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# Introduction: Lutheranism and the Nordic Welfare States in Comparison

Ingela K. Naumann and Pirjo Markkola, Guest Editors

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Lutheranism is a dominant feature of the Scandinavian countries or, as they are known in the European context, the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. 5

Church historians recognize the Scandinavian countries for their long tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran State Churches. Strong ties between the church and the state date back to the Middle Ages and, in particular, to the Reformation, which reached Scandinavia in the 1520s and 1530s. The churches were gradually integrated into the governing of the state. For many centuries, the Lutheran churches had a hegemonic status and the clergy represented both the state and the church in local communities. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, more or less the whole populations of the Nordic countries were Lutheran.<sup>1</sup> Still today Lutheranism is the denomination of the majority: the current membership figures range from 67.5 percent in Sweden to 79 percent in Denmark. Finland and Norway are close to the Danish level, with 76 and 77 percent, respectively. Moreover, even in Sweden, where the membership figures are the lowest, the percentage did not fall below 80 until as late as 2003.<sup>2</sup> Despite these figures, Nordic societies are generally rather secularized. Today, 10 15 20

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1. Dag Thorkildsen, "Religious Identity and Nordic Identity," in *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, ed. Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), 138; Henrik Stenius, "The Good Life Is a Life of Conformity: The Impact of the Lutheran Tradition on Nordic Political Culture," in *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, ed. Sørensen and Stråth, 161-71; Pirjo Markkola, "Introduction: The Lutheran Context of Nordic Women's History," in *Gender and Vocation. Women, Religion and Social Change in the Nordic Countries, 1830-1940*, ed. Pirjo Markkola (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000), 12.

2. The Norwegian statistics are from January 2012; the Swedish and Finnish statistics are from December 2012; and the Danish statistics are from January 2013. See [www.kirken.no](http://www.kirken.no), [www.svenskakyrkan.se](http://www.svenskakyrkan.se), [www.folkekirken.dk](http://www.folkekirken.dk), and [www.evl.fi](http://www.evl.fi) (accessed October 1, 2013).

religion plays a minor role in the public life and politics in the Nordic countries. 25

The Nordic countries are also renowned for their comprehensive and generous welfare states. The concepts of the “Nordic welfare state” have been commonly used to characterize the welfare systems in all these countries. Labor movement strength in combination with the political dominance of Social Democracy are commonly highlighted by welfare state researchers as explanatory factors for some of the key features of the Nordic welfare states: universalism, security, and equality as expressed in high levels of social security and public welfare service provision.<sup>3</sup> Protestantism, or to be more specific, Lutheranism, seldom figures as explanations in mainstream welfare state research. The low profile of the Lutheran churches in the Nordic countries may have been a reason for the mainstream welfare state research not considering religion a relevant factor in the development of the Nordic welfare states. 30 35

This collection of research articles challenges and amends these assumptions about the Nordic welfare state by demonstrating the varied dimensions of influence of Lutheranism on welfare state development in the Nordic countries. Spanning the period from the early twentieth century to the 1970s, the articles uncover active engagement of religious actors in welfare debates during this period and demonstrate struggles, conflicts, and compromises between various actors that question some commonly held understandings of unproblematic relations between Lutheran churches and state policies. The majority of the collected articles herein examine the postwar period, when many of the comprehensive, universalist welfare policies took shape that gave the Nordic welfare states their specific character,<sup>4</sup> and discuss how, against common perception, religion played a role in these developments. Some contributions focus on the early twentieth century to demonstrate how state-church relations were renegotiated in a period when political visions about the Nordic welfare states were formulated and the basis for later social policy trajectories were laid. 40 45 50 55

This Special Issue of *Journal of Church and State* makes an important contribution to welfare state debate and theory by countering the idea, particularly common in political science-based welfare state analysis, of the irrelevance of religion in welfare state development in the Nordic countries. In so doing, all contributions in this 60

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3. Walter Korpi, *The Democratic Class Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1983); Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

4. Niels Finn Christiansen and Pirjo Markkola, “Introduction,” in *The Nordic Model of Welfare. A Historical Reappraisal*, ed. Niels Finn Christiansen et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006).

Special Issue in various ways work at the crossroads of the social sciences, history, and theology. This collection brings together historically grounded accounts of the specific state-church relations in the evolving welfare states in Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden. As a collection, these articles provide new insights into the variations in Lutheran discourse, organizations, and influences in Northern European welfare states that have not been presented in international welfare state research in such breadth before.

## The Rediscovery of Religion in Comparative Welfare State Research

Early welfare state research in the 1970s and 1980s was well attuned to the key role of religion in the formation of modern societies, and thus also modern welfare states, developing the thesis that Protestantism in the Nordic countries had facilitated secularization and thus allowed for the state to take over the field of welfare provision. The Nordic welfare states were, in this sense, Protestant welfare states. The more contentious relationships between church and state in countries with majoritarian Catholic populations had led to delayed or residual welfare state development in continental Europe.<sup>5</sup> With the rise of comparative welfare state research, particularly the popularity of power resource theory and the welfare regime approach, these earlier discussions on religion and the welfare state became forgotten. Whether scholars put the emphasis on the role of the labor movements in the formation of the welfare state,<sup>6</sup> or employers,<sup>7</sup> or various forms of alliances and coalitions between social classes,<sup>8</sup> it became the dominant understanding that welfare states had developed along the axis of material interests and class conflicts. Due to the historic labor movement strength and the dominance of the Social Democratic parties in the Nordic countries, the Nordic welfare states became characterized as “Social Democratic

5. Arnold J. Heidenheimer, “Secularization Patterns and the Westward Spread of the Welfare State, 1883-1983,” *Comparative Social Research* 6 (1983): 3-38; Peter Flora, *State, Economy and Society in Western Europe, 1815-1975*, 2 vols. (Chicago: St. James, 1983); Peter Flora (with Stein Kuhnle and Derek Urwin), *State Formation, Nation-building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan Based on His Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

6. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds*; Korpi, *The Democratic Class Struggle*.

7. See Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, ed., *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Sven Steinmo, *Taxation and Democracy: Swedish, British and American Approaches to Financing the Modern State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

8. Peter Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State 1875-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

welfare states.” In many ways, the Social Democratic welfare state became the ideal welfare state in the comparative literature, with a tendency to evaluate to what extent other European welfare states deviated from the Nordic model due to different outcomes of the class struggle. 95

In the 1990s, countering this perspective on the welfare states, a series of scholars began to emphasize the role of religion in explaining the persistence of traditional family values and social norms as reflected in the conservative stance of social policies in countries with Catholic majority populations.<sup>9</sup> In an important study, Kees van Kersbergen demonstrated how class was not the only formative dimension in European welfare states, but how religious ethics and values as represented by Christian Democratic parties had left clear marks on the structure and content of social insurance and welfare programs in several continental and southern European welfare states. Thus, one could speak of a distinct Christian Democratic welfare state regime.<sup>10</sup> However, the focus of these welfare state analyses that included religion was on Social Catholicism or Catholic movements; the Christian Democratic welfare state was, in this sense, a Catholic welfare state. “Religion” in European comparative welfare state studies in the 1990s became equated with Catholicism, while the perceived wisdom persisted that Protestantism in its various forms, or other religions for that matter, had played no role in the formation and development of European welfare states. 100 105 110 115

In recent years, a new comparative scholarship on religion and the welfare state is emerging that seeks to systematically account for the role of all Christian denominations in the formation of European welfare states.<sup>11</sup> There has also been, in particular among Nordic 120

9. See, for example, Michael Minkenberg, “Religion and Public Policy: Institutional, Cultural, and Political Impact on the Shaping of Abortion Policies in Western Democracies,” in *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (2000): 221-47; Mary Daly and Sara Clavero, *Contemporary Family Policy: A Comparative Review of Ireland, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2002); Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds*.

10. Kees van Kersbergen, *Social Capitalism: A Study of Christian Democracy and the Welfare State* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 3.

11. Thomas Bahle, *Familienpolitik in Westeuropa: Ursprünge und Wandel im internationalen Vergleich* (Frankfurt a.M. New York: Campus, 1995); Thomas Bahle, “Public Child Care in Europe: Historical Trajectories and New Directions,” in *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives*, ed. Kirsten Scheiwe and Harry Willekens (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 23-42; Kees van Kersbergen & Philip Manow, eds., *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sigrun Kahl, “The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant Traditions Compared,” *European Journal of Sociology* 66 (2005): 91-126; Sigrun Kahl, “Religious Doctrines and Poor Relief: A Different Causal Pathway,” in van Kersbergen & Manow, *Religion, Class Coalitions*, 267-95; Kimberly

researchers, a renewed interest in the role of religion in the development of the Nordic welfare states.<sup>12</sup> Many scholars working in this newly emerging field draw inspiration from political scientist Stein Rokkan, who in his monumental work on the formation of modern states in Europe drew a conceptual map including various social cleavages in society, namely that between religious and secular forces, or as a short hand that between “church” and “state.”<sup>13</sup> The historical role of the churches in welfare policies has attracted growing attention among scholars working in this tradition. Sigrun Kahl, for example, points out how European welfare regimes reflect differences between Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran social doctrines.<sup>14</sup> Others argue that the role of religion in the development of the Western welfare states is not just a question of doctrine-influencing policies. In particular, Philip Manow, Kees van Kersbergen, Thomas Bahle, and others have emphasized the importance of the *absence* of a religious cleavage in Scandinavia and the role of consensual state-church relations in allowing the expansion of public social policies.<sup>15</sup> It is thus the consensual character in the relationship between the Lutheran churches and the state in Northern Europe that first made it possible for a generous Social Democratic welfare state to develop.

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Morgan, *Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies in Western Europe and the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); *Religion and Welfare in 21st Century Europe*, Vol. 1, ed. Anders Bäckström, Grace Davie, Ninna Edgardh, and Per Pettersson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); *Religion and Welfare in 21st Century Europe*, Vol. 2, ed. Anders Bäckström, Grace Davie, Ninna Edgardh, and Per Pettersson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

12. Tim Knudsen, ed., *Den nordiske protestantisme og velfærdsstaten* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000); Uffe Østergaard, “Lutheranismen, danskheden og velfærdsstaten,” in *13 historier om den danske velfærdsstat*, ed. Klaus Petersen (Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2003); Annette Leis, *Den kyrkliga diakonins roll inom ramen för två välfärdssystem. En jämförande fallstudie av två diakoniinstitutioner i Sverige och Tyskland* (Uppsala: Diakonivetenskapliga institutet, 2004); Pirjo Markkola, “The Lutheran Nordic Welfare States,” in Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen, eds., *Beyond Welfare State Models: Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 102-18.

13. Flora, *State Formation*; Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction,” in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, ed. Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967), 1-64.

14. Kahl, “The Religious Roots,” 91-126, and “Religious Doctrines,” 267-95.

15. Philip Manow and Kees van Kersbergen, “Religion and the Western Welfare States—The Theoretical Context,” in van Kersbergen & Manow, *Religion, Class Coalitions*, 14; Lars Bo Kaspersen and Johannes Lindvall, “Why No Religious Politics? The Secularization of Poor Relief and Primary Education in Denmark and Sweden,” *Archive Européen sociologique* XLIX (2008): 119-43; Bahle, “Public Child Care.”



It is an important shift in perspective to posit “state-church consensus” as a basis for the development of a strong welfare state in Northern Europe, rather than to dismiss religion as irrelevant in these countries. It shifts the focus to a more historically grounded understanding that churches were powerful actors in modern European societies. Manow and van Kersbergen have in this respect developed the most explicit theoretical framework to date that systematically includes state-church relations as an explanation for differences in European welfare state development, and thus make an important contribution toward reintegrating religion into political science scholarship on welfare states. Their framework arguably suffers from a certain static or instrumental approach to history and from overgeneralization. It means that no role is attributed to nonstate actors, other than explicitly economic actors (trade unions, employers), in the continuous development and reform of welfare state programs. In other words, in Manow and van Kersbergen’s model, the Lutheran churches in the Nordic countries, once “allowing” the states to act around social issues, become passive bystanders of the Social Democratic welfare state developments in these countries. However, historical studies provide extensive evidence that the churches and other religiously affiliated actors in the Nordic countries were actively involved in welfare provision,<sup>16</sup> as well as actively part of shaping policy debate around welfare issues.

An analytical model that acknowledges the importance of other than economic cleavages in welfare state formation needs to include attention to the continuous political manifestations or the possibility for the re-emergence of these cleavages; this may not necessarily be within the party system, the place where political scientists tend to look.<sup>17</sup> It is an important aspect of democratically constituted, modern societies that political discourse is not limited to the political arena, but is also shaped by debate in public fora of various kinds. As the articles in this collection illustrate, the Lutheran Church was an influential voice in society in the Nordic countries and clergy were actively engaged in public discourse.

16. Leis, *Den kyrkliga diakonins roll*; Elisabeth Christensen, *Kyrklig och social reform. Motiveringar till diakoni 1845-1965* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2006); Pirjo Markkola, “Promoting Faith and Welfare: Deaconess Movement in Finland and Sweden, 1850-1940,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 25 (2000): \_\_\_; See also this Special Issue.

17. See Ingela K. Naumann, “Childcare Politics in the ‘New’ Welfare State: Class, Religion, and Gender in the Shaping of Political Agendas,” in *The Politics of the New Welfare State*, ed. Giuliano Bonoli and David Natali (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158-81; Ingela K. Naumann, *Childcare Politics in the German and Swedish Welfare States*, PhD thesis (Florence: European University Institute, 2006).

In order to analytically grasp the role of religion or the Lutheran Church in a welfare state, some shifts in analytical perspective are needed. First, while the mainstream political science welfare state research focuses on the political system and the role of parties (and sometimes economic actors), other actors influencing political discourse in public debate and other social spaces remain secondary. Therefore it is important to broaden the understanding of the arena for welfare politics and welfare actors. All articles in this Special Issue start from a broad understanding of politics and examine public debates and discourses, rather than strictly party politics. For example, Aud Tønnessen, Pirjo Markkola, and Jørn Petersen, et al. draw on newspaper debates, letter exchanges, and individual publications of the time by clergy and representatives of religiously grounded organizations to reconstruct the positions of religious actors. Second, the mainstream welfare state research traditionally focuses on certain core areas of the welfare state, such as employment-related social policy issues and social insurances. However, other, arguably older, areas of the welfare state concerning education, social care, and the family are often neglected.<sup>18</sup> And it is exactly here that the churches and other religious organizations were particularly active long before welfare states developed. The lack of focus on these areas may well have contributed to an underestimation of the continuous involvement of the church in welfare provision and policy debate. Markkola's contribution aptly illustrates how family issues were a central focus for the Lutheran Church in Finland to engage in discussions about welfare policy in the postwar era.

Third, political science approaches tend to collapse "the church" (i.e., the majority church) and "religion" into a concept of a unified religious actor. The articles in this collection shed light on the diverse religious landscape in the Nordic countries, demonstrating the analytical necessity to distinguish between different religious actors, for example, the state churches and free churches, as well as between the official church and a wide range of religious civil society organizations such as philanthropic associations, diaconal institutions, Inner City Missions, the Salvation Army, and so forth. In this respect Aud Tønnessen, Pirjo Markkola, and Ingela Naumann focus particularly on the position of the official state churches vis-à-vis the welfare state, while Jørn Petersen et al., Annette Leis-Peters, and Paolo Borioni examine the role of religiously based civil society organizations in welfare debates and welfare

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18. Anneli Anttonen and Jorma Sipilä, "European Social Care Services. Is it Possible to Identify Models?" *Journal of European Social Policy* 6 (1996): \_\_\_\_\_. With this important article, Anttonen and Sipilä highlighted a "blind spot" in comparative welfare state research in the 1990s by comparing "social service regimes."



provision. The latter highlight how nonstate actors have made important contributions to the development of the modern welfare state as well as the Nordic countries—a reason why some suggest it is more appropriate to speak of a “welfare system” rather than the “welfare state.” 215

Lastly, welfare state research tends to treat Lutheranism as a homogeneous doctrine across all Nordic countries. A key contribution of this Special Issue is to shed light on the differences in state-church relations in the Nordic countries. There are striking similarities between the Nordic countries; however, significant differences exist as well. In the next section these similarities and differences in state-church relations in the Nordic countries will be discussed in more detail. 220 225

### State and Church: Historical Perspectives

The five Nordic countries constitute a distinctive corner of the Protestant world. In 2012, the population of the Nordic countries was about 25 million.<sup>19</sup> According to the figures from the turn of the millennium, some 85 percent of the population in the Nordic countries belonged to the Lutheran Church, accounting for more than 35 percent of all Lutherans in the world.<sup>20</sup> The Nordic countries share a long interconnected history, but with differing political constellations. At the end of the Middle Ages the entire area was united under the Crown of Denmark by King Olav’s mother, Margrethe (1353–1412), who in practice ruled the area until her death. By the end of the fifteenth century the union was dissolved, and in 1523 Gustav Vasa was elected king of Sweden. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century Denmark, Norway, and Iceland were ruled by the king of Denmark, while Finland formed an integrated part of the Kingdom of Sweden. As a result of the Napoleonic wars, which spelled a new era of upheavals in Northern Europe, Sweden lost Finland to Russia in 1809. Five years later, in 1814, a union between Norway and Sweden was established, giving Norway its own constitution, defense, and government. In 1905 Norway gained independence and elected a Danish prince as the king of Norway. The Grand Duchy of Finland gained independence in 1917 and two years later a republican constitution was approved.<sup>21</sup> 230 235 240 245 250

19. Population; <http://www.norden.org/en/the-nordic-region/population> (accessed September 20, 2013).

20. Markkola, “Introduction,” 12.

21. David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: the Baltic World 1492-1772* (London: Longman, 1990); David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772-1993: Europe’s Northern Periphery in An Age of Change* (London: Longman, 1995).

As the Lutheran version of Christianity had a hegemonic status in all the Nordic countries, some scholars suggest that it is perhaps the most important explanation of the similarities between the Nordic states and, in particular, the Nordic models of welfare provision. In fact, the cultural influence of Lutheranism goes well beyond the direct operations of the church. For example, it has been pointed out that the Lutheran inheritance has contributed to a certain understanding of work ethics and equality, ideas forming a cultural backdrop of welfare state development in these countries. Furthermore, the centuries of hegemonic state churches have created an atmosphere of conformity in Nordic societies.<sup>22</sup>

Research on the Nordic welfare state and Lutheran churches has highlighted the long history of state churches and the crucial role of the church in the historical formation of local administrations.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, attention has been paid to several central teachings in Lutheran theology, such as the doctrine of work as vocation and the doctrine of the two kingdoms, clearly emphasized by the so-called Lundensian school of theology since the 1920s.<sup>24</sup> Work as vocation is related to the principle of full employment in the Nordic welfare policies. This has been pointed out by Dag Thorkildsen, but Pauli Kettunen also notes “everybody’s right to follow the moral norm that everybody ought to work.”<sup>25</sup> The Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms maintains that God rules the world through two kingdoms: the spiritual kingdom (*das geistliche Regiment*) and the secular or worldly kingdom (*das weltliche Regiment*). The spiritual kingdom is ruled by gospel and the worldly kingdom by law. In the latter, state, legislation, compulsion, and punishment are necessary instruments to uphold justice and order. Possibly, the doctrine of the two kingdoms makes the Lutheran Church open, or accepting of state

22. Thorkildsen, “Religious Identity”; Knudsen, *Den nordiske protestantisme*; Stenius, “The Good Life,” 161-71.

23. Knudsen, *Den nordiske protestantisme*; Østergaard, “Lutheranismen, danskheden og velfærdsstaten”; For more recent publications, see Markkola, “The Lutheran Nordic,” 102-04; Kees van Kersbergen, “From Charity to Social Justice: Religion and the European Welfare State Traditions,” in Kettunen and Petersen, *Beyond Welfare State*. On gender perspective, see Pirjo Markkola, “Genre, lutheranisme et États-providence Nordiques,” *Revue d’histoire nordique* 9 (2009): 57-70.

24. Thorkildsen, “Religious Identity”; For Lundensian theology, see, e.g., “Sweden,” *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Mich. & Leiden: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., & Brill, 2008), 248; Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005): 253-59; For Lundensian theology in Finland, see Juha Seppo, “Teologinen aikakauskirja sodan ja Lundin teologian varjossa 1940-1953,” *Teologinen aikakauskirja* 102 (1997): 5-6.

25. Thorkildsen, “Religious Identity”; Pauli Kettunen, “The Nordic Welfare State in Finland,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 26 (2001): 240.

welfare. The role of this doctrine appears central in the Nordic understanding of the state-church relations; however, interpretations are by no means undisputed. Over the decades, theologians, politicians, and social scientists have drawn differing conclusions regarding the significance of the secular kingdom for the Lutheran doctrine. 280

For example, Harald Hallén (pastor and Social Democratic parliamentarian in Sweden from 1910s-1960s) supported the expansion of the Swedish welfare state, while Norwegian Bishop Eivind Berggrav was very critical towards the welfare state; Berggrav's criticism was well known in the other Nordic countries. One of his major statements was the idea that the welfare state is a form of a totalitarian state, thus undermining morality and monopolizing tasks that would belong to other providers of welfare, such as families.<sup>26</sup> 285

Despite the similarities among the four countries, there are important differences that can be traced back to the age of Reformation and the age of Pietism. According to Thorkildsen, Sweden and Finland represent the High Church tradition, whereas Denmark and Norway are representatives of the Low Church tradition. The Reformation was more directly controlled by the state in Denmark and Norway, while the church in Sweden and Finland retained more independence. In the 1860s and 1870s the Lutheran churches in Sweden and Finland, respectively, established a General Synod. In Finland the General Synod got a right to propose changes in the Ecclesiastical Act and decide on the Ecclesiastical Order. Today the Church of Sweden is the most independent among the Nordic Lutheran churches; as of 2000 the church and the state have been separate in Sweden. The Church of Sweden is now only one of the denominations that can have church fees collected by the state along with income tax. It differs from the other denominations only in one respect: the Church of Sweden administers cemeteries and collects fees for that public service.<sup>27</sup> 290

The Danish and Norwegian churches remained state churches until the twenty-first century. In Norway the king is the constitutional head of the church; legislation affecting the church must pass through Parliament, though in 1981 Parliament voted to maintain the state church. The church was granted some autonomy though, including the right to govern its internal affairs through a General Synod. Until 2012, when the Norwegian constitution was amended, Lutheranism was the public religion of the state. In Denmark, according to 300

26. See Aud V. Tønnessen in this volume. Also see Tønnessen, ". . . et trygt og godt . . ."; For Denmark, see Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen, and Nils Gunder Hansen, *I himlen således også på jorden? Kirkefolket om velfærdsstaten og det moderne samfund* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2009); and Petersen, Petersen, and Kolstrup in this volume.

27. Markkola, "The Lutheran Nordic Welfare States."

the constitution, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is a national church. The Danish Parliament is the legislative authority and the highest administrative authority is the minister of ecclesiastical affairs. Moreover, the monarch must be a member of the national church.<sup>28</sup>

Religious freedom in Scandinavia has been accentuated by Pietism and liberalism. In this respect Norway and Denmark were already quite open by the early nineteenth century. The Norwegian Dissenters' Act of 1845 allowed Christian denominations to be established but kept some restrictions: civil servants, for example, had to be members of the Lutheran Church. In 1891 a new Dissenters' Act allowed religious freedom to all Christians and Jews. In Denmark the freedom of religion was granted by stages after the constitution of 1849 was passed. Similar reforms in Finland and Sweden were lengthy processes. In Finland, the members of the Orthodox Church were granted the same civil rights as Lutherans in 1826; non-Lutheran Protestant denominations, for their part, were allowed by the Dissenters' Act of 1889, and complete freedom of religion was established in 1922. According to the constitution passed in 1919, the Finnish state was no longer a confessional Lutheran state, but the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church remained national churches.<sup>29</sup> In Sweden the long conformity to Lutheran tradition was loosened in 1860 when the first Dissenters' Act was passed, but full freedom of religion was not granted until 1951.

With respect to religious tolerance we thus find an "East-West" split in the Scandinavian countries, with Denmark and Norway granting religious freedom relatively early on. These legal steps were accompanied by an integration of the revivalist movements into the official state church. For the Finnish and Swedish churches on the other hand, which have been described as High Churches, this step took considerably longer. However, also in Finland, the church was relatively open to the revivalist movements and integrated most of them into the majority church, while this did not happen so easily in Sweden. According to Thorkildsen, the Church of Sweden has been the most suspicious of revivalism; partly for that reason the Free Church movement has gained the strongest foothold in Sweden with a polarization emerging between the official state church and free churches.<sup>30</sup>

28. [www.kirken.no](http://www.kirken.no); [www.folkekirken.dk](http://www.folkekirken.dk) (accessed October 1, 2013).

29. Anne Birgitta Pessi, "The Church as a Place of Encounter: Communalism and the Good Life in Finland," in *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe*, eds. Anders Bäckström and Grace Davie, with Ninna Edgardh and Per Pettersson (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 81.

30. Thorkildsen, "Religious Identity."

This Special Issue shows that, over the period investigated here, the Lutheran majority churches had many voices. Not even in Finland and Sweden, where a central decision-making body, the General Synod, existed, did the church have a unified position; instead there were various theological and religious factions and competing groups representing different standpoints. Opinions and attitudes were often formed in dialogue and debate, but a range of differing interpretations and positions coexisted at any point. Also in Denmark (and Norway in the postwar era), differing factions were relatively free to operate. The contributions in this volume thus challenge an oversimplified concept of “the church” as a unified historical actor. In addition, several contributions in this issue highlight the changing positions within the churches over time. Lastly, in light of the wealth of evidence the contributions in this Special Issue bring together, the general understanding of the “consensual relationship” between the state and the Lutheran Church has to be revised: they shed light on strong tensions and conflict, as well as the forging of compromises and new “working relationships.” In particular Tønnessen and Naumann point out that there were no naturally peaceful relations between Social Democracy, the dominant political force in these countries, and the Lutheran Church.

The Lutheran majority churches in the Scandinavian countries were not isolated from the rest of society, of course. As a majority church well into the 1950s, the Lutheran Church counted around 93 percent to 95 percent of the national population as its members. As such Lutherans were, naturally, also part of other institutions, such as political parties, trade unions, and civil society organizations. In fact, the overlap of Lutheranism with other affiliations meant that when the Nordic welfare states were built, Lutheran politicians of all political parties formed an overwhelming majority in the Parliament and the government. Lutheranism thus provided an important backdrop for politics in the Nordic countries, and although most members of the Lutheran Church were passive already in the postwar era, it also maintained a presence in more invisible ways.

This Special Issue highlights how the relation between state and church in modern society is an unfinished story, an ongoing process. The articles in this volume show how this relationship has been marked by consensus, conflict, compromise, cooperation, and co-optation across the Nordic countries during the early phases of welfare state development. There have been changes in positions within the churches vis-à-vis the welfare state over time, as well as changing perception of the Lutheran Church and its role in society. It should then perhaps not come as a surprise that today, as the dominance of the state in welfare provision is being debated in the Nordic countries, we experience a period in which the churches’ role in social welfare is being renegotiated again.