

Nils Gunder Hansen, Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen (eds.): *I himlen således også på jorden? Danske kirkefolk om velfærdsstaten og det moderne samfund*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag 2010, 243 S.

There is growing research interest in the role of religion in welfare states. One good example is the book *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States*, edited by Kees van Kersbergen and Philip Maniow from 2009. It discusses and analyses different welfare state models by using religion as an analytical category. Fundamental values and political preferences in social politics are explained not only as a result of political negotiations or economic developments, but also as a result of religious traditions. When using religion analytically, cultural-historical perspectives come to dominate the research on welfare states. This has led some researchers to the conclusion that social democracy and the Scandinavian welfare states represent a form of secularized Lutheranism. It is in relation to this research trend that the Danish publication *I himlen således også på jorden?* must be read.

It is the Centre for the Welfare State Research at the University of Southern Denmark that is behind this publication, together with researchers at the Institute of Literature, Media and Cultural Studies.

The centre has played a vital role in popularising research on the welfare state, not least through its so-called “13 project” with publications discussing the history in, the challenges to, and the values of the Danish welfare state. The topic of religion and the welfare state has also been debated here (especially, see *13 historier om den danske velfærdsstat*, from 2003). For the moment, no one in the Nordic context seems more politically concerned with the Lutheran roots of their culture and history than the Danes. This relationship is important for a debate on Islam and immigration. From this perspective, this new publication by Danish church leaders about the welfare state is a fruitful, critical contribution to the discussion of how Lutheran modern Denmark is.

According to the editors, Nils Gunder Hansen, Jørn Henrik Petersen, and Klaus Petersen, the relation between the Lutheran tradition and the modern welfare state is far more complex than some researchers recognise. Firstly, they find that assertions that the welfare state is “Lutheran” are often generalizations and not based on precise definitions of either Lu-

theran social doctrines or the welfare state. Instead, they are representations of developments in the 17th and 19th centuries, but not the 20th, despite the fact that the idea and notion of the “welfare state” belongs to 20th century history. Secondly, although admitting that a Protestant social doctrine can be recognized in Martin Luther’s writings, the different interpretations of this doctrine lead the editors to the conclusion that it is not possible to establish a one-to-one relationship between Lutheran social doctrine and the Danish welfare state. This critical position, as opposed to more confirmatory stances concerning a connection between Lutheran social doctrine to the modern welfare state, is the basis for this anthology. The purpose of the articles in the anthology is to develop a more solid foundation for further analysis of the relationship between Lutheranism and welfare state, instead of what the editors call “more lofty” attempts to claim continuity in a distant past when no one had any idea of what, in later centuries, would come to be described as a welfare state (p. 20).

With one exception, the articles deal in different ways with how various Danish church leaders have reacted to and reflected on the developments which characterise the welfare state. Such characteristics are the expansion of the power of the state in society, especially in the field

of social politics. This is a field where the church traditionally has played an important role, in both the public system and the private. The Danish folk church and different Christian organisations have therefore had vested interests when commenting on and discussing state developments. With this background, it is interesting to learn more about the wide variety of opinion among church leaders on welfare state developments in the context of Denmark. In general, church leaders who were close to this social field regarded the expansion of state power over social matters more highly. But having said this, it is also obvious that many of them feared that the welfare state would threaten the work of the church.

Both Kurt Larsen and Liselotte Malmgart give nuanced pictures of the work and attitudes found within the manifold social engagement of the church in the 19th and 20th centuries. Larsen argues that the apolitical approach of the Inner Mission to social problems lead to a positive evaluation of the expansion of state responsibility. With the state taking care of the social needs of the people, the church could concentrate on its primary activity, namely the spiritual life of the Danish population. Malmgart has studied different socially engaged organisations within the Danish folk church and confirms a dominantly positive attitude towards the welfare state, but sees this as a result not

of an apolitical attitude, but rather as a result of a deep understanding the shortcomings of the church in this field.

Tidehverv, a Danish theological movement of the 20th Century, represents a very different position. This is a movement that, through the political party Dansk Folkeparti, has become a prominent representative for a position that connects Lutheranism with Danish nationalism. Its roots are the dialectical theology of the 1920s, and its reaction against a moralistic and emotional type of Christianity addressed both inner mission as well as the followers of Grundtvig. In the post war era, *Tidehverv* became an opponent of the welfare state system, seeing it as a threat to human dignity, robbing the individual of responsibility for their own life. According to Torben Bramming, *Tidehverv* has tried to be the conscience of the welfare state system and, he says, it has as such always also been an important part of the welfare state's development, though not always loved or popular.

Kim Arne Pedersen critically analyses whether or not Grundtvig could be seen as the ideological father of the welfare state, but comes to no clear conclusion. Pedersen places Grundtvig in the 19th liberal tradition. Caring for the poor and needy was not a state responsibility. Despite this, Grundtvig has, through history,

been used in support of different political positions, from social democracy to nationalism.

Both Hal Koch and Knud E. Løgstrup belong to the generation of theologians who were marked by the war experience and who dominated the theological scene during the golden years of the welfare state. Hal Koch was known as a representative of social democracy and a stern defender of democracy in principle. He has also been seen as an ideological architect behind the welfare state, but according to Jes Fabricius Møller Koch did not see the welfare state as social democratic, but rather social liberal, and as such kept his distance from the whole project. Løgstrup, on the other hand, comes close to creating an ethical foundation for the welfare state through his thoughts about the ethical demand, claim Jørn Henrik Petersen and Lis Holm Petersen. Although he never used the term "welfare state," he argued in favour of an active state in social politics.

Reading Danish hymns in the context of economic theories, Niels Kærgård finds that social concern has been an integral part of Danish spiritual life since Martin Luther. Only to a limited degree has this been controversial, although its formative impact probably has been more important than what the different Danish "church fathers" have said and done. Hymns are

cultural threads in the life of the church, and when sung, often taken for granted. Kærgård finds that the hymns often contradict dominant economic theories from the same period, especially liberal economic theories.

The last article, by Jørn Henrik Petersen and Klaus Petersen, relates the Danish church-based welfare state discussion to similar discussions in Great Britain and Norway. They find that the Danish debate was much influenced by positions taken by the archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, as well as the Norwegian bishop, Eivind Berggrav. Both of them represented a critical discourse on the development of the welfare state, although Berggrav was more critical than Temple, seeing in the welfare state a demonic and totalitarian element that threatened society and the church. With the exception of *Tidehverv*, the Danish debate seems more nuanced than the Norwegian. This might relate to the different experiences the two countries had under German occupation, but Petersen and Petersen also ask if there are historical and cultural differences that go further back.

Critically, one could say that the article live up to the ambition of the editors – to create a foundation for analysing the relationship between Lutheran doctrine and the establishment of the welfare state – in only a few example cases. The reason for this is

that the various articles focus only vaguely on this topic. It is not a Lutheran social doctrine that is up for discussion. These articles are instead occupied with describing how Danish Lutheran church leaders and organisations have reacted to and reflected on the developments of the modern state and sometimes also the welfare state. If the main aim had been to enter into the discussion on the connections between Lutheran social doctrine and the welfare state, other methods would have to be used, instead of focusing on certain leaders and their textual contributions to the debate. Additionally, the articles might benefit from a wider perspective, including more than the socio-political side of the welfare state, such as discussing the politics of gender equality. With this said, this book is nonetheless important as a contribution not only to historical insights into Danish church debates, but also into the historical roots of the actual political Danish debate on Lutheranism, the Danish folk church, nation and people, and the complex relation between theology and politics. The different voices presented in this publications show how complicated it is to put church and state, religion and politics into one formula. Even among theologians and church leaders belonging to the same denomination and to the same church, the understanding of the relationship between theology and politics is often contradictory.

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