

# Religion, Conservatism and Society in Post-modern Denmark



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International Social Science Basic Studies, 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, Spring 2007

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# 1. Introductory chapter

## 1.1. Motivation

Contemplating my own religious beliefs brings about different discussions on religion; the interpretation of divine messages; the alleged gap between religion and politics; the societal importance of religion etc. My interest in discussing religious matters has led me to the questioning of the modern and indifferent stance towards religion in general. I sense a tendency for the modern individual to take a very critical stance towards religion, based on what seems to be an argument everyone has incorporated in their mental schemata without reflecting upon it. In terms of this I find it odd how some people can be so refusing of religion and still proclaim their Christianity; the common Dane tends to declare the relation between Christianity and the Danish mentality without being able to put forward and submit to the messages of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> This paradox is also revealed in the relationship between the Danish Church and the state; building upon the bonds between the church and state is unheard of due to aspects in the modern society such as multiculturalism and atheism but separating the two completely and thus giving the church a more autonomous role is just as bad. From my point of view, this refusal to discuss, accept and eventually encourage the belief in a greater truth, causes stagnation in the development of religion and religious beliefs.

Basically, I am interested in a communicative bridge between religion and the experiences from its sphere on one hand and the modern society found in the aspects of e.g. human rights and representative democracy on the other hand. Because even though they should not be confused, they are in fact interrelated! The traditions of Christianity have guided the Danish society in particular ways throughout the history and hence forming e.g. a Danish form of the healthcare system. The point, in this relation, becomes that this historical and religious background has been forgotten over time and thus one adheres to values, rules or even opening hours without considering the reasoning behind them.

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<sup>1</sup> This will be elaborated on throughout the project by referring to the interviews conducted by Safet Bektovic in relation to his categorization of people's religious beliefs.

## 1.2. Problem area

This project is motivated by the wide theme concerning the relationship between politics and religion; democracy and providence. Can these opposites attract or should we be focused on separating them completely?

In order to translate this wide theme into a more precise and clear problem area I have decided to focus on the Danish society and, in this respect, the Conservative political party. The idea is to trace down a shift in the perception of religion within the Danish population, after which the same shift is sought in the Conservative approach to Christianity in their party programmes.

The theoretical framework will be provided by Émile Durkheim and Safet Bektovic; applying them in an ad-hoc manner will basically mean that their concepts and ideas are used in the relevant sections. They are however both used mainly as a point of reference and discussion.

The connecting thread throughout the project is the paradox characteristic for modern Danes. This paradox can be found in the fact that most Danes are members of the Danish Church even though only a small percentage actually attends the Sunday services.<sup>2</sup> Another example could be the tendency to discuss a separation of church and state, when in fact the majority of the population considers the church to be a part of the Danish identity and culture.

An explanation could be that even though people do not believe, they tend to adhere to the way the Church celebrates life changes in the form of e.g. births, weddings, burials etc. because they have been raised with these traditions. This brings about the discussion on individualism vs. collective rituals; very much contradictory to the modern individual following his or her own path without worrying much about the surroundings is the notion on human beings as socially constructed and as such in need of others to form the fundament on which they base themselves. Collective rituals thus become important being that they give a sense of belonging.

I will therefore bring in a short historical account of the development within the societal importance of religion in terms of the general population and in terms of the Conservative political party, being that there seems to be a shift in the way Christianity, respectively, has been and is currently approached and applied. It is important to state that although the discussions throughout the project are based on an interrelation between the Danish population and the Conservative political party as the same shift in the perception of religion

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<sup>2</sup> App. 2: Danskerne og religion-statistics

is sought after, the two aspects are, nevertheless, approached differently and separately in the actual chapters. Meaning that in order to be able to discuss and analyse the party programmes of the Conservative political party it was necessary to have the overall idea of how the religious perception was within the population as this was the general religious affiliation and had to, as such, be related to the Conservatives. All in all, the historical review in chapter which deals with the Danish population should also be kept in mind throughout the chapter which deals with the Conservative political party. Hence the historical account is based on the idea that the main historical periods, which I will shortly introduce and discuss in the report, have had an influence on the way we perceive religion in the post-modern society.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.3. Hypothesis**

- It has become characteristic of the modern individual to have a generalised belief in spirituality rather than adhering to the ethics of the Danish Church.
- The teachings of Martin Luther and N.F.S. Grundtvig have had an influence on the individualisation of religion.
- The previous conservative focus on God, King and Nation has to some extent retracted.

### **1.4. Problem formulation**

Why has the traditional perception of religion in Denmark changed?

### **1.5. Research question**

How has the representation of Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity within the Danish population and within the party programme of the Conservatives changed?

### **1.6. Sub-questions**

- How has the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity been applied in the historical Danish context?

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<sup>3</sup> Bjerager, 2006, p.65

- How has the Conservative's political approach to religion shifted?

## **1.7. Design of report**

Chapter 1 Introduction gives an account of the problem to be discussed and analysed throughout the report. The structure of the report follows the sub-questions further on to the research question which will found the basis for the analysis; this analysis will lead to the answering of the problem formulation, which in this project report is put forward in the hypothesis.

Chapter 2 Theory & Method gives a presentation on the considerations made in relation to the methodological, empirical and theoretical decisions. It is also a discussion on the de-selections made in terms of other useful theorists or research techniques.

Chapter 3 The Danish population is constituted of two parts; 3a contains a presentation of the historical background and the traditions guiding the Danish society in general whereas 3b is a part-analysis focusing on the development within Danish religious attitudes.

This chapter will deal with Safet Bektovic's categorisation of religious belief, whilst discussing the different statistics found in relation to the abovementioned development.

Chapter 4 The Conservative political party follows the same structure as the previous chapter, being that it is constituted by a section on empery and a section dealing with a part-analysis. The latter is focused on questioning whether the assumed development within the population can be found in the political party's two different policy programmes.

Chapter 5 The perception of religion today is the final analysis, incorporating the part-analysis from respectively chapter 3 and 4. Trying to answer the research question this chapter brings about a discussion on the change within the representation of the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity by bringing in the various concepts and ideas already dealt with. The political analysis revolves around, on one hand, the general political ideals for a secular and modern society and, on the other hand, a more specific discussion of the Conservative political party's perception on the function of church and religion in today's Danish society.

Chapter 6 Conclusion aims at answering the problem-formulation.

## **2. Theory & Method**

### **2.1. Introduction to chapter**

In order to answer the problem formulation it is necessary to form a plan for the project work in terms of argumentation, discussion and quality assessments. This chapter deals with the methodological structure of the project report; the focus and measures of the analysis.

The discussion on philosophies of social science is composed of the functionalist thought; although this thought will only function on an ad-hoc basis it, nevertheless, supports the report's theoretical framework based on Émile Durkheim and the classifications found in Safet Bektovic's work. Both comply with the idea that religion creates a feeling of cohesion and unity in a particular society and is thus, according to the early functionalists, serving the function of creating social stability.<sup>4</sup> In order to clarify how the theories will be applied in relation to the analysis I have constructed a graphic overview. For the record, this overview only deals with the theoretical framework and does as such not deal with methods applied and empiry analysed.

This chapter also includes a presentation of the empirical data and the methodology applied in order to make sense of the data-collection. The report follows the Conservative political party and the Danish population separately, and this separation brings about a difference in the empirical data and the research techniques applied.

A discussion and explanation of the concepts used throughout the project will also be included. Besides this demarcating discussion on concepts, a section on theoretical and methodological limitations will be included.

### **2.2. Clarification of concepts**

#### **2.2.1. Modern individual**

One does not have to be familiar with scientific work in order to realise that this term is not sharply defined and is as such not valid. In order for the term to make sense throughout the

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<sup>4</sup> Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online, <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/R008SECT>, 2007-05-27

project we need to delimit the subject; men/women; young/middle-aged/old; ethnic Danes/foreigners; confirmed believers/ practising believers/non-believers etc.

Basically the term “modern individual” complies with the statistics found in Lüchau’s work, meaning that we are dealing with middle-aged, ethnic Danes, men and women, who have been baptized and who, in relation to their baptism, are believers in some way. I will also draw on the work of Safet Bektovic, using his classificatory system in terms of people’s level of belief; however it will be pointed out when I specifically draw on Bektovic as he mainly deals with young people.

### **2.2.2. Traditional perception**

When discussing “traditional perception” one needs to keep in mind the historical representation of the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity in Denmark found in Martin Luther’s teaching of the two regimes and the Danish Constitution (which will be presented in chapter 3). This collaboration of Christian ethics and the Danish ideal of democracy have had its impact on the Danish culture and identity for decades. However it is this project’s hypothesis that the population’s religious attitudes are undergoing change; one no longer believes in something specific such as life after death or that Jesus is God’s son, today one just believes. Finding traces of change- e.g. moving from a clearly Christian belief to a generalised spirituality-cannot be claimed to be systematic, but the point is to find a tendency which is somewhat evident. An illuminative example could be the legislation on shopping hours and public holidays; as the Danish theologian and bishop, Jan Lindhardt, notices, both areas have its base in The Old Testament’s 4<sup>th</sup> commandment stating, “*Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy*”. However this historical background has been forgotten resulting in that the legislations have been reduced to an understanding of the local supermarket’s opening hours.<sup>5</sup> The point is that even though it is well-known to most Danes that Sundays should be reserved to service at the church, few actually practise this Christian commandment.

### **2.2.3. Danish Church**

We will in the report discuss the relationship between politics and religion drawing upon the Danish Church (in Danish: Folkekirken) which is why it needs an introductory clarification. The Danish Church is founded on an Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity, which connects it historically to the German monk, Martin Luther and to the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>5</sup> Lindhardt, 2005, p. 64

I will throughout the project discuss the relationship between politics and religion in Denmark related to the stance that the Danish Church is a national church; a church merged with the state so that the head of the state is also the leader of the church (cæsareopapisme).<sup>6</sup>

#### **2.2.4. The historical background**

This term implies the analysis of historical episodes which are found to be relevant in terms of the current religious perception. Periods such as the Reformation, the Enlightenment and post modernity will be studied in terms of the ideals dominating them; how is the individual, religion and the collective perceived in these periods?

The point of analysis is not to give an account of the historical development as such, but to track down the reasons behind the current religious perception.

### **2.3. Philosophies of Social Science**

The functionalist thought, which will be applied in an ad-hoc manner, contains some reflections which are relevant in relation to the main problem of this project and the paradoxes following this problem. However it is important to emphasise that I will follow the most general positions within early functionalism and in that respect Émile Durkheim will serve as a point of reference.

Following Durkheim and his mode of explanation we arrive at the object of research; applying the systemic perspective, instead of the intentional explanatory model or the structural causal perspective, focuses the analysis of religion on the said matter's functional patterns through time. This overall point does not exclude the interest in and analysis of respectively the individual and the structural causal connections being that the individual level, on one hand, provides explanations of e.g. the decrease in regular church-goers from a subjective point of view and is as such relevant in relation to the discussion on individualisation. On the other hand, looking for structural causal connections is very similar to the functional mode of explanation<sup>7</sup>, which Durkheim follows, being that it seeks to find regular causal relationships between factors over a certain period of time independent of actor's intentions. The difference is that following the functional explanatory model implies the focus on the distinct elements of a whole.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gyldendals Røde Ordbøger, Fremmedordbog: cæsareopapisme p.115. See also Lindhardt, 2005, p. 47

<sup>7</sup> Also called the systemic perspective

<sup>8</sup> See Olsen & Pedersen(eds.), 2005, p. 125 and Andersen & Kaspersen(eds.), 2000, p.63-64

It is within Philosophies of Social Science significant and relevant to discuss the struggles between science and religion, the latter in particular referring to Christianity due to the reasoning that it has dominated the world-perceptions in as same amount as science does now. This discussion will be dealt with later on in the report by examining some of the historical backgrounds of a modern society; the ideals of the Enlightenment-period have had a decisive impact on the Western world in terms of e.g. view on humans, attitudes towards the construction of a Truth etc.

In relation to this, the *theory of knowledge* (epistemology) poses a question concerning the criteria for choosing methods: can and should the social world be studied according to the same principles followed by the natural sciences? The two major lines of thought, positivism and interpretivism, argue respectively that knowledge can be produced by gathering facts by objective observations and thus turning them into general laws and, on the other hand, that knowledge is different, depending on the people, institution, language etc.

In a superficial matter one could relate the functionalist analogy to biology as an important metaphor; in same way that the self-regulating heart pumps blood as its main function, so has the institutions within society a function which is related to the rest and dependent on them in terms of the well-functioning of the society or organism.<sup>9</sup>

The other fundamental discussion within Philosophies of Social Science which revolves around *the theory of the nature of reality* (ontology) and is concerned with the perception of the world, asking more specifically whether the social world is external to social actors or if it is produced by us. The two opposing traditions within this discussion are objectivism and constructivism; their stance is respectively (objectivism) that the social world is external and independent of social actors and that it thus has an almost tangible reality of its own and (constructivism) that the orders of society are “*much less like commands and much more like general understandings*”<sup>10</sup>, thus focusing on interpretation and understanding instead of inductive analysis and objectivity.

The abstract theory of functionalism can be formulated shortly by referring to its main domain, “actions”; not reflecting upon actions as related to the interest or motives of individual actors, but as social processes or -structures.<sup>11</sup> The focus on interrelation is of importance being that it separates functionalist theory from that of a linear perspective where

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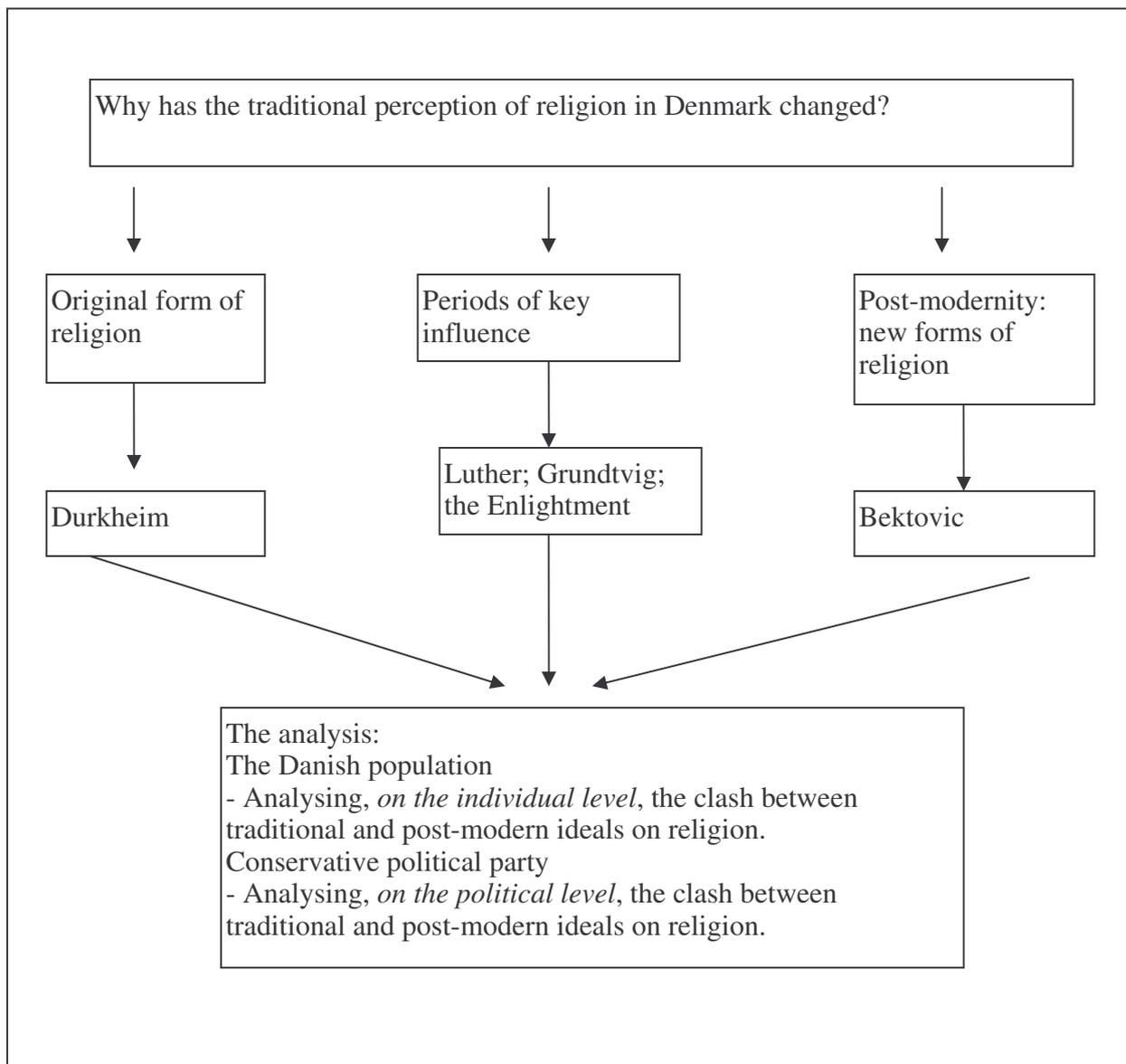
<sup>9</sup> Andersen & Kaspersen(eds.), 2000, chapter written by Willy Guneriussen, p.64

<sup>10</sup> Bryman, 2004, p. 17

<sup>11</sup> Fuglsang (eds.), 2004, p. 116

actions are conceived as one-sidedly dependent (C follows B which follows A) instead of dealing with the different, interrelated elements of a whole.<sup>12</sup> The relation to my project reveals itself in the question; what have, in the course of religion, been the influencing factors by which the Danish population has the religious attitudes they happen to have today? It is with this question in mind that one should understand the choice of theory and method.

## 2.4. Graphic overview



<sup>12</sup> Fuglsang & Bitsch Olsen(eds.), 2004, p. 117

Wording the problem-formulation indicates the starting point as such, and helps to show the different aspects extracted from this problem. In order to understand the development we need to know how it started; Durkheim's study of primitive societies show totemism to be the original form of religion and in that relation how society and individuals were organized according to the prevailing religious form.

Due to different historical facts religion has retreated from its original function; Luther's reformation of the church, Grundtvig's focus on being an individual first, then Christian and the ideals of the Enlightenment period have all played a part in constructing the society we live in today.

The post-modern society and individual emphasise the independent attitude and the free-of-all-obligations mentality, which is slowly demolishing the spirit of the Christian church; the preaching of the Gospel.

The point of analysis is to understand why that is so; why has the role of religion retreated in the modern society?

## **2.5. Choice of Theory**

This project's theoretical framework draws on two different theories, respectively that of Émile Durkheim and Safet Bektovic. Durkheim's work on the primitive religions lays the basis for the historical background; meaning that we can apply his notions on the basic functions of religion within a non-modernized society as a comparative argument throughout the report. I use Bektovic's classification of the Danes' religious attitudes as a discussion of the present religious perception in Denmark.

The application of these two theorists will be according to "the strategy of co-ordination" which is characterised by the corresponding of theories. They do not contradict each other and they might not even complement each other, but they are nevertheless used in coordination.<sup>13</sup> In my case both Durkheim and Bektovic investigate the function of religion in, respectively, society and the individual's life; this distinction can be related to the paradox of leaning both to the rituals of a collectively and to an individualized way of life. In terms of this distinction one might argue for further opposing tendencies; Durkheim deals with religion in a so-called

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<sup>13</sup> Antonsen, Greve & Jørgensen, "Teorier om forandring i den offentlige sector", 2000

primitive society whereas Bektovic's investigates the religious tendencies within a post-modern society.

Following is a more detailed presentation of the two theories and an idea of what I will focus on in my application of them, meaning that the concepts explained in the following sections are the concepts to be used throughout the report.

### 2.5.1. Safet Bektovic's<sup>14</sup> classification system

Writing about the identity formation amongst young people with respectively a Christian and a Muslim background has for PhD Safet Bektovic resulted in the book called "Kulturmøder og religion-Identitetsdannelse blandt kristne og muslimske unge".<sup>15</sup> His notions on religious beliefs are used in a general matter to discuss the other side of the Danish paradox (presented in the Motivation and Problem-area); the individualisation of religion. Accordingly I will look into what is the basis for the Danish individual and ambivalent relation to Christianity.

Bektovic's categorisation of young people's religious attitudes is a continuation of Hans Raun Iversen's work on the same matter.<sup>16</sup> Iversen gives a theological-sociological account of the historical development of Danish Christianity; Bektovic transmits this account to the post-modern Denmark and in the process incorporates two new categories.<sup>17</sup> The categories laying basis for the analysis are Church-Christians; Culture-Christians; Committed-Christians; Believers in science.

*Church-Christians* have an active relation to the church which they see as a key-institution in society; not only as a symbolic cultural heritage but by the fact that the parishioner is an actual part of their identity. For this type of Christians it does not make sense to believe privately and in ones own way, being that the church should create and provide the setting and framework for faith.<sup>18</sup>

*Culture-Christians* have an ambivalent relationship to their religious heritage being that they acknowledge it, but it does not play a role in their lives. Accordingly the values, which this religious heritage has brought about, play a positive function in the creation of personal

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<sup>14</sup> Bektovic holds a PhD in Søren Kierkegaard and the Sufis' passionate outlook on religion, and is currently employed at Copenhagen University.

<sup>15</sup> Museum Tusulanums Forlag, Københavns universitet, 2004

<sup>16</sup> See p.73. Hans Raun Iversen has furthermore provided academic supervision to Bektovic.

<sup>17</sup> In total Bektovic operates with 5 categories; I will however only make use of four. The excluded category deals with "Christians with an immigrant background", which I find irrelevant based on this project's focus on ethnic Danes and their historical and traditional background.

<sup>18</sup> Bektovic, 2004, p.73

attitudes but they are not usually connected to the ethics of Christianity.<sup>19</sup> Culture-Christians are of that opinion that the rituals performed in e.g. church are of socio-cultural character rather than of religious. In relation to the ambivalence towards Christianity it is remarkable that, even though they find it irrational and thus unacceptable to believe in Jesus as God's son and the Bible as His word, they consider both to be of vital importance in relation to the development of the Christian civilization.<sup>20</sup>

*Committed-Christians* are committed to the existential meaning of the Christian testimony and are as such fully committed to the Christian way of life. Accordingly they are not focused as much on the traditions and theology as they are on the individual believer's relation to God. Like the Church-Christians, they also have an active relation to the church even though they tend to criticize its insufficient actions in promoting the Christian identity.<sup>21</sup>

If it was up to the *Believers in science*, the Christian identity would not even exist, even less be promoted, as they find religious feelings highly unacceptable. Religion and God are only for weak people and can not contribute to the development of the modern and enlightened society. On the basis of their "cultural liberation" they consider identity as a result of free choices and not as a historical heritage.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.5.2. Émile Durkheim<sup>23</sup> and the original religion

Although Durkheim personally choose not to lead a religious life, his sociological work on religion ("The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", London, 1915) is highly relevant as he was primarily concerned with how modern societies could maintain their coherence when integrative factors such as religion and ethnicity were downgraded. The argument was however that industrial capitalism would pose a risk to the societal cohesion being that it undermines the traditional religious commitment. In relation to this he deals with the division of labour which results in either an organic or mechanical solidarity; which characterize respectively a modern and a primitive society. This discussion forms a ground on which it is possible to compare the original form and function of religion and the religious attitudes of a post-modern society. Hence Bektovic's categorizations of religious attitudes become of relevance.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.74

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.75

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.75

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 76

<sup>23</sup> French sociologist; 1858-1917

For Durkheim the original *form* of religion was to be found in the activities of totemism<sup>24</sup>; the totemic animal was the center of focus and functioned as an emblem for a social group, the clan. Additionally the original *function* was to prepare people for social life and in that relation, making them willing to put the interests of society ahead of their own. Durkheim's definition of religion, which is also acknowledged today amongst anthropologists of religion, puts religion forward as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e. things set apart and forbidden-- beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Furthermore he believed that religious phenomena are a result of a separation between the profane (the realm of everyday activities) and the sacred (the realm of the extraordinary and the transcendent) - the separation is however determined by people.

Durkheim's interest revolved around religion as a communal experience rather than an individual one, and resulted in a categorization of the 4 major functions of religion: 1) *Disciplinary*, dealing with the forcing or administrating of discipline; 2) *Cohesive*, being that it brought people together and eventually resulting in a strong bond; 3) *Vitalizing*, meaning that it boosts ones spirit and vigour; 4) *Euphoric*, as it brings about a feeling of happiness, well-being and confidence.<sup>25</sup>  One might argue that people in postmodern societies are less prone to appreciate the integrative force of religion than the people in the so-called primitive societies; the acknowledgement of an authority's superiority and being content with ones lot is rare in a modern western society.<sup>26</sup> In this relation Durkheim takes up the discussion on the different impacts through history which have resulted in the decreasing role of religion, such as e.g. the Enlightenment period, the French revolution, the formulation of human rights etc. He argues that these movements could "constitute a vital form of religion under modern conditions"<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> *Wikipedia.com*: Totems support larger groups than the individual person. In [kinship and descent](#), if the ancestor of a clan is nonhuman, it is called a totem. Normally this belief is accompanied by a [totemic myth](#).  
*Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*: An association between human groups or individuals and specific animals or plants which entailed ritualized observances and sometimes eating avoidances.

<sup>25</sup> *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durkheim>, 2007-05-30

<sup>26</sup> *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.rep.routledge.com.molly.ruc.dk/article/R015SECT11>, 2007-05-30

<sup>27</sup> Andersen & Kaspersen, 2000, chapter on Durkheim is written by Willy Guneriusen, p. 72

## 2.6. Choice of Method

Due to the various interesting aspects of this project and due to the informational value of the incorporated data it is clear to state that the empirical data found and used are multiple and varied. This approach to data collection might be somewhat controversial and complicated as it broadens the project's case-study and might result in a blurry analysis. Nevertheless, it is important in relation to the problem formulation and its two aspects that we include at least two empirical subjects; respectively representing both the political and the social stance on Christianity.

### 2.6.1. Empirical data

In order to be able to conclude on the social and individual stance on religion in general and Christianity in particular, I will draw upon statistics already produced by other researchers. The secondary source of empirical data is found in Peter Lüchau's paper on religious beliefs in Denmark across 50 years, which was produced in corporation with Copenhagen University's interest area "Religion in the 21. century".<sup>28</sup>

The empery used for the political analysis is two party programmes of the Conservative political party; an old and a new one, respectively from 1981 and 2000.<sup>29</sup> The programmes are read from a Christian perspective, meaning that the focus is on the sections which can be related to the ethics of the Evangelical-Lutheran teachings.

In the following I wish to asses the quality of the empirical data found in terms of the rigours set of criteria superficially mentioned in Bryman's "Social Research Methods"<sup>30</sup>; one by one I will apply the criteria to the party programme and to the statistics.

The *authenticity* of the party programmes can be discussed; the fact that the name of the author is not mentioned anywhere has its effects on the reader, but it is questionable in terms of the origin of the programme- even though it is stated when and where it was passed. The same goes for the paper produced by Peter Lüchau; it goes without mentioning that he as a researcher has had his influence on the outcomes or the interpretations of the data. However

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Lüchau, "Gudstro i Danmark i 50år", Satningsområdet Religion i det 21. århundrede, Københavns Universitet, 2004

<sup>29</sup> See appendix 7 and 12

<sup>30</sup> Alan Bryman, "Social Research Methods", Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 381

the interest area set out by Copenhagen University might as such also, directly or indirectly, set out some guiding lines in terms of e.g. the work paper's focus points. Although these are all very good guesses, they remain just that; speculations.

The *credibility* criterion as such is complicated as you must always question the author's prejudices and aims. With that in mind it becomes clear that the party programmes is just that; an ideological presentation of one party's views. Furthermore, it is important to notice that not all subjects get an equal amount of space and consideration. In terms of the statistics found in Lächau's paper one might argue that the numbers speak for themselves and even more so because the reader is presented with the questions asked to a particular table.

The *representativeness* criterion is covered in that the party programmes are typical of their kind being that it contains sections on the different subjects that a political party is supposed to deal with. Lächau's work paper is as such typical of its kind, however he has himself pointed out that it was problematic to find sources,<sup>31</sup> thus making it hard to generalise on behalf of the society's population, even though he has included e.g. a distinction between men and women.

The *meaning* criterion questions if the data is clear and comprehensible. Both the party programmes and the statistics in the work paper are in Danish and are as such straightforward in terms of my perception of them. Furthermore, each subject and table of answers is treated in a comprehensible, explanatory and specifying manner.

## 2.6.2. Methodology

According to the "Problem-Oriented Project Work" decisions on methodology revolve around delimiting what is being analysed by depicting the nature of ones interpretation; methodological individualism, methodological collectivism or situationism? The approach taken in this report will be that of methodological collectivism which is concerned with social context, meaning that the object of analysis is the significance of social context to the individual's action. This approach argues for the use of a theory or model in explaining the structures or phenomena that influence individual action.<sup>32</sup> In relation to the functionalist thought, my interpretation will focus on the function of religion and hence how some

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Lächau, "Gudstro i Danmark i 50år", Satningsområdet Religion i det 21. århundrede, Københavns Universitet, 2004, p.4

<sup>32</sup> Olsen & Pedersen, 2005, p.150

historical realities have had an impact on the relation between the individual and the assumed integrative force, religion.

It is however important to emphasise that interpretations made will be bound to the empirical material, meaning that I will seek to prove my point through the points made in respectively the party programme of Conservatives and the statistics presented by Lüchau.

### 2.6.3. Research techniques

The data collection techniques applied in this project is the explanatory and the descriptive methods which have the approaches of respectively demonstrating causal links and showing a phenomena's structure.<sup>33</sup> The techniques for data collection applied for the explanatory approach are e.g. analysis of documents, interviews in situ and the application of theory. Whereas e.g. comparative methods and a mixture of qualitative and quantitative tools are used within the descriptive approach.<sup>34</sup> By applying these methods I comply with the requirements of this report's problem, to the nature of the empirical data and to the reach of the theories chosen. Hence saying that the explanatory and descriptive method helps seeing the whole (historical background) in order to understand the particular (the perception of religion today).

It is with this in mind that the actual research techniques are going to be a combination of a qualitative content analysis and a secondary approach to statistics. Because on one hand, the seeking out of underlying themes, which are usually illustrated with a quote, will be similar to putting on Christians glasses and hence read the political texts in relation to Evangelical-Lutheran Protestantism.

On the other hand, the reading of the statistics found on individual religious perceptions will be less in-depth since Lüchau's presentations and interpretations give sense; thus the focus will be on applying the numbers so that it makes sense in relation to my hypothesis.

The considerations made in relation to the quality assessment provided a basis for the empirical data's restrictions. Following is a section on the limitations of the complete project report, in terms of both the empirical and theoretical deficient and de-selections.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.164-165

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.166

## 2.7. Delimitation

Following is a discussion on the delimitations of the empery and research techniques used and the theory applied.

### 2.7.1. Empery and Methods:

- The fact that all the empirical data is in Danish, which could be a probable setback due to the translation of respectively the answers in the questionnaires which the statistics are mainly based on and the formulation of attitudes by the Conservative political party. However I do not find it to be a problem being that the statistics are focused on numbers and that the extraction of themes does not require a thorough reflection on the exact wording.
- The close relation to the European Union and the current debate about the role of religion in the institution would otherwise bring about a section on EU in terms of the influential religious organizations at play<sup>35</sup> and the moral bond between the countries. Additional points for discussion could be Europe's history and the presence of globalization. Although both have surely had an impact on people's religious attitudes, the focus of the problem formulation is however the Danish nation-state and the historical developments on which the Danish religious identity is based.
- The analysis of the current Danish religious condition would have been more in-depth if e.g. another political party was included as a counter-balance to the Conservatives. Opposing the Conservative "God, King and Nation" to the ideal of universal human rights which the governing party, Venstre, stress instead would bring about a more thorough discussion on the different attitudes present in the Danish society. Accordingly, two parties from respectively the Left- and Right wing would bring yet another perspective on the matter.
- Although Lüchau tries to avoid it, he ends up generalising more or less. The fact that the individual reasoning is neglected is as such in compliance with the Durkheimian thought, which views intentional explanations to be of little significance<sup>36</sup>, but in relation to the representativeness criterion(see section on empirical data) it is incorrect.
- The most prominent limitation of the statistics found in the work paper by Lüchau is that they are dated to year 2004. Of course, one might argue that the entire paper works with old statistics and questionnaires and that the 3 year interval between the publishing of the paper

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<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Kristeligt Dagblad, "Bør den dansk kirke markere sig mere i EU?", <http://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/artikel/252444?highlight=EU>

<sup>36</sup> Intentional explanations means "explaining individual action in relation to the intentions and aims the actor seeks to achieve." Andersen & Kaspersen, 2000, p. 63

and my analysis does not change the facts very much. Nevertheless it is important to mention the matter being that, as Lüchau pointed out in relation to another historical fact, the debate on Islam might have had an impact on people's reflections.

Furthermore it is important to emphasise the fact that Peter Lüchau's interest in the historical development of religious beliefs brings about the aspect of secondary analysis; his analysis can be questioned due to the simple fact that he was not part of the research teams analysing the questionnaires in the first place and can thus have misunderstood some aspects.

- As mentioned shortly above, the many discussions on Islam during the years have an impact on the individual reflections; one might ask "am I a Christian because I am not a Muslim?" or "is the growth of Islam a negative development in relation to the Danish Church?". The point is that it is different from Christianity and from what people are used to in terms of religious practice. The discussion on religious perceptions in respectively Islam and Christianity is interesting<sup>37</sup>, but the focus is still on the Danish historical background which does not include Islam as such.
- One may argue that I could have applied a content analysis coding scheme which implies designing a coding manual and a coding schedule.<sup>38</sup> However this method is less relevant in relation to the reading of the party-programmes being that two versions of a party-programme is not enough and does not contain the direct terms relevant to the project.
- Following the qualitative content analysis results in an unclear procedure; the process of extracting the themes are left implicit.<sup>39</sup> This has an affect on the reliability of the project being that the data deducted can be questioned according to the principle of reproduction.

### **2.7.2. Limitations of the theoretical framework:**

- An apparent limitation of Bektovic's book, in terms of this project report, is the narrow focus on young people. The fact that I deal with the Danish population in general might bring forward a critique based on the fact that the categorisations made relevant in this project are mainly applied to young people. Nevertheless, the categorizations as such are generally defined and thus applicable to a larger context which enables me to use them without great difficulties.
- The fact that I have included a very small number of historical realities means that I might have neglected a certain aspect which might have been crucial or, at least, relevant. However,

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<sup>37</sup> Bektovic, 2004 takes up this discussion in "Kultur møder og religion-Identitetsdannelse blandt kristne og muslimske unge". I have however disregarded this other aspect related to young Muslims.

<sup>38</sup> Bryman, 2004, p. 189

<sup>39</sup> Bryman, 2004, p. 392

the argumentation for this was that in order to keep focus I should only focus on a few periods which can be said to contain some of the same aspects as the periods not included, e.g. the violent break with the Catholic Church is included in the section on Martin Luther, which thus makes the French revolution to some extent used and inadequate.

### **3. The Danish population**

#### **3.1. Introduction to chapter**

This chapter deals with the religious perceptions of the Danish population; how has the representation of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity changed within the population? By following the hypothesis that there has been a shift from the ethics of the Danish church to a more generalised belief in spirituality I will take up a discussion on the decreasing amount of memberships in the Danish Church.

To make the chapter more comprehensible I will break it up in two, respectively dealing with the historical background of the empery and a sub-analysis of the general attitudes in the modern Danish society. The first section takes up different factors which have had an influence on the development and thus lays the basis for the later discussion on how the original perception of religion is different from the current one.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a reasonable argument stating that, besides the modern ideals of the Enlightenment period and post-modernity, the individualisation of religion is also a result of the religious and societal notions which the Danish population confers to.

#### **3.2. Historical background on empirical data**

##### **3.2.1. Martin Luther and the teaching of the two regimes (1483-1548)**

Although the Reformation was characterised by various aspects and positions I will here concern myself with the Lutheran Protestantism<sup>40</sup>, based on the teachings of the German monk, Martin Luther (1483-1548). Accordingly it is important to remember that Luther was

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<sup>40</sup> Protestantism is a collective designation for a group of movements which arose during the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

one of the few individuals which rebelled against the established church, and that the Lutheran movement is small in relation to the other protestant-evangelical churches.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, it is relevant to mention that the protestant maxim was said to be “*Sola fide*”,<sup>42</sup> which means “Only faith”. This is important in relation to the fact that Luther wanted the Christian individual to read the Bible himself, so that he does not rely on the church’s interpretations and eventually come to realize his worth as a human being. This emphasis on the individual deprives the church’s function as “middleman” and thus its monopoly on God.<sup>43</sup> One might think that this break with the superiority of the church is also transferred to the state being that this also required and still requires some form of subordination by the population. However this was not the case being that Luther believed both the state/King and church to have important functions at hand. Thus Luther divided society in two regimes, a spiritual and secular, so that the church can preach the Gospel in a regulated and proper society, which is secured by the public authorities. Either way the word of God is spread and followed; in the secular regime God operates through laws and regulations and hence keeps peace and order, whilst He in the spiritual regime acts directly through His word and the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> In contrast to the modern perception of the state, Luther saw the public authorities as inaugurated by God as there is a need for a society based on the rule of law, which is why it is seldom accepted to be disobedient to the public authorities.<sup>45</sup>

In order for the public authorities to have legitimacy they must act according to God’s will, which basically means that they must act with love for their fellow human beings instead for the love of power and money. Even though one might consider Luther to be somewhat naive to think so well of the public authorities, he nevertheless developed his teaching on the two regimes due to the fact that several historical personalities had a difficulty being politicians and being Christians at the same time.<sup>46</sup> Luther responded by stating that there are advantages in being a Christian public authority: by knowing that he cannot save himself, but depends on God’s mercy, he is liberated to do good for his fellow humans; he does not come to perceive the power as an absolute and personal factor as he understands that he is God’s tool and that we will eventually return to Him.<sup>47</sup> This brings about an understanding of the

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<sup>41</sup> See for example the Methodist, Baptist, Calvinist churches

<sup>42</sup> Luther tekster, <http://www.martinluther.dk/VOT-02.htm>, 2007-06-07 See i.a. boxes 110 and 121

<sup>43</sup> Dosenrode-Lynge & Øhrstrøm, 1998, p. 57

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 56

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 60 + p. 56

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.69

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.70

two-regimes teaching which emphasises and explains the twofold situation in which human beings find themselves; we live in a limited and superficial world while at the same time being responsible towards God.<sup>48</sup>

The Danish bishop, Jan Lindhardt, presents another understanding of the two regimes in his recent book on the Danish church and its role in the Danish society.<sup>49</sup> He is of the opinion that the two regimes should, besides being called the secular and the spiritual regime, be known as respectively the “see-kingdom” and the “hear-kingdom”. Basically this refers to the fact that Luther lived in the beginning of the era in which the eye takes over, meaning that the reality at hand is to be understood by the power of sight. Even though Luther could comply with this, he did not exclude the power of the spirit, which for him was not visible, only perceptible in the form of the Gospel preaching (hence audible).<sup>50</sup> The argument is thus that faith as such does not occur in the human heart without any external force, but is brought about by the hearing of God’s word. The hearing and accepting of God’s spoken word brings the individual in focus being that we all relate differently to it.<sup>51</sup> Christianity went from being a publicly decided matter, to being a personal matter. Even though this privatizing of feelings is first considered successful in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, one might argue that it can be lead back to the tradition of writing and the fight against and removal of authorities to which the basic teachings of Martin Luther can be connected.<sup>52</sup>

More importantly, Lindhardt’s interpretation of Luther argues for a so-called “caesaropapisme”<sup>53</sup> which basically means that the two regimes are in fact only one regime; the emperor and pope are one and the same. Lindhardt argues that having an interrelated church and state is not a thing of the medieval past, but is a fact in the modern Danish society in which the ministers are hired by the state and the ministry of church affairs is governed by members of the Danish Parliament. Having that kind of national church means to have a church nation, being that, *“It comes natural in terms of the caesaropapisme. We come to have a state with clerical functions. We are so used to it that we no longer consider these functions as ecclesiastical.”*<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 56

<sup>49</sup> Jan Lindhardt, ”Folkekirke?-Kirken i det danske samfund”, Hovedland, 1. udgave, 2005

<sup>50</sup> Lindhardt, 2005, p.130

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.29-30

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 31-40

<sup>53</sup> Fremmedordbog: Cæsareopapisme= (af lat.) styreform hvor statens hersker også er kirkens.

Sven Brüel, Niels Åge Nielsen og Lilian Plon, Gyldendals Røde Ordbøger, 11. udgave, 7. oplag

<sup>54</sup> Lindhardt, 2005, p. 47-48

The state's acquisition of church land and duties are a result of, amongst others, Luther's battle to reform the church. Arguing that, "*Since the church in Rome no longer could invoke God's blessing on its political power, it had to renounce the power. That led to the church's withdrawal from the political arena. It also led to a privatization and personalization of belief.*"<sup>55</sup> This refusal to acknowledge particular values as better than others has promoted the post-modern relativism which in turn has helped create a very critical and negative picture of religion in general, as any religious belief is based on a conviction that something is the truth and thus un-debatable.<sup>56</sup>

However before going into the discussion on post-modernity we need to bring forward other significant and influencing historical factors.

### **3.2.2. The ideals of the Enlightenment period (approx. 1680-1780)**

One can argue that the main motto characterising this period and the ideals derived from it is Kant's wording, "*Sapere aude!*" Basically people are motivated to have the courage to use their own reason, as this was the primary source of authority. This brings forward the notion on the Enlightenment as breaking through "the sacred circle", meaning that superstition, irrationality and intolerance were pushed back by values such as freedom, democracy and reason. The former were held responsible for political instability and religious wars, and were thus deemed, at best, inadequate and, at worst, dangerous,<sup>57</sup> whereas the latter were believed to be the result of an education of the public.

The period prior to the Enlightenment broke away with various forms of absolute power and credibility, especially in the form of the demands directed by the middle class towards the monarchy and the church's loss of credibility in line with the progress of (natural) science. In view of that, the Enlightenment-philosophers gathered these existing struggles by advancing the abolition of absolute monarchy and a lessening of the church's power over societal organisation.

The clash with the church was based on two matters; on the fact that a new form of religious belief developed from the rationality promoted during the Enlightenment and on the growing

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<sup>55</sup> Bjerager, 2006, p.65

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.79

<sup>57</sup> See app. 8 Enlightenment period

and progressive middleclass. The latter had a problem with the church's large amount of wealth and authority which stood in the way of their own progression, whereas divine revelations and holy books was not a part of the new established faith entitled deism.<sup>58</sup> Instead deist believe that human reason must be the basic foundation of religious belief and that sources of the natural world can reveal the existence of God or a supreme being.<sup>59</sup> All in all, one can say that the Enlightenment period was characterised by a form of secularization based on the fact that the norms, laws and order of society could no longer be substantiated with a religious statement. One can argue that this aspect draws us away from Luther's God given regimes, but relates us to Grundtvig's notion that we are humans first and then Christians.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.2.3. N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872)

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig achieved a career as a minister, theologian, hymn writer, politician and educational theorist and is as such considered to be one of the most influential personalities in the Danish societal- and spiritual history. He is to a large degree responsible for the widespread Danish understanding that being Christian and being Danish is interrelated, as he incorporated Danish and Nordic history in his interpretation of Christianity.<sup>61</sup>

His "historical-poetry" was characterised by an aspiration to educate about the human's (especially the Danish people) position in the world by including traditional topics such as philosophy, history, in terms of history of Denmark and the church, Nordic mythology and especially poetry.<sup>62</sup> This was mainly conducted in a language the common Dane could understand, as Grundtvig opposed the tendency to have an elitist group of scholars. He advanced the common man's Christian belief and right to choose a minister which would preach according to the personal belief one might have and not force Christianity upon you. In relation to this it is relevant to quote Henrik Wigh-Poulsen, theologian and president of the Grundtvig Academy at Vartov, who is of that opinion that if it was not for Grundtvig, "*More people would have been counted as outside of the Danish church.*" Through his vision on the parishioner and the church, Grundtvig calmed down the laymen-movements in the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See app. 6 Oplysningstiden 1

<sup>59</sup> Wikipedia.com, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deism>, 2007-06-07

<sup>60</sup> "Menneske først og kristen så", se Hvithamer, 2007, p. 97

<sup>61</sup> Hvithamer, 2007, p. 97

<sup>62</sup> See app. 4 Grundtvig i Dansk Litteratur

century and made the Danish church more comprehensive and inclusive.<sup>63</sup> He turned the gaze inwards when he stated that the reason for the establishments outside the church was because the majority of ministers had neglected their calling and had failed to preach the Gospel.<sup>64</sup>

Grundtvig focus was on the life in a parishioner as he believed that *“the parishioner constitutes a (Danish) community that gather around the sacraments, statements of faith and hymns. It is the “living word” that is spoken in the community, not the read word, which is most significant.”*<sup>65</sup> Relating this to Luther’s view on the relation between the individual and God, it becomes clear that Grundtvig has taken it a step further being that he combines the paradox stating that faith is, on one hand, external to people and that we must objectively accept it and that it, on the other hand, is subjectified through experience and inner spirituality. Accordingly, Sune Auken argues in his PhD that Grundtvig phrases a theological and dogmatic belief in a language which is very personal and oriented towards familiarity. This brings forward an image of God, which *“encompasses both a god that exceeds everything, simultaneously with that it is a very existing and personal god”*. This can be related to the power of the “living word” within the parishioner which makes Grundtvig focus more on the idea that Christians have believed in the same creed for centuries and they have passed this faith on rather than being concerned with details in the Bible. Basically Grundtvig was of the opinion that theologians should not have a say in what or how to believe as there was/is an acknowledgement that the individual knows what he or she believes in.”<sup>66</sup>

### 3.2.4. The ideals of post-modernity

Post-modernism or post-modernity? That is a very controversial discussion, which can shortly and superficially be settled with the distinction saying that, *“Postmodernity is a condition, or a state of being, or is concerned with changes to institutions and conditions- whereas postmodernism is an aesthetic, literary, political or social philosophy.”*<sup>67</sup> Hence, the term used to describe the present condition in society will be “post-modernity”. That this term is an unclear and confusing term is clear to most people who have dealt with it. I will therefore not

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<sup>63</sup> See app. 5 Grundtvig i Kristeligt Dagblad

<sup>64</sup> Hvithamer, 2007, p. 97

<sup>65</sup> Translated from Danish: Menigheden udgør et (dansk) fællesskab, der samles om sakramenterne, trosbekendelsen og salmesange. Det er ”det levende ord”, som det tales i fællesskabet, ikke det læste ord, der er det væsentligste.” Hvithamer, 2007, p. 97

<sup>66</sup> See app. 6 Grundtvig i Kristeligt Dagblad

<sup>67</sup> See app. 9 PoMo

go into deep discussions about its definition, but will rather focus on some of its, generally agreed characteristics.

As many of the theorist with the post-modern discussion, Jean-François Lyotard, understood post-modernity to be the a contrast to modernity; for him post-modernity represents a culmination of the modern pursuit of progress and change, being that “*constant change has become a status quo and the notion of progress, obsolete.*”<sup>68</sup> Additionally one might say that there is a shift from a society structured by industrialization and class solidarity to a society which is characterized by an increasing fragmentation and pluralism. The notion of individualism seems to replace traditional commitments, especially those of class, ethnic and religious character. On the basis of this, post-modernity is seen to be very much related to anti-foundationalism; meaning that absolute ideas and universal truths are automatically disregarded.<sup>69</sup> The emphasis is rather on plurality, diversity and relativity.

However, Bektovic argues that this same relativity has negative consequences for the identity-formation in a post-modern society; the stress on reflexivity implies that the post-modern individual considers tradition as well as modernity aspects, but the fragmentation and individualisation results in a crisis being that the individual to a great extent seeks new divisions between the individual and the collective, as well as between the particular and the universal.<sup>70</sup> This indicates “*a tension field in which one still stresses ones individuality and has a critical stance towards traditional religion [...] but at the same time you express a protest against a society which is destroying the core values in life and you thus seek to reformulate the substance of the traditions.*”<sup>71</sup> The result is a so-called syncretism or eclectic approach which basically implies a combination of many different sources or views; in the western world this syncretism is often to be found in a privatized form being that an increasing amount of people combine elements from different religious traditions and thus create their own individual belief.<sup>72</sup> This can be related to the work of Peter Lüchau “Gudstro i Danmark i 50år” in which we are presented for a religious belief which has quantitatively been stable, but which has changed in terms of a tendency towards seeing God as a general spiritual force (even though the amount of people believing in God has not changed).<sup>73</sup>

In terms of the relationship to the church and the brotherhood and unity which it preaches it becomes clear that the post-modern individual is still religious even though he or she does not

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Heywood, 2002, p. 65

<sup>70</sup> Bektovic, 2004, p. 21

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 25

<sup>72</sup> Riis, 1996, p. 14

<sup>73</sup> See app. 1 Gudstro i DK i 50år, p.15

comply with the commonality of the church. “*Believing without belonging*” is the religious description of Europeans actuated by the European Values Survey, which was related to the fact that the church is no longer seen to be an authority in people’s lives.<sup>74</sup> Why then is the majority of the Danish population still a member of the Danish Church?<sup>75</sup> The attempt to answer this question follows.

### 3.3. Sub-analysis: The religious course of the population

The aim of this section is to answer the sub-question, “How has the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity been applied in the Danish context?” For this I will draw on the earlier presented categories of Safet Bektovic while keeping in mind the outlined historical influences on the Danish population and some of Èmile Durkheim’s concepts. Hence the discussion will revolve around the present religious perceptions in relation to earlier conditions. What has been the focus of respectively Durkheim, Luther, the Enlightenment-philosophers and Grundtvig? And how did we jump from Durkheim’s collective religiousness to the post-modern emphasis on secularization?

As previously mentioned, religion was for Durkheim a communal, rather than an individual, force being that it has a gathering and socialising affect on the society. On a general basis, Durkheim does not speak of religion as particular religious communities, but as a societal institution which contributes to the survival and well-being of the society as a whole.<sup>76</sup> However, Durkheim also speaks of a division of labour which has an impact on the coherence of society. Accordingly, “*The societal development is influenced by the division of labour. During the industrialisation there is a growing division of labour which comes to mean that the solidarity form of the society changes.*”<sup>77</sup> Durkheim explains the change in solidarity by the concepts mechanical- and organic solidarity; there is a shift from mechanical solidarity (found in primitive societies and implying “attraction by similarity”) to organic solidarity (which is to be found in so-called complex societies and which are based on a “mutual dependence between specialized activities”) which is provoked by the process of industrialisation and individualisation. The point is that religion might help in creating a new form of community-feeling within the individualized society; this is done by making the

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<sup>74</sup> Bjerager, 2006, p.143

<sup>75</sup> Medlemsprocent: 83.0 Kirkeministeriet, <http://www.km.dk/545.html>, 2007-06-08

<sup>76</sup> Riis, 1996, p. 85

<sup>77</sup> Riis, 1996, p. 86

concept of God as general and abstract as possible being that, “*the more general the communality-feeling gets, the more space is left over for individual variations.*”<sup>78</sup> Basically the respect for individuality is important in a modern and complex society, otherwise the construction of a communality-feeling is hardly possible, and without said feeling the result could be anomie.<sup>79</sup>

Martin Luther did not consider solidarity or/and individuality as such, being that he values the suffering obedience higher than he values the civil liberty,<sup>80</sup> thus what connects Durkheim and Luther is a focus on the communal aspect of religion. However, in relation to the problem of this project the emphasis should be on the fact that although Luther considered public authorities and the church vital in order to uphold the Christian moral, he rejected the Catholic Church to be the institution in charge and wanted, in that relation, the individual to read the holy book by himself.

The emphasis on the human reason was by far the most significant aspect of the Enlightenment period; in stead of basing the norms and rules of society on a religious argument, the primary source of authority now came to be people’s own reason. Hence, even though one can be religious and still be guided by the ideals of the Enlightenment one can easily assert that if the decision was up to the Enlightenment-philosophers the individual would not have to deal with things such as the Bible or supposed miracles, being that even religious belief must be founded on human reason. (The religious philosophy and movement; Deism)

This sketched out line of development leads to the works of Grundtvig whose work and teachings are a big part of the Danish society (e.g. the so-called “højskole”-tradition which could be translated with the insufficient word folk high school, but his influence is also to be found in the attitudes of several politicians leaning towards the movement named after him: Grundtvigianisme). Characteristically he emphasised the life on Earth which has resulted in a reputation as the “happy” form of Christianity.<sup>81</sup> More importantly, and in relation to the abovementioned communality-feeling in an individualized and complex society, is the fact that Grundtvig saw the Danish Church to be “tolerant”, which referred to an idea that it should be able to tolerate nearly anything.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 87

<sup>80</sup> Dosenrode-Lyng, 1998, p.59

<sup>81</sup> Wikipedia.com, <http://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grundtvigianisme>, 2007-06-09

<sup>82</sup> Lindhardt, 2005, p.124

On the basis of this outline and in relation to the sub- question “Has the amount of memberships in the Danish Church decreased? Why?” we now turn to the post-modern relation to and application of Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity.

*“The low rate of church attendance (2-4% on a weekly basis), combined with the high rate of nominal church membership in the national Lutheran Church (80-85%) reflects, among other things, a situation in which almost five hundred years of relatively rigid, compulsory state church religion has prevented the majority of the people in the Nordic countries from ever having any sense of practical responsibility for the organisation of their own religion.”*<sup>83</sup>

This quote brings forward two relevant factors; the fact that the religious affiliation has previously been “rigid” and “compulsory” and that this condition had resulted in a “nominal church membership” today. The church is no longer approached concerning existential and ethical questions, but functions merely as *“the implicit legitimating body of the Christian culture”* and as such the institution traditionally providing for funerals, weddings etc.<sup>84</sup> Thus one way of answering the question raised in the end of section 3.2.3 could be found in the quote that, *“The Danes have a low rate in terms of the existential belief, but a high rate in terms of the Christian identity.”*<sup>85</sup> Meaning that it is due to the Christian culture that one is a registered member of the Danish church and not because one believes in the Gospel or attends in the church. This is highly relatable to Bektovic’s category “Culture-Christians” as they acknowledge their religious heritage but have not chosen it consciously to play an active role in their lives.

Furthermore the role of the church in society has been steadily decreasing due to historical factors. This has had an impact on the individual’s relationship to the church and has, among other things, led to a privatization of religion. One might argue that the content of ones private and personal belief is as such not relevant, being that the sociological study focuses on the consequences, in terms of social relations and identities, ones outlook on life has. It seems, as Bektovic also argues, that individualisation results in some form of a social crisis because one no longer has a particular foundation and must organise its spiritual search in *“loose networks that are not guided by a definite and specific teaching but rather by common motives.”*<sup>86</sup>

Trying to formulate a clear and precise answer to how the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity has been applied in the Danish context has lead me to conclude that there is no clear and

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<sup>83</sup> Iversen(ed.), 2006, p. 37-38

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 38

<sup>85</sup> See app. 10 Hvorfor går danskerne så sjældent i kirke?

<sup>86</sup> Riis, 2002, 17

precise answer; on one hand, one could have argued for a population which was mainly individualised and had, as such, rejected the Danish church following the argument that a post-modern individual would reflect consciously on his or her affiliation to a institution such as the church.<sup>87</sup> However, on the hand, the fact that people are members of the church, even though they are just nominal members, might imply the need for some kind of collective identity or bond. Following Grundtvig, this is because it gives them a sense of belonging in a rather individualised society.

This paradox has an impact on the project- report as it is also to be found in the political relationship to the Danish Church.

## **4. The Conservative political party**

### **4.1. Introduction to chapter**

Similar to the structure of the previous chapter, this chapter is also divided in a section on the empirical background, which is characterised by a short historical overview/discussion, and another section focused on the different points of analysis.

Following chapter 3 and the hypothesis that there has been a shift in the religious perception, I will try to apply the sub-analysis and conclusion of said chapter in order to investigate whether the same shift has occurred on the political arena, represented in the form of the Conservative political party. The traditional focus of the Conservatives has been the belief in “God, King and Nation”, but the question is what they focus on in the modern society? By bringing in a presentation of principles guiding a church-state separation, I aim at providing a background on which it is possible and relevant to discuss and analyse the Conservatives’ stance on Christianity. Due to, on one hand, its ideology which is mainly influenced by conservatism, and the post-modern society in which we live on the other, the party faces a paradox being that it can neither support a complete separation of church and state nor a strong bond to the Danish Church.

The chapter will provide for a general introduction to the party, including its ideology, history and general standpoints. However a more detailed discussion on the party’s stance toward

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 22

religion in general and the Danish Church in particular will be presented in another section; an introductory and comparative presentation of a respectively old and new party programme will provide the material for this section. The basis however will be provided by a discussion on the ways to separate church and state.

In terms of the sub-analysis I will incorporate some of the discussed points in chapter 3 in order interrelate the analysis of the Conservative People's party with the tendency within the Danish population.

## 4.2. Background on empirical data

### 4.2.1. General introduction to the Conservative People's party

On a general basis, the first thing that comes to mind when speaking of the Conservatives is the fact that the term derives from the latin word "*conservare*" which means to preserve. In relation to this philosophical background one can mention another profiling aspect of the party, is the Irish-born writer and politician, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) who is said to be the father of conservatism<sup>88</sup>, even though he was not the first to use the term publicly. The first to apply the word in its modern sense is the French author and politician, François-René de Chateaubriand, which in the 18<sup>th</sup> century named a magazine, in which he argued for a political rehabilitation which would bring back the pre-revolutionary conditions in France, *Le Conservateur*. Nevertheless, Burke argued, as opposed to Rousseau, in the 1790s that the establishment of the future is achieved with a fundamental respect for the past and the traditions. Hence the definition of a conservative as a person that, "*sustains the existing and the, from the ancestors, inherited whether it deals with the constitution or scientific approaches, traditions and practices.*"<sup>89</sup> This brings forward Burke's fundamental view stating that society should be viewed upon as an organism which revolves around an exceptional commonality, which is valid for past, present and future generations of said society. And on this basis, the change promoted by the Conservatives is rather evolutionary than revolutionary; the biological term is used to explain the heritability, reproduction and selection of certain elements within the society.<sup>90</sup> The emphasis on "God, King and Native country" could be an example on such societal elements which are sought preserved.

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<sup>88</sup> His book "Reflections on the Revolutions in France" from 1790 is considered to be a milestone.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 21

<sup>90</sup> Wikipedia.com, <http://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konservatisme>, 2007-06-09

The historical background of conservatism is traced back to the revolution in France which is said to be the birth of Conservatism; it is a reaction to the demand of immediate change. There was a need to change the wide-spread demand for change in order to be able to preserve what one considered to be important.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps this relation to the French revolution has brought about the conservative view on history implying that its course has meant a break between the state, the community, and the individual, the citizen.<sup>92</sup> In relation to this an “ideology of imperfection” is attained arguing that radical and utopian changes will not, and cannot, bring about the ideal society as the human being is considered imperfect.<sup>93</sup>

The Danish version of conservatism is to be found in the political party, the Conservative People’s Party. Until 1915, the conservative ideology was incorporated in the political party “Højre” (direct translation: Right), but due to several reasons a more modern and socially oriented conservative profile was sought for. The general ideological framework of today’s Conservative party is considered to be constituted of conservatism and liberalism<sup>94</sup>, which generally means that they are, “*against ideologies and especially the materialism and lack of spirituality of today. It has its base in the human mind, and it rejects that happiness can be forced, it is individualistic and is concerned with personal freedom and inner autonomy...*”<sup>95</sup> This focus was clear in the party’s first, very short and precise, programme containing 12 points, some of them depicted below.

Furthermore this combination of liberalism and conservatism has surely had an impact on the alliance between the Conservatives and Denmark’s Liberal party, Venstre. The Conservative People’s party has since year 2001 been in a government coalition with Venstre, and occupies as such 7 ministerial posts. Bendt Bendtsen is the political leader and chairman of the party, as well as the vice-Prime minister and the minister of economic and business affairs. In terms of the government, the Conservative political party has only once run for the Prime Minister’s Office; Poul Schlüter managed to keep the party at its feet during a crisis in the 1970s and was elected Prime Minister from 1982-1993.

Following points are included here in order to give a general view of what the Conservative political party focuses on.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Tamm, 1999, p. 24

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 32

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 25

<sup>94</sup> See app. 11 De Konservative Wikipedia

<sup>95</sup> Tamm, 1999, p. 32

<sup>96</sup> See app. 11 De Konservative Wikipedia

- The strengthening of private property ownership and the opportunities to start a business
- A legislation in the social area based on the principal of “help to self-help2”
- A limiting of the population’s consumption of alcohol
- Holding back with the finances of the public sector
- The preservation of the Danish Church
- A higher skill level in “the children’s school” and at the higher educational systems.
- A complete pass of the equal and common franchise
- The accomplishment of women’s equal rights

Later on in this chapter I will particularly go into the point on the Danish Church and examine how the relation to it has been depicted in the party programmes from respectively year 1981 and the newest edition from year 2000. First, however, it is important to found the basis for the later discussion by investigating the general ideas behind the separation of church and state.

#### **4.2.2. 3 principles of church-state separation**

The aim of this section is to present an academic approach to the discussion of a church-state separation. I will make use of Robert Audi’s book “Religious Commitment and Secular Reason” which brings forward 3 central principles of church-state separation. This section thus brings forward concepts that will enable me to discuss the Conservative party’s relation to the Danish Church in the next section.

Robert Audi presents us with 3 central principles for church-state separation which are all bound together by the fundamental element in a “*full-blooded liberal democracy*”: religious liberty. Perhaps, it is important to emphasise that the following principles are ideals and are as such not completely achievable. Moreover, Audi recognizes the importance of religion to individuals and that he thus must speak of an institutional separation of church and state, rather than a moral. The point is that if a state, directly or indirectly, prefers a particular religion, its people will maybe feel obliged to follow said religion and thus have a difficulty in practising another.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Audi, 2000, p. 32

Audi speaks of “*the libertarian principle*” which basically means that, although within certain limits, the state must permit the practice of any religion. The state recognizes that it should not interfere with the citizens’ freedom to practice their religion and does therefore not favour any particular religion. A discussion point within this principle is what the “certain limits” contain; where are the boundaries of legitimate state power? Audi argues that wherever the state wishes to interfere it is up to them to provide valid argumentation and proof.<sup>98</sup>

The next principle is similar to the latter being that “*the equalitarian principle*” also advocates for neutrality in relation to religion. The difference however remains in the fact that in the former principle it is referred to neutrality among religion, whereas in the latter it is neutrality toward religion. Hence the equalitarian principle rules out any form of established church<sup>99</sup> - however, “*Given how many democratic nations have an established church, one may wonder whether the equalitarian principle is meant to imply that they do not deserve the name “democracy” or are at best not liberal democracies.*”<sup>100</sup>

Last but not least is the so-called “*neutrality principle*”. Regardless of my use of the word “neutrality” to explain the other principles, this principle neither favours nor disfavors religion as such; it is characterised by a political neutrality which precludes governmental favouritism. Meaning that there is neutrality between the different religions *and* between the religious and non-religious institutions/persons.<sup>101</sup>

The point now is to ask which principle the Conservative People’s party would adhere mostly to. How do the two party programmes reflect the Conservative view on the Danish Church? And in that relation, has their political approach to religion shifted?

#### **4.2.3. The Conservatives and the Danish Church**

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the Conservative outlook on the Danish Church I will incorporate two party programmes, respectively an old and the latest version.

The old party programme (referred to as PP1981)<sup>102</sup> is agreed upon September 1981 and bears the title “A Future in Freedom- The programme of the Conservative People’s party”. The 24 sections are supposedly summarized in the introduction stating that, “*Freedom must be the*

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 32

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 33

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 36

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 33

<sup>102</sup> See app. 12 Det gamle partiprogram

*basis for the development and future of Denmark. The individual must have the right to choose its own ideas and to shape life in the frame which is provided by an awareness of the common.*"<sup>103</sup> The new and latest version of the Conservative party programme (referred to as PP2000)<sup>104</sup> is approved November 2000. It contains 14 points under the heading "Reason and Renewal- Conservative values in the 21. century".

It is important to state that there is a difference in my approach to the two programmes; only a few sections will be focused on in PP1981 whereas almost the entire PP2000 will be discussed. This is due to the fact that the former programme has a section on the Danish Church which I can relate to whereas the latter does not and hence forces me to take the general attitudes in the programme into account.

When considering the headings of the two party programmes you might ask yourself if the conservative wish to preserve is incorporated. Neither programme has a clear reference to a conservative ideology, thus it is not easy to spot if you have not already been acquainted with the conservative position. The heading of PP1981 is easily understood when seen in relation to the abovementioned introductory quote, as it gets clearer what the word "freedom" contains. The awareness of the common should be provided through e.g. a comprehensive schooling in Christianity, which will "*inspire the individual's spiritual engagement*".<sup>105</sup>

The heading of PP2000 has, on the other hand, incorporated a modern profile by using the terms "reason and renewal". However, keeping Edmund Burke in mind, these terms should be considered evolutionary rather than revolutionary (see section 4.2.1) as, "*Knowledge and education endows each of us with cultural and historical insight, which is the precondition of enlightened and democratically aware citizens.*"<sup>106</sup>

In relation to this, one can discuss the view on the Danish Church; reading through the PP1981 you get the impression that the Conservative People's party is fully aware and content with the Christian foundation of the Danish society and that, accordingly, the Danish church is preferable as it has the most liberated structure and the acceptance of the majority of the population. This might explain why the wording, "*To make sure that the church can address its preaching- and educational duties...*"<sup>107</sup> is stated explicitly and in a positive manner; the church is not just a historical monument, it is an important factor of the societal development.

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<sup>103</sup> Due to scanning problems this sentence is not included in the appendix. See thus Tamm, 1999, p. 199

<sup>104</sup> See app. 7 De Konservative's nye partiprogram

<sup>105</sup> See app. 12, p. 58

<sup>106</sup> See app. 7, p. 7

<sup>107</sup> See app. 12, p. 59

One might argue for the same attitude in PP2000, even though it is not stated as explicitly. In PP2000 it seems important to emphasise that that things (e.g. the administrative as well as the preaching aspect of the church) are clearly distinguished and that the ideal of a *secularized* society is secured. This can be seen in the simple phrasing of the following sentence, “*We want to protect our common values and traditions, the Constitution, the royal house, the Danish church...*”<sup>108</sup> Why the sudden reversal of the internalised motto, God, King and Nation? Perhaps the Conservative People’s party had to be careful with putting God and the Church first, when the Bible is at the bottom of the pile of books in the Danish Parliament.<sup>109</sup> Although there is no specific section on the Danish Church which is, moreover, only mentioned directly other in combination with other aspects of the Danish society that should be preserved and although there is a change in the traditional perception, the importance of the Danish church is still clear when related to the *Christian ethics*. The stress on the communalities’ charity and compassion for those who cannot help themselves is a clear reference to the fact that, “*The Christians turned their love towards the next into a tangible system that cared for the ill ones, the widow and the orphans.*”<sup>110</sup> Accordingly one might say that the Conservative emphasis on the preservation of communalities and common values can be seen in relation to two factors; the historical-traditional and the practical. The former is relevant because of the importance given to cultural knowledge (see footnote 5) whereas the latter is noteworthy in relation to the societal order, to which the sense and organisation of communality might be relevant in accomplishing.<sup>111</sup> Hence, quoting the Conservative Party chairman, the question is whether or not it is, “*a solution to push our own religion-Christianity-out the back door and only let rationality, science and the logical argument prevail in the organisation of our society? No- it is not.*”<sup>112</sup>

### 4.3. Sub-analysis: The religious course of the Conservatives

Related to the Mohammed-caricatures and the following emphasis on human rights, one of my first assumptions related to the Conservative People’s party asserted a comprehensive shift within its ideology. The idea was that the Conservatives had renounced their well-known emphasis on “God, King and Nation” in favour of a more general belief in the human rights.

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<sup>108</sup> See app. 7, p. 9

<sup>109</sup> Bjerager, 2006, p. 241

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>111</sup> See app. 7, p. 4 segments 7 & 9

<sup>112</sup> See app. 13 Kristendommen er jo i det off. rum

However, I abandoned this idea shortly after the first close reading of their latest party-programme. Nevertheless, I still was of the opinion that there is a tendency to decrease the role of Christianity.

This assumption is backed up by the simple fact that there has not been incorporated a section on the Danish Church in the new party-programme and later by the scrutinizing of the exact phrasing of sentences related to the Danish Church. This led to an understanding that whereas the role of the Danish church is more explicitly mentioned in PP1981, it is discussed in a much more general matter in PP2000; one might argue that this is related to the sub-title of PP2000 as this is concerned with the “conservative values for the 21. century”. Hence the point stated in chapter 3 related to Durkheim; although religion is originally seen to be a gathering and socializing factor in society it is important to keep in mind the complexity of the post-modern society which basically implies that in order to create a feeling of communality you need to respect the individualized ways of the population.

In relation to Robert Audi's 3 principles of separating church and state we can, by the help of process of elimination, deduce that The Conservative People's party follows the libertarian principle. Of course, the principles are ideals and are rather combined than applied distinctively. Nevertheless, due to the fact that only the libertarian principle accepts an active role of religion in society (the equalitarian principles rules out an established church and the neutrality principle would rather not discuss religion at all) we can conclude that it contains the, to the Conservative party, important factor.

## **5. The final analysis: The perception of religion today**

The purpose and intention of this chapter is to discuss the theory in relation to the empty and to answer the research question “How has the representation of Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity within the Danish population and within the party programme of the Conservative political party changed?” Consequently I will speak in general terms although related respectively to the Danish population and the Conservative political party.

Martin Luther stressed, among other things, the need of an individual reading of the Bible if one wants redemption and the opportunity to read other interpretations than the one provided by the Catholic Church. The development has, however, led to an acquirement of biblical

and Christian knowledge on a collective matter; the popular education, emphasised by N.F.S. Grundtvig, teaches about Christianity by emphasizing said religion's influence on the cultural and historical traditions of Denmark. In this relation, the Conservative political party stresses the importance of Christianity as a school subject, being that it provides a historical and cultural insight which is considered to be significant in relation to the development of enlightened and democratic citizens. The aspiration is hence the advancement of the function of religion as a socialising factor. One might argue that this aspiration has not been reached being that the majority of the post-modern Danish population relates Christianity with simple things such as Christmas or the (physical) crucifixion of Jesus, rather than with the biblical preaching at the Sunday services. This point implies a consistency between the theoretical framework provided by Bektovic and the empirical data being that the tendency to see God as a spiritual force rather than as existing in an elevated human being can be seen in relation to the culture-Christian who does not regard the Bible, and Christianity in general, to have an influence on the daily-life. Nor is he/she of the opinion that it should.<sup>113</sup> Following this, the point of analysis becomes the paradox and discussion of individualism vs. collective rituals presented in the problem area. Both points are to be found in the post-modern society; the aspect of individualism is shown in the tendency leading towards a more generalised religious belief and spirituality being that, in order to use religion as a socialising and gathering factor, the idea and presentation of religion must be as general as possible so that the complex variations of the post-modern society can be incorporated. Although being contradicted to individualism, one might argue that the aspect and need for collective rituals in the post-modern society can be reflected in the integration of ones complex values to a general belief system. The individualised society is countered by the need for a sense of belonging, even if the sense of affiliation is represented in e.g. a nominal membership of the Danish Church.

This aspect of a general system of belief is also to be found in the analysis of the Conservative political party.

Whereas the Danish church and its societal role is more explicitly mentioned in the old party programme it is only mentioned in a much more general matter as it is merged with another aspect of society. Furthermore, the PP2000 contains sections dealing with broad themes

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<sup>113</sup> Bektovic, 2004, p. 75

such as e.g. “respect for the human being”, whereas PP1981 specifically deals with e.g. traffic in one section and spare time in another.

Thus in conclusion, it seems that the change of the representation of the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity is, both in terms of the Danish population and the Conservative political party, explicit as a general system of belief rather than a binding and authoritative religious form.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the problem formulation, “*Why has the traditional perception of religion in Denmark changed?*”

A historical argumentation treats this question on the basis of the historical influences of Martin Luther and N.F.S Grundtvig. Thus following and adhering to the hypothesis that, “*The teachings of Martin Luther and N.F.S. Grundtvig have had an influence on the individualisation of religion.*” On one hand Luther’s interpretation argues that it is up to the individual to figure out what to believe in, whereas, on the other hand, Grundtvig stresses that Christianity is incorporated within the Danish history. The teachings of these two historical personalities might be contradictory, but they are nevertheless still present in the post-modern Danish society which is, respectively based on Luther’s interpretation in terms of the Gospel (The Danish constitution supports the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity) and Grundtvig’s interpretation of the Danish society (Grundtvigianism is the most widely spread orientation within the Danish Church).

When concluding upon the Conservative political party it is important to state that although there is a shift from a clearly stated relation to the Danish Church to a more vague and general argumentation, it is still possible to extract and recognize the Christian ethics in the latest party-programme.

The same can be said about the Danish population; although the majority of Danes are considered and consider themselves cultural-Christians there are other categories of Christians which also holds members. Nevertheless, the approach of this project-report has brought focus to the cultural-Christians as being the category which represents the majority of Danes most adequately.

An important aspect of the conclusion is found in the post-modern notion on “anti-foundationalism” which basically implies a rejection of idea and universal truths and, instead, an emphasis on plurality, diversity and relativity.

Hence, it might be so that Luther and Grundtvig have had somewhat of an influence on the historical development of religion, but it is however the message of the abovementioned post-modern concept that has taken the discussion on religion in another direction as it rejects the traditional preaching, the interpretations, and the fundamental aspects such as the Gospel.

Hence, *“since the post-modern confrontation with “the great narratives”, meaning the political ideologies, the philosophical systems and the established religion, value relativism has instead taken over. It is now up to the individual to decide what is good.”*<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Bjerager, 2006, p. 79

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*Other more important articles are incorporated in the appendixes.*