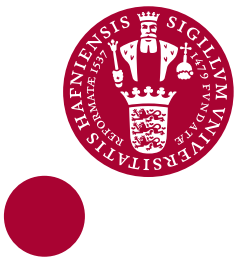

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Hans Raun Iversen

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Department for Systematic Theology
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Foreword

This collection of twelve articles in English, written over two decades, has three main purposes: Firstly it will serve as a reader at courses for English-speaking guest students at the University of Copenhagen. Secondly also for other non-Danish readers it may be a source of information on the special relations between church, society and mission in Denmark. Thirdly I hope that it can further discussions on these issues with colleagues from the non-Danish reading world.

Besides the specific formulations of some of the insights in these articles that may have been sharpened by the international contexts, there is not much in this volume which can not also be found (and often in more detailed form) in my Danish publications, e.g. *Grundtvig, folke-kirke og mission. Praktisk teologiske vekselvirkninger* (Copenhagen: Anis 2008 with full bibliography). The only chapter with material not published in Danish is the last one.

In the first four chapters of this volume the approach to the Danish scene is mainly that of sociology of church and religion. The next six chapters employ missiological perspectives – including perspectives on church and society, as they are crucial for the missiological discussion. The two final chapters explore liturgies of ordination as central parts of the life of the church.

The twelve articles which can now be read as chapters in this book have not been revised except for minor corrections, a couple of abbreviations, where texts directly overlap, and a few footnotes to update basic information. I have therefore taken care to note the year of first printing in the list of contents – and given the full reference for first printing in the first footnote for each chapter and in a common list of references at the back of the book. If the reader wants to have the latest news on, e.g. church statistics, please consult the most recent chapter. The same applies if the reader is looking for my latest interpretation of the issues at stake. Readers taking

time for this may find it stimulating to trace the steps of development during the two decades reflected in this book. As the situation has changed, so have my ways of understanding it.

Reprinting twelve articles originally published in very different places reveals that the author is not only in the habit of recycling his arguments but also repeating his favourite quotations. One such quotation from Woody Allen appears altogether three times! I hope that the reader will bear with such repetition and maybe even take it as an opportunity to consider the significance of the argument or the quotation once more. The reprinting also means that the chapters have slightly different styles of writing, e.g. abstract, English or American spellings and references in author-date-system or footnotes – as required by the editors of the first editions of the various chapters.

A warm word of thanks to Ane Bækgaard and Line Stæhr who established digital versions of older texts and did the basic part of the layout and proof reading. I am also grateful to Pia Skov Borch for solving my technical problems.

A very special word of thanks goes to Edward Broadbridge who for more than twenty years has taken pains to make my (East African) English appear as proper English – and even more he has created wonderful translations of my favourite quotations from Danish songs as an inalienable source for Danish studies. Hoping that it is an honour I dedicate this volume to him! Whenever you enjoy the language, think of him. Whatever errors you find, be sure that I am the one responsible.

August 20 2009

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Content:

1. LEAVING THE DISTANT CHURCH: THE DANISH EXPERIENCE[1]

Abstract

The European Value Studies confirm that the Danes rank at the top of the scale in relation to social solidarity and willingness to pay high taxes in order to maintain their welfare state, but at the bottom when it comes to confidence in collective decisions on moral and ethical questions. This paper explores how far this is interrelated with the status of the Danish Folk Church as the weakest monopoly church in the world. It concludes that the Danish Folk Church is a sort of tribal Church and that the Danes will therefore not leave it as long as the church does not question the Danish tribal welfare society.

Introduction

On December 7, 1994, Danish TV announced the national rate of tobacco consumption and its resulting deaths, a subject which had received prominence at a medical conference in Copenhagen. The former Health Minister, Ester Larsen, a member of the Liberal Venstre party, was asked insistently by the interviewer. "Why is Denmark lagging behind the rest of the world in banning tobacco advertisements and smoking in public places?" The answer she gave was, first, to the effect that all moral decisions in Denmark must be made by the individuals themselves. Then, she stated:"When the Swedes are told to wipe their feet on the mat and stop smoking, they do so. We Danes

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[1] First printing in Bar-Lev, Mordechai and Shaffir, William (eds.): *Leaving Religion and Religious Life*, Jai Press Inc, Greenwich Connecticut, 1997, p. 139-158.

do not." Now, although Ester Larsen is more or less correct in her characterization of the difference between Danes and Swedes, it is striking that when confronted with the enormous costs involved in smoking related deaths, she insisted that the individual alone must decide ethical and moral questions. Apparently she believed that there were votes to be gained in Denmark from this view, even though she and the Liberal party are not nearly so liberal in their social and financial policies as, for instance, the Americans, who nevertheless take a strong line on moral offenses such as smoking in public places.[2]

The European Value Studies (Gundelach and Riis 1992) confirm that the Danes rank at the top of the scale in relation to social solidarity and willingness to pay high taxes in order to maintain their welfare state, but at the bottom when it comes to confidence in collective decisions on moral and ethical questions. The Danes are to a high degree ethically, existentially, and also partly religiously committed, but they do not seem to believe in joint authorities and institutions that can decide moral and ethical issues on behalf of the nation (Petterson and Riis 1995). It is the origins of this anomaly that we seek to trace here, while at the same time examining why the Danes find it hard to resign from the Danish Folk Church, a phenomenon which probably makes this both the weakest and the strongest church in the world.

Danishness and Norwegianness

A Norwegian Catholic priest (Grevbo 1987, p. 14) has aptly stated that the Norwegians "believe too much in too little." In other words. Cultural identity and Christianity are more or less separate entities in Norway. Conversely,

[2] In recent years Danish politics on smoking has been changed in line with most European countries.

it seems that the Danes believe too little in too much, insofar as in Denmark Christianity and cultural identity are mixed into a thin gruel of commonsensical, each-to-his-own philosophy.

The very fact that the Danes have no strongly held individual, let alone collective, attitudes towards religious faith, helps explain why, with a weekly church attendance of 2 percent, they are among the least religiously observant people in the world, even though 87 percent are formally members of the Danish Folk Church. This is in contrast to countries such as Italy, for example, where there are even church-going atheists (Østergaard 1994). In Denmark, the number of church-going atheists - and, indeed, of church-goers of any sort - is minimal.

This attitude towards the church must be understood in light of the general Danish attitude toward the state and social institutions. Danes are skeptical of institutions that claim to hold strong and unshakable views. This skepticism helps keep the church at a distance, as does the Danes' knowledge that the church's attitudes and doctrines may be at variance with their own (Jensen 1995). Further explanation is to be found in the special nature of Danish cultural identity. The multimedia artist and poet Piet Hein (1983), who knows the Norwegians as well as he knows his fellow Danes, profiles the difference between them as follows:

> To researchers who are legion
> in the Scandinavian region
> I really must make plain:
> a Norwegian's more Norwegian
> than a Dane is ever Dane.

The Danes are Danish as "ordinary folk." They are perfectly content, as a national folk song declares, with "plains and green hills in the North" (Danish Folk High

School Songbook, nos. 524 and 216). Whereas in Norway one must know to which valley and creed one belongs, in Denmark it is enough simply to live in the country and to know that you are Christian in some vague way. On the basis of his work on a new, four volume history of Danish identity, Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen comments:

> Some of the greatest names in Danish intellectual life, Grundtvig, Andersen, Kierkegaard, were un-Danish in their idealism passion and sensitivity, and they knew it, even noted it in their writings. But they all understood how to dampen their fires the Danish way, to make themselves accessible to their countrymen. To be Danish is to take part in a lifelong conspiracy, a game with hidden rules, to say things on different levels without showing your cards, but being aware that the receiver - your fellow-Dane - gets the point. Not for nothing did Kierkegaard prefer the indirect form of address: and the heroes of modern Danish literature are for the most part fantasists, liars and dreamers, with their strength in the inner life rather than the outer deed (Lundgreen-Nielsen 1992, p. 13).

In order to illustrate this characteristically Danish self-realization through the control of the art of literary understatement, Lundgreen-Nielsen quotes a remark in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy-tale, "The Rags," where a Danish rag has to characterize itself to a Norwegian colleague:

> I know myself, and as I am, so are all our rags: we are so good-natured, so modest, we believe too little in ourselves, and you don't get anywhere by doing that. but I like it so much. I find it so sweet! By the way. I can assure you that I know

> full well my own value, I just don't talk about it: nobody can accuse me of such a fault. I am soft and pliant, tolerate everything, envy no one, speak well of all, despite the fact that there is not much good to be said about most of the others, but leave that to them! I always make fun of it because I am so bright! (quoted in Lundgreen-Nielsen 1992, p. I I).

N.F.S. Grundtvig, the nineteenth century catalyst of tremendous change in Danish culture, Christianity, and popular education, invented the formula "Human first, then Christian." Danes have in common their humanity before their Christianity. This means that just as they are human beings, so Danes are and should remain Christians. And this is just what the Danish nation does, however uncertain its members may be about the meaning of Christianity in their lives. As a people, Danes shy away from joint forms of expression and in general from emotional display. And since they live without a common commitment rooted in an acknowledged common identity, it is not so strange that they are like Christian Nicodemuses, who at best go to Jesus at night - and only then outside the church, for at night and at other unsuitable times the church is locked.[3]

Commenting on the fact that with 1,500 suicides a year, Denmark had the highest suicide rate in Western Europe, the Norwegian born suicide researcher, Unni Bille-Brahe (Christian Daily News March 4, 1989) sees the difference between Denmark and Norway as lying in the fact that "Norwegians have a far more practical view of the church's role among the people. There is a commitment to each other, and no fear of taking joint responsibility." Both church and people in Norway are more church-

[3] In recent years most churches have been opened during the daytime and city churches are inviting for "night church" a number of evenings during the week.

minded, in the sense of being more oriented towards the community and towards rituals than are the Danes and their church.

The national rite of passage from childhood into adolescence in Denmark is church confirmation at the age of 13 or 14. At the church service, youngsters confirm the baptismal vows made by their parents, which gave them automatic membership in the Danish Folk Church. The practice of confirmation is widespread: in 1995, 80 percent of all newborn babies were baptized, and 79 percent of all youngsters were confirmed. However, since 1915 there have been attempts to create a popular alternative to church confirmation of youngsters, especially through the Society for Civic Confirmation. In 1934, with the Social Democratic Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning as guest speaker, the society held a civic confirmation ceremony for 1,200 youths (Moos 1979). By 1986, 2 percent of the young people were still opting for civic confirmation, but since 1993 there has been no effort on a national level to continue the civil ceremony.

The alternative today for the 20 percent of the young Danes who are not confirmed in church is a private family party, or their first charter trip to the Spanish island of Mallorca, a popular Danish vacation destination. In Norway, by contrast, the Humanist-Ethical Association attracts up to 10 percent of the youth to young people's gatherings, where a strong emphasis is placed on ethical responsibility for the environment, for peace, and so on. The same association has regularly run campaigns in Norway to persuade people to resign from the church. In Denmark, on the other hand, there is in practice no real alternative to the Folk Church regarding collective ritual forms of expression. There has never been any popular basis for a resignation movement in Denmark; when the

church loses its hold, no one else moves in.[4]

Danish religious history

The question why the church has apparently lost its hold over Danish society is intimately connected to Danish religious history. When Ansgar, the missionary of the North, arrived in Denmark in 826 A.D., the Danes did not rush to embrace the new Christian faith. Another 150 years were to pass before runes were carved into the Jelling Stone in East Jutland, constituting the Danes' baptismal certificate: "King Harald caused these mounds to be raised to Gorm his father and to Tyra his mother; the Harald who won for himself all Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christians." The stone dates from c. 975 A.D. and tells us quite a lot about King Harald Bluetooth's politics and plans, but not much about the hearts and minds of the people he ruled. Yet already by 1050 there were 1,000 churches in Denmark, and by 1150 another 1,000 had been established.

This rapid growth testifies to the importance of Christianity from the early Middle Ages onwards, but leaves no clue as to whether the churches were built by devout Christian parishioners or at the behest of powerful local magnates. However, we do know that the many stone churches, which stand to this very day, were financed mainly through land-tithes imposed upon the populace in the thirteenth century.

There is good ecclesiastical evidence, especially Bishop Palladius's Journal of Pastoral Visitations, that by the time of the Reformation in 1536, the Danes were no more than nominally Christian. According to Palladius's testimony,

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[4] Only in recent years Humanistisk Samfund has committed itself to establish alternative rites de passage, competing with those of the church, cf. http://www.humanistisksamfund.dk/.

what the Danes clung to during that period was at best a sort of Catholic superstition, along with false teachings about the saints and the trade in indulgences. It is for this reason that the new evangelical pastors had to work as missionaries among their own people, zealously seeking to convert them and save them from perdition.

Even during the Pietist Movement of the eighteenth century, which incidentally introduced compulsory in 1736, there was equally little conviction among religious leaders that the Danes had truly become Christians. On the contrary, the view seems to have been that 200 years of evangelical preaching had had precious little effect. Church activists attributed this situation to the fact that the people had not been given the educational wherewithal to receive the Gospel. Thus, efforts were directed towards educating the common people.

The Revival Movement of the nineteenth century, which continued into the present century, revealed a marked distinction between the few true Christians and the unconverted masses. However, although that movement may have had only a limited impact on popular Christianity, it did represent perhaps the most comprehensive and searching Christianization process in the history of Denmark, a process through which many people, although still a minority, became committed to Christian beliefs.

The idea of an identification of the church with the people is an illusion, and typical of the Folk Church epoch. With a few minor exceptions, everyone in Denmark, from the founding of the state church until freedom of religious belief was constitutionally proclaimed upon the introduction of democracy in 1849, was by law a member of the king's church. Even though compulsion has been abolished, it is still the merger of identities between the Danish nation and church that the Folk Church seeks to build on - both in its administrative practices and in the way it views itself. What is easily overlooked is that there never actu-

ally was a voluntary merger of interests between people and church. The compulsory nature of Christianity in Denmark, and especially its Lutheran use as a tool in the hands of the ruler for the subjugation of his population, is most clearly illustrated by the Danish Law of April 15, 1683. In his phrasing of this law, the absolute monarch does not conceal the fact that he needs the pastor and his helpers to keep control of public morals, which are necessary for strengthening the kingdom and which are not so conveniently controlled by any other means. Just as the power of government (Book 1) and secular and domestic life (Book 3) are subject to the King, so too is religion (Book 2). Throughout this fundamental law we find the view that the King has delegated superiors to rule their inferiors. We hear nothing about the religious status of the latter, such as the Reformation's God-given right of laypeople through baptism to form a church. It is very likely here that we discover the roots of the distant, uninvolved relationship between the Danish people and church that exists for the most part to this very day.

The Word's weakest Monopoly Church

The Indian anthropologist G.P. Reddy, who recently wrote a study of Danish culture, could not conceal his wonder at the contradictions inherent in the national character as expressed in the Danes' attitude toward religion. Reddy expresses his confusion in the following words:

> As far as I can see, the Danes are a very liberal and secular people who are negligent of their religion. And yet the same Danes and the Danish missionaries are worried about the young people being attracted to Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism: in fact it has gone so far that they have opened up special religious institu-

> tions to bring the insignificant number of young Danes who have strayed into Oriental religions (perhaps merely a passing phenomenon) back into the fold. Some missionaries are considering making Christianity more mystical by introducing ideas such as karma, reincarnation etc. to prevent young people from being attracted to the religions of the East (Reddy 1991, p. 167).

The apparent contradiction that puzzles Reddy can be explained by the thesis that the Danish Folk Church is the weakest monopoly church in the world, but that this is exactly how the Danes wish it to remain: weak, but a monopoly. On the one hand it is often claimed that we live in a post-Christian era in Denmark. Even though this is historically a problematic claim, it is true that, particularly in the major cities, Christianity is seen as only one among many other philosophies of life. And in a number of central religious domains, such as participation in Sunday services and pastoral care in its broader sense, the Folk Church is extremely weak. On the other hand Christianity is, in the full meaning of the words, the Danish people's traditional religion. A traditional religion is not necessarily one fraught with deep theological conviction for its followers, nor one followed with devout piety. It is rather the religion which in the final analysis lies at the deepest level of consciousness and cultural identity, and it is the religion to which one instinctively turns for refuge in a crisis. An interesting example is the surprising coalition of union members, youth activists and church people formed in order to provide refugees with church sanctuary as their last resort.

The ethnologist Inger-Marie Børgesen (1991) interprets the Danes' relationship to Christianity and the church positively: the church is its own justification in that it has a high degree of age and "original existence." In the coun-

tryside and to a lesser extent in town, it is a landmark both in the local topography and, equally important, in the inner landscape of the individual. Whatever the circumstance, the church is still the only place Danes find fitting for the major events of life. In the words of Berger (1973), its role is now and again to form an arch over our lives as a harmonious and sacred canopy beneath which things fall into place and where there is room for all Danes. That is why Danes sing their hearts out on Christmas Eve, "On star carpets of azure blue we walk happily to church." Not on Christmas morning, certainly not on Boxing Day (also a full holiday in the Danish church calendar), and certainly not on New Year's Day (another church day). But in principle, now and forever. In other words the church must be there, in case the people need it- but hopefully not just yet. The Danes like the church at a distance.

This peculiar attitude towards the church seems to rest on a strange feature of the Danish character: namely, their almost total lack of a sense of "ecclesia," of the ability and the desire to be called upon together before the face of God in order to commit themselves with rituals and symbolic actions to what is important to them as individuals and as a people. This does not mean that they have no existential or religious commitment: even though Denmark was among the first countries to introduce free abortion and pornography, the serious personal commitment of the Danes must not be overlooked concerning, for example, ethical problems confronting the nation. This is recognized in the European Values Studies (Gundelach and Riis 1992), and is often demonstrated in political practice, such as in the delicate debate over the establishment of a brain-death criterion, which was accepted in Denmark only after a lengthy period of public wrangling and understandable hesitation among the nation's politicians.

Viewing this in a positive light, we may speak of a kind of inclusiveness in Danish culture (Borish 1991). The

Danes do not like to exclude people; they try to make room for everybody. They opt for arrangements that can be joined by everyone, whether they are talking about pensions or decision making. It is almost as though they are trying to capture, on a large scale, the characteristic cosiness of the Danish home, where nobody stays outside the group. The style of leadership Danes demand is informal, democratic and group oriented; the embodiment of these qualities is perhaps the Folk High Schools, where the Danes want everybody to join in and at the same time respect individuality. And, since the Danes expect their church to be all-inclusive, this of necessity requires that it hold no doctrine which is either too demanding or too sharply defined. The peculiar feature of the Danes, though, is that they do not expect to find tenable answers in collective contexts, let alone in handed-down traditions and ancient institutions such as the Folk Church. Here we have at one and the same time the explanation for the weak position of the church in Denmark, yet the lack of any widespread desire to work out viable collective alternatives to it.

So although the Free Churches, that is, Reformed Protestant ones such as the Baptists and so forth, in their combined activity and support in Copenhagen and several other local areas fill the landscape almost as much as the Folk Church, they have never developed into a broad popular alternative to it, as is the case for example in Sweden, and partly in Norway. There is a fair amount of vitality in the Free Churches in Denmark, yet by and large, with only 1 percent of the Danish population as members, they occupy no more space in the total Danish picture than they did 120 years ago. In contrast to the situation in Denmark, 4 percent of the Norwegian population and 6 percent of the Swedish population belong to churches outside the Folk Church. This perhaps says something about the Danish Free Churches, but it tells us more about the

Danish people, who have established for themselves the world's weakest monopoly church.

The welfare state as secularized Lutheranism

It is a striking fact that in general it is the old Lutheran state-church countries which now show the weakest support for the church, the lowest expectations of the church and the weakest popular approval of the basic Christian tenets (Martin 1978; Riis 1990). A number of secularizing forces (industrialization, urbanization, rationalism, etc.) must be taken into consideration if we are to understand this development. But there is no reason to assume that these secularizing factors have been collectively more prominent in the Lutheran countries than elsewhere, and more in Denmark than in even the other Lutheran countries. The explanation lies in the fact that in these countries, the state churches have never enjoyed a truly positive and voluntary endorsement by the people. The Lutheran Church was foisted upon the Scandinavians from above, and they had no personal say in the matter. The churches served, in effect, as a tool of absolutism. Furthermore, the absolute monarchies in these countries gave the state church a monopoly over the religious and cultural meeting place of the general public, to the extent that alternatives were never even imagined. The state churches succeeded in eradicating all other forms of organized religion and all sense of common religious interest, but they never created a strong, active acceptance of Christianity among the people.

Thus, if the Danes are Christian, they are Christian in their own peculiar churchless way. In its unique way of being Christian, Danish society does nevertheless have a place for the church, especially through the encounters with it that almost all Danes have in the course of their lifetimes (Børgesen 1991).

We have thus far characterized a churchless de-Christianized Christianity as the traditional religion of the Danes. Every tribe has its traditional religion. And a tribal society is precisely what the former British Ambassador to Denmark, Sir James Mellon (1992), calls Denmark. With its modest size (43,000 km2) - greatly reduced over the course of history - Denmark is not a nation in the sense of being a synthesis of various population groups. It is in fact an old-fashioned tribe, in which tribal feeling is crucial to the Danes' view of the world, and where social cohesion is promoted through uniformity. This emphasis on uniformity' helps to explain why no one is accepted in Denmark unless he adapts to the Danish culture and lifestyle and rapidly learns the relatively difficult Danish tribal language. If you wish to join the tribal community you must conform, and also do your bit in the way of paying taxes and duties to the tribal welfare system. A foreigner can at a pinch be a guest of the tribe for a while, but he must not expect to enjoy the rights of a tribe member, particularly in the shape of social benefits, unless he becomes "one of us" and adopts Danish mores.

The historian Uffe Østergaard (1992) has succinctly characterized the Danish tribal welfare state as "secularized Lutheranism." The Danes want the state to protect their individual freedoms of faith and belief, for which they and their neighbours must pay record taxes to the state and the local council. The welfare state is regarded as a (God given?) secular government established to secure the welfare of the Danes in every imaginable situation, without involving itself in their personal morality, faith or lifestyle. In their political attitudes, therefore, the Danes are more liberal than the European population in general, but they simultaneously offer more solidarity to their own version of a state. This is why Danish politics in some areas are apparently more socialist than is generally the case in

Europe (e.g., free education for everybody from school to university; Hastrup 1994). Danish politics evince Lutheran paternalism in the economic sphere and emphasis on social conformity, but total disengagement in the religious/moral sphere, making the Danes liberalized social democrats- in other words, secularized Lutherans.

As the Danes view the state, so they view the church: it must be there, but it must not interfere. Thus it was considered most un-Danish when, during the 1950s and 1960s, Social Democratic government ministers announced that they were not church members and should be given civil, not church, funerals. If one asks a Dane directly, he or she will not place much emphasis on the Folk Church as a national church. But on an unconscious level the Folk Church is nevertheless part of the Danish tribal institutional framework. Popular feeling therefore holds that it should be supported by everyone, even though its first duty is to leave everyone in peace until it is needed. Because of this feeling that the church should remain outside of the daily course of events in Denmark, one cannot call Folk Church religion civil religion either (Glebe--Møller, in Hamarti 1984). Christianity is not employed by politicians in their political rhetoric[5], mainly because Christianity is confined to matters of personal lifestyle and ethics-spheres which Danish politicians shy away from. Societal attitudes hold that the church should be politically and socially non- interventionist. This view is shared by the church's own leaders, who also make much of the claim that no one may speak on behalf of the church. There is no church synod in Denmark, and no archbishop, ensuring by this lack of centralization that the church does not play a political role, even if so desired.

Furthermore, because of this peculiarity, the Folk Church neither can nor will enter into practical collabora-

[5] For the rather dramatic changes at this points, see chapters 3 and 4.

tion with, or mutual recognition of, other churches. Wherever there is a lack of independent church organs or staff, the state acts as both the church's legal subject and national lawmaker. Indeed, this reliance upon and intertwining with the state is the secret to the Church's survival in spite of a staggeringly weak leadership which would have spelled death to any other organization (Knudsen 1993). Even so, church influence on Danish society as a whole has declined precipitously in the last century.

This peculiarly Danish church form is embellished with a theology which emphasizes that Christianity in Denmark must be Danish Christianity. One explanation for this is the power with which the Danish prophet, N.F.S. Grundtvig, and the internationally famous Soren Kierkegaard have dominated Danish theology. Also in Danish cultural life, around the turn of the century a native cultural radicalism arose, led by Professor George Brandes. All of this resulted in Denmark's breaking away from the tradition of common European cultural standards for the last 100 years (Hauge 1994).

The dissolution of institutional religious observance under the state

Over the past 150 years, various areas of society have broken free of church influence. Local government, education and poor-law authorities have gradually undergone this process, which reached a culmination in the Education Act of 1975, which resulted in the separation of the formal teaching of religion in school from the church. Pontoppidan Thyssen (1991, p. 343) defines this secularization process as "the disintegration and decay of the state church, and thus the dissolution of the institutional religious observance under the state which was once generally accepted." There are at least two elements

comprising this process: the institutional element, in which the church little by little loses control over and influence upon society: and the personal component, in which people gradually distance themselves from the life and teaching of the church.

In fact, we know very little about the level of personal observance and church attitudes during earlier eras. The same is true of church attendance. The Danish Law of 1683, for example, required every person to attend Sunday service, but this was doubtless never respected, even though in many places, each household was expected to be represented in church by at least one member. At the height of the Age of Reason, around 1800, many accounts testify to poor church attendance. We do hear of children and young people being lined up in the local church for the episcopal visitation, but this probably happened only once in a decade. Thus we have not moved from 100 percent cooperation between church and people to almost none at all. In the twentieth century, weekly church attendance has dropped from 10 percent to 2 percent of the populace (Iversen and Thyssen 1986, p. 325).

Indirect but significant confirmation of the gap between church and people is to be found in the Leisure Surveys for 1964, 1975, 1987, and 1993 (Friedberg 1994) undertaken by the Social Research Institute. Membership in the Folk Church comes with baptism, almost invariably infantile baptism. At present 87 percent of all Danes are baptized members of the Folk Church. All members pay around 0.75 percent of their income in Church Tax. Resignation from the Folk Church demands only a signature on an application. Once the request to resign is granted, the locally levied church tax is no longer collected. However, when asked if they would join the church if membership were be attained by optional enrollment, the respondents answered as follows (see Table 1).

The figures show that the dissolution of the state-guaranteed bond between church and people is an ongoing process, even though the decline from 1975 to 1987 was reversed by the time of the 1993 survey. More noteworthy is the significant drop between 1975 and 1987, in the number of Danes who would not opt to become church members, although the level did not return to the 1964 figure. The greatest increase in recent years is in the category of those who either leave the answer blank or write "Don't Know." The Danes are evidently not quite so sure that they want to do without their church. Support for the church may be waning, but few in practice actually resign from it. In fact, more people joined the Folk Church than those resigning from it in 1995, even when figures for infant baptism are not counted. These two contradictory developments are reflected in the responses to a further question in the survey (see Table 2).

Table 1. **Number of Danes who would enrol in the Folk Church (in percent)**

	1964	1972	1987	1993
Yes	72 %	58 %	45 %	58 %
No	18 %	35 %	23 %	26 %

Table 2. **Church Attendance of Adult Population (in percent)**

	1964	1975	1987	1993
Never	31	45	37	25
Only at church feasts tivals	31	20	31	40
Now and again	25	22	19	17
Twice a month more	8	6	3	5
Blank	2	1	2	1
Non-member	4	6	9	12

Support is seen to be falling, and yet the number of those who declared in 1993 that they never go to church is markedly lower than in any previous survey. Sporadic attendance is probably no greater than before; it is more likely that in 1975 many felt the need to point out that they did not care at all for the church. By 1987, however, there were fewer respondents who were completely negative, even though they probably did not attend services any more often than in 1975. In fact, a number of indicators point to the 1993 figures as showing a genuine increase in support for the church.

The relationship in Denmark between the church and the people is, for better or for worse, far less close than under the absolute monarchy of previous centuries. Even then, compulsory churchgoing could at most ensure a show of Christianity from the individual. There is no doubt, however, that the end of autocracy was the decisive factor in the secularization which characterizes the relationship between church and people today.

There are two important aspects of this secularization. First, liberation from the church came about through a succession of movements - the revivalist movement, cultural radicalism, the labour movement, the youth rebellion, women's liberation, all of which left their mark, partly because there truly were a number of oppressive church mechanisms to dismantle. In the days of state-church autocracy, one either accepted compulsory religion or tolerated it; otherwise, as Grundtvig (1851) stated, "in the end no one could become an adult without being sent to prison." Second, liberation has allowed the Danes to live all of their life outside church Christianity; they can easily manage without contact with the church, even though they have never consciously chosen to do so. There have, though, been certain recent trends which have suggested

that while competing religions may not have filled the spiritual vacuum left by the non-vitality of the Folk Church, Danes may be turning to certain quasi-religious and mystical philosophies in order to fill the void.

Twenty five years of secularization and decrease in personal religious observance has recently given way to an alternative religious or spiritualistic upsurge. Certain of the features accompanying this wave seem to have become a permanent part of the Danish internal landscape, particularly the self-centered belief in one's own self-sufficiency and ability to depend on oneself alone.

Cogito ergo sum: I think, therefore I am, said Descartes. Before him we might reasonably have said, *Cognatus ergo sum:* I am known by others, I belong to a place, and therefore I exist. But in today's world, this no longer holds true. The feeling that all the significant things in life happen inside oneself seems to have taken root in the Danes, so that wherever they turn for help with their lives, the criterion is always, "Does it work for me, do I get good vibrations from it? Does it touch me so that I feel I am alive?" There is no longer a conviction that absolute standards exist; in other words, good is as I perceive it to be.

Interest in New Age is particularly marked among both younger and mature women in Denmark (Gundelach and Riis 1992). Characteristic of these women is that due to their Lutheran background, they have integrated certain elements of the Lutheran doctrine of salvation into their New Age religious observance. For example, in an interview in the mid1980s the Danish writer Elsa Gress characterized her religious experience as follows, in words recalling the idea of Divine Grace, albeit without Christ:

> You receive it as a gift. Or rather it is there all the time, but you are closed off from it... Sometimes you suddenly receive a pair of binoculars or this hearing aid, and you hear the heartbeat in there in

the big uterus boom, boom, boom... (quoted in Sjoerup 1994. p. 32; similar statements from Sjoerup's interviewees p. 29, 30, 85, 131. 185, 192 in Sjoerup 1992).

Use of and contact with the Folk Church

One should not conclude from the foregoing that the Folk Church has been completely abandoned; there are still many vital, if not frequent, interactions between the Danes and their church. To understand the nature of this relationship one must examine how the Danes use their church and what level of contact they maintain with it. The following statistics, rounded to the nearest whole number, are from 1995 and January 1, 1996 (see Table 3).

No statistics exist distinguishing between members and non-members with regard to participation to church ceremonies. Therefore, we do not know precisely how many non-members nevertheless marry in church or are buried with clergy in attendance.

Table 3. Church Membership in Denmark

87 %	are members of the Danish Folk Church
1 %	are members of other Christian churches
4 %	are baptized but have resigned from the Folk Church
4 %	are unbaptized Danes, especially children and youngsters
1 %	Are immigrants with no church membership
3 %	are Jews, Muslims or immigrant, belonging to, or with their backgound in, a non Christian religion

Non-members have no legal demand to participate in church ceremonies, but for many good reasons a pastor often agrees to participate in a funeral, and occasionally also at weddings. We do not know either how many Folk Church members are not confirmed in spite of having passed the traditional confirmation age of 14. A rough estimate would be 3 percent, or 150,000. Statistics on the use of the Folk Church are based on percentages of the entire Danish nation, a holdover from the era when membership was nearly universal (see Table 4).

The average Dane thus remains in contact with the church at the four traditional crossroads in life. This, however, reveals only the most minimum contacts between church and people. How many people, and how often, participate in church activities aside from those who are undergoing baptism, confirmation, marriage or burial? How many in general are in regular contact with the church? Precise information is hard to obtain, but the following estimate of the number nevertheless gives a rough idea of the numbers involved (Iversen and Thyssen 1986, p. 328) (see Table 5).

One obvious question is how many of the numbers are the same people being counted repeatedly in different categories (e.g., attending both church services and adult classes); the answer to this question determines whether the church in the course of a week touches the lives of as much as 26 percent of the populace or as little as 5 percent. No unambiguous answer can be given, but we would estimate that altogether circa 10 percent of the Danish population comes into some sort of contact with the Folk Church in the course of an average week. Around 11 percent of 13 to 18 year-olds, for example, are in a church children's or youth group. A number of people meet the church every week; for many there is contact only rarely. For a large group, many years separate each church visit or other form of contact.

Table 4. Use of the Folk Church for Christian Ceremonies

80 %	of children are baptized in connection with their naming, i.e. within six months of birth
5 %	are baptized later, most of them just prior to their confirmation
79 %	of an age cohort (age 13) are confirmed
54 %	Of marriages take place in church
93 %	Of the dead are buried by the church

Table 5. Contact with the Folk Church in the Course of a Week

2 %	attend services (half of whom take communion, which is available every Sunday)
4 %	attend Sunday ceremonies
2 %	attend adult classes in church
5 %	attend a voluntary meeting for children, young people, the elderly etc.
3 %	Listen to radio services
4-6 %	Listen to other church broadcasts
3-4 %	per month watch a TV service

If we imagine the varying levels of commitment to the Folk Church as concentric circles, the outer circle covers the 87 percent of the populace who are baptized members. A second circle would be drawn around the 10-25 percent who more or less regularly have some kind of contact with the church. The third circle contains the 35 percent who are regular churchgoers and/or in some way belong to the category of "active core church members." The historical

trend has been for the two outer circles to shrink in size, while there have been signs of stabilization of the innermost circle. Ole Riis (1990) finds that in recent years there has been a continued decrease in the group of strongly committed faithful but an increase in the numbers of those who are positively oriented towards the church while not particularly committed to religious observance.

Conclusion

The state of the church-people relationship depends on the eyes of the beholder. One can point out that "only" 2 percent of the populace attend services weekly for the sole purpose of worship. 2 percent is not much, but it does represent 100,000 people, a fairly large number. One could also maintain that membership numbers remain very high, having dropped only from 98 percent to 87 percent in the course of a century.

However, we can anticipate the day when membership figures may perhaps fall to around 80 percent nationally- and to 50 percent in Copenhagen. There are also those who would stress that 2,000 adolescents each year are baptized just prior to confirmation, that is, of their own free will. The number of those baptized right before confirmation is, however, only half of the number of those baptized as infants who never attend confirmation classes at all.

Are the Danes able to leave the church that forms a framework around their churchless Christianity? And do they want to? The answer for the present seems to be negative. In spite of comprehensive secularization, which shook the church particularly in the 1970s, the Folk Church apparently belongs to the people as a personal, spiritual entity in the Danish tribal welfare state that they take such good care of. The Danes may find it hard to work out in practice what being a church member involves, both because over the centuries they have lived

with the church as a control system imposed from above, and because it goes against the Danish mentality to enter into a genuine fellowship centered around the church. But as long as the Folk Church is available with its ceremonies when needed, and as long as Christianity is not interpreted as something that conflicts with the Danish tribal ideology, the Danes seem to believe that they belong inside the Folk Church, even though in general they believe in everything but the Lutheran-Evangelical teachings of their church.

Danish churchless Christianity is thus an example of "belonging without believing" (Bäckström 1993; Botvar 1996; Davie 1990), or perhaps even more precisely "belonging without even believing in belonging."

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2. POVERTY AND CHURCHES IN DENMARK[1]

> Far more of metal, so red and so white
> others got from mountains and plunder.
> Danes, anyway, have daily bread,
> even in the hut of the poor man.
> That's when in richness we have gone far,
> when few have too much and fewer too little.

A Christian vision of social equality?

Thousands of social and political gatherings in Denmark are opened by one of the famous national songs, "Langt højere bjerge" (Far higher mountains), which concludes as quoted above. It was composed by the Danish national bard and modern father of the Danish church and nation, N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) on the occasion of a Danish expedition to West India in 1820. Grundtvig was a liberal in his own way. Especially from around 1830, when he made his first trip to England, he advocated religious, political and economic freedom. The idea of a social welfare state, where each individual citizen has the right to economic help from the common basket of state and municipality, was far from his mind. Even so, as a Christian he wanted there to be food for the poor Lazarus and he surely wanted

[1] First printed in Noordegraff, Hermann and Volz, Rai-ner, (eds.): *European Churches Confronting Poverty. Social Action against Social Exclusion*, SWI-Verlag, Bochum, 2004, p. 148-159.

there to be as few poor people as possible in our small country. Presumably, Grundtvig here is drawing on the story of how God nurtured the Israelites by sending manna to them in the desert: The people were instructed to gather as much as they needed, two quarts for each member of a household; as a result "those who gathered much did not have too much, and those who gathered less did not have too little. Each had gathered just what he needed" (Exodus 26:18). It is a similar vision of divine distribution of God's own gifts that is behind the words of Grundtvig in this famous Danish national song.

Obviously, Grundtvig's words are open to interpreta-tion. One interpretation could be that it is all right to have, for example, ten percent of people who are very rich if only we have fewer who are very poor. However, the general understanding is that there should be social and economic equality among the Danes, at least in as far as this demand does not hurt the freedom of the individual to engage in investment, trade and industry. As unclear as it is, it is probably this theological statement that, for almost 200 years, has been and still is a common norm for social politics in Denmark. No one would ever run for office or seek any other high position in Denmark without swearing to Grundtvig's statement. On the one hand, the statement is open to manipulation, not least of all in today's world, where - in a global context - the majority of the Danes surely have far too much! On the other hand, it seems to have been guiding our society - preventing us from having very many extremely rich people and also from having many Danish citizens poor enough to die from hunger over the past 200 years. Denmark has no high mountains, nor does it have any deep valleys. We are, in all respects, mentally as well as socially,

the plain Danes living on the plains (cf. chapter. 1, p. 3).

Although today in Demark, as in most parts of Europe, we have social political slogans such as "rights always go with duties" and "to eat you must work" (or at least have compulsory job training while on social benefits!), these are far from being Biblical allusions or theologically reflective social-political statements, even though 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says something very similar. This new politics of the 1990s is simply a product of economic calculations pointing to the imbalance between the size of the labour force and the expenditures for social benefits in the welfare society of today and, in fact, of any foreseeable future. One statement by Jesus, however, seems to be true everywhere, including Denmark: "You will for always have poor people with you" (John 12:8). In Copenhagen as in all major European cities, one cannot use the Underground without meeting them. In the countryside, one might escape meeting them, but there may be even more of them, hiding themselves from the busy eyes of the rest of us.

Poverty in Denmark

Generally speaking, living conditions still seem to be improving in Denmark. From 1989 to 1998, the proportion of households with an automatic dish-washer increased from 23 to 46 percent, and the proportion of families with a personal computer increased from 12 to 60 percent during the same period. Even though Denmark has a high rate of death due to cancer (connected with high numbers of smokers), the average lifespan has increased to 75 years for a man and 80 for a woman. Regarding the income available for individual consumption, equal-

ity improved slightly during the 1980s, whereas the tendency towards inequality grew during the 1990s, when Denmark had a social-democratic government (Bonke and Munk: 2002:7f.)!

In comparison with the other social welfare societies of Scandinavia, Denmark ranks rather low in Eurostat's statistics on poverty. In 1999 among the EU countries, only Sweden, Germany and France used a higher percentage of the BNP than Denmark for social expenditure (Danish Statistical Yearbook 2002:163). We are now approaching a situation where half of the population receives some form of income transfer from state or municipality.

The percentage of relatively poor households, i.e. those having less than half of the median income, is 9.2 in Denmark and thus a little higher than in Germany, France, Holland and Belgium (Bonke and Munk 2002:13). The percentage of those who consider themselves to be poor is only 7.5 - and thus considerately lower than the average for Europe (Bonke and Munk 2002:13). Thus, generally speaking the number of poor people in Denmark is relatively low - at least according to conventional calculations. Poverty has two main causes. The first is social heritage. For people who have been poor for a long time, or who come from poor families, it is hard to climb the social ladder towards better economic conditions. There is a considerable tendency for children of poor parents to follow the path of their parents and thus remain among the poorer parts of society (Bonke and Munk 2002: 21f.). The other main cause of poverty is psychological diseases and social de route due to personal disasters or abuse, which make people unable to administer the few resources they have so that they become poor, perhaps even homeless and begging in the streets.

We have no precise figure for the number of homeless people, since they may, for example, be registered as living in a home, where they are not able to stay for psychological or other personal reasons. Dr. Preben Brandt, who for many years has worked with and researched the social medical and social-psychological situation in the poorest areas of Copenhagen, has suggested the following definition of the group of poor and homeless people in Copenhagen: "They are people who are 'wrong' in relation to what we others consider to be 'right': they behave differently. They do not live in a way that we find right and cannot utilize society's institutions in the term's broadest sense. From the point of view of ordinary citizens, the homeless are different in a negative sense, and we exclude them from our ordinary social life. We do not like them" (Koch-Nielsen 2002:3).

We also tend to place immigrants and refugees in Denmark among the "outsiders" and "wrongdoers". Over the past few years, the economic and mental conditions that Danish society has created for its immigrants have turned from bad to very bad. Strict discrimination takes place as refugees and immigrants are far from having the same civil rights and access to social benefits as ordinary Danish citizens. In addition, it has been suggested that the right to vote at local elections should be taken away from immigrants. When the social rights of the twentieth century and even the political rights of the nineteenth century are not respected in the case of immigrants in Denmark, it seems to be connected primarily to the fact that the Danes tend to behave as a tribal people. To be a proper Dane one had better look and work like us! Although we have many immigrants who look very different from us (the number of Muslims in

2002 was estimated to be 195,000), Islam and other immigrant religions have no official recognition in Denmark. This is a major reason why the Muslims, for example, have not yet been able to build mosques or establish their own funeral places in Denmark.[2] Denmark does not really want its immigrants to feel at home in our country. The lack of civil, cultural and social recognition of the immigrants is most likely to contribute to segregation of major parts of this new group in Danish society - perhaps causing poverty for many generations among major parts of the immigrant population (cf. Ploug 2002: 5f.).

Today, the economy of the nation (i.e., the growth of GNP) is always more important than social equality among the people of Europe. In Denmark as well, social politics are determined by the capitalist market. We first seek growth and competition, and only as we succeed in gaining a higher GNP do we consider the possibility of doing more for the poor. This is true for a social- democratic government as well as for the present right-wing (liberal-conservative) government. Only in special cases, such as the case of the immigrants, are there differences between the political parties in terms of social politics. In spite of positive political statements from the minister of social affairs and a great deal of good will from many individual politicians in major parts of parliament. We should not expect better social politics. In fact, we should expect more cutbacks in the income of poor people in the future. These are the conditions if one wants to compete in the world market and to encourage and please the majority of the working and voting population, which thinks it is

[2] The first Muslim Funeral place in Denmark was established in 2006 at Brøbyøster, 10 km. west of Copenhagen City.

only fair to have good (i.e. better and better) standards of living in return for the hard work required in most places of work today.

Social ethics of the churches in Denmark

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark is the only church in the world that is labelled a Folk Church in the national constitution, dating back to 1849. Practically speaking, this church is "the weakest monopoly church in the world" (cf. chapter 1). It is comparatively weaker than any other church (or major religion) anywhere in the world in terms of attendance, conformity of the population with its teachings, and expectations of the church from its members. On the other hand, for the great majority of the Danes the church is a monopoly church without any competing alternatives. Due to some hesitation among young parents regarding the practice of infant baptism over the past three decades and to immigration of non-Christians, the rate of membership in the Folk Church had fallen to 84 percent of the population in 2002. However, the rate of church funerals, for example, is very stable at around 92 percent, as most people see no alternative at the time of the death of a relative. Even though since 1849 the constitution has foreseen that the Folk Church should have its own legal leadership, for a number of reasons the state still serves as legislator, administrator and legal subject for the Folk Church. As a result, the Folk Church has no official teaching, except for what can be found in the Bible and the Lutheran Creeds (Confessio Augustana and The Small Catechism by Luther). Thus, there are no official statements from the Folk Church concerning modern ethical and social questions.

The non-Lutheran churches are few and small in Denmark, making up a little more than one percent of the population in terms of their membership. The largest among them today, due to immigration, is the Roman Catholic Church, which of course has strong social-ethical teachings - and also undertakes social activities such as relief work in poor countries (Caritas). The same is true for some of the protestant "free" churches in Denmark, such as the Methodist church, which - in spite of having less than 2000 members - carries a good load of social projects. Most well known among poor people, and even among the general public, is the Salvation Army (also with less than 2000 members).The Salvation Army is extremely active in distributing "the sacrament of helping" in poor parts of major cities in Denmark.

During major parts of the twentieth century, especially from 1950 to 1990, the secular welfare state ideology was very strong, not least among members and pastors of the Folk Church in Denmark. This trend, to which the majority of the pastors belonged up to 1990, had a number of causes and background factors: 1) As in many Western European countries, the social welfare state was successful in making people believe that social progress would continue within the framework of the social welfare state, and thus private, not to mention religious, initiatives looked conservative or nostalgically misplaced. 2) Due to this understanding of social politics and probably even more to the position of the church as a legal part of the state, with the state as its legal subject and the pastors as civil servants of the state, the pastors have been very keen on developing a theology where preaching and listening to sermons are the only legal activities of the church. Karl Barth, Martin

Luther, Søren Kierkegaard and even Grundtvig have been interpreted in a way that legitimised the absolute detachment of the church from any sort of social responsibility. As politics should be separated from Christianity, so should social responsibility, as it was seen as a political matter resting with state and municipality -and, of course, to a limited extent with the individual Christian in his or her daily life in the family or place of work (Iversen in Nissen (ed.) 2001: 35-39).

Since 1990, it has been recognised in growing areas of the Folk Church that this secular-oriented, individualistic, kerygmatic theology is very one-sided, if not heretical, when seen from the perspective of Bible and church history. There are many reasons behind this change in theology, including the following: 1) There is no need to strive for a social welfare state that is better than the communist states, when there are no communist states left. Instead, we can try to find a new balance between state, market and civil society as agents in cooperation, including social politics. 2) At the same time, the state is being reduced as many parts of its work are being "delegated" to agents at the market level or in civil society. This also is beginning to challenge the church: It is not safe any longer to swear to the state only, as the state is no longer a sovereign state but rather a responsive, negotiating and coordinating agent in our society (Bundesen et al. 2001). This means that the church is again taking up local social responsibilities, especially at the parish level where it has 100 years of tradition of parish boards taking responsibility for local church work together with the pastors. 3) Alongside these political and social developments, theology is also developing strongly, discovering and rediscovering social dimensions and ethical

challenges in Christian theological traditions as well as in contextual theologies from other parts of the world.

This provides some of the background for the unanimous decision in 1999 by the bishops of the Folk Church to form a committee to review and give recommendations about the diaconal work of the Folk Church. Because of the state-church organisation of the Folk Church, there is no board or synod at the national level to receive, discuss and officially approve the analysis and recommendations in the committee's report. " Diacony - an integrated dimension in the life of the Folk Church" (Nissen (ed.) 2001). Nevertheless. the report points towards a new trend in the Folk Church in terms of social responsibility. The social work that has always existed in different forms in the Folk Church is being recognised, legitimised and encouraged in the report. In short, the report argues that Sunday services, Christian teaching, mission work and diaconal work are equal as areas of work for any church, even though the actual priority given to different forms of church work in the Folk Church must always depend on the decisions of parish boards and volunteer church organisations, which carry the practical burden of the work.

Church work among poor people

Social work in the Folk Church is basically organized in two ways: at the parish level and at the national level in free diaconal organizations - in line with the two traditions which developed in diaconal work in Germany in the wave of pietism (Nissen (ed.) 2001: 7-15).

At the parish level, the parish boards became re-

sponsible in 1903 for collections in the church for the poor people in the parish. Regular collections for poor people are still required in the church legislation, but in practice most congregations collect money for many purposes other than aid to the poor - and some collect very little and very rarely. Especially in Copenhagen and other cities, it is common to have a parish-based Congregational Care Organisation (based on the German concept of "Gemeindepflege"). Thirty-five percent of the congregations organise aid to poor people at Christmas especially in major cities. 88 percent of the congregations are involved in this (Nissen (ed.) 2001:239). However, more parishes are involved in various forms of work for elderly people (74 percent), often social gatherings. In some parishes, there are other social activities such as visitation teams, and meeting and eating places for lonely and poor people. Today, work at the parish level is being strengthened by the introduction of catechetical and diaconal parish workers, who are now leading the social work in about 200 of the biggest parishes of around 2000 parishes in the Folk Church.

The most comprehensive and intensive church work among poor people is organised by volunteer (so-called free) diaconal organisations, with little or no formal links to the Folk Church as it is organised within the legal framework of the state. We can distinguish between four types of diaconal work carried out by diaconal organisations in Denmark.

Perhaps the most important type can be called *extreme diacony,* where the organisations provide food, shelter, medical care, human contact and ultimately the possibi-lity for help to change the life situation for the most poor and downtrodden among us: homeless people, those suffering from abuse (often com-

bined with prostitution), mentally disturbed people who cannot be placed in institutions, etc. The Church Army (founded in 1912 with English inspiration) is especially active here - with more than 5000 volunteers led by full-time employed social workers and-pastors placed in most of the major towns in Denmark. For almost 100 years, the experience of The Church Army has been that there are always new groups of people who need attention at "the country roads and lanes" (Luke 14:23), where The Church Army considers its calling to be at work. This work has placed the pastor leading The Church Army as the most respected advocate for the weakest placed among the poor.

The classic form of diaconal work may be called *pioneering diacony.* Historically, most forms of social and health work known in our society today have been pioneered by the volunteer church organisations. This is still taking place, for example, in the introduction of hospices, which are decisive not only for the terminal patients admitted to them, but also for the possibility of resistance to suggestions about new legislation allowing doctors to give active death assistance to dying people. Both of the two major old deaconess houses in Copenhagen spent considerable resources pioneering hospice work during the 1990s.

A third form of diaconal work is *alternative social work,* where volunteer organisations attempt to provide better procedures and standards than those provided by state and municipality. This is especially the case in preventive work, for example, among alcoholics and drug abusers, who are always at risk of ending up among the poor and outsiders. Parish churches and diaconal organisations are also involved in creating places for different types of job training and

protective jobs.

A fourth type that some diaconal organisations also undertake today is what could be called *competitive diacony.* This is especially the case where state and municipalities want to privatise social work - for example, home care among disabled and elderly people who cannot care for themselves. Wherever volunteer organisations, including those in the church, can set better standards than those found in public or private organisations, it is very worthwhile to do so.

The best parts of the work among poor people are often organised as "welfare mix", having input and participants from various agents such as state, municipality, parishes, church organisations, humanitarian organisations and others. This is a great challenge and, at the same time, a great opportunity for the Folk Church especially, which to a large degree is still an integrated part of the Danish society (Nissen (ed.) 2001:149-164).

It is estimated that 1.2 million people are involved in some form of volunteer work in Denmark. Of these, 300.000 are active in social work. 50.000 of the volunteers being active in social work organised by churches and diaconal organisations. In spite of fears to the contrary, there seems to be a growing number of people who will let themselves be recruited to volunteer social work in church and society, provided that there are leaders who organise good structures for the work and call upon volunteers to join it. Whether we like it or not, voluntary giving of money (and not least of all, time) seems to be a necessary way forward if there is any hope for a better future for the poor among us (cf. Habermann 2001 and Nissen (red.) 2001:240f.).

Conclusion

At the time of the Reformation in 1536, the conquering King Christian III, and thus the state, expropriated the church and all its belongings in Denmark. The state took the property, the right to tithe, the solid infrastructure, the pastors, and thus the ideological apparatus from the church. This may be the most important historical precondition of the modern Danish social welfare society. It is arguable that the state also took over the social project of the church, even though it was 400 years later before the state was economically and politically in a position to realise the "Christian" vision of social equality in the form of the social welfare state (Knudsen ed. 2001). Today it seems obvious that state and municipality will never be able to realise the full vision by caring properly for those poor people who are most vulnerable. Even if the state gives them enough bread and money to survive from day to day, they cannot live from that alone. In order for the poor to have a life with the experience of love and at least some hope for changes to the better someday, others must step in. The churches in Denmark, including the Folk Church, are challenged to be among these others - teaching their members social responsibi-lity and organising work among the poor.

Finally, it must be mentioned here that there is a strong connection between experiences from volunteer social work, the general attitudes towards the poor in the population, and the actual social politics of state and municipality (c f. Nissen (ed.) 2001:230). Only those who give their time and have the courage to be close to the poor and outsiders can argue convincingly that the poor are at least as human as the rest of us. If we do not care for the poor, we destroy

the human standards of our society! Only if the experience from work among the poor is kept alive among ordinary people will those people have the strength to demand social justice and ethical standards in our society. And the politicians, who after all are people from the people, depending on the goodwill of the people, will adjust the social politics accordingly. Thus, diaconal practice among the poor is a cornerstone in the fight against the many forms of Social Darwinism that are infiltrating society. Only those who attend to the poor can be proper advocates for the poor.

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3. SECULAR RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS SECULARISM. A PROFILE OF THE RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT IN DENMARK SINCE 1968[1]

Abstract

It is the thesis of this article that the recent development of the special form of religion or lack of religion – secular religion combined with almost religious secularism – in Denmark is deeply embedded in the set-up of Danish society: Strong social community combined with deep-seated religious individualism tends towards a common but only weakly articulated faith in God. It is further argued that the special, politically influenced, form of religion in Denmark provides a significant part of the Danish background for the Muhammad cartoon crisis in early 2006.

Introduction

10 years ago I argued that Danes, being a modern people in a tribal nation, combine strong social solidarity with strong existential, ethical and religious individualism (see chapter 1 and Iversen 1999). Contrary to Michel Maffesoli I use the term 'tribe' in the traditional anthropological sense, referring to modern anthropological studies of Danish culture (Borish 1991, Reddy 1991 and Mellon 1992). The main purpose of this article is to introduce the studies in a new book in Danish on faith in God in Denmark (Højs-

[1] First printing in Secular religion and religious Secularism, A profile of religious development in Denmark since 1968, *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, Nr 2, 2006, Volume 119, p. 75-92.

gaard and Iversen (eds.) 2005), relating them to my earlier findings. The new studies clarify that Danes tend to believe in God in a weak and conditional way. This corresponds to the observation that the 83% of the Danish who are members of the Danish Folk Church belong to their church without believing much in their belonging. In recent decades religion and even Folk Church attendance has been set free from social pressure. This has resulted in a high degree of openness towards the Folk Church but not to a significantly higher degree of religious practice. Finally the article elaborates on another old argument that the Folk Church, controlled by secular politics, has been a decisive factor behind the special form of secularisation in Denmark (Iversen 1992). The fact that religion is the most debated issue in Denmark in the wake of the Muhammad cartoon crisis is thus not because there is much religion in Denmark. More probably it is due to the incompetence among the Danish secularists to deal with a situation where religion does not just disappear – as it was expected 40 years ago.

Strong social community and strong religious individualism

According to the European Values Studies[2] Danes rank top of the scale in relation to social solidarity and willingness to pay high taxes to maintain their welfare state, but at the bottom when it comes to confidence in collective decisions and common authorities on ethical and existential questions. 79% of the Danes see the welfare society as a community to which they are

[2] When referring to European Values Studies in this article, I use the Danish data from 1981, 1990 and 1999, received from the Danish coordinator, Professor Peter Gundelach.

morally obliged to contribute, without regard to what they get from the community themselves (Schjørring and Bak (eds.) 2005:25). According to the European Values Studies from 1990 and 1999 the following percentage think that the church can contribute to solving moral problems: from 17% in 1990 to 21% in 1999; family problems from 12% to 13% respectively and social problems an increase from 7% to 10%. The expectation that the church can contribute to meeting a spiritual need is much higher: 46% in 1990 and 53% in 1999.

Danes are, however, concerned about personal responsibility, such as the criteria for life and death, good and evil. At present the majority of the best-attended Danish films deal with just such questions with great success. Danes deliberately turn to cinema, TV, literature, Internet and so on, and sometimes to family and friends – but rarely to the Church with ethical and religious questions (Hjarvard 2005:175-178).[3]

Denmark – together with other Nordic countries – is among the most egalitarian countries in the world. The 10% richest have only 2.8 times more money available after taxes than the 10% poorest (Schjørring and Bak (eds.) 2005:38). In terms of what we have in common and the degree of egalitarianism Denmark is more communist than the communists ever were. As a liberal, the present Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, only won his position by abolishing his former ideas of a "minimum state". The reality is that the Danes are determined to maintain their welfare state alongside individual freedom in ethical, existential and religious matters. The extreme anti-welfare, right-wing Progress Party (*Fremskridtspartiet*) under

[3] Two pages also found in chapter 1 or 2 have been omitted here.

the new name Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*) had to promote itself as even more in favour of social demo-cratic welfare politics than the Social Democrats before it could seize political power as the decisive supporting party behind the bourgeois government since 2001.

Danish society is tribal and almost communist in terms of economy, welfare, culture and mentality. This has a strong historical background, most notably the fact that the relatively limited Danish empire was cut down to the small area of the Danish-speaking "ethnic" Danes in 1864 following the defeat by Germany. Danish West Indian Islands were part of the Kingdom and Commonwealth (*Rigsfælleskab*) until 1917, Iceland until 1918, as the Faeroe Islands and Greenland still are, just as immigration into Denmark has always taken place (Østergaard 2006, Fenger-Grøn and Grøndahl 2004). Even so, Danes since 1864 have managed to imagine that Denmark is, has always been and must always be the one and same state of the (ethnic) Danes (Christiansen 2005). The sense of national unity is being upheld today by at least seven strong institutions which are common to almost all Danes, as all Danes have been socialised and are continually strongly influenced by: 1) families and child-care institutions with common norms for primary socialization in, 2) a fairly egalitarian comprehensive folk school system, 3) a strong tradition for many volunteer organizations in civil society governed by consensus democracy, 4) two Public service Radio/TV channels with converging socializing entertainment, transmitting more than 2/3 of the broadcasting in Denmark, 5) a labour market with flexicurity, based on a special "Danish model" of negotiations between the unions and the employers, 6) a Protestant-inspired universal welfare system and 7) a common Park of

Religions structuring the religious outlook as well as the flow of the year for most Danes.

In spite of many exceptions and variations in Denmark, as in Nordic countries in general, from an international perspective it is the common factors, denominators and patterns which are the most dominant. This goes for Denmark in particular: Numerous studies have pointed to the strong coherence in Danish society as a major factor behind Denmark's economic success in recent years (Campbell, Hall and Pedersen (eds.) 2006).

Believing in God conditionally

Diagram 1. Common structure in the Danish Park of Religion: God, Virtue and Destination

	Form of religion	God	Virtue	Destination
1	Implicit religion and banal religion	Experience of difference	Moral markings	Happiness and a good life
2	Folk religion	God as destiny for the individual	Virtue	Eternal life of the soul
3	New religions and Spirituality	Micro-macro cosmology	Karma – balance between cause and effect	Reincarnation
4	Church Christianity	Trinity	Love of neighbour	Resurrection of the flesh
5	Culture Christianity	God as partner	Want to be good	Prospects and good advice
6	Civil religion	God as destiny for the nation	Citizenship	Peace, welfare and stability
7	Islam	Allah	Sharia	Allah's provisions

Turning to what I have proposed to label the *Park of Religions* in Denmark, a reading of texts and interviews from all of the seven main branches of religion in Denmark reveals a strong common religious pattern, which I have systematized in the diagram above (cf. Iversen 2005: 109-119). I am not attempting to estimate the size of the various branches, as most people belong to several branches integrating various religious sentiments. The point of the diagram is only that a somewhat similar religious structure – God, Virtue and Destination – is found in all of the seven dominant branches in the Park of Religions in Denmark, cf. Diagram 1.

It is conventionally argued that despite its many forms Church Christianity has been the most dominant and continuous religion in Denmark for more than 1100 years. There is no doubt that Christianity has always attempted to eradicate or embrace and thus absorb other forms of religion. Even so, more popular forms of religion, including *banal religion*, a term used as a parallel to Michael Billing's term *Banal Nationalism* (Billig 1995; Hjarvard 2005), may well have influenced the common religious pattern in Denmark every bit as much as Church Christianity. The most elaborated and clear-cut connection between God as destiny, virtue as middle of the road morals, and eternal life of the soul as destination, described in Danish empirical research, is folk religion, as found in agricultural Denmark 50-100 years ago (Rod 1961).

Even though "God" is a highly debated figure in Denmark, faith in God is still the strongest and most centrally-placed oak in the Danish Park of Religions. In contrast, Sin and Hell and Grace and Salvation are Christian concepts that are disappearing from the minds of the Danes. But God remains. Most Danes have heard the stories of God the creator and Jesus his

son in their school and confirmation classes. The changes in the forms of life have not been quite as dramatic in Denmark as in Sweden. Still the basic shifts from agricultural via industrial to service society and the consequent changes in religion are the same during the last 150 years (Bäckström et al. (eds.) 2004): The sacred canopy that used to embrace common life in agricultural Denmark has therefore disappeared and thus also the secure place and powerful position of God. Some sort of faith in some sort of God is, however, still primary. The European Values Survey has the following question: "How Important is God in Your Life?" (10 means very important and 1 not at all important). Out of all the nations, Denmark comes in second to last, with only 21% choosing 7-10. This suggests that the vast majority of Danes believe in God, but God is not of much direct significance in their lives. The significance of faith in God in Denmark is more indirect and subtle

The balance between community and individualism in the mentality of the Danes finds strong expression when we look at their faith in God. Incidentally the situation is portrayed better than anywhere else in the following brief dialogue, formulated by Woody Allen, without special reference to Denmark (quoted from Warmind 2005:290):

> A: Do you believe in God?
> B: I'm not sure...
> A: Well, Kierkegaard says that if you're not sure, then you don't!
> B: Okay! Then I guess I do!

Only 5 % of the Danes label themselves "atheists" and some 15 % as "agnostics". 80 % do not want to exclude themselves from "believing in God", even

though only 62 % respond positively to the statement "I believe in God", according to the European Values Studies from 1999. Commenting on these figures the American sociologist of religion, Dr. Phil Zuckerman who has studied religion in Denmark for one year notes:

> In my interviews (now up to 140 people), I have found that many people will say that they don't believe in God (or a higher power or anything like that) and yet they wouldn't call themselves 'atheist'. I ask them why not if they don't believe in God, and they generally say that 'atheist' is 'too strong' or 'too negative'. So my observation is that the percentage of Danes who do not believe in God is probably somewhat higher than 5% (maybe closer to 20-25 %?), but that they just don't like that term 'atheist' (mail from Phil Zuckerman April 25 2006).

Interestingly 71 % label themselves as believers (*troende*), whereas 69 % state that they are Christians, and only 40 % that they are religious. As a common result of 13 empirical, i.e. sociological, anthropological, psychological, hym-nological, literary and media-scientific studies of Faith in God in Denmark, the editors concluded that Danes in general believe in God in a conditional way. Most of them seem to say something similar to what 10-year-old school children do: "I believe in God, but maybe there is no God" (Højsgaard and Iversen 2005:26-27.). This is what Danes are likely to learn in school and this is what is constantly being communicated to everybody not least via Public Service TV and other mainstreaming media.

Everywhere God is at play as an interesting model of thought, a literary figure, a personal friend or a playmate. And this is increasingly so even though the generally high level of education has made it more and more evident that most probably there is no God. For the Danish way of believing in God it is not essential that God exists. In his revealing work in a religious survey in Denmark since the 2nd World War Peter Lüchau, PhD-student in sociology of religion at University of Copenhagen, uncovered the following answers (Table 8 in Lüchau 2004):

Table 1. Danes stating that God exists and that they themselves believe in God (percentage)

	I think that God exists	I believe in God
1947/48	80	80
1970	62	60
1979/81	45	59

Only few Danes fully support the line by the well-known Norwegian hymnwriter, Petter Dass, that God will still be God if all men die (Dass 1698). Yet even fewer (app. 5 %) strongly believe that there is no God! The great majority tend to believe in some kind of God: God as a spiritual power in man, or maybe God as a good person – not unlike Pastor Thorkild Grosbøll, who states: "God is dead and that is good. Therefore we can come close to the man from Nazareth without running the risk of assault. He is a brother only" (Grosbøll 2003:90, my translation). The great majority of Danes don't like outspoken pious Christians, confessed atheists, fanatical spiritualists or provocative pastors, preferring to emphasize that since the death of Jesus good human beings are themselves to be "gods", even though it helps if, like Pastor Grosbøll, they insist that they are Christians. Accord-

ing to a study of more than 1500 contributions to the so-called Grosbøll-debate in Danish newspapers in 2003-04 Danes prefer to find their place in the centre, as they have got used to having their common religion peacefully and passively in a more or less secular way (Højsgaard 2005:198).

Danes are afraid of too much religion, especially as they perceive it among Muslims and New Religious Movements. Paradoxically at one and the same time Danes have the feeling that religion should play a more significant role – probably as a stabilizing factor behind their fragile Culture Christianity (Larsen et al. 2002:86-88). According to
European Values Studies the main institution in the Danish Park of Religions, the Folk Church, is respected and trusted in the same way as the military, the school system, parliament and the welfare system – and significantly more than the press and the trade unions. Social solidarity, good education and free hospitals are values to which most Danes are strongly committed. In the same way they are serious about some sort of religion, even though the majority personally claim that they are "Christian in my own way". They are right insofar as nobody ever put them under severe religious pressure to become Christian in a specific way. But they are wrong insofar as almost all of them end up "choosing" their "own" religion within the traditions in the common Park of Religions, where God is still a primary figure.

Believing and belonging

In the debate about "believing" or "belonging" I have labelled the Danes as "belonging without believing" or even better "belonging without even believing in belonging" (see chapter 1). Few Danes ever left the

Folk Church, of which their forefathers were forced to be members in its proper state Church edition until 1849. On the other hand most of them never took a firm decision to be full and responsible members of their Church. When we examine what they do in terms of attending Church, conforming to the faith of their Church and having positive expectations of their Church the Danes together with the Swedes are the most secular people in the world, with a high degree of distance to their Church (Davie 2002:6-7, Norris and Ing-lehart 2006:73-82).

When asked what is most important about the Church, Danes point to the old buildings, the life-circle rituals and Christmas – with a very low priority to ordinary Sunday Services. When asked how the Church should prioritize its work, the result is similar with one striking exception: the Church should first of all "help elderly and sick people" and "contribute to international relief work" (Gallup Opinion Poll April-May 1998, for similar findings covering all Nordic countries, see Sundback 2000:62-69 and Gustafsson 2000:101-106). This of course is totally unrealistic, as 99 % of social work has long ago been taken over by the state and the municipalities. It does, however, signify that Danes want the Church to be there to do what they think – on the basis of their Culture Christianity (see chapter 6 and Iversen 1999) – that all of us should do. Knowing that we do not do it, they believe that at least the Church that taught us Christianity's law of loving one's neighbour should itself practise neighbourly love!

Life-circle rituals, family traditions and the role of the Church as a sort of guarantor behind Christianity as a cultural norm make the Church almost as legitimate as the National Health Service. The Church is an institution which should be respected. On the other

hand it also means that the churches are treated just like hospitals. Danes pay the taxes necessary and relatively few leave the church, but as a general rule they only go to church when it is needed, when they or their friends and relatives need to have something done. According to Church Statistics 2004, 83 % of the inhabitants of Denmark are members of the National Church, 75.5 % of the babies are baptised at the time of name-giving, 72 % of the youngsters are confirmed at the age of 14, 43 % of all marriages and 90 % of all funerals are conducted in the National Church, (http://www.km.dk).

As there are more babies being baptised than elderly Church members dying, membership of the Danish Folk Church is almost stable for the time being. A significant drop in membership will appear, when the big birth cohorts (born between 1940 and 1970) start dying. At present the most severe decrease is found in the figures for confirmation, which dropped from 77% to 72 % between 2001 and 2004. An even more drastic fall has been seen in the percentage of marriages conducted in the Church. These dropped from 74 % in 1966 to 43 % in 2001. On the other hand the figures for infant baptism and Church funerals are fairly stable.

The present cultural situation is characterised by individualism to the extent that the only choice you do not have is not to choose. It has become culturally illegitimate just to do as your family always used to do. Everybody has to be the responsible editor of his or her own CV. This seems to be the explanation for the decrease in the numbers of confirmations and weddings in Church, where, as an individual, you have various options. You can be married at the town hall – and have the Church celebration for your new family at the baptism of your first-born child. And youngsters

may decide that they want to have a family party (and hopefully "confirmation gifts") without attending confirmation classes and being confirmed in Church. It is no big thing for the non-confirmed youngsters, nor is it for most of the parents. However, a decrease in contact to the Church as well as in a basic knowledge of Christianity does loosen the links between the Church and its members, and may eventually lead to the members' full withdrawal from the Church. The present development in the Church of Sweden illustrates this tendency (Bromander 2005). Still, infant baptisms and Church funerals are more stable, as in practice these are not left so much to the individuals to choose for themselves. So far there are almost no alternatives to baptism and a Church funeral, if you want a proper ritual at the time of birth and death in Denmark.

Religious development in Denmark since 1968

My professor in church history, Anders Pontoppidan Thyssen (1991:343), defined secularization as a process of "disintegration and decay of the state church, and thus the dissolution of the institutional religious observance under the state which was once generally accepted". I prefer this definition, as it underlines that religion in agricultural Denmark was integrated into society – not merely a dominant agent, as emphasized for example in Peter Berger's definition of secularization (1967:113). Over the last 150 years many different areas of society have broken free of Church dominance and removed its various influences. In 1855 for the first time local community boards were established without the pastors ex officio members and more or less automatic chairmen. Many similar regulations followed. The process came to a sort of culmination in the 1975 Educational Act which stated that

the teaching of religion in the public schools should no longer be linked to the confession of the church.

Until 30 years ago it seemed evident that the long pro-cess of secularization as defined by Thyssen would continue. If we look at religion from the perspective of the individual the process indeed has continued and is ongoing. For instance, during the first strong decrease in the rate of infant baptism and confirmation during the 1970s (see table 3) in most families some elderly members would put the rebellious youngsters under pressure to follow the tradition of the family and the local community. This rarely happens today, where the common understanding is that religion only works if it has been personally chosen by the individual. Danes have moved far away from the sacred canopy that overhung agricultural Denmark 100 years ago. It has become compulsory for the individual to take a critical stand towards the remnants of special "Christian" movements, groups and circles, if one happens to be "related" by upbringing to this form of Christianity. 50 or even 30 years ago some Danes might sit in the pews on Sunday morning, because they took it as a moral duty according to their family tradition. Today church attendance, like practically all sorts of religious activity, has been set free from social pressure. Compared to 30 years ago there are as many people in the pews on Sunday morning – and probably even more at alternative religious activities. However, all participants in religious activity today seem to act for the single reason that they have chosen to do so themselves. Religious activity is something you choose, as in general you choose how you want to live and spend your leisure time.

As the old conventional religious attendance disappears and Church Christians feel free to forget about church attendance, many other people from all sorts of

background may choose to attend this or that religious activity. They do not do so to replace the old attendees and form new core congregations to replace the old ones. They come according to their own interests and lifestyles – in their own rhythm. They do not feel that they are under social pressure or moral duty to attend for the sake of solidarity with the old institution and its employees. What we are seeing we may label a sort of post-modern re-traditionalisation, but most certainly one on new terms – as expressed by Jan Olav Henriksen:

> ...the individually chosen adherence to a spiritual tradition rooted in normative Christianity can have strong subjective significance, and more so, as such retraditionalised spirituality is generally based on personal construction and eclecticism (Henriksen 2005:86).

Leading Danish politicians stress the necessity of continuous change in the service society in order for it to compete under the conditions of globalised capitalism. They have succeeded much better than Chairman Mao ever did in creating a situation of permanent revolution. Everything is always to be evaluated and rearranged accordingly! What has changed is not the basic constitution of the individuals but the basic conditions set up by a politically ruled society, where nobody is allowed to think and act as they used to. Again we can express the point in the words of Jan-Olav Henriksen:

> It is easy to imagine how a society can emphasise that your basic duty is to develop your own self – and that this is a duty you also have with respect to society. Such ideals

> found their most explicit expressions in Western thought as far back as the Romantic period... However, this 'subjective imperative' originates somewhere else, than in the individual (Henriksen 2005:76-75).

An illustration of the retraditionalisation in Denmark in recent years can be seen in the following answers to the rather hypothetical question: If required for being a member of the Danish Folk Church would you register as a Member? The Danish Institute for Social Research has posed this question and has collected the following answers since the first leisure time survey in 1964 (Fridberg 2000:86):

Table 2. Would you register as a member of the Folk Church if necessary? (Percentage)

	1964	1975	1987	1993	1998
Yes	72	58	45	58	56
No	16	37	23	26	23

At the end of the 1960s and increasingly so in the 1970s and 1980s religion seemed to be disappearing in Denmark. In 1969 the old practice of issuing royal resolutions of recognition for religious communities (free churches) was abolished and a simple administrative practice for giving religious communities permission to conduct legal marriages was initiated (Iversen 2004:42-45). The same year a new order for theological education was introduced at the University of Aarhus (from 1975 also at the University of Copenhagen) where religious studies was no longer a part of normal theological studies. Everywhere the feeling was that religion was becoming a marginal issue so that there was no reason to deal with it in serious ways. Many factors were at work, not least the

development within families and on the labour market, as the remaining mothers left home to work full time during the same period. This resulted in a historically low rate of fertility and marriage and – so it seems – a subsequent fall in participation in Church life (Iversen 2005:105):

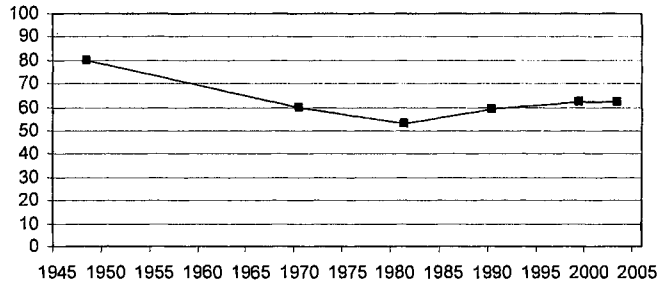
Table 3. Child Birth, Fertility, Marriages, Divorces, Church Marriages and Baptism in Denmark every fifth year since 1961

Year	Children born pr. year	Fertility Rate	Marriages Conducted pr. Year	Divorces pr year	Church Marriages. Percentage of all	Percentages of Infant Baptism in Copenhagen	Percentages of Infant Baptism in Denmark
1961	76.439	2,547	36.364	6.606	67,8	92,3	Ca. 98
1966	88.332	2,615	41.424	6.726	73,6	89,9	Ca. 97
1971	75.359	2,043	32.801	13.401	66,0	75,1	90,1
1976	65.267	1,747	31.192	13.064	56,6	58,0	85,9
1981	53.089	1,437	25.411	14.425	54,4	51,0	82,8
1986	55.312	1,447	30.733	14.490	54.3	49,8	79,7
1991	64.358	1,668	31.099	12.655	53.9	51.4	79.3
1996	67.638	1,747	35.953	12.776	54.5	50.6	79,2
2001	65.458	1,747	36.567	14.597	42,6	48,7	77,3

The figures in Table 3 in general follow a similar curve rather rapidly down and then up again, stabilising at a level considerably lower than was the case before 1968. (The most significant exception is church marriage, where the first child's baptism seems to have taken over the function of the family-constituting ritual.) The very same curve is found in Peter Lüchau's analysis of the answers to the questions

about faith in God in Danish surveys on religion since the 2nd World War (Lüchau 2005:36).

Figure 1. Danes claiming to believe in God (percentage)



To call the recent religious development in Denmark a religious revival or resurgence is an exaggeration. The general situation is better characterized by the fact that the individual no longer experiences a social pressure to be religious in certain ways, cf. Thyssen's definition of secularization. There is thus also no reason to be against religion as a part of the parents' tradition which young people should rebel against. Religion has been set free so that Church and religion are no longer experienced as being linked to specific powers, traditions, parents, the establishment or the state. It has therefore become easier, though still not very common, to choose religion, to take an interest in God and spiritual traditions or attend religious rituals in the Folk Church, for instance, just as it is easy to choose to keep religion and church at a distance, as the majority do. In the 1981, 1990 and 1999 European Values Studies only approximately 8 % say that it is important to bring children up in the Christian faith; 92 % do not find that this is of special importance, even though it is the promise they make at their children's baptism. The bottom line anyway is that there

is a little more observable religion in Denmark today than 20 years ago but much less than 40 years ago.

From secular Religion to religious Secularism

For more than 100 years the politics of religion in Denmark has been determined by two different political views which have been able to come to the same practical conclusion: Let the Folk Church remain under the rule of the state and marginalise all other sorts of religion as far as possible! This has been the politics of conservative nationalists who want to have one nation with one religion. In practice the nationalists have often worked well together with the cultural and liberal radicals (and generally also the Social Democrats), who want religious influence to be kept far away from political debates, where they wish to control the agenda. Before the Social Democrats grew strong, the liberal Farmers' Friends during the latter part of the 19th century had a similar stance (Iversen 1992).

The conservative nationalist politics of status quo is well expressed in the following recommendation from 1864 to the King from the Ministry of Church and Education reacting to the wish from the Roman Catholic Church to establish a residence for a Catholic bishop in Denmark, which the Danish state could not forbid since Denmark had enjoyed freedom of religion since 1849:

> One must firmly keep in mind the basic difference between Your Majesty's relationship to the Danish Folk Church, of which you are the head, and to other recognised faith communities in this country, in particular the Catholic congregations, whose internal affairs stand under an authority, independent of Your Majesty, and whose progress and well-

> being can by no means reside under the positive protection of your Majesty (letter to the King, 15 December 1864).

Just as the Danish government was afraid to render any kind of help to establish a (possibly German) Catholic Bishop's residence in Copenhagen shortly after the loss of the southern parts of the Kingdom to Germany in the war of 1864, so the Danish government today, simultaneously pleasing its supporting party, the Danish People's Party, is reluctant to support any other form of religion than the one cultivated in the Danish Folk Church. As stated above, the present legislation on religion has no room for recognition of religious communities outside the Folk Church. In its working programme the Danish People's Party want to protect all sorts of freedom, but nevertheless,

> ...our duty as a nation is first and foremost one concerned with Danish culture and its foundational Christian ideas. We have no duty to further religions, cultures and languages of other countries. We have no duty to give up protecting our culturally determined faith, norms, traditions and attitudes (quoted from Bjerager 2006:198-199, my translation).

To make the point clear also at the level of the individual Pastor Søren Krarup, the Danish People's Party's spokesperson in Parliament on matters concerning integration, facing a Muslim girl at a political gathering in Odense in March 2004 told her:

> You wear a Muslim scarf. You thereby signal that you belong to another faith than the one of the Danish people. That is in order, as we have freedom of religion. But you live among a Christian people, and by wearing your scarf you send a signal that you place yourself outside the faith of the Danish people. Danish culture and thereby Danish identity is woven together with Christianity and this relationship can not be dissolved (quoted from Bjerager 2006:199, my translation).

It is remarkable that such hard Christian rhetoric has an appeal in a secular country like Denmark. To many Danes, however, "Christianity" only means "Danish culture", so supporters and leading members of Krarup's party can follow his argument. Atheists among them even argue that Christianity is the supreme religion and thus worth supporting in order to keep down other religions, especially "Medieval Islam" (e.g. MP for Danish People's Party Morten Messerschmidt in *Adam and Asmaa* Denmark's Radio 2, April 12, 2006, and interview in the magazine *Ud & Se* April 2006). The secular nationalists today are thus uniting the old conservative, nationalist argument with the classical, cultural and liberalist radical politics of religion.

The secular politics of cultural and liberal radicals have been quite successful in Denmark. The strategy has been to keep religion like a bird in a cage, that is, too small to give the bird the possibility to learn how to fly, but at the same time too nice to make it reasonable for the bird to protest loudly against its captivity. On December 9th 1892 and January 8th 1893 the liberal radical newspaper *Pol-itiken*, commented ironically on the suggestion that the municipality of Copenhagen should finance new church buildings in the

growing capital. The comment epitomised the dominant political attitude to the Church which was to determine the practical politics for the next 100 years:

> My ideal is that they (religious people) shall have everything from us. Not only churches, but pastors and pastors' houses, chaplains, bell ringers, gravediggers, organ players, church singers and all of it. And they shall have it generously and well, so that they and their wives, daughters and sons can be happy because we care for them, and so that they never fall into the temptation of wanting to stand on their own two feet (my translation).

The writer, signing his article "Philistine", argues that it is important for all free thinkers to remain members of the Folk Church. To a "less polite suggestion, that we should leave the Folk Church, we will answer even more politely; This will be a dear duty for us: After you, my dear! Be so kind as to leave first!" It is assumed that these articles were written by the editor-in-chief, the leading liberal radical politician Viggo Hørup, who put his point in a more direct form in another article from 1893:

> The state Church with the help of its well-paid, lazy, bourgeois, state-employed pastors can mainstream and hush up the religious needs of the church attendees, so that they become harmless. For these reasons I love and esteem the state Church, because it is the best defence we free thinkers can have against outrageous religious excitement (quoted from Bjerager 2006: 206, my translation).

In recent years and not least after the Muhammad cartoon crisis early in 2006 *Politiken* has changed its view on religion. It now argues for the separation of state and Folk Church and equal treatment of various religious communi-ties. At the same time not only the Danish People's Party but even more clearly Denmark's major newspaper, the bourgeois *Jyllands-Posten*, has taken over the old polemical view on religion formerly promoted in *Politiken* (Bjerager 2006:28-36 and Hjarvard 2003:127f). It was not only a bad accident that the disastrous Muhammad cartoons appeared in secular and nationalist Denmark, which has often been accused of unjust religious policies by international observers, nor was it unexpected that they appeared in the currently most religiously hostile Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* (Holm 2006, Rothstein and Rothstein 2006:11-114). Also the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who was not only politically troubled but also personally regretted publication of the cartoons (though unwilling to apologise on behalf of the nation) has contributed to the almost religious celebration of Danish secularity and nationality by proclamations such as "Freedom of expression is sacred in Denmark" (Bjerager 2006:30).

The former bourgeois Danish minister of foreign affairs, Uffe Ellermann-Jensen, who is highly critical of the present bourgeois government's activist or even aggressive foreign policy, has used another poem by Piet Hein to characterise the stubborn official Danish attitude to not only the Muslim world but most of the rest of world and to disagree with the high profile Danish policy of No-Apology in the crisis (Ellemann-Jensen 2006):

> What's it to him
> who is sure of his case
> that the rest of the world
> is quite out of step?

The secular, nationalist Danish lack of sensitivity towards other people's points of view reached a climax with the Danish reactions to the diplomatic attempt by UN general secretary Kofi Annan to excuse the Danish behaviour by citing the nation's short experience of living with Muslim immigrants, paraphrased thus: Mr. Annan must have been quoted wrongly or he has misunderstood the whole thing, as of course it is not the Danes who have to get used to living with immigrants but the immigrants who must get used to living with the Danes (*Kristeligt Dagblad* February 27, 2006)! It is the repeated claim by the Danish People's Party which most politicians are afraid to confront, that the Muslims must understand "us" and not the other way round (Rothstein and Rothstein 2006:170).

In the first attempt to give a comprehensive account of the cartoon crisis in relation to its many contexts two brothers, Klaus and Michael Rothstein (the one a cultural critic, the other a historian of religion) modify their cultural radical standpoint on religion following the line taken by *Politiken*. They contribute bravely to a better understanding of Muslim religion, asserting the importance of the prophet Muhammad, for example, and criticising the dubious provocation by *Jyllands-Posten*. On the other hand they argue that our society needs less religion and that the religion that we have should not be protected by special religious laws, only by the fact that religious people are under the same sort of legislation and protection as all other citizens (Rothstein and Rothstein 2006:69, see also Olsen 2005). In brief, what a stable society needs is

"religious minimalism" (Bruce Lincolns) and "soft religion", as – unfortunately – religion is not going to disappear (Rothstein and Rothstein 2006:95-99).

Danish media and politicians have been discussing religion every day and almost all day long in 2006. The Danes in general, however, are still among the most secular people in the world. There is therefore no reason to believe that religion will become a dominant political factor because of the religiosity of the Danes, of Christian or Muslim background. It is estimated that only 20% of Muslims in Denmark are registered as members of the mosques and only 10 % of the approximately 200,000 Muslims in Denmark attend prayers in the mosques on a normal Friday (Fibiger (ed.) 2004:178, Kühle 2006:170-171). On the side of the Folk Church after a challenge from three pastors to the bishops to issue a guiding letter to Christians during the Muhammad cartoon crisis, two of the bishops wrote a feature article in *Kristeligt Dagblad* (10 March 2006), two others consented and the remaining six had no comment. "Religion" is not very organised and is pretty much incapable of political action in Denmark!

The reason that religion is back on the agenda is not because of its resurging importance but rather because of the disappointment among secularists that it has not disappeared altogether – and because of their inability to relate even to the modest form of religion found among the Danes. What is triggering the eager debate on religion in Denmark today is apparently not religion but the peculiar Danish form of secularism, which is preoccupied with its own non-religiousness in an almost religious way.

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4. BACKGROUND TO THE CARTOON CRISES IN DANISH MENTALITY[1]

A question of mentalities

Books and articles on the Danish Cartoon Crises have already been and are still being published by the hundreds. In a number of them the course of events of the crises has also been described and analysed (see e.g. Mogensen 2007, Riis 2007 and Gregersen 2009). This contribution therefore limits itself to the background of the crises in the special national, political and secular setting in Denmark.

I agree with e.g. Tariq Modood (2006) that part of the story is about racism in the cultural, not in the precise legal, primarily biological based sense of the word: The stereotypication, marginalization and stigmatization experienced by Muslims in Denmark during recent decades do resemble the experience of the e .g. immigrant Jews during the last 400 in Denmark (Østergaard 2007). Intolerance to and fear of religion is not uncommon by secular people in Denmark. On the contrary it is mixed with "an avoidance of all deviations from local standards" (Riis 2007: 443). I do not think that Jyllands-Posten did the right thing in its attempt to teach Danish Muslims the lesson necessary for citizens in "a modern, secular society", by attempting to make them ready for "scorn, mockery and ridicule" by help of the cartoons (Rose 2005). All of us surely need education, and that goes not least for the old ethnic inhabitants in Denmark, who are in

[1] Key note at the final conference of the Priority Area in Research *Religion in the 21st Century*, held at University of Copenhagen, September 2007.

need for "education and refinement of their sensitivities in the light of changing circumstances and the specific vulnerabilities of new entrants" (Modood 2006: 61). The cartoon crises was about the handling of an actual multicultural situation (Modood 2007), or rather the Danish lack of ability in this respect (Lægaard 2007, Andersen 2008).

Borrowing the term of Richard T. Bernstein what happened in Denmark during the crises can be analysed as a "clash of mentalities". Bernstein defines mentality as

> a general orientation – a cast of mind or way of thinking – that conditions the way in which we approach, understand and act in the world. It shapes and is shaped by our intellectual, practical and emotional lives. Mentalities can take a variety of concrete historical forms. We never encounter a mentality in the abstract, but only in a particular historical manifestation. To fully understand a specific historical manifestation of mentality, we need to locate its context, its distinctive character, and its sources (Bernstein 2005: 18).

There is not much sense in talking about a clash of civilizations in Denmark, but there are significant differences between the personal experiences based secular mentality of most ethnic Danes and the authority based religious mentality found among e.g. Muslim groups of immigrant Danes. To live in peace a mutual understanding and re-cognition among the two mentalities is needed.

Ethnic Danes and immigrant Danes

The most typical element in the Danes' approach to "the others" is great openness to the world and globalisation and even to multi-culturality combined with a high degree of determination to protect themselves and their own cultural self-perception. The survey by *Epinion* for the weekly magazine, *Ugebladet A4*, from June 2006, strikes this doubleness very precisely with the reactions to the following five statements[2]:

Do you agree to these statements?	Agree	Disagree
It is positive to be a multi-cultural society	57 %	16 %
Globalisation constitutes no threat to Denmark	57 %	11 %
Denmark *had* to tighten its immigration policy.	69 %	15 %
Islam is a threat to western society	57 %	25 %
Danish society rests on certain Danish values which it must protect	79 %	6 %

On the one hand we can agree that this is a contradiction of the kind that the social comedian Niels Hausgaard illustrates with the Jutlander who is a strong supporter of atomic energy so long as the reactor is over on Zealand or at any rate on the other side of Funen. For, as he says, over by us it'll just be in the way! On the other hand it is wise to acknowledge that the self-contradiction in the Danes' attitude to "the others" is of a complex nature and much deeper than the well known forms of local chauvinism. In the newest

[2] Quoted from Per Michael Christiansen in *Politiken* 19th May 2007

and most thorough survey of the conflict around the so called new Danes the political scientist, Frølund Thomsen, formulates the Danish dilemma in the following diplomatic but also unambiguous way:

> It is clear in the Danish immigrant debate there is a democratic Achilles' heel regarding the immigrants' right to be culturally different from the majority Danish population (Thomsen 2006: 67).

The *Background Report* from the Ministry of Integration's study of the values of ethnic groups (Gundelach and Nørregaard-Nielsen 2007), places the Danish Achilles' heel in relief to the Achilles' heel that exists among the immigrants themselves. In a series of questions on their view of gender, marriage, sex, religiosity and obedience the immigrants are seen to be more moralistic and old-fashioned than the present Danish average. For better for worse, their position resembles that of Danes born 75 or 100 years ago. This is not to imply that the immigrants will change their views just as quickly as our grandparents' grandchildren did, but it is nevertheless strange that the Danes, who are used to letting their grandparents think what they like, have relatively serious problems with the attitudes of the immigrants. The centre of the problem is mental: the Danes have only just got used to their new Danish mentality when along come the immigrants with a mentality that the Danes themselves have recently abandoned. That is the core of mental difference between the Danes and the new immigrants. After a thorough study of the role Danish mentality in media Rosenfeldt (2006) argues for investment in an immigrant press which with a mentality that does not offend the immigrants as easily as the Danish media that

currently debate conditions of life in Denmark. This step, he believes, will encourage integration.

Because the Danes are so engaged in their own (new) mentality, they are – literally and politically - neglecting the results of the survey, which sets a question mark against the Danes' excellence. For example, the *Background Report* shows that in a number of crucial areas the immigrants are actually living up to what are often called the Danish core values better than the ethnic Danes themselves. Immigrants are more against travelling on public transport without a ticket, cheating the social services and doing moonlight work than the ethnic Danes; they have more faith in equal treatment by the courts, the hospitals and the police; they are more prepared for their children to have friends from a different ethnic background; they are almost equally prepared as the Danes to separate religion and politics; and they oppose more strongly than the Danes the introduction of a 'strong man' to take over power in the country.

The most problematic area of conflict over "Danish values" is on the "freedom to hold meetings for extreme groups", which is supported strongly by only 39 percent of ethnic Danes but by 65 per cent of immigrant Danes, who perhaps have always wanted such freedom rights. Only 40 per cent of ethnic Danes agree completely that you should "be able freely to perform religious rituals", whereas the immigrant Danes, who are perhaps more experienced in this area, completely support free religious practice with 80 per cent backing (Gundelach and Nørregaard-Nielsen 2007: 126ff.). Thus the majority of Danes are in marked opposition to the 19th century national prophet, Grundtvig's (1783-1872) famous demand for "freedom for Loke as well as for Thor", where "the enemy", Loke, should have the same rights as "the

friend", Thor. The ideal of freedom in Denmark is cut to suit the needs of the majority Danes.

Summarising, it is clear that the immigrants' attitudes reflect the cultures from which they have come on questions which can be regarded as moral. On the other hand, to a considerable extent the ethnic Danes' attitudes appear to be unconsidered products of a cultural and political normality with limited broad-mindedness towards people who think differently about politics and religion.

We're all in the same boat

Denmark is a small country with less than 5.5 million inhabitants. The defeat to Germany in 1864 led to the loss of roughly one-third of the kingdom, after which practically everyone in the remaining population was a Danish-speaking Dane. The fact that Greenland and the Faroe Islands still belong to the kingdom works as a kind of historical exception, which only goes to prove that Denmark is the Danes' Danish kingdom. The defeat to Germany also meant that Denmark had to face up to being a vulnerable nation whose continued existence was far from assured. The result was that the Danes staked their energies on a shared, people's Denmark, applying in practice the words attributed to the founder of the Danish Land Development Service, a third generation immigrant, Enrico Dalgas (1828-94): "Every loss has a compensation /An outward loss must lead to inward cultivation" Dalgas was referring to the loss of South Jutland and of the cultivation of the Jutland moors, but the motto was also used about Denmark's situation in general. The Danes had to put their efforts into building up a nation internally strong with Danish culture and a national feeling of solidarity. With the support of the Grundtvigian

movement and its focus on a Danish *folk*, language and history a popular self-awareness was established despite the country's insignificant size and limited numbers.

There have been numerous rewritings of the old revue song, *We're all in the same boat*. This was also the tune that Vase and Fuglsang turned to when they wrote new lyrics for the song, *Did we learn anyfink?* about the Mohammed cartoon-crisis, performed by Ulf Pilgaard at the Circus Revue in 2006. The picture they paint is extremely effective. What a single group of decision-maker says or does in Denmark often has consequences for everybody in such a small country. And even more so: most of us behave as if we are sitting on one other's laps in the same little boat. The image can therefore be used to appeal for unity and to urge moderation in attacking others while we are on the collective voyage.

Anthropologists from abroad who have done fieldwork in Denmark have often been tempted to describe the Danes as a tribal society in the classic anthropological sense, that is, a pretty much closed community, where everyone keeps watch on one another in order to ensure the group's survival, best of all without the intervention of those outside, who in any case do not belong to the tribe (Mellon 1992, cf. also Borish 1991 and Reddy 1993). Denmark's socio-economic structure, with record-high taxes (63 per cent as the top-rate) and arguably more free common benefits than any communist country has ever had, both assumes and promotes a high degree of solidarity in the form of willingness to pay for joint enterprises. Conversely, in the area of existential ethics and religion the Danes are individualists, almost anarchists, without a sense of the importance of joint authorities, even though they discover most of their attitudes to

life within the joint structures of the Danish forms of religion (see below). It is therefore reasonable to ask whether there indeed is a tribal mentality among the Danes which makes it difficult for immigrants to feel at home in Denmark.

At any rate anthropologists describe the Danes as people who form a circle around themselves and each other, while simultaneously shutting out "the others". Anne Knudsen fastens on this circle which the Danes – children and adults alike – surround themselves with when problems are to be solved. Face to face with one another in a circle everyone looks a little more like everyone else – that at any rate is the experience – and a natural desire arises to show regard for those who are similar to yourself when you can see who is at the table and who is not: "The dislike of ambiguous identities is very widespread in Denmark," says Anne Knudsen (1996: 13). The flipside is that in both a physical and a standpoint sense the Danes turn their backs on those who seem fickle or are outside the circle. "This is something that especially immigrants and their descendants can feel," she adds.

Steven M. Borish (1991) takes up the round-table dialogue at the folk high schools (*højskolerne*), where it is a bit of a disaster if someone is unwilling to join in. The Danes are – or at any rate once were – mostly disposed towards the everyone-join-in arrangement, cf. the universal principles of the co-operative movement and the welfare society. Jonathan Schwartz (1985) uses the quadrangle shape of the Danish farmyard as a metaphor for Danish mentality: once you are inside the farmyard gate, it is really welcoming – here there is *hygge* (cosiness). But if you have no legitimate errand, you should stay outside the gate, where there is precious little *hygge* around. If a dinner party is to enjoy *hygge*, it must not be too large. Otherwise

you must split into groups so you can cosy up to one another around the table with its candles and all the accoutrements, as Prakash Reddy notes (1993: 157f.). Most Danes today settle for insisting they are *Danes*, leaving it to the Swedes to aspire to be the best, as Hanne Sanders from Centre for Denmark Studies in Malmø has put it (Sanders 2006:27). But the Danes live a good life in Denmark, and that is clearly not the case for people in a whole series of other countries. There must therefore be something special about Denmark and the Danes. At any rate Danes are dammed good at being Danes!

Church, nation and people

The Reformation in 1536 made Denmark a Protestant Lutheran country, and thus one where faith became a personal matter. That belief has won through entirely today when all Dames claim to be Christians or whatever else "in my own way." The democratic Constitution of 1849 states that the church's "organisation" is to be agreed on later, but this has in fact never happened in the form of the overall solution envisaged in 1849. The work of various commissioners never resulted in political agreement. So the state and the church are still interwoven. Church tax, paid by all members and used not least for church maintenance, is levied alongside ordinary income tax. The state pays 40 per cent of the clergy's salary and thus helps to finance important areas of the church's work. In return the church carries out administrative tasks for the state by having responsibility for civil registration of all persons and the public burial authorities.

Religion and faith play an *implicit* role for Danes. There is an emotional affiliation towards, and at times participation in, church rituals and alternative reli-

gious practice, but there is little understanding of the religious content. It can be argued that Christianity is not present in Danish families, schools, workplaces, welfare systems and voluntary activities. But it can be equally argued that a number of Lutheran-Protestant figures stand behind – or have helped to encourage – the Danes' attitudes to children, family, work, freedom, equality, commitment, solidarity etc. Just as history, culture and Christianity are present behind the major Danish institutions and their mentality, so do they also make their presence felt behind the backs of the individuals' mentality.

The Danes' faith is not much visible in day-to-day life. Like secular Jews in USA secular Lutherans in Denmark practice *Incognito ergo sum* (Sachs 1999:60). Few give active expression to it, an occasional prayer is said, and faith in a spiritual power is more common than faith in a God corresponding to the personal image of God in Christianity. Yet Danish Christianity does contribute to creating an us-and-them relation to other faiths, particularly Muslims (Gundelach et al 2008).

The balance between community and individualism in the mentality of the Danes finds strong expression when we look at their faith in God. Incidentally the situation is portrayed better than anywhere else in the following brief dialogue, formulated by Woody Allen, without special reference to Denmark (quoted from Warmind 2005:290):

> A: Do you believe in God?
> B: I'm not sure...
> A: Well, Kierkegaard says that if you're not sure, then you don't!
> B: Okay! Then I guess I do!

Only few Danes fully support the line by the well-known Norwegian hymnwriter, Petter Dass, that God will still be God if all men die (Dass 1698). Yet even fewer (approx. 5 per cent) strongly believe that there is no God! The great majority tend to believe in some kind of God: God as a spiritual power in man, or maybe God as a good person – not unlike Pastor Thorkild Grosbøll, who states: "God is dead and that is good. Therefore we can come close to the man from Nazareth without running the risk of assault. He is a brother only" (Grosbøll 2003:90). The great majority of Danes don't like outspoken pious Christians, confessed atheists, fanatical spiritualists or provocative pastors, preferring to emphasize that since the death of Jesus good human beings are themselves to be "gods", even though it helps if, like Pastor Grosbøll, they insist that they are Christians. According to a study of more than 1500 contributions to the so-called Grosbøll-debate in Danish newspapers in 2003-04 Danes prefer to find their place in the centre, as they have got used to having their common religion peacefully and passively in a more or less secular way (Højsgaard 2005:198).

Secular and national Lutheranism

Danes are afraid of too much religion, especially as they perceive it among Muslims and New Religious Movements. Paradoxically at one and the same time Danes also have the feeling that religion should play a more significant role – probably as a stabilizing factor behind their fragile Culture Christianity (Larsen *et al.* 2002:86-88). According to European Values Studies the main institution in the Danish Park of Religions, the National Lutheran Church (*Folkekirken*) is respected and trusted in the same way as the military,

the school system, parliament and the welfare system – and significantly more than the press and the trade unions. Social solidarity, good education and free hospitals are values to which most Danes are strongly committed. In the same way they are serious about some sort of religion, even though the majority personally claim that they are "Christian in my own way". They are right insofar as nobody ever put them under pressure to become Christian in a specific way. But they are wrong insofar as almost all of them end up "choosing" their "own" religion within the traditions in the common Park of Religions.

Denmark is a "Christian" country. So say most Danes today – faced with immigration, the EU and globalisation! A female factory worker agrees Denmark's religion is Christianity, even though "you don't have to engage in it." But the folk church otherwise is a clear-cut case for most people: children are baptised and confirmed in the (75 and 72 per cent respectively i 2005), so they live in a Christian country. A male carpenter adds that Denmark's Christianity is "at a level where it's accessible. I don't think that if anyone mocked our religion that we would burn their flag and stuff like that. That's way over the top, the idea, it's so distant...! We have to go a bit further south-east before the chain comes off the wheels – but I don't think they should have mosques here." A young shipping man sings the typically Danish tune about Christianity and the church:

> We're a Christian country, but we're not the kind that runs down to the church to hear the priest tell us about the actual religion. Christianity is like the Ten Commandments. It's more than being just God's things. It's like ... the way our society's built up. Like you

> can have several wives in other religions, but you mustn't in Denmark. In that way I think I'm Christian, because I live the Christian way, and of course it's also got something to do with the fact that I've chosen to believe in God, because I said yes to my confirmation. But I don't do anything about it in the form of the Church and that way.

Ethnic Danes have a clear tendency to position oneself in relation to Muslims – and thus to claim that they are Christian, or at any rate that they live in a Christian country, even though the content of their Christian knowledge and practice is modest. The question therefore is how can Denmark be and remain a Christian country, if there is no one who practises or knows anything about Christianity?

Europe is the only continent which is markedly secularised. And in that regard Sweden and Denmark lead the way (Davie 2002). The Danish National Lutheran Church can be characterised as the world's weakest monopoly church (cf. chapter 1 and 3). The weakness stems from the lack of support for its religious services and basic creeds, while expectations as to what use it is are very low in comparison with what we find in other countries. The monopoly it holds is due to the fact that there have never been any major active alternatives to its long-standing tradition for administering the four transitional rites of birth, confirmation, marriage and burial. Added to this is the crucial historical circumstance that Denmark is the only country in the world which since the Reformation has always retained its linking relationship between people, state and church. For this reason – and because the state/church discussion has never acquired widespread support – it remains a general view

not only of the state but also of the church that "It's all of us". Even though in 2006 there were "only" 83 per cent of the Danes who were members of the folk church.

Only 10 or 20 years ago very few would have considered religion and the National Lutheran Church as one of the institutional pillars of Danish society It is also a moot point, since there has been no tangible increase either in religious activity or in church support during the period. What *has* risen – and by several hundred per cent in the last 10 years – is the extent of and interest in the politically-influenced public debate on religion (see Rosenfeldt 2006; Højsgaard 2005). Since the 1970s and 1980s, when the individual was expected to decide for himself/herself about religion, because the traditions could no longer bear their practice, more and more people are now feeling it necessary to take a stance, often arguing that they themselves – and "we in Denmark" – are different from the Muslims who fill the newspaper columns and the TV and computer screens. If we are not actively practising our positive attitudes to Christianity we can, the Danes seem to think, at least be active in our negative attitudes to Islam.

Experiential centrism

Danes have considerable international experience – at least as tourists. No current research can point to strictly racist or strongly ethnocentric attitudes among the Danes. When we must note with Thomsen that in the debate on immigration the immigrants' right to be culturally different from the Danish majority society is the "democratic Achilles' heel" (Thomsen 2006: 67), we find a fair share of the explanation in the Danish form of experiential centrism. There are many his-

torical, social and psychological factors in play, but it is striking how much the Danes keep to what they themselves have experienced.

This experiential centrism may hang together with the influence of the specifically Danish tradition in philosophy and theology of experiential life orientation. Since the beginning of the 19th century there has been a high degree of scepticism in Denmark towards the German idealist philosophers – with their systems such as the Hegelian. From their common contemporary mentors Poul Martin Møller (1794-1838) and F. C. Sibbern (1785-1872) both N.F. S. Grundtvig and Søren Kierkegaard were raised in this experiential and life-philosophical tradition. To this very day Danish philosophy as a rule is either empirically analytical or phenomenologically orientated and is thus more engaged in experiences than principle thought-figures. This tradition, via the schools, culture and adult education, has most probably acquired a significant degree of popular approval. In a well-known popular mediation of the tradition Grundtvig writes:

> And never lived that man
> who understood the span
> of what first he had not loved.
> (Grundtvig 1834)

This direction down the proper path of experience can mean that you must commit yourself in order to become wiser and acquire knowledge of others. That's a valid point. But it can also be interpreted to mean that "the others", whom you do not yet know and certainly have not loved, are doubtless dangerous or wrong. The culturally optimistic slogan: "A stranger is a friend you haven't met", can easily become culturally pessimistic in practice when "the other", whom I do

not know, does not belong to "us". We need research into how close the connection is between the popular and the philosophical way of thinking in Denmark, and how the Danish experiential centrism relates to similar mental forms in other parts of the world.

The crisis in February 2006 following *Jyllands-Posten's* publication of cartoons of the prophet Mohammed was in many ways a test case for the Danish mentality. "Did we learn anyfink?" asked the song that summer. The Queen gave the authorised answer in her New Year's Eve Speech 2006. After several nuanced views on the necessity of respecting the cultures of others, she said:

> The year that is past has taught us something, not least about ourselves. We now know better what we stand for, where we neither can nor will sell out.

The following evening on New Year's Day 2007 the prime minister interpreted the text:

> We stood guard over the freedom of speech, which is the most precious freedom-right we have ... It is the core of democracy. And it is the driving-force for enlightenment, education and development. It is the freedom of speech that has created progress in Denmark, in Europe and other free societies of the world.

There was nothing else to be learned, according to the prime minister, even though Danish diplomats have not without reason been retrained in the wake of the crisis (Branner 2007, Petersen 2007). There is possibly a majority among the Danish people for the prime

minister's conclusion, but there is far from agreement. In fact there are differences of opinion right down to the individual families, for example in the elderly farming couple's comments to the flag-burnings: "It's those Muslims, they're stupid," says she. "Yes, yes, but there are enough Dannebrogs," he adds.

In Denmark only 10 per cent say that there cannot be truths in different religions. The corresponding figure for UK is 23 per cent, rising to 57 per cent for Turkey and 86 per cent for Pakistan (Gallup International Millennium 1999). The reason why it is incessantly hammered home in Denmark that "democracy always has the right of way over religion" – and the reason why the prime minister can go so far as to claim that freedom of speech is sacred and apparently the only sacred thing – is that there are evidently not many who disagree with him in a population which deals *relatively* with its own and others' religion. The disagreement in Denmark has less to do with differing views of religion as with the political savvy of the prime minister's absolutist, idealistic stance, which e. g. aired in his opening speech to parliament on 3rd October 2006 in his refusal to sell out in the global 'battle of values' between "intelligent enlightening and fundamentalist darkening. Between democracy and dictatorship. Between freedom and tyranny" (quoted in Petersen 2007: 31).

Nikolaj Pedersen, Emeritus Professor of Political Science characterises the prime minister's simple dualist message as one of "almost messianic pathos". Together with his ally, George W. Bush, Anders Fogh Rasmussen is fighting for "democracy, freedom of speech and human rights". In staging their respective speeches the difference is that the dividing-line for Bush runs between "good and evil", while for Fogh Rasmussen it is between enlightened secularity and

darkened religion. Who is the enemy and who is the friend, they are often agreeing on.

It cannot be said that the Danes are without religion, only that it has little direct effect when it comes to major political questions such as war and peace. The Danes' religion is "pliable" and weak, so it does not present any barrier in moral or ethical questions. Their religion has to do with the Danes' personal identity and self-perception. Relationships to "the others" are decided by and large on a secular basis, as the prime minister urges in his wish to remove religion from the public sphere.

The secular, nationalist Danish lack of sensitivity towards other people's points of view reached a climax with the Danish reactions to the diplomatic attempt by UN general secretary Kofi Annan to excuse the Danish behaviour by citing the nation's short experience of living with Muslim immigrants, paraphrased thus: Mr. Annan must have been quoted wrongly or he has misunderstood the whole thing, as of course it is not the Danes who have to get used to living with immigrants but the immigrants who must get used to living with the Danes (*Kristeligt Dagblad* February 27, 2006)! It is the repeated claim by the Danish People's Party which most politicians are afraid to confront, that the Muslims must understand "us" and not the other way round (Rothstein & Rothstein 2006:170).

A clash of mentalities

It is hard to find any "clash of civilizations" in the Danish background of the Cartoon Crises. There are different religions, to some extend different cultures, but it is senseless to talk about different civilizations in Denmark as immigrant Danes tend to be more

"Danish" than ethnic Danes. What we find is what Richard J. Bernstein calls different mentalities. The dominant mentality in Denmark tends to think "that affirming one's certitude and the dept of one's sincere conviction is sufficient to justify the claim of objective certainty" (Bernstein 2005: 14). The Muslim minority mentality in as far as it is strongly dependent on religious authority may have the same tendency.

This clash of mentalities had a clear expression in July 2007 when the leader of Danish People's Party, Pia Kjærsgaard, won the court case raised against her by some of the Muslims leaders whom she characterized as traitors against the nation because of the Muslim leader's journey to some Middle East countries during the Cartoon Crises. At the door step leaving the court room the spokesman of the Islamic Society of Denmark, Mr Kasem Ahmad, announced that the Muslims had to call for a *fatwa* now. Immediately the Danish press was filled with speculations on who was to be killed, knowing about *fatwa's* only from the Rushdie case. To the Danish minds it was and still is incomprehensible that an adult man can appeal to religious leaders far away in order to learn how he shall react to what he considers as injustice done firstly to his prophet and then to himself. What we witness here is a clash between a self dependent secular and an authority dependent religious mentality.

To Richard J. Bernstein the alternative to the clash of mentalities is a "pragmatic fallibilism", meaning that we should abstain from claims of absolute truth in human and political relations. This is obviously difficult for Muslims seeking religious security in a *fatwa*. It is, however, at least as difficult for a prime minister like the present Danish one, who never admits to a failure: Not only was his handling of the Cartoon Crises infallible, but so was his involvement in the Iraq

war and whatever he has done during his time as prime minister since November 2001. His sincere experience is, that he is always right. Whenever criticized his answer is: "There is nothing to come after", everything is just in order.

Since 1901 the political form of rule in Denmark has been parliamentary government, where no minority, however powerful, can govern without a majority in parliament. Since 2001, when the right-wing took over power with the support of the Danish People's Party, parliamentary government has allowed room for a modest majority to be able to determine important all matters on Denmark's relation to the world (e.g. participation in the war in Iraq and a tightening of immigration policy). In a number of other democratic countries there is a broader distribution of power and thus more powerful voices in the public debate than in Denmark. This may take the form of a president with his/her own mandate, a second democratically-elected chamber, or courts with a strong legal basis for monitoring observance of the constitution. The Danish form of parliamentary government does not allow room for any of these. Whenever the prime minister is supported by a majority in Parliament, he is always right, since there are no ways to prove otherwise.

The Danes think 'society' on the basis of their own experiences. There are – apart from the politicians – no powerful norm-setters to influence attitudes. Nor in general are there any strongly idealistic positions and traditions that can trump the individual's experiences. It seems that for the Danes, as for the Danish philosophical tradition, it is experiences and reflection on these rather than more principled explanations that stand at the centre. Far from being ethnocentric in a classic racist way (Thomsen 2006:189-200) the Danes

are experience-centred. However, since Denmark is a relatively open society where you can meet people of another culture nearly everywhere and where many have extensive international experiences, the Danes have varying attitudes to immigrants with a mentality different from their own.

As I have argued elsewhere (chapter 3) the National Lutheran Church might help the Danes pointing to the religious experiences and traditions found in Christianity. Tied as it is to the state and thinking almost as secular and nationalistic as the majority of Danes there was, however, no statement from the Danish Church like the following issued by the World Council of Churches in the days of the crises, February 2006:

> As people of faith we understand the pain caused by the disregard of something considered precious to faith. We deplore the publication of the cartoon. We also join the voices of many Muslim leaders in deploring the violent reaction to the publications (quoted from Riis 2007: 448).

Danes in general are not strong "people of faith". Even so it should not be impossible for them to understand "people of faith". Mutual understanding is primarily a question of will and education – as often found among Muslims in Denmark. Let me conclude by quoting a young Muslim girl who was interviewed in an investigation of cultural and religious encounters at the two most multiethnic secondary schools in Denmark. Having described her sincere and deeply felt religious commitment to Islam, quite different to the ethnic Islam of her parents, she ended up saying smilingly: "Of course I am also pretty well able to

analyse my religion in a critical way. I have after all been educated in Denmark, haven't I?" (Bektovic 2004:86 and 122). It might be useful if religious and not least secular Danes got the same Danish education as this young Muslim girl.

Was the Cartoon crisis about religion? No, in Denmark it was about a clash of mentalities, having of course each their religious dimensions. Religion does have some significance, but it is far from dominant in the Danish background of the cartoon crisis. As more often than not, it is more about something else than about religion.

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5. BECOMING A CHRISTIAN IN A NON-CHRISTIAN AGE. AN ATTEMPT TO ANSWER AN OLD QUESTION FROM A MODERN GRUNDTVIGIAN STANDPOINT[1]

Introduction

For most Danes the priest, politician, poet and prophet Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) is the greatest Dane who has ever lived. At any rate he takes up more room in Danish history and culture than any other Dane. Just to mention one example: Grundtvig has written a third - and in fact the best and most popular third - of the hymns in our great hymnbook. Though a number of works have so far been published in foreign languages[2],

[1] Lecture at six theological colleges in Midwest America, October 1992, arranged under the aegis of The Nordic Center in Minneapolis, presented together with a similar lecture by Professor Paul Holmer, who was talking from the standpoint of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). First printing in *Studia Theologica*, 46, 1992, p. 133-146.

[2] In English there are two major textbooks: *Selected Writings. N.F.S. Grundtvig*. Edited and with an Introduction by Johannes Knudsen, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1976, and *A Grundtvig Anthology*. Selected by the Grundtvig Society, Centrum Publications, Århus/James Clarke and Co., Cambridge, 1984. A comprehensive introduction to the different areas of Grundtvig's life and work is found in *N.F.S. Grundtvig. Tradition and Renewal. Grundtvig's Vision of Man and People, Education and the Church, in Relation to World Issues Today*. The Danish Institute, Copenhagen 1983. It has a full bibliography on Grundtvig literature in English. Parallel editions are found in Danish, German and French. Also worth reading is Ernest D. Nielsen: *N.F.S. Grundtvig. An American Study*. Augustana Press, Illinois 1955, which is among the sources of inspiration for my own *Ånd og livsform. Husliv, folkeliv og kirkeliv hos Grundtvig og sidenhen*, Århus 1987.

internationally Grundtvig is still far from being as well-known as his 19th century contemporaries Søren Kierkegaard and Hans Christian Andersen.

Grundtvig is a magnet, who seeks to gather up the whole of Danish culture. But he is also a catalyst putting it back into circulation. As an intermediary he is often effective, yet often it is he himself who is felt to block the road. His importance is therefore hard to calculate. It is impossible to say what is his own work, and what he has simply picked up from all those theological and cultural traditions that he studied. And it is equally hard to tell what Denmark would have been without Grundtvig. For we have not been without him for more than 200 years.

It is highly unfair only to deal with Grundtvig as a historical figure. True he studied history day and night - but it was always for the sake of the present and future life of his people and the church. Grundtvig therefore is best regarded as our early contemporary. As it happens he also left more than 100,000 written pages, so one can easily spend a whole life in dialogue with him. It is regrettable that Grundtvig is so hard to translate into a foreign language from his Danish vernacular, for he was a very fine poet, who expressed himself not only in a very beautiful, but also in a very precise way in the composition of his countless poems. Thus we find astonishingly sharp and clear statements on deep and difficult questions in his poetry. Even if one misses out on the beauty of his Danish language, however, one can enjoy the clarity of his thinking, when drawing on his poems to illustrate, for example, the question of how to become a Christian.

Even though Grundtvig did not think of his own time as a non-Christian Age in our modern sense of the words, he is as outspoken and distinctive on the question of becoming a Christian as on most other fundamental human and Christian questions. Firstly we shall try to read Grundtvig's contribution to this issue through the glasses of our time.

Later we shall try to read our own situation through Grundtvig's glasses.

I. BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

1. Living Human Beings will be Christians Tomorrow

In a famous poem from 1837 Grundtvig writes that the precondition for becoming a Christian is that we are human. Amimals cannot become Christians. And even though we are called sheep we must not think of adding animals to the flock of God, nor cast pearls before swine. While devils even the Almighty himself cannot remake into Christians. But since we are human beings, we have every chance to become Christians, because man is created in the image of God.

To be heathen is no hindrance to becoming a Christian. In fact it is the precondition itself. To be heathen means literally to be someone from the heath. Which is where we all come from inasmuch as God originally placed us there, says Grundtvig.[3] We might also call to mind Adam or Enoch, or even better Noach. They were heathens not Christians, but they were clearly in the state of God's grace. And Abraham, David and John the Baptist were friends of God, even though they were clearly not Christians. For Christianity by definition did not exist before Christ. To be a Christian means to believe in and be baptised into Christ, to be swaddled with Christ.

But if we are truly human, we can become Christian. In fact we can hardly escape it, according to Grundtvig. He concludes his poem as follows:

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[3] In Danish "from the heath" (hedenifra) or "heathen-old" (heden-old) means from very old days.

Man first and then a Christian,
That is a major point,
Christianity is given free,
It is the purest joy,
But a joy which only comes to him
Who already is a friend of God,
Belonging to the noble tribe of truth.

Therefore every man on earth
Must strive to be truly human,
Opening his ears for the word of truth,
And giving God the glory;
If Christianity is the truth
Though not a Christian today
He will be one tomorrow![4]

Christianity always comes free of charge. Christian faith is given freely by God to human beings belonging to the noble tribe of truth. But we cannot be Christians against our will. In fact we have to strive to be truly human in order to be become Christian. This is the content of Grundtvig's famous statement *Man first, then a Christian.* He is not suggesting that we should just relax, since if we are not Christians today we will probably be Christians tomorrow anyway. Nor does he mean, as theologians inspired by secular theology have claimed in recent years, that human life should be separated from Christian life in the organisation of modern society.[5]

Grundtvig's statement is theological: *What is truly human is truly Christian*, he says. This we know to be true, in that God's sending of Christ is a re-creation of what he created in

[4] Grundtvigs Sangværk, III, no 156. Five verses from this poem have been translated into prose English by Johannes Knudsen in *Selected Writings*, p. 140-41.

[5] This is the tendency in Kaj Thaning: *N.F.S. Grundtvig*. The Danish Institute, 1972.

the beginning. Thus when human beings live out the human, we are always close to the Christian in at least two ways: perhaps human life flows over with gratitude and happiness directed to the God of Creation. Or perhaps - and this is something we all experience - we weep gold tears because we cannot live up to our golden human life. But then the gold tears show that we have had a glimpse of the gold, that is, we have understood that we are created in the image of God. And so defeat on a human level can also send us on to Christianity, provided the path is not blocked by the prejudices and barriers which mankind has set up in the course of history. Once we have become Christians, there is one thing above all we must use the new life for: to become and remain truly human. In fact Grundtvig's central statement about the purpose of life - human as well as Christian - runs like this:

> To be human in everything,
> Strong in the spirit, despite the dust,
> To honour God in mankind
> As our Creator's masterpiece.

History has shown that Grundtvig's phrase *Man first, then a Christian* can be misused to separate the human and the Christian. This is not at all his intention. In fact his concern is to understand his own way of being a Christian and to point to how we can invite others to become Christians. A number of people have tried to reformulate Grundtvig's phrase in order to clarify his intention. The best suggestion comes from a modern Danish poet, Poul Borum: *Man and therefore Christian. Christian and therefore Man.*[6]

[6] Paul Borum: *Digteren Grundtvig.* Copenhagen 1983, p. 197.

2. Faith, hope and love from below and above

Grundtvig firmly believes in the principle of contrary terms: Light is the opposite of darkness, life is the opposite of death, good is the opposite of evil; he also believes that these opposites cannot be mixed. His point is that we cannot label somebody as a totally evil person and still preach the gospel to him. Grundtvig firmly opposes Luther when he speaks of man who have been turned into devils because of the fall of Adam.[7] If we wish to invite people to become Christians, we must begin with the belief that each person is created in the image of God. And we must be ready to answer when we are asked what is the content of that image of God in which we have been created. The full response from Grundtvig to that question is complicated. But its core is faith, hope and love. Faith - that is, a life lived in confidence in other people and perhaps in God. Hope - that is, a life where some sort of meaning is glimpsed in its course. And love - that is, a mutual life of giving and receiving.

Grundtvig's claim is that faith, hope and love can be found everywhere in mankind. If that was not the case, then man would have degenerated into an animal over the years. Without the ability to have confidence, to live in faith, how could we trust our mothers, our husbands and wives, or for that matter our teachers? Only our heart can make us sure of the most important things in life. And when we can be sure in our hearts, then we have faith and are clearly people created in the image of God. Animals and trolls do not know about matters of the heart:

> Faith and hope and love,
> These jewels of the earth
> With God's voice come rushing down

[7] See 'The Innate and the Reborn Humanity', in *Basic Christian Teaching, Selected Writings*, p.74ff.

Only to us Humans;
To trolls and animals they are but
Idle talk and fairy tales![8]

These three jewels were given to mankind at creation, and even though they were buried in the desert at the fall of Adam, nowadays out of the heath - among the heathens, such us the Nordic people - these jewels have been ploughed up again, so that we are able to understand the renewed jewels that God laid in the manger-room, from where faith, hope and love grew up again together with God's own Son. And once again Grundtvig puts his basic understanding together in two small verses:

Faith and hope and love
Christian clothing put together
Come to us from above
With God's "Yes and Amen",
Come however as a spring,
Only on the plains and hills,
Where they have been before.

He who knows not what Gold is
Cannot weep for gold,
Those who are the kin of dust
They can only turn to dust.
Faith and hope and love
From below and from above
Meet in the *Word of God.*[9]

We become Christians when what we as human beings know of faith, hope and love meets God's faith, hope and love in sending his Son. This is so because God works in two ways:

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[8] *Sangværk*, V 253, v.1
[9] *Sangværk* V 127, vv.1-2.

> First time as the good creator,
> Mild at the dust at your feet,
> Second time as the sin-absolver,
> Gracious God and loving father.[10]

Because God works in this double way, it is important that we meet him in a double way: in the goodness of his creation and in the love of his Son. This is also the reason why we as Christians cannot limit ourselves to preaching the Gospel. We also have to reawaken a living folk-life in fact, before we can effectively speak to the people about living Christianity. At least Grundtvig does not, as he says, "envy those who prefer to speak to the dead". He "would rather speak to the living robbers than to the dead saints. The former might be converted but the latter can do nothing."[11]

There can be no understanding of Christianity, if we have not learnt by heart the human, i.e. God-created, content of the basic Christian words, which are human words:

> So if we did not have the Danish words: mankind, father, mother marriage, children, brother and sister, God, providence and immortality, time and eternity, truth and lying, soul and conscience, faith, hope and love, which made a corresponding human impression on our hearts, then neither gods nor men could enlighten us about them or vitalize us through them. So that it is not only our old ancestors who had to become men before they could be Christians - be heathen before they could become Christian people. It is fundamentally just as true of ourselves and our children, and it has only been hidden from us because either we made

[10] *Sangværk* IV 212, v.6.
[11] *Folk-Life and Christianity*, 1847, *Selected Writings* p.43.

> no real true use of Christianity, or all that we encountered that was human came to us under one heading, so that we could not distinguish the heathen and the Christian from each other.[12]

3. The Living Interaction

What is needed for humanity is that we live a vital life of faith, hope and love. What is needed for Christianity is that we live a life of Christian faith, hope and love. These two correspond and they can strengthen one another. There can be no living Christian life without living human life. And in the long run, says Grundtvig, there can also be no living human life without living a Christian life.

When looking for living people we must be open-minded, so as to see how far the human struggle really is a true struggle for human life. An example is to be found in Grundtvig's review of the first feminist booklet to appear in Denmark in 1851 - *Letters of Clara Raphael.* The name of the author, Mathilde Fibiger, does not appear on the cover. Generally the reviewers were rather negative, whereas Grundtvig was very positive. Even though he did not much care for Clara's opposition to Christianity and marriage, Grundtvig found Clara to be one of the "living people who prove that they are so by loving life and hating death in all its forms". Therefore Grundtvig concluded,

> Clara is clearly much closer to the Kingdom of God than both the priest confessing his sins, and the young lady trying to convert her without possessing her living feeling of what man, created in the image of God, even in his deepest fall is and must be, both in God's and in his own eyes...[13]

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[12] *Danskeren,* IV, 1851 p.90.
[13] *Danskeren* IV, 1951 pp.324 and 327.

Human life can be dead. And so can Christian life. In fact our great problem may be that we take dead Christianity as a measure by which we judge human life. In that way we end up with a superficial Christianity, which closes our eyes to the richness of life. Grundtvig put it this way:

> ..talking to people who have settled for the explanation that Christianity is no more than allowing oneself after ancient custom to be married by a priest, having one's children baptised as soon as possible without them catching a cold, and going to church when one does not have a cold oneself and one is not afraid of catching one either and one is not off to the park, and one has no other legitimate excuse - talking to such people about Christianity is a hopeless matter because for them it is almost just as external a thing as the "Christian clothing" in which the children were baptised in former times, and which in the country the priest's or the schoolmaster's wife could lend out to the whole parish.[14]

We do not need priests with Roman armour in our churches. We only need to ask people to come to church with their "simple, strong and warm everyday clothes",[15] i.e. their daily life in human faith, hope and love. Thus living human life can interact with living Christian life, and if there is no such living human life, then, says Grundtvig, it must be the job of the church to awaken or create such life.[16]

Let us conclude this section by seeing how the living interaction *Danne-Virke* between human and Christian life takes place also in unintended ways. In the book *After Grundtvig* from 1983 the leader of the Danish-minded

[14] *Danskeren* IV, 1851, p.85.
[15] *Danne-Virke* 1817 p.217.
[16] *Folk-Life and Christianity*, 1847, *Selected Writings* p.41.

Danish-German boarder, Karl Otto Meyer, tells how after the Second World War he was among the Danish children who were sent to Denmark for a summer holiday. The schoolmaster used to gather them in the Danish school and before their departure they would sing Grundtvig's famous hymn "O day full of grace, which we behold", written in 1826 for the millenial celebration of the coming of Christianity to Denmark. "I freely admit that for a long time I thought that the verse "We journey to our fatherland, where day is not frail nor fleeting", was about Denmark", says Meyer. Grundtvig intended to paint a picture of the heavenly fatherland by using words from the earthly fatherland. But the children in fact gained a richer picture of their earthly fatherland by singing about the heavenly fatherland. However unintended, the interaction was living anyway, and so it may have helped the children to join in these very precisely formulated words of praise, which Grundtvig wants us all to do:

> God be praised for all his bounty,
> Image first and fullness last,
> Spirit here, in truth, and grace,
> Henceforth everything in love![17]

II. BECOMING A CHRISTIAN IN A NON-CHRISTIAN AGE

1. On the Trail of the Spirit

One of the main chapters in Ernest D. Nielsen's book on Grundtvig is called "On the Trail of the Spirit". The title is

[17] *Sangværk* IV, 239, v.13.

very apt, for in all the many areas of his life and work Grundtvig constantly pursued the trail of the spirit, as the spirit is what gives life to every area of life. In the last resort the spirit is always God's own spirit, which he breathed into the nostrils of Adam, giving him the breath of life and thus the human spirit (Gen. 2:7).

The activity of the spirit Grundtvig finds first of all in home life, which feeds on and is borne along by faith, hope and love. But the spirit is also the determining power behind and within the life of the people. As God's spirit in creation expressed itself by living words, so it is with human beings: the clearest expression of the spirit within and among us is the living words with which we communicate:

> Souls and bodies a thousandfold
> The human spirit can unite,
> Piercing them with words like lightning,
> So they all are one at heart.[18]

The creational spirit of God is in the world, working in and among human beings. The re-creational spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is among us in the same way. We do not need to cry for the Holy Spirit to come to us, we only need to groan for it to stay with us (Romans 8:26). Grundtvig has a special point, however, which is very important to him: just as God created the first time by his living word, so does he today, when the Christian congregation lends him its mouth by saying the Lord's Prayer, the words of the institution of the Lord's supper and the Apostolic Creed. According to Grundtvig these are the main words that we have from the mouth of Jesus himself. Where these words sound again from living voices, God is creating the Christian faith in those who listen. It follows therefore that the church and its worship are a precondition for the survival of Christianity.

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[18] *Danish Folk High School Songbook,* 151 v. 5.

In fact, says Grundtvig, the Christian faith has been kept alive for all these years because the living words of Christ have been passed on through history in the living congregations in a living way - not because of, but quite often in spite of, the priests and the church establishment.

We will not dwell here on Grundtvig's concept of the church, but he is right in saying that there could be no Christianity without a living church, just as there can be no children without parents. Christianity cannot survive without places to live, to grow, to be passed on. And that is the church's place. Thus the work of the church is a precondition for men and women becoming Christians today.

For Grundtvig there are seven major peoples in history. And in each of them he finds one of the great people's congregations. He names them according to the seven letters of the seven congregations in the Book of Revelation. The first five congregations are the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the English and the German. The sixth congregation, the one called Philadelphia, is not to be found in the country with a city of that name. That would be a superficial way of theologizing, says Grundtvig.[19] He ends up being quite sure that the sixth one, the congregation of love, is the Nordic congregation, and especially the Danish congregation, of which he is himself the great prophet. He has difficulty guessing where the seventh and last congregation will come into being, but he has heard so much about India that he ends up pointing to the banks of the Ganges as its place of origin.

With this concept of history Grundtvig could not speak of Denmark and other places where Christianity has come alive as if we are living in a non-Christian age. There is a lot of resistance to the church - not least within the church itself -and he himself and all living Christians have a major battle

[19] *Kristenhedens Syvstjerne*, 1860

to fight before the whole church and thus the entire people can become a living congregation.

On the other hand Grundtvig is well aware that history can turn again, so that the people and the church of the future will face even greater problems than the people and the church of his age. That was not least what he learned in England during his three trips to London in 1829, 1830 and 1831. The demonic element in English development at the time is simply that technical science and financial power together create a spiritless supremacy. There were certain Englishmen of spirit who recognized this already in 1830, says Grundtvig eight years later, during one of his famous lectures *Within Living Memory*:

> Machinery turns people by the thousand, large and small, into purely secondary factors, pure appendices to the machinery as the chief concern and basic power; so that even those Englishmen who allow themselves to think about something other than reckoning everything they do in money, regard with secret horror each new discovery and colossal exploitation of the mechanical powers that are gradually supplanting all the old craftsman and making them mere tools in the engineer's hand, mindless slaves in the factory owner's yard.[20]

Industrialization only made inroads into Denmark in the years after Grundtvig's death in 1872. And fundamentally he insisted on his biblical view of history, even though he was aware of tendencies towards what is now called modernization and secularization. In various statements he foresaw the demise of his own philosophy of life, if what he called the "railway-age" was going to take over. In a number of ways conditions of life have developed far

[20] *Mands Minde*, 1837 p. 446.

beyond what Grundtvig could possibly have imagined; in other ways development has not been as catastrophic as he feared. Life has always been difficult, not least for Grundtvig himself, but now it has become difficult in new ways. One central aspect has been touched on by Carsten Jensen, a modern Danish writer:

> Work has gradually become so specialized that if two well-educated people marry and are not in the same branch they will be unable to talk about anything but their love. They are not allocated many more words in common than those available to relatives during visiting-time in a prison. The rest of the time the lovers sit each in their cells of incomprehensible language and cannot even reach one another by banging on the pipes. That is why we talk more and more about love not in confidence but for everyone to hear and in any place. Not because love is the only universal that exists but because the language of love is the last universal left. When the three words I LOVE YOU become a holy trinity and a true religion in the language it does not mean that life is endlessly rich; it means it is endlessly limited. A society where only feelings are allowed to be rich is a poor society.[21]

In its own almost kafkaesque way this quotation points to one basic fact of our time: there is such a thing as a people and a common cultural identity among peoples of the world, but modernization and internationalization have meant that we are not much aware of our common traditions and common conditions of life. Often we have to rediscover what is common to us, for instance in times of crisis or by

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[21] Carsten Jensen: *På en mørkeræd klode*, Copenhagen 1986, p. 73.

living outside our own country for a lengthy period. On our return we can perhaps better see our situation and thus also our common values.

Generally speaking we cannot approach anybody today and address them as part of a group with this or that common culture. In a radical way we have all become what Kierkegaard calls "hin enkelte" - that individual, or the single individual. That is how we regard ourselves and thus also how we wish to be addressed. If we do not want to be superficial in our mission to a people, we have to start with the individual today. It is very important, however, that we do not address the individual only because we have some sort of pious understanding that God only wishes to treat individuals with a broken heart. On the contrary, we should start with the individual because we should always be serious about who people are and who they think they are as people of today.[22]

2. Nomads without Nomadic Culture.

Grundtvig's designation for the good dwelling-place is 'pavilion', the open tent full of shadows. He takes the expression from the many tents set up in the Old Testament.

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[22] Grundtvig, rightly understood, is a great missiologist, even though he has his limitations due to lack of experience of foreign mission, cf. Hans Raun Iversen: Grundtvig som inspiration til mission, in *Nordisk Missionstidsskrift* 3/1983 pp.94-115. At the beginning of this century a number of German missionaries (e.g. Bruno Gutmann) developed what could be seen as a sort of grundtvigian missiology, mixing the grundtvigian theology of folk-Christianity with the German philosophy of "Blut and Boden". A modern "grundtvigian" missiology is to be found in a book by a Baptist pastor from Chicago, brought up with Norwegian lutheranism in a rural valley near the Canadian border in the state of Washington: Raymond Bakke: *The Urban Christian*, Marc Europe, Bronley 1987. "The bigger the city the more personal we must become", Ray Bakke says (p. 59).

It is not only the living-place for the desert nomads, but is also described as the king's dwelling. And the expression 'tent' or 'pavilion' is also used about the tabernacle where the people preserved the ark of the covenant during their desert wanderings. God too can come visiting or take up residence in a tent, as he did for the first time with Abraham in Mamre. It is the same expression John's gospel uses about Christ who becomes flesh and takes up residence, i.e. raises his tabernacle among us (John 1:14). And when the visionary prophesies how God will have his residence among the people (Revelation 21:3) it is again a pavilion that is God's dwelling-place. If we have become nomads in our own culture, without a fixed common identity, life is not necessarily the worse for that. It is not alien to God to pitch his camp among nomads. Let us finally consider then in what sense of the word we have become nomads.

Nomads move around regularly, and especially those with cattle are always ready to break camp so they can be where the grass is greenest and the water most plentiful. However, nomadic life today is often a battle merely for survival. Grass and water are hard to find and the various governments pursue the same policy of preferring the nomads to settle. So nomadic culture in many places is in a state of crisis. But if nomads are allowed to live as nomads, their culture and their practices fit like a glove. Their life-form is a unity, inseparable from their identity. A nomad normally moves with his whole settlement, and wherever he gets to, he will nearly always find other settlements that belong to his own clan. Above all he will always meet members of his real family, i.e. the age group in the tribe with whom he was circumcised. This is so whether he comes as a warrior or a shepherd in his younger years, or as settlement chief as an elder; he will not move to a new settlement until the women have gone before him with the household. In nomadic culture the man never misses a wife and children, for wives and children are held in common

with the same age-group. In addition the Christian nomad who has arranged his settlement as a congregation takes his congregation with him when he moves.

Modern people also move around a lot, in Denmark on average every 7th year. But because many only move a little, there are many others who move even more. In our own way we are becoming nomads, although we do not have a nomadic culture. What we do have are memories of an agriculture and some bourgeois ideas about our home as a castle. But our pretty privet hedges and front-door intercoms cannot protect us either from inner dissolution or extraneous everyday rhythms. That is why we often feel we lack both power and language and even freedom, because our many choices do not make us free but tie us hand and foot. And yet time and again it turns out that the spirit cannot be tied down. Love is right after all, a common will creates living forms, and our life is renewed.

What we need to do is go inside the forms, however fragile and provisional they are, to be present where we are, to dare to expect that both life itself and enlightenment as to what life is will meet us in the midst of the concrete form-made life. This is our task in our home and places of work, in national and local movements, in the local communities - and in the church if we believe in it. If we accept that life is always somewhere else, wherever the grass is greener, then in the end life is nowhere. Granted most of us in our day to day lives are confronted by powers, authorities, and demands that make it easiest for us to adapt, to pull away, to resign ourselves to the technologically determined rhythm being whatever it might be. The conveyor belt, of whatever kind, is allowed to run on, even though the man next to me has got something in his eye, or perhaps his heart's core has picked up signals that take his courage away. And yet it is only from inside the forms, within the daily rhythms, that life can be lived, even though it is the same forms and rhythms that often do not allow any life to come back into

life. So a genuine revolutionary patience is needed, a firm hope that all the new life which will also be ours is already growing here where we are right now.

As Christians we need environments where we can live as Christians, as churches and congregations here and now. Our next problem, however, is that all too rarely do Christian environments reach outside their own borders with a credible testimony. In practise we appropriate the gospel - perhaps because in reality we are also frightened that a church will grow up that is out of control. So the Home Mission people still talk of the bulk of the people as the forecourt of the temple and not the temple itself. As followers of Grundtvig speak of the everlasting action of John the Baptist, which consists of preparing the people's soil and creating among them self-reflection and horizons of religious understanding as precursors for the specifically Christian 'event', which takes place somewhere else, ostensibly in church on Sunday at 10 o'clock. To which they do not go anyway. Both strategies overlook in practice that God is among us, that God became man in Jesus, and that his activity is continued through the power of the Holy Spirit in the world to this very day. Therefore the true John the Baptist action today, when Jesus *has* come, is to say with John "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). The difference between John and us is precisely that he was six months older than Jesus, while we come almost two thousand years after. Jesus is here before us - among people. Our task is therefore not to wait for him but to point to him and say, God is among us!

It is fortunate that Grundtvig made a mistake when he visualised Christ on his wanderings among the peoples of the earth visiting the high cultures first. "He who goes with the word of grace/homeless and poor around the earth" (DHS 128, v.1) can surely find his way to the nomads without a nomadic culture. So our eyes can also be among those about whom Grundtvig wrote:

Eyes, you are happy
You who see God's Son on earth!
Ears, you became so rich
When you heard the word of life
Heart, when you believed the word,
The tree of life rose from the root."
(DHS 142, v.7)

3. Conclusion.

We have seen that there are three preconditions for people becoming Christians in our age. 1) That we allow one another to live in such a way that everybody can believe that all of us have been created in the image of God. 2) That the Church is the church - that is, those called out to pass on the living words of God in the places where people live today. 3) That we accept that people of today agree with the modern Danish philosopher of everyday life, Storm P, who once said, "Everybody just thinks of themselves. I am the only one thinking just of me".

6. FOLK CHURCH AS MISSION TO CULTURE CHRISTIANS[1]

The art of labeling

We have plenty of labels: Churchless Christians, Four-Wheel Christians, New Religious Christians, Nominal Christians etc. None of us likes to be labeled - and certainly not when the label points out what we are not. But for the sake of clarity in the discussion of our religious situations we cannot avoid using labels. It is crucial, however, that the labels we use are positive ones and, of course, as correct as possible. This is why I suggest that the great majority of Folk Church members - and even many non-members - in Denmark and probably in other Nordic countries as well should be labeled *Culture Christians*. At the same time we have a helpful term for the discussion of how the Churches should carry out their mission in our countries.

In major parts of the debate on missiology of Western culture ordinary members of established Churches in Europe and North America, including the Folk Churches in the Nordic countries, are labeled *Nominal Christians*[2]. It is fair to say that the membership of Folk Churches is rather formal, when it only implies few things, for example the Church members being baptized and paying a certain

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[1] First printing in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 1997/3-4, p. 237-246.

[2] A neoclassic and representative book in this debate is Eddie Gibbs: *In Name Only. Tackling the Problem of Nominal Christianity* (Bridge Point Book, 1994). Gibbs also uses the term "Cultural Christians", but only in passing as another label for "residual Christians" or second generation revival Christians, who have themselves not been "born again", p. 93.

amount of Church tax - and the Church having to offer its services to these members whenever wanted at the time of birth, adolescence, wedding and death. From an ecclesiastical point of view this sort of Church membership is, indeed, nominal. What is wrong, however, is the hidden implication: If your Church membership is formal or nominal you are a nominal Christian, that is a Christian only by name.

Folk Church members in the Nordic countries, for example in Denmark, do not normally attend Sunday services, their religious belief do not conform with the creed and teaching of the Church and they generally do not expect much from their Church. The Church, however, has to be there – in case it should be needed. The Church is thus being treated as an insurance for certain services, not as a community of believers. This pattern of relationship to the Church is well known from everyday experience in Denmark and from a great number of surveys as well. If the membership of the Folk Church has become a formal matter, that, however, does not mean that Christianity only has a formal place in the lives of Folk Church members. On the contrary: Normally for Folk Church members Christianity is an important part of their culture. It is the sort of Christianity I suggest that we call *Culture Christianity.* It must be strongly underlined that Culture Christianity is something different from *Christian Culture.* It is a very open question of whether there ever was a Christian Culture, i.e. a culture "where the Gospel has penetrated into the personal and social subconsiousness of a people, so that it influences human behaviour instinctively"[3].

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[3] Stephen Neill quoted by Wilbert R. Shenk: "Encounters with Culture" Christianity", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 18, 1 (1994). 8. Stephen Neill in *The Unfinished Task* (London

Culture Christians are people for whom a major part of their culture is Christian, but their culture is most certainly not, nor are their full religious beliefs if they have any. Culture Christians in the Western Christendom-context may resemble such people in Third World countries, for example China, who have adopted certain Christian values and thoughts as part of their culture and worldview, even though they have only a marginal relation to the local Christian Churches. The difference is, however, that Culture Christianity in Europe and North America usually will be acquired by heritage, whereas, for example, in China it is a product of adaptation by the individual to Western culture and lifestyle.

For the sake of clarity it must be underlined that Culture Christianity is experienced by the individual as a positive and personal culture. Whereas *Christendom*[4] signals a situation with an imposed synthesis of Christianity and national culture, Culture Christianity is taken over voluntarily by the individual. Whereas *Civil Religion*[5] is a common religious framework legitimating the state and society in wich its citizens live, Culture Christianity is based on personal values and identity, even if it may have implications for the political views of the individual, for example it may make the individual support the United Nations' rules for Human Rights.

The content of Culture Christianity

In a recent interview the Social Democratic chairman of the Danish Parliament, Professor Erling Olsen, labelled

1957), only points to two examples, or rather visions, of a Christian culture, by Augustine in the fifth and Dante in the fifteenth century.

[4] Cf. Anton Wessel: *Europe: Was It Ever Really Christian?* (London: SCM, 1994).

[5] Cf. Belá Hamarti (ed.): *The Church and Civil Religion in The Nordic Countries* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1984).

himself a Christian. Having a partly Jewish background he was never baptized and also he, as he puts it, never received "the gift of faith". Behind his human and political values he does, however, call himself a Christian and argues that:

> Christian Culture is an ingrown part of being Danish to the extent, that you can't escape it... Christianity is woven into our very existence as the cross is into our national flag, Dannebrog.[6]

The retort to Erling Olsen by the Church cannot be that he is only a nominal Christian. Nominally he is not Christian at all as he is not even baptized! On the other hand, if we take away from Erling Olsen all the Christianity we find in him, there will not be much left of the Erling Olsen that we know and recognize. Thus I suggest we accept Erling Olsen on his own words. He is a Christian, that is a *Christian by Culture*, or a *Culture Christian*, as it is obviously the cultural part of Christianity to which he subscribes. And what may be said about Erling Olsen is true for the majority of Danes, both members of the Folk Church and many non-members alike.

Three arguments support the claim that the great majority of the people of the Nordic countries are Culture Christians. First of all there is no national culture in our countries without Christianity. Our nations were built alongside - and partly by means of - the introduction of Christianity. This historical fact is being rediscovered not only in historical research[7] but also in the political

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[6] *Kristeligt Dagblad,* October 1 1996.

[7] Cf. For example: Øistein Wahlberg (ed.), *Før og efter Stiklestad 1030. Religionsskifte – Kulturforhold – Politisk magt* (Stiklestad Nationale Kulturcenter 1996).

and cultural experience of recent decades. This is especially true in Denmark where Danish cultural identity has been increasingly questioned since the country joined The European Community in *1972,* and also in recent years through the presence in Denmark of a growing number of immigrants from other cultures.

Facing questions about national and cultural identity we attempt to dig down into our roots and what we find there is Christianity. This is true for Denmark and also partly for Europe in general. Geographically Europe is not much more than the tail end of Asia, and the same is true ethnically as many of our forefathers immigrated in distant times from Asia. We are, however, sure that there is something distinct that we call European culture. And the one major historical factor that created this distinction is Christianity.

One of Erling Olsen's colleagues in the Danish Parliament, Mimmi Jakobsen, chairman of the Centre Democratic Party, expresses herself as follows:

> My Faith is a faith in the basic values of Christianity. We read in The Sermon on the Mount: You shall treat other people as you want to be treated yourself. That is the reason why we must have tidy politics concerning refugees and immigrants. This faith is a part of our inheritance, it is the basic values which we have from Christianity: You must behave yourself.[8]

More than half of the Danish population agrees with Mimi Jakobsen and Erling Olsen. Their basic values are influenced by a Christian concept of human kind.

Those Danes who are not aware of the links between their cultural and political values and Christianity tend to

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[8] Interview in *Copenhagen Christian Television, KKR, M*arch 16 1997.

claim that they are "Christians - in their own way", as the Nordic people have tended to express themselves. When asking the Danes what sort of religion they have, they give many answers. The great majority - approximately seventy per cent - will, however, end up stating: "I am Christian, in my own way, of course". This is my second argument for calling the Danes Culture Christians. Thus if you don't accept that the Danes are Christians you have to argue that they are wrong about their own identity!

My third and final argument is the observation, that the language of the heart in Denmark is still the Christian language. In his doctoral thesis Troels Nørager argues that "the basic human character of the individual heart-experiences and the community creating meaningfulness of the language of the heart" is the very "place in a secularized society, where a connection between the culture of the people and Christian religiosity is still to be found"[9]. Plenty of examples of this may be seen in modern art, not least in literature, and in the practice of ordinary life, for example the bridegroom quoting 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, in order to express his love for his bride.

Summing up we conclude that the positive content of Culture Christianity in Denmark is a Christian-influenced worldview, a Christian concept of man and some basic ethical and existential values deriving from the teaching of Christianity throughout the centuries, but still making up a basic part of Danish identity.

The approach of Christian mission to Culture Christians

Is there a need for Christian mission to Culture Christians? The obvious answer is Yes! First of all Christian Mission

[9] Troels Nørager: *Hjerte og psyke* (Anis, 1996), p. 323.

is directed to all people *(panta ta etné,* Matt. *28,19).* There is no reason why there should be no mission to people who have inherited a Christian-influenced culture. Furthermore the missionary calling is one for discipleship of Christ. And for Culture Christians Christ is perhaps a good teacher, but not someone to believe in or to follow as the disciple follows his Master. Culture Christianity is not born by faith, nor does it live by faith, it comes to us as a part of our legacy. Culture Christianity has no confession of the Christian creed. Also prayers to Christ as the Son of God are hardly known to Cultural Christians. From the point of view of the Biblical concept of Christian mission Culture Christianity is a cultural phenomenon, a special one obviously, and one close to Christianity as are Judaism and Islam in their ways also.

As Christ respected and appreciated the culture into which he was sent, so the mission of the Church must respect and appreciate the culture in which it is to work. Thus Christian mission cannot begin by defining a culture by what it is not. Therefore Folk Church members cannot be defined as nominal Christians. On the contrary mission to Culture Christians must begin by appreciating the values of Culture Christianity. Furthermore the dialogue with Culture Christians must begin by taking Culture Christians by their own words when they say that they are Christians.

Mission to a people can never begin by denying the identity of that people, claiming that they are not at all what they think they are. Christian Mission should never attempt to cast out the old culture and thus run the risk of having seven bad spirits taking its place. Christian Mission to the West will submit itself to cultural imperialism well known from colonial times if it is not willing to begin by affirming the values of Culture Christianity and after that move to the dialogue on what Biblical Christianity means. This is even more important since Culture Christianity is a child of the Church, making the negative attitude on the side of the

Church a destructive experience for Culture Christians, who may feel that they are despised by their own mother, if the Church is not serious about their identity.

Folk Church as maintenance of Culture Christianity

Culture Christians often respect sincere confessing Christians, for example if those Christians care for their children, inviting them to Sunday schools etc.[10] Culture Christians are also often open to serious dialogue with Biblical founded Christian mission. They may even see that what is being introduced to them is the foundation on which the Christian values of Culture Christianity have been built. Opposition to Christian mission to Culture Christians may come from the leadership of the Folk Church more often than from the Culture Christians themselves

Culture Christianity is the child of the teaching of the Folk Church. Culture Christianity most certainly does not come alive by itself, nor is it kept alive by its own momentum. On the contrary, Culture Christians have no methods and ritual forms of their own for the transmission of their own Culture Christianity to their children. We can probably only begin talking about Culture Christianity after the introduction of compulsory confirmation classes in Denmark in 1736. Confirmation classes today do give young people a sense of basic Culture Christianity. Attendance and experience of the rituals of the Church (baptism, confirmation, wedding and funeral) may contribute to the upholding of Culture Christianity amongst many ordinary people.

The Danish religious situation is a typical missionary one. The religion of 300,000 inhabitants is unknown. *250,000* are baptized, *former* members of The Folk Church. *200,000* belong to other religions (130,000 are

[10] Cf. Harald Hegstad, *Folkekirke og trosfellesskap* (Trondheim 1996).

Muslims), *150,000* are baptized members of the Folk Church, but have not been confirmed and thus most likely never had any teaching about baptism and Christianity. And to this is added the great majority of the population, three to four million people, being Culture Christians with only weak and diffuse religious beliefs.

Folk Church as mission to Culture Christians

Can the Folk Church work as an instrument of mission in Denmark? Is it possible that the Folk Church may function as the proper means of mission to Culture Christians? In the Danish situation the answer is that so far we have seen no working alternative to the Folk Church as the missionary Church to the Danish people!

One hundred and twenty years ago, one percent of the population had left the old Folk Church (until the freedom of religion in the democratic constitution of *1849:* the State Church of Denmark) to join "Free Churches" (Baptists, Catholics, Methodists etc.). Today only eighty-six percent *of* the population are members of the Folk Church - but at the sane time the number of members of the "Free Churches" still only amounts to approximately one per cent. One major reason for the lack of growth of the "Free Churches" in Denmark seems to be the fact that the majority of the Danes are Culture Christians - and the Church for Culture Christianity is supposed to be the Folk Church. Being converted and joining one of the "Free Churches" thus seems to mean leaving not only your old religion (or lack of religion), but also leaving your culture, or at least the way your culture has been perceived so far, by leaving its institution, the Folk Church. According to canon law, membership of the Folk Church cannot be combined with membership of one of the "Free Churches", even though in practice this law is normally not enforced by the Folk Church administration!

The Folk Church has so many resources (money, personnel, buildings, monopoly of rituals and traditional goodwill), that it can be used for a great many things. An instrument of mission the Folk Church can only be when, in the very way it works, it dares to reflect and signify the message that it is to preach. In a situation of Culture Christianity it is the Folk Church that must be *signum et instrumentum* for the Gospel. The Folk Church as the Church of which the Culture Christians are members and the Church in which they trust - must make it clear that its message is not foremost "Come to Us" but "Let us follow Him". Thus the Folk Church must be a "go-Church" and not only a "come-Church". And even more: the Folk Church must be a Church of mission within its own borders. The Folk Church must be a missionary Church by being an open Church where the forecourt of the Church is within the Church (see further in chapter 7).

The message of the missionary Folk Church to its Cultural Christian members is this: This Church is the Church of Christ. As it is my Church it is yours! And as it is yours it is mine. Let us be the Church together, i.e. let us belong to and serve the Lord together. In the Nordic countries it is the main task of mission - and of missiology as well - to develop the *Folk* Church as a means of mission to the great majority of Cultural Christians in our countries.

7. INCARNATION, CONGREGATION AND MISSION[1]

> When the Church is engaged in Mission, it is clearly seen that the unity between its inner life and its outer action is absolutely crucial to the success of its mission. If Church and Mission become divided, the most fateful schism of all has struck the Church.[2]

This conclusion of Johannes Aagaard's work on his doctorate, as it appeared in the 1967 *Festschrift* to his former teacher, Regin Prenter, is unequivocal.[3] Together with W. Löhe he is insisting that canon law must always be a 'lex charitatis,' as only then the Church shall be a Church for the whole world. "If canon law is secularized, then, in the final instance, is the mission of the Church," says Aagaard. His point is that missiology, as presented by its founder, G. Warneck, has taken over from G. Sohn's famous thesis: "Das Kirchenrecht steht mit dem Wesen der Kirche in Widerspruch" (Canon law stands by its character in opposition to the essence of the Church).[4] Aagaard sees here an explanation for the divergence between the basic standpoint of Warneck's first volume, where Church and Mis-

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[1] First printing in Pandit, Moti Lal et al. (eds.): *Identity in Conflict. Classical Christian Faith and Religio Occulta. Essays in Honour of Prof.* Johannes *Aagaard*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, New Dehli, 1998, s. 203-218.

[2]. Johannes Aagaard, "Kirke og mission – eller kirken i missionen," in G. Wingren and A.M. Aagaard, eds. *Festskrift til Regin Prenter.* Copenhagen, 1967, pp. 167-177.

[3] See Johannes Aagaard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche. Die Problematik ihrer Integration im 19. Jahrhundert in Deutschland,* I-II. Gleerups, 1967.

[4] G. Sohn, *Kirchenrecht,* 1892.

sion are held together, and the second volume, where he accepts the phenomenological argument that the actual organization of Mission is best served by a secular society not necessarily linked to the Church. It was this ambivalence between the internal and the external, the visible and the invisible in the Church, and thus between Church and Mission, that Aagaard called into question around 1970, leading to his clash with the state-organized Danish National Church (Folkekirken) and its secular legal basis.

Over the last twenty years, however, Aagaard has been moving in the direction of a disengagement of Mission from Church in his demand for "independence of Mission for its own sake."[5] The problem is no longer just the established secular canon law of the older churches but the lack of ability and will among newer as well as older churches to meet the challenges from the religions, both the old religions and those transformed to new religious movements. To clarify his view, Aagaard applies the term: *the double apostolate.*[6]

> My purpose in underlining the two apostolates is not to separate them, but to call attention to the second one: the free, dynamic, Pauline apostolate. This is necessary because in the Church today Paul's pillar apostolate has won the day everywhere.... Today, more than ever, we need distinct missionaries who are willing to invest their whole lives to be Christian pioneers outside the frontiers of the churches, wherever in the world it may be.... It is possible to many dialogues on a tourist visa. Travelling missionaries would not spend their time keeping the bungalow in order,

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[5] Lars Thunberg, "Doing Theology. Johannes Aagaard, the Missiologist," in *Dialogue in Action. Essays in honour of Johannes Aagaard.* New Delhi, 1988, p. 7.

[6] See "7 Theses on Mission, "The Double Apostolate," *Areopagus* 15-18. 1987, pp. 13-14.

> or on administrative business. They have all the time at their disposal. [7]

I make no attempt to evaluate the possibilities concerning the travelling pioneer mission to which Aagaard wishes to give priority. Unquestionably it is important inter alia as an element in study activities, but its hit-and-run character would seem to limit its direct missionary value. The move today of many missiologist towards the integration of church and mission, which Aagaard missed in Warneck 30 years ago, is due to an apparent renewal of theological insight and, even more significantly, missionary practice. For, despite all the necessary criticism of the church, the overwhelming experience is that the bearer of mission is the congregation precisely because there are congregations today, active and passive, inward and outward-looking, spread throughout the world which are far different from the ones that existed 100 years ago. This is the trust of the present article, which builds partly on incarnational theology and partly on missiological studies of congregations in Copenhagen in recent years.

1. INCARNATION AND THE THEOLOGY OF MISSION

"You ask what theology has to do with history. That is as if you were asking what God has to do with the world," says the Danish Church father, N.F.S. Grundtvig, in a letter of 1812. [8] Christianity is, first and foremost, a piece of history, a new life in the midst of the old one. Christianity

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[7] Johannes Aagaard, "The Double Apostolate," *Areopagus* 15, 1987, pp. 13-14.

[8] *Chr. Molbech og Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig. En brevveksling* 1821-51. Copenhagen, 1982, p. 19. Cf. Hans Iversen, "Grundtvigs inkarnatoriske kristendomsyn," *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift.* 1981, pp. 258-77.

is about God who has created and maintained the world, stretching out both hands, his Son and his Holy Spirit, to a new creation and salvation of the world he loves. It is precisely God's love for the world which is the reason why he did not re-create us all with his mighty Word back into the Garden of Eden with the message to be more aware of the serpent and of the tree of knowledge next time around. God came into the world – God is in the world and is at work in the world or as Grundtvig puts it:

> First time as the good creator,
> Mild with ashes at His foot
> Second time as sin-absolver,
> Gracious God and loving Father.[9]

This, in short, is what we understand as the incarnational character of Christianity, unique in the history of religion. It is a distinctive hallmark which is of crucial significance in such widely differing areas as our view of mankind and our Eucharistic teaching. But it is equally important in our view of the relationship between the Gospel and the cultures that the World Council of Churches sought to place on the agenda before the Conference on Mission in Salvador in 1996. The incarnational understanding acquires similar significance for the way in which the Church is the Church; in short, its ecclesiality.

With the incarnation, the temporal external world, human life in all its corporeality, is acknowledged as being capable of bearing likeness to God, and of bearing his Gospel forward. This must, therefore, also be true of the Church in its humanity and corporeality, in its ecclesial expression today.

The classic error with regard to the importance of incarnation for ecclesiology – the error that no Protestant theo-

[9] *Sangværk IV,* 212, 6.

logian should fall into (and no Catholic theologian either since the Second Vatican Council) – is to regard the Church as a direct continuation of the incarnation of Christ.

This is not the case. In Jesus of Narareth God and Man meet in an indissoluble unity. Jesus is true God as he is true Man, but the Church can never be true God. The Church life develops alongside the human life on earth; it is fundamentally human. But it is also more than that, for it is God-willed, created by God as an instrument for his new creation as well as for salvation. It consists of people who are called out, and called together, by God on the strength of their common faith that he has granted them. The Church belongs to Christianity as the bearer of the Gospel, privileged by God himself to preach the Gospel. Although the Church may not be perfect, yet it is called and challenged to lead the way in giving the Gospel body and substance in every culture. In the formulae, which the Lutherans use, it is the *simul justus et peccator.*

If the one classic error is to regard the Church as a continuation of the incarnation of Christ, it is equally fatal to overlook that *the incarnation is the necessary life-form of the Church.* It lies within the Church's call to be within the world, take form among people, pitch its tents in a contextual way. Thus the Church's human form is of central theological interest. Because of its starting point in Christ, the Church's preaching and its form are inseparable. As Robert Banks says: "Paul's understanding of community is nothing less than the Gospel itself in corporate form."[10] For Paul it is a question of the Church expressing its message through its own form in the world.

Christianity rests, in a double sense, on Jesus Christ. The belief that the Kingdom of God meets us in the Son of God, the incarnated, crucified and resurrected Son, has not

[10] Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community.* Exeter, 1980, p. 198.

arisen from within the heart of mankind. This belief has only come into the world through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. At the same time, and for the same reason, it is a faith that rests on people meeting Christ, on him coming before our eyes. But how can this be? "How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross?" That is how the English missionary and missiologist, Leslie Newbigin, puts it before continuing:

> I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.[11]

The subject of the Mission, the agent that institutes faith and signs of the Kingdom of God, is the Holy Spirit. But the Church is the place of the Mission, the environment within which, and from which, Mission takes place.[12] It is the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional communication in and out of the Church that ensures that the Gospel is heard. God creates much through men and women of goodwill, but he uses Christians and congregations to establish faith in, and signs of, his Kingdom.

That God should allow his Son to die for mankind is a scandal for the Jews and a folly for the Greeks. So it is too for the ethnic minorities in Denmark. For Muslims the death of God's Son on the cross is a grotesque thought; yet for many other, more or less, secularized groups of immigrants the story of Christ's cross may be attractive because they themselves have experienced suffering. The cross, however, only gives meaning as the story of yet another instrument of torture in this world, which is all too inven-

[11] Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society.* Grand Rapids. 1989, p. 227.
[12] Ibid., p. 119.

tive in destruction. *That God reveals Himself as the God of love in the death of Christ on the cross can only be proclaimed by and through a community of love.*

Christianity in this sense is a personal matter. It can only be passed on from person to person, or, rather, from communities that invite community. This is not actually a new idea in Denmark, but in our churches we have bowed our heads and refused to take seriously the challenge to every local congregation to be the privileged bearer of the Gospel. Partly it is because Danes are good at assuring one another that "we are all Christians in our own way," though we prefer not to acknowledge the fact that we have become what we are as a result of the signals we have received from the congregations. And partly it is hard to be a prophet among one's own tribe. How can anyone bear witness to anyone else when we are all of the same kind? Immediately we run into the First Commandment in the famous Danish (fictional) Law of Jante: You must not think you are anybody. And nor are we, we say, closing ranks around our little congregation and its church life.

True congregational life in a local context is true mission. That is the thesis of Charles van Engen, who was installed in the chair of the first professorship in Biblical Missiology at the School of World Mission in Fuller, USA on 15 May 1996. His book, *God's Missionary People. Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church,*[13] shows that there is an astonishing agreement on the link between the Church life and Mission among the most divergent missiological 'Schools.'

Congregations are not just bearers of the Gospel, but are the privileged subject of mission. According to van Engen, the congregation is also the hermeneutic of the Gospel. It is the framework of practice and of understanding within which people will understand - or misunderstand - the

[13] Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary Purpose. Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church.* Grand Rapids, 1991.

Gospel. While using what gives nutrition and the capacity to function as an identification model, we may say that the Church is the true mother of the Christian faith,[14] also among Protestants. Thus a reflection on the Church's self-awareness is the main route to reform and renewal of Christianity, as can be seen in the Roman Catholic Church where the break, after the Second Vatican Council, came with the dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium,*[15]

Wherever life is lived in contexts where many people are first or second generation Christians, it is a natural topic of conversation to discuss how people came to their faith. American research into the Church growth has been particularly active in this area, and newly converted Christians answer that *the Gospel becomes true for people in, through and during the encounter between the totality of their conditions of life and the totality of the way in which the Church is the Church in the local environment.*[16] Faith is conditional on the Gospel being preached, for none can believe what they have not heard. But faith does not follow directly from what has been heard. *Faith requires that something is heard*, as Romans 10:17 should really be translated. People nowadays have the same response to the Church as they had to Christ in his day; they invariably appraise the totality of what the Church says, is and does - perhaps, most of all, the last-mentioned. This is true of people who are far outside the Church just as much as for those who themselves are baptized members

The above point of view is concisely expressed in the third article of the Barmen Declaration: the Church must

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[14] Cf. "Kirken er som himmerige," *Den Danske Salmebog,* no. 97

[15] Cf. van Engen, op. cit., p. 106.

[16] Cf. "Missionsforkyndelsen, de konkrete livsforhold og oprettelsen af troen på Guds Rige. Ti teser om mission" in Hans Raun Iversen *Grundtvig, folke-kirke og mission. Praktisk teologiske vekselvirkninger.* Copenhagen: Anis 2008, p. 375-392.

bear witness equally with its human organization as with its preaching.[17] The Church must, therefore, stand by its ecclesiological practice, just as it must stand by its preaching. In 2 Cor 3:2f Paul uses the image of the Church as a letter in which people can read the message from Christ. Of course, it is the message which is the most important thing about any letter, but we know from experience that the message is interpreted in terms of the reader's situation and attitude - and we also know that both the envelope and the notepaper, even the handwriting, can have an influence on how the message is received and understood. Worse still, the letter can be of such poor quality that the message never even gets through. It may be that the envelope cannot be opened because it is stuck, or that even when opened, the ink in the letter is smudged.

2. CASE STUDIES IN CONGREGATIONS IN MISSION

The following five case studies of churches in Copenhagen serve to demonstrate how congregations can open themselves like letters of Christ that might be read by city-folk today.

The Blossoming Housing-Estates around Kingo's Church

Kingo's Church lies on the edge of the old working-class suburb Nørrebro in a parish of 14,584 (1995), which includes the only housing-estate in Inner Copenhagen where the population has increased markedly as a result of construction of new buildings over the past 15 years. Kingo's is a classic 'Church Fund' Church. Formally founded in

[17] "mit Ihrem Glauben wie mit ihrem Gehorsam, mit ihrer Botschaft wie mit ihrer Ordnung," quoted in *Teologiske tekster.* Århus Universitetsforlag, 1989, p. 376.

1896, the Church Fund of Copenhagen has been, during the last 100 years, the driving-force behind the building of approximately 100 new churches in Copenhagen and its suburbs. For 86 years Kingo's Church has kept up its support, its activity, and in many respects an organizational and working form that few of the other Church Fund churches have known since the 1950s, and many not since the 1930s. Since 1970 Kingo's congregation in particular have taken a number of new initiatives, such as action stewardship, youth camps, parish hut, parish helpers, visiting service and international Church services for refugees that have become a major part of the Danish Church's refugee work in Copenhagen. With the exception of work among immigrants, it is fair to say that until the 1980s Kingo's Church was faring no better than any other church: the congregational activities concentrated on maintenance, attempting to keep the church together around a limited number of activities but without the surplus energy to reach out radically to new groups of immigrants who have no church background. That, however, is what precisely is happening today in an innovative parish outreach programme, which includes a new recycling shop, housing estate work and cross-cultural summer activities. Let us take a closer look at the last two areas mentioned.

Since the first important Bethesda church-meeting in 1886, when the idea was launched by the Grundtvigian pastor, Johannes Møller from Odense, it has been one of the most challenging Church Fund ideas that church work should be organized in smaller districts, i.e., in housing estates where they exist[18] Certain churches, such as Bethlehem Church, also began as housing-estate churches, but the initiative was swiftly overtaken, in most places, by the

[18] Cf. Hans Raun Iversen, et al., eds., Omkring kirkefondet. Kildetekster til debatten om kirkeforståelse og kirkeligt arbejdssyn 1890-1990. Copenhagen, 1990, pp. 44ff.

demand of the parish church for pastors and voluntary workers, and probably also by the general trend to gather parishioners into the nest by keeping up activities that could fill the church on Sundays while giving lower priority to more decentralized work, the results of which might not be visible on the Lord's day. Nevertheless, the housing-estate or district idea has been applied in many areas in the world, including social care work in a number of Copenhagen parishes earlier in this century, in The Lutheran Church of Tanzania, and in Baptist churches in Chicago and Houston where Finn Allan Ellerbæk, the retired parish pastor of Kingo's Church, has gained much experience.[19]

Recent efforts of Kingo's Church have been to build trust and co-operation with seven large housing-estates in the parish, together with youth and sport clubs and the North-West Social Centre. All the housing-estates and clubs are different as regards traditions, composition of residents and members, cultural norms and leadership forms. Housing-estate work must, therefore, adapt to local needs and wishes, the philosophy being that it is no use of arriving with fixed ideas as to what should or should not happen, even though that is what the National Church seems to do best. Since 1994 the key person in the Kingo project has been its secretary, Erik Nielsen, trained Christian social worker and former missionany in Tanzania, who coordinates the work single-handedly (an admitted weakness to some extent) and simultaneously functions as a radar-screen and signal sender - a condition for successful communication with the residents aid committees in the housing-estates. The project is funded, in large part, through

[19] Cf. Finn Allan Ellerbæk, *Karréarbejde som relevant tværkultural kommunikation i Københavns kirkeliv.* Copenhagen, 1997. See also Finn Allan Ellerbæk, *Kagwe Diocese. A Lutheran Church History – as seen and studied by a missionary.* Copenhagen, 1992; David T. Bunch, Harvey J. Kneisel and Barbara L. Oden , *Multihousing Congretations.* Atlanta, 1991.

the 1989 Church Council Law (co-operation clause). In practice, it has taken the form of club activities for various age-groups, religious services in housing-estates and even in wine bars, as well as growing church work with children.

The housing-estate project work is determined by the premise of availability of local residents. One premise is that most children are at home during holidays in July, while church workers are, in general, taking a well earned rest of their own. This challenge was faced in 1996 when, with the help of hired artists, youngsters from the Kingo parish worked on decorating rooms, fences and gables as well as participating in the Kingo Cup Tournament with competitions in football, table tennis, darts, streetbasket, hockey and chess. The leading figure in the practical running of these activities was a 33 year old Brian Bakke, who drew on his experiences from a number of similar activities in Chicago.[20]

Three results were immediately visible. For the first time, the parish succeeded in getting *youngsters from different ethnic backgrounds and on a voluntary basis to work together*, and to work well. There was a positive energy output from, and healthy creative experience for, around 100 youngsters. And the paintings that now decorate the district have been admired by many. Kingo's Church, whose reputation in the parish was a bit stuffy has acquired a different profile, and is now seen as a catalyst for an obviously good idea that nobody before had bothered to realize. "Let us have more Kingo" is now heard round and about in the parish. In brief, it has been demonstrated that much can be very different if only it is done differently.

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[20] Brian is the son of the urban mission consultant Ray Bakke of Chicago, known in Denmark from his book, *The Urban Christian.* Marc Europe, 1987. Danish translation, *Kristen I byen.* Lohse and DMS, 1993.

In the Light of the Master. New Age Services in the Local Community Houses of the Bridge Districts, Nørrebro and Østerbro

Bethlehem Church on Åboulevard in Copenhagen is in another part of the vibrant Nørrebro area. It is known for its charismatic high church services, for the cell principle on which its congregation is based, and not least for its many outreach activities: marches, festivals, church plantings, social and political actions, and a wide-ranging dialogue and pastoral care service among people in various New Age environments.[21] The project - *In the Light of the Master* - is the fruit of many years' study and work on the New Age religion, and is described as follows:

> The aim of the project, *In the Light of the Master*, is to present the gospel to people in the New Age environment in a language which is theirs. It is our perception that people's interest in personal and spiritual development, in alternative healing and lifestyle, and their commitment to New Age is an expression of a genuine search for God, even if they do not know Him, and even if this search goes down paths that are foreign to the Christian faith and often difficult to reconcile with the Bible.

In the Light of the Master builds on the twofold experiences with the New Age devotees and Rev. Ole Skjerbæk Madsen's own personal, charismatic contribution. At the annual Mind-Body-Spirit exhibition in the Falconér Centre in the inner city Bethlehem Church has learned that the

[21] The parish pastor Ole Skjerbæk Madsen, has provide a detailed dogmatic reflection on church practices of the Bethlehem Church in *Genoprettelse. En bog om Helligånden. Kirken og dens karismatiske fornyelse.* Copenhagen, 1995.

most important thing is not to inform the public about, let alone make propaganda against, the New Age, and then present the Christian alternative. People who are searching need neither propaganda nor right opinions, but an invitation to join into a congregational context where they can meet the Master himself. Rev. Madsen says that the entire concept of *In the Light of the Master*, including the name, the content and the advertising, was given to him by Jesus in the summer of 1994.[22] Prior to and sometimes even during the meetings, he receives direct words from Jesus that he understands as "a breathing into our hearts and thoughts and pictures from God and the Master Jesus," which he passes on to the meetings as 'inspiration.'

Fundamentally, New Age has been accepted as a cultural form, not just as an anti-Christian religious form, even though there is an obvious anti-Christian religiosity at work. With this in mind, the task of the Church is to go into the New Age culture and take on a cultural form within it. Thus through advertising in the New Age environment, in the magazine *Nyt Aspekt* in local weeklies, Bethlehem Church arranges spiritual meetings or services on the cultural conditions of the New Age environment. The open meetings are held outside church premises in the Local Community Houses of Nørrebro and Østerbro respectively, places where the New Age devotees often meet. Ten minutes before the start of the meeting, meditative music is played. After a brief welcome and more music, there is an invocation and a proclamation:

> Jesus, King of Righteousness!
> Son of God and Son of Man!

[22] Cf. Ole Skjerbæk Madsen, *Kaldet til discipelskab. I Mesterens Lys*. Værløse, 1997, p. 6. As well as the introduction and commentary, among other things, on the follow-up work of the project, the book also includes the contents of the first 14 services held in the New Age environment.

Send us your light and your truth.
Jesus, Light of the World!
We wish to sit at your feet
And receive your word in heart and thought.
Jesus, King of Righteousness,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Send us your light and your truth.

There follows a reading of verses form the Bible, meditation and teaching, with its starting-point from, for example, John's gospel, the beatitudes, the sermon on the mount, intercessory prayer for "the healing of hearts," communal song (Write your name, Jesus, upon my heart), joint prayer for healing, the hymn of the evening, the blessing and possibly further song, Bible choir, and finally, a cup of herbal tea and the opportunity for conversation and intercessory prayer around the tables.

Forty to fifty people, mostly New Agers, take part each time. After the meeting, some of them engage in discussion with the participants from the Bethlehem Church. A quiet movement has thus grown up where people move from the New Age to the services and congregational life of the Church.

Project "Active Church" in Avedøre

The initiatives at the Kingo's Church and the Bethlehem Church are outreach activities, as they are called in missiology. Geographically, the movement of the Active Church project at Avedøre is in the opposite direction. Here the initiative is to get people to reach into their church and actively make it their own. The word 'active' is to be taken at its face value, for not only must the Church be active in attracting people into becoming churchgoers in the usual sense, but the Church also must be capable of functioning in a quite different way. It is not just that peo-

ple should come to the church, or use the church for something they could equally do elsewhere, but that a process of exchange should take place. The starting-point should be that the church opens its doors and invites people into its rooms. In the case of the large suburb of Avedøre, the existing conditions provide a good physical framework for the encounter between the Church and the people. But, first, a brief background, political, and local.

The coalition government of 1993-94 put considerable effort into improving the city environment. The Centre Democrat representative on the government committee was the Minister for Church Affairs, A.O. Andersen, who devoted his considerable energies to a cause which he saw not only as a party and a church one, but also as a personal one. As a result, the church became actively involved in urban renewal, and a pastor was appointed as a government-paid city development consultant to the Joint Congregational Care Council in 1994. Her task is to inspire and support church initiatives that contribute to local city development in the socially deprived areas. A number of social and church projects have been supported with and without funding from the government.

The Avedøre Church stands like a red fortress amid the grey concrete housing-blocks of a Copenhagen suburb. Of the 14,000 parishioners, there are 13.6% immigrants. The two most active groups in commerce are lower-salaried employees and unskilled workers. Registered unemployment stands at 8%, but many more are on some form of transfer payments. Church memberships as well as baptism and confirmation numbers lie well above those for the city of Copenhagen, while church taxes, levied on all the members of the National Church and around 0.7-0.8% of the parishioner's net income, provide a substantial financial base. Average figures, however, do not say much about the parish realities, for there are considerable differences between the pleasant outlying housing areas and the

suburban centre housing blocks with 6,000 residents, over half of them out of work and fearing that they will be reduced to a dumping-ground as social misfits. It is no surprise that the church should seem distant in the general consciousness, even though it occupies a geographically prominent position in the centre of the township.

The Church Council of Avedøre Church applied for and received just under a million Danish crowns ($150,000) for the programme of Active Church, a grant which went mainly towards the salary of the co-ordinator, running costs and a café-kitchen for the 2-year period between 1993-95. During that time over 100 people were involved in the open church project. A dozen or so at a time, throughout the municipality of Hvidovre, had temporary jobs or ran the café or the theatre group, which were the most popular and successful elements in the project. There was also a crisis group for the bereaved and depressed, which has since grown into a discussion group linked to the church, an art and culture group, a sewing group for immigrant women, programmes for children, media activities, debate meetings and alternative church services. Numerous meetings, workshops, parties and weekend get-togethers were held to find out who could do what with whom and how.[23]

Of course, there were a number of conflicts over attitude and action when the peaceful church opened its doors to 100 active people. Despite its size, there was sometimes hardly room for the parish pastors to hold the normal services or church rituals. But two goals were definitely achieved. Many people who saw the local church - nicknamed the 'Old People's Home' by some - as being somewhat isolated now realized that, through their own initiative, it could be used for other things than Sunday services; and many churchgoers began to think otherwise about 'be-

[23] Cf. Paul Kühle, *Evaluering af Projekt "Aktiv Kirke" 1. November 1993 - 31.Oktober 1995.* Unpublished, 1995.

ing a church' in Avedøre. Perhaps the church and its resources should be used quite differently, to prevent it falling back into the same old role of being largely restricted to a Saturday wedding or Sunday service, populated by former scouts or Sunday school pupils. *Nothing lives without places to live. At Avedøre the church is providing a place for encounters between local human needs and Christian faith.*

A Streetpastor and a Café

> Since the middle of 1993 Ellen Margrethe Gylling has been a Streetpastor for children and young people in Inner Copenhagen. It has been well-documented that, over the years, the inner city has developed into an extremely tough area for youngsters, with violence, crime, vandalism, neglected children exposed to violence, street-children, etc. It is important that in the social work to improve the conditions for exposed children new paths are taken all the time. It is important that children and young people meet the understanding and empathetic adults to find out where they themselves are. The project, Streetpastor, is planned to end in 1996, but it is our hope that this prize can mark the need of this initiative, and thus underline that it must continue beyond 1996.

This was the motivation of the Steering Committee of the National Organization (for) Children's Conditions when they awarded the Peter Sabroe Prize, in spring 1996, to the Streetpastor project in Copenhagen. Since then, and not entirely unaffected by the award, the bishopric has granted a half-salary to the pastor to continue the project for further 3 years, with the other half coming from Trini-

tatis Church's Church Care, which in turn has met with much goodwill from various foundations, church organizations, congregations and individuals.

The Streetpastor's principal workplaces are the streets of the inner city. Accompanied by a volunteer for as many evenings and nights as possible around the weekends when the young people gather, the Streetpastor is visibly on the scene, wearing her little but unmistakable badge inscribed with 'Ellen Margrethe Gylling. Streetpastor for young people. Trinitatis Church.' She knows from experience the challenges facing the youngsters, and thus the challenges facing the adult who is speaking to them. She also has a broad network of contacts with the multi-faceted social initiatives in the inner city that are directed specifically towards children and young people. She is not there to duplicate their work, but to be available as a pastor, a carer and an adult friend in the streets where adults at best are witnesses to the exploits of the young. The clear church profile of the project makes the award of the social radical Peter Sabroe prize all the more remarkable.

If the Streetpastor were to accommodate all the well-intentioned invitations to talk about her job, she would have no time to do the job. But she does talk a lot to youngsters in groups, she visits school classes, and she also teaches confirmation classes, another way of getting to know the age-group, since 80 percent of all Danish youngsters attend confirmation classes in groups of up to 20 for 6 months in their parish church before being confirmed. Added to this, she holds ordinary church services, experiments with alternative street services, participates in various action-oriented church avtivities such as the church of 'many colors project' during the UN's social summit in 1996, children's carnivals, and culture nights.

In popular terms, the streetpastor meets the youngsters primarily as 'Dog Christians', that is, with an offer of as a person and not as a house to shelter in or a group to join.

At the same time the youngsters also need to be allowed to behave like 'Cat Christians', that is, relate to a particular environment in a particular building, as parishioners of an ordinary church do. The crucial fact is that the youngsters have nowhere to be, just as the Streetpastor herself is in constantly need of a place – and not just a rented office at Trinitatis Church where she can meet her 'congretation' outside meeting hours in the streets. To remedy this, the Streetpastor café has been opened, called the *Six Feet Under*, in the basement of the former old people's home of Trinitatis Church. Both the house and the café are owned by the Joint Congretional Care Council, which has been responsible of the rooms with aid from the Boy's and Girl's Brigades and the YMCA and YWCA.

One of the weaknesses of the National Church is that it is pastor-centred. This weakness can, at certain points, be turned into strength, the Streetpastor project being one of them. When the word 'pastor' is used – meaning someone who gets paid to talk about God and Jesus – alongside the word 'street', there is a perceptible shift of view to a clear signal that is positively regard on all sides. In two areas, in particular, the project has made its mark: firstly, in the *relationship to youngsters in the streets,* where the only problem is too few – even though the bigger difference is between one pastor and no pastor; and secondly, in relations to the press, the project has received a *solid backing and genuine interest.* This also goes for the secular youth magazines, which have done a great deal to introduce the Streetpastor to their readers so that they can get to know her – indeed, they expect her to be there now. Finally, the local church also benefits: to adapt the Danish proverb; When it rains on the church work, it drips on the church.

Meetings at the Meeting-Places

There are 73 churches in Copenhagen City belonging to the National Church and 298 in Greater Copenhagen, in some places there are hopelessly few, while in others impractically many. In Greater Copenhagen there are also 40 'centres' run by the church organizations which are open to outsiders. Efforts are being made to open churches to more people in need, even when the night people are awake. If we include all the Second Hand Shops, the shelters and other places run by the church organizations, there are around 100 meeting-places under the auspices of the National Church in addition to the actual churches in Greater Copenhagen.

Ten years in an old basement shop in Oehlenschlægersgade and since Advent 1996 on the somewhat larger third floor of an old factory in Valdemarsgade. That is the accommodation history of the Danish Missionary Society's *Meetings for Immigrants and Danes in Vesterbro,* now renamed as the *Church's Immigrant Work,* it is presently run together with the parishes in the Vesterbro deanery. The main activity is an Open House with a café where the sexes, age groups, social groups and ethnic groups divide up according to their own patterns during the week. There is an advice service, social arrangements and a visting service and a number of initiatives and activities that take place apparently almost at random; in other words, a traditional churchwork set-up for immigrants combined with a modern mission among the Muslims. The entire program is run by 2 to 5 full-time staff and 15 volunteers plus various trainees.

One lesson that has been learnt at the Meeting-place is encapsulated in the following episode. A group of Turks said that they would like to attend the communal evening for the Danish workers at the Meeting-place, which end with devotions. Of course, they were welcome. Meanwhile

the Danish Missionary Society (DMS) appointed Rev. Raja Socrates, an Indian, with the support of the Vesterbro parishes. Why not, therefore, hold these well-attended devotions together in one of the lesser-used churches in the area so that the Muslims could experience a church from the inside? No sooner said than done, with the results that the Turks are no longer present when the communal devotions begin!

"You cannot push people backwards into the Kingdom of God," a former DMS general secretary once said at the Meeting-place. Even though in the heat of discussion about Jesus as a prophet or the Son of God, the local staff and volunteers must resist the desire to push people backwards precisely because the meeting of religions has underlined the need for new thinking to replace the traditional evangelization work of the Church. Christians neither can nor should *'bring people to Christ.'* They overrate themselves by thinking so and simultaneously objectify their partner into being someone who 'has not got' what the rest of us have got, namely, Christ, or at least faith in Christ. Nor can Christians 'bring Christ to people,' for again they are overrating themselves, assuming that Christ allows himself to be dragged around by us when the truth is that Christ himself is the thruth, the way and the life. Christians must *open up the fellowship within which, and sometimes around which, we gather in the name of Jesus in such a way as to allow all kinds of other people to join.* This can only be done when we dare to be together with other people where they are normally to be found – and in their way, not in ours. It is we who must leave our ghettos to find out and build up the meeting-places outside the normal church homeground.

3. MISSION AS WORK AT THE BORDERLINES

The principal perspectives in these five projects are radical. They are perhaps seen most clearly in the Active Church project at Avedøre, which is also the most difficult example in practice. Here the attempt is made to take seriously the claim that the Church is for everyone, and that the church staff do not own their church but are rather *caretakers* who have to open the church up so that it becomes a home for everyone. As it is with marriage, so it is with the church; it is build on relationships: *The church is mine as it is yours – and yours as it is mine.* Only if the church is successfully shared with others, then it is truly a church.

Johannes Aagaard and other church critics are right to claim that the well-known inertia of cultures and social institutions tend to lead the church to a closing of ranks around itself, or at least to enclosing the gospel in a particular church form. This is not least true of a State-supported, State-organized national people's church such as the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark. The five examples mentioned here point instead to the possibility of congregations challenging themselves to cross their own borderlines. The general conclusion from these and other corresponding studies of congregations in Denmark is that mission in the sense of gospel outreach takes place on the borders of Church and non-church. And most often you do not know, nor do you need to know whether you are in the Church or outside the Church when you are in mission.

In the Kingo's Church and the Bethlehem Church the Church is clearly reaching out to people who are distant from it, whether they are baptized or not, by playing on a different patch from the traditional one. Both here and at the Meeting-place, the Church is seeking to establish a communal environment in territories and within cultural forms that belong to the target groups rather that the

Church. It can also happen through the Church in the shape of a Streetpastor with helpers tramping the streets where life is lived on other terms than those of a typical congregation. And finally, the Church can place its own resources at the disposal of local residents, members and non-members alike, and give them the opportunity to find out what they can use the church for, while of course retaining the church's priority as a place of worship, as in the case with Avedøre.

As regards the organization and finance, the five projects in Copenhagen are on the borderlines of the Church's work, and depend largely on voluntary activity from laypeople. The Avedøre project was financed by the Church and the State, but has, of course, required local volunteers. Both the Kingo and the Bethlehem initiatives can call on the National Church resources, but have to depend primarily on voluntary efforts. The Streetpastor project and The Meeting-place have been started with voluntary finances and resources, but both are now being gradually integrated into the structure of the National Church as regarded financing.

The National Church (Folkekirken) is a tool that can be used for a great many things, as it has so many resources at its disposal. It will only have to be an instrument for mission when in its very work-form it dares to reflect and to signify the message that is to be preached. *The Church must be signum et instrumnetum for the Gospel of Christ.* Only then has it understood the meaning of incarnation on the context of the relationship between the Church and Mission. Only then is it clear that the Church's message is not: 'Come to us,' but: Let us follow Him.'

8. TEN THESES ON THE DIACONÍA OF THE CROSS CULTURAL MISSIONARY[1]

Introduction

I have been looking forward to share with you my consi-de rations on *The Apostolate of the Missionary.* Since I saw my first pictures of missionaries in the cellar of Danish Lutheran Mission's house in Ølgod in 1960, and definitely since I met the missionaries of Danish Ethiopian Mission and Danish Missionary Society in their fields in Ethiopia and Tanzania at my first tour to Africa around New Year 1972, I have been occupied by the person and service of the missionary. During the last eight years as a board member of Danish Missionary Society, since 2000 Danmission, intensive talks with missionaries on furlough have contributed to my understanding of the subject. Also from my wife, Ida Kongsbak, who was a missionary TEE-teacher in Tanzania for 10 years, and who helped me set up the ten theses of this paper, I have learnt a lot.

To make sure, that I am not outdated in terms of literature on the missionary I rushed through the 200 books on missiology, which we have bought at the University of Copenhagen during the last 10 years. This in itself proved, what we all know, that missionaries are not seen as the key persons in mission to day: I only found one book *On Being a Missionary,* written by an old American missionary doctor to Nepal, Thomas Hale. To this could be added Jonathan J. Bonk's *Misson and Money. Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem* and Paul Hiebert's *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries.* Dealing with their respective topics they also have a lot to say on the person and service

[1] First printing in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 91, 4, 2003, p. 533-551.

of the (Western) missionary. This is my background for these considerations, which are, last but not least, also influenced by the sounding board, which I still have in my mind, from the discussions at a conference at Liselund on the concept of the missionary to day, where the first oral version of this paper was presented[2].

Thesis 1: Missionaries are Christians, who are set free to be Christians only - or at least primarily.

It is my basic point of view that missionaries are privileged Christians. Most of us are employees, career makers, spouses, parents and too many other things before we consider how to be Christians. Knowing the work load and situation of most missionaries, they may easily end up living like the rest of us. But in principle they are called and sent out to be full time Christians among their fellow human beings, Christians and especially Non-Christian. No more, no less.

In the new mission policy statement of Danmission from August 2003[3] the role of the missionary has been elaborated in this way: Danmission is a mission society, not only a missionary society. All Christians have been baptized to be missionaries to their fellow human beings. There are, however, also special missionaries, who are called and sent out by missionary societies and churches to cross cultural borders to do missionary work. For the sake of clarity and honesty Danmission labels the individual missionaries according to his or her professional education

[2] Nordic Ecumenical Council's and Nordic Institute of Missiology and Ecumenics's conference on "The Missionary Person and Service" at Liselund, Denmark October 3-5 2003.

[3] *På vej sammen. Følgeskab i vidnesbyrd og tjeneste. Missionssyn og målsætninger for Danmissions arbejde i Afrika, Asien, Mellemøsten og Danmark*, agreed on at the General Assembly of Danmission, August 2003.

and work. Even so the collective label for those who are being sent out by Danmission is still *missionaries,* because this is the best way of signalizing why and for what basic purpose Danmission send Christians out, also when they are sent to countries, where "mission" is strictly forbidden by law. Christian mission is always carried out through human beings. The special full time missionaries are a small but important group in Christian mission. The special missionaries are to go in front as well as to walk behind their fellow Christians, witnessing to the Gospel by words and life style, in order that others may follow their example.

The interrelationship between the mission of all baptized and the mission of the special missionaries is a crucial point as missionaries often seem to have been sent out and supported as a sort of indulgence, making the mission friends feel, that they have cared for "their mission" when they have collected money for the work of "their missionary". Missionaries are easily trapped in the same trap as pastors and parish workers, when they signalize that mission means to collect money in order to sponsor the missionary. As the pastor and the parish worker can never be the only ones working in the congregation, the missionary can never be the only one working in mission. On the contrary, mission is a calling of all baptized to make Jesus Christ known and believed in, as far as human beings can contribute to that.

To my understanding, churches and missionary societies are lazy and even stupid if they don't keep on struggling to find new missionaries for new patterns of missionary work. Mission is not equivalent with missionaries, but mission without special missionaries is at risk to make itself much weaker and far les visionary than necessary. To this should therefore also be added that students of mission must be challenged to study the identity and work of the

missionaries, since the lives of good missionaries are one of the very best labs for the study of mission.

Thesis 2: The basic New Testament words for mission and the service of the Christian sent out (the apostle) are diakonía (the act of a deacon) and diakonéin (to act as a deacon). A diákonos (deacon) is someone who has been mandated by another to do his or her work against a third person. As it was with the deacon Jesus Christ, it is with all Christians: We are mandated to be God's deacons against God's creatures whoever they are and wherever we meet.

For the last ten years scholars of the diaconal or social work of the church have agreed to the results of *John N. Collins'* study from 1990, where he argues, that the New Testament concept *diakonía* - in the background of New Testament's contemporary sources - must be understood as in Thesis 2 above: In New Testament a deacon is an agent, a messenger or a servant, who has been mandated and authorized by somebody (most often God) to perform the work and will of the one mandating against a third person, who is at a distance so that the one giving the mandate needs another person to move to the third person in order to act on his behalf by e. g. signing a contract, delivering an authorized message or serving the guests at a big feast, where the host can not attend to everybody himself. "*Dia*" in *diákonos* means that the deacon has to be a Go-Between, somebody walking a distance to carry out a mandate. This is the reason why Jesus calls himself a deacon (Mt 20:28). It is not because he is a humble servant, but because he has been mandated and sent by his Father. Being a mandated deacon he must, however, carry out his *diaconía* also if that means that he will be like a slave – and even die on the cross.

Only one place in New Testament, in the story of the final judgment (in Mt 25:44), *diakonéin* means to serve or help as it is done in the social work of the church. The other 99 places, where we have *diakonéin, diakonía* and *diákonos* in New Testament, these words are used about somebody who has been entrusted a special service, be it in the congregation, for the apostle or for the Gospel. Thus a lot of different persons are deacons in New Testament: the angles, the women, Jesus, those serving Jesus, the apostles, Paul's coworkers, the congregations and those specifically called deacons in the congregations. Furthermore *diakonía* is used about the charismas, the collection to the poor ones in Jerusalem, the old and the new covenant etc.[4] A deacon is a mandated Go-Between. A *diakonía* is something working in between, but always somebody or something mandated and working in a decisive way.

Diakonía is the central New Testament word for the call and mandate of all Christians. The Christian is to go-between God and fellow human being. The apostle has his special *diaconía.* An illustrative text is the story of the election of a successor for the apostle Judas in Acts 1:17, where the position of Judas is called a *diakonía* and an *apostolé*, the *apostolé* being obviously a subdivision of the *diaconía*[5]. When we consider the importance and scope of Christian mission, *Missio Dei* and *Missiones Ekklesiae*, as we understand it in the Nordic churches to day, it can not

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[4] In the report from the Danish Bishop's Diaconal Commission I have given account of all the 100 places, where the *diakonía*-words are used in New Testament, cf. Iversen 2001.

[5] It goes beyond the limits and scope of this paper to elaborate on the New Testament material on *apostolé*-words as I have done it on the *diaconía*-words in Iversen 2001. It is, however, possible for any Greek-reading person to test my thesis by going through the places in New Testament, where you find the apostolé-words as listed in a New Testament Konkordanz.

be narrowed down to the concept of a geographical sending (*apostolé,*) in New Testament. It can not be labeled as anything less than the basic mandate of all Christians, that is *diaconía.* Moreover *diaconía* in a very precise way points to the crossing of borders, which is always the Christian's challenge due to the apostolic and catholic character of Christianity. As in New Testament the deacon is being entrusted and mandated by his sender, so all Christians are mandated by God in Christ to carry out God's work after having crossed those borders (be they mental, ideological, cultural etc), which always have to be crossed to reach other people[6]. A missionary does not need to be sent out to cross geographical borders, even though the normal understanding is, that a missionary is somebody crossing cultural borders as we have them all over to day. The working definition of a missionary in this paper is thus *a Christian who has been mandated and sent in front to be – as far as possible- nothing but a full time Christian among other Christians and especially among Non-Christians, so that other Christians may learn from her as she, by words and lifestyle, witnesses to God, as He is known to us in the deacon Jesus Christ.*

Thesis 3: A missionary is foremost a Christian who lives in dia-praxis and dia-logue with Non-Christian as with Christian fellow human beings and neighbors.

In the paragraph on dialogue in the new mission statement from Danmission the Christian art of talking with people of other faiths is described in the following four points:

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[6] In his last small book, which was edited in Danish at the formation of Danmission in 2000, John V. Taylor strongly and rightly emphasized that mission is a mandate, not a command, cf. Taylor 1998.

1) Talking together in daily life, where you live side by side, and where knowledge of one another may lead to mutual understanding and even friendship, is the first thing needed, which always carries a value in itself.
2) Talking together in daily life may in a natural way lead to religious dialogue of daily life[7], because you talk about what comes up and thus also may have deeper dialogues on religious questions.
3) A need for setting up frameworks for more systematic religious dialogues may arise. Thus meeting places, where people may drop in (e.g. bookshops) may be created or local dialogue groups may be set up, so that there is a place, where the participants may gain in depth understanding of another's faith and way of thinking.
4) Finally religious dialogues also take place as an element of studies in theology of religions, where e.g. Muslim and Christian theologians search for insights in the faiths of one another.

Finally it is being stressed that the fellowship of talking together (*dia-logue*) needs to be combined with and often presupposes the fellowship of working together (*dia-praxis*). Living, talking and working together carries its value in itself. My ultimate missionary, *Gudrun Vest*, who has worked as a parish worker in the north western parts of Tanzania for more than 30 years, in a letter printed in *Dansk Missionsblad 12/1976* reports, how she started up visiting people according to an agreed schedule: *"It was very cozy, since they are wonderful people. But it was also no more than that"*. After this experience she shifted to

[7] The Arab Working Group 2002 is dealing at length with the concept of "dialogue of life".

visit various families and live, work and sleep with them for some days. On this she reports:

> ...laying there we talk about what has happened during the day – under the roof of that tiny hut. Then it happens that we come to a much deeper dimension of the problems – about being human and being Christian, than is the case when you make home visitations according to a schedule. To me it is decisive to be present there in the midst of the daily life of the people. When the night is over you get up. There is no time to make your self cozy. Up and out in the field. I always bring my hoe from home – and now we work along with the dust in the air and sweat all over the body. It is my experience however, that it is possible to pass on the word of God even if your back is hurting.

Gudrun Vest's younger missionary colleague, *Ida Kongsbak*, who was teaching firstly Christianity in primary schools and later on for six years Theology by Extension for evangelists and church elders, in a letter from her first years in Tanzania tells that she has felt comforted and strengthened by an expression she has found in a sermon by the Danish wartime pastor *Kaj Munk*: *"Witnessing about God, that means foremost to live in a way so that life becomes precious for others and so that what is good in them is being strengthened"*. She continues:

> If you have the feeling that you are not really succeeding in doing what you have been sent for, the idea of giving up easily comes to you. Then it is comforting for me, that mission is not depending on teaching a certain amount of periods or not. The contact to people in daily life has a value

> in itself, if you are not paralyzed in despair over the poorness of your professional work" (Ida Kongsbak's letter from 3rd of March 1987).

In a former letter from 23rd of April 1986 Ida Kongsbak quotes *N. F. S. Grundtvig's* famous statement: "*He has never lived, who ever managed to understand, what he was not firstly found of*"[8]. She continues: "If you don't take your time, you feel you waist your time. That love has its own sort of time, is becoming increasingly clear to me here in Karagwe". *Paul Hiebert* in his book brings a *South African Pioneer Missionary's Translation of 1 Corinthians 13,* which elaborates very strongly the key point of my Thesis 3 on the missionary:

> If I have the language perfectly and
> speak like a native
> and have not His love,
> I am nothing.
>
> If I have diplomas and degrees and know
> all the up-to-date methods,
> and have not His touch of understanding love,
> I am nothing.
>
> If I am able to argue successfully against
> the religions of the people and make fools
> of them and have not His wooing note of love,
> I am nothing.
>
> If I have all faiths and great ideals
> and magnificent plans
> and not His love that sweats
> and bleeds and weeps and

[8] A poetic translation of this quote is found in chapter 4.

prays and pleads,
I am nothing.

If I give my clothes and money
to them and have not love for them,
I am nothing.

If I surrender all prospects. Leave home
and friends and make the sacrifices
of a missionary career and then turn
sour and selfish amid the daily
annoyances and slights of the missionary life,
then I am nothing.

If I can heal all manner of sickness
and disease but wound hearts and hurt feelings
for want of His love that is kind,
I am nothing.

If I can write articles and publish books
that win applause but fail to transcribe
the word of the cross into the
language of His love,
I am nothing.

(From a sermon by Stephen Brown, Key Biscayne Presbyterian Church in Florida)

Thesis 4: A missionary is a guest citizen who advocates the case of his or her host citizens – the whole way to the international Word Trade Organization negotiations.

Colonial time missionaries were often trapped between their European mates, the colonial rulers, and the local

people whom they were to do missionary work among. Colonial rulers could use guns and dogs and did so to a far extend. Missionaries couldn't use dogs and guns in their work. They had to come close to the local people if they were to witness to them. Having examined the research on colonial time missionaries in Tanzania, i. e. Tanganyika, the German colony unto the 1st World War and the English Mandate Area from 1918 to 1961, I have found that the missionaries very often sided or at least attempted to side with the local people at the times of crises and warlike situation. Knowing the situation of the local people the missionary became their advocates.[9]

Advocating the case of the local people was sometimes dangerous at colonial times. In local conflicts it may be dangerous to day as well, e.g. when the missionary opts to stay on in a situation of civil war. At the international scene advocacy is often a difficult and complicated matter. That missionary advocacy, however, has to be done all the way through to international trade negotiations became crystal clear to me at a certain occasion during my studies of the mission and congregational life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) in 1977 and 78[10]. Having done my field work and participant observation in eight congregations in eight different tribes of Northern Tanzania I needed to do some historical follow up research in the archives at the headquarter of ELCT in Arusha. Realizing that the archive was not well organized I asked the secretary in charge to leave me alone to find

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[9] There is a lot of popular literature on mission and partly on missionaries as well. We lack, however, solid biographical studies of missionaries, exploring especially how they responded personally, theologically and politically to the challenges in the mission fields. A recent historical, but not much theologically reflected contribution is Peltola 2002 on the life and work of a Finish missionary to Ovamboland, Namibia 1870-1926.

[10] Cf. Iversen 1981

the stuff I needed. He kindly agreed to do so and I spent an interesting time reading many sorts of material – including one recent letter from the bishop of ELCT's North Western Diocese, *Josiah Kibira*, who from 1977 to 1984 was also the president of the Lutheran World Federation. The letter was to his fellow bishop, Sebastian Kolova, at the time of the letter the presiding bishop of ELCT. Bishop Kibira had had the visit of the secretary of Lutheran Coordination Service, the umbrella-organization of the Lutheran missionary societies supporting ELCT, Hermann Sinram, who visited Bukoba in order to check up on the use of the money, that Mr. Sinram had send to Kibira's church from his office in Hamburg. In a situation, where bishop Kibira's diocese was 80% self-reliant bishop Kibira obviously was about to loose his temper having to answer the many questions of this German money-controller. In stead of doing so he wrote a letter complaining to his fellow bishop Kolova, where in particular one sentence caught my attention:

> If only those European would pay a fair price for our coffee we could do without their money, since our people keep on giving 10% of their cash income to the Church.

It was and is still as simple as that: Kibira, who formulated the famous sentence "*No church is so poor that is doesn't have anything to give and no church is so rich that it doesn't need to receive anything*", strongly wanted cooperation in mission to work together with solidarity in terms of political and social issues. The alternative is obviously, that those of us, who happen to belong to the affluent West, continue to be in the position of the masters, if we don't join the fight for economic and political justice. And even so the hard challenge of being a Western missionary in a poor country is still the affluence of the country you

come from – and to a considerable degree of the missionary herself, as Jonathan Bonk elaborates it in *Missions and Money.*

A missionary must always fight any sort of abuse of people and stay far away from any sort of corruption, also where "good things" can be obtained by the help of a little money under the table. This is rightly included as some of the strong parts of the recent formulated *Codes of Conduct* of the Danish Missionary Council[11]. A missionary who is not willing to side with the people and stay away from those practices, which spoil the social development of the host country, should never be a missionary. A missionary who never carried some of the burdens and hardships, which the local people live with, may never have understood the reality of missionary work. When missionaries at furlough reports of all the hardships they have faced, I tend to think that they may have had a good beginning. Even though it is the duty of the mission secretary to prepare the position of work, the house and a lot of other things before the missionary is send out, it will never be an easy thing to work in a poor country – in solidarity with the local people. Martin Luther may be right when he argues that St James has a bad theology of salvation. That, however, doesn't prevent that he is very accurate in formulating a Christian theology of missionary conduct:

> If a brother or a sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food and one of you says to them: "Go in peace, be warmed and filled!" – without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead (Jas 2:15-17).

[11] Cf. Nielsen (ed.). 2003

Thesis 5: A Missionary is a co-walker and a co-worker for the joy of Christian faith.

As many other mission agencies Danmission has adopted the terminology and theology of *accompaniment* and *walking together*. When churches work together to fulfill their mission – be it by sending missionaries or in one of many other ways – companions are not around to take the responsibility from the local partner. Missionaries are to work for the common joy in the Christian faith among all Christians. Each of us has to carry the responsibility for the mission of our local churches. Co-walkers and co-workers are not to take the responsibility from the local church, but they are most certainly to point to the responsibility – also when it is not that popular.

It is simple and even so not at all easy. At the August assembly 2003 Danmission's missionary to Madagascar, Bjarne Nordentoft, witnessed to that in a poem by witch he reflected on the concept of accompaniment and being on the road together:

On the road together
Together we are on the road:
You travel with oxen
or your worn out bike
or bare foot.
I drive my Toyota Land Cruiser with
the air-condition turned on.

Together we cook rice with sauce and meat:
I use the better part of the pig.
You use some small pieces of gristle and pork.

Together we send our children to school:
You to classes with sixty pupils,
that they may sweat under the rusty roof

while learning by rote the meaningless strings of words of the teacher.
I to twenty five class mates
who – in architect designed furniture and IT-rooms -
are enjoying themselves as they are learning
at a cost pr child far beyond your income.

Together we invite one another for dinner:
I invite you to a restaurant
with table clothes and napkins and wine and French dishes.
You humbly ask me to take a sit at your rush mat.

Together we are struck by illness and disasters:
I have access to the expertise of the best doctors available,
In worst case I will be evacuated to Denmark.
You may die without anybody noticing it
at the entrance of the hospital.

Together we sing hymns to praise the Lord.
We listen to the message about the salvation
by His death and resurrection.
And together we meet at the table of the Lord.

(Translated from Netværk, Danmission September-Oktober 2003 p. 15)

Thesis 6: A missionary is a Christian walking at the borders, always reminding herself and her church that the Gospel is meant for those outside – that they may be converted as we may be it ourselves.

As not least *Lamin Sanneh* has taught us Christianity is a translation movement. Christianity is being renewed as it

is being translated and incarnated outside the context of the established churches. It is important how Christianity is being translated and preached to those outside the borders and it is even more important how they received the translated Christianity into their lives. Becoming a Christian is to experience a fusion between the horizons of one's old culture and the newly translated Christianity, which is being retranslated in that very process. Witnessing this translation process the established church is being challenged and – if it is open to that – re-evangelized by the old Gospel in brand new clothing. It is thus entering into the continuing conversion of the church, as *Darell Guder* puts it – referring to Martin Luther's famous *Ecclesia semper reformanda.*

If nobody goes outside the church with the Gospel those outside may still be unaware of the Gospel. And, as Paul states it, if we understand him right: You can't believe in what you have not heard of (Rom 10:17). This is quite simple. It is however almost as simple, that the continuing reformation of our established churches requires experiences from mission work outside the borders, where we meet the Gospel in a new context.

The Catholic Maasai-missionary *Vincent J. Donovan* and the Protestant Nepal-missionary *Thomas Hale* tell two different stories about that. Donovan – when preaching to the Maasai on the real High God being the God of Reconciliations - was met by the following question from a Maasai elder: "Has your tribe found that High God? Have you come to know him?" (Donovan 1982:45). Hale reports on a missionary couple who escapes at the time of the persecution of their newly formed small Christian congregation and weeks later receives the message, that their new Christian brothers and sisters in jail praise the Lord and thank the missionary that they brought the Good News worth suffering for to them. *"We went out to disciple them, but it is they who have discipled us,"* the missionary

concludes in Hale' report (Hale 1995:135). The missionary is always at risk to be the one being converted.

Thesis 7: A missionary is an ecumenical ambassador who – as footnotes in the history of the host church – contributes to connecting the host church to other churches in the world, past and present. At the same time the missionary is to bring back to the sending church the witness about that fullness in Christ which is present in the host church

> Christians are...not at liberty to talk about Jesus in any way they choose. They are challenged to speak about him from within the context of the community of believers, "the whole people of God", past and present (David Bosch 1992:22).

How are we to prevent that Christ is being divided – so that we end up having separate Christs in whom we believe – in separated churches? The fact that Western missionaries traditionally have exported and reinforced denominationalism can not prevent that one of the major duties of missionaries is to live among new Christians as ambassadors of the whole Christian tradition. Missionaries are not the primary human agents in the processes of conversion. The human subject of conversion to Christianity is always the one being converted[12]. In Tanganyika the German Lutheran missionaries were jailed or sent home during both of the two world wars. The church did not die because of that. Nor did it flourish and grow. In fact its new period of growth began only when the missionaries were back again – or replaced with other representatives from the old churches. This was not due to the hard work of missionaries propagating conversion. But it very much

[12] Cf. Kjærland. 1977: 350-52.

seems to have been due to the fact that the presence of missionaries again connected the indigenous Christian church to other churches in the world. The new Christians were not left to talk about Jesus in their own way only. They could test their understanding of Jesus with that of the traditions which the missionaries represented. To day it is often emphasized, e.g. by the general secretary of North Western Diocese of ELCT, Dr. *Fidon R. Mwombeki*, that younger churches which do not need "gap-fillers" still need missionaries who can walk, work and theologize together with local pastors and theologians[13].

Those of us who were privileged to listen to professor *Bengt Sundkler's* annual report to Nordic Institute of Missiology and Ecumenics on his great project on The Christian Movement in Africa during the late 70'ies and early 80'ies will always bear in mind his enthusiastic stories about the returnees, the refugees, the traders, the farmers searching for new land, the soldiers and so many other Africans who carried Christianity around all over Africa[14]. Where ever the missionaries arrived they found that there was already a Christian congregation. Listening to this marvelous story it happened more than once that an old time missionary back in the corner raised his finger and asked: "Yes, Bishop Sundkler, I understand, what you are telling us. But the missionaries! What do you do about the missionaries?" Even more we remember professor Sundkler's retort: "*The Missionaries, my dear friend, you se, I put them in the footnotes!*"

At the first moment the disappointment was hard for the old missionary as well as for quite a few of the younger missionary scholars working with Western missionary ar-

[13] Fidon Mwobeki: Danmissions rolle i Tanzania, *Danmission. Magasin om Mission*, April 2003.

[14] One of these reports has been printed in Sundkler 1987. After the death of professor Sundkler the results of his studies have been edited in Sundkler and Steed 2000.

chives. Little by little we realized, however, how right Sundkler was. The missionaries are not in the real text about the Christian movement in Africa. This movement is a movement by Africans to Africans. But there are a lot of footnotes in that story. This is where we find the missionaries. To us who know about the significance of footnotes in academic books, the footnotes are indeed an honorable place to be put in. This is where we find the connections, the sources, the supporting arguments and the wider context of the story! It is in the footnotes we find the missionaries, which no Christian church should ever be without!

It is forgivable if you – looking from outside – have your doubts if there is a Christian church in the highly secularized and also otherwise peculiar Danish Folk Church. I can, however, tell you that there is a Christian church in the folk church in Denmark. One of the major reasons is, that one third of the hymns in our great hymnbook, those written by *N. F. S. Grundtvig,* are translations or rather recreations of old Christian hymns from all the former churches, which according to Grundtvig were the Hebrew, the Greek, The Latin, The Anglo-Saxon and The German Churches. When singing in the Danish Church, and we sing a lot, we sing together with all the Christians from Christ ascended to heaven to he shall reappear in the sky. That, at least, was the intension of Grundtvig in his great effort to rebuild the Christian church in the Danish State Church. Unfortunately very little has been done since the death of Grundtvig in1872. Thus in our new hymnbook from 2003 we don't have even one hymn from one of the great majorities' churches in the South to day. This is why Danmission has now sent the two most gifted Danish church musicians, *Betty and Peter Arendt*, as short term missionaries to Ruhija Music School in ELCT – in order that they may bring home to our church the tunes and poetic theology of the Tanzanian church.

In a situation where – as pointed out by e. g. *Philip Jenkins* – two thirds of the Christians of the world are now living in the South the churches of the North are to be pitied if they receive no inspiration from Southern Christianity. It is easy to have your doubts about the future of Northern Christianity when you see it with only Northern, secularized glasses. You will, however, see much more, when you see Christianity in the light of Southern Christianity. Northern churches may involve themselves in mission to make Christ known, to practice a little solidarity with the majority of materially poor Christians in the South, to be companions with other churches in mission and for other good reasons. A major reason for Northern churches to involve themselves in mission to day is, however, possibility to send out missionaries as ambassadors who can bring the Gospel back to us in an enriched edition. And even more: All of our pastors badly need to have a post educational training in one of our family churches in the South. How terrible if I do not preach the Gospel, Paul says, because then I do not get my share in its blessings (1 Co 9:16 and 23). How terrible if we as Northern Churches do not keep tight relations to the major churches in the South, we must add to day.

Thesis 8. In the relationship between the sending and the receiving country the missionary is an international mediator, who is to function as a witness to the common humanity of all mankind – by accepting all people in the receiving country as fellow human beings, independent of how they are, and by being a good neighbourly representative for the sending country, independent of the standards otherwise practiced in that country.

Dr. *Donald Snow*, an American who since 1993 has been employed by the Hong Kong-office of *Amity Foundation*,

an independent Chinese NGO, established 1985 by Chinese Christian to further education health, social work and development by the help of, among other things Western Volunteers, in his address at Danmission's international conference January 2003 emphasized the political importance of the presence of (Western, Christian) volunteers in all local parts of China[15]. Exactly to day when China is far from being at war with other people, not to speak of the rest of the world, it is important to strengthen people to people relations at the grass root level. Relations between people of different kinds always tend to be fragile. The more we can strengthen then through international co-workers the better! Such a thing as Amity-teachers teaching English and making friends in Chinese local schools is an important way of furthering understanding and goodwill between people of different cultures and religions, which can easily be turned against one another – in fear and hostility. In that way missionaries are always to be ambassadors of peace and friendship between people. In a globalized age peace and co-understanding must be build on personal relations between representatives from all the cultures which we otherwise only meet as they are presented in the media.

Thesis 9: A missionary is knitting a network of prayers for one another, which will work as a sign and force of reconciliation between people and between people and God.

Bishop *Desmond Tutu* was preaching one evening during the late 1980'ies in the Cathedral of Copenhagen – to all most as many people as you may find in the 100 folk churches of the Capital during a normal Sunday. He was very happy that evening even though apartheid was still

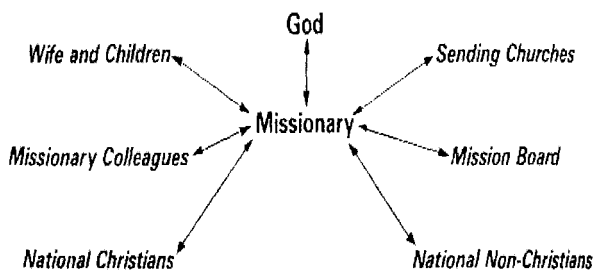
[15] *Danmission. Magasin om Mission*, April 2003.

very strong in South Africa. "I have received a letter from an old lady in the Northern parts of the forests of Canada", he told us. "And she is praying for us, she is praying for the abolishment of apartheid. So what is there to be afraid of? In the far away forests of Canada an old lady is praying for us to overcome. Therefore we shall overcome!"

Bishop Tutu believes in the power of world wide prayers. As we know apartheid was abolished a few years later. Missionaries in the same way are helping us to set up a chain of mutual prayers around the world. Because we know our missionaries, we also know the people, Christians and Non-Christians alike, among whom they are working. And they know of us – as the members of the sending church. *Paul Hiebert* points the relationships and thus the role of the missionary in the following figure, which may be interpreted in many manners. Here we shall only point out, that the missionary is knitting a network with many partners invited to pray for each other as they all of them know the same missionary as their Go-Between.

FIGURE 35

Roles Associated with the Status of "Missionary"



All these relations and the prayers between them may work in line with the strongest missionary text by Paul, where he pictures the Christians in general and the missionaries in particular as liberated and entrusted ambassadors (i.e. deacons) of the God of Reconciliation:

> .., if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against him, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (1 Co 5:17-21).

Thesis 10. Presenting and representing Jesus Christ in whom God showed us, that what is truly human is to be found in what is truly Christian and visa versa, a missionary must always work for peace, joy and righteousness in church and society.

The theological heart behind the above theses may be summed up in the (Grundtvig-inspired) incarnational theology, which has been formulated briefly in the introduction to the new Mission statement of Danmission, where we read:

> Danmission's way of understanding Christianity and mission is deeply anchored in the incarnation, God coming to us in and through a human

being, Jesus of Nazareth. This means that what is human and what is Christian can never be divided. If only what is human is being developed, we must long for what is Christian, as we believe that human beings are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. If only what is Christian is being developed, we must long for what is human, as faith in Jesus Christ can only be lived out in engagement for fellow human beings. If you go to the roots of it, what is truly Christian, as we know it from Jesus Christ, is a re-creation of what is truly human, as all human beings have been created to it. In the same way what is truly human, as we meet it in people of all kinds, points to Jesus Christ, by whom and to whom all human beings have been created. ....

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The Bible. Revised Standard Version

9. HOW CAN A FOLK CHURCH BE MISSIONAL CHURCH?[1]

How can a Folk Church not be missional?

1. "The Church exists by mission, just as the fire exists by burning" (Emil Brunner 1931), mission meaning: making Christ known and believed as far at this is possible for human beings. As congregations must be missional, mission must be congregational.

Lutheran definitions of Church often emphasize the functional aspect, i.e. the Church is the Church insofar as it is a community preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments.[2] *Karl Barth*'s contemporary in dialectic theology, *Emil Brunner*, put it bluntly when stating that "the Church exists by mission, just as the fire exists by burning".[3] The fire has various functions, heating, lightening, spoiling, consuming, cleaning and/or polluting. If the fire is not burning, however, there is no fire. The Church too has a number of functions, such as building community, celebrating, serving people in various ways etc. If the church is not making Christ known and believed as a basic dimension of whatever it is, the Church is no longer a Christian Church, belonging to Christ.

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[1] A former version of this article was presented at "Churches in transformation – with special regard to the Scandinavian situation", arranged by *International Research Consortium Congregational Mission and the Social Sciences*, March 3 2006, at the Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo. First printing in Tormod Engelviken et al. (eds.): *Mission to the World. Communicating the Gospel in the 21st Century. Essays in Honour of Knud Jørgensen,* Oxford: Regnun 2008, p. 51-66.

[2] *Confessio Augustana* 1530, article 7.

[3] Emil Brunner, *The Word in the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), p. 11.

I was educated as a missiologist during the 1970s in the wave after the study program on *The Missionary Structure of the Congregation*, launched by the *World Council of Churches* after the merger between the WCC and the *International Missionary Council* in New Delhi in 1961. The relationship between Church and mission has therefore always been a key issue for me. Basically I am convinced that congregations must be missional, just as mission must be congregational. Mission and Church belong together as two interwoven dimensions of the same reality.[4] The good news are only news if they are communicated. There is not message if there are no messengers. Christian faith can only stay alive in us when we practice and communicate our faith (1 Cor 9:16 and 23).

A Folk Church like any other church does have its anti-missional sides. It is, for example, very much an established, even bureaucratic, Church. The Danish Folk Church is in fact a state-governed Church - with a secular state as its legal subject at the national level. It is a church in Babylonian captivity; to a far extend run by other criteria than those of the Gospel. But the Folk Church may also have potential for mission: it has good relationships with, and easy access to, the great majority of the Danish people, most of whom are in fact members paying their Church tax. There is a fairly high degree of general confi-

[4] Charles van Engen has written one of the better books on this issue in *God's Missionary People. Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1991). I developed my own simple thesis that "proper congregational life in the local context is proper mission and vice versa" during two years of participant observations in eight different local congregations in eight different ethnic groups in Northern Tanzania in 1977 and 1978, cf. my book *Tanzania tur/retur. Syv tekster om socialisme og mission* (Århus: FK-Tryk, 1981). A concentrated discussion on my point of view is found in chapter 7.

dence and trust among the various actors around the local Folk Church, and it also enjoys stable funding through the above-mentioned tax, which is collected by the state alongside the municipality and state taxes.

A Folk Church at its best is as much and often more a facilitator for various activities going on in the midst of the lives of ordinary people than an organization over and against the people. In this respect the missional potential of a Folk Church may be even better than that of other church forms. This was also the experience at the time of the revivals: any good Danish revivalist pastor 120 years ago might revive major numbers of his parishioners, whereas foreigners like *Billy Graham* and *Luis Palau* never made any significant impact during their campaigns in Denmark.[5]

On the other hand a Folk Church with a long history is often experienced as a power from above and thus as a pacifying factor in terms of religion: it demands nothing and expects very little from its members - except their Church tax! It is indeed a striking fact that the Nordic countries, which have had the longest and strongest state-governed (Lutheran) national Churches, are also generally the most secularised societies in the world, according to the conventional definition of secularization.[6]

Decisive characteristics of Danish/Nordic Societies today

2. Danish (Nordic) Society is tribal and almost communist in terms of economy, welfare, culture and mentality. Danes have much in common in terms of 1) primary so-

[5] Cf. my evaluation in Palau og Ansgar, *Nordisk Missionstidsskrift* 100/1 (1989): 8-12.

[6] Cf. chapter 1 and 3.

cialization in families and child care institutions, 2) a comprehensive folk school system (single state school), 3) strong Public Service mass media with converging socializing entertainment, 4) a labour market with flexicurity, 5) a Protestant-inspired universal welfare system, 6) consensus seeking practices in civil society and 7) a common park of religious traditions.

In recent years we have seen a number of studies seeking to establish what the Nordic countries have in common – as a special part of Europe.[7] Major areas of history and traditions and not least the similar languages (apart from Finnish) are common to the Nordic countries. The seven above-mentioned factors are found in all the Nordic countries – in slightly different forms – and are probably even stronger as unifying factors among Nordic people. It is to be assumed that they also determine the common conditions of work for our Folk Churches.

Three teachers from three faculties at the University of Copenhagen are currently attempting to study what we initially called *The Heart-Beat in Denmark – Patterns of Mentality and its Institutional Form in a Protestant Welfare Society*. The ambition is to write a book on Denmark inspired among others by Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life* from 1985. The study is based on interviews and with no initial thesis to prove. So far the result seem to be that common institutions as the seven above mentioned go hand in hand with a common mentality, and an extremely high degree of satisfaction with life in Denmark. The

[7] Cf. e.g. Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Copenhagen: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), and Björn Ryman et al (eds.), *Nordic Folk Churches. A Contemporary Church History* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 2005).

Danes do not consider themselves to be the best in the world. They, however, feel, that they are good of being the ones they are! Therefore they fit for Denmark and Denmark fits for them (cf. chapter 4).

In spite of many variations in the Nordic countries, e.g. among Swedes who want to be the best and Danes who want to be the Danes[8], from an international perspective the common factors, denominators and patterns are predominant. After all, our societies are structured in similar ways. At the same time it is significant that all of our countries have Folk Churches with approx. 80 % of the people as members – in spite of many years with freedom of religion (in Denmark since 1849) and significant groups of immigrants with other religions.

A difficult topic for discussion is whether the religious traditions and their subsequent secularization, into the "Parks of Religions", as I like to call it, is mainly a dependent or a determining factor in Nordic societies. It is obvious that the Folk Church is vitally dependent on the development of the other common arenas. For example in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when a large number of mothers left home to work full-time on the labour market, we saw a decrease in Church practice, and especially in infant baptism, a rite that is essential for the survival of Folk Churches (cf. chapter 3, table 3). In the same way the work of the Folk Churches depends on the access of the Church to cooperation with the Folk School, as the Danish comprehensive school system is called. This is entirely legal in Demark but depends on the goodwill of the teachers involved. On the other hand it is strongly argued that the fact that at the Reformation the king and thus the state expropriated not only the property and leadership but also the infrastructure and project of the church, is the major

[8] Cf. Hanne Sanders, *Nyfiken på Danmark –klokare på Sverige* (Göteborg: Makadam/Center for Danmarksstudier, 2006).

historical factor behind the development of the universalistic welfare state system in Nordic countries.[9]

In many ways our societies can be understood as encompassing a sort of secularised Lutheranism.[10] In the above mentioned study in progress it appears that Danes are very much committed to work and to relations to friends and family. Thus they emphasise vocation or work and placement (*kald og stand*) above anything else, which may be interpreted as a form of secular Lutheranism.

3. The comprehensive Folk School teaches its pupils that some people believe in God, and that you are also allowed to do so, with the reservation that God may not exist. The most popular forms of "Church" are TV, Cinema and Literature. Here deeply-felt ethical and existential concerns can be fleshed out in a way where no authority (ecclesia) tells you what to think and do. The media leave it to you to be "Christian in your own way", as Scandinavians like to put it.

A recent study of how belief in God is present in various arenas of Danish society points out that the basic form of faith in God among Danes is the one formed in the Folk School, where children in Form 3 (aged 8-9) have already learnt that there are these stories about God, but where the teachers, when asked if they are true, always answer, "I don't know, but some people believe so". With the combination of religious story-telling and scientifically-based teaching in the Folk School children and after them adults are likely to end up with a rather unarticulated, conditional

[9] Cf. Jens Holger Schjørring and Jens Thorkild Bak (red.): *Velfærdsstat og kirke* (Copenhagen: Anis, 2005).

[10] Uffe Østergaard: *Europas ansigter. Nationale stater og politiske kulturer i en ny, gammel verden*, Copenhagen: Rosinante, 1992), p. 336ff.

and reserved faith in God. Most people when urged to respond place themselves not too far from the centre of the national Park of Religion, when they say, "Yes, I believe in God, but maybe there is no God". A precise picture of the Danish state of religious affairs is given in the following brief dialogue by Woody Allen:

> A: Do you believe in God?
> B: I'm not sure... A: Well, Kierkegaard says that if you're not sure, then you don't!
> B: Okay! Then I guess I do! [11]

According to the *European Value Studies* Danes rank top of the scale in relation to social solidarity and willingness to pay high taxes to maintain their welfare state, but at the bottom when it comes to confidence in collective decisions and common authorities on ethical and existential questions. They therefore have no idea that the Church might have anything important to say when personal or political decisions are to be taken on questions such as the use of genetic embryo examinations leading to abortion. However, the Danes are much concerned about moral responsibility, such as the criteria for life and death. At present the majority of the best-attended Danish films deal with just such questions with great success. Danes who would never think of going to their Church with such questions deliberately turn to Cinema, TV, Literature, Internet etc. and sometimes to family and friends - but rarely to the Church.[12] *The Da Vinci Code* has become extremely popular and read by many more people than the Bible. In Denmark the clue in Dan Brown's book is not

[11] Quoted from Morten Warmind. "Ateisme i Danmark", in Højsgaard and Iversen (eds.) 2005, p. 290.
[12] Cf. Stig Hjarvard. "Medialisering af religiøse forestillinger", in Højsgaard and Iversen (eds.) 2005, p. 175ff.

that it brings a lot of occultural stuff, but rather that it emphasises the importance of churchless Christianity, where what matter is not who you are but whom you choose to be for the time being. In that respect it is helpful that the old "Great Code"[13] (i.e. the Bible) is now being supplemented if not replaced by new "Christian" codes such as the *Da Vinci Code.*

4. Danes live on the plains and among the green hills of the North, without mountains and valleys like Norway: "To researchers who are legion in the Scandinavian region, I really must make plain: A Norwegian is more Norwegian than a Dane is ever Dane" (Piet Hein). If Norwegians traditionally believe too much in too little, Danes believe too little in too much.

When it comes to ethical and existential questions, Danes are even more individualistic than Norwegians, who are used to belong to a certain valley with a particular identity in terms of culture and religion. It is significant that approx. 10 % of the life circle rituals (*casualia*) in Norway are conducted by the *Human Ethical Society*, whereas there is practically no such alternative to the rituals of the Folk Church in Denmark[14]. Even though there are controversial pastors on both political wings and differing religious and political styles in various congregations, the general outlook of the Danish Folk Church is mainstream, comprehensive and uncontroversial.

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[13] Cf. Jan Ulrik Dyrkøb, *Northrop Fryes litteraturteori* (København: Berlingske Forlag 1979), p. 61ff.

[14] In the antireligious wave after some years with religion as the most debated issue in Denmark a majority of the city magistrate in Copenhagen in April 2007 wants to open the first non-consecrated funeral place in Copenhagen.

A very few people who take a strong political or religious stand may leave the Folk Church because of its inability to make collective decisions on any controversy. If you only say a little and are heard by very few you will not provoke many people. If – as happened on Christmas Eve 2005 – 300 pastors collectively decide to preach against the lack of lodging for foreigners in the Danish house, you may have a little unrest but you will soon be back to business as usual – not mixing politics and Christianity, as the self-contradictory slogan goes in the politically governed Danish Folk Church. Generally speaking the Folk Church in Denmark is fairly stable in terms of membership. The general rule is that only those people who have had too few or only negative experience in their church cancel their membership, at present a few thousands a year and equivalent to the number rejoining the church. As the only Church in the Nordic countries the Folk Church in Denmark has never faced a real campaign encouraging people to leave the church. Even if atheists are mobilising to day the general feeling seem to be that campaigning against religion is being too serious about religion.[15]

Denmark has followed a silent and almost totally peaceful way from a rural, agricultural country in the 19th century via a modern, industrialised country in the 20th century[16] to a highly competitive "flexicurity" economy in the globalisation of the 21st century. [17] Thus the Danes repeatedly are ranked as the most "happy" people in the world in interna-

[15] One page also found in chapter 2 is omitted here.

[16] Not least due to the influence of Grundtvig, cf. Stephen Boris, *The Land of the Living. The Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's Non-violent Path to Modernization* (Nevada City :Blue Dolphin 1991).

[17] Cf. John L. Campbell, John A. Halland and Ove K. Pedersen (eds.) *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism* (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2006).

tional surveys. As mentioned above the Danes are very much satisfied with their own performance, institutions and mentality. Exactly this makes them turn their backs to people "who are not like us" as seen in current immigrant poli tics and the Muhammad Cartoon Crises 2006[18].

Denmark is one of the most egalitarian countries in the world. The 10 % richest have only 2.8 times more money available than the 10 % poorest. Having more in common and being more egalitarian we are more communist than the communists ever were. For this project the Folk Church and the Folk State are supposed to stand together, excluding those who do not belong to "we Danes". Like the Russians support the dictatorship of Putin, who is making the majority of Russians richer, the majority of the Danes, among whom 5/6 are becoming richer these years, are happy having a bourgeois government dependent on the nationalist Danish Folk Party, whose new slogan is "Strict politics of foreigners and true welfare" (*Stram udlændingepolitik og ægte velfærd*).[19]

Determining characteristics of Nordic/Danish Folk churches today

5. A (Nordic sort of) Folk Church is what you have between the autocratic King's Church and what comes after the Folk Church (Krister Stendahl). The Danish Folk

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[18] Cf. Lisbet Christoffersen (ed.): *Gudebilleder. Ytringsfrihed og religion i en globaliseret verden* (Copenhagen: Tiderne Skifter, 2006). An English edition of this book is under preparation.

[19] It is noteworthy that the majority of pastors and probably also of church Christians are not at all in favor of present Danish politics, cf. Hans Raun Iversen, "Kan præsterne anerkende de anderledes troende og samtidig være i mission blandt dem?" in *Karma, koran, kirke – religiøs mangfoldighed som folkekirkelig udfordring* (Århus: Forlaget Univers, 2006).

Church was created politically as a changeling (Kløvedal Reich), as the only solution politically possible when Denmark acquired its democratic constitution in 1849. Currently the Folk Church in Denmark is taken hostage in an iron triangle between state, church and native folk - leaving Muslims, for example, outside as non-recognized.

If St. Peter had asked, as the last point on the agenda at the first assembly of the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15), what sort of church the heathen people of the countries of Northern Europe should have, the meeting might have come up with many and various suggestions. The only one they would never have invented is the Folk Church. Only history can invent a Folk Church.

A Folk Church is what you have *after* the state church and *before* what comes after the folk church, the Swedish professor and bishop, *Krister Stendahl*, once said.[20] In the process of introducing secular democracy and freedom of religion in the 19th and 20th centuries the old Lutheran state Churches kept the great majority of the population as members and were more or less formally labelled Folk Churches, even though the state church legislation was only gradually changed to democratic church rule. The Folk Churches have contributed considerably to the cultural and political coherence of people and nations in Scandinavia. To a varying degree they also prevented strong free churches from developing, this being the case especially in Denmark. The Folk Churches of Scandinavia at one and the same time have kept the majority of the people as Church members and have served as an insurance against too *much* religion, as the German political theologian Dorothee Sölle once put it.

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[20] Krister Stendahl, "De nordiske folkekirkers fremtid" in Kjell Ove Nilsson (ed.), *Folkekirkerne i Norden* (Uppsala: Nordiska Ekumeniska Instituttet, 1986), p. 143.

A recent minor prophet in Denmark, *Ebbe Kløvedal Reich,* pointed out in one of his many historical surveys that the Danish Folk Church was born a weakling and a changeling that nobody really cared for.[21] Even though up to the 2nd World War the Social Democrats as well as Christian-inspired Conservatives in principle wanted a split between Church and state, nothing happened to this effect, as the Church "as such" never had any organisation and standpoint of its own. These days the Social Democratic opposition to the Liberal-Conservative government wants to discuss Church-state relations, but they have no voice in a situation of national "crisis" such as the one that followed the publication of the Muhammed cartoons in 2006.

Since the reformation in 1536 (bringing a civil war to its end) Denmark never had a 1) revolution, 2) civil war, 3) occupation (sic!), 4) serious cultural war, 5) revival leading to splinter churches, 6) immigration seriously challenging the hegemony of the ethnic Danish group. Thus the triangle people, state and church may still be seen as a unity (cf. chapter 3). Currently the Folk Church in Denmark is thus taken hostage by its own history in an iron triangle between state, church and native people – leaving e. g. Muslims outside as non-recognized.[22]

6. The Danish Folk Church (the only church called Folk Church in a national constitution) is the weakest monop-

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[21] Ebbe Kløvedal Reich, *Kun et gæstekammer. Historien om den danske folkekirkes fødsel* Århus: Landsforeningen af Menighedsrådsmedlemmer, 1999), p. 96. See further p. 109.

[22] In a recent study (Peter Gundelach and Ester Nørregaard Nielsen, *Etniske gruppers værdier* (Copenhagen: Ministeriet for Integration, 2007), pp. 126 and 129) it appears that only app. 40 % of ethnic Danes emphasises full political rights for all groups and freedom to perform all sort of religious rituals. App. 85 % of immigrant Danes supports these freedoms.

oly church in the world. It is what Danish people want to have instead of the "ecclesia" (the religious folk assembly gathered at the square), which they have no sense of. The Folk Church is respected and used by its members in the same way as public hospitals.

In the debate about "believing" or "belonging" I label the Danes as "belonging without believing" or even better "belonging without even believing in belonging" (cf. chapter 1). Few Danes ever left the Folk Church, of which their forefathers were forced to be members in its proper state Church edition until 1849. On the other hand most of them never took a firm decision to be full and responsible members of their Church. Thus at the most 15 % of the members vote at the elections of congregational boards in the approx. 10 % of the parishes where there is more than a single list of candidates at the elections every fourth year. When we examine what they do in terms of attending Church, conforming to the faith of their Church and having positive expectations of their Church the Danes together with the Swedes are the most secular people in the world, at a maximum distance to their Church.

The Danes are extremely afraid of too much religion, especially as they perceive it among Muslims. Politicians are very successful in exploiting this fear. Paradoxically at one and the same time Danes have the feeling that religion should play a more significant role – as a stabilizing factor behind their fragile Cultural Christianity.[23] When asked what is most important about the Church, Danes point to the old buildings, the life-circle ritual and Christmas – with a very low priority to ordinary Sunday Services. When asked how the Church should prioritize its work, the

[23] Christian A. Larsen, *Danskernes forhold til religionen – en afrapportering af ISSP98* (Ålborg: Aalborg Universitetscenter, 2002), pp. 86-88.

result is similar with one striking exception: the Church should first of all "help elderly and sick people" and "contribute to international relief work".[24] This of course is totally unrealistic, as 99 % of social work has long ago been taken over by the state and the municipalities. It does, however, signify that the Danes want the Church to be there to do what they – on the background of their Cultural Christianity – think that all of us should do. Knowing that we do not do it, they believe that at least the Church, that taught us Cultural Christianity's law of loving one's neighbour should do so itself!
Life circle rituals, family traditions and the role of the Church as a sort of guarantor behind our Cultural Christianity make the Church almost as legitimate as the National Health Service. The Church is an institution which should be respected. On the other hand it also means that the churches are treated just like the hospitals. Danes pay the taxes necessary but rarely come to church except when badly needed, i.e. when they or their friends and relatives need to have something done.

7. 83 % of the Danish population are members of the Folk Church, 75.5 % of the babies are baptised at the time of name-giving, 72 % of the youngsters are confirmed at 14, 43 % of all marriages are conducted in church, and 89 % of all funerals (figures from 2005/2006).2% of the Danes use to attend church at a given Sunday.

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[24] Gallup Opinion Poll April-May 1998 on "What is most important in the church". For similar findings covering all Nordic countries, see Göran Gustaffsson and Thorleif Pettersson (eds.), *Folkkyrkor och religiös pluralism – den nordiska religiösa modellen* (Borås, Verbum Förlag. 2000), pp. 62ff. and 101ff.

As we have more elderly Church members dying than babies being baptised, membership of the Danish Folk Church is decreasing by roughly 0.5 % per annum. For the time being the most severe decrease is found in the figures for confirmation, which dropped from 77% to 72 % between 2001 and 2005. An even more drastic fall has been seen in the percentage of marriages conducted in the Church. These dropped from 74 % in 1966 to 43 % in 2001. On the other hand the figures for infant baptism and Church funerals are fairly stable.

The present cultural situation is characterised by individualism in the sense that the only choice you do not have is not to choose. It has become culturally illegitimate just to do as your family used to do. Everybody has to be the responsible editor of his or her own CV. This seems to be the explanation for the decrease in the numbers of confirmations and weddings in Church, where as an individual you do have various options. You can be married at the Town Hall – and have the Church celebration for your new family at the time of the baptism of the first child. And youngsters may decide that they want to have some family party (and hopefully "confirmation" gifts) without attending confirmation classes and being confirmed in Church. It is no big thing for the non-confirmed young persons, nor is it for the Church. However, a decrease in contact to the Church as well as in basic knowledge of Christianity does loosen the links between the Church and its members, and may eventually lead to the members' full withdrawal from the Church. Still, infant baptisms and Church funerals are more stable, as in practice these are not left so much to the individuals to choose for themselves. So far practically there are no regular alternatives to baptism and a Church funeral.

The Missional Functions of the Danish Folk Church

8. The Folk Church attempts to bring up its baptised children to be Church Christians (e.g. by confirmation classes and by offering various activities to school classes, as museums do). The Folk Church thereby maintains Cultural Christianity (non-religious Christianity) as common ethical and cultural ballast in Denmark.

We do not have any membership surveys or other good indications of the outcome of the work of the Danish Folk Church. In her ethnological Ph.D. thesis 16 years ago *Inger-Marie Børgesen*, listening to the life stories of Folk Church members in different settings, found that they obviously became what they call "Christian in my own way" on the background of various experiences of encounters with the Folk Church, e.g. at life-circle rituals.[25] People do not expect much from the church. When they are given guidance and help at funerals, for example, they are thus positively surprised.[26] On a daily basis the great majority of the members of the Folk Church do not think of the Church as something to which they "belong". On the other hand to a considerable extent they become what they become due to the actual work of the Folk Church, towards which they generally have a positive attitude.

71 % of the Danes state that they are "*believing*" ("troende"), meaning people who want to live with positive and trusting attitudes to their own lives as well as to their neighbours. 69 % state that they are Christians, and 62 % that they believe in some kind of God. Only 15 % state

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[25] Inger-Marie Børgesen, *Folk og folkekirken. Kirkens plads i menneskers hverdagsliv og tankeverden (*Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1991).

[26] Cf. Birthe Lund and Hans Raun Iversen (eds.), *Livshjælp. Undersøgelser af begravelsespraksis og begravelseskultur i Danmark* (Århus: Landsforeningen af Menighedsrådsmedlemmer, 1993).

that they are agnostics and 5 % atheists.[27] The 69 % of the Danes who label themselves Christians – and in fact quite a few more – I designate "Cultural Christians".

Cultural Christianity as found in Scandinavia consists of a Christian-influenced world view, a concept of man and some basic ethical and existential values deriving from Christianity, together with a preference for using Christian-inspired language in important situations. For Cultural Christians a major part of their culture is Christian, whereas their entire culture is most certainly not, nor are their religious beliefs if they have any.[28] Cultural Christianity does not come alive - nor is it being kept alive – by itself. It is the child of the teaching of the Folk Churches through the centuries. Cultural Christians have no ways or rituals of their own for the transmission of Cultural Christianity to their children. Cultural Christians are thus dependent on the Folk Churches, which in turn rely on the existence of Cultural Christianity.

Historically, Cultural Christianity was established as a result of compulsory confirmation classes, in Denmark from 1736. Also today confirmation classes teach young people Church Christianity with the result that they become Cultural Christians. What is heard by those attending the rituals of the Folk Churches also seems to contribute to the upholding of Cultural Christianity among Scandinavian people. This may be the major political and existential contribution of the Folk Church to the culture and identity of the Danes.

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[27] Højsgaard and Iversen (eds.) 2005: 68.

[28] For a more detailed discussion of the concept see chapter 6 and "Kulturkristendom, kirkekristendom og karismatisk kristendom. Kristendomsformernes baggrund og samspil i folkekirken", in Jørn Henrik Olsen (ed.): *Kulturkristendom og kirke*. Ny Mission 1 (Copenhagen: Unitas Forlag, 1999), p. 6-43.

9. In almost all activities of the Danish Folk Church 1) Church Christians, 3) Cultural Christians and often also 3) Charismatic Christians, meet and exchange their views of Christianity in subtle ways. The Folk Church at its best functions as a switchboard making the three forms of Christianity mutually inform, respect and inspire one another. In this way the Folk Church is broadcasting Christianity.

For more than ten years it has been my argument – partially inspired by the studies conducted by Harald Hegstad in Norway – that the mission of the Danish Folk Church is mainly found in the positive exchange which continually takes place between Church Christians, Cultural Christians and often also Charismatic Christians, i.e. people working and living enthusiastically for the purpose of Christianity.[29] I still believe this argument to be valid – and probably even more so in Denmark than in Norway – as we have fewer examples of hostile relations between revival-like core groups and more secular or liberal Folk Church members in Denmark than in Norway. Obviously only little positive can come out of this encounter and exchange (be it in the congregational boards, at life circle rituals, at Sunday services, or in children's work etc.) if there is no mutual respect and basic trust among the groups and individuals involved.

The importance of this exchange is decreasing as the old core groups of Church Christians are disappearing in the Danish Folk Church. This is mainly due to the recent development in the life-forms in Nordic societies. In the mainly agricultural-based society in the 18th century our

[29] Cf. Harald Hegstad, *Folkekirke og trosfellesskap. Et kirkesosiologisk og ekklesiologisk grunnproblem belyst gjennon en undersøkelse av tre norske lokalmenigheter.* (Trondheim: Tapir Forlag, 1995).

communities were the given ones in the local parishes, even though some revivalists and a few atheists broke out from life under *the sacred canopy* as it was interpreted and administered by the parish pastor. In the mainly industrial-based society in the 19th century we learned how to choose between *various solidarities and sectors* and the Church tended to become a sector of its own remote from the busy life of industry and business. At its best the Church gathered some temporary groups who took the responsibility of being core groups. In the mainly service- based society of the 21st century, where we are at one and the same time becoming more global and more eager to live in small circles of friends, we have adopted *fluid relations* as we seek places and experiences where we can acquire strengths and orientation in our lives. [30]

10. As we are moving from given or chosen communities via temporary communities to fluid communities the question is no longer who or what but where God is. As the old congregational core-group culture disappears, the Churches – as temples, not as synagogues – serve as arenas and offer relationships for the new fluid communities. Obvious examples of the growth of the fluid Church are Night-Churches, Street-Pastors, Baby-Hymns, Alfa-Courses, Bible-Marathons, Pilgrimages, Road-Churches, Cyber-Churches and from 2006 a weekly TV-Church on Danish Public Service TV.

As are your days, so shall your strength be, said our forefathers, quoting Ecclesiastes. As your events and experiences of orientation are, so your strength shall be, we seem to say today. The Folk Church in Denmark is tentatively,

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[30] See Figure 14.1 in Anders Bäckström, *Svenska Kyrkan som välfärdsaktör i en global kultur (* Stockholm: Verbum, 1999), reprinted here in chapter 10

even hesitantly, attempting to face this new form of life by trying out new ways of work. In a serious of seminars at Vartov in the autumn of 2007 new form of congregational life is being explored under four headings: The *temporary congregations*, where people come for special rituals or events, the *singing congregations*, where our Nordic record in hymn singing[31] is renewed in new forms, the *conversational congregations*, where dialogues are taking place between e.g. immigrants, social outcasts, New Age adherents and Folk Church Christians in all sort of ways and places, and the *churchless congregations*, where people, who basically want to be independent of any church, seek the churches, including Cyber-churches and the Tent Church at Roskilde Festival, as pilgrims or tourists.

More people seek the churches in Denmark today than 25 years ago. Most often they have more positive experiences by doing so today than in former times. They have, however, no intention to build stable congregations in the synagogue way as promoted by the children of the old revival movements. They look a lot more like the medieval Christians who respected and used the churches as temples whenever needed – a few times a year or at least during life time.[32]

Sometimes I think that the Danish Folk Church is beginning to look a bit like St. Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds. The Folk Church is serving people who stop by at the oddest times and places to see if there is anything for them to pick up today. In following them the Church itself

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[31] Cf. Hans Raun Iversen, "Tidevarv komma, tidevarv för-svinna... Overvejelser omkring en spørgeskemaundersøgelse af salmesang i de nordiske lande" in *Hymnologiske Meddelelser* 31/1 (2992): 76-82)

[32] Cf. Oskar Skarsaune, "Noe overveielser om norsk folkereligiøsitet", and "Hvor mange Typer menigheder huser folkekirken?" in *Halvårsskrift for Praktisk teologi*, 2/1993 1/1997

may become fluid – journeying along the roads like Jesus – from *Galilee* with the heathen migrants via *Samaria* with its mixture of religions to *Judea* with the Folk Church Temple in Jerusalem. Probably almost half of the more than 2000 congregations in Denmark have today involved themselves in inter-religious work in contact with Muslims and adherents of other religions[33]. Hopefully they will learn from the experiences – moving from Galilee via Samaria to Judea and back again.

Is the Danish Folk Church a missional church?

There is most often no clear missionary intention in the work of the Danish Folk Church. There is, however, often a missionary dimension in the same work. There is little *centripetal, community building light* in the folk church. There is, however, quite a bit of *centrifugal, formational salt* in its work (cf. Matt 5:13-16).

Even if the work of the Folk Church for *Christian information* does not result in much it does not mean that there are no results in terms of *Christian and Culture Christian formation* among church members. The church can point to little results in terms of regular church attention, conformity with the official teaching of the church and identification with church Christianity. Even so an apostolic dimension of the work of the church may be found in its widespread work for Christian formation. If it is the goal to make men believe e.g. that "All scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16) the Danish Folk Church is not doing well. It does, however seem to be doing somewhat better, if the goal is to "equip for every good work" (2 Tim 2:17).

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[33] Cf. *Karma, Koran og Kirke. Religiøs mangfoldighed som folkekirkelig udfordring* (Århus: Univers 2007).

In his important book *The continuing Conversion of the Church* the reformed missiologist *Darrell L. Guder* tightens the concepts of church and mission up saying: "Whatever is not mission is not part of the church's vocation"[34]. In his lecture at the Mission Conference of the Danish Folk Church at Nyborg Strand June 9 2006 he elaborated his point in this way:

> A leading Mennonite missiologist in the United States has said that 'Christendom is Christianity without mission'. That is, as I have told him, a historical over-simplification. But it does describe our theological traditions accurately. We have done our theology of the church with virtually no attention to its fundamentally missional purpose and action.[35]

Historically seen this is literally true for the Danish Folk Church: It is possible to point to only a limited missional impact of the work of the church. Generally speaking it is correct to label the work of the church as an attempt to maintain the status qvo of a rather passive majority church. What really matters to the folk church seems to be that people continue belonging to the church. In the words of Guder:

> It has become possible for people to compartmentalize their religion, to unlink the message of gathered worship on Sunday from the practices

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[34] Darrell L. Guder, *The continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Publishing Company, 2000, p. 207.

[35] Darrell L. Guder, *Mission in a Pluralist Society – Why and How?* Mission Conference of the Folk Church at Nyborg Strand June 9 2006, Presentation I, p. 7.

> and decision-making Monday through Saturday. It has become possible for missional vocation to be reduced to religious observance.[36]

At the annual meeting of the *International Research Consortium Congregational Mission and the Social Sciences* in the buildings of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*'s first Pastoral Seminary at Zingst March 2007 a participant, black South African Church leader told the following story from one of the first occasions where he was sitting one evening with a white South African Church leader. "10 years ago I did not think that I should ever sit together with a white Christian", the black Christian said. "I know, but trust me, we really tried to be serious Christians, reading a lot in the Bible", the white Church leader retorted. "Yes, but you never read the Bible together with us" the black Church leader commented. "You are right, and that was exactly where we failed", the black Christian concluded.

The white churches in South Africa have had to learn the hard way by realizing their own wrongdoings. The Danish Folk Church never faced any hardship from which it could learn. Its leaders can still boast of their church having "the best church order in the world". The Danish Folk Church may be excused in as far as it has been taken hostage by its own history and by secular, nationalist politicians. The Folk Church looks like a church in Babylonian captivity. But it is also as a church unprepared and undecided to leave the Egyptian fleshpots of the security in the arms of the successful Danish State. The question remains when the Danish Folk Church will ever learn by sharing in the way described by Guder:

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[36] Guder 2006, Presentation II, p. 7.

> The history of Western theology can be described as a sequence of learned attempts to explain why the Sermon on the Mount does not apply to us. When we enter discussion with our sister churches around the world and explore our shared understanding of our calling and our mission, then we can certainly share what we have learned from our long history....[37]

[37] Guder 2006, Presentation I, p. 13.

10. FLUCTUATING CONGREGATIONS - CHRIST IN US AND WE IN CHRIST[1]

Christ in us and we in Christ

In his ground-breaking book *Liquid Church* from 2002 *Pete Ward* considers whether church could be understood not just as people gathered in a solid fellowship or institution, but more as a process, as something people carry out in a fluid movement. Ward suggests that our concept of 'church' should shift from being a noun to being a verb.[2] With this in mind, he reflects on Paul's Christological interpretation of church or 'congregation' in the following passage:

> Paul sees our union with Christ as his presence surrounding and indwelling the believer. This relationship sustains and establishes the believer in relationship with God, but also it forges a wider community base to faith. The shared experience of the Lord unites into one body all of those who are in Christ.[3]

Arguing for unity in the churches to which he is writing, Paul emphasizes the concept of the church as the body of Christ in order to make the members of the various branches of the new, local congregations respect one another and stay united (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17 and in general Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12 and 14). Like most scholars, Pete Ward takes this as an indication that the congregation must pri-

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[1] First printing in: *Med Kristus til jordens ender. Festskrift til Tormod Engelsviken.* Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag 2008.

[2] Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 3.

[3] Ward 2002:35.

marily be understood as the body of Christ – tending to imply that those who are outside the congregation are outside the body of Christ. Even so, he claims:

> we should place significantly more emphasis on the way that our connection to Christ makes us part of the body, rather than the other way around. ... There is vital truth in this: the church is the body of Christ. At the same time, however, the failure to reverse the order and say that the body of Christ is the church means that we are often unable to imagine ourselves [as Christians] outside of the institutional box.[4]

Paul writes more frequently about 'we in Christ' or 'the congregation as the body of Christ' than about 'Christ in us'.[5] Yet he can also write powerfully on 'Christ in us', especially in the following passages: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,' (Gal. 2:20). Likewise, addressing his fellow Christian Galatians, he says that he is working so that 'Christ [may] be formed in you' (Gal. 4:19). Also well known from Eucharist liturgy is Paul's prayer that 'Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith' (Eph. 3:17). To Paul, 'Christ in us' is our 'hope of glory' (Col. 1:27). As the spirit of God and his Son was breathed into our nostrils at creation, so Christ now once more indwells us for our re-creation in his image so that we may 'be conformed to the image of the Son of God' (Rom.

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[4] Ward 2002:37 and 38.

[5] According to James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1998) p. 396, the expression 'in Christ' is found 83 times in the direct form in the Pauline Corpus (61 times if Ephesians and the pastoral letters are excluded). In addition, there are a lot of equivalent phrases, such as 'in him' and 'in whom'. While 'we in Christ' is a core issue for Dunn, he pays no special attention to 'Christ in us'.

8:29). This way of thinking is found everywhere in Paul's letters. He cannot imagine how Christian people can gather as the body of Christ if Christ did not first take shape in those people, making them Christians. The same way of thinking is found in the Gospel of John: 'if a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him' (John 14:23).[6]

Paul has good reasons for writing more about 'we in Christ' than 'Christ in us', even if the two ideas are closely related. Ward is probably right to argue that the major problem today in our churches is that church people are 'concerned to oppose what they see as the individualism of contemporary society'.[7] In 1 John 5:12, however, we read that 'he who has the Son has life.' Having the Son by having him within us is linked to – or leads to – the possibility that we are 'in' and 'belong to' the body of Christ. The former – 'we are in' – is at least as important as the latter – 'we belong to'. Whatever Christianity is, it is a new life in the midst of the old pre-Christian life. It is more of a movement than a once-and-for-all status. As Paul puts it: 'I am still running, trying to capture that by which I have been captured' (Phil. 3:12).[8]

This article argues that we are in serious need of a new appreciation of 'Christ in us' as a basic concept in missional ecclesiology, and this for two reasons. At least in Europe, and especially Northern Europe, we have what I call fluctuating societies, meaning that churches and congregational life are beginning to look much more like a

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[6] Bible quotations from *The Bible. Revised Standard Version* (Stonehill Green, Great Britain: The British and Foreign Bible Society 1985).

[7] Ward 2002:37.

[8] This translation, which is close to the present Danish translation, is taken from the front page of Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (New York: Orbis Books 1982).

process, where Christ is being presented and represented to people in all sorts of ways, than a status, where specific people 'are in Christ' for good as his very church. Secondly, this also seems to be the reality in the many kinds of churches labelled as 'emerging' by Gibbs and Bolger among others.[9]

From stable to fluctuating societies

Pete Ward is influenced by *Sigmunt Bauman*'s sociological analysis of Western societies as stamped by 'liquid modernity',[10] requiring 'liquid churches'. It is debatable in what sense Western societies may be labelled post modern or liquid. It is nevertheless undeniable that the Northern European societies among others are still undergoing significant shifts in terms of their basic modes of production. This is probably seen most clearly in Sweden, where the average poor farmer was even poorer during the 19th century than their counterparts in Denmark. Also, industrialization in the 20th century was much heavier in Sweden than was the case in Denmark. The sociologist of religion *Anders Bäckström* and his team in Uppsala have drawn up the most decisive changes that took place in Swedish society from the 19th to the 21st century. These changes are shown in the following chart, which – slightly modified – holds true for all of the Northern European countries and probably to some degree for most parts of the Western world:

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[9] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches. Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (London: SPCK 2006).

[10] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2000).

Changes in mode of production and its consequences for religious life

19th Century	20th Century	21st Century
	The little globalisation	The big globalisation
Agrarian Society		
	Industrial Society	
		Service Society
Basis for survival:		
Land Food Sustenance	Capital Standard of Living	Knowledge Meaning of Life
Human relations:		
Local and near	National and distanced	Global and intimate (circle of friends)
Basic values:		
Traditional values	Value associated with solidarity	Values associated with freedom
Belief-affirming institution:		
Church	Grass-roots or popular movements	Quality places
Religion function as:		
		
Canopy = overarching sphere of meaning	Sector or professional sphere	Arena or communication sphere

During my own childhood in the 1950s, on a small farm in western Denmark, my family lived in a 19th century Danish agrarian manner, under what Peter Berger calls the 'sacred canopy'.[11] As a family of five, we could survive by producing our own sustenance. Human relations were local: near neighbours and close-by relatives. Only once or twice a year could my parents go and visit their siblings and other relatives who lived beyond cycling distance. At harvest festivals, Christmas and on similar occasions the schoolteacher and the pastor repeated and confirmed the Christian traditions, interpreting the signs of the times for us. Having heaven as our one and only horizon, we had little doubt that there *was* a God – and this was independent of religious group affiliations. The question for us, almost as for Martin Luther, was: *Who* is God? How can we be sure that God will be merciful and bless each of us and our families?

The agrarian mode of production changed rapidly in Denmark in the three decades after World War II, as the few farmers remaining industrialized their market-oriented food production. This second industrialization was more powerful in Denmark than the shift from carpentry to industry around the first part of the 20th century. What mattered was capital for investment and internationally oriented national organizations. This was the case for the owners of the means of production as well as for the workers. Welfare politics limited the clash between social classes in Danish society to a considerable extent. Yet, even so, industrial society divided people into different sectors, branches, jobs, and professions. A life of solidarity within the group became important, even if all forms of these solidarities became increasingly temporary and provisional. The church became a sector of its own, with its own professional staff. The minority of people remaining

[11] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York 1967).

within that sector embraced a slightly modernized version of Christianity. The God question was now: *What* is God? Theologians were busy explaining God as eternal love or the power to be in whatever is, attempting to make God viable to society at large.

Due to globalization, unplanned and unwanted, our mode of production is now changing again, as all types of production are steadily being outsourced as soon as they reach an industrialized level. Instead, we live by inventing and delivering all manner of technical, mental, social, and physical services to one another, and, when successful, selling them to the rest of the world as well. Today, we almost literally live by 'cutting one another's hair', which in the industrial era would have seemed impossible to do then. The forces of production today are knowledge, smartness and the ability to convince your customers that you can deliver a meaning to life for them. Life in 'sectors' is outdated and is being replaced by many sorts of networks, including circles of friends, new partners, and customers who have often only met one another on the Internet.

We live like the waves – always moving, always fluctuating – and like the waves we are always new and old at the same time. What is the new and what is the old is hard to say. Churches clinging to their old sector identity and established activities are diminishing, but many new network relations and activities are cropping up. Church buildings are among the new quality places as arenas for pilgrims and tourists seeking events, experiences, celebrations, and relationships, attempting to delve into to what may be the very sources of life. The number of fluctuating activities in our churches is ample: mothers singing hymns while dancing with their babies in front of the altar; all types of occasional gatherings for service, with food for small children's families; activities for scouts and mini- and maxi-candidates (age 9 and 14) for confirmation;

youth music services; street pastors; night churches; Internet and TV churches; and occasional services and ritual connected to the cycle of the year and the lives of individuals and families. Lots of people join in such activities either once or twice, or even ten times, yet very few, if any, think of staying on for some stable activity such as the Sunday service at 10 a.m. They 'church' whenever they 'church', i.e. they attend church whenever they choose to do so'. Being members of church as a stable community is not within their horizon.

Also the God question has changed once more. People do not ask '*Who* is God?' or '*What* is God?' They ask '*Where* is God?' They are steadily looking for new quality places, arenas, relationships, and flows of communication where they can have the experience of some existential or divine orientation in their lives.

From stable to fluctuating churches

Pete Ward tells us 'I have sometimes felt that the real purpose of church services is to enable the clergy to count the congregation'.[12] Since I am a church sociologist supposed to know how Christianity is doing in Denmark, for three decades on average once a week I have had journalists asking about church attendance as if this was the final criterion of success for Christianity. When I tell them that there is nothing new to tell, as church attendance has been pretty stable for forty years with 100,000 participants countrywide attending an average Sunday service (equivalent to 2 per cent of the population), they often persist in asking why 2000 pastors can make only 2 per cent of the population Church Christians. In short, my answer is: 'Pastors cannot make people Christians. Christianity is a do-it-yourself discipline. To be a Christian, you have to be

[12] Ward 2002:18.

the subject of your own faith and Christian practices.' Jesus came to raise signs of the emerging Kingdom of God and faith in the emerging Kingdom of God, where he himself is the Lord. He came to call individuals to repent and turn to the Kingdom of God. He did not come to make sure that the clubs of Church Christians will for ever gather for an hour or more on Sunday at 10 a.m..

As the modes of production have made people change from being stable resident parishioners to being commuters and consumers, the church can no longer label them as lazy parish Christians when they do not turn up. Instead, it tends to label them church consumers, when they eventually do turn up for their rites of passage and spiritual events. There is a huge need for sharp criticism of a society where the expansion of consumption is the only overarching goal. Prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western European societies were supposed to be not only richer but also more free, democratic and human than the communist societies. Today, the one overarching goal of Western societies is the growth of economic power. It follows logically that citizens, who for the most part are asked to be producers and consumers of services, may, when they turn to Christianity, look like consumers of *meaning*, spiritual events, and so forth. Yet they are not *only* consumers. They are also – as fully as people ever were – human beings created in the image of God, seeking meaning for their lives in the Christ who was born, lived, died, and rose from the grave for them.

People do not primarily come to church to have their consumer needs fulfilled. They come with spiritual desires and a wish for meaning in their lives. They also come to gain a little spiritual support and practical accompaniment at difficult phases in their life circles. To be a church with and for such people is the mission of our churches in Northern Europe today.

Towards a missional ecclesiology of being in Christ

From a missiological point of view it is not difficult to see that the process where Christ transforms and takes shape in people is prior to, and thus far more basic than, the congregational life where people gather as the church body of Christ. In a neo-classical way, *Alan R. Tippett* has outlined the dynamic process of conversion as known from Christian Mission in the following model, using the story of the return to the father of the prodigal son as an illustration:[13]

Old Context (Pagan)				**New Context (Christian)**		
Period of A-wareness	Point of Reli-sation	Period of deci-sion-mak-ing	Point of En-coun-ter	Period of In-corpo-ration	Point of Con-firma-tion	Period of Ma-turity

If we ask people who are either coming or returning to Christianity, they will talk about a long, individual process with different stages – as would the prodigal son returning to his father if we could ask him. Yet in two respects, Tippett's model needs some revision. Firstly, there is most often no simple way from the old (pagan) to the new (Christian) context. For a long time – at least to the period of maturity – converts will be commuting between the two contexts, and more often than not they will not move so far from the one to the other. Instead they will integrate elements from the old and the new into their new life. Secondly, it is hardly realistic to say that most converts come to a period of incorporation and end up as stable, 'mature' Church Christians who can stand up and be counted as

[13] Alan R. Tippett, 'Conversion as a Dynamic Process in Christian Mission'. *Missiology. An International Review*, (1977), Vol. V. No 2, p. 219.

such – which is what Church Growth people from Tippett's generation had in mind.[14]

In individual Christians, as in all types of churches, Christianity and culture are always mixed. There are no fixed criteria from which to tell when a person has eventually moved from a pagan to a Christian context. The modern father of church and nation in Denmark, *N.F.S. Grundtvig* (1783–1872), emphasized that *heathendom* means what comes *from the heath*, i.e. from something closer to God's creation than we are in modern life. He proudly stated: 'It has just struck me that there is still a lot of Heathendom in me.'[15] In the same way, a pagan is a *paganus*, literally somebody coming from the rural areas, where like everywhere else there is a lot of good life for new Christians to carry on with. Theologically speaking, what is truly human, carrying the mark of God's good creation, is already truly Christian, belonging to Christ, by and for whom it was created.[16]

The point here is that becoming as well as being Christian is a dynamic, never ending process. Not only for theological reasons but also for social and psychological reasons there may be a need for the new Christian to attempt to make a firm decision at some point – as did the prodigal son at a certain stage. Especially in areas where Christian-

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[14] The heuristic value of Tippett's model is still recognized by the newest interdisciplinary research in conversion, which has come up with much more complicated models, cf. e.g. Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1993), pp. 16–19 and 168–169. For Nordic readers, I refer to Mogens S. Mogensen and John H.M. Damsager (eds.), *Dansk Konversionsforskning* (Århus: Forlaget Univers 2007).

[15] *N.F.S. Grundtvigs Poetiske Skrifter udgivne af Svend Grundtvig* (6. del. Kbh. 1885), p. 486.

[16] Cf. chapter 5 and Hans Raun Iversen, *Grundtvig, folkekirke og mission. Praktisk teologiske vekselvirkninger* (København: Anis 2008).

ity is new, there may also be a need to stress that the conversion of the new Christian was completed at a certain point. In most situations this can be focused around baptism – or for those already baptized, around some sort of confirmation. However, the reality is that all Christians in all parts of the world continue to commute between various areas of culture and Christianity – for better or for worse. As Christians, but also as empirical churches, we are, along with Luther, at our best as mixed bodies, *simul justus et peccator.*

What, then, can the church do in the midst of this 'paganism'? It is not unnatural that it often attempts to control Christianity in order that it should not be mixed up with whatever else there is. This has often been the situation in the 'young' churches practising strict church disciplines – with a lot of problems in that respect. However, it is also often the case in modern secular settings that churchgoers have the feeling that 'heathen' people coming for the 'services' they need from the church leave just as heathen, as when they arrived. My best suggestion in this situation is the one the Catholic Maasai missionary *Vincent J. Donovan* ended up with. After a number of years as a church-centred missionary he was allowed to go out and talk about God with the Maasai people in their *bomas* (villages). He concluded that churches think that the problem is: What if the Gospel should fall into the hands of 'heathen' people? Instead, he says, the problem is that the church does not really dare to leave the gospel *with* the people and accept that the interpretation of the gospel depends on the people who hear it.[17]

On the background of an enormous amount of study of the history of Christianity in Africa, the missionary, bishop and professor *Bengt Sundkler* firmly stated that what we have is a 'Christian Movement in Africa', depending on

[17] Donovan 1982.

refugees, returnees, migrant workers, and all types of people being moved around, carrying the gospel – or parts of the gospel – in their hearts. Such people movements' were the primary missionaries in the vast continent of Africa. Secondary to them were missionaries sent from abroad. As Sundkler used to put it, the missionaries belong in the footnotes, they are ecumenical ambassadors, linking to the tradition of old Christianity. The primary advocates of Christianity were African people on the move. The *real* innovators, however, were the local people who accepted Christ into their lives.[18]

Another former missionary in Africa, *John V. Taylor*, in his missional studies of the Holy Spirit emphasizes that the Spirit of God is sent to the world God so loved. He expresses the point as follows: 'Our theology would improve if we thought more of the church being given to the Spirit than the Spirit being given to the church'.[19] This point is valid almost everywhere, but it may also lead astray, as was the case in the extreme secular folk church theology of the mid-20th century in Denmark, where the ideal was that there should be no church and no church people distinctive from the people of the nation as such: 'The goal is not that the people are incorporated in the congregation, but that the congregation disappears when it has brought the gospel to the people and they have received it'.[20] In an eschatological perspective, this may be a vision for the church. In a secular context such as the Danish one, it con-

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[18] Cf. chapter 8, point 7 and Bengt Sundkler, "African Church History in a New Key", Kirsten Holst Petersen (ed.) *Religion, Development and African Identity* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1987), pp. 73–84.

[19] John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God. The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press 1972).

[20] Pastor Kaj Thaning quoted in Hans Raun Iversen, *Ånd og livsform. Husliv, folkeliv og kirkeliv hos Grundtvig og sidenhen* (Århus: Forlaget Anis 1987), p. 201.

tributed chiefly to secularizing the church in line with the people.

Lesslie Newbigin[21] and his many followers have done a good job in challenging Western churches to become missional[22] – as I understand them, they argue more or less along the same lines as experienced missionaries such as Vincent J. Donovan, Bengt Sundkler and John V. Taylor. What we still need to emphasize is that it is not only the church that must be missional. Church members, formal members as well as informal sympathizers, must also be understood in a mission context – in similar ways as missiologists have understood the processes of conversion to Christianity in the non-Christian World.

A fluctuating Church focusing on 'Christ in us' will be more plural than the well-run congregation where all are supposed to belong in the same way to the very same body of Christ. 'Christ in us' churches may run the risk of going astray even more than 'we in Christ' churches. Whereas 'we in Christ' churches tend to be uniform, with little room for insights and practices from other denominations and traditions, 'Christ in us' churches have the chance to be more ecumenically open and comprehensive. Churches need open doors combined with a strong centre. To all Christians and churches, a decisive criterion for being in Christ and having Christ is expressed by David J. Bosch, quoting New Testament scholars Schottroff and Stegemann:

> Christians are ... not at liberty to talk about Jesus in any way they choose. They are challenged to speak about him from within the context of the

[21] See e.g. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 1986).

[22] Cf. e.g. Darrell Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsmans 2000).

> community of believers, 'the whole people of God', past and present.[23]

The job of the church is as clear as ever in a fluctuating culture. It is to tell the Christian story and to hold on to it. It is to offer many forms of fluctuating liturgies and Christian practices in which people can join in their own fluctuating ways.[24] It is to give people open opportunities to identify with Christ as he is presented and represented by the church. To become and be a Christian takes heads, hands and hearts, knowing, doing and being. The mission of the church is to create open arenas where Christ may indwell people so that they discover 'Christ in us' – perhaps leading to 'we in Christ'. In this way, our churches may follow the Pauline vision of the work of the church, where – while still looking through the mirror – there is nothing to be covered, as,

> the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of God, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17–18).

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[23] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books 1992), p. 22.
[24] Cf. Ward 2002:70 ff. and 87–98.

11. RITES FOR THE ORDINATION OF PASTORS AND BISHOPS IN THE EVANGELICAL-LUTHERAN CHURCH OF DENMARK: A COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVE[1]

There are two authorised ordination rites in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark (ELCD): one for the ordination of pastors and one for the ordination of bishops.[2] This is in itself a striking fact, which can to some extent be understood through the process of analysing the content of the rites.[3] A fuller understanding does, however, require knowledge of the historical background of the ordination rites as well as their ecclesiastical setting in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark.

This article first analyses the rites as they are printed and used as liturgical texts, according to the ELCD Ser-

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[1] First printing in Hans Raun Iversen (ed.): *Rites of Ordination and Commitment in the Churches of the Nordic Countries*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press 2006, p. 451-471. Where nonthing else is mentioned that references in this shapter is to that book.

[2] The Danish word used for ordination rites is '*vielse*', though the common word in everyday parlance is '*ordination*'. The word '*vielse*' is also used for marriage, whilst '*indvielse*' is used for the consecration of a new church or churchyard. The first rite after the Reformation used the word '*ordination*' – the word '*vielse*' was authorised only in the 1685 rite and has continued in use in subsequent rites.

[3] See Iversen 1989 for a discussion of the fact that no other ordination rites have been authorised in ELCD, though such rites have been used especially for deaconesses, deacons and missionaries for almost 150 years. One Liturgical Commission – the one that created the 1963 *Prøveritebogen* (the 'Proposed Service Book', which was never authorised) – had the idea that a rite for the ordination of deacons and deaconesses should be included in the Service Book. For the most recent development, see Malmgart (Part II.3 above).

vice Book in current use. Both rites were authorised on 6th of March 1987 and slightly revised for the 1992 Service Book. For the analysis of the textual content, the method agreed at the Farfa Consultation in April 1998 has been followed.[4] More light is then shed on the results of this first analysis by relating the current liturgies to the three previous pairs of ELCD rites (1537, 1685 and 1898), as ordination liturgies are strongly historically determined in ELCD.[5] Thirdly, the results of the first two analyses are related to the wider context of their theological and legal setting in the Danish Folk Church.

The specific question raised here is, 'What is being communicated to the congregation (and at a bishop's ordination, to the public, via television) during ordinations in ELCD? In order to introduce this perspective, two basic questions about the intention and communicative ability of rites are identified at the outset.

Understanding and Communicating Ordination Rites

It is a fair assumption to make that rites must be self-explanatory; the churches should be held responsible for the theology being communicated in their liturgies, for these liturgies, as texts and as ritual performances, are a vehicle for the communication of theology.[6] This is a

[4] 'Theology and Terminology of Ordination: a Research Project on the Authorisation of Rites and Procedures in the Nordic Churches', 1998, Consultation at Farfa 16-20 April, 1998 (unpublished material). See Part I.

[5] The best historical analysis of these rites is found in Eckerdal 1989. For the wider Lutheran context, see Puglisi 1998 (3-70), which includes an analysis of the Danish rite drawn up at the Reformation (30-39). For more detailed information on these developments, including proposals put forward at various times for new rites that were never authorised, see Lindhardt 1977.

[6] In the so called Snedsted pastors' trial the local as well as the regional court pronounced that the 'the rites of the Folk Church must

reasonable requirement even for churches such as the Lutheran Churches which do not subscribe to the *lex orandi lex credendi* principle. As ritual texts are meant for performance and not for reading, it is necessary to take into account not only what the texts say but also what they communicate by the way in which they are performed. The leading composite question for analysis is thus: Who is saying and doing what to whom within the rite, on behalf of whom, in which way and in which context? What are the results? With whom is the overall performance communicating? However, the question of communication is particularly complicated. An examination of the ELCD rites faces a double challenge to understanding for the following reasons.

In the first place it is obvious that the Liturgical Commission which finished its work in 1978, and to a lesser extent the bishops who revised the Commission's recommendations before the authorisation of the rites in 1987, did so very much as historians, who wanted to reconstruct and preserve the rites developed at the time of the Danish Reformation. That leaves us with the question of how far they succeeded in applying the intention of the Reformation rites to the situation of the Danish Church today, in order to ensure that the rites they were authorising did not simply repeat, with slight adjustments, what the reformers had said, without really communicating the Reformation theology in today's context. Or even worse: Are these rites, which are taken from a particular context, where the church was opposing sixteenth century Roman Catholic concepts of ordained ministry, communicating something entirely different from their original message in today's totally new situa-

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be seen as interpretations of its confessional basis', and 'the rites must be taken as valid, though not exclusive representatives of Evangelical-Lutheran positions' (Judgement in Thisted Byret 27.6.1996 and Judgement in Vestre Landsret 19.1.1999).

tion, where pastors are seen as civil servants who specialise in religious affairs and regarded as appointed to be religious caretakers and employees of the secular welfare state?

Secondly there is also a general question that must be asked about the ability of traditional rites to communicate to a congregation wider than a restricted number of trained theologians. In the theoretical debate on rites as means of communication, there are currently two major schools of research:

One school, whose representatives include Roy A. Rappaport, trusts rites to be able to pass on their own message, independent of the prejudice and for-understanding – or lack of relevant horizon – of the participants. The rites simply seem to work – as is definitely very often the case within ELCD on occasions such as baptisms, weddings and funerals. 'Although usage may not be faithful to it (the rite), that which is represented in liturgy is not fiction, and the performance does more than *remind* individuals of an undying order: it *establishes* that order' (Rappaport 1979, 197).

A second school argues that participants in rites understand and receive according to their own intentions, attitudes and concepts. Thus more participatory 'performative rites' may work even better than 'liturgical rites', where the primary concern is to have the rite correctly enacted (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 8-14). This is in fact the whole point of using rites in an often theologically ignorant folk church context: participants do receive and understand a lot, but they do so in their own ways, quite independently of the intention of the pastors and theologians who create the rites. On the other hand the rites are necessary, for without them folk church members cannot express the meaning and mark the transitions that they each in their own way experience in the rites. This is particularly so when those who are present

are themselves direct participants in the rite, as is the case with weddings and funerals, where the performance of the participants interacts directly with the fixed traditional rite, which the pastor represents (Rubow 2000, 45). A liturgical rite cannot communicate, if people attending it do not, as individuals, have the experience of being given an active part in the rite. The pastor's prayers are not directed to the same end as the lay people's prayers, if the experiences and situation of the lay people are not reflected in them. Thus the ordination rites are in a very difficult position, when placed in a folk church congregation.[7]

Present Danish Evangelical-Lutheran Ordination Rites as Text and Performance

The rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops are very similar. *The pastor's ordination* is part of a special evening service and can take place on any day of the week. It normally takes place in the cathedral of the diocese where the pastor has been called to serve in a particular parish, though it may also take place in another church, such as the new pastor's parish church. As there will normally be more than one candidate to be ordained

[7] Obviously empirical research would be needed to establish evidence of what the 1987 ordination rites communicate to a contemporary folk church congregation, to lay people gathering in the church to watch the ordination ceremony. No systematic, empirical research has been done so far. One observer reporting from the ordination of a bishop in Ribe in 1980 concluded: 'In fact I have the feeling that nobody knows why a bishop has to be ordained: he is probably first and foremost an administrator – a civil servant. If a few people think that this appointment is such an important thing, it could be done by shaking hands, signing and having a dinner for those in favour of that' (Ruge 1980, 63). If nothing else is conveyed here, at least the for-understanding of the reporter, as probably shared by most ELCD-members, seems very well expressed!

at the same service, and many of them have been called to temporary posts only, the ordination will most often take place in the cathedral as the central and 'neutral' place. *The bishop's ordination* is part of a normal Sunday Service (without Eucharist!)[8] in the cathedral of the diocese in which the new bishop has been elected to serve. All the pastors and church elders from the diocese attend and more than one hundred officials from all branches of society – first of whom is the Queen. As part of its 'public service', the national television network always transmits a bishop's ordination.

The Structure of the two Rites

The structure of the two rites is deliberately the same.[9] Parts at 10-16 and the parts printed in capitals at 1 and 6 below are added to the normal service and are specific to the ordination service:

1. Prelude WITH ENTRY PROCESSION
2. Layman's[10] entrance prayer
3. Entrance hymn from The Danish Hymnal (DDS).[11]
4. The greetings between officiating minister (always a pastor) and congregation
5. The entrance collect ('*kollekt*') by the officiating minister

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[8] Celebration of Eucharist has been included in the rite since 2008.

[9] The full text of the 1987 pastor's ordination in the Danish original version, arranged synoptically together with the previous rites of 1537, 1685 and 1898, is available from hri@teol.ku.dk.

[10] A custom found only in ELCD, where a lay person, in practice normally the 'clerk' ('kordegn'), says a prayer on behalf of all the laity.

[11] The numbers noted in the following refer to the 1953 edition of the Danish Hymnal.

6. Entrance scripture reading (1 COR. 3.3-8 OR EPH 4.1-13, ON THE HUMBLE AND GOD-GIVEN SERVICE OF MINISTERS IN THE CHURCH)
7. The Apostles' Creed (compulsory in normal Sunday Services in ELCD, only adopted as a compulsory part of the ordination service in 1987)
8. Hymn (DDS 248 or another Holy Spirit hymn for a pastor's and DDS 296 for a bishop's ordination)
9. Brief sermon by a pastor at a pastor's ordination only.
10. Presentation (announcement of the candidate for ordination)
11. Prayer from the pulpit for the ministry of those who are to become pastors/bishops.
12. Hymn (special for the occasion of ordination: DDS 294 (by Grundtvig) or 293 (by Kingo) for a pastor's and 248 (by Luther in Grundvig's version) for a bishop's ordination)
13. Sung ordination prayer: *Veni, sancte Spiritus* in Danish (sung antiphonally by bishop and congregation) or Latin (by bishop and choir)
14. Sermon from the altar by the bishop to the candidate(s)
15. Four readings from the Bible
a. Matt. 28.16-20 or John 20.21-23 (the sending of the disciples/the mission of ministers)
b. John 15.1-5 or John 15.12-16 or Matt. 10.24-27 (on Christ, his church and its servants)
c. 2 Cor. 5.14-21 or Eph 4.7-13 or 1 Cor. 4.1-5 or 2 Cor. 3.4-8 - or Phil. 2.5-11 for a bishop's ordination (on serving in Christ)
d. 2 Tim. 4.1-5 or Titus 1.5-9 or 1 Pet. 5.2-4 or Phil. 2.5-11 - or Acts 20.28-32 for a bishop's ordination (on leadership in the congregation)
16. The ordination
a. The bishop's exhortation about the ministry of a pastor/bishop

b. Promise by the candidate(s) – their affirmative response to the exhortation
c. The handshake between the candidate(s) and the bishop and those assisting him (at a bishop's ordination only between the candidate and the two bishops assisting; at a pastor's ordination normally including all those who had participated in the entry procession (at 1 above) and those who would be taking part in the laying-on of hands (16e below)
d. For a bishop's ordination only: presentation with an episcopal cloak and a cross
e. Ordination prayer concluding with the Lord's Prayer during the laying-on of hands
17. Hymn (DDS 246)
18. The service continues with the Eucharist, after a pastor's ordination, or with a sermon by the new bishop, after a bishop's ordination, at which there is no Eucharist (until 2007).

A. Trinitarian Perspectives

Classical Trinitarian formulae are used in all the three editions of the collect used in the service (at 5) and in the *Veni, sancte Spiritus* (at 13) – asking the Triune God to equip his Church with pastors and bishops. The collect (at 5) belongs to the Danish church tradition and the ordination prayer at 13 to the classical ordination tradition. If taken fully into account the rite is given a strong Trinitarian and epicletic introduction by the Grundtvig hymns (at 8 and 12) together with the *Veni, sancte Spiritus* – as context for the weaker *epiclesis* in the prayer during the laying-on of hands (at 16e).

B. Continuing the Work of Christ

The pastor is to be a 'faithful pious preacher' of the Gospel of Christ (at 5). So is the bishop (at 5), who is 'furthermore' to carry out supervision in the congregations (at 10). Otherwise it is left to the biblical texts and the hymns to say that the pastor or bishop who is being ordained is to carry on the work of Christ, following in his footsteps, and to specify how he is to do this. Bishop Henrik Christiansen, who was influential in the final arrangement of the order of the present four series of texts for the readings claims that the content and foundation (*'mandatum Dei'*) of the ordained ministry (*'ministerium ecclesiasticum'*) is fully expressed in the biblical readings, regardless of which texts are chosen for a particular ordination service (Christiansen 2003: 9).

C. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The *Veni, sancte Spiritus* (at 13) asks for the gift and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. In the prayer during the laying-on of hands (at16e) God is asked to strengthen the candidate(s) with the Holy Spirit for their ministry as workers for the harvest, preachers and stewards of the Gospel. There is, however, no mention of personal gifts of the Holy Spirit to be received by the person being ordained. The majority of the hymns (most of them written or translated by Grundtvig) invoke the Holy Spirit to strengthen and unify the Church.

D. Baptism and Ordination

In the rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops, there is no mention of baptism as the foundation, nor is the congregation mentioned or the pastors' and bishops' call to work with congregations. Baptism is mentioned only in the reading of Matt. 28.16-20, which is included

as a text about the task of pastors and bishops – not as a text on the common calling of all the baptised. Bishop Christiansen argues that Matt. 28 here is 'a full expression of how ordination is building on the covenant of baptism – as a ministry in, for and with the baptised and baptising people of God. In the context of ordination Matt. 28 stands significantly for baptism as the foundation and for the sending out – and thus for the content of the ministry to which ordination sends and equips' (Christiansen 2002, 6). However, it is rather questionable to what extent this interpretation is heard by anyone except the bishops who agreed that this was the meaning of Matt. 28 in this context.[12]

E. Relationship to the Congregation

Both texts for the entrance reading (at 6) mention the unity and disunity of the Church and about the role of leaders in relation to that. Both ordination prayers (at 13 and 16 e) emphasise that ministers exist for the benefit and growth of congregations. The four biblical readings (at15) also deal indirectly with the relationship between pastor/bishop and congregation/church. However, in neither of the two rites does the congregation appear as the body that elects, approves or receives the new pastor or bishop, not to speak of their participation in the ordination. It is furthermore questionable whether topics men-

[12] Bishop Christiansen defines ordination in ELCD as 'a divine service, in which the congregation and the representatives of the ordained ministry ('ministerium ecclesiasticum') – in ELCD the bishop – on behalf of the Church publicly confirm the pastor's election, which has been undertaken by the representatives of a congregation and, according to the present Folk Church order, recognised by the Ministry of Church Affairs. At the same time, it is made clear that the Bishop in question has tested and accepted the said person for ordained ministry in the Folk Church' (Christiansen 2003, 4).

tioned in the biblical readings and formal prayers are heard and understood at all, if they are not experienced in the direct wording and performance of the rite.

F. Concepts of the Church

The rites hardly make any distinction between the Church universal, the Lutheran Church and the local congregation. They seem to indicate that there is only one church – identical with the acting church, the Evangelical-Lutheran (Folk) Church of Denmark. In the presentation prayer from the pulpit the traditional mention of the congregation to which the new pastor has been called has been taken away to give a more open and ecumenical perspective on ordination (according to Christiansen 2002, 8).

G. Call and Confirmation

The rites emphatically state that a call has already taken place and they confirm it (see 10 and 16). This is clearly the case, even though the performance of these impressive rites and *expressis verbis* the first part of the ordination prayer (at 16e) indicate that the candidate is being created pastor/bishop during the rite! A significant difference between a pastor's and a bishop's ordination is that the candidate for pastor's ordination enters the church in his (newly bought) pastor's robe, the cassock, whereas the bishop enters in his (old) pastor's cassock.[13] The bishop is later dressed in the bishop's cassock and cross as part of the rite (at 16 d).[14] At a pastor's ordina-

[13] What cannot be seen by the congregation at a distance is that the new bishop's 'pastor's cassock' is in fact quite new, as the bishops wear velvet at the front of their cassocks!

[14] Bishop Christiansen refers to Grundtvig's strong emphasis on true ministry as a gift of the Holy Spirit – and Gospel, Creed, Bible

tion the common practice is for the pastor who is to be ordained to wear an alb over his black pastor's cassock. Quite a number of pastors testify to feeling that they fully become pastors only when they enter the church again, having taken off the alb during the hymn after the ordination (at17), even though the alb is taken off outside the church and not as part of the rite.

H. The Significance of the Laying-on of Hands with Prayer

The ceremony with the promise and handshake (at 16 b and c) may appear impressive. Even more impressive and thus – as it seems - the central point of the rite is the ordination prayer during the laying-on of hands by the bishop and the group of assistants (at 16 e). This can amount to a great number at a pastor's ordination, but only five at a bishop's ordination. The centrality of this is underlined by the repetition of 'Amen' after the concluding Lord's Prayer. The popular saying goes that the young theologian is made a pastor by having his backbone removed by the bishop and his assistants during their laying-on of hands. Something like this is indeed what this performance looks like, when watched from

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etc. as belonging to the congregation, which should therefore not be given to the pastor in particular. The pastor should only be given what he is given by the Holy Spirit, as only the Holy Spirit can install pastors in the Lord's flock (Christiansen 2002, 7). On the other hand Bishop Christiansen finds it very important that the bishops are given their special cloak and cross during their ordination to signify the responsibility of oversight which they have over and above the responsibility of a pastor (Christiansen 2002, 8). Therefore Bishop Christiansen took care to have this vesting of the bishops mentioned in the new 1987 rite. Since 1923 the Danish bishops have had a bishop's cross, but most of them have considered this cross to be a 'private' matter, even though is pertains to their office.

the congregation, though the theological content is about conferral of ministry and *epiclesis*.

I. The Effect of Ordination

There is no specific statement in the rite of any precise effect, such as sending, receiving or being authorised. However, the newly ordained leave the church together with and in the very same dress (without the alb) as their fellow pastors/bishops – indicating that the newly ordained person is now like his/her fellow ministers. This is particularly clear at a bishop's ordination, where the new bishop is vested in the episcopal cloak and receives the cross as the last part of the ordination rite (see 16d, cf. note 11).

J. The Apostolic Dimension

The rites strongly emphasise that ordination is following apostolic traditions and patterns (at 10, 13, 15, 16a and e). Since 1987 the Apostles' Creed has been included as a compulsory part (at 7) of the ordination rite, as is also the case for all Sunday services in ELCD, a development that followed Grundtvig's discovery of the Apostles' Creed as a 'word from the mouth of the Lord' (see below under L, The Promises). Bishop Christiansen finds that the apostolic dimension of ordination has its strongest emphasis in the many long hymns sung during ordination (Christiansen 2003, 14-15).

K. Subjects and participants

Strictly speaking only seven people are needed for a pastor's ordination: the bishop; a pastor as officiating minister of the ordinary parts of the service and the presentation (10 and 11); four assistant pastors (for 15 and 16c

and e), and the candidate(s). If the bishop so decides, all the pastors present, and even some representatives from the congregations involved, may participate at 1 and at 16c and 16e at a pastor's ordination. Normally all pastors participate in this way, but lay people – for example, representatives of the parish boards which have elected the new pastor(s) – participate on a regular basis in only a few of the dioceses.[15]

At a bishop's ordination several people are needed for the procession: the Bishop of Copenhagen, the dean of the cathedral as officiating minister of the ordinary parts of the service and for the presentation (at 10 and 11); all the area deans of the diocese; all the other bishops of the National Church; one bishop from each of the Nordic Lutheran Churches, and the bishop-elect. The readings (at 15) are normally done by four Nordic bishops, whereas only the two Danish bishops from neighbouring dioceses and the most senior and the most junior pastor of the diocese participate at 16c, d and e. To prevent the risk of the new Danish bishop being involved in (episcopal) *successio apostolica*, which ELCD does not believe in but nevertheless seems to be afraid of (Lindhardt 1977,46) no foreign bishop will ever lay hands on a bishop of ELCD (See note 20). The three Danish bishops are the only ones who participate in the part of the rite that takes place in front of the altar. In 1987 it was proposed that lay people should participate in the laying-on

[15] In the Diocese of Roskilde lay people's participation in the procession and the laying-on of hands has been normal practice since 1978. Bishop Christiansen considers that this goes against the Lutheran Confession according to which ordained ministry (*'Predigtamt', 'ministerium ecclesiasticum'*) is instituted by God (*Confessio Augustana* – hereafter CA – 5). The *rite vocatus* required according to CA 14 must not be confused with the delegation of the ministry from the lay people as their participation in the laying-on of hands may indicate (Christiansen 2002, 5).

of hands at the bishop's ordination, as was the case in the 1537 Church Ordinance (*De biskoppelige handlinger* 1978, 69, 80). However, this Danish tradition, which might have complicated the ecumenical situation even further, was not accepted by the bishops, when they completed the work on the present 1987 rite.

In both rites the congregation of lay people is present and participates in the ordinary parts of the service and in the singing of the many good and long hymns as has always been the case in ELCD services (cf. Iversen 2002). In the parts of the service that are specific to the ordination, the congregation is given the chance to join in the first 'Amen' after the ordination prayer together with the bishop ('All say "Amen" to this', at16e). In practice, only those who are standing very close to the bishop – mainly the pastors – will manage to join in this Amen. There is no other involvement on the part of the congregation in the central parts of the ordination rite.

L. The Promises

The content of the candidate's promise (at 16 a, b) is formulated following the traditional nineteenth century confessional Lutheran patterns. The bishop 'by virtue of [my] office' receives the promise. According to what is promised here at the ordination, the pastor's preaching is to be in accordance with the Word of God, as it is found in the Bible and to which the confessional documents of the Church 'witness'.[16] In the promise or oath (*'præsteløftet'*), which the pastor-to-be has to sign before ordination, the Word of God is said to be found equally in the Bible *and* in the confessional documents of the

[16] The Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, with the *Confessio Augustana* and Luther's *Small Catechism* form, equally, the confessional basis of the Danish Church since the Church Law of 1683.

Church. Under the influence of N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), this un-Lutheran formula, which from the time of orthodoxy (seventeenth century) replaced the oath to the King found in the 1537 Church Ordinance, was never revised. For Grundtvig it was important that the Apostles' Creed, as the universal baptismal creed of the Church, was formulated by Jesus himself and as such 'a word of God' even more than most of the Bible. This point of view has had a strong influence on Danish rites, where the Apostles' Creed, including the renunciation of Satan, is always used in all forms of liturgy. Later on the problems with liberal theology also hindered attempts to reformulate the hyper-confessional wording in the pastor's oath. This orthodox pastor's oath, however, never affected the promises made by the pastor in the ordination rite (in the 1898 rite the Word of God is said to be found only in 'the prophetic and apostolic writings': the confessional documents are not mentioned.) Thus the pastor even today gives two different and contrasting promises in the same process, an ecumenical-Lutheran one during the rite and another one, which may be understood in a narrow confessional way, before the ordination takes place (Harbsmeier 1989, 208f; Lindhardt 1977, 26, 42-47).

M. The Corporate Dimension

As processions are very rare in the Danish Folk Church,[17] it makes a very strong impression on the congregation to see the procession with all the pastors in black and the bishop at the head, or at a bishop's ordination all the bishops and deans with the Bishop of Copenhagen leading them. The ordination in front of the altar

[17] Apart from ordination the only other occasion when there would normally be a procession is the consecration (*'indvielse'*) of a new church.

with pastors (and bishops) crowding around it (perhaps with a few lay representatives, if it is a pastor's ordination) also leaves members of the congregation with the impression that they are passively observing a rite in which the fellowship of pastors or bishops is creating a new member of their special order – to which admission is gained by going through this distinct rite of incorporation into the body of ordained colleagues.

N. Entry into Spiritual Leadership

It is hard to see where the rite admits the candidate to any form of spiritual leadership – except as a preacher and guardian of the right Gospel in the Lutheran sense of that, as it is expressed in the pastor's promise and the prayers (at 11 and 16a-c and e). At a bishop's ordination the new bishop's sermon immediately after the ordination can be seen as a test or demonstration of his ability to lead the church by preaching the Gospel. The newly ordained pastor is – wisely? – not tested in the same way.

O. Differences between Rites for the Ordination of Pastors and Bishops

There are only small differences between the two rites even though each rite makes a quite different impression on the congregation.

The rite and the biblical texts are the same – except that there is the option at a bishop's ordination of reading Phil. 2.5-11 and Acts 20.28-32 (on Paul talking to the bishops in Ephesus). There is a difference, however, in that the one verse of the free Danish version of the ancient Trinitarian *Hymnus Angelicus*, later know as *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (*'Aleneste Gud i Himmerig'*, DDS

360) is sung by the congregation between the different readings at a bishop's ordination.

The hymns are almost the same at the ordination of pastors and bishops: DDS 296, Luther's hymn on the Word is used at a bishop's ordination, instead of DDS 294 or 293 used at pastors' ordinations, as the candidate to become bishop is already ordained pastor (at 8 and 12).

In the exhortation on the bishop's ministry it is emphasised that the bishop is still to be a servant of the Word but now 'furthermore' a supervisor of pastors and congregations. In the ordination prayer (at 16 e) the Holy Spirit is asked to 'form and enable' the bishop as well as the pastor for the new ministry. In 1898 the bishop was only to be 'enabled'! Eckerdal's interpretation is that there are now two types of ordained ministries in the Danish church (Eckerdal 1989, 58). According to the Liturgical Commission the correct understanding is, that 'form and enable' are equivalent symbolic expressions, and as the bishop is no more than the pastor the same expressions have to be used for both of them (*De biskoppelige handlinger* 1987, 67, 81).

Nowhere in the rite is it explicitly claimed that pastor or bishop receive authority in the church. The only trace of this is in the peculiar wording that appears in the ordination prayer (15 e). Of pastors it is said, 'we now according to your Word entrust them with the holy preacher's and pastor's office'; for a bishop there is a prayer for the person 'who is now being entrusted with a bishop's ministry in NN diocese'. This is what is left of the strong (feudal) words about delegation of office found in the 1685 rites and, in a rather weaker version, in the 1898 rites. It is peculiar that both these forms,

which were totally omitted by the Liturgical Commission, appear now in passing so to speak.[18]

It is also to be noted that the bishop is said to have a 'ministry' ('*tjeneste*') whereas the pastor has an 'office' ('*embede*', '*Amt*'), which the bishop of course already has!

The subjects of each rite, the participants and the whole setting of the services appear, however, quite different. This may be due to the vesting of the bishop, to which there is nothing similar for pastors, except the removal of the alb outside the church (normally in the vestry) after the ordination, and the new bishop's exercise of his authority by preaching immediately after his ordination. Moreover, for a bishop's ordination, there is the whole setting with the procession and a hundred high-ranking officials, including the Queen, at the front of the church.

Conclusion

[18] Bishop Christiansen has a very definite explanation, though, without prior explanation, it is hard to hear and understand this new wording in the ordination prayer in the way he does. According to Christiansen the little word 'now' in the short new sentence 1) expresses the *'institutum est'* of CA 5 (the newly ordained person is 'now' being entrusted with what God Himself has instituted); 2) indicates that now is the legal moment when the bishops and pastors pass on the order of ordained ministry to their new colleague, and 3) indicates that this is the moment when the Holy Spirit is being asked to equip the new pastor/bishop. In other words this little 'now' makes the whole rite instrumental in the classical way, as this is the exact moment when ordained status is being transferred – dogmatically, legally and by the Holy Spirit himself (Christiansen 2003, 8). This is obviously debatable, but even if the argument is accepted ELCD still needs to find other ways of including the lay congregation in the rite (cf. Puglisi, 2001, 230).

Apart from the biblical readings, the Apostles' Creed and the long theologically dense hymns, the Danish Evangelical-Lutheran rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops have preserved expressions of Trinitarian ordination theology in the prayers (at 5, 13 and 16e). In their performance the two rites are, however, basically forms for the masters (the ordained bishops and pastors) to introduce and authorise the disciples (the candidate(s) for ministry) to be like themselves. This is done according to what is emphatically called 'apostolic tradition', while the congregation looks on and does practically nothing during the ordination as such. Only at a later stage at a Sunday morning service in the local congregation – at the installation – the pastor is introduced and recommended to the congregation by the area dean on behalf of the bishop – and thus received by the congregation. (There is no such installation for the bishop, as he is ordained in the cathedral of the diocese where he is to serve.)

In particular, the handshake after the promise made by the pastor/bishop to be ordained clearly communicates the message that ordination is enrolment into the club of pastors/bishops. Interestingly this is the part of the rites that has caused most of the problems at the ordination of women, when conservative male pastors, who have participated in the rite as supporters of conservative ordinands, have refused to shake hands with the female pastors ordained during the same service. As the state and/or God, who has entrusted the pastor with his/her office, is not visibly present and participating and as it would be too much like 'episcopalism' if the ordaining bishop were the only one shaking hands with the candidates, the whole group of ordained ministers present receives the new minister by shaking hands with him/her. This is of course a nice gesture – especially when everybody shakes hands with everybody else – but it is hard to

see that it has a proper place at the centre of the ordination rite. It seems that this habit, which has been interpreted as a sort of 'democratisation' of the handshake with the bishop only, is unique to ELCD tradition. What is intended as a democratisation within the clergy group in fact looks like an introduction into the clergy club.

The Current Rites against the Background of previous Danish Ordination Rites

In the 1537 Church Ordinance ordination is called a 'custom', that is, a ceremony only (*'Inthet andet end én skick vdi Kircken'*). A great deal of emphasis is placed on the process of praying for, electing, testing and calling the new pastor. The act of ordination itself is what Eckerdal calls 'an act of prayer by the church' (Eckerdal 1989, 20). The text repeats that everything must be said in a loud voice, so that the people can hear what is going on, and that the bishop and the congregation must be close enough to one another for the congregation to see what is going on. The rite is found in two closely related forms, one for pastors and one for bishops, of which the rite for the ordination of a bishop is the oldest known from an Evangelical-Lutheran church. Generally speaking the 1537 rite is close to that of 1987 – as the latter is deliberately constructed as its modern parallel. Unlike Luther's rite both of the 1537 rites include a promise (a vow to the king to be sworn by the candidate(s) before the ordination in the church); the handshake is included in the bishop's ordination only but was officially introduced in 1685 for pastors also. According to the text on the ordination of a bishop, elders (lay people) (may) participate in the laying-on of hands. There is no mention of this at the pastor's ordination, and it is not found in the 1685 rite.

The 1685 Rite transformed the ordination rite into what Eckerdal calls 'an act of feudal delegation (endowment)' (Eckerdal 1989, 21). Partly influenced by the recovery of feudalism during the time of absolute monarchy (from 1660) and partly due to Anglican influence the act of delegation (or conferral of office by the bishop to his vassal, the candidate), was developed and made the central part of the rite. The oath to the ordaining bishop with the subsequent handshake has taken the place of election by, sending to and reception into the congregation, as found in the 1537 rite. The congregation is no longer supposed to do anything but pray at a distance – not as a part of the rite of ordination. Even the 'Amen' after the ordination prayer is only to be said by the clergy – and the second 'Amen' by the bishop alone.

T*he 1898 ordination rite* represents a compromise between the two former rites. The act of delegation is still strong but the ordination prayer during the laying-on of hands has returned, with significantly epicletic wording. A revealing part of the bishop's ordination – also typical of its time – is the fact that the bishops celebrate the Eucharist with one another – while the congregation watches but is not invited to participate.

In the latter part of the twentieth century the act of delegation was severely attacked, not least by the official Liturgy Commission[19], which was itself vigorously attacked, particularly by Professor Regin Prenter and the high church movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Prenter 1980; Glenthøj 1992). Against that background the bishops – as they took over and completed the 1987 rite - were mainly concerned about the Liturgical Commission's recommendations that ELCD should return to the good old pattern of 1537. At the same time they secured a form of endowment or 'entrustment' with *'potestas'*,

[19] This criticism is the most dominant idea in *De biskoppelige handlinger* 1978.

mentioning it in the introduction to the ordination prayer (16e), thereby also placating the protesting high church pastors.[20] Consequently the bishops did not take much time to consider the theological content of the rite or the role of the congregation in the act of ordination. Nor did they consider the ecumenical texts on the ordained ministry such as the BEM document. Against this – briefly described – historical liturgical background the ELCD ordination rite ceased to be a feudal giving and receiving of authority between bishop and candidate and became a collegial incorporation of a new member into the fellowship (the *ordo*) of the clergy.

Apart from the significant rewording of the introduction to the ordination prayer the bishops did not change much of the recommendations made by the 1978 liturgical commission before they had the new rite authorised in 1987. The number of collects to choose from was cut down from seven to three (at 5), and the number of Epistle texts from four to two (at 6). The order of the texts for the four readings was changed, so that none of the four basic topics mentioned in brackets (at 15) could be omitted. Only one text, Matt. 7.7-11, which seems to have been suggested because Luther used it for his baptismal rite (!), has been omitted. The bishops did not accept the Commission's recommendation that a bishop's ordination should end with the Eucharist. They knew that it would be impractical (and unpleasant for the many high ranking guests) to have the big congregation included in a Eucharist with all the state and church officials[21]. In the exhortation for the new bishop the commission suggested, that the new bishop should 'take care of himself and his entrusted work', but the bishops returned to the old wording and the 1987 rite says that the

[20] Cf. Bishop Christiansen's interpretation, mentioned above.

[21] Eventually this was solved in 2008 by the help of different stations for distribution in the church.

new bishop shall 'take care of himself and for the congregation, with which he has been entrusted'. The bishops also returned to the traditional wording of the epicletic prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit for the new bishop, in the prayer during the laying-on of hands. Again here the Liturgical Commission was so eager to emphasise that nothing new was really being added to the pastor's ordination when the pastor was ordained bishop, that it omitted the classical *epiclesis* in its recommendation for the prayer during the laying-on of hands at the bishop's ordination.

Eckerdal emphasises that the new rite is a congregational rite (Eckerdal 1989, 57). Ostensibly a place has been given to lay people and the clerical act of delegation has been removed. However, in practice the members of the congregation are only present as a context in which the ordination takes place. They are there as they are at the traditional Danish Sunday Service: it takes a lot of good will to see the congregation as the subject of what is going on, as the singing of the many long hymns is almost the only part in which the congregation is actively involved in the rite (and even that part is sometimes taken over by professional choirs).

The Ecclesiastical Setting of the Present Rites

The Folk Church in Denmark (ELCD) is very much a state church. The so-called folk church dimension is, however, evident at the congregational level. This is the case in as far as the congregation boards elect the pastors and bishops – practically without interference from church or state authorities. When the congregations have elected them the pastors and bishops are, however, formally government civil servants employed by the state Ministry for Church Affairs.

Paragraph 37 of the law that governs congregation boards reads: 'When exercising his duties of office, including the care of souls, the pastor is independent of the congregation board'. This paragraph – inserted as a compromise to silence the pastors when legislation was first introduced to create permanent congregation boards in all parishes in 1912 – is still a cornerstone in the self-understanding of the majority of pastors in the Folk Church of Denmark, even though, to a very large extent, it is in practice meaningless, as pastors have to co-operate with the congregation boards in almost every part of their work, according to other parts of the church legislation and practice.

It is significant to note that the Liturgical Commission began its 1978 recommendations on the rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops with a long historical analysis of the development of the Danish rites. There is no mention whatsoever of a biblical perspective on ordination. The report begins with a historical description (by Professor P. G. Lindhardt) written in a historically and ecumenically ignorant vein:

> There is no need to take account of the Catholic rites for the ordination of bishops and pastors, which we know from the late medieval Pontificals of Lund and Roskilde. In all respects the ceremonies they contain, which reflect the Roman understanding of sacramental rites (with the ordination of bishops as the superior rite) are so different from the Evangelical ordinations that there is no conceivable reason to compare them.[22]

[22] Cf. e.g. Smith 2002, who argues convincingly that there was continuity between the medieval and the early Reformation Church on matters of ordination and public ministry.

A great deal of historical work, of varied worth, was covered in what follows in Lindhardt's introductory article but the result is a foregone conclusion. It is to be found in the brief comments on the recommendation for a new rite. As the first rites from the time of the Reformation were not known in authorised texts, the Commission 'found it most proper as a point of departure to take the ordination rites for pastors and bishops, as found in 'The Right Ordinance' of 1537/1539'. Further it emphasised that both of these rites are 'congregational'. Therefore the new rites have to be formed in such a manner 'that it is clear that the pastor or bishop to be ordained has already received his/her calling by the election of the congregation and the appointment by state authority' (p. 48).[23]

[23] This position was decisive in the Danish debate on the Porvoo Common Statement, and the refusal of the Danish Evangelical-Lutheran bishops to join its proposed Lutheran-Anglican fellowship in the 1990s. Episcopal succession was removed from the Danish Church at the time of the Reformation, when new Danish bishops were ordained by Pastor Johannes Bugenhagen, Luther's delegate to Copenhagen. As in the Liturgical Commission the most influential point of view in the Danish Church among theologians, is still that ordination is primarily a public celebration of the calling of a pastor or bishop, which has already taken place (cf. note 10). It is therefore not necessary that it is a bishop – still less a bishop with apostolic succession – who ordains a new pastor or for that matter a new bishop. The major point – on the part of the theologians – in the Danish attack against the Porvoo Statement was the statement's teaching on the threefold ministry, and thus the superiority of the bishop's ministry. Apart from lack of understanding of the statement itself, the main attitude taken by the lay people in the congregation boards, who also tended to be negative to the statement, seems to have been resistance to the actual power of bishops (and pastors). When the theologians said that the bishops were going to be more powerful, if the church signed the Porvoo Statement, the lay people had no option, as they feel that bishops

The present rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops together with the lack of other official ordination rites in the Folk Church of Denmark, reflects - and reinforces - the precarious balance of power between state, clergy and congregation. At the same time they show a rigid – theologically rather unreflected – use of the confessional doctrines in CA §§ 5 and 14. The congregation board members, whose involvement in the ordination service is rather passive, have already played their decisive part, as they are sovereign in electing pastors and bishops by voting – and thus they have secured the 'rite vocate' of CA 14. This reflects a well-known division of labour in the folk church: lay people pay the bill and make the most powerful decisions. The rest – including the rite – is left to the clergy. The old formula 'pay, pray and obey' has been changed to 'pay, elect the pastors/bishops according to your democratic choice, and let them be ordained by their fellow pastors/bishops to do the rest of the job together with their fellow pastors/bishops'.

Ole Bertelsen, when Bishop of Copenhagen, began his sermon at the ordination of Bishop Herluf Eriksen on 25th May 1979 as follows:

> Let me be frank and begin by asking in the midst of this congregational gathering. Is it not too grandiose and stately to make a person take up his work in such a gathering? What sort of sense is there in this? And how suitable is it? Of course, we do not need to pay attention to how far this is in accordance with the time we happen to live in, but we cannot avoid wondering if this is in accordance with the main purpose of

(and pastors) are already too powerful in the church (cf. Lodberg 2002).

> the Christian Congregation: the Gospel of Christ, crucified and risen! In my opinion we should not be too serious in this respect. The word seriousness is not found in the New Testament – This book is full of words like joy, peace, power, life, hope, love.... We are having a feast today. We are admitting a bishop to continue his service in the dynamic message of joy... (Bertelsen 1980, 12).

Three out of six of Bishop Bertelsen's published sermons at bishops' ordinations begin by defending the rite (Bertelsen 1980). The Bishop is not trying to explain the meaning of the actual rite, but pointing out that after all, in the light of the Gospel, the performance of the rite is not very important. He is, however, revealing that he himself is not at all at ease having to lead such a grandiose ceremony, which is not easily connected to the Gospel which the Church is here to proclaim. However, the bishop also has to obey and follow the rites as the state is paying him to do.

Conclusion

The Danish Evangelical-Lutheran rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops have much valuable theological content. However, the hard questions this analysis raises are these:

How can ELCD practice *lex orandi lex credendi* in any sense if only the bishops who made the compromises leading to the present ordination rites, have the right understanding of what is going on during the ordination service? Probably it cannot.

Are the1987 rites for the ordination of pastors and bishops an example of a tradition (of 1537) being surrendered and betrayed instead of being transmitted (cf. Puglisi 2001, 280)? Did the Liturgical Commission and the bishops succeed in re-introducing the 1537 rite (the actual performance of which we know very little about), or did they create a splendid new and very different rite by putting something similar to the 1537 rite into the totally different context of the late twentieth century? The latter would seem to be the case.

How can we expect the congregation to understand and appreciate the ritual enactment of a rite with which the ordaining bishop himself is not at all at ease? We probably cannot.

The Liturgical Commissions and the bishops at no time analysed the differences between the Reformation situation – in which a new rite had to legitimise a new Lutheran Church after the break from the old Roman Catholic Church – and today's situation in Denmark, where the state church tradition is so strong that whatever is said is heard within that framework. A congregational rite cannot be created today simply by devising a rite that is anti-Catholic. It would have to be an anti-State-Church rite – and not a rite that seems to fit hand-in-glove into the modern state church practice, where the pastors act as a group of civil servants.

It is legitimate, though not necessarily theologically sufficient, to wish to articulate today what the Reformers articulated in their day, but if what is to be communicated is also to be understood, this can hardly be done by repeating now a rite that is almost 500 years old.

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12. THEOLOGICAL AND LITURGICAL CONSIDERATIONS BEHIND RESEARCH ON RITES FOR ORDINATION AND COMMITMENT

This book[1] provides rich material and a wide variety of approaches to the theology and terminology of rites of ordination and commitment in the churches in the Nordic countries, despite the limitations identified in the introduction. It therefore also offers the editor a great many issues for final consideration and conclusion. In an attempt to limit and organise the scope, I have taken as the point of departure for these concluding observations six basic questions that relate to the research that has been undertaken:

1. How is ordination related to God – seen as a work of God?
2. What is the relationship between baptism and ordination – as a reflection of the relationship between congregation and minister?
3. How is the relationship between congregation and minister expressed in lay participation in rites of ordination?
4. How is the relationship between various ministers in the church expressed in the various rites of ordination and installation to a range of ministries in the church?
5. How does the process of admission to ordained ministry reflect the understanding of oversight (*episkopé*)?

[1] This is the concluding chapter from the studies published in Hans Raun Iversen (ed.): *Rites of Ordination and Commitment in the Churches of the Nordic Countries*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press 2006. Where nonthing else is mentioned that references in this chapter is to that book.

6. What are the diversities and convergences in the ordination rites and the understanding of liturgy in the Nordic Churches?

The Trinitarian Foundation of Ordination

Most ordination rites repeatedly mention, address, invoke, praise and pray to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. On the surface at least, they seem to operate with a balanced Trinitarian theology. The role of the Trinity in ordination and liturgy is, however, not primarily one of correct dogmatic teaching. A dynamic understanding of God working in a Trinitarian way is essential, if ordination is to be a theological and not only a legal or communicative act in the churches. Referring to J. D. Zizioulas, James F. Puglisi emphasizes that

> Christ... is only present in the world in and through the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament this affirmation is so essential, that the incarnation itself of Christ is inconceivable without the work of the Spirit (Luke 1.35). We can christologically conceive of ministry only in the context of pneumatology and this finally leads to the involvement of the whole Trinity. The ministry of the Church cannot be reduced to anything less than the action and involvement of God in history since the beginning (Puglisi 1996, 202f).

As we know from the story of the first Pentecost, after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the Kingdom of God, God's own *eschaton*, is made present among us in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, however, always calls the receivers of the Spirit together as a new

People of God, gathering it as a baptismal and eucharistic communion – and thus proclaiming in word and deed, and in the form of its presence, the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is within – and only within – this communion that ordination for ministry in the service of God as known from Jesus Christ can take place and ordained ministers are to work.

For an ordained minister to be participating in the work of Christ – and not limiting him/herself to being a steward of practical matters within the church – it is essential that the fellowship expressed during the laying-on of hands at ordination is focused in the epicletic prayer to the Holy Spirit to equip the minister-to-be. Whoever voices the epicletic prayer, theologically speaking the core of ordination should be, but is not always, the prayer by the whole congregation for the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the specific ministry, which is now being handed over to the one being ordained. As a fully theological act, ordination cannot be celebrated without the congregation believing and expressing the belief that admission to the ordained ministry is basically the work of the Holy Spirit.[2] Only in this way can the Church see itself – and live as – a Trinitarian reality, a community with its ministers, and a community that is the body of Christ. Upheld by the work of the Holy Trinity, the Church is a communion which must reflect the communitarian being of that same Trinity. This is essential whenever the Church is proclaiming the Gospel or being rebuilt in celebration of baptism, Eucharist – or ordination (cf. Puglisi 2001, 245, 285-8). If we accept that there is

[2] Volf puts the point in this way: '...the church needs the vivifying presence of the Spirit of God, and without this presence, even a church with a decentralised participative structure and culture will become sterile, and perhaps more sterile even than a hierarchical church...Only the person who lives from the spirit of communion (2 Cor. 13.13) can participate authentically in the life of the ecclesial Community' (Volf 1998, 257).

participatory knowledge in liturgy, ordination is not about looking at things, but about dwelling in them, not about handling the Trinity, but about being immersed in it.[3]

Church and Minister: Baptism and Ordination

It is only too easy to make the priesthood of ordained believers overshadow the priesthood of all baptized believers. Among others the Lutheran Reformers reacted to this tendency emphasizing that over against God and human beings (*'coram Deo et coram hominibus'*), ordained ministers have no special status at all. They only have special functions within the congregation among sisters and brothers (*'in ecclesia pro fratibus'*, Puglisi 1998, 163-167).

Baptism implies commitment to service and mission. Salvation received by baptism and faith is always to be shared with others. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God can never be narrowed down to a private concern for the individual baptized Christian. Understanding what Christianity is all about, every baptized Christian must be a pastor to fellow Christians as well as a deacon to those in need and a missionary to non-Christian neighbours. That baptized Christians must be servants to everyone does not, however, mean that everyone should always do everything to everyone else at the same time. The gifts are differentiated and so the functions must be in any congregation. It is not everybody who is gifted to be a cross-cultural missionary! Nor is everybody gifted and educated to be called to perform pastoral care, public preaching or ministry of oversight. To make sure, that such important functions as these are carried out, the Church calls, ordains and installs specific ministers to take leadership in these functions. Ordination for a specific function is primarily to be understood as a congregational prayer for the person to be

[3] Cf. Jussila (Part III.2).

equipped for the specific ministry and by no means as 'a second baptism' placing the ordained person at a different level compared to other baptized Christians.

How is the interrelationship between baptism and ordination being handled in ordination rites – and for that matter in baptismal rites in the Nordic churches? The answer, in brief, is that the relationship between the theology of baptism and the theology of ordination is only rarely mirrored in the rites examined. It is most striking that, although the Nordic Baptist Churches practise believers' baptism, the relationship between baptism and ordination is not reflected in their ordination rite, nor is it in their baptismal rites, according to Bent Hylleberg's study (Part II.5). Historically, in Hylleberg's view, confirmation and ordination, and also monastic professions, have often been practiced as a sort of 'second baptism'. This is hardly the case in Nordic rites for perpetual commitment to religious life as analysed by Else-Britt Nilsen (Part II.4). On the contrary it seems that, of all Nordic rites, these rites, when examined, are seen to be most clearly building on baptism as the basis of perpetual Christian commitment. Another rather isolated example of an explicit relationship to baptism is found in the different ordination rites in the Church of Norway, where – after having introduced the 'new worker' to be ordained – the rite continues: 'In baptism we were incorporated into the people of God, and we were all 'ordained' (*'vigslet'*) to be ministers (or 'servants', *'tjenere'*) for God'. After referring to the teaching on the priesthood of all believers in 1 Peter, the rite continues almost literally quoting *Confessio Augustana (CA)* V: 'God has also instituted a specific ministry to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments, so that we can share in saving faith and be preserved in this faith'[4] In other

[4] Cf. Fjeld on the Lutheran Churches in Norway, in his first article, and on the United Methodist Church in Norway, in his second article (Part II.4).

churches – such as the free Grundtvigian congregations in Denmark, which emphasize baptism as 'the one thing needful', ordination nevertheless seems to be conducted without any reference at all to baptism.[5]

It is highly questionable whether the relationship between congregation and minister can ever be clarified theologically without a clear expression of the relationship between baptism and ordination. This is needed not least in the wording of the ordination rites. In these rites, where the theological identity and responsibility of the participating clergy is most often clearly expressed, lay people are left as observers or even as consumers if the rites do not emphasize the common ministry of all baptized in the midst of whom – and for the building up of whom – ministers are being ordained. Equally important – or even more important – is the question of how lay people take responsibility in the process of admission to ordained ministry.

Church and Minister: The Role of Lay People in the Ordination Rite

The relationship between ordained ministers, their local congregations and the wider Church is crucial in all ordination rites. The relationship may be articulated in different ways in various parts of the rites.

As an ordained minister is always a servant within the community of believers he or she must also be elected and called by the laity of the relevant congregation, or at least with their consent. The *Traditio Apostolica* from the beginning of the third century clearly states that the bishop to be ordained shall be one who has been chosen 'by all the people' (Puglisi 1996, 18f.). The theological reason for this dependency of the ordained ministers on the community of laity tends, however, to be neglected or rather

[5] Cf. Jørgensen (Part II.5).

transformed into a certain degree of legal influence by lay leaders in congregations, during the process of admission to ordained ministry. This has often been the consequence of the Lutheran viewpoint that what matters is that the one to be ordained is called in an orderly manner (*rite vocatus*, as stated in *CA* XIV). Such a call to ministry can easily be extended, just as the minister can be examined by proper authorities before the ordination, in such a way that there seems to be no reason why the laity's participation in the election should be expressed in the ordination liturgy, since the election is over. The fact that 'so and so' has been called is thus only announced in legal terms at the beginning of the ordination rite, and there is no place left for the laity present at the ordination to consent by confirming that the candidate (as the called or elect person is now usually termed) is 'worthy' (Greek '*axios*', Latin '*dignus*') as is still the case at ordinations in the Orthodox Church.[6]

Another explicit way of including the laity in ordination is by their participation in the processions and the laying-on of hands during the decisive epicletic prayer, which has been introduced as a possibility in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark, though some bishops do not accept the participation of laity in the process of ordaining a person to a ministry which has, as CA V says, been instituted by God.[7] Church leaders claim that the laity present at ordination of course 'participate in the liturgy', as lay people can join in singing the hymns and spiritually, though most often silently, in the saying of the creed and the prayers, and at least they watch and listen to the liturgy

[6] See Metropolitan Johannes (Part II.1) and White (Part III.1). Volf emphasizes that 'ordination is to be understood as *a public reception of charisma given by God and focused on the local church as a whole*. . . Ordination is essentially a divine-human act' (Volf 1998, 249).

[7] Cf. Iversen (Part II.6).

as it is being performed by the bishop and his assisting pastors. The reality of this participation depends on the practical scenario in the church, where the laity will often be placed far away from the clergy at the altar – and where the creed and the prayers are often said in a manner so that the laity – without a written order of service to hand – have no chance of joining in what is supposed to be their own creed and prayers!

The communion between laity and clergy has its basic expression in the Eucharist, which has therefore also been a part of all ancient ordination liturgies. It is, however, not always so any longer, for example in the Lutheran Churches in Norway and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark.[8] It is hard to see how the true relational (i.e. theological and congregational) character of ordained ministry can be expressed without the context of the Eucharist as the decisive common meal for common strength from God (Puglisi 2001, 251, 262).

Eventually the interdependence between the ordained ministers and the congregation of laity may be expressed in the last part of the ordination rite when it moves from '*electio*' and '*benedictio/ordinatio*' to '*missio/receptio*'. In a number of Nordic ordination rites the '*missio/ receptio*' part is, however, missing, probably often due to the fact that the ordination takes place in the cathedral, where the congregation of the pastor-to-be may be absent. The '*missio/receptio*' part is thus only and often very weakly expressed in the short rite at the installation of the pastor by the area dean the following Sunday in the local church. Thus it is not clarified in the ordination rite that the calling and ordination is being done so that the newly ordained minister may be sent to and received for work in a particular congregation. The result of this – or rather the background of this – is a *clericalization* of the ordained minis-

[8] Cf. Fjeld and Iversen (Parts II.4 and II.6).

try as a special profession, where ordained ministry is to be exercised to – but not having its identity within - the congregation (Puglisi 2001, 242).

The practice of ordaining pastors, for example, in diocesan cathedrals and not in the local churches of the congregations where they are to serve, is among other things often used to express the idea that ordained ministry is for the whole church – and that ordination is for life-long service, independent of the congregation, which the pastor is actually serving during his or her time as an ordained minister at work. Also representatives of other neighbouring churches may participate in the ordination, for example at a bishop's ordination, in order to express the idea that ordained ministry is for the service of the whole church and that it is important and valid for service also in other churches. Such participation is of course only meaningful when the participants come from churches with some agreed mutual recognition of ordained ministries.

Unfortunately the material collected in this book does not deal with the various practices of reception with or without re-ordination of ordained ministers who go from one church to another and are invited to resume ordained ministry in another church, as often happens in the Nordic countries. It seems an obvious issue for exploration – in order to challenge the churches about their – as it is seems – theologically poorly thought-out practice on this point.[9]

Relationship between Ministries

[9] Volf comments as follows: 'Certainly a previous ordination in a local church will be of significance for a different local church into which the ordained person is transferred, and it will be the more so the more intimate is the communion between the local churches involved' (Volf 1998: 251).

Relationships between different sorts of ordained ministries are expressed in the way the rites for their ordinations converge or differ. This is the case in different respects.

In most churches only the bishop (or his equivalent) can officiate at the liturgy of ordination. This seems to indicate that for theological reasons the bishop has the supreme ministry among ordained ministers, as is also clearly demonstrated in the oldest available ordination rite, *Traditio Apostolica,* ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome.[10] Even so some churches argue that the bishop's role when officiating at the liturgy of ordination to other ministries is only following practical and functional church order, not expressing any theologically founded priority among ordained ministries.

The question of which ordained ministers participate in the various rites for ordination of candidates to different sorts of ordained ministries also seems significant. As a general rule, for example, pastors will participate actively or even officiate at the ordination of deacons, whereas deacons, as a general rule, will have no active role, except perhaps as a personal assistant to the bishop, during the ordination of pastors, where pastors are always actively involved. This seems to indicate that deacons do not belong to a full and equal order of the ordained ministry of the Church.

There are often significant differences in the order and not least the wording and the symbols used in the different liturgies. Certain acts such as praying during the laying-on of hands may be omitted in rites that admit the candidate

[10] Cf. the interpretation in Puglisi 1996, 27-85 concluding that in *Traditio Apostolica* the real meaning of Christian *fraternitas* is clear: Christians are 'members of the same dignity, yes, but differentiated according to the various functions in the Body. However, despite these functional and ministerial differences, all share, in solidarity, the overall responsibility for the life of the community' (85).

to a 'minor' or less recognized ministry in the Church. The different sorts of vestments worn during the ordination rites often seem to indicate not only the different function but also the different positions of the various ministries.

The unity or disunity among ordained ministers is furthermore indicated in the normal practice of re-ordaining deacons, who take over the work of a pastor, or pastors, who take over the duties of a bishop. In Lutheran Churches which emphasize that there is only one ordained ministry ('*ministerium ecclesiasticum*' as the Latin rubric to art. V in CA names it) one might expect that missionaries, who have been sent out from a certain church to preach and sometimes even to administer the sacraments in a 'mission field', could take over the work of a pastor in the home church in question without a new ordination. 'Re-ordination' has, however, normally been practiced, when a missionary 'pastor' returns and takes up a pastor's duties in his home church. In recent years the problem has often been eliminated when a missionary with pastor's duties has received his ordination from the local church in the 'mission field', which will then be recognized by the church at home. It is however noteworthy that Ghita Olsen finds that emphasis on 'the threefold ministry' tends to degrade the rites for the sending out of missionaries from the Nordic Churches. There is an obvious need to rethink the relationship between ordained ministry and mission work proper.[11]

A basic requirement for all ministries with all kinds of 'ordination' in the Christian Church is that they are apostolic, carrying on the message and practice which the first apostles learned from Jesus of Nazareth. As there is only one Jesus whose apostolic tradition can be carried on, all ministers have to work corporately, sharing one and the

[11] The question is dealt with in the context of ELCD in Iversen 1989, 65-117. A new study of rites for the sending out of missionaries is provided in Olsen (Part II.5).

same apostolic ministry, even though they have different shares in that one ministry. Eventually this also means that no minister in any church can renounce his or her basic communion with all sorts of ministers in all Christian Churches, without denying that these ministers belong to the apostolic tradition of the one Christian Church.

Episkopé and Ordination

It is no accident that the issue in *The Porvoo Common Statement* that has been the trickiest for the studies in this book is the question of episcopacy or *episkopé* in its relation to lay people, orders and the act of ordination. As we have seen in the case studies in Part II above most churches in the Nordic countries try to express the connection between *episkopé* and ordination in one way or another. Therefore the question of the relationship between episcopacy and ordination must be dealt with explicitly. What is the significance of the role of the bishop in the ordination rite? And what are the criteria for a bishop to be a proper bishop, in as far as such a position is found to be needed in the Church?

The lessons from the ecumenical dialogues leave us with no doubt that there can be no ecclesial communion without eucharistic communion – and that, according to the standpoint of the Roman Catholic Church, for example, there can be no eucharistic communion without recognition of the 'sacrament of orders' – that is, bishops seen as successors of the apostles according to divine institution.[12] Thus the questions of the role and kind of bishops, who officiate at ordination in our churches, remain core questions

[12] Cf. Sullivan 2001. Cf. also the contributions by Puglisi and Tjørhom (Part III.1). Puglisi (1996) discusses at length the development of episcopacy, as reflected in early ordination liturgies, during the struggle of the early Church for survival at times of persecution and heresy.

when dealing with the ecumenical relations between churches. At the same time – and no less important – leadership as expressed by ordination is a crucial question within each of our churches. It is an important instrument and a signal of how the churches care for and express authorized ministry and true Christian teaching within their own traditions.

There is no such thing as a simple historical succession from the apostles of Jesus to the bishops (and pope) of our churches today. It may however be argued, as the Roman Catholic Church does, that sound theological reflection leads to the acceptance of the episcopal ministry as an order which has developed in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit – in the same way as Protestants believe that the biblical Canon came about by the work of the Holy Spirit. Francis A. Sullivan divides his argument for the Roman Catholic view into three parts:

> 1. The post-New Testament development (in terms of ministerial orders) is consistent with the development that took place during the New Testament period.
> 2. The episcopate provided the instrument that the post-New Testament Church needed to maintain its unity and orthodoxy in the face of the dangers of schism and heresy threatening it.[13]
> 3. The Christian faithful recognized the bishops as the successors to the apostles in teaching authority. The reception of the bishop's teaching as normative for faith is analogous to the reception of certain writings as normative for faith. The

[13] It might be added that Irenaeus and others who argued for – and won the case about – the fixing of the biblical Canon in the last part of the second century did so by pointing to the apostolic tradition, as it had been guided by a historical line of bishops.

> Holy Spirit guided the Church in determining both norms, for error about the norms would have led to untold errors in faith (Sullivan 2001, 255).

Mainstream Protestants generally have no objection to the idea that the work of the Spirit may be expressed in a process of institutionalization. There may be a tension but never a pure contradiction between charisma and institution. On the contrary it is possible to speak of institutionalization as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, '*Ordnung als Manifestation des Geistes*' (Schweitzer 1959).[14] So far it is quite possible for Protestants to follow Sullivan's argument. Furthermore it seems that the Reformation Churches pointing to '*sola scriptura*' as the only guard for sound faith have most often been ruled by kings and princes who have pointed to themselves as 'Guardians of the Christian Faith' and have taken the authority to appoint bishops and pastors for the churches in their areas. As we have today no kings to 'guard the faith' in our churches, the questions of authorized ministry and true Christian teaching have to be dealt with. We may attempt to solve them by the help of (democratic) synods and/or (professional) teaching committees. Such arrangements do, however, not take account of the fact that lay people meet – and put their trust in – pastors and bishops as authoritative teachers of the gospel. How is this – undemocratic – fact to be dealt with?

One way of dealing with the need for teaching authority in the Church is to have authorized bishops with teaching authority and pastoral oversight over the congregations in their dioceses, and to let these bishops authorize new pastors and bishops by ordaining them and taking on the oversight of their future ministry. This is, however, not enough to guard the Christian faith within a church. Bish-

[14] A general discussion on the interrelationship between charisma and institution in Protestant Churches is found in Dombois 1969.

ops cannot work alone, nor can they appoint and authorize pastors without the active consent of the congregations. Therefore the connection between *episkopé*, congregation and ordination may be helpful, when carefully expressed and practiced.

The electoral process of officeholders can be described correctly only as this complex interaction of mutual giving and accepting (or also rejecting) between officeholders and the congregation (Volf 1998, 256). In fact there is a need for a mutual ministry of oversight between three partners in the church: the bishop must supervise the congregations and their ordained ministers; the ordained minister must take the daily responsibility of supervising the theological practice of the congregation; and the lay people, who participate in the calling of all ordained ministers, also have a duty to supervise the teaching and preaching of their ministers in congregation and church. It is this complex interdependence which should be expressed in rites of ordination.

Convergence and Diversity in the Structure of Ordination Rites and the Understanding of Liturgy in the Nordic Churches

James F. Puglisi concludes his study of contemporary ordination rites in Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Methodist Churches as follows:

> Ordination is a complex process that links ministry, concrete Church, confession of faith, and communion of the faithful. This concrete process is at once communal, liturgical, and juridical, and in all its aspects, sacramental. Christian ordination cannot be reduced to a simple rite of installation or of entrance into a charge, but it is an ecclesiastical process (*traditio-receptio*) in which a

> Christian receives a charism for the building up of the Church, which puts him in a new relationship – personal and lasting – with his brethren (Puglisi 2001, 264).

As we have seen in the case studies of ordination rites from the various churches in the Nordic countries, not all these ordination rites can be described as 'sacramental' and distinctly different from rites of installation. Also the reception of a particular 'charism', not to speak of a '*character indelebilis*', during ordination is not found in all rites, especially not in the cases where the decisive emphasis it put on the democratic calling of the pastors. On the other hand all the Nordic ordination rites have more or less the same basic structure and content, as follows:

- Introduction of the candidate within a congregational gathering
- Prayers
- Hymn-singing
- Confession of faith
- Readings of relevant biblical texts
- Address

and/or

- Promises and admonition, calling attention to the content of the ministry in question
- handing over of the ministry

and/or

- Prayer for the reception of the Holy Spirit during laying-on of hands

It is also generally clear that the ordination rites are needed for communal and liturgical as well as for juridical reasons. Although there may be some 'anarchic' or char-

ismatic practices in Pentecostal-type Churches[15] normally all our churches carefully follow a practice where ordination is needed before ministers may perform their central ministerial duties. There seems to be a trend for the practice of ordination to converge towards a mainstream way of doing things, more or less independent of the official theological teaching and understanding of ministry in the churches examined.

Ordination in the Churches of the Nordic countries is clearly something different from a graduation ceremony, for example. Nobody doubts that students have graduated with all the rights and duties of a graduate, whether or not they participated in the graduation ceremony at their college or university. As a general rule, however, no one is a full minister in a Nordic Church without having gone through the proper rite for ordination to the ministry in question. Ordination is a practical and a more or less strict legal requirement for an ordained minister, someone having an 'office' (*'embede', 'embete', 'vigningstjänst'*). However, the question is how the rites are actually performed and interpreted theologically.

Are our ordination rites *expressive*, that is, only or at least primarily proclaiming publicly (by blessing in the midst of the congregation and petitionary prayer) what has already been effected during an already completed process of admission to ordained ministry? Or are they rather *instrumental*, i.e. performative acts by means of which the candidate for ordination is actually being ordained and thereby created – by God and the Church – as the minister he or she is going to be?

Generally speaking the rites analyzed in Part II are not easily identified as simply expressive or instrumen-

[15] Cf. also the acceptance of 'privately ordained' ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark as described in Jørgensen (Part II.5).

tal.[16] Many of them are both, for others it is very unclear how they might be described. As we have pointed out above it is also quite often unclear who has called and who is actually ordaining the candidate to the ordained ministry in question (the local congregation, the National Church, the bishop, the fellow ministers or someone else).

The tradition of introducing ministers by means of a rite, as part of the normal liturgical activity of the churches, does however seem to be as strong as ever before. Probably this is due to a common experience of the importance of proper ministers, who – because they are necessary for the life of the church – have to be properly ordained, though no church can be run without an active ministry of lay people, as if its life is only the business of professional ministers. To this, it seems, is added a growing sense of the importance of liturgy – and the experience (at the very least implicit) of liturgy and rites as means by which something happens as something is done to those participating in a rite. During the process of secularization that culminated in the 1970s, many Nordic Churches had difficulties in their liturgical life. Today many have come to realize that even though liturgy may be bad no liturgy at all is worse and even deadly for the churches. Thus churches are eager to introduce ministers by way of liturgical ceremonies. It might even be said that whenever a church joins the tradition of introducing its ministers by *epicletic* prayer during the laying-on of hands, the church ordains, whether it so intends or not!

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[16] See e.g. Fjeld on non-Lutheran Churches in Norway (Part II.4) and Olsen on missionaries (Part II.5).

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