistinction to the exclusive academic culture of the elite (Hagemann, 1992, pp. 112ff; J.E. Larsen, 2019).

This shift reflected a more general transformation of cultural and religious life, which also changed the role and status of the ministry. The cardinal point was the incorporation into the church and school of popular forms of religious and/or national awakening, which changed the basis of pastoral and educational authority. New visions of a 'folk church' and 'folk school' were launched against the old state church and commoners' school. Inspired by Foucault, we can conceptualise this process as a democratisation and dispersion of pastoral forms of power and authority throughout society. In order to understand the emergence of the modern primary school and its teaching profession, we must therefore turn towards the parallel transformation of the church and the ministry.

State church, lay revivalism, and the transformation of the pastorate

The early- to mid-nineteenth century saw the rise in both Denmark and Norway of various religious awakening movements led by laypeople. While critical of the clergy *qua* social and cultural elite, these movements largely remained loyal to the Evangelical Lutheran confession and in fact tended to defend the Lutheran orthodoxy against what they saw as a growing rationalistic unbelief among the clergy. A distinctive combination of sociocultural self-empowerment, religious subjectivism, and a sturdy theological conservatism gave these movements a highly

complex and ambiguous role in the formation of modern, democratic Nordic societies (Thorkildsen, 1997).

When Danish and Norwegian lawmakers abolished the prohibition against lay religious congregations around 1840 and enacted a minimum of religious freedom, the church lost much of its traditional capacity to discipline religious belief (Oftestad, 1998, pp. 85ff). The minister could not to the same extent base his authority on his office but had to defend it through purely spiritual and pedagogical means (Gilje, 2014, pp. 415ff). The ministry was, in this sense, transformed from an office to a modern profession (Scott, 1978). Ministers were, however, professionals of a specific kind: they were pedagogical or *pastoral* professionals, whose power and authority depended on their ability to touch the sensibility of their parishioners and guide their search for religious and existential meaning.

A striking expression of the new conditions of pastoral power was the rise in Denmark and Norway in the 1850s and 1860s of the Inner Mission, which sought new ways to spread the Christian gospel in a world where sin and unbelief were rife. A Pietistic, socially activist revivalist movement that was *within*, but not *submitted to*, the official church, it stimulated a more congregation-oriented self-conception within the church (Oftestad, 1998, pp. 125ff). Especially in Norway, the Inner Mission helped establish a new alliance between the clergy and laypeople based on a synthesis of Lutheran orthodoxy and revivalist Pietism. A low-church 'assembly and meeting Christianity' was thereby incorporated into the official church (Molland, 1972, p. 116). The Norwegian ministry became increasingly recruited from peasant society and from the lay revivalist movement, to which they often returned, after graduating from university, as its 'organic intellectuals' (Gilje, 2014, p. 423).

The cooperation of the state church with low-church revivalism was indicative of a more general social mobilisation and state/society integration in late nineteenth-century Norway. But this integration did not make the church more inclusive. Quite the contrary, orthodoxy and revivalism shared the premise that the church must be a community of true believers, not a public institution administering the means of grace to unbelievers and 'Sunday Christians'. In Norway, therefore, the alliance between the clergy and devoted laypeople could not form the basis of a broad, inclusive 'folk church' (Thorkildsen, 1997, p. 154).

Danish religious life, however, while also affected by Pietistic revivalism, became strongly influenced by a different kind of awakening movement, which distanced itself from both academic theology and the Inner Mission. This so-called Grundtvigianism, an idiosyncratic blend of theological and national thought generated by the minister-*aum*-philosopher and historian Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872), constituted a third, increasingly important centre of gravity in the shaping of Danish religious life. Against the Pietist renunciation of worldly culture, Grundtvig insisted that only a subject who longed for life and sought to realise his or her potential in this world was able to receive the glory of God and the promise of eternal life. Rejecting the antagonism between the worldly and the spiritual, he saw the two as interdependent and interlocking (Koch, 1954, p. 250).

Against academic theology, on the other hand, Grundtvig insisted that the Word of God manifested itself not in the Bible but in the congregation's living profession

of faith (ibid., p. 242). He thus made a crucial distinction between the church as a worldly institution and the true church of Christ, which might reside in the church as a 'guest', but which was not a human institution, but eternal from the days of the Apostles (ibid., p. 240). This eccentric ecclesiology proved powerful as a heuristic for the democratisation and nationalisation of religious life by imbuing the congregation, and, in a wider sense, the people, with an aura of holiness. Unlike the Pietist awakening, it would lay the foundations of an inclusive, national 'folk church'.

Folk church and folk school: Denmark versus Norway

Grundtvig had argued that the Danish school should abandon religious education, since Christian instruction was utterly unable to convey a living faith (Grundtvig, 1836). By the 1850s, such criticisms of traditional catechistic methods had become widespread. However, rather than secularising the school, the Grundtvigians infused education with another *kind* of religiosity, disseminated through a 'didactics of the living word'. Vivid, inspiring storytelling became the preferred mode of teaching, with special emphasis on national legend, folklore, and history (Gjerløff and Jacobsen, 2014, pp. 99–115).

The cultivation of edifying national and religious narratives would permeate the elementary school curriculum, textbooks, and teacher cultures of both Denmark and Norway. The collective singing of national hymns and folksongs became an essential part not only of elementary schools, folk high schools, and teacher-training seminaries, but also of popular meetings, associations, and rallies, particularly in Denmark. In this way, Grundtvigianism invigorated Danish elementary school teachers with a distinctive brand of popular revivalism, which, despite its strong theological and cultural disagreements with Pietism, shared with it some crucial social and psychological functions (Reeh, 2012, p. 351). Indeed, Grundtvigian teachers tended to see themselves as a kind of emissaries who would awaken the children to national cultural self-awareness (Korsgaard, 2004, p. 223).

Like Denmark, Norway saw a parallel transformation of church and school driven by the rise of a civil society with lay revivalism and other popular movements. Grundtvigianism, while marginal within the Norwegian church, exerted a certain influence on the elementary school and its teachers, primarily through folk high schools and some teacher seminaries. But this influence was strongly resisted by orthodox and Pietistic teachers, parents, and ministers, who stuck to Lutheran doctrines about human sin and the duty to forsake the temptations of this world (Korsgaard, 2003). Such resistance, however, was gradually surpassed by politically driven educational reform after the liberal-populist party, *Venstre*, came to power in 1884. Another source of reconciliation was the movement for cultural and linguistic 'Norwegian-ness', which was joined by many deeply religious teachers after it was 'Christianised' in the 1890s and the *nynorsk* form of Norwegian accepted as an alternative liturgical and hymnal language (Tvinnereim, 1973).

In 1889, the government enacted a seven-year, comprehensive folk school, the first five years of which were common to all students. While there was no equivalent to the Danish free schools in the unified, comprehensive national school system that ensued, in 1890 a new law on teacher education endorsed private

seminaries as supplements to public ones. This amendment encouraged revivalist movements to organise their own teacher training. By educating Christian teachers to animate folk schooling, revivalist leaders sought to save the Norwegian people for Christianity in spite of the massive secular influences of a godless age (Eritsland, 2020). These private seminaries, most of which were Pietist-revivalist in kind, counted for a considerable share – at times close to half – of Norwegian teacher education during the next three or four decades (Tveiten, 1994, p. 162).

In 1912, the Norwegian Inner Mission's powerful leader Ole Hallesby published a series of articles that pleaded for shifting the focus of missionary work from the church and religious meeting house to the school. Instead of preaching to the choir of mostly elderly women, he advocated for reaching out to students, particularly to those of the upcoming professional elites who would shape tomorrow's institutions and society (Hallesby, 1912). This turn towards the school as the primary field of the home mission is indicative of a new understanding of the relationship between the folk school and Christianity, reminiscent of the Grundtvigian notion of the folk church as a worldly institution that could be invigorated by the Christian spirit of those who inhabited it.

In Denmark, the folk school and folk church developed more or less in tandem. The two laws that made the first step towards a common folk school and introduced parochial church councils were both passed in 1903. In Norway, the Folk School Act preceded parochial church councils by more than 30 years, indicating the much higher level of conflict within the latter sphere. While the church was perpetually haunted by doctrinal conflict, leading in 1907 to the foundation of an independent 'Congregation Faculty' dominated by a combination of orthodoxy and Pietism, the folk school was forged through political steering and compromise which crystallised in a national curriculum. A formative experience in every citizen's early life, the school became what the church did not: an integrative institution based on widely shared sociocultural values and, at the same time, an arena of value competition, controversy, and compromise. In a sense, the teacher replaced the minister as the shepherd of young souls and disseminator of society's constitutive values.

Sweden: a more statist and secular teacher culture

Swedish elementary school teachers grew in self-consciousness and sociocultural status throughout the late nineteenth century and took an activist political stand both through their organisations and as local community leaders (Florin, 1987, pp. 89–91). But this vocational coming-of-age occurred under historical circumstances that differed in some important respects from the situation in Denmark and Norway. In 1842, 13 years before Denmark liberalised its school law, Sweden moved in the opposite direction, replacing home teaching under clerical control with compulsory elementary schooling. However, this law did not introduce something radically new, but rather confirmed a growing trend. Permanent or ambulatory schools already existed in almost half of Sweden's parishes. What was qualitatively new was that the state took firmer control of education by building a special institution alongside the teaching tradition of

the church (Florin, 2010, p. 2). Still, the Swedish folk school would remain closely tied to the church for many decades to come. Much like in Norway and Denmark, the parish minister was the chairman of the local school board (until 1909), and teacher-training seminaries were nurseries of Christian piety under close clerical supervision and control.

However, Sweden established a more uniform, centralised teacher-training system than its neighbours. The School Act of 1842 stipulated teacher seminaries in Stockholm and the cathedral cities, funded by the state and controlled by the cathedral chapter (*ibid.*, p. 4). State and church thereby dovetailed in the formation of elementary education and teacher training, much like the situation in Denmark–Norway a century before.

The democratisation of Swedish religious life also followed a different trajectory from those of its Scandinavian neighbours. As already noted, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Swedish church possessed a higher degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the state than its Danish–Norwegian counterpart. Headed by an archbishop and a synod, it has been described as the ‘Anglican Church of the North’. This starting point made it much less inclined than its Scandinavian sister churches to reach out to the popular awakening movements which spread rapidly in Sweden in the nineteenth century. The result was a burgeoning of free churches alongside the official church, which upheld and even reinforced its distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Danish and Norwegian churches (Thorkildsen, 1997, pp. 141, 153; Claesson, 2004, pp. 62–101).

The civil revolution came comparatively late to Sweden and largely coincided with the country’s rapid industrialisation. In Denmark and Norway, popular religious and cultural movements preceded the labour movement by several decades, and both countries saw the rise of liberal institutions, organised political competition, folk high schools, and popular movements before class struggle and socialism transformed the political and cultural landscape. These currents also preceded the sweeping shift in Nordic intellectual and literary life in the 1880s from religious and national idealism to scientific rationalism and positivism. In Sweden, by contrast, liberalism, socialism, and scientific rationalism tended to coincide and come together in the folk high school and other popular movements (Claesson, 2004, pp. 62–101).

The combined effect of these historical circumstances was to make Swedish teachers more inclined than their Danish and Norwegian colleagues to endorse a secular school programme and to align themselves with the state in order to overcome clerical dominance. Whereas the liberal parties became the dominant teacher parties in Denmark and Norway, Swedish elementary school teachers were divided more or less equally between the labour and liberal parties. They were also more prone to support scientific approaches to school development and calls for a scientific basis for teacher training in order to raise their own professional status and the quality of teaching (Florin, 1987). Swedish folk school teachers thus exhibited some similarities with their German colleagues: they were predominantly anti-clerical, state-oriented, politically slightly left-leaning, and sought to increase their status by reducing the gap between their own vocational training and that of academic professionals (*ibid.*, p. 79; Bölling, 1983).

Conclusion: Lutheranism, teacher cultures, and the Nordic educational model(s)

Since the 1990s, historians and social scientists have paid increasing attention to the religious origins of the Nordic welfare states. This scholarship has often pointed to the underlying continuities between the early modern, absolutist–orthodox Danish and Swedish kingdoms and the post-war secular, state-centred Nordic welfare regimes. Special importance is ascribed to the Lutheran submission of the church to the state, which greatly empowered the state, bolstered its spiritual authority, and thereby prepared the soil for the modern ‘caring state’ (e.g. Knudsen, 2000).

When applied to the problem of how the Lutheran legacy has conditioned primary teaching in the Nordic countries, this perspective draws our attention to how primary education in these countries disseminates a set of officially approved values to the entire population. The Nordic countries have strongly emphasised the need for shared values across classes, regions, political opinion groups, and, more recently, ethnic and religious diversity. A public, comprehensive national school system is recurrently pointed to as an essential instrument of such sociocultural integration. As a former Danish minister of education remarked, the folk school’s object clause is ‘society’s profession of faith in common values’ (Heinesen, 1972, p. 188). Teachers have also widely accepted the authority of national political agencies to define a common curriculum. A somewhat iconoclastic suggestion is that this reflects a legacy of the Lutheran confessional state, where the king’s first religious duty was to inculcate in the population a uniform faith.

However, while certain affinities exist between the orthodox–Pietist *Erziehungsstaat* of the 1700s and modern Nordic school systems, claims of straightforward historical continuity are simplistic. The complex historical trajectories described in this chapter illustrate this point. The Danish kingdom, which was, in the late 1600s, one of the most absolutist states of Europe, and whose church became virtually absorbed by the state, would later develop the most liberal and autonomous teacher culture in Scandinavia. Sweden, on the other hand, which converted to Lutheranism more gradually, and where the church and local communities both preserved higher degrees of autonomy vis-à-vis the state, ended with the most centralised, state-dominated educational system and teacher culture of the Nordic countries. This seeming paradox points to the significance of the intermediate civil revolution: the interrelated religious, cultural, social, and political transformations that Nordic societies underwent in the nineteenth century.

This chapter has studied teacher cultures as channels of continued religious influence within the Nordic school systems. Ansell and Lindvall (2013, p. 516) have noted that the secularisation of primary education in Sweden and Denmark was a drawn-out process that was not completed until the 1930s. By secularisation, they mean the transfer of institutional control over the educational system from parishes or religious orders to secular authorities (ibid., p. 507). The shift of focus in this chapter from institutionalised clerical control to teachers’ vocational identities makes secularisation appear as an even more protracted and less linear process.

A complex problem arises here on the possible impact of latent religious influences on modern educational theory and practice. The German educationalist Meike

Sophia Baader (2005) has highlighted the religious undercurrents of early German reform pedagogy. Danish and Norwegian scholars have similarly pointed to reform pedagogy's continuity with the Grundtvigian educational movement. Its didactics of the living word and rhetorical juxtaposing of its own 'school for life' with the passive inculcation and reproduction of dead knowledge in the old form of schooling anticipated in significant ways later calls for a 'progressive', 'child-centred' education, and may have helped produce a special susceptibility towards modern reform pedagogy among Nordic educators (Jarning, 2009, p. 479f; Gjerløff and Jacobsen, 2014, p. 281).

This observation inspires a more general supposition. The enduring impact of Lutheranism on Nordic elementary education is manifested not only in the dominant role of the state, which implements from above a comprehensive, unified school system that disseminates to nearly all children a set of common values, skills, and knowledges. It also reveals itself in the strikingly pastoral self-image and practices of Nordic primary teachers, who tend to see themselves as caretakers of 'the whole child' and midwives of a developing self, in contrast to the more scholarly orientation of upper-secondary teachers.

This combination of a uniform educational scheme implemented from above and an individualised, child-centred pedagogy practiced from below may be related to the deep-seated ambiguity inherent in the Lutheran legacy between submissive obedience and the release of subjectivity and individualism. As an instrument of pastoral power and governmentality, the primary school has thus *subjectified* its students in the double Foucauldian sense of disciplining them and socialising them into a common set of values, on the one hand, and releasing their individual subjectivity on the other. In the secularised Nordic countries, this tension is continued by a primary educational system that combines ambitious equalising and unifying objectives with a reform-pedagogical creed that emphasises pupils' right to subjective self-expression and individually adapted education. Along the way, however, the Lutheran consciousness of sin has been replaced by an optimistic belief in the child's natural propensity for self-development. It is this 'secularised' version of the inherent Lutheran tension between a uniform faith imparted from above and subjective freedom exerted from below that has proved seminal for the Nordic welfare states.

Much like Lutheran ministers in earlier times, Nordic teachers are expected to redeem the subjectivity of each child and at the same time, represent and police the normative foundations of society. The Nordic teacher cultures, born of the civil revolution of the nineteenth century, have been instrumental in bringing about this synthesis.

Note

- 1 Ove Korsgaard (2003, p. 197) has pointed out that while Norwegian historiography has tended to trace the roots of the compulsory folk school to the Danish–Norwegian school laws of 1739, Danish historians of education have traced its origin to 1814 when the new School Acts were introduced. A possible reason for this historiographical difference is the more gradual development of organised schooling in Denmark. The school laws of 1739 thus changed the educational situation more radically in Norway than in Denmark. Like Korsgaard, however, I here follow the Norwegian tradition, seeing 1739 as the point of origin of mandatory primary schooling in both parts of the realm.

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