

Merethe Roos

**The Quest for a New Education**

# **Studies in the History of Education and Culture**



Edited by  
Meike Sophia Baader, Elke Kleinau, and Karin Priem

## **Volume 4**

Merethe Roos

# The Quest for a New Education

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Social Democracy, Educational Reforms, and Religion  
in Norway after the Second World War

**DE GRUYTER**  
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# 1 The Book and its Background: Christian Education in Post-War Norway

This book will address the role of Christianity in Norwegian compulsory education in the years following World War II, with a particular focus on the years leading up to the enactment of the Public School Act (Folkeskoleloven) in 1959. This law prepared the way for the Primary and Lower Secondary School Act of 1969, which introduced nine years of compulsory schooling for all pupils, instead of the previous seven-year requirement, enacted in 1889. The 1969 law also curtailed the rights of the Norwegian church. I will argue that the political role of the school subject “Knowledge of Christianity” in the 1950s, as well as the role Christianity plays as the basic value in Norwegian compulsory education, can be seen in the light of a cultural and liberal understanding of Christianity, and will demonstrate that this understanding of Christianity is strongly rooted in Scandinavian theology.<sup>1</sup> Through this approach, this book will give new perspectives on a topic that has occupied an important place in Norwegian post-war historical narratives. It meets a recently underlined need for case-oriented studies that take the institutional, political, and historical environment of political actors into consideration in analyses of the politics of education, as well as emphasising the necessity of considering religious contexts for understanding educational policy debates and developments.<sup>2</sup> This approach nuances the earlier understanding of the story of the Norwegian school in the post-war period as being a story of increasing secularisation.

This study will help international readers to understand important aspects of the development of the welfare state in one of the Nordic countries and to become aware of how cultural presuppositions play a part in this development. The Nordic countries are known for a high standard of living and low-income disparity, and for merging free-market capitalism with a generous welfare system. Several authors have emphasised the need for including educational policies in welfare state analyses, because educational-political paths often coincide with other policies of welfare state regimes.<sup>3</sup> In this introductory chapter, I will outline the background of the book and provide a more detailed explanation of my thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> The Norwegian title of this school subject is Kristendomskunnskap. Hereafter, the expression “Knowledge of Christianity” will be used to designate this subject.

<sup>2</sup> Katharina Sass, *The Politics of Comprehensive School Reforms: Cleavages and Coalitions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Sass (2022), 11. See also Torben Iversen and John D. Stephens, “Partisan Politics, the Welfare State, and Three Worlds of Human Capital Formation,” in *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (4–5)

This topic must be seen against the backdrop of Norwegian cultural history. Historically, teaching in Christianity has taken a prominent position in the Norwegian school system. The Norwegian church had belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran branch of the Christian church since the sixteenth century and was a state church until 2017 when it changed to being a distinct legal entity. Still today, the Evangelical Lutheran Church occupies the largest faith community in the country. Since the first educational act was signed in 1739, at a time when Norway was still in union with Denmark, the school was seen as an extended arm of the church, and rote-learning of Erik Pontoppidan's (1698–1764) explanation of Martin Luther's Small Catechism played a key role in teaching and learning, far into the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Even though nineteenth-century school acts challenged the dominance of Christianity, and the previous ecclesiastical school board was eventually replaced by a secular board of education, the school's Christian education continued to function as an extension of the church's baptism and as a preparation for confirmation.<sup>5</sup> It was not until 1969 that an educational act stated that religious education should no longer be confessionally rooted in Lutheran Christianity, and "Knowledge of Christianity" was separated from the church's baptismal education. However, education in Christianity still plays an important role in the Norwegian curriculum. It holds a prioritised position in the subject of Christianity, Religion, and Ethics (KRLE), which is compulsory from grade 1 through 10, even though the educational act states that the subject should have an objective, critical, and pluralistic character.

The 1969 school act also introduced nine years of compulsory schooling in Norway, after ten years of experimental activity where all municipalities were encouraged to implement nine years of primary school. Previously, the compulsory course of education in Norway had been only seven years, with two possible options for upper secondary education: either the "real school" [realskolen], which prepared students for the gymnasium and the university, or the more practically oriented "continuation school" [framhaldsskole]. While the roots of the "real school" and

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(2008), 600–641, Janine Jongbloed and Ashley Pullmann, "Well-being in the Welfare State: The Redistributive Capacity of Education," in *European Journal of Education*, 51 (4) (2016), 564–586, and Nienke Willemse and Paul de Beer, "Three Worlds of Educational Welfare States? A Comparative Study of Higher Education System across Welfare States," in *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22 (2) (2012), 105–117.

4 Alfred Oftedal Telhaug and Odd Asbjørn Mediås, *Grunnskolen som nasjonsbygger. Fra statspietisme til nyliberalisme* (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, 2003).

5 For an overview of Norwegian nineteenth-century education in English, see Merethe Roos, *International Impact on 19<sup>th</sup> Century Norwegian Education: Development, Influence and National Identity* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021).



the “continuation school” can be traced back to the nineteenth century, their presence in the 1950s stretches back to the Norwegian 1936 School Act. They became implemented in the Norwegian school system in 1939. The School Act of 1969 stands out as a strong political symbol of the political attempts in social equalisation that characterised Norway in the post-war period. The ideological basis of this Act was laid by the preceding School Act (1959), and the emphasis of this book will therefore be from the end of the WWII up to 1959.

The process leading up to the 1959 and 1969 decisions has traditionally been portrayed as a polarised struggle, where strong political forces tried to detach the school from the church. On the other hand, conservative Christian voices fought to maintain the school’s Christian – more specifically, Evangelical-Lutheran – character, and to ensure that Evangelical-Lutheran education should retain the priority it had always had. It is also referred to as a polarised political battle, where the political parties were divided into two camps: socialist or left-wing parties (Labour Party, Socialist Party, and Communist Party) opposed the conservative or right-wing parties (Conservative Party (Høyre), Christian Democrats (Kristelig Folkeparti), Centre Party, Liberal Party (Venstre)), with the latter block trying to maintain the Christian character of the school.<sup>6</sup> In his epoch-making work, *De nasjonale strateger* [The National Strategists, 1998], sociologist Rune Slagstad emphasised how the Labour Party became a driving force for a secular state with no ties to a specific religion or philosophy of life.<sup>7</sup>

The Labour Party held a prominent position in the Norwegian political scene in the post-war decades, and the election in 1945 introduced an era referred to as a one-party state system.<sup>8</sup> This implies that the party took a lead in developing a welfare state reflecting social democratic ideals, and accordingly comprehensive schooling – the same school for all – became an important institution in the welfare state.<sup>9</sup> According to Rune Slagstad, the Labour Party defended an ideology of modernisation rooted in science, and their expansion of scientific rationality came at the expense of Christianity and the church. Important voices in the party also

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6 Per Eivind Kjøl and Alfred Oftedal Telhaug, “Norsk skolepolitikk i etterkrigstida. En beskrivelse og analyse av skole- og utdanningspolitikken fra 1945 til 1977,” in *Norsk utdanningspolitisk retorikk. En studie av utdanningstenkningen i norske partiprogrammer*, ed. Alfred Oftedal Telhaug et al. (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 1999), 33ff.

7 This book immediately became a reference work in Norwegian academic discourses. See Rune Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger* (Oslo: Pax, 1998).

8 Jens Arup Seip, *Fra embetsmannsstat til ettpartistat og andre essays* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963).

9 Nina Volckmar and Harald Thuen, “Postwar School Reforms in Norway,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Education* (oxfordre.com/education) (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2020), 1–30.

actively wanted to promote secularisation of schools, and Slagstad could thereby conclude that the Labour Party played a decisive role in weakening Christianity's leading position in the Norwegian school system in the twentieth century. Slagstad's views find support in the traditional church historical narrative about Norway in this period.<sup>10</sup> Church historians have, for their part, also emphasised how Norwegian Christians mobilised through the establishment of the Institute for Christian Upbringing (IKO), and how IKO leader Bjarne Hareide (1908–1979) became a driving force in maintaining the school's Evangelical-Lutheran character, not least through his extensive authorship.<sup>11</sup> With the close connection between the school and the state in mind, it is not surprising that Norwegian theologians and church historians have seen the relationship between church, school, and state as an interesting field of research.

However, there is seldom smoke without fire, including in this context. Important voices in the Labour Party *did* fight to reduce the church's influence over the school in the years after WWII. A number of examples could be mentioned, although here I will limit myself to only a few. In April 1953, the well-known journalist, editor, and high-profile Labour Party member Torolf Elster (1911–2006) used the monthly periodical *Kontakt* to argue for the necessity of a secular school. "The slogan 'Christianity out of school' can become a catchy appeal for the large number of youths for whom it is so difficult today to get excited about political activity", he wrote in the magazine's editorial.<sup>12</sup> In the daily newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* 26 April 1954, a paper which functioned as a party organ for the Labour Party, August Lange (1907–1970) argued that the school's preamble needed a thorough overhaul.<sup>13</sup> Official documents giving directions for the school should not emphasise the school's foremost goal as giving the students a Christian upbringing, Lange underlined, with reference to the current public school act, ratified in 1936.<sup>14</sup> August Lange was a high-profiled educator who had been employed as a principal at Hamar teacher training college in 1953. Lange had withdrawn his membership from the Norwegian church and became an advocate of the Norwegian Humanist

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<sup>10</sup> A number of books and articles could be listed, but few are in the English language. For general introductions in Norwegian, see Bernt T. Oftestad, Tarald Rasmussen, and Jan Schumacher, *Norsk kirkehistorie*, 3rd ed. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2005) and Brynjar Haraldsø, ed., *Kirke – skole – stat* (Oslo: IKO-forlaget, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Kristin Norseth, "IKO gjennom 75 år," in *Prismet* 3 (2020), 217–259.

<sup>12</sup> Torolf Elster, "Editorial," in *Kontakt*, 1.4.1953. However, Elster was opposed, including within his own ranks, and moderated his own arguments in the daily paper *Arbeiderbladet* later that year. See "De vergeløse," in *Arbeiderbladet*, 23.10.1954.

<sup>13</sup> August Lange, "Folkeskolelovens formålsparagraf," in *Arbeiderbladet*, 26.4.1954.

<sup>14</sup> Lov om Folkeskolen (The Folk School Act).

Association, founded in 1956. At the Norwegian Parliament (the Storting), well-known and influential politicians such as Rakel Seweriin (1906–1995) and Gustav Natvig-Pedersen (1893–1965) tried their best to argue for weakening the place of Christian education in the schools, when this became a topic in the debates.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, when the Ministry of Church and Education raised a proposal for a new educational act for Norwegian primary schools in 1958, the paragraph on the importance of Christian education, as seen in the previous school act (§ 9c, 1936), had been omitted. This omission caused massive response in the public sphere and was viewed as an attack against the statutory purpose of the school.<sup>16</sup> Just over a decade earlier, in 1946, the Oslo teacher training college, previously privately owned by the Oslo Lutheran Inner Mission Association, became a public institution. In her doctoral thesis on a church leader's criticism of the welfare state after 1945, church historian Aud Tønnessen pointed out the consequences of this transfer: when the Inner Mission Association was prevented in this way from training teachers in accordance with their view on Christianity, their ambition to awaken the people to repentance as well as their goal to re-Christianise the state was simultaneously weakened.<sup>17</sup>

The Labour Party's opposition to the church and Christianity can be traced back to the interwar period. The party was founded in 1887, three years after parliamentarism was introduced in Norway. At the beginning, the party had a limited program, consisting of four points actualised by genuine societal problems at that time: voting rights, regulation of working hours, direct and progressive taxation, and the right to strike.<sup>18</sup> Gradually, the party gained greater support, and the election in 1903 secured their first representatives at the Storting. At the same time, they increased their importance in local politics. However, internal tensions soon arose, and a revolutionary wing emerged. The impressions from the Russian revolution and the increased class antagonism during WWI caused a change of leadership in 1918, and in the following year the party agreed to follow the Third International (Comintern), led by party secretary Martin Tranmæl (1879–

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15 Svein Tuastad, *Skulen og statsmaktsspørsmålet: Stortingsdebattar 1945–2005 om religion i skolen og om private skular i lys av normativ teori* (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2006).

16 Torstein Harbo, *Målsetting og læreplan i den 9-årige skole* (Oslo: Fabritius, 1960), 59 ff.

17 Aud V. Tønnessen, "Et trygt og godt hjem for alle?" *Kirkelederes kritikk av velferdsstaten etter 1945* (Oslo: Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning, 2000). See also Alf Gunnar Eritsland, *Med skolen som misjonsmark. Den norske vekkingsrørslas satsing på norsk lærerutdanning 1890–1946* (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2019).

18 Merethe Roos, *En kort introduksjon til Norge på 1800-tallet* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2020).

1967).<sup>19</sup> However, the party split in 1921, after the majority of delegates at the party congress voted in favour of Vladimir Lenin's 1920-theses, which indicated that the parties following the Third International practically were controlled from Moscow. The split caused the establishment of the Social Democratic Labour Party of Norway.<sup>20</sup> The Labour Party, on their side, broke with the Third International in 1923, which again led to the formation of the Norwegian Communist Party. The two factions merged in 1927, and in the election to the Storting the same year the Labour Party made great progress. In 1928, the party came to power for the first time, under the leadership of Christopher Hornsrud (1859–1960). However, Hornsrud's government was overthrown after only 18 days, and still counts as the shortest-serving government in Norway. After a political downturn at the beginning of the 1930s, the party changed its political course from a revolutionary to reformistic profile. The new profile strengthened the party, and in 1935 Johan Nygaardsvold (1879–1952), known as one of the Labour Party's most influential politicians of all time, was installed as the country's prime minister.<sup>21</sup> Nygaardsvold's government remained in office until 1945.<sup>22</sup> Johan Nygaardsvold's predecessor Einar Gerhardsen (1897–1987) is normally referred to as the Father of the Nation (*Landsfaderen*) in Norwegian history writing.

With a background strongly rooted in communism, one can easily imagine that the Labour Party came across as hostile to religion in the years between the two world wars. In 1923, the historian Edvard Bull Sr. (1881–1932) published the pamphlet *Kommunisme og Religion* [Communism and Religion], which was regarded as representing the Labour Party's official view on religion.<sup>23</sup> Bull was a high-profile Labour Party politician, becoming minister of foreign affairs in Hornsrud's government and the party's deputy chairman in 1927. His pamphlet rejected traditional Christian belief. The church was seen as counter-revolutionary and an organ of capitalism, and should be actively opposed in an energetic and ruthless way. This should first and foremost be done through secularising the school:

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19 Nikolai Brandal, Øivind Bratberg, and Dag Einar Thorsen, *Sosialdemokratiet: Fortid, nåtid, framtid* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011), 55 ff.

20 Hilde Gunn Slottemo, *En kort introduksjon til Norge på 1900-tallet. Forskjell og fellesskap* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2021), 45.

21 Finn Olstad, *En historie om Arbeiderpartiet. Fra arbeiderpopulister til verdensborgere* (Oslo: Dreyers forlag, 2021), 45.

22 During WWII, the Nygaardsvold government relocated to London, and Nygaardsvold continued to head the government in exile. The London government was complemented by representatives from conservative political parties. Nygaardsvold resigned in 1945 when King Haakon appointed Einar Gerhardsen to lead an interim government consisting of all political parties.

23 Nils Ivar Agøy, *Kirken og arbeiderbevegelsen: spenninger, skuffelser, håp. Tiden fram til 1940* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2011), 309 ff.

“The church’s real position of power in our society lies in the school”, Bull stated.<sup>24</sup> Through Christian education it could reach practically all the country’s children in their most impressionable years, and if it was the case that the church was the Labour Party’s foremost enemy, the party should use school policy to fight against them, he continued. This aggressive anti-religiousness caused great concern among socially engaged Christians, and in the years after WWI much work was done to prevent a socialist state from overriding the importance of the church.<sup>25</sup> However, as the Labour Party changed its political course in the 1930s, it also became less hostile to Christianity. This was clearly expressed not least through allowing the Christian Worker’s association to be established in 1939, in close connection to the party.<sup>26</sup>

The Norwegian church became a unifying institution in the Norwegian resistance work during WWII, experiencing increased support and church attendance.<sup>27</sup> This gave hope for a consolidated church in the future, built on a unified understanding of theology and the church’s place in society. Immediately after the end of the war, there were a number of initiatives which underpinned this Christian optimism. One such initiative was the establishment of an Oslo-based Christian newspaper, which could supplement the Christian newspaper *Dagen* that had been published in Bergen since 1919. This newspaper came to be called *Vårt Land* [Our Country] and appeared on the street in 1945.<sup>28</sup> In the same year, the Christian Democrats (KrF) broke through as a national political party and got their first representatives into the Storting.<sup>29</sup> Notwithstanding that, this unity was soon to crack and reactivate old tensions between conservative and liberal Christians.

The post-war period also reactivated old tensions between the church and the Labour movement, which was reminiscent of those seen in the interwar period. The Labour Party and the church defended two different explanations of society during the war years. For the Labour movement, the battle against poverty was regarded as a superior goal, and this battle required a planned economy and a strong national state. In their opinion, the vision of welfare was what united Nor-

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24 Edvard Bull, *Kommunisme og religion* (Kristiania: Det norske arbeiderpartis forlag, 1923), 29–30.

25 Agøy (2011).

26 *Ibid.*, 613.

27 Hallgeir Elstad and Per Halse, *Norsk Kristendomshistorie* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2021), 234.

28 Per Voksø, *I striden siden freden. Historien om Vårt Land 1945–1965* (Oslo: Vårt Land, 1994).

29 Olav Rovde, “Kristelig Folkeparti – mellom kristen tradisjonelitet og velferdsmodernitet,” in *Mellom gammelt og nytt. Kristendom i Norge på 1800- og 1900-tallet*, ed. Knut Dørum and Helje Kringlebott Sødal (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2016), 125–140.

wegians during the difficult war years, and the ideas on what Norway should be after the war were made known through the booklet *Framtidens Norge* [Norway in the future], published in 1944 by the Norwegian Seafarer's Union and the national worker's organisation (LO).<sup>30</sup> This publication listed five goals which should form the basis for post-war Norway: 1) work for everyone, 2) everyone should live in a decent home, 3) everyone should receive sufficient food, 4) everyone should be given the opportunity to go to school, regardless of their parents' income, 5) everyone should be safe so as not to suffer hardship when illness, unemployment, or old age occurred.<sup>31</sup> *Framtidens Norge* was pursued in the *Joint Programme*, which should unite all political parties in a joint statement on the country's recovery.<sup>32</sup> Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that cooperation, across political opinions, philosophies of life, and social class, should contribute to making Norway "a safe and good home for everyone".<sup>33</sup>

The church emphasised other matters. They saw the war as a direct cause of secularisation and viewed Christianity as the reason for the unity that arose during the war years. The community should unite in order to renew and reform the church, and the welfare state project was seen as an extension of the National Socialist state. In line with this, criticism was raised against the welfare state project. Eivind Berggrav (1884–1954), bishop of Oslo from 1937 to 1951, was among the sharpest critics of the welfare state project, not only in Norway, but also internationally. Berggrav presented his view in his lecture at the general assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Hannover in 1952.<sup>34</sup> In Berggrav's view, the welfare state project threatened to control all aspects of human development. Consequently, there would be no room left for a spiritual dimension. Moreover, the welfare state put itself in the place of God and thus contained a demonic element, Berggrav stated. Christian faith became a private concern, and the welfare state took the role as a religious superstructure.<sup>35</sup> Berggrav's views caused a commotion, especially on the left side of the political landscape. However, other important churchmen opposed Berggrav's views, and saw the welfare state project as a necessary respon-

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<sup>30</sup> *Framtidens Norge*. Retningslinjer for gjenoppbygningen. Utgitt av Arbeidernes Faglige Landsorganisasjon, Norsk sjømannsforbund (Stockholm, 1944).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>32</sup> *Arbeid for alle. De politiske partienes felles program*, accessed 20 September 2023, <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/kilder/velferdsstat-og-vestvending/K1815-fellesprogrammet.html>Fellesprogrammet - NorgeshistorieFellesprogrammet - Norgeshistorie.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> The lecture came to be published in the periodical *Kirke and Kultur* in the same year. See Eivind Berggrav, "Stat og kirke i dag etter luthersk syn." in *Kirke and Kultur* 8 (1952), 449–62.

<sup>35</sup> Gunnar Heiene, *Eivind Berggrav En biografi* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1992), 393 ff.

sibility for the state.<sup>36</sup> Neither was Berggrav, who supported the Labour Party in other cases, supported by the public at large.

As one of society's absolute cornerstones, the school became a natural battleground in this political and cultural landscape. I have previously mentioned Bjarne Hareide as an important strategist in the struggle to preserve the Evangelical-Lutheran school in the post-war era. At this stage, Hareide and his background should be given more attention. The teacher and theologian Hareide came to be at the forefront of what the influential bishop and theology professor Per Lønning (1928–2016) referred to as one of the most important renewal impulses in post-war Norwegian church life.<sup>37</sup> As a result of the renewed church effort during WWII, an initiative soon came to establish a Christian institute that would secure the school's Evangelical-Lutheran anchoring.<sup>38</sup> There was a strong need to prioritise the school, which was believed to be moving towards an increased de-Christianisation, the appeal for this foundation stated. The schools should be filled with a Christian spirit, the children should be taught by Christian teachers, and a pedagogical and methodological renewal of the school's Christian education should have priority. Many also thought it was important to continue to keep dissenters away from teaching Christianity. In Norway at that time, anyone who was supposed to teach Christian education in school was required to be a member of the state church.<sup>39</sup> This led to the establishment of the Christian Press Office [Kristelig Pressekontor] in 1945, where Hareide was initially employed in a part-time position. Hareide's first thoughts were to establish a youth college that could prepare Christian youths for a future career as teachers, but after consulting a key school politician from the Christian Democrats (KrF), Hans Svarstad (1883–1971), Hareide concluded that it would be useful to focus on institutions that could embrace the widest possible scope on education and schools. KPK, which changed its name to the Institute for Christian Upbringing (IKO) in 1948, became a powerful centre for Norwegian church life, as well as a decisive institution for the relationship between church and school. The magazine *Kristen Skole* [Christian School], established in 1946, provided direct contact with Norwegian teachers. The magazine changed to a pedagogical journal in 1950 named *Prismet* [The Prism], which

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<sup>36</sup> Tønnessen (2000), 114ff. See also Heiene (1992).

<sup>37</sup> "Kirkehistorie skrevet i Sarpsborg – første prostevigsel", in *Vårt Land*, 1.6.1973.

<sup>38</sup> Norseth (2020),

<sup>39</sup> This came to be changed in the 1969 school act, which stated that those who were to teach "Knowledge of Christianity" had to teach in accordance with the official Norwegian Lutheranism. See Torry Seland, "Lex Borgen: Et blad i norsk skolehistorie om ikke-lutheraneres rett til å undervise i høyere utdanning," in *Tru på Vestlandet. Tradisjonar i endring*, ed. Birger Løvlie, Per Halse, and Kristin Hatlebrekke (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2020), 363–390.

aimed to publish educational articles that could contribute to the current pedagogical debate and highlight the importance of “Knowledge of Christianity”. *Prismet* is still today regarded as an important educational journal in Norway.

IKO rapidly increased its societal impact. Fifteen years after KPK was first established, IKO had developed into a fully-fledged pedagogical institute with a number of employees and a regular periodical. It also functioned as a textbook hub for Christian schoolbooks. A great number of volunteers, teachers, priests, and parents helped to keep IKO going, for instance as writers, board members, local representatives, or consultants.<sup>40</sup> It also became important for the institute to publish textbooks that could secure the Evangelical-Lutheran doctrine of faith, and to oppose books that did not speak in favour of Evangelical-Lutheran ideas. Moreover, IKO achieved great importance in the research environment in pedagogy at University of Oslo, not least through Reidar Myhre’s (1917–2005) popularity as a lecturer at the institute.<sup>41</sup> Myhre was soon followed by other pedagogues connected to IKO, and soon IKO pedagogues formed a significant part of the institute’s professional environment. For his part, Hareide, who quickly had his position extended to a full-time job and remained as a leader for IKO until 1971, proved to be a writer who took advantage of every opportunity to put forward IKO’s cause in the public sphere. He published pamphlets and small printings and was also a frequent contributor to newspaper debates. The texts were characterised by a pointed writing style, often polemic, and Hareide sharpened his argumentation in debates with his opponents. “Should Christianity be left out from school?”, he rhetorically asked in 1956, addressing people such as Elster, Lange, and the radical sections of the Labour Party.<sup>42</sup> Hareide’s aim was to make people aware of the danger they were facing in their daily life. The following quotation says a lot about the challenges he believed society faced:

The most alluring slogan used in the battle on Christian education, and the one that has gained the greatest impact on people, is called: religion is a private matter. This is an offshoot of the great, often frightening word of revolution, religion is opium for the masses! Here, it has taken a far more innocent form, but it says much the same thing, without the revolutionary colour; in fact, it sounds democratic. The negative consequence of this is self-evident. Christianity should be limited to private life and the inner life of the heart. (...) In public life, Christianity is regarded to be poison and opium.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Norseth (2020), 222.

<sup>41</sup> Kim Gunnar Helsvig, *Pedagogikkens grenser. Kampen om norsk pedagogikk ved Pedagogisk Forskningsinstitutt 1938–1980* (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Bjarne Hareide, *Skal kristendommen ut av skolen?* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1956).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.



## The National Research Context: the Contribution of this Book

In the wake of Bjarne Hareide's fierce fight to retain the Evangelical-Lutheran character of the school, one can understand that previous church historical research in Norway has drawn a picture of the Labour Party's school policy in the years after WWII as a contribution to a de-Christianisation of Norway. Likewise, it is understandable that corresponding weight has been placed on IKO's efforts to maintain the school's Evangelical-Lutheran character. With its origin in theology, it goes without saying that much of the church historical research is clearly based on certain values, and that it can be written into the same historiography and battles that have characterised the theological Norwegian landscape in general. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the theological landscape in Norway has, simply explained, been divided into two factions: a liberal one linked to the university's theological faculty, and a conservative one linked to the private Free Faculty of Theology (MF), established in 1908. These two factions will be presented more closely in the next chapter. Thus, many of the contributions to this field belong to the same theological traditions in which Hareide himself stood.

Neither does the most recent publication on the relationship between the Labour Party and the church, published by theologian and historian Nils Ivar Agøy in 2023, tamper with the polarised narrative about the Labour Party and church/Christianity as two incompatible dimensions.<sup>44</sup> Agøy's book is a comprehensive and thorough work, relating to a great number of historical sources. Yet it is also a traditional historical work that primarily deals with the historical sources, and which does not relate these to the complex contexts from which the sources derive. This is also emphasised in the book's introduction: "The cases dealt with have been selected on the basis of how they appear in the sources, not, for example, based on how they appear in previous research, in biographies or memoir literature".<sup>45</sup> Agøy's point of departure is thus different than that of the present volume. When it comes to the Labour Party's relationship with the school, he can thus conclude with the following: "The Labour Party's leadership wanted a secular school, where 'Knowledge of Christianity' would indeed be included, but where the church would not direct the school. In the Labour Party's understanding, the School Act of 1959 was only one phase in a long struggle to break the school out of the grip of the church".<sup>46</sup> One of the aims in this book is to problematise the term "secular" and see the school's development in the light of the diversity

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<sup>44</sup> Nils Ivar Agøy, *Knuste drømmer. Kirken og arbeiderbevegelsen. Tiden fra 1940 til ca. 1960* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2023).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

of contexts that surround political statements about the school at the given time. It has also a different thematic point of departure than Agøy. Where Agøy discusses the great narrative of the church and the Labour Party in the post-war period, this book looks exclusively at the school and school policies. Thus, the book presupposes that the nexus between school and contexts will throw a new light upon the school's Christian foundation in the post-war period.

In recent decades, however, several scholars have contributed to approaching the question of the Labour Party, the school, and Christianity from another angle. Characteristically, these contributions are not written by researchers with a background in theology, but by historians, political scientists, and pedagogues. The present book follows the path forged by these scholars, while also taking a closer look at the theological assumptions that underlie this development of the school.

One such scholar is the political scientist Svein Tuastad. In his PhD thesis, Tuastad demonstrated that the debate on the "Knowledge of Christianity" in the Labour Party after WWII can be divided into internal and external approaches to religion.<sup>47</sup> On the basis of thorough analyses of debates at the Storting, Tuastad has argued that representatives who defended an external approach to religion accepted Christianity's influence on society as a historical fact, without emphasising whether or not it was desirable for society to be affected in that way. On the other hand, those who defended an internal approach intended that the Christian message should be as widespread as possible. This internal approach implied that the school's Evangelical-Lutheran character had to be maintained. Tuastad demonstrated that, while all the conservative representatives at the Storting defended an internal approach to religion, both views could be found in the discussions within the Labour Party in the decades after WWII. In practical life, though, the internal and the external approaches to religion could become political attitudes that were diametrically opposite. Representatives defending an internal approach to religion may distinguish between the state's role and personal perceptions and wishes about the state's future, while representatives defending an external approach to religion may end up recommending policies that presuppose a religious state, independent of their own views.<sup>48</sup> With this point of departure, Tuastad's thesis provides a broader understanding of the relationship between school, church, and the state in the post-war era in Norway.

Another scholar who has made an important contribution in this regard, is the historian Kim Helsvig. Helsvig, who has particularly worked with the history of the Norwegian Ministry of Knowledge and with the establishment of a pedagogical

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<sup>47</sup> Tuastad (2006).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

professional environment in Norway in the post-war period, has done an excellent job of underlining the importance of two persons who will also play the core role in this book, Helge Sivertsen (1913–1986) and Eva Nordland (1921–2012).<sup>49</sup> Helsvig places emphasis on their common background in Christian environments.<sup>50</sup> Helge Sivertsen took a central role in the Labour Party after 1945, and Einar Gerhardsen considered him to be an heir to the throne in the party.<sup>51</sup> Sivertsen functioned as a deputy minister under three ministers in the Ministry of Church and Education Affairs – Kaare Fostervoll (1891–1981), Lars Moen (1885–1984), and Birger Bergersen (1981–1977) – and he is regarded as the architect behind the extended unitary school in Norway, which was established with the introduction of compulsory nine-year school in 1969.<sup>52</sup> Sivertsen also did important work in reforming the gymnasium and upper secondary education. The pedagogue Eva Nordland was, together with her husband cultural historian Odd Nordland (1919–1999), a close friend of Sivertsen, and an important professional alliance partner and adviser in questions concerning school and education.<sup>53</sup> She was affiliated with the pedagogical research environment at the University of Oslo as a student and as an academic employee for more than 50 years. After defending her PhD dissertation in 1955, she rose through the ranks from university lecturer to become a docent, and finally, in 1983, a full professor. Nordland had close ties to the Labour Party during her career and was responsible for several academic reports, as well as acting as a member and leader of numerous advisory boards. From the mid-1950s, she presented the Labour Party's visions on school and education in a number of contexts, and already in 1956 she had given a lecture on the Labour Party's view on the necessity of nine-year schooling, during a meeting for teachers in Gjøvik. Nordland also played a key role in the Council for the Pilot Schemes of Education, established in 1954 in order to modernise the school.<sup>54</sup> Throughout her adult life, she engaged

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49 Kim Gunnar Helsvig, *Reform og rutine. Kunnskapsdepartementets historie 1945–2017* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2017), “Kristendom og dåpsopplæring i norsk skole 1739–2003,” in *Kirke and Kultur* 108 (5–6) (2004), 447–462. See also Helsvig (2005).

50 Helsvig (2017).

51 Rune Slagstad, “Arbeiderpartistaten som skolestat,” in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 3–4 (1994), 229.

52 Nina Volckmar, “Helge Sivertsen – ideolog og strateg,” in *Pedagogiske profiler. Norsk utdanningsstenkning fra Holberg til Hernes*, ed. Sveinung Vaage and Harald Thuen (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, 2004), 227–244.

53 Helsvig (2017). See also Helge Sivertsen's festschrift for Eva Nordland's sixtieth birthday, Helge Sivertsen, Lise Vislie, and Finn Børre Stokholm, eds., *Kvinne viser vei. Festschrift til Eva Nordland i anledning 60-års dagen* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1981), 13–14.

54 This advisory board continued their work until 1984. See Alfred Oftedal Telhaug, *Forsøksrådet for skoleverket 1954–1984: en sammenfattende framstilling* (Trondheim: Alfred Oftedal Telhaug,

in social work and peace activism. Among other things, she was a co-founder of the Norwegian anti-nuclear weapon organisation in 1979 [Nei til Atomvåpen] and the national organisation *Kvinner for fred* [Women for Peace] in 1980. Both Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland left a great number of texts to posterity, and these texts will be subject to further investigation in this book.

The pedagogue Nina Volckmar's research must also be mentioned in respect to Helge Sivertsen's life and work.<sup>55</sup> In her doctoral dissertation, in which she examines whether the reforms in the Norwegian school system in the 1980s and 1990s represent something qualitatively new in relation to the reforms of the 1950s and 1960s, Helge Sivertsen is one of two main characters.<sup>56</sup> Volckmar places much emphasis on Sivertsen's background in the folk high school tradition. Not least in light of this tradition, as Volckmar argues, is Sivertsen's visionary manifesto from 1946, *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole*, in which Sivertsen outlines his ideas for the future of the Norwegian school.<sup>57</sup> The folk high schools emerged in Denmark in the 1830s as a result of Danish theologian Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig's (1783–1872) ideas on a liberal education, a "school for life". Grundtvig is undoubtedly the most important Nordic contributor to European pedagogy, in addition to his substantial contributions to theology, poetry, and historiography. His theological ideas will be discussed in more detail later in this book. With respect to the folk high schools, Grundtvig had proclaimed a vision for a broad popular education which was open to everyone in the 1830s. This school should be contrasted to the narrow elitist orientation that had characterised his own schooling, which, in Grundtvig's opinion, could be called a "school for death".<sup>58</sup> His "school for life" should awaken the desire and ability to live life fully, through promoting general competencies for life.<sup>59</sup> A central concept in Grundtvig's ideas was "the liv-

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1989), and Alfred Oftedal Telhaug, *Forsøksrådet for skoleverket 1954–1984. En studie i norsk skoleutvikling* (Oslo: Rådet for samfunnsvitenskapelig forskning NAVF/Universitetsforlaget, 1990).

55 Nina Volckmar, *Fra solidarisk samværskultur til kunnskapssolidaritet. Det sosialdemokratiske prosjekt fra Sivertsen til Hernes*, (PhD diss., Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, 2005), and "Knowledge and Solidarity: The Norwegian Social-democratic School Project in a Period of Change," in *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 53 (2008), 1–15. See also Volckmar (2004).

56 The other is Gudmund Hernes (b. 1941), who served as a Minister of Church, Education, and Research in Norway between 1990 and 1995.

57 Eng. translation: Democratic and National Upbringing in the Norwegian School.

58 Pål Henning Bødtker Walstad, *'Dannelse og duelighed for livet'. Dannelse og yrkesutdanning i den grundtvigske tradisjon*, (PhD diss., Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, 2006), 108.

59 Ove Korsgaard, *Grundtvigs oplysningstanker – om at knytte bånd og løse knuder*, in *Grundtvig-Studier* 51 (1) (2000), 154–171.

ing word”, which presupposed an element of divine inspiration, as well as a deep belief in nation and humanity. The living word should permeate all teaching at the folk high schools. The folk high school should also be deeply related to the mother tongue and the nation’s entire life, as well as reflecting the spirit of the nation. The folk high school movement grew rapidly and was successfully established in all Nordic countries. While the first Danish folk high school was established in Rødning in 1844, the first in Norway came 20 years later. Sagatun was founded by the teachers Olaus Arvesen (1830–1917) and Herman Anker (1839–1896) in Hamar in 1864.<sup>60</sup>

Sivertsen grew up in a family who more or less devoted their lives to the folk high schools. His father, Nils Sivertsen (1877–1955), spent his entire professional career in the movement. He first established Marnar folk high school in the south of Norway (Agder), and then Sund (Inderøy, Trøndelag), where he worked as a manager from 1926 to 1948.<sup>61</sup> When Nils Sivertsen retired in 1948, he and his wife donated Sund folk high school to the local community.<sup>62</sup> Helge Sivertsen’s uncle, Martin Sivertsen (1874–1964), was at the same time manager at Skogn high school, not far from Sund. The folk high school’s teachers were closely linked to the school’s activities by living close to the area where it was located, and Sivertsen was therefore surrounded by the school’s life and work throughout his upbringing. It is also likely that Grundtvig and Grundtvigian ideas took a strong position in his childhood home.<sup>63</sup> In order to demonstrate Sivertsen’s belonging to the folk high school tradition, Volckmar places particular weight upon the pamphlet *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole*.<sup>64</sup> This pamphlet was a result of an assignment Sivertsen carried out in 1946 on behalf of the so-called Besserud circle, where Si-

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<sup>60</sup> The first folk high school in Sweden was established in 1868, while it came to Finland twenty years later. See Johan Lövgren and Henrik Nordvall, “A Short Introduction to Research on the Nordic Folk High Schools,” in *Nordic Studies in Education* 37 (2) (2017), 61–68.

<sup>61</sup> Enevald Skadsem, “Mannen,” in *Fram då frendar. Heiderskrift til Helge Sivertsen på 70-årsdagen 12. Juni 1983*, ed. Ingeborg Lycke et al. (Oslo/Bergen/Tromsø/Stavanger: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), 7.

<sup>62</sup> “Sund folkehøgskole, Inderøy, 80 år. Skulen blir no sjølveigande institusjon. Stor gåve fra fru Marta Sivertsen and skulestyrar Sivertsen – Albert Haugsand ny skulestyrer”, in *Nationen*, 18.8.1948. In this text, it is reported that the Sivertsen couple gave Sund folk high school as a gift to the local community, and that the folk high school then became a non-profit institution.

<sup>63</sup> In 1946, Nils Sivertsen published a book on Hans Nielsen Hauge, *Hans Nielsen Hauge og vensamfunnet*. In this book, Sivertsen does much to emphasise the direct line between Hauge and Grundtvig. See Sivertsen (1946), 193 ff. and 213. His source is obviously Anders Skrondal’s book on Grundtvig in Norway (*Grundtvig og Noreg*, (Bergen: Lunde, 1929)). Sivertsen’s emphasis on the relation between Hauge and Grundtvig is criticised by his reviewers, see for instance Ivar Welle, “Hauges pietistiske linje,” in *Vårt Land*, 18.3.1947.

<sup>64</sup> English title: *Democratic and National Upbringing in the Norwegian School*.

vertsen also acted as a member.<sup>65</sup> In *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole*, Sivertsen builds on the ideals of the folk high school, Volckmar argues.<sup>66</sup> Sivertsen's point of departure is to demonstrate that the folk high schools creditably aimed to give their students a national and democratic upbringing, as well as to develop a common spirit. This goal should also be pursued in Norwegian compulsory education, where it was lacking. However, according to Volckmar, Sivertsen adapted the ideals of the folk high school to his own time. This is particularly evident in his emphasis on the need for democratic education. In his pamphlet, Sivertsen distanced himself from the path that had been taken at the nineteenth-century Grundtvigian folk high schools, where the individual and the national were at the centre. The ideal for his own time could rather be found in the Labour movement's folk high schools, such as the one established at Sørmarka outside Oslo.<sup>67</sup> Here, the aim had been to educate the pupils into capable workers who could participate in a democratic society, rather than to emphasise the need of awakening national feeling, as was done in the traditional folk high schools, Sivertsen argued. Thus, it should be social studies, and not history education, that was to form the school's formative teaching material.

In the following, I will argue that Sivertsen's Grundtvigian heritage can also be found in other texts that he wrote. At the same time, we shall see that the democratic ideals Sivertsen aimed at in his visionary post-war pamphlet were present in Grundtvigian environments in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Along these lines, I will claim that what Sivertsen particularly connects to the practical work of the labour movement can be related to the original cultural background of the folk high school movement. Sivertsen's statements can thus be seen in light of the contexts that have been an important part of his life. At the same time, they are a part of the great education- and Bildung project defining Norway in the post-war decades.

I will also postulate that many of Eva Nordland's texts from the 1950s, as well as her understanding of man and man's responsibilities, are characterised by the

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<sup>65</sup> The Besserud circle was a group of prominent Norwegian intellectuals who gathered in the home of historian Halfdan Olaus Christophersen (1902–1980) in Besserud in Oslo to discuss the rebuilding of Norway after WWII. Sivertsen's pamphlet is part of a series discussing post-war Norway, initiated by the Besserud circle.

<sup>66</sup> Volckmar (2004).

<sup>67</sup> The folk high school at Sørmarka was established by the National Worker's organisation (LO) in 1938, and counts as the Labour movement's first significant educational institution. It was established by historian and Labour Party politician Halvard Lange (1902–1970), who also worked as the school's manager. See Gidske Anderson, *Halvard Lange: portrett av en nordmann* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981).

contexts that have surrounded her and of which she herself has been a part, right from her childhood. These contexts are still available in the post-war decades. Among the writings Nordland left to posterity is an autobiography, in which she draws lines back through her own life.<sup>68</sup> Nordland was a priest's daughter, and in her autobiography she has looked back on her childhood as a "lifelong upbringing".<sup>69</sup> Her father, Hans Bauge (1889–1967), had been a close friend of the well-known theologian Kristian Schjelderup (1894–1980) and, according to Nordland, Bauge considered himself as a "liberal Christian". In the 1920s, Bauge had also exchanged letters with the famous musician, theologian, and medical doctor Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965). Christianity's ethical message was central to Hans Bauge's theological point of view, and Nordland talks about this in the chapter on her upbringing:

As a child, I went to the church a lot, because it was not easy in a village like ours to fill the church when the priest did not talk about the "inner mission". And even worse, like my father did, that the priest warned about what he called a "sweet-Jesus-mentality", which he thought would prevent people from using Christianity in everyday life. The Christian teaching was quite simple for Dad: You must act according to the message of serving your fellow man.<sup>70</sup>

The years in her childhood home had obviously drawn her attention towards a morally oriented Christianity. Her father had made his children aware of four basic life rules, both through their upbringing and from the pulpit: 1) live like the Good Samaritan, be quick to help others, 2) live a simple life, do not spend lavishly, and do not be to blame for others getting too little, 3) take action if someone bothers others, disobey the tormentors, especially if they were people with power and authority, 4) don't accept someone forcefully trying to press you into doing something you don't agree with. Her father had also pointed to Gandhi as a moral role model.<sup>71</sup> For the young Eva Nordland, Christianity was thus a question of how people should live together on earth. She was taught from the beginning that man should use what he or she believed, and if it was not used, this was proof of lacking belief.

It is likely that these life rules characterised Eva Nordland's adult life as a pedagogue and public debater, and as a participant in the political sphere to a much greater degree than previous scholarship has been aware of. Her background and fundamental principles of life fit well with contemporary cultural and political contexts. Schjelderup and Schweitzer, for instance, were still an active part of

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<sup>68</sup> Eva Nordland, *Skritt på en vei* (Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk 2000).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 17ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23.

the cultural and theological context in the 1950s. Eva Nordland could relate to these contexts, as they also merged with her own points of view. This can, in turn, help posterity to understand Nordland's texts and statements. Her ideas about school, education, and upbringing are not just parts of an educational discourse, they can also be seen in light of a context in which theology forms an important component.



**Fig. 1:** Eva Nordland. Photo: Unknown/The Norwegian Labour Movement Archives and Library.

The argumentation in this book can thus be seen in the extension of Kim Helsvig's article on Christianity and baptismal education in Norwegian schools 1739–2003. In this text, Helsvig points out that Christianity stands out with renewed strength in Norwegian education after 1969 (the year when "Knowledge of Christianity" was separated from school's baptismal education), albeit with different cultural assumptions and with a different content than previously.<sup>72</sup> From the beginning of

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<sup>72</sup> Kim Helsvig, "Kristendom og dåpsopplæring i norsk skole 1739–2003," in *Kirke og Kultur* 108 (5–6) (2004), 447–461.





**Fig. 2:** Helge Sivertsen. Photo: Unknown/Oslo Museum, CC0 1.0.

the 1970s, the content of Christian education, which traditionally had been based on Bible history, catechism, and hymnals, was replaced with an easily understandable youth edition of the New Testament, as well as textbooks with detailed guidelines for the teachers. Helsvig sees this change in relation to the Labour Party's new perspectives on religion in 1975. Previously, religion had been considered a private affair, but in that year it was emphasised that the Labour Party should assume that there was a connection between the Christian message and a social policy based on solidarity. At the same time, one should assume that socialist thinking was more in harmony with Christianity than with capitalism.<sup>73</sup> These ideas had far-reaching consequences – for instance, the late twentieth century's most influential (and contentious) school politician, Gudmund Hernes, considered Christianity to be an ethnic characteristic (Norwegian = Christian).<sup>74</sup> This has also led theologians to ask whether the Norwegian school from the 1970s onwards has been

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<sup>73</sup> Helsvig (2004). See also Jørund Midttun, *Sosialdemokrati og folkekirke. Det norske Arbeiderpartis forhold til kirke og religion*, KULTs skriftserie 41 (Oslo: Norges Forskningsråd, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Tordis Borchrevinck, "Makten eller æren. Kristendom og felleskultur i det flerreligiøse Norge," in *Sand i maskineriet: makt og demokrati i det flerkulturelle Norge*, ed. Grete Brochman, Tordis Borchrevinck, and Jon Rogstad, *Makt- og demokratiutredningen 1998–2003* (Oslo: Pensumtjeneste, 2010), 117. Gudmund Hernes served as Minister of Church, Education, and Research between 1990 and 1995.

founded on a special social democratic version of Christianity, where a need for a confessional anchoring of Christianity has been emphasised. At the same time, the necessity of respect and openness for other denominations and life stances has been underlined.<sup>75</sup> This book will argue that the Labour Party's new take on religion in 1975 can be seen in a continuous line that can be traced back to the post-war period and the development of the welfare state. In this continuous line, Christianity can be viewed as an active and normative cultural factor, just as theology must be seen as a decisive political driving force, in the twentieth century as well.

## The International Research Context

The present book must also be seen in the context of continued international scholarship focusing on the extent to which church and school can be seen as an integrated part of the state in the Nordic countries. A prominent example are the works by Danish theologian Mette Buchardt, who has devoted several scholarly articles to the study of the relation between state, church, and education. Buchardt has argued that the history of Nordic Cultural Protestantism has contributed to a model of religious education in which secularisation is combined with sacralisation: the church is divorced from the state, but at the same time, Protestant Christianity is at the nation's inner core.<sup>76</sup> This can be seen in the works of university theologians of Cultural Protestant affiliation, such as the young Eivind Berggrav (Norway), Edvard Lehmann (Denmark, 1862–1930), and Nathan Söderblom (Sweden, 1866–1931). Thus, in Buchardt's opinion, it is meaningful to talk about a "Nordic Cultural DNA" that is connected with the significant role of Nordic Protestant Culture, and it is also reflected in the salient place that Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity takes in today's Nordic education system. This gradual transformation of religion into culture is described in other works by Mette Buchardt as well, both in texts co-authored with other scholars and in articles she has written alone. This is, for instance, evident in a research work written together with Finnish scholars Pirjo Markkola and Heli Valtonen, where the scholars argue that, al-

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75 Sverre Dag Mogstad, "1960–1989. Kirken i kulturkampen om skolen," in *Kirke – Skole – Stat: 1739–1989*, ed. Brynjar Haraldsø (Oslo: IKO-forlaget, 1989), 132–157. See also Ivar Asheim, "Kan vi lære av historien," in Haraldsø (1989), 161 and 167.

76 Mette Buchardt, "Cultural Protestantism and Nordic Religious Education: An Incision in the Historical Layers behind the Nordic Welfare State Model," in *Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education 2* (2015), 131–165. See also her article "Lutheranism and the Nordic States," in *Luther zeitgenössisch, historisch, kontrovers*, ed. Uwe Puschner and Richard Faber (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017), 285–295.

though changes in the educational system often have followed a pattern where the responsibility of the church is replaced by secular authorities, “breaks with the past have not always been abrupt, because the Lutheran Churches have had a significant role in the Nordic national projects”.<sup>77</sup> In another article, Buchardt suggests that recontextualisation of liberal theology in education in the first half of the twentieth century resulted in progressivism rather than secularisation. Liberal theology is defined as a direction in “Protestant theology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that sought scientific legitimisation by incorporating literature studies, sociology and history, in particular, to theology”.<sup>78</sup> This aim was followed by an interest in making Christianity useful to the culture. Buchardt demonstrates that this recontextualisation of liberal theology can be seen in the works of Edvard Lehmann and Aage Bentzen (1894–1953), the latter also a theologian, who transformed “religion” into new categories that were related to “culture” when pedagogised into state schooling.

It should perhaps not come as a surprise that Buchardt also views this as being in line with the development of a Nordic welfare state.<sup>79</sup> She argues that the Nordic states and their social practice are intrinsically connected with the Lutheran confession, and that Lutheranism thus becomes a common frame of reference, a characteristic Pirjo Markkola has described as “Lutheran ideology”.<sup>80</sup> These perspectives coincides with a broader interest in seeing Lutheran ideas and practices as preconditions for the Nordic welfare state. The Evangelical-Lutheran heritage has, as Paolo Borioni points out, been an important background for the argumentation of social democratic reformers in the twentieth century; the Evangelical-Lutheran background has been socially reinterpreted and challenged.<sup>81</sup> This must, of

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77 Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola, and Heli Valtonen, “Introduction: Education in the Making of the Welfare State,” in *Education, State and Citizenship*, ed. Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola, and Heli Valtonen, NordWel Studies in Historical Welfare State Research 4 (Helsinki: Nordic Centre of Excellence NordWel, 2013), 7–30, here 14. Mette Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization and Modern Education Reforms in ‘Provincialized Europe’: Historical Research in Religion and Education beyond Secularization R.I.P.,” in *IJHE. Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11 (2021), 164–170.

78 Mette Buchardt, “Pedagogical Transformations of ‘Religion’ into ‘Culture’ in Danish Mass Schooling from the 1900s to the 1930s,” in *Paedagogica Historica* 49 (2012), 126–138.

79 Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013).

80 Pirjo Markkola, “Introduction: The Lutheran Context of Nordic Women’s History,” in *Gender and Vocation: Women, Religion, and Social Change in the Nordic Countries, 1830–1940*, ed. Pirjo Markkola *Studia Historica* 64 (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), 9–25.

81 Paolo Borioni, “Danish Welfare Reform and Lutheran Background in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” in *Journal of Church and State* 56 (1) (2014), 128–150. Several Nordic historians have also argued that the development of the Nordic model and the Scandinavian welfare system can be ascribed to a secularised Lutheran tradition, see for instance Uffe Østgard, *Europa. Identitet og identitetspolitik*

course, also have consequences for the views on schooling and education. Religion, in its broadest sense, has been seen as a profound cultural prerequisite for education and, in line with this, educational theorists and historians like Daniel Tröhler, Daniel Lindmark, Meike Sophia Baader, Rob Freathy, Stephen Parker, and Jonathan Doney (to mention a few) have outlined a far more complicated relationship between religion, education, state, and politics than has previously been done.<sup>82</sup> Religion is, they argue, in different ways transformed and spread out in twentieth- and twenty-first-century school policies and practical schooling, for instance through the different *languages of education*, as Daniel Tröhler puts it.<sup>83</sup> One such language of education is seen through the open and pluralistic approach that characterised the late twentieth-century reform of religious education in Great Britain, which can be interpreted in light of the colonialist knowledge production provided through Western mission.<sup>84</sup> These perspectives reflect many of Rodney Stark's points. In his iconic essay *Secularization R.I.P.*, Stark, who was an American sociologist of religion, argued that secularisation theorists have tended to oversimplify society's development and equated secularisation with deinstitu-

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(Copenhagen: Munksgaard/Rosinante, 1998) and Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth, eds., *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997). These perspectives are clearly indebted to Max Weber's theories on Protestant ethics. The church historian Dag Thorkildsen, on his part, connects the Nordic welfare state policies to Luther's understanding of work as a vocation, see Dag Thorkildsen, "Lutherdom, vekkelse og de nordiske velferdsstater," in *TEMP – tidsskrift for historie* 1 (1) (2010), 131–144, and "Religious Identity and Nordic Identity," in Sørensen and Stråth (1997), 138–141. See also Antti Raunio, "Lutheran Impact in the Nordic Socio-Ethical Culture," in Heinrich Assel, Johann Anselm Stiegler, and Axel E. Walter, eds., *Reformatio Baltica. Kulturwirkungen der Reformation in den Metropolen des Ostseeraums* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 933–947.

<sup>82</sup> Daniel Tröhler, *Languages of Education: Protestant Legacies, National Identities and Global Aspirations* (New York: Routledge, 2011), and "National Literacies, or Modern Education and the Art of Fabricating Social Minds," in *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52 (5) (2020), 620–635, Rob Freathy, Stephen G. Parker, and Jonathan Doney, "Raiders of the Lost Archives: Searching for the Hidden History of Religious Education in England," in *History, Remembrance and Religious Educations*, ed. Stephen G. Parker, Rob Freathy, and Leslie J. Francis (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), 105–137, Meike Sophia Baader, *Erziehung als Erlösung. Transformation der Religiösen in der Reformpädagogik* (Weinheim/München: Juvena Verlag, 2005), and "Erziehung als Erlösung: religiöse Dimensionen der Reformpädagogik," in *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Historiographie* 8 (2) (2002), 89–97. In 2014, an entire volume of the periodical *Journal of Church and State* was devoted to studies of Lutheranism and the Nordic Welfare State in comparison. The collection of articles in this volume demonstrated the varied dimensions of influence of Lutheranism in the Nordic countries in the years after 1945. See Pirjo Markkola and Ingela Neumann, "Lutheranism and the Nordic Welfare States in Comparison," in *Journal of Church and State* 1 (2014), 1–12.

<sup>83</sup> Tröhler (2011).

<sup>84</sup> Freathy, Parker, and Doney (2015).

tionalisation.<sup>85</sup> An example of this could be seen, Stark argued, through Karel Dobelaere's and David Martin's understanding of secularisation as a "decline in the social power of once-dominant religious institutions whereby other social institutions, especially political and religious institutions, have escaped from prior religious dominance". And, Stark sarcastically added, "if this were all that secularization means, there would be nothing to argue about."<sup>86</sup> Stark main argument is that there have been no recent religious changes in Christianity that are consistent with a secularisation thesis – not even among scientists. He concludes by quoting Peter Berger: "I think that what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake (...) Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious".<sup>87</sup>

Yet in spite of the relatively recent attention towards the importance of religion, these Lutheran ideas and the Lutheran institutional practices for the development of the welfare state – and welfare state institutions – must still be regarded as overlooked in previous research, not least from a Norwegian perspective.<sup>88</sup> There is a need now to see Nordic and Norwegian educational history from a broader church historical perspective, and to view church and theological history as an important background for Nordic – more specifically Norwegian – school after WWII.<sup>89</sup> This need can be highlighted by taking recently published sociolog-

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<sup>85</sup> Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R. I. P.," in *Sociology of Religion* 60 (3) (Autumn 1999), 249–73.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>88</sup> See for instance Susanne Wiborg, *Education and Social Integration: Comprehensive Schooling in Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Susanne Wiborg, "Education and Social Integration: A Comparative Study of the Comprehensive School System in Scandinavia," in *London Review of Education* 2 (2) (2004), 83–93. Susanne Wiborg and Terry M. Moe, eds., *The Comparative Politics of Education: Teacher Unions and Education Systems around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). In accordance with this, Kaius Sinnimäki and his colleagues have recently argued that for a long time, there has been a great lack of religious perspectives in the explanatory models for the formation of the Nordic welfare states. All attention has, according to Sinnimäki, been directed towards the decreasing importance of Christianity. See Kaius Sinnimäki et al., "The Legacy of Lutheranism in a Secular Nordic Society: An Introduction," in *On the Legacy of Nordic Lutheranism in Finland*, ed. Kaius Sinnimäkiet et al. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society/SKS, 2019), 9–36.

<sup>89</sup> In a promising PhD project at Uppsala University, Emma Hellström analyses the relationship between the relation between Christian education and the democratic development in Swedish primary schools between 1920 and 1969. Hellström discusses the extent to which Christian education is seen as a question that created tensions and contradictions concerning the right to define what this school subject should be like, and she argues that there is no contradiction between the typical growth of democracy that is seen in Swedish primary education in this period and in Christian education. The preliminary project title is *Religionens roll i den demokratiska skolens fram-*

ical works into consideration. In a comparative study of school politics in Norway and Germany after 1945, Katharina Sass has argued that school politics can only be understood in light of substantial cleavages – or conflict structures – that set the premises for cooperation.<sup>90</sup> Sass’ theoretical point of departure is the Norwegian sociologist Stein Rokkan’s (1921–1979) theory of political cleavage structures, which implies that the political dividing lines that characterised Europe in the twentieth century were seen as expressions of historically determinant social divisions.<sup>91</sup> One of the political debates that Sass uses to enlighten her thesis is the debate on Christian education in Norwegian politics up to 1969, for the background of which she concludes that “the Labour Party succeeded in handling crosscutting cleavages in a way that did not sabotage and sometimes even strengthened its school reforms, thus building a powerful hegemonic coalition”.<sup>92</sup> Even if Sass emphasises that the Labour Party was not united in its views of the school’s value base (“some social democrats wanted a fully secular school, but many wanted to keep a modernised form of Christian education because of its ethical value”), she seems to set as a premise – or take for granted – that Norwegian education in the post-war era was characterised by secularisation, or a gradual downscaling of the importance of Christianity in society in general and the school in particular.<sup>93</sup> In the following, and in line with the previously mentioned scholarship *post* the idea of Secularization R.I.P., I will problematise the concept of secularisation, and provide room for a broader understanding of the cultural background surrounding Norwegian school reforms in the post-war period.

Modern Protestant theology, as well as the Lutheran background of the Nordic states, will form an important background for my argumentation. It is a fundamental assumption that modern Protestant theology and Lutheranism, as this appears in twentieth-century Norway, create significant contexts for the school’s development in post-war Norway. Hence, I will claim, through being transformed and recontextualised into education and state schooling, modern Protestant theological perspectives, including Grundtvigianism, are woven into the contexts forming

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växt. Striden om folkskolans och grundskolans kristendomsundervisning 1920–1969 (English title: The role of religion in the rise of democratic schools. The battle over Christian education in *Swedish primary schools 1920–1969*).

<sup>90</sup> Sass (2022).

<sup>91</sup> See particularly the much-cited essay by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction,” in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967), 1–64.

<sup>92</sup> Sass (2022), 244. Sass also uses other conflicts to enlighten her thesis, such as the one on private schooling.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

the background for the development of the welfare state after 1945 in Norway. For what pertains to theology, Johan Bernitz Hygen (1911–2002), Tor Aukrust (1921–2007), and Kristian Schjelderup will be of particular importance. Hygen worked as a professor of theology at University of Oslo and was one of the most significant ethicists and philosophers of religion in his own time, not least demonstrated through his doctoral thesis on Christian teleology, which was defended in 1948.<sup>94</sup> Johan B. Hygen also contributed substantially to the public sphere, not least as a commentator in newspapers and on radio when general orientations were needed.<sup>95</sup> As well, Tor Aukrust, at that time a PhD candidate at the theology faculty at University of Oslo, was an important voice in the public sphere in the 1950s. Aukrust came to play a substantial role as a mediator between social democracy and Christianity in post-war Norway. Kristian Schjelderup, on his part, played a substantial role in the so-called hell debate in the 1950s, and his theological understanding contributed to putting a humanistic and liberal understanding of Christianity on the agenda in the post-war decades. Kristian Schjelderup held a doctorate in theology from University of Oslo (1921) and served as bishop in Hamar diocese from 1947. Schjelderup's views form an important part of the cultural backdrop of the school's development in this period.

## Theoretical Perspectives

In the theoretical sense, this present book will be based on an understanding that the meaning of an utterance – or a text – will always be dependent upon the surrounding cultural contexts at the time when the given utterance was expressed.<sup>96</sup> Helge Sivertsen's and Eva Nordland's texts will of course take centre stage, but at the same time this theoretical approach will also require that other texts and documents are taken into consideration. Sivertsen's and Nordland's texts are mainly written in periodicals and in the daily press, for example in journals such as *Kirke og Kultur*, *Kontakt*, and *Norsk Skoleblad*, and in newspapers like *Arbeiderbladet* and *Verdens Gang*. There are few biographical sources that can provide information on how Nordland and Sivertsen saw themselves in relation to contempo-

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<sup>94</sup> Johan B. Hygen, *Moralen og Guds rike. Teleologiske problemer i den kristelige etikk* (Oslo: Land og kirke, 1948). See also his article "Menneskesyn og moral," in *Kirke og Kultur* 4 (1949), 193–208.

<sup>95</sup> Inge Lønning, "Kristendom og kultur," in *Kristendom og kultur. Utvalgte artikler utgitt til forfatterens 70-årsdag, 16. Juli 1981*, ed. Johan B. Hygen (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1981), 14.

<sup>96</sup> The cultural context refers to the social, material, and intellectual framing of the text, and is used in accordance with how it is elaborated by Swedish text scholars Per Ledin and Lennart Hell-spong. See their work *Handbok i brukstekstanalys* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1997), 49–64.

rary intellectual currents. Eva Nordland's autobiography counts as an important background, but the book is written in a narrative mode, and the reflections upon how the contexts have characterised Nordland's own works and ideas are relatively few.<sup>97</sup> Helge Sivertsen, on his part, left no autobiographical works to posterity. Thus, Nordland's and Sivertsen's texts will be understood as representations of the writers and will be studied with the purpose of exploring what they intended to do.

With this point of departure, the noted Cambridge political theorist Quentin Skinner's (b. 1940) work will form an important background in this book, in particular Skinner's influential 1969 essay, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas".<sup>98</sup> A fundamental assumption in Skinner's work is that *to say something* is also *to do something*, implying that an utterance should also be seen as an act. Skinner thus stands in the tradition of the pragmatist John Langshaw Austin (1911–1960) and is regarded to have made Austin's insights on speech acts applicable for the historian in the historian's work with texts. In his 1962 treatise *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin made a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary speech acts.<sup>99</sup> These expressions describe different aspects of the same speech act: a locutionary speech act is the utterance in itself, an illocutionary speech act describes what one does when saying something, and a perlocutionary speech act denotes the consequences of the expression.

Skinner emphasised the illocutionary aspect of the speech act and demonstrated how this accounted for shifts in language. According to Skinner, there was "no

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97 To the extent that Eva Nordland has reflected upon the connection between the contexts and her own utterances and ideas, these reflections are about the educational context, rather than the theological. Nordland has devoted chapters to the Norwegian pedagogue Helga Eng (1875–1966), and to the Swedish educationalists Ellen Key (1849–1926) as well as Lev Tolstoj (1828–1910), referring to them as an important background for her own work. However, she does not go into details about these intellectuals, although she starts her presentation of Tolstoj by affirming her concerns for the future of Norwegian academic pedagogy ("We removed ourselves from the reform pedagogy that Helga Eng had drawn up and broke with the legacy of Ellen Key. One question was now urgent: how should we secure *Bildung* and humanism in study? The development of the subject went in the direction of making room for a bit of this and a bit of that, in which tests were to be given, then exam results were to be graded in accordance with what was regarded as important in terms of elements in the subject."). See Nordland (2000), 56.

98 Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Context in the History of Ideas," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 29–57. See also his later methodological works, such as "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action," in *Political Theory* 3 (1974), 277–303, and "Hermeneutics and the Role of History," in *New Literary History* 1 (1976), 209–232.

99 John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, The William James Lecture Delivered at Harvard University 1955, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).



determinate idea to which various writers contributed, but only a variety of statements made with the words by a variety of different agents with a variety of intentions". Thus, he continued, "what we are seeing is equally that there is no history of the idea to be written, but only a history necessarily focused on the various agents who used the idea, and on their varying situations and intentions in using it".<sup>100</sup> Consequently, every speech act could be seen as conventional and embedded in the surrounding specific contexts in order to be grasped, every historical situation or utterance is unique.<sup>101</sup> Knowledge of the contexts will always be of fundamental importance to understanding the given utterance. The meaning of the given expression can also transcend what can be controlled by the writer, and through having privileged access to the contexts, the historian can also be able to unveil structures of which the writer might have been unaware.

*Intention in writing* is a key term in Skinner's methodology.<sup>102</sup> To unveil the intentions of the writer should here be defined as understanding how the given expression was meant to be taken at the time when it was written. Thus, says Skinner, "to understand a text must be to understand both the intention to be understood, and the intention that this intention should be understood, which the text itself as an act of communication must at least have embodied".<sup>103</sup> It follows from this that the route which the historian should follow is the delineation of the whole range of communications in which a certain word or a certain sentence could be used. This, Skinner admits – rather than writing the history of the sentence itself – is an "almost absurdly ambitious enterprise", but it helps the historian to focus on the possible ways of using a possible expression, and sheds light upon how the meanings of words may change. With these perspectives, Skinner also avoids Wimsatt and Beardsley's famous critique of the intentional fallacy.<sup>104</sup>

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**100** Skinner (1988), 56.

**101** Erik Åsard, "Quentin Skinner and his Critics: Some Notes on a Methodological Debate," in *Statsvetenskapelig Tidsskrift* 90 (2) (1987), 101–116.

**102** David Boucher, "The View from the Inside: Skinner and the Priority of Retrieving Authorial Intentions," in *Texts in Contexts: Revisionist Methods for Studying the History of Ideas*, ed. David Boucher, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Library 12 (Delft: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 193–249.

**103** *Ibid.*, 63.

**104** In their 1954 article, William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley underlined the impossibility of understanding the intentions of the writer. See "The Intentional Fallacy," in W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1954), 3–18. In a volume consisting of critical essays discussing Skinner's theses (Tully (1988)), Skinner is criticised, among other things, for neglecting the notion of the death of the author. One of the critics is the political theorist John Keane (b. 1949), who presents his criticism in "More Theses on the History of Philosophy," in Tully (1988), 204–217. In a reply, Skinner addresses Keane's statements, underlining that his primary intention is to focus on the language of the discourse. His secondary

Skinner's understanding of meaning as something that is formed at the intersection between the text and the public sphere implies that the intention is never contingently connected to the speech act. The intention is implicit in every single expression and can never anticipate the given utterance. Skinner importantly differentiates between *intention to do* and *intention in doing*. The intention to do, which is identical to the motivation for uttering the given expression, may never have issued in an action. Intention in doing is logically connected with the speech act, in the sense that it serves to characterise its point.<sup>105</sup> Intention in doing may then be, for example, to confirm, to warn, or to oppose. Intention in doing is thereby the key to understanding the speech act. This is equal to what J. L. Austin labelled as *the intended illocutionary force* of the expression. What was intended in doing can be found through studying the surrounding contexts of the given utterance. However, even if the study of the social texts could explain them, it would not be the same as providing the necessary means to understand them. This is related to the fact that the surrounding contexts can only assist the scholar in dealing with the question of what the writer intended to say with the given expression, it can never provide an understanding.

The question at stake here will be to unveil Helge Sivertsen's and Eva Nordland's intentions in writing, in the Skinnerian sense of the word intention. This means that I am interested in examining the intersection between their utterances or texts, and the contexts that surround these utterances. These contexts will be defined by the aid of White Papers, protocols, discussions and reports in newspapers and periodicals, as well as other sources that can be used to find the meaning of utterances. In relation to the issues that are presented in this chapter, I will delineate three relevant contexts: a) the development of the welfare state and the school's place in the development of the welfare state; b) culture and society; c) theological contexts. The first context includes discussions at the Storting as well as general perspectives on the welfare state development in Norway; the second context comprises the so-called hell debate, the establishment of the Norwegian Humanist Association, and the language dispute in the 1950s; the third context includes the establishment of IKO as well as a discussion of the prevailing theological tendencies. When describing the third context, we will also take a closer look at some of the theologians who may be relevant for understanding the prevailing intellectual conditions, first and foremost Johan B. Hygen and Tor Aukrust. Kristian Schjelderup will be presented in connection with the hell debate. It must, however,

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intention is to shed light upon the relationship between the individual contributions to such language and the discourse as a whole. See Quentin Skinner, "A Reply to my Critics," in Tully (1988), 231–288. In this text, Skinner also addresses the other authors in Tully's book.

105 Skinner (1988), 60–61.

be underlined that even if these contexts are treated separately in this book, they do, in practice, intertwine. The contexts form an important part of this book and will be presented before we take a closer look at Sivertsen's and Nordland's texts. The three contexts could also have been supplemented with other relevant backgrounds, for example the pedagogical and the Grundtvigian contexts. Yet, in order to achieve the highest possible degree of reader-friendliness, pedagogical and Grundtvigian perspectives will only be brought into the discussions in the book's third part.

To sum up, this book studies Norwegian compulsory education in the post-war period, with an emphasis on the years up to 1959 (Public School Act). I argue that the political role of the subject "Knowledge of Christianity" (Kristendoms-kunnskap), as well as the role Christianity plays as the basic value in Norwegian education in the post-war years, can be understood in light of a cultural and non-dogmatic understanding of Christian theology which is a part of the contexts in which this subject is formed. This contrasts with the previous understanding of the development of school and "Knowledge of Christianity" in this period, and by entering into these theological and cultural contexts, this volume will also provide perspectives different than those of scholars who have challenged the thesis of a sharply polarised landscape on the topic of Christian education in Norway after 1945. Of particular importance to this book are texts by Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland. Sivertsen took a central role in the Labour Party after 1945, not least in what pertained to education, and Eva Nordland functioned as one of Sivertsen's closest advisors.

This book will have three parts after this introduction. In the first of these, I will depict the different contexts that surrounds the politicians and intellectuals who are subject to study in this book. The second part will denote a presentation of Helge Sivertsen's and Eva Nordland's relevant works and discuss the findings of the previous parts in light of the contextual analysis. In the last part of the book, we will also discuss the findings in the previous part of the book in light of relevant research literature, and denote Sivertsen's and Nordland's intention in writing and uttering.

## 2 A Social-democratic Order, the School, and the Secular State. A Diversity of Contexts

### Political Conditions

We will begin this part by describing the political changes that set the stage for the time in which the main characters in this study lived and worked. What political ideas dominated at that time, what were the practical consequences of these ideas, and what role did the school play in everyday political life? What was everyday life like in Norway in the years after WWII? Why was it necessary to improve the school, and how did this process take place?

### Rebuilding a demolished country; the development of the welfare state; the school as a cornerstone in the welfare state

The government that came to power in Norway after WWII faced enormous challenges. Norway was to be rebuilt, politically, economically, and physically. The ravages of the war had demolished parts of the country. Particularly the county of Finnmark and huge districts in Troms in northern Norway were in ruins. The merchant shipping fleet had suffered heavy losses in allied service, the fishing fleet needed renewal, and the industry had to be adapted to production in times of peace. There was a great shortage of housing, as the interwar period had offered few possibilities for new buildings. During the war, people had lived with food rationing, with sometimes enormous queues for food. The peace in May 1945 gave a new hope for the future. The number of births per year in 1945 and 1946 broke previous records, and people's visions and dreams created a common dream for a better future.<sup>1</sup> The Norwegians had now become a united people as never before.

One man came to play a particular role as a politician in post-war Norway, the above-mentioned Einar Gerhardsen. Gerhardsen is the longest-serving prime minister in Norwegian history, with over 17 years in office, and Rune Slagstad counts him as one of the most important national strategists in Norway during this peri-

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<sup>1</sup> May Brith Ohman Nielsen, "Mennesker i historie, historie i mennesker: Hvorfor og hvordan undervise om emosjonelle og kontroversielle emner knyttet til Norge under andre verdenskrig?," in *Fortiden i nåtiden. Nye veier i formidlingen av andre verdenskrigs historie*, ed. Claudia Lenz and Trond Riste Nilsen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011), 269–295.

od.<sup>2</sup> Einar Gerhardsen, who had no formal education other than the seven compulsory years during his youth, was raised in one of the capital's most disreputable living quarters (the so-called Gråbein quarter), an upbringing which is considered to have marked him for the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup> He had a clear socialist vision and devoted his career to strengthening the working class. This became particularly clear when he took office in 1945, as he proclaimed that the Labour Party should work for a "free socialist society".<sup>4</sup> His aim was that labour as well as capital should be controlled by democratically elected bodies.<sup>5</sup> This was to be realized through, among other things, a comprehensive council system. The so-called industry council was supposed to control and regulate the business within each individual industry.<sup>6</sup> Another council, the production committee, was supposed to bring together officials and workers within each enterprise, in order to decide on "significant changes" in the business. However, Gerhardsen's socialist vision met with much opposition, both in the different companies as well as within the Labour Party. Moreover, Norway was included in the Marshall Plan, which aimed at increasing productivity by transferring American principles of business management and American technology to the European countries, and by pressing the countries into supranational cooperation (OEEC/OECD).<sup>7</sup> Gerhardsen had to give up his vision of governing the country in a socialist direction by the end of the 1940s, and the social democratic course of the Labour Party became a final fact from 1953.<sup>8</sup>

The post-war period gave a new lease on life for the Norwegian economy, realising the hope for the individual that many had dreamed of after the end of the war. Suburbs were built in the big cities, and infrastructures, like underground and tram systems, were developed to make suburban life easier. Cooperative housing organisations, like OBOS in Oslo and BOB in Bergen, provided solutions to the housing problems in the biggest cities by building homes for their members,

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2 Slagstad (1998).

3 Finn Olstad, *Frihetens århundre. Norsk historie gjennom de siste hundre år* (Oslo: Pax, 2010).

4 Einar Gerhardsen, *Unge år. Erindringer fra århundreskiftet fram til 1940* (Oslo: Tiden forlag, 1974), 390.

5 Inger Bjørnhaug, *I rettferdighetens navn. LO 100 år – historiske blikk på fagbevegelsens meningsbrytninger og veivalg* (Oslo: Akribes forlag, 2000).

6 Olstad (2010), 140.

7 Helge Ø. Pharo, *Norge og Marshallplanen*, Atlanterhavskomiteens serier 198 (Oslo: Den Norske Atlanterhavskomite, 1997), 5.

8 Rune Slagstad, "Da Arbeiderpartiet fant seg selv," in *Arbeiderpartiet og planstyret 1945–1965*, ed. Trond Nordby (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993), 47–78. See also Edvard Bull, *Norges historie*, vol. 14, *Norge i den rike verden, Norge etter 1945* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag, 1979).

and played a core role in implementing the post-war social housing policy.<sup>9</sup> The Norwegian State Housing Bank (NSHB) was established by parliament in 1946, with the purpose of financing housing at a modest but good standard for a reasonable cost.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence of these efforts, about 650,000 new houses were erected in Norway between 1950 and 1970. At the same time, the standard of living increased rapidly, as did salaries. The real wage for an industrial worker roughly doubled from 1945 to the late 1960s, and from the end of the 1930s up to 1969 private consumption more than tripled. The children of the post-war generation could enjoy benefits unknown in their parent's upbringing: good and nutritious food, as well as a wide selection of toys and sports equipment. From 1960, private cars, which had previously been reserved for those with transport needs in their profession, were freely sold, with the private car becoming the ultimate sign of welfare and prosperity.<sup>11</sup> In addition to wages increasing, the working days became shorter. Since 1918, the normal weekly working hours had been 48. In 1959, this was reduced to 45. Nine years later, in 1968, the number of hours people had to be at work was further reduced to 42 hours per week. The labour organisations had been a strong driving force to accomplish these changes.<sup>12</sup> Norway became an industrial and service society with strong secondary and tertiary industries, and the people who lived there were given the freedom to choose, to consume, and to do as they wanted.

These changes, which completely changed people's daily life within a few decades, must be seen as part of the development of the welfare state in Norway, similar to how this governmental form also developed in the other Nordic countries. The reconstruction of Norway after 1945 was characterised by what historian Berge Furre has called a Social Democratic Order.<sup>13</sup> Its characteristics can be highlighted in ten points: 1) a strong state with governance ambitions, 2) large financial transfers to equalise the differences between parts of the country and social groups, 3) economic growth and full employment as the highest goal of economic policy, 4) industry as the priority trade, 5) marked mixed economy, 6) negotiations between the state and interest organisations that supplemented the political-par-

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9 Bjørn Bjørnsen, *Hele folket i hus. OBOS 1929–1970* (Oslo: Solum Bokvennen, 2007).

10 Knut Selberg and Vegar Hagerup, *Husbanken former Norge: Den norske stats husbank: innflytelse på arkitektur og tettstedsutvikling 1946–1980* (Trondheim: Norges Tekniske Høgskole. Institutt for by- og regionplanlegging, 1981).

11 Per Østby, *Flukten fra Detroit: Massebilismens integrasjon i det norske samfunnet*, (Dr. Art. thesis, Det historisk-filosofiske fakultet, AVH, University of Trondheim, 1995), 28.

12 Inger Bjørnhaug, "Kortere arbeidstid – hvorfor og for hvem?," in *Tidsskrift for Arbeiderbevegelsens historie* 2 (1985), 32ff.

13 Berge Furre, *Norsk historie 1905–1990. Vårt hundreår* (Oslo: Samlaget, 1992), 146 ff.

liamentary system, 7) market regulation of transport and primary industry, 8) public and free health care, 9) public educational system, and 10) state responsibility for national cultural institutions. Following the ideas of Danish sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen, this can be seen as part of a project typical for this region at that time. In his influential work on welfare state capitalism, Esping-Andersen singles out a social-democratic welfare regime, a Nordic or Scandinavian model, that was emerging in the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> The social-democratic model, which could be regarded as one of three welfare state typologies (in addition to conservative and liberal regimes), was characterised by a system that promoted an equality of high standard rather than an equality of minimal needs, and it demonstrated a peculiar circumstance in which the state took an active core role in the society. The high level of public services was funded by a high level of taxation. However, Esping-Andersen's model has been contested by later research, and as Stein Kuhnle and Axel West Pedersen have more recently pointed out, there is no consensus in the literature on the exact nature or contents of a Nordic model.<sup>15</sup> It has also been argued that the emergence of the Nordic welfare states can be traced back to a much longer development and includes complex cultural as well as political aspects with strong historical roots, common for all Nordic countries. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this can not least be related to the Nordic countries' common cultural heritage.<sup>16</sup>

There is still no doubt that the rise of the welfare state in the Nordic countries connects to the practical politics implemented after 1945, and that this can be described as a number of more or less stable elements that in sum make up the state policy in the Nordic countries. Universalism, in the sense that social protection and services were offered to all citizens as a matter of social rights, rather than through systems that are segmented by social or economical matters, such as occupation or income, must be regarded as one of the model's most distinct elements.<sup>17</sup> The point of departure for this distribution policy is the active and responsible social state. In another research article, Kuhnle has, together with Sven E. Olsson, argued that this universalism was supported by a typical community building, risk exposure, human dignity (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948), and economic

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14 Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

15 Stein Kuhnle and Axel West Pedersen, "The Nordic Welfare State Model," in *The Nordic Models in Political Science: Challenged, but Still Viable?*, ed. Oddbjørn Knutsen (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2017), 249–272.

16 See the references particularly to Markkola's and Buchardt's research above, p. 20–21.

17 Paula Blomkvist and Joakim Palme, "Universalism in Welfare Policy: The Swedish Case beyond 1990," in *Social Inclusion* 8 (1) (2020), 114–123.

and bureaucratic efficiency.<sup>18</sup> Other scholars have underlined that this political turn was presupposed by a common political, cultural, and demographic climate in the post-war Nordic countries, paving the way for their typical and common welfare state systems.<sup>19</sup> In the context of this book, the common Lutheran background is not without significance for the understanding of the necessity of community and ethics of universality, as becomes apparent in the Nordic countries in the twentieth century.

What pertains specifically to post-war Norway, is a particular characteristic that the period from 1945 through the subsequent decades is characterised by a strong fundamental consensus across the political party lines. The tension between capital and labour, which had caused much agitation in the interwar years, was still present, but the conflict was now replaced by a willingness to cooperate. Or, as historian Francis Sejersted puts it: “The dispute had entered into orderly forms by the establishment of a game of solidarity. The parties played their roles and made compromises which were acceptable for all. This calm development was grounded in the broad agreement on the national integration and development of the welfare state.”<sup>20</sup> As a consequence of this unity came a number of measures financed by public funds which ensured the general welfare. Different forms of social securities had already been introduced before WWII, such as the act on occupational pension benefits (1936) and the act on unemployment benefits (1938). However, these laws set requirements for who could be included, for instance, the law on unemployment benefits demanded that the recipient should be able to work and be unemployed through no fault on their own.<sup>21</sup> The occupational pension benefits were originally means tested.

After the war, extensive changes in the social security system aimed at including an even larger part of the population in the social benefits. The nuclear family was seen as the cornerstone of society, and the traditional division of labour between men and women was maintained. Consequently, the first decades after WWII have been called the housewife period in Norwegian history.<sup>22</sup> In the nucle-

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18 Stein Kuhnle and Sven E. Olsson, *The Developmental Welfare State in Scandinavia: Lessons for the Developing World*. UNRISD Programme Papers on Social Policy and Development (Geneva: UN Research Institute for Social Development, Sept. 2004), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/536395> (accessed 10 April 2023).

19 Mikko Kautto, “The Nordic Countries,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*, ed. F. G. Castles et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

20 Francis Sejersted, “Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder,” in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 21 (3–4) (2004), 253.

21 Stein Evju, “Permittering og trygd,” in *Arbeidsrett og arbeidsliv* 2 (2007), 135–147.

22 Gro Hagemann et al., *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*, 3rd ed. (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2019), 363ff.



ar family, the child always came first. In his extensive volume on social democracy in Norway and Sweden, Francis Sejersted points to the child's central position in the countries' post-war social policy, and that the policy on children became an important part of the social integration project.<sup>23</sup> In line with this, child benefits to families with more than one child were introduced in 1946, as the first welfare state reform.<sup>24</sup> Single parents were to receive social security from their first child. Soon, other social security rights followed, such as disability allowance in 1961 and widow's pension in 1964. The means test for occupational pension benefits was dissolved in 1957, and industrial injuries benefits for all wage and salary earners were introduced three years later. The final, and most comprehensive, social security regulation came with the National Insurance Act (Folketrygdloven) in 1966/67. This law, which was adopted with broad political agreement, coordinated previous voluntary and compulsory social security schemes. Its aim can be summarised in three points: 1) it guaranteed everyone the right to an income during short-time illness as well as the right to reasonable medical care and free hospitalisation, 2) it secured elderly people (over the age of 67) the right to maintain an income that was two-thirds of what it had been before retirement age, and 3) it ensured a personal income for a number of groups, who for various reasons could not obtain their own income, either because they are disabled, another family breadwinner had passed away, or they have occupational injury or injury of war.<sup>25</sup> The first paragraph of this act describes its comprehensive and fundamental character:

§ 1-1: The purpose of the National Insurance Scheme is to provide benefits in case of sickness, physical handicap, pregnancy and confinement, unemployment, old age, disability, death, and loss of breadwinner. All persons resident in the Realm shall be insured under this Act. The same shall apply to any person not resident in the Realm if he a) is working in the Realm as an employee in return of wages or other remuneration covered by § 6-4, b) is a Norwegian national employed on board a Norwegian ship, including periods for which he receives pay in accordance with law or agreement, c) is a Norwegian national and is taking part in a Norwegian hunting expedition or is employed at a Norwegian hunting station or by a Norwegian civil airline as a member of the flight or ground personnel, d) is a

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder. Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2013), 296.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Lise Seip and Hilde Ibsen, "Morsøkonomi, familieøkonomi og samfunnsøkonomi. Barne-trygden i et historisk perspektiv," in *Historisk Tidsskrift* 4 (1989), 412–433.

<sup>25</sup> Alfred Oftedal Telhaug, "Velferdsstat og utdanning i Norge – to sider av samme sak," in *Utdannelseshistorie. Årbog* (2006), 37.

Norwegian national and is a civil servant in paid service abroad or is a paid employee of such a civil servant (...).<sup>26</sup>

The school played a key role in the development of the welfare state, and nine years of compulsory education came to be at the core of the social democracy's educational system.<sup>27</sup> The school was an important instrument for integration and, in line with this, it became a fundamental principle that children should attend the same school for as long as possible. The school's role in post-war politics became clear immediately after the war had ended. The first post-war minister of education, Kaare Fostervoll, saw it as an important task to carry out the school reforms implemented in the years before 1940, and in 1947 the Ministry of Church and Education established the Coordinating Committee for Schooling and Education (Samordningsnemda for skoleverket). This committee did not have the mandate to implement new measures for the school, but the school should carry out regulations that had already been accepted.<sup>28</sup> These regulations included The Act on Higher Education (1935), The Acts on Urban and Rural Schools (1936), and the Law on Continuation School (1946).

This idea of unity, the idea of the same school for all, also pointed forward toward a more inclusive higher education. As a result of this policy, Lånekassen [The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund] was established in 1947 to allocate reasonable loans and grants to Norwegian students for their education.<sup>29</sup> For its part, a substantial part of the profits from the newly established Norsk Tipping, the governmentally owned gambling company, should provide money for research and science.<sup>30</sup> This, in turn, reflected a strong political will to invest in school and education and, in accordance with this, Norway, together with Sweden, spent a greater proportion of GDP on schools than any other country in Europe. This positive attitude towards school and education was also cross-political, as school pol-

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26 National Insurance Act of 17 June 1966 no. 12 with amendments, last of 21 December 1990; the special supplement act of 19 June 1969 with amendments, last of 23 December 1988; the Act of 16 December no. 9 on appeal to the Insurance Court of Appeal with amendments, last of 5 June 1987; the Family Allowance Act of 24 October 1946 no. 2 with amendments, last of 23 December 1988.

27 Alfred Oftedal Telhaug, *Norsk skole i et kulturkonservativt perspektiv. Formidling og polemikk* (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, 2008), 13 ff.

28 Volckmar (2005), 33.

29 Dyre Røseth, *Effektivitet og fordeling. Lånekassen som utdanningspolitisk redskap 1947–2003*, (Master's thesis in History, University of Oslo, 2003).

30 Olaf Devik, "Inn i forskningsalderen," in *NAVF 1949–1974. I forskningens lys – 32 artikler om norsk forskning i går; i dag, i morgen*, ed. Mauritz Sundt Mortensen (Oslo: Norges almenvitenskapelige forskningsråd, 1974), 19–35.

itics was something that all parties, regardless of political dividing lines, could agree upon in the years after WWII.<sup>31</sup>

Sweden became a pioneering country in this regard, and the education historian Alfred O. Telhaug has noted that Norway and Sweden can be considered as one nation when it comes to the question of schooling and education in the years after WWII.<sup>32</sup> Tage Erlander (1901–1985), Swedish Prime Minister between 1946 and 1969 and himself a son of teachers as well as the spouse of a teacher, became a driving force in this regard. In his diary from 1945, he notes his ambition for the school: “a common education for those under the age of 15 in the same local unit, and under the same management”.<sup>33</sup> The following year, the 1946 school commission was set up in Sweden, which aimed to design a standardized education for all children up to the age of 15. These ideas coincided with those being discussed in AUF (the Labour Party’s youth wing organisation) in Norway at the same time, as well as in England and the USA.<sup>34</sup> In 1947, the secretary of the 1946 Swedish school commission, Stellan Arvidsson, gave a fiery speech at the Socialist Student Union in Oslo, urging that the school be used as a tool in the fight for a changed society, a “new world”. The ambitions were sky-high: “Why not at the dinner table, for example in the home of farmers, discuss the structure of atoms with reliable specialist knowledge? Why should not the mason’s apprentices be able to discuss the social preconditions for Shakespeare’s gestalt formation during lunch with the greatest naturalness? There are no limits here!”<sup>35</sup> In interviews with the Norwegian press, he emphasised the school’s importance for democracy: “The purpose of this work is to modernise and democratise the Swedish school system, both in terms of its internal life as well as the external organization”, he told the newspaper *Morgenbladet* in April 1947.<sup>36</sup> The plans for the fundamental changes in Sweden were also duly noted around Norway. According to the newspaper *Bergens Arbeiderblad*, the Swedish suggestions could be regarded as a big step towards real democracy, while another daily paper, *Eidsvold Arbeiderblad*, claimed that the report from the Swedish 1946 school commission should be seen as one of the most inter-

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31 Kjøll and Telhaug (1999), 100 ff. In another book, Telhaug describes these years as “collaboration years”. See Alfred Oftedal Telhaug, *Norsk skoleutvikling etter 1945* (Oslo: Didakta Norsk Forlag, 1982), 73 ff.

32 Ibid.

33 Tage Erlander, *Dagböcker 1945–1949*, ed. Sven Erlander (Hedemora: Gidlunds förlag, 2001).

34 Volckmar (2005), 43.

35 Helsing (2017), 59.

36 “Ni års skoleplikt i Sverige – eksamen og karakterjag fjernes,” in *Morgenbladet*, 23.4.1947.

esting works of its kind after WWII.<sup>37</sup> The Swedes had concluded the largest school report in the world, reported the Oslo-based paper *Dagbladet*.<sup>38</sup> There was a positive attitude all around the country, and the reports in the newspapers awakened a curiosity among its readers and drove their attention towards new possibilities for schooling and education.

### The process towards nine-year compulsory schooling in Norway

Soon nine-year compulsory education also became a goal for the Norwegian politicians and policy makers. The Labour Party became a driving force in the process towards the implementation of this new educational model, and the members stated their goals clearly. The Norwegian press regularly published statements and discussions that reminded the readers of the party's intentions. In April 1952, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo) shared the party's long-term plan for schools and education.<sup>39</sup> The articles reiterated Helge Sivertsen's speech in the Socialist Student Union on 25 April of that year.<sup>40</sup> In these texts, Sivertsen stated the goal for the Labour Party's school policy: "It is time to continue the basic idea of the unitary school from childhood to adolescence (...) This development of the continuation school, and a unification with the real school, in order to get a common upper secondary school, is a main point in the draft that the committee has put forward for discussion", he claimed. The rationale was clearly linked to the Labour Party's goal of social equality:

The access to further education has become easier since the Labour movement came to power in 1935, but the access to education after primary school still gives a strong impression of social and geographical injustice in society. The real school and the gymnasium, which provide the longest education, are dominated by children from the occupational groups who can best afford it. There is also a big difference between the western parts of some cities, where almost the entire cohort continues in the real school and the gymnasium, and those regions in the country where it is most difficult to obtain more general education than secondary school, or possibly primary school and a course in the continuation school.<sup>41</sup>

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37 "Demokratiets skole," in *Eidsvold Arbeiderblad*, 10.9.1948, and "En mer demokratisk skole," in *Bergens Arbeiderblad*, 3.9.1948.

38 "Skoleløbner blir nøktern virkelighet," in *Dagbladet*, 9.3.1949.

39 The text was printed in three parts. See "Langtidsprogram for skolen, Av Statssekretær Helge Sivertsen," in *Arbeiderbladet*, 24.–26.4.1952.

40 The meeting was announced in *Arbeiderbladet*, 25.4.1952.

41 *Arbeiderbladet*, 24.4.1952.

The Labour Party's youth wing organisation (AUF) defended the party's proactive school policy eagerly, not only in Oslo, but also elsewhere in the country. In April 1953, the paper *Dagningen*, based in Lillehammer, published an interview with the young 20-year-old Martin Leren from Brennhaug in Dovre.<sup>42</sup> Leren had been appointed as the district's representative for the Labour Party's leadership trainee program in Asker outside Oslo in 1952, and was therefore regarded as an up-and-coming talent in the Labour Movement. On the question of what he regarded to be the most important tasks for the Labour Party's youth wing organisation, he replied: "Full employment and the school programme implying nine years of compulsory schooling. Everyone should have the opportunity to get the education they have the right to claim, according to their talents." Leren's views were representative for young voices from the Labour Party at that time. Two years later, the Church Minister Birger Bergersen stated with great certainty and optimism that, within 20 years, Norwegian youth would receive nine years of compulsory education. The occasion for the statement was the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lillestrøm gymnasium in September 1954, attended by several prominent politicians and cultural representatives.<sup>43</sup>

Bergersen's statements reflected the certainty of changes in the school system that had established itself within the Labour Party at that time. Systematic measures which aimed to realise their visions were now implemented. An important step in this regard was the committee that should work with the long-term plan for the Norwegian school system. This committee included influential Labour Party politicians such as Werna Gerhardsen (1912–1970), Gudmund Harlem (1917–1988), Per Almaas (1898–1991), Karsten Heli (1898–1976), Olav Sundet (1909–1983), and Erling Østerud (1899–1979), in addition to Helge Sivertsen. Werna Gerhardsen was Einar Gerhardsen's wife and a member of the Oslo school board and Oslo city council. Gudmund Harlem was a professor of medicine, deputy chairman of Oslo Labour Party, minister of social affairs (1955–1961), and defence minister (1961–1965), while Almaas, Heli, Sundet, and Østerud were teachers and schoolmen with leading positions. However, Sivertsen is undoubtedly the most important, and while the ministers of education held the final power to implement new plans, the strategist Sivertsen worked behind the scenes and laid the foundations for the reform work to be carried out. Helge Sivertsen had taken part in the debate under the auspices of the Worker's Youth League immediately after the war and sympathised with the attitudes on schooling and education that was expressed there. After Sivertsen was appointed as the secretary for the minister of education in

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42 "Vi presenterer," in *Dagningen*, 9.4.1952.

43 "Hyldest til Lillestrøm høyere almenskole på 70-årsdagen," in *Aftenposten*, 18.9.1954.

1947, an orientation towards a restructuring of the Norwegian school system began soon afterwards.<sup>44</sup> In 1950, Sivertsen sat in the audience in the Swedish Riksdag (Parliament) during the debate that led to the decision to attempt compulsory nine-year education, and one year later he led the committee that worked on the school's long-term plan.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the work with the long-term plan for the school, Sivertsen also prepared a White Paper which discussed improvement of schooling and education (Meld. St. 9 (1954), *Om tiltak til styrking av skoleverket/On measures to strengthen the school system*). The White Paper concluded by stating that the school should strive towards a clear goal:

(...) to secure children and youth in the cities and in the countryside a full basic education up to the age of 16–17 (...) as soon as it becomes possible, a joint secondary school that includes both the “real school” and the “continuation school” as different lines. All upper secondary education must be built on this foundation with equally good conditions for practical and theoretical education.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, an advisory board should be set up to lead experiments with different forms of school organisation. This advisory board should “represent professional knowledge in questions concerning the school and scientific pedagogic research”, and they should work in close contact with the University of Oslo, the National University College for Teacher Education, the scientific research institutions, and the National Research Council.<sup>47</sup> The administrative responsibility for this should be placed with the Ministry of Church and Education. Thus, the White Paper emphasised that the school should be scientifically grounded, which, in turn, reflected a belief that science could become a useful tool for politics. In line with this, the Norwegian Research Council (NAVF) was established in 1949, financed with funds from Norsk Tipping.<sup>48</sup> The Research Council was divided into five different groups with different subjects, and group C was intended for psychology, education, and youth issues.<sup>49</sup> This scientific grounding could help Si-

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44 Tønnes Sirevåg, *Den ni-årige skolen* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1979).

45 Helsvig (2017), 59, Sejersted (2013), 328, Slagstad (1998), 321.

46 *Om tiltak til styrking av skoleverket*. Meld. St. 9 [White paper] (1954), 100.

47 *Ibid.*, 99.

48 “Norges Allmenvitenskapelige Forskningsråd opprettes. Forskningsrådenes fellesutvalg skal fordele tippepengene,” in *Aftenposten*, 13.5.1949. The biologist Johan T. Ruud (1903–1970) was appointed as chairman for NAVF, while the historian Sverre Steen (1898–1983) was appointed deputy chairman. See *Aftenposten*, 1.10.1949.

49 The other groups were: language and history (A), social sciences (B), natural sciences (D), and medicine (E).

vertsen and his political co-partners to legitimate the political line that they drew up in the post-war period, and to emphasise the necessity of knowledge, truth, objectivity, rationality, neutrality, and logic.<sup>50</sup> Or, to put it in Rune Slagstad's precise formulation: "The new regime after 1945 became a political regime in the guise of social sciences: a new form of state with drastically expanded governing capacity, attached to new experts and their knowledge."<sup>51</sup>

### Forsøksrådet for skoleverket

Stillingen som assistent ledig for tiltredelse snarest. Vedkommende bør ha eksamen artium og handelsutdannelse og helst øvelse i kontorarbeide. Lønn etter Statens regulativ.

Søknad stiles til Kirke- og Undervisningsdepartementet og sendes Forsøksrådet for skoleverket, f.t. Bygdøy allé 1, Oslo, innen 10. november 1954.

**Fig. 3:** The Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education carried out extensive activities and had a correspondingly great need of help. This announcement, from *Aftenposten* 26 October 1954, states that the Council had a vacant position for an assistant, with entry as soon as possible. The right person should have an *examen artium* and business education, and preferably training in office work.

This pointed forward to the establishment of the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education in 1954. Through their attempts to establish a nine-year compulsory education in Norway, this council functioned as an advisory board for the Department of Education, and they received wide powers and great political influence. The Act on Experiments in school was sanctioned on 8 July 1954, and Tønnes Sir-evåg (1909–1984), a historian and an experienced teacher, was elected as the leader for the council.<sup>52</sup> The council should lead and coordinate various experiments that pointed towards a new school system. One of the experiments carried out was a three-year teacher training course at Hamar teacher training college, one year shorter than had been the practice since the 1930s. The council also underlined the need of further training for the school's teachers and took an active part in the design of courses that could promote and strengthen teachers' competencies. Another experiment was an attempt to include English as a compulsory school subject, which started in Tønsberg in 1955. However, their most important task was to advise, control, and follow up local authorities that wanted to implement nine-year compulsory education in their municipality. Local authorities were

<sup>50</sup> Telhaug (2006), 35, Helsvig (2017), 63.

<sup>51</sup> Slagstad (1998), 168.

<sup>52</sup> The other members were Edvard Stang, Drammen, August Lange, Hamar, Rolf Waaler, Bergen, head teacher Ruth Frøyland Nielseen, Oslo, school inspector Hallgeir Furnes, Kløfta, and teacher Ivar Sørli, Oslo, docent in psychology Ragnar Rommetveit, Oslo.

given good conditions if they were willing to try the system with nine-year schooling: rural municipalities received a grant of 75% of the operating expenses, while the cities were granted 30%.<sup>53</sup> Newspapers around the country could document great interest and curiosity: “Stryn municipal educational committee is in favour of establishing a nine-year school, and would like to cooperate with the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education in the process of development”, the local newspaper *Fjordabladet* in Stryn (Western Norway) wrote in November 1955.<sup>54</sup> Ørsta, another municipality in the western part of Norway, was even earlier: “Nine-year school in Ørsta already from the autumn. There is a good hope for approval of the plan”, the newspaper *Sunnmørsposten* wrote in March 1955.<sup>55</sup> The schools that wanted to participate in the experiments with nine-year schooling were met with specific expectations related to implementation and logistics, as Lars Beite documented in his analysis of schools in Rogaland from 1950.<sup>56</sup> This centre periphery model was typical for Norway in the twentieth century. Alfred Oftedal Telhaug has pointed out that the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education reflected the time-typical understanding on the necessity of distribution, wherein a national institution should spread culture and knowledge from the centre (the capital) out into the districts.<sup>57</sup>

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53 Telhaug (1989).

54 “Stryn skulestyre går inn for ein samlande linedelt ungdomsskule, med både realskule og framhaldsskule,” in *Fjordabladet*, 15.11.1955.

55 “9-årig skule i Ørsta alt fra hausten. Gode voner om godkjenning av planen. Nok klasserom på Velle skole,” in *Sunnmørsposten*, 17.3.1955. The heading is rather optimistic and reassures the readers that there are enough classrooms at one of the local schools.

56 This could, for example, be as follows: 1) the municipality must be willing to establish a nine-year school in accordance with the law, and as soon as the council believes it is possible to have a compulsory nine-year school in the municipality; 2) in a transition phase, the secondary school could be arranged as a school of two years, built upon the former seven years; 3) the municipality must take steps in order to introduce English as a compulsory school subject in the sixth year of schooling; 4) the municipalities must be willing to try a distribution of subjects and hours in five-day primary school; 5) the municipality must be willing to discuss English as a compulsory subject in the fifth grade with the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education; 6) for the upper secondary school, the municipalities should be willing to try out the distribution of subjects and school hours which has been worked out by the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education; 7) the municipality must secure the necessary school rooms and sufficient equipment for secondary school and implement an annual reading period of at least 38 weeks. See Lars Beite, *Om utbygginga av grunnskulen i Rogaland 1950–1980* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1984), 63.

57 Telhaug (1989), 37. Another example of the ideas on the necessity of distributions, is the establishment of the Norwegian Broadcasting Cooperation, NRK, in 1933.



As a result of the work done by the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education, a proposition to the Odelsting was delivered in January 1958.<sup>58</sup> This proposition came to attract a lot of attention among the population and created significant discussions at the Storting. The ministry's objective was to obtain promises to give the municipal council the right to make decisions on a nine-year school. Their objective can be summarised as follows:

The bottom line of these school reforms could be summed up in the idea that all ordinary pupils should obtain a longer compulsory teaching period than they did before, so that schooling should not end earlier than the age of 16. Within this framework, there should be different educational programs, allowing the individual student to receive training that is in accordance with interests, abilities, and aptitudes. This division in different programs should not create social stratification in the school, and it must be ensured that abilities and aptitudes form the basis for the selection of educational program, and not a desire for prestige.<sup>59</sup>

The bone of contention was the statutory objective (§ 1), which was now slightly changed in relation to the previous legislation (1936), as well as the omission of § 9c, which was regarded as the fundamental paragraph for Christian education in Norwegian schools.<sup>60</sup> In § 1, a new sentence was added to the opening section: "The school's foremost task is to make students good citizens". The rest of the paragraph was unchanged, except for one word: the expression "useful citizen" in the last sentence was changed to "able citizen" ("The school shall help to give the pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, and work in order to make them citizens who can benefit others/useful citizens both in moral and physical matters"). § 9c was adapted into § 7.<sup>61</sup>

The proposition to the Odelsting was intensively discussed in the newspapers all over the country during the spring of 1958, and the discussions documented much activity in the local communities. Public meetings were arranged, and the proposition was on the agenda in teacher organisations' meetings. Both clergy and laity were concerned, not least with respect to the apparent reduction in the importance of Christianity and Christian teaching. The country's bishops issued a joint statement, indicating that the proposition was a sign of two recent tenden-

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<sup>58</sup> Od.prp. 30/1958, Lov om Folkeskolen. Norway had a bicameral system of Government up to 2009 (Lagtinget and Odelstinget).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>60</sup> Knut Tveit, "Formålsparagrafen – eit 150-årig uromoment," in *Kirke og Kultur* 112 (2) (2007), 175–188.

<sup>61</sup> § 9c: The goal for Christian education should be to ensure that the children know the main content of biblical history, the most important incidents in church history, and Christian childhood faith, as this is described in the Evangelical-Lutheran Doctrine of Faith.

cies in the relationship between church and school.<sup>62</sup> On the one side, it signalled a view on cooperation and cohesion that had been evident since the war years, and on the other side, it depicted a tendency to detach the school from the church and weaken the ecclesiastical and confessional character of the Christian subject. These critical voices were often opposed by representatives from the Labour Party, on both local and central levels. Some examples from newspapers in the spring of 1958 can illustrate the public mood. The high-profile vicar and later bishop Monrad Norderval (1902–1976) wrote a series of articles in the newspaper *Sunnmøre Arbeideravis* in May 1958, on invitation from its editor Simen Kr. Hangaard (1922–1983).<sup>63</sup> Norderval had been invited to write because he had been involved in a debate on the proposition in the school board in his hometown, Ålesund. The debate was referred to in an editorial in the same newspaper on 12 May, and the editor asked critical questions about statements that Norderval should have made during the meeting.<sup>64</sup> The text was written in a characteristically sarcastic and condescending tone. Norderval's reply used a similar style, and he rebuked editor Hangaard by saying it was regrettable that Hangaard portrayed him in a bad light in respect to the labourers. Hangaard gave an indignant reply in the same newspaper one week later, complaining of the form of the debate. Moving to the capital, the debate there was equally fierce as elsewhere in the country. "The school is as little a sovereign master as other cultural institutions are. It shares a common responsibility for the welfare of our people in its broadest sense and must therefore be in close cooperation with home and the church", said Bishop Karl Marthinussen (1890–1965) in *Aftenposten* in April 1958.<sup>65</sup> IKO leader Bjarne Hareide, on his hand, was more than ready for a fight.<sup>66</sup> "The school act is synonymous with battle", the newspaper *Vårt Land* wrote in a heading in late March of the same year. The heading quoted Hareide, who had indicated that if this White Paper was accepted, it would be the most powerful blow against the Knowledge of Christianity that had ever been seen. Sverre Aalen (1909–1980), a biblical scholar and professor at the Free Faculty of Theology, highlighted the legal foundation of "Knowledge

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62 "Vår skoles kristne karakter må bevares, sier biskopene," in *Aftenposten*, 15.4.1958.

63 Monrad Norderval, "Sogneprest Norderval og den nye skoleloven," in *Sunnmøre Arbeideravis*, 19.5.1958, and "Mere om mitt forhold til den nye skoleloven," in *Sunnmøre Arbeideravis*, 20.5.1958. See also Simen Kr. Hangaard, "Svar til sogneprest Norderval," in *Sunnmøre Arbeideravis*, 27.5.1958.

64 "Monrad Norderval og den nye skoleloven," in *Sunnmøre Arbeideravis*, 12.5.1958. It is indeed telling that this edition of the same newspaper contains other texts on the same topic, see Egil Erikssen. "Framlegget til ny skolelov."

65 "Hva innebærer Ot. Prop. Nr. 30?," in *Aftenposten*, 26.4.1958.

66 "Skoleloven betyr kamp," in *Vårt Land*, 27.3.1958.

of Christianity” as a school subject: “‘Knowledge of Christianity’ must take a special position among the school subjects. No other subject is, according to its content, defined in the Constitution”. And, he added, “the constitution does not speak about Christian teaching in general, but teaching should be based upon the Evangelical-Lutheran doctrine”.<sup>67</sup> The Storting, on their side, had a great influx of people who wanted to protest. During the spring months, they received ca. 1400 petitions in total.<sup>68</sup>

The proposition also caused much debate at the Storting, after the Committee of Church and Education had made minor changes to the proposal’s first paragraph.<sup>69</sup> The statutory objective, which now became the subject of debate, had the following wording:

The school’s task is, together with the homes, to work to make the pupils become good citizens. It should help give the pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, develop their abilities and talents and give them good general knowledge, to make them citizen who can benefit others, in both moral and physical matters.

The pedagogue Torstein Harbo, who gives a throughout presentation of the debate in his book on the introduction of nine-year schooling, summarises the discussion at the Storting in the following points: 1) § 1 was given much emphasis. It was underlined that the preamble should make a point of departure for the work with the curriculum. 2) The committee of church and education altered the original formulation of § 1. Many of the representatives at the Storting expressed their satisfaction with these changes, and the committee’s proposal for the preamble was adopted with only one vote against (Emil Løvlien, (1899–1973, The Communist Party)). 3) During the discussions in the Storting, the different parts of the sentences in § 1 were commented upon. The comments can be summarised as follows:

- “Good citizens”: seen independently, this expression was unclear, and the expression must rather be seen in relation to the other central concepts in this paragraph.
- “Help giving the pupils a Christian and moral upbringing”: this part of the paragraph could be interpreted in light of § 2 in the Constitution of Norway, and the Christian character of the school was underlined by a number of speakers. Most of the representatives at the Storting agreed that the school

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<sup>67</sup> Sverre Aalen, “Kirkestatsråden og kristendomsundervisningens formålsparagraf,” in *Vårt Land*, 24.5.1958.

<sup>68</sup> Harbo (1969), 62.

<sup>69</sup> The committee added a new formulation: the school’s task is, *together with the homes*, to work to make the pupils become good citizens (my italics).

in the future should also remain a Christian school. The exception was the representative from the Communist Party.

- “Develop their abilities and talents”: this formulation was interpreted according to a principle of differentiation, that the school should educate all pupils according to their abilities and aptitudes.
- “Give them good general knowledge”: this formulation can, according to Harbo, be seen as a consequence of recent pedagogical tendencies (which will be elaborated below) and can be seen in relation to the importance of cultural knowledge.<sup>70</sup>

In 1959, the Storting decided that the municipalities could extend compulsory schooling to nine years.<sup>71</sup> The new act for primary school followed immediately after, and the curriculum for trials with a nine-year school came the following year. It has been argued that the proposition to the Odelsting (no. 30/1958) changed the climate in the Norwegian public debate on education. Twenty years after the proposition was presented, Tønnes Sirevåg, who was chairman of the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education, wrote that there was hardly a document relating to schooling and education that had caused as much attention as this one.<sup>72</sup> Clergy and defenders of traditional Christian values were concerned about the school’s Christian education. The teachers’ organisations and many teachers, on their part, believed that the ministry of Church and Education had presented a proposition based on poor preparatory work which lacked a democratic foundation.

In a political sense, the curriculum introduced in 1960 can be seen as a result of the Labour Party’s school policies in the years after WWII. The political forces were uncompromising and goal-oriented, and critical voices could find themselves overrun, without having political authorities considering their objections.<sup>73</sup> It was also a trueborn child of the Norwegian social democracy. The curriculum opens with a general introduction, consisting of three comprehensive chapters, which

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70 Harbo (1960), 76 ff.

71 Lov om Folkeskolen (1959).

72 Sirevåg (1979).

73 The preface in book by teacher Arne Johan Waldenstrøm’s is significant: “This is a single teacher’s experiences upon the uselessness of all opposition. It’s what this book is about.” Arne Johan Waldenstrøm, *Kampen om ungdomsskolen. Rapport om opposisjon mot skolereformene etter skoleloven av 1959* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1971). See also Helsvig (2017), who quotes Tønnes Sirevåg saying that the Ministry of Church and Education had used the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education to “pave the way” for the introduction of the nine-year unitary school system. Helsvig (2017), 65.

emphasise the individual's opportunities for democratic *Bildung*, the necessity of introduction to the national cultural heritage, as well as individuality and independency. These were important components of the post-war social democratic project: social integration and equality for all. The comprehensive introduction in the 1960 plan contrasted with the previous curriculum (1939), which started with a descriptive explanation of the subject's hours and timetables.<sup>74</sup> In line with the renewed focus on the necessity of *general Bildung*, social science was now introduced as a broadly oriented subject including history, social studies, and geography (which previously had been separate subjects), so that it could help realise the school's new democratic mandate.<sup>75</sup> The curriculum called for the school to be a democratic society in miniature, which was founded on the national cultural heritage and Christian morals and faith, in addition to democratic ideas and scientific method. This goal could be reached through the implementation of an ambitious programme, incorporated in the curriculum:

Pupils in the nine-year school will afterwards gain social and political rights and duties as adult Norwegian citizens. What the school could do in order to prepare the pupils for an active citizenship, is first and foremost to give all pupils as good an orientation as possible about the local, national, and international society in which they belong, institutions, organisations and functions, and knowledge on how society, organisations and institutions have emerged. It is important that as many people as possible are activated to take interest in social issues, and that they can make use of tools to orient themselves on their own. (...) It is an important task for the school to promote respect among the young for democratic ideals (...) such as interpersonal skills and willingness to cooperate, ability and willingness to take factual considerations into decisions, respect for law and justice, tolerance towards people who are different, people with different beliefs and other opinions.<sup>76</sup>

The equalising dimension of the curriculum was evident on several levels. In a social-economic sense, it was argued that a nine-year school could contribute to delaying pupil's choice of educational paths. This would, in turn, mean that that the choice they made was to a lesser extent conditioned by socio-economic background, but more by their abilities and interests.<sup>77</sup> It was also now specified that the school should give equal opportunities to pupils with different interests, abilities, and aptitudes. So far, the school had prioritised gifted pupils, and pupils

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<sup>74</sup> In a discussion with Arne Johan Waldenstrøm, Helge Sivertsen makes the following statement: "The whole basic idea of this reform is the social". Waldenstrøm (1971), 45. Cf. *Normalplanen for byfolkeskolen* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1948), 6 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Rolf Th. Tønnessen, *Læreplaner i nasjonsbyggingsperspektiv: ei sammenligning mellom Norge og Tyskland* (Kristiansand: Utdanning som nasjonsbygging. Rapport, 2003), 36 ff.

<sup>76</sup> *Læreplan for forsøk med nårig skole* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1960), 15.

<sup>77</sup> Telhaug and Mediås (2003), 167.

with theoretical talents rather than practical. Moreover, the municipalities were now required to provide additional help to pupils who had difficulties keeping up with the progression. In 1955, the municipalities were required to present a plan for extra tuition, and it was decided that the government should reimburse expenses to school psychologists who would assist in determining how tuition was presented. Initiatives were also taken to even out the differences between town and country. The government gave differentiated financial grants that were conditional on the municipalities' finances, and legislative changes which made it easier for the municipalities to centralise the schools were made.<sup>78</sup> The 1959 school act was the first common school act for schools in the cities and schools in the countryside.

During the 1960s, the policies that led to the 1969 School Act were carried out. The Norwegian education system continued to strengthen fundamental structural transformations that gave opportunities to everyone, regardless of gender, economic situation, geographical location, or social status. Kim Helsvig has therefore referred to the period from 1960 to 1975 as the most significant in the history of the Norwegian Ministry of Education.<sup>79</sup> The main characters in this book, Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland, continued their political and strategical work. Sivertsen became the Minister of Church and Education in Einar Gerhardsen's third government in 1960, holding this post until 1965, when he returned to the position as the school director in Oslo. Sivertsen particularly worked to strengthen upper secondary education, and his work pointed forward to the 1974 secondary school reform. Eva Nordland, on her part, had a central role in the committee that drew up the Labour Party's school and cultural program in 1962–1965. Nordland was also appointed as head of the council of teacher education in 1961, remaining in this position until 1969. This council had an important role in the improvement of the school, and in the years under the auspices of Eva Nordland, this council designed a completely new teacher education program in Norway, both for primary and secondary education.

The school's Christian foundation was challenged towards the end of the 1960s. The governmental change in 1965 broke the Labour Party's long monopoly on governmental power, and from 1965 to 1971, Norway had a conservative coalition government under the auspices of Per Borten (1913–2006).<sup>80</sup> This government secured, among other things, an act for independent schools, which granted

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<sup>78</sup> Telhaug and Mediås (2003), 167 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Helsvig (2017), 69.

<sup>80</sup> Per Borten represented the Centre Party. The coalition government consisted of representatives from the Centre Party (SP), Conservative Party (Høyre), Liberal Party (Venstre), and Christian Democratic Party (KRF).

parents the right to choose schools other than the government schools.<sup>81</sup> However, in line with the Labour Party's objective of the emergence of a democratic state, it was now defined as the parents' task and right to take the responsibility for a Christian upbringing of the children. In the Odelsting's proposal for a new primary school act in 1969, the parents' responsibility was clearly spelled out:

In our country, as in many other countries, the primary school has been based upon the Church's teachings. In this connection, the committee would like to point out that Christian and moral upbringing must be seen in close connection with parents' own parenting responsibilities. By having their child baptised, most of the population has assumed responsibility for the child's Christian and moral upbringing. This responsibility rests with the parents themselves. The school's education in Christian knowledge has provided and should continue to introduce Christian faith and morals, which can help parents in raising their children.<sup>82</sup>

Baptismal education was the responsibility of the church, and the school's task was to guide the parents in the upbringing of the children, and not the church in baptismal education: "The church has considered Christian education in schools as part of its baptismal education. The committee will underline that the church itself is responsible for providing baptismal education in an ecclesiastical sense."<sup>83</sup> Thus, the school's Christian education had become something completely different from what it had been since 1739. It was now based on the parents' rights, rather than the church's dogmas. The 1969 school act also allowed teachers who were not members of the Norwegian Church to teach "Knowledge of Christianity".<sup>84</sup> In order to secure the confessional grounding, this had been reserved for members of the state church since 1739.

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**81** These schools should either be a pedagogical alternative, such as the Waldorf school, or a faith-based alternative, such as Christian schools. See Alessandra Dieudé, "Legitimizing Private Schools within a Political Divide: The Role of International References," in *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* (2021): 78–90.

**82** Innst. O. XIV, 1968/1969 (Innstilling fra kirke- og undervisningskomiteen om lov om grunnskolen), 8.

**83** *Ibid.*, 31ff.

**84** Sigurd Hjelde, "Mellom sekularisering og kristendom – forholdet skole-kirke i Norge i etterkrigstiden," in *Nordiske folkekirker i oppbud. National identitet og international nyorientering etter 1945*, ed. Jens Holger Schørring (Århus: Århus universitetsforlag, 2001), 340–51.

## Cultural Conditions

The next part of this chapter highlights the cultural conditions that applied in Norway in the actual period under consideration. In this context, the relationship between Christianity and culture is particularly relevant, but also the inflamed language dispute will be briefly dealt with in this part. What premises does society set for the position Christianity occupies in society? What is the general mood in the people at large? We will start with the so-called hell debate, which characterised the Norwegian public sphere during much of the 1950s. Even if the debate in its essence is about theological standpoints, it gained influence far beyond the church and congregational life. This can, among other things, be confirmed from the subsequent activity in the press.

### The Hell Debate – from a cultural perspective

I am probably speaking to many tonight who know they are unconverted. You know that if you fell dead on the floor at this moment, you would fall straight into hell (...) How can you who are unconverted calmly go to sleep at night, you, who do not know whether you will wake up in your own bed or in hell (...).<sup>85</sup>

These words, broadcasted on Norwegian radio on a cold Sunday evening in January 1953, were the starting point for one of the most extensive cultural and theological debates in Norway in the twentieth century. The words were part of a sermon delivered by Ole Hallesby (1879–1961), professor at the Free Faculty of Theology and chairman of the executive board of the Norwegian Lutheran society of Inner Mission, in Storsalen, the Inner Mission's meeting house in central Oslo. Hallesby had grown up in a Pietist revival tradition, and in his adult life he was as much a preacher as he was a professor of theology. One of his central aims was to save as many as possible from eternal perdition. In his cultural contexts, Erik Pontoppidan's explanation of Luther's catechism was still firmly established. In the catechism, perdition is referred to as the eternal torment of hell. What was new, was that this message was broadcast to a wide public through radio.

Hallesby's words caused an immediate commotion, and already on the following day, the newspaper *Dagbladet* had this headline on their front page: "Hallesby threatens hell through the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation". The subheading quoted an explanation from the broadcasting manager Kåre Fostervoll: "We have

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<sup>85</sup> Ragnar Skottene, *Gudsbilde og fortapelsessyn: en teologihistorisk analyse av norsk helvetesdebatt 1953–1957* (Oslo: Solum forlag, 2003), 35 ff.



no rights to control religious programs in advance”.<sup>86</sup> Other newspapers followed immediately. *Arbeiderbladet* made sure they had correctly understood what Hallesby had said and called upon him to control his speech.<sup>87</sup> On the next day, they wrote in their editorial: “Professor Hallesby transforms God into a giant-Hitler, who punishes people with eternal torment if they don’t believe in the dogmas”.<sup>88</sup> In such a context, where WWII was close in history, this claim must have had a strong effect. In the coming days, weeks, and months, the texts on this subject in the newspapers were almost endless. It was polemised and debated, scrutinised, and incorporated into narratives. It seemed like everyone was involved, from the unknown man in the street to politicians, university professors, and intellectuals. A couple of examples from the debate’s first weeks might illustrate the climate. The writer “Nils” turned Hallesby’s sermon into something melodramatic, published in *Dagbladet* on 29 January, where the radio became the source of fear:

I do not touch that devil’s device anymore. I apologize, I do not know what I am saying, I do not know what I am doing. I do not dare to lay down in fear of falling asleep, I do not dare to sit down in fear of falling asleep. I might wake up in hell. And I do not dare to stand, and I do not dare to walk, in fear of falling over and go straight into hell. I believe in Hallesby and all his being.<sup>89</sup>

In the newspaper *Friheten*, published by the Norwegian Communist Party, a writer sarcastically focused on Hallesby’s use of what the writer considered to be a swear word:

To hell! These words are not normally considered to be enlightened. But now the word is used in the national broadcasting by a Norwegian theological professor, and now an ordinary man could use the word without being accused of swearing. Professor Hallesby, by the way, speaks very expertly about hell. Without real knowledge of his topic, he cannot be so locally known.<sup>90</sup>

The cultural radicals had a field day with this. There was an imminent danger of Hallesby himself ending up in hell, said the writer Helge Krog (1889–1962), referring to the Bible’s teaching about man’s judgement on the last day.<sup>91</sup> How could Hallesby put himself in God’s place? “In my eyes, Hallesby is a monster, and he be-

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86 “Hallesby truer med helvete gjennom Norsk Rikskringkasting,” in *Dagbladet*, 26.1.1953.

87 “Vantro stuper ned i helvete, sier Hallesby,” in *Arbeiderbladet*, 27.1.1953.

88 “Helvete,” in *Arbeiderbladet*, 28.1.1953.

89 “Mannen som hørte radio,” in *Dagbladet*, 29.1.1953.

90 “Til Helvete!,” in *Friheten*, 30.1.1953.

91 Helge Krog, “Overveiende fare for at Hallesby havner i sitt helvete,” in *Sant å si. Artikler* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1956), 166 ff. See also Helge Vold, “Helge Krogs kristendomskritikk,” in *Kirke and Kultur* 112 (3) (2007), 253–264.

longs within this order the most bloodthirsty of them all, the Evangelical-Lutheran (...)", Krog concluded. Krog was known to be a critic of everything that had to do with Christianity. Several medical doctors, on their part, used the press to warn against the harmful effect of Hallesby's speech. "During a discussion the other day, on the incessant Hallesbyian hell, I was asked if I thought a hellfire sermon could cause morbid disturbances in the audience. To this, I had to answer an unconditional yes. That a psychotic shock in an individual with a neurotic disposition can cause or worsen a mental disorder (neurosis), is something all doctors know", wrote the neurologist Ragnar Forsberg in *Dagbladet* February 1953.<sup>92</sup> Others pointed out that the reactions were a sign of Norwegians' low level of education, and that this gave additional reason to be worried about how Hallesby's words could affect the population. In the periodical *Samtiden*, professor of psychiatry and one of the founders of the Norwegian Humanist Association, Gabriel Langfeldt (1895–1983), wrote:

How far behind Norwegians are when it comes to the view upon hell in the population at large, is immediately apparent from the fact that Hallesby's radio speech had a frightening effect on quite a few people. It is very illustrative what the Danish theology professor P. G. Linhardt wrote in *Verdens Gang* 12. March this year: In Denmark, most people would have thought (if they had listened to Hallesby's radio speech) that they had mistakenly turned on Saturday fun in Islev cinema.<sup>93</sup>

The debate also threw light upon the cultural position that the church had in society. The issue at stake was the relationship between state and church. What was the consequences of the state church system? Could the state interfere in what the church should teach and learn? These questions were particularly brought to the fore in the wake of Kristian Schjelderup's statements on Hallesby's speech. Schjelderup, who was a bishop in Hamar diocese, was known to be a liberal theologian in the interwar period and he was a popular bishop in the broad strata of the population in the years after WWII.<sup>94</sup> Hallesby and Schjelderup had been bitter enemies in the theological debates in the 1920s, due to their different views on central theological issues. During WWII, however, they were imprisoned together at Grini prison camp and became good friends. This friendship was now put to the test.

Schjelderup's first statement came in *Arbeiderbladet* 31.1: "To threaten hell I consider not only wrong, but also downright harmful (...) for me, the doctrine of

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<sup>92</sup> Ragnar Forsberg, "Helveteslæren i medisinsk belysning," in *Dagbladet*, 19.2.1953.

<sup>93</sup> Gabriel Langfeldt, "Helveteslæren i mentalhygienisk belysning," in *Samtiden* (1954): 213.

<sup>94</sup> Pål Repstad, *Mannen som ville åpne kirken. Kristian Schjelderups liv* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1989), 403 ff.

eternal punishment in hell does not belong to the religion of love”.<sup>95</sup> The discussions continued in the newspapers some days later. “Notably, one of the church’s bishops stands up and denies the church’s confession and the Bible’s word about eternal perdition”, Hallesby argued in *Aftenposten* 4.2.<sup>96</sup> In his opinion, Confessio Augustana spoke clearly about eternal perdition, and that this was also well documented in the Gospels of the New Testament. In the same edition of *Aftenposten*, Schjelderup gave a reply, this time in a more moderate and cautious tone than in his previous text. Yet, the conclusion remained the same: for Schjelderup, it was impossible to understand Jesus’ words about perdition in a way that he could believe in a place of eternal physical torment.<sup>97</sup>



**Fig. 4:** The Hell Debate became a frequent topic in Norwegian newspapers in 1953, and the discussion also included poems and artistic illustrations. This illustration of Mephisto was printed in *Dagbladet* 5. February 1953.

<sup>95</sup> “Professor Hallesbys radiotale. Biskop Schjelderup uttaler seg,” in *Arbeiderbladet*, 31.1.1953.

<sup>96</sup> O. Hallesby, “Biskop Schjelderup og bekjennelsen,” in *Aftenposten*, 4.2.1953.

<sup>97</sup> “Biskop Schjelderup svarer professor Hallesby,” in *Aftenposten*, 4.2.1953.

The debate continued with new contributions from both Hallesby and Schjelderup, as well as from their like-minded supporters. It soon turned in the direction of an ecclesiastical and juridical discussion about how inclusive the church should be. Conservative voices wanted Schjelderup to resign from his position as bishop, and Christian newspapers, like *Vårt Land* and *Dagen*, ensured that these views became known to the public. The pressure against Schjelderup soon became so massive that Schjelderup wrote a letter to the Ministry of Church and Education, asking them to take measures in order to “clarify the question of whether I, with my statements about the eternal punishments of hell, have put myself outside the confession of our Evangelical-Lutheran church”.<sup>98</sup>

The ministry allowed relevant bodies to give their opinion, and the case was sent for a hearing to the theological faculties and the bishops. Most of the bishops, as well as the Free Faculty of Theology (MF), were against Schjelderup’s views, without concluding that he had to withdraw from his position as a bishop. The university’s theological faculty (TF), on their part, argued that Schjelderup both could and should continue as a bishop: “a different outcome of this case would lead to many who rightly belong to our church feeling homeless”, the college of teachers concluded.<sup>99</sup> Frede Castberg (1893–1977), a professor of law, was asked to write a report on behalf of the Ministry of Church, published in November 1953.<sup>100</sup> Castberg was to comment on the constitutional and legal aspects of the case. His conclusion is clear:

No spiritual coercion should be exercised against the individual in the church when he himself – to use the words of Bishop Schjelderup – feels in deep spiritual agreement with the gospel and with the living confession as it is read every Sunday in our churches. A strict orthodoxy characterised by a literal interpretation of the scripture and confession cannot today be present within a church that is governed by the state and principally aims to gather under its vault all the members of society.<sup>101</sup>

Castberg’s point of view gave rise to new debates. Only a few days after the report was published, Eivind Berggrav published a rebuttal.<sup>102</sup> Berggrav’s opening section left no room for doubt:

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<sup>98</sup> Pål Repstad, *Teologisk profilering i sosial kontekst: Kristian Schjelderups liv, tid og teologi*, Diss. Dr. Philos. (Kristiansand: Agder, 1994), 513.

<sup>99</sup> Repstad (1989), 367–68.

<sup>100</sup> Frede Castberg, *Statsreligion og kirkestyre. Utredning avgitt 21. november 1953 etter oppdrag fra Kirke- og Undervisningsdepartementet* (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1953).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64.

<sup>102</sup> Eivind Berggrav, *Contra Castberg. Om kirkens grunn* (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1953).

The first thing that strikes me when I read Castberg's book, is that if this book had existed before the occupation, the Norwegian church's struggle during this period would have been impossible. This interpretation of the law presented by such a writer would have knocked us down before we had lifted our legs to march.<sup>103</sup>

Berggrav believed that Castberg's writing violated the church's integrity. Nevertheless, as Schjelderup's biographer Pål Repstad argues, the debate about church and state soon took on a certain hypothetical character, as it soon became clear that the state had no ambitions to rule the church in a sovereign manner, independently from ecclesiastical advisers.<sup>104</sup> In February 1954, the Ministry of Church and Education concluded that Kristian Schjelderup could not have excluded himself from the church's confession with his statements in the hell debate.<sup>105</sup> In autumn of same year, the bishops sent out a pastoral letter in which they questioned the extent to which the government in the Schjelderup case had overstepped the limit for what kind of power they could exercise over the church.<sup>106</sup> The Ministry of Church Affairs had seen state and church as two sides of the same coin, while the church perceived them as two parties that were in a tense relationship with each other. The pastoral letter provoked sharp reactions in the Labour movement and the debate eventually turned into addressing the treatment of Schjelderup. Powerful voices in the Labour movement sympathised with Schjelderup and criticised the church for treating him badly.

The hell debate and the dispute between Ole Hallesby and Kristian Schjelderup reactivated the early twentieth-century tensions between liberal theology and a conservative Biblicist Christianity. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the theological landscape in Norway was characterised by conflict between liberal and conservative interpretations of the Christian message. The conflict resulted in the so-called Calmeyergate meeting in 1920, where over 950 conservative delegates from the church and Christian organisations decided to boycott all cooperation with liberal theologians, bringing the dispute between liberals and conservatives into a new context.<sup>107</sup> The dispute between Schjelderup and Hallesby highlighted that the church could include a humanistic understanding of Christianity that embraced the human and ethical aspect of religion in addition to a dogmatic faith. This reveals the societal impact of the hell debate. The debate contributed to inte-

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>104</sup> Repstad (1989), 317.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Agøy (2023), 211 ff.

<sup>107</sup> Joh. M. Wisløff, *Landsmøtet i anledning av kirkestriden: avholdt i Calmeyergate missionshus 15.–18. februar 1920* (Kristiania: Lutherstiftelsens Boghandel, 1920).

gration rather than polarisation: Christianity was transformed within the culture, and the liberal theological image of an ethical Jesus who met the needs of the modern human being was now played out on an open stage. This transformation also helped clarify the relationship between church and state. In theological matters, the church was sovereign, and the state had no rights to interfere with its teachings.

In the years after the hell debate, Schjelderup also used other opportunities to highlight this form of humanistic Christianity. An example is his statement about Albert Schweitzer on the radio in autumn 1956, on the occasion of a recently published book by and about Schweitzer.<sup>108</sup> Schweitzer, who had received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952, had been an important voice in early twentieth-century protestant theology, not least through his sharp distinction between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith.<sup>109</sup> Among other things, Schweitzer believed that the personality of Jesus was the link between the historical life of Jesus and Christianity, and that Jesus summoned people to follow him in changing the world. Christ demonstrated an ethical will that persisted through all times. Thus, it was not the historical Jesus or Jesus as God's son, but Christ as spiritually arisen within men, that counted.<sup>110</sup> In his own life, Schweitzer strove to put the words of Jesus into practice. As a medical doctor, he opened a hospital in Lambaréné in what was then French Equatorial Africa (Gabon) in 1913, and ran this until his death in 1965. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to him for his "reverence for life" and his tireless humanitarian work. In the interwar years, Kristian Schjelderup had shown that he was well acquainted with Schweitzer's theology.<sup>111</sup>

The Norwegian public sphere became fully aware of Albert Schweitzer after he received the Nobel Peace Prize, and both Christians and humanists cited him in support of their view. Johan Hygen was one of the main speakers when Schweitzer came to deliver his Nobel speech in Oslo in November 1954. The event, which we will return to in the next part of this chapter, was duly covered in the press. In *Dagbladet* on 30 August 1956, Johan Hovstad (1896–1959), one of the founders of the Norwegian Humanist Organisation, compared Schweitzer's ethics with secular

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**108** The book, *Veien til deg selv*, was published in Norway by the German publisher Max Tau (1897–1976), who worked to make German literature known in Norway. It was widely discussed in the Norwegian press, and the book is mentioned for the first time in a review by Norwegian author Johan Borgen (1902–1976) in the article "Albert Schweitzer – Om og av," in *Dagbladet*, 20.11.1956.

**109** Nils Ole Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

**110** Henry B. Clark, "Albert Schweitzer's Understanding of Jesus as the Christ," in *The Christian Scholar* 45 (3) (Fall 1962), 230–237.

**111** Repstad (1989), 245 ff.

humanist ideas: “Albert Schweitzer’s basic ethical principle is in full harmony with a humanist philosophy of life, while it stands in direct opposition to the notion that the ethical norms should rest upon a divine revelation, given once and for all”.<sup>112</sup> In the radical newspaper *Orientering* some months earlier, the writer Alf Martin Jæger (1895–1967) criticised the church for being absent in connection with the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Schweitzer.<sup>113</sup> “I saw no action from the church to pay tribute to him”, Jæger complained. He found this completely unreasonable. Jæger meant that, more than anyone else in the twentieth century, Schweitzer had fulfilled the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount through his humanitarian work, and churchmen should therefore be the first in line to pay him tribute.

Schjelderup’s statements on the radio program were printed in the periodical *Samtiden* in January 1957. Central to the text is the following:

Albert Schweitzer a Christian? I feel it as a presumption and a shame for the Christian church that this question is raised at all, and even from some quarters have been negatively answered. Admittedly, he falls outside the usual ecclesiastical and confessional qualifications, he breaks all traditional ecclesiastical-theological thinking, and he is as unorthodox as he can be. But he lives in the spirit of Jesus, and all his work is done in the name of Jesus. He has followed in the footprints of the Master, without taking a moment to consider what sacrifices this will cost him.<sup>114</sup>

Secular humanists seized the opportunity and exploited it for all it was worth. In a two-issue article in *Verdens Gang* in February 1957, Gabriel Langfeldt wrote extensively on Schweitzer’s views on religion and morality.<sup>115</sup> He concluded his essays by stating his agreement with Schjelderup, that it was indeed a presumption and shame for the Christian church that the question of whether or not Schweitzer was a Christian had been raised. Yet, with this confession, Langfeldt argued, Schjelderup had admitted that it was possible to be a Christian without believing in any deity apart from man and the rest of the creation, and that it was not necessary to believe in Jesus as the son of God and in the doctrine of atonement to be

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112 Johan Hovstad, “Albert Schweitzer og norsk kulturdebat,” in *Dagbladet*, 30.8.1956.

113 Alf Martin Jæger, “Metropolittens besøk” [The visit of the Metropole], in *Orientering*, 14.4.1956.

114 Kristian Schjelderup, “Veien til deg selv. Albert Schweitzer i Fredsbiblioteket,” in *Samtiden* (1957), 15.

115 Gabriel Langfeldt, “Albert Schweitzers syn på religion og moral,” in *Verdens Gang*, 20.2.1957 and 21.2.1957. Langfeldt was well acquainted with Schweitzer’s ideas. In 1958, he published a book on Schweitzer’s religion and morality, *Albert Schweitzer. En personlighetsstudie* [Albert Schweitzer. A study of his personality], in 1958. In the years between 1960 and 1965, Langfeldt and Schweitzer exchanged letters.

called a Christian. “Truly, it is brightening in Norway when the church, through its unprejudiced attitude, allows a bishop of Schjelderup’s character the freedom of speech.”

Many Christians reacted strongly. In the periodical *Luthersk Kirketidende*, which was closely connected to the Free Faculty of Theology (MF), the rector of MF’s practical theological seminary, Carl Fr. Wisløff (1908–2004), discussed Schjelderup’s radio speech.<sup>116</sup> The most grave circumstances for Wisløff, and for several others who spoke out in this periodical, was that Gabriel Langfeldt had used Schjelderup’s statements to emphasise that a Norwegian bishop indicated that one could be a Christian without believing in the doctrine of atonement.<sup>117</sup> This was a call to battle, and *Morgenbladet*’s 25 April edition announced that several Christian organisations should gather on 1 May to discuss how they could preserve the true Church.<sup>118</sup> The overall topic for the announced meeting was the battle against heresy, not least that which was mediated through Schjelderup’s recent statements. The public was informed of Schjelderup’s view upon this matter in *Morgenbladet* some days later.<sup>119</sup> The newspaper referred to a debate which had been held a few days previously, where the participants had been discussing the church’s situation and particularly the consequences of Schjelderup’s radio speech on Schweitzer. The referee was Arne Fjellberg (1907–1960), rector of the practical theological seminar at the university’s theological faculty (TF). According to Fjellberg’s account, Schjelderup repeated what he had said previously:

Schweitzer tears down the usual barriers and cannot be placed into the ordinary categories. But he lives in the spirit of Jesus and all his work is done in the spirit of Jesus. His life and his work are proof that Christ has defined this man far more deeply than his philosophical writings suggests. (...) Before Schweitzer, we must all bow our heads in shame. His life is a life in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.<sup>120</sup>

Schjelderup also emphasised that he felt solidarity with the Norwegian church, and that he wanted to be its servant. However, he would not be a slave to any faction. Nevertheless, he assured that every sincere Christian in Hamar had the right to know that he stood with them in the Christian truths.

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116 Carl Fr. Wisløff, “Kirkens fred,” in *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 9.3.1957, 65–67.

117 See for instance E. Tidemand Strand, “Strid og arbeid,” in *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 12.1.1957 and “Hva biskop Schjelderup star for,” in *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 23.11.1957 and E. Jonsbu, “Vil vi den norske kirke,” in *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 12.1.1957.

118 “Organisasjonene til ny kirkekamp 1. mai. Hallesby atter til felts mot vranglæren,” in *Morgenbladet*, 25.4.1957.

119 Arne Fjellberg, “Aktuelt i kirken. Biskop Schjelderup uttaler seg,” in *Morgenbladet*, 30.4.1957.

120 *Ibid.*



We will return to the theological context of this debate in the next part of this chapter. Here, we shall preliminarily conclude that Schjelderup's statements on Schweitzer strengthen the theological discourse he has created with the hell debate. Liberal theological currents are again brought to life, and they merge into a larger cultural discourse.

### The Norwegian Humanist Association

The hell debate also contributed to a favorable situation for the Norwegian Humanist Association, established in Oslo in 1956. The superior objective for this association was to detach morality from religion, i. e. to establish an ethical humanism.<sup>121</sup> The initiators believed that morality should and could be justified on the basis of reasonable human needs, not on the basis of religious revelations and myths. In the previous section, we have already mentioned two of those who took the initiative in starting the association, Gabriel Langfeldt and Johan Hovstad, but two others were also central, the botanist Kristian Horn (1903–1981) and the lawyer Bjarne Didriksen (1884–1956). Just like Langfeldt and Hovstad, Horn and Didriksen had both been active in the public debate for several years prior to the establishment of the association. Horn became the first leader of the association and remained in this position until 1976.

The Norwegian Humanist Association had been preceded by the Association for Civil Confirmation, which was also Kristian Horn's idea. Horn had aired the idea of an alternative to church confirmation for some friends already in 1947, and three years later, after an invitation had been sent out to a statutory meeting, an association for civil confirmation was established in September 1950. Civil confirmation was arranged for the first time in the University Aula in Oslo the following year.<sup>122</sup> From 1952, the ceremony took place in the city hall of Oslo, which was made freely available by the municipality of Oslo for this purpose.<sup>123</sup> The founder's idea was that confirmation should be arranged as a formal and ceremonial party for the youth, as an alternative to the church's confirmation which traditionally had a strong cultural position in Norway. A course in citizenship, particularly aiming to awaken a sense of moral and ethical values on a non-religious basis, was to be arranged before the party. This replaced the biblical teachings and dogmas which were a part of the confirmation in the church.

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<sup>121</sup> Paul Knutsen, *Livet før døden. Human-etisk forbund 1956–2006* (Oslo: Humanist forlag, 2006).

<sup>122</sup> Solveig Bonde Ormestad, *Human-etisk forbund 1956–1981: Bakgrunn og ramme, pionertid, borgerlig konfirmasjon* (Oslo: Human-etisk forbund i Norge, 1981), 48.

<sup>123</sup> The city hall is still used as the venue for civil confirmation in Oslo.



**Fig. 5:** Civil confirmation attracted a relatively high number of participants in the 1950's. This text, announcing that 93 adolescents participated in youth party in 1953, was printed in *Dagbladet* 11. May that year.

This institutionalisation of a secular life philosophy was well aided by the press, and the Oslo-based *Dagbladet* used this as an opportunity to promote their liberal profile and to demonstrate the paper's redactional line.<sup>124</sup> In January 1951, the paper published an interview with the first chairman of the Association for Civil Confirmation, August Schou (1903–1984), who was also the director of the Nobel Institute.<sup>125</sup> Schou stated that the program for the youth party was being developed, and that the course to be held ahead of the party would include several ethical topics relevant to young people. The newspaper edition also made the readers aware of the registration deadline, as well as the address for registration.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> *Dagbladet's* editor, Einar Skavlan (1882–1954), was known to despise all kinds of conservative and dogmatic Christianity. On the other hand, he was positively disposed to liberal theological currents, such as Kristian Schjelderup. See Jeanette Sky, "Når Gud blir en trussel – Religiøse landeplager," in *Kirke og kultur*, 116 (4) (2011), 273.

<sup>125</sup> "Ungdomsfest i aulaen 9 mai," in *Dagbladet*, 24.1.1951.

<sup>126</sup> The registration deadline was also announced through the newspaper's advertisement columns. See for instance *Dagbladet*, 25.01.1951.

Later editions of *Dagbladet* informed readers that a similar organisation had already existed for some years in Denmark, and that the Norwegian association aimed to arrange a “beautiful party for the youth” in May.<sup>127</sup> The ceremony received a correspondingly large space in the newspapers. “Civil confirmation is a great success!”, *Dagbladet* wrote on 7 May 1951, and continued by stating that this would likely become a tradition in Norway.<sup>128</sup> The arrangement in the Aula also aroused attention in a broader public sphere as well as in the political life. The fact that the Minister of Church Affairs, Lars Moen, was present at the ceremony was particularly noted. Conservative representatives at the Storting now asked whether the state church system was in danger, and whether Moen’s presence meant that the Ministry of Church and Education supported the initiative.<sup>129</sup> In his reply, Moen stated that the church should demonstrate greater tolerance and accept a diversity of meanings than it had done in his time. The church did not have exclusive rights to the word confirmation, and confirmation in the church had been voluntary since 1911.<sup>130</sup>

The official character of the civil confirmation in Oslo attracted international attention, and Kristian Horn was invited to the annual conference of the British Rational Press Association in Oxford, United Kingdom, in 1954. In 1955, he attended the regional conference of IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union) in Antwerp, Belgium. On the way home to Oslo, Horn wrote an article describing how humanists in Belgium had organised themselves, and how this had contributed to an organised opposition to the Catholic privileges in schools. It was now time to organise a similar association in Norway, Horn argued. The article was printed

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127 “Ungdommen må ta stilling til religionen i frihet, sier formannen i den danske foreningen for borgerlig konfirmasjon,” in *Dagbladet*, 01.02.1951, and “Kurset i medborgerskap fører opp til den borgerlige konfirmasjon,” in *Dagbladet*, 27.2.1951. The ceremony in Copenhagen was also duly noted in the paper: The edition 31 March published a notice saying that the civil confirmation ceremony would take place at the Odd Fellow Order the following day. It would also be transmitted through Danish radio. The paper followed up with a thorough presentation of the ceremony in Copenhagen the day after it had taken place. See “300 unge deltok i ungdomsfesten i København,” in *Dagbladet*, 2.4.1951. Civil confirmation was also discussed on the radio. See for instance *Morgenbladet*, 15.2.1951, which announces the radio program, including a discussion between the perpetual curate Sverre Eika, the housewife Målfrid Dørum, and the lector A. St. Langeland.

128 “Den borgerlige konfirmasjonen en stor suksess. ‘Vær på vakt overfor de ferdiglagde sannheter’, ordfører Bull i sin festtale til de unge,” in *Dagbladet*, 7.5.1951.

129 Hartvig Caspar Christie (1893–1959), who represented Høyre, presented an interpretation to Lars Moen at the Storting on 10 May 1951. The discussion was reported in all major newspapers in Norway the following day.

130 The debate in the Storting was referred to in several newspapers. See for instance “Kirken bør vise større toleranse,” in *Verdens Gang*, 19.5.1951, and the sarcastic editorial in *Dagbladet* on the same day: “Naturligvis, hr. Hambro,” in *Dagbladet*, 19.5.1951.

in *Dagbladet* on 4 October 1955.<sup>131</sup> The invitation to the statutory meeting for a Norwegian Humanist Association was sent on 2 April 1956, and the Association's first meeting was held one week later.

The establishment of the Humanist Association in Norway must be seen in light of the Norwegian freethinker tradition, which could be traced back to the Reformation.<sup>132</sup> Historians Henning Laugerud and Arne Bugge Amundsen have explained that freethinking in Norway came as a consequence of the close ties between church and state and the cultural monopoly held by the Evangelical-Lutheran confession. The freethinkers included both separatists, such as Quakers and the followers of the lay minister Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824), liberals with roots in enlightenment ideas, as well as political opportunists such as the radical labour leader Marcus Thrane (1817–1890).<sup>133</sup> Eventually, the confessional criticism developed into a direct criticism of religion. Several of those who supported the establishment of the Humanist Association had been eager critics of religion in the previous decades. The foremost among them was undoubtedly the writer Arnulf Øverland (1889–1968). Øverland had been accused of blasphemy (the last person in Norway to be formally accused) after his speech in the student society in Oslo in 1933, where he had been invited by the revolutionary communist group *Mot Dag* [Towards Day].<sup>134</sup> The provoking title of the speech, *Christianity, the tenth plague*, resulted, according to Øverland himself, in the “professors Hallesby and Moe approaching the police”, who had a referee present during his appearance.<sup>135</sup> However, during the trial, Øverland was acquitted by six to four votes. He was invited as a guest speaker at the first meeting after the Humanist Association was founded, and he read poetry at the ceremony for civil confirmation in the city hall in Oslo in 1956. The civil confirmation had by then been taken over by the Humanist Association. As an old friend of Kristian Horn from the student society in the interwar period, Øverland became an important associate in the years up to his death in 1968.<sup>136</sup>

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131 Kristian Horn, “Kraftig aksjon mot katolske privilegier i belgiske skoler. Religionsfrihet også i folkeskolene,” in *Dagbladet*, 4.10.1955.

132 Arne Bugge Amundsen and Henning Laugerud, *Norsk fritenkerhistorie 1500–1850* (Oslo: Humanist forlag, 2001).

133 *Ibid.*, 318 ff.

134 Hans Fredrik Dahl, *De store ideologiers tid*. Norsk idéhistorie, vol. V (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2001), 232.

135 Arnulf Øverland, *En kjetters bekjennelser*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1988), 5. The name Moe refers to Olaf Moe (1876–1963), professor of New Testament at the Free Faculty of Theology (MF).

136 Knutsen (2006), 429.

Øverland's role as a freethinker and humanist is particularly interesting in this context. Jeanette Sky has underlined that *Christianity, the tenth plague* can be seen as a reply to Ole Hallesby's text *Den Kristelige Sedelære* [Christian moral philosophy], published in 1928 and used as a textbook at the Free Faculty of Theology.<sup>137</sup> In his speech, Øverland passed a merciless sentence over Hallesby's work: "The book oozes zeal. It is dark as a dungeon and boring like eternal salvation. Completely unreadable. (...) It is written by a man who cannot control himself."<sup>138</sup> Yet his speech can also be seen in a wider context. It is a revolt against the church as an authority in society, as well as a confrontation with the supernatural character of religion and its claim to be believed. During the trial, this was also highlighted by Øverland himself.<sup>139</sup> In its concrete historical surroundings, Øverland's speech was a reply to the conflict around the play "The Green Pastures", which was to be staged at the National Theatre in Oslo in the winter of 1932/1933. Problematically, the play, which, among other things, depicted black people's religious life in the southern United States, portrayed God as a person on the stage. As a consequence, an almost united Christian Norway concluded that the play was blasphemous.<sup>140</sup> For Øverland and his like-minded peers, this was a good example of the powerful strength of literal and dogmatic Christianity. Hallesby's teachings also dominated the culture, and it was even extending to the National Theatre.

The protests against Christianity's cultural influence and religion's claim to power over human minds built bridges between the religious criticism of the 1930s and the criticism that appeared twenty years later. The driving force behind the establishment of NHA was not primarily to establish an institutional atheist life orientation, but to build up an organisation that anchored ethics rationally and independently of religion. This is evident through several chronicles by and interviews with key persons in the NHA during the first year.<sup>141</sup> In this respect, ethical humanism as it appeared in 1956, was by virtue of their ideas (and paradoxically enough) not far from liberal theology. This is reflected in the fact that both humanists and theologians demonstrated their enthusiasm for Albert Schweitzer's views upon ethics and morality, as we have demonstrated above. However, it is also demonstrated in minutes from debates between high-profile humanists and theolo-

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137 Sky (2011), 274.

138 Arnulf Øverland, "Kristendommen, den tiende landeplage," in *Tre foredrag til offentlig forargelse* (Oslo: Forlag1, 2006), 31.

139 Arne Stai, *Norsk kultur- og moraldebatt i 1930-årene* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1978), 59.

140 Per Eriksen, "Folket som ville binde Gud," in *Kirke og Kultur* 111 (1) (2008), 61–69.

141 See for instance Kristian Horn's texts "Human-etikk og livssyn" and "Ikke vår oppgave å reformere religionen," in *Dagbladet*, 31.8.1956 and 15.5.1956, Gabriel Langfeldt's text "Moralens forankring og menneskehetens fremtid," in *Verdens Gang*, 21.11.1956.

gians, such as in the interesting discussion between Kristian Horn and Johan Hygen in the socialist student society in Oslo in October 1956. The debate is referred to in *Dagbladet* on 3 October 1956.<sup>142</sup> In their introduction, the newspaper stated that, to their surprise, the two opposing debaters were much closer to each other than one might think:

Anyone who expected that the debate between the humanists and the theologians at the meeting for the socialist student organisation yesterday would demonstrate a gap between these two philosophies of life, went home somewhat surprised at midnight, when the debate closed. It ended with both sides confirming that there is reason for cooperation between them on very important points, even though there is no connection between the parties' justification for their moral views.

The newspaper quoted verbatim from the discussion between Horn and Hygen, and the debate is characterised by a mutual respect and openness to each other's positions, as well as by attempts to meet each other's points of view. Hygen, on his part, demonstrated his scepticism towards a dogmatic Christianity, and the reluctance of many Christians to engage in a broader dialogue with culture. This reluctance could indicate that these Christians did not recognise the high-value ideals of the humanists, Hygen pointed out. He clearly showcased a historical critical interpretation of the Bible: dogmas are historically determined, and various religious motives may be seen in the different religious formulations. Hygen also admitted that, in his opinion, too much emphasis was placed on a literal adherence to what are believed as Christian truths. The principle for judgment in the Bible was to refuse to show mercy to one's fellow man, he argued. Thus, Hygen concludes: "when this is the premise, one must indeed be careful not threaten others with eternal torment. I do not agree with Bishop Schjelderup's antagonists".

Hygen's statements were immediately taken up by Horn:

There is such a strong statement of rationalism in what Hygen has said that his view – if it is extended – must lead to ethical humanism. It cannot be on such rational conditions that the power of Christianity is founded. My biggest complaint against the Christian doctrine is that it has solved the problems with collective ethics. There is no moral system that has solved these problems.

Horn started his presentation with defining what humanistic rationalism is about: a humanist is a rationalist. He does not think that everything is rational, but he

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<sup>142</sup> "Vi skal sannelig passe oss for å true andre med Helvete! Når vi ser premissene for dommen Bibelen beretter om, sier professor Hygen," in *Dagbladet*, 3.10.1956. The meeting was mentioned in *Dagbladet* on the previous day. The theme for the meeting was: Is it possible to have a moral view and a philosophy of life without having faith?

turns against the devaluation of human reason. The justification for not wanting to join a religious system thus became individualistically motivated: the humanist cannot think that his own moral or ethical view should be valid for others.

The debate between Horn and Hygen demonstrates a proximity between Horn's association and current theological views that previous research has tended not to communicate sufficiently.<sup>143</sup> There is a will to dialogue from both parties as well as efforts to reach an agreement on fundamental points. The two parties were united in a desire for freedom and tolerance, the difference lies in the extent to which the ethics are rooted in a religious revelation or not.<sup>144</sup> The openness demonstrated from Horn differs from Øverland's militant atheism, even though this, as it appeared in the 1930s, was also a confrontation with intellectual coercion and religious systems.<sup>145</sup> The endeavours of freethinking, seen among Horn and his fellow peers, or the reluctance to adhere to religious dogmas, seen with Schjelderup and Hygen, points in both cases towards the autonomy of man. This forms an interesting background for the project in this book. Autonomy, regardless of ethical foundation or faith, requires education, knowledge, and independence.

It is worth noting that high-profile members of the Labour Party were also counted among the pioneers in NHA. Historian Paul Knudsen emphasises that these members particularly came from the radical academic tradition within the Labour Party movement, not least as this materialised through the *Mot Dag* movement.<sup>146</sup> August Lange, mentioned above, was one of these members, but so also were the literary historian and film producer Olav Dalgard (1898–1980) and Werna Gerhardsen – thus demonstrating the breadth of variety in the Labour Party.<sup>147</sup> Their members and high-profile politicians represent a broad range of ideological positions.

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**143** The same argumentation that Horn makes can be found in one of Johan Hovstad's texts, see "Human-etikk og relilgion," in *Dagbladet*, 20.4.1956.

**144** These attempts at dialogue and clarification can also be seen in the book *Human-etisk eller kristent livssyn*, written by theologian Odd Godal (1905–1959) and Gabriel Langfeldt. The texts printed in this book were part of a series of lectures held at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer in May 1956. In the preface to the book, the authors wrote that even if these philosophies of life have much in common, there is reason to underline that there are principal differences worth noting for anyone who strove towards a holistic approach to life.

**145** Paul Knudsen, who has written about NHA's history, underlines that the militant atheism of Øverland might have been a reason for the association experiencing problems in reaching people, as the organisation was perceived as being too negative. See Knudsen (2006), 50.

**146** *Ibid.*, 52.

**147** Gerhardsen's daughter Torgunn was among the 34 who participated in the first civil confirmation in 1951. See Ormestad (1981).

### The language dispute in the 1950s

The picture of the cultural climate in Norway in the 1950s will not be complete without briefly mentioning the ongoing dispute concerning the Norwegian language. The language debate, and its consequences, demonstrate humankind's autonomy, as well as a need not to succumb to any normative system, including when it comes to language.<sup>148</sup> The Norwegian language consists of two juxtaposed and official variants, bokmål (book language) and nynorsk (new Norwegian, previously landsmål). The history of those language variants has its origin in the nineteenth century, and their roots were an important part of the growth of national identity in Norway. While the history of bokmål can be traced back to the Danish-oriented written language that came as a consequence of the Dano-Norwegian realm lasting until 1814, new Norwegian came to be built on Norwegian folk language. In the last half of the nineteenth century, the development of new Norwegian had been an important part of the country's nation-building process, and in the first decades of the twentieth century, writing reforms were introduced to standardise language forms. Already in 1917, efforts were being made to merge the language standards into a common language form, while a reform in 1938 proposed two levels of regulation: a textbook standard, which gave grammatical rules to be followed in schools' textbooks, and permitted non-standard forms, which could be used in students' work, but not in textbooks. There was an extensive variety of non-standard word forms, both forms which had previously been used and new forms which were regarded to be important in the future. The forms could be freely selected by the students.

The linguistic and cultural development in the nineteenth century impacted on school and education. In 1885, the Norwegian folk language (landsmål or new Norwegian) was juxtaposed with the "common written and book language". Legislation in 1892 gave the local school board the right to decide whether a school's textbook should be in the Norwegian folk language or the common written book language.<sup>149</sup> The fact that the right to teach Norwegian folk language was established by law provoked the cultural elite. The poet and public debater Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832–1910) initiated a campaign for the established Danish-oriented written language, and the term rigsmål (riksmål, language of the realm) was

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148 See also Merethe Roos, "Critical Thinking in the 1950s: Language Dispute, Textbooks, and Newspaper Debates in Norway in a Norwegian Upper Secondary School," in *New Perspectives on Educational Resources: Learning Materials beyond the Traditional Classroom*, ed. Hege Roll-Hansen, Kari Hernæs Nordberg, and Karl Christian Alvestad (London: Routledge, 2023), 151–162

149 Eli Bjørhusdal, *Mellom nøytralitet og språksikring. Norsk offentlig språkpolitikk 1885–2005*, (PhD diss., University of Oslo), 150 ff.



used from 1899. Eventually, in 1907, the campaign organization Rigsmaalsforbundet (Society for the Language of the Realm) was established in order to promote the use of this language variant.<sup>150</sup>

The language dispute in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century points forward to the debate in the 1950s. This discussion was caused by a statutory provision that allowed local school boards the right to decide which language form to choose. Battlelines were drawn between those who defended the common language forms and those who were adherents of riksmål. From the view of the defenders of riksmål, the national linguistic policy appeared as authoritarian, not least because schoolbooks were adapted to the 1938 standard. In 1939, school authorities in Oslo adopted a regulation on using radical language forms in textbooks that were used in the schools.<sup>151</sup> This situation provoked both parents and students, and ten years after the Oslo resolution, a group of parents organised themselves in a Parental Campaign, striving against the use of radical language reforms in their children's textbooks.<sup>152</sup> This campaign included resourceful cultural profiles, which used their networks to spread the message. Pamphlets were printed and distributed, strategic public speeches were held, and campaign participants raised funds for the cause. The campaign soon spread to other parts of the country, and it became one of the most influential grassroots movements in the 1950s. The periodical *Frisprog*, published by the Parental Campaign from 1953, extended important pressure upon language policy makers up to the 1990s.<sup>153</sup>

Indeed, one should be careful to equate freethinking with the opposition against radical language forms. The parental campaign was supported by people from all strata of society, and from all ideological backgrounds. However, there are overlapping ideological driving forces, which can be seen not least through Arnulf Øverland's commitment to the language debate. Øverland was among the most ardent advocates of the riksmål, together with other writers, such as Andre Bjerke (1918–1985), Sigrid Undset (1882–1949), and Sigurd Hoel (1890–1960), as well as intellectuals such as the literary professors Andreas H. Winsnes (1889–1972) and Francis Bull (1887–1974) and the editor Ernst Sørensen (1903–1972). Arnulf Øverland functioned as the chairman of the Society for the Preservation of the Traditional Standard Norwegian (Riksmål Society) between 1947 and 1966.

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<sup>150</sup> Lars Roar Langslet, *I kamp for norsk kultur – riksmålsbevegelsens historie gjennom 100 år* (Oslo: Riksmålsforbundet, 1999).

<sup>151</sup> Trygve Bull, *For å si det som det var* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1980), 203 ff.

<sup>152</sup> Langslet (1999), 229 ff.

<sup>153</sup> Roos (2023), 160.

Øverland demonstrated the same commitment to an idea of the free development of language as he did for free thought. This can be seen through his position as a leader of the Society for the Preservation of the Traditional Standard Norwegian, but it can also be seen through his uncompromising polemics, which were closely related to his fight against religion. An example can be seen in his 1950 text in the periodical for the Society for the Preservation of the Traditional Standard Norwegian, *Fri Sprogutvikling*, in which he argued for the preservation of language as a natural process which could not be subjected to any form of external coercion.<sup>154</sup> The article was later printed in the volume *Sprog og Usprog* [Language and Non-Language]:

In the political watch exchange, cultural values are not highly esteemed, and at the Storting our language is for sale at a bargain price. But we cannot calmly accept that a departmental committee decides to take the mother tongue from our children and makes them tacit.<sup>155</sup> This is such a serious intervention in the children's mental life that a people's movement should be raised against it.<sup>156</sup>

Øverland clearly ties humankind's autonomy and the ability for critical thinking to the use of language: a living language creates itself, in the process of being used and in interaction with others. Likewise, it is destroyed while we are members of a committee, he states polemically, with reference to the dead character of bureaucracy. Øverland ends his pamphlet by drawing parallels to the Nazi regime: "Der Führer denkt für uns" [the Führer thinks for us], someone said. This does not suit us. We will think for ourselves. In our own language."

The language debate in the 1950s was a part of an intellectual climate where intellectual independency was a motive power. As a leading figure in this debate, Øverland draws parallels between autonomy in both the linguistic and religious sense, but ideological lines can also be drawn between linguistic independence and other ideologies where human autonomy has a significant place, for example anthroposophy. Andre Bjerke was strongly oriented towards Rudolf Steiner's world of ideas and wrote textbooks for the Waldorf School. Ernst Sørensen had been a teacher at the Waldorf school in Bergen and later belonged to the innermost circles of anthroposophy in Oslo.<sup>157</sup> The language debate in the 1950s is thus part of a

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154 Arnulf Øverland, "Fri sprogutvikling," in *Sprog og Usprog* (Oslo: Riksmålsforlaget, 1967), 84–87.

155 The expression "watch exchange" refers to an old practice in Oslo, where people met in the district of Grønland to exchange watches. Some of those involved in the process became professionals, and amateurs were often fooled by those having more experience in trading.

156 Øverland (1967), 86.

157 Peter Normann Waage, *Andre Bjerke. I kampens glede, en biografi* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2018).

complex interplay in humankind's autonomy and forms an important part of the context in the present book.

## Theological Conditions

So far, we have treated the theological questions as a part of the cultural context. But what was the landscape of the professional theologian like, and what about more traditional Lutheran environments, like those belonging to the circles around Bjarne Hareide and IKO? What was it that was protested among those who wanted more intellectual freedom and autonomy? These questions are also an important part of the background for understanding the ideological landscape which is subject to investigation in this book. In the following, we will take a closer look at the theological contexts surrounding Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland.



**Fig. 6:** Bjarne Hareide had a huge number of followers. In June 1955, the newspaper *Vårt Land* announced that Hareide had published a book thematising the relationship between pedagogics and the Christian gospel. The book was called *Pedagogikk og Evangelium* [Pedagogics and Evangelium]. The note is published 30.6.1955.

### **A complex theological landscape: Consensus theology, a Christian offensive, and a divided Christian public sphere**

The theological landscape in the 1950s is characterised by reactivation of tensions seen in the interwar period, as I have argued earlier in this book. These tensions could be traced back to the very first decade of the twentieth century, with a rift between conservative and liberal factions in the church. The tension between

these factions resulted in the establishment of the Free Faculty of Theology (MF) in 1908. In the previous decades, the theology faculty had oriented itself in a liberal-theological direction. In line with this, the faculty's teachers built their lectures around modern critical research, as had been developed in Germany towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>158</sup> This was hard for conservative Christians to accept, and after MF was established in 1908, Biblicist Christians rallied against liberal theology. As a consequence of this new theological orientation, Ole Hallesby proposed a separation between state and church at the Calmeyergate meeting in 1920. However, this was not adopted, but the decisions at the meeting helped to put pressure on the authorities to prevent liberal priests and churchmen from gaining ground within the church.

The establishment of the Institute for Christian Upbringing (IKO) in 1946/1948, which was discussed in the introductory chapter, must be seen in light of this desire to protect society against all forms of secularisation or liberal influences. The institute's charismatic and hard-working leader, Bjarne Hareide, was as polemical in his writings as his antagonists who strove for intellectual freedom independent of religious doctrines or institutionally rooted ethics. Hareide wrote diligently in newspapers and periodicals and participated in discussions which were duly referred to in the daily press, besides writing several pamphlets printed on a relatively large scale. One of these was *Skal kristendommen ut av skolen* [Should Christianity be taken out of school], published in 1956. To give a familiarity with Hareide's ideas, this text will be used as an example below.

Hareide's pamphlet is divided into six small parts, in addition to a preface which functions as a prolegomenon to the book's content. In a cultural climate where a number of motivations were available, he saw a need to defend his cause. The preface left no doubt about the author's intentions:

What I want with this writing is to draw a picture of a situation that is a threatening danger for church and people. Perhaps some of it has become a bit polemical. But I am a representative of the attacked party, the Norwegian Church, which in recent years has hardly given a unified response to the many attacks it has been exposed to on this front. With these lines, I do not mean to strike in any direction, but rather to defend. This is about values and ways of living which are still dear to many Norwegians. Yet my intentions are more than a protective defence for old positions. The positive goal can be formulated like this: Fill the institutions!<sup>159</sup>

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158 Vidar L. Haanes, *Hvad skal da dette blive for prester? Presteutdannelse i spenningsfeltet mellom universitet og kirke, med vekt på modernitetens gjennombrudd i Norge* (Trondheim: Tapir, 1998), Hallgeir Elstad, "Akademisk teologi i moderniteten – Det teologiske fakultet i det 20. Århundre," in *Teologi og modernitet. Universitetsteologien i det 20. Århundre*, ed. Hallgeir Elstad and Tarald Rasmussen (Oslo: Unipub, 2011), 9–38.

159 Bjarne Hareide, *Skal kristendommen ut av skolen?* (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1956), preface.

Hareide used his book to demonstrate how he believed that Christianity's position had gradually lost ground in both school and society. His aim was to tell a tale of decay, already starting the first chapter's with the first sentence: "In the recent generations, Christianity's position in schools and the history of 'Knowledge on Christianity' have been resembling a receding front", he expressed with considerable concern. In his view, Christianity had now entered a confusing struggle with other philosophies of life, and the school subject was now so curtailed that a further reduction of teaching hours or of the subject's content would be equivalent to wiping it from the curriculum.

Hareide proceeded systematically and drew long arguments, thus using the first chapter to provide a historical framework for the decay. According to him, the negative development could be traced back to the publication of Peter Andreas Jensen's reader in 1863. However, in his view, much of these changes were due to the Christians themselves. Jensen's book, which had caused much commotion in its own time because it included folk tales and other secular texts, was a good example of Christians not choosing their battles right, he argued.<sup>160</sup> The antagonists of Jensen's book had fought for "Knowledge of Christianity" to remain the only subject in school, rather than fighting for the subject's content and status. However, said Hareide, they had misunderstood what the battle was about. To reduce general education had never been Martin Luther's goal – in fact, he could be considered as the father of general education. Luther had fought for the school to become the state's responsibility, rather than the responsibility of the church. Since then, the development had gone in the wrong direction. In the 1880s, an intellectual trend hostile to Christianity had gained ground in the country, and many now believed that the goal was to get rid of Christianity and Christian education. The attacks on Christian identity soon became organised and systematised. In 1891, a demand that the school should be non-denominational was added to the party program of the social democrats, and in 1915 Labour politician Carl Bonnevie (1891–1972) had raised a proposal to delete the confessional character of the school subject. Three years later, the Labour Party's general meeting had proposed to remove "Knowledge of Christianity" from the school's portfolio and include instead Christian education as part of the history curriculum. Notwithstanding, this proposal re-

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**160** Peter Andreas Jensen's reader was introduced as a consequence of the 1860 school act. Around the country, Christians protested against its inclusion of secular texts. Among other things, the protests resulted in the establishment of a new Lutheran denomination (Den Jarlsbergske Frimenighet), as well as of private schools. See Dagrund Skjelbred, Norunn Askeland, Eva Maagerø and Bente Aamotsbakken, *Norsk Lærebokhistorie. Allmueskolen – folkeskolen – grunnskolen 1739–2013* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2017), 57 ff.

sulted in far less support for the Labour Party, and already in the following year they altered their formulations and argued for a non-denominational school.

The decay continued during the interwar period. The Labour Party went on with their battle against the school's Christian foundation, led by several key figures in the party. One of these was history professor Edvard Bull, another was the leader of the *Mot Dag* movement, Erling Falk (1887–1940). According to Hareide, the *Mot Dag* movement had also turned the Labour Party in a far more radical direction. Yet, the Labour Party was not alone in its attempt to weaken the school's Christian character. The political tendencies had also been helped by liberal theology. Primarily, this had happened because that the higher schools had recruited teachers who had been educated in the university's theological faculty. These theological tendencies were also seen among teachers in primary education. Hareide gave a crushing verdict for his own time: "We have probably never seen a more tragic chapter in the history of Christian teaching. (...) Its consequences for church and society will be seen for a long time. This cannot be restored in a generation or two."

The results of these new political and theological directions came to the fore in the 1939 curriculum (*Normalplanen*). This curriculum reduced the influence of Christianity in the school, both through a decline in the number of teaching hours in "Knowledge of Christianity", as well as through alterations that changed the very lifeblood of this subject. The latter occurred by taking out the doctrine of the fall of man, and the pupils were no longer to learn about Luther's catechism, the most important confessional writing in the Lutheran church. Generally, throughout the first part, the reader is given the impression that the Labour Party had been an important driving force behind the religious decline in school and society, and that their struggle against dogmatic Christian teaching had been supported by representatives of liberal theology.

This impression is further strengthened in the three preceding chapters of the book, all of which are linked to the Labour Party's policies through short introductory quotes.<sup>161</sup> The chapters depict how the Labour movement continued their fight against Christianity and Christian education, after the *Mot Dag* movement had been dissolved. Hareide describes how Christianity was now attacked from several sides. The party's youth wing movement (*AUF*) aimed to free the school from church patronage and were supported by the radical cultural elite. This could particularly be seen through their periodical *Kontakt*, edited by Torolf El-

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<sup>161</sup> In chapters 2 and 3, the texts are introduced by a short quotation from the periodical *Kontakt*, published by the Labour Party between 1947 and 1953, while chapter 4 is introduced by a quote from August Lange.

ster.<sup>162</sup> Elster, who had worked as a journalist in the Labour Party's daily paper *Arbeiderbladet* after *Kontakt* folded in 1953, had also written the article "De Vergeleøse" [The defenceless], in which he, according to Hareide, described schoolchildren as unguarded persons, exposed to abuse of power through the teaching in "Knowledge of Christianity". This view of the school and Christian education had also reached the streets. In protest marches in Oslo in May 1955, there were banners of a blasphemous character, carried by members of the Labour Party's youth organisation (AUF), reading "Away with preaching – neutral religious education!", and illustrated with a horned and hooved figure, carrying a book with a cross under its arm. The figure was swept away by a large broom.

The new tendencies had caused changes in school and society. The most recent school acts had enabled secular interpretations of the law formulations, resulting in a general education on secular grounds. There was also a change in who was allowed to teach in schools. The Church ministry had recently established several principals at teacher training schools who were not members of the Evangelical-Lutheran church. This had serious consequences, said Hareide. It meant that "even an atheist or an opponent of Christianity, or a man with a completely different view of life than the Christian, could become the leader of an institution that should be characterised by a Christian life view and have 'Knowledge of Christianity' as its main subject".<sup>163</sup> The secularising tendency was thus obvious: emphasis was now placed on the child being brought up to become a good member of society, rather than to become a good Christian. The school should primarily serve society rather than serving church and Christianity. With this background, the Coordinating Committee of School and Education (Samordningsnemda for skoleverket) had oriented the school towards a clear strengthening of the humanities. This was at the expense of school's Christian character.

After briefly going through the challenges associated with the dissenter's demands to take part in the school's Christian education in chapter five, Hareide uses the sixth and final chapter to summarise the present situation on Christianity, schooling, and education. Point for point, he goes through several of the objections that had been raised against the church and Christianity, and against Biblicist and normative Christian teachings. In his own time, human autonomy was the goal, not least seen through the opinion that morality should be detached from religion and the idea of a child realising itself. This new view on human autonomy could be exemplified with the establishment of civil confirmation. In Hareide's opinion, this

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<sup>162</sup> The periodical *Kontakt* came out between 1947 and 1954 and functioned as an ambitious periodical aiming to facilitate an open and unprejudiced discussion within the Labour movement.

<sup>163</sup> Hareide (1956), 54.

practice was doomed to failure: when morality was to be built on absolutes, one would in any case arrive at a point where morality had taken on a religious character, because the absolutes would function as a religion. It had also been argued that the school's religious education should be non-denominational. This would, said Hareide, undermine the church's primary mission. The goal for Christian education should be to convey pure, confessional, and dogmatic teaching, which reflected the fact that the dogmas were results of generations of pedagogical and theological work and struggle. The state and the political authorities did not have the authority to decide which doctrine was preached, as had been recently attempted. The church was a confessional church and not only a state church, and this meant that the church itself should take the responsibility for securing the faith to which the people was baptised. Church and school could also accommodate a demand for tolerance. The Norwegian curricula contained a tolerance passage: the teacher should be aware of anything that may be offensive and hurtful to the opinion of others and teach the pupils to show patience and tolerance towards people who think differently from what they do themselves. Against the accusation that Christianity created guilt, which had recently been proposed, one could point to the essence of Christianity. The aim of the Christian gospel was to free people from all feelings of guilt, through the forgiveness from God and the people. Hareide also used the last chapter of the book to counter criticism from the dissenters. He repeated that the Norwegian church was confessional, and as long as school and church were as intertwined as they were, this required that Christian education should adhere to the confession. Thus, all the challenges in his own time were a strong motivation for the theological-pedagogical work which he himself had initiated:

Only the inner life and pulse of a school subject and a philosophy of life could save it. No power in the world can save the life that loses its inner heartbeat. Only a living renewal can preserve "Knowledge of Christianity" in Norwegian schools. (...) "Knowledge of Christianity" is the most important pedagogical power in the schools.<sup>164</sup>

In conclusion, the pamphlet *Skal kristendommen ut av skolen* demonstrates that Hareide's Christian-pedagogical activities, as well as his writings, serve as attempts to preserve the school's evangelical-Lutheran nature, at a time where much could be perceived as an existential threat to the Christian character of school and society. His aggressive and polemical style and the topic of his struggles can be traced back to the early twentieth century, when the Association for the Inner Mission

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164 Ibid., 89.



decided to fight against what they saw as secularising tendencies in society.<sup>165</sup> The school was then viewed as an important strategical area for religious revival, as was the case with social care. Hareide's proactive attempts to preserve the school's Christian character also adapt to what Aud Tønnessen has called "the ecclesiastical narrative of the war".<sup>166</sup> In this narrative, the war was seen as a consequence of the secularising tendencies that took place in the interwar period. Consequently, the Norwegian defence during WWII was perceived as a narrative of Christianity's central position in people's life; the national community during the war years was strongly rooted in Christian tradition and teaching. Thus, it became more important to facilitate the strengthening of the Christian community than to take part in the development of the welfare state.<sup>167</sup>

The ecclesiastical narrative of the war could also be traced elsewhere. When the war ended in 1945, many were engaged in implementing measures that could contribute to strengthening the Christian belief within society. The foremost goal was a *re-Christianisation* of the population.<sup>168</sup> One of the measures carried out was the establishment of the Christian daily paper *Vårt Land* in Oslo 1945. In the programmatic writing *Norsk kirke i dag* [Norwegian Church Today], published just after the end of WWII, theologian Stephan Tschudi (1908–1996) suggested the establishment of a Christian daily newspaper, "raised above class and party antagonisms". This newspaper should assess the trends of the time with an objective eye and convey a clear Christian attitude to social and cultural issues, similar to what the newspaper *Dagen* had done in Bergen since 1919.<sup>169</sup> The paper should teach Christians to see society's challenges in light of biblical teachings and to raise them to take responsibility in their surroundings. It should also erase the dividing lines between conservative and liberal Christians and publish on behalf of a united Christian community.

Stephan Tschudi had also been an important spokesman for a unified Norwegian church, and, in his opinion, *Vårt Land* was thus to act as this church's extension. Tschudi's unified church should be based on the local congregation and should have the church service as a common meeting place for prayer and edifi-

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165 In 1912, Ole Hallesby launched the Inner Mission's new strategy, in a series of articles in the periodical *For Fattig og Rik* [For Poor and Rich]. See Bernt Torvild Oftestad, *Den norske statsreligionen. Fra øvrighetskirke til demokratisk statskirke* (Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 1998), 187 ff.

166 Tønnessen (2000), 87.

167 Eivind Berggrav saw the welfare state project as a contradiction to the Lutheran regime of the two regiments. See Hans Morten Hansen, "Fra statskonform kirke til sosial omformer? Sju teser om Den norske kirkes rolle fra 1800-tallet til i dag," in *Teologisk Tidsskrift 2* (2015), 164–186.

168 Tønnessen (2000), 145, Oftestad (1998), 191, Slagstad (1998), 466 ff.

169 Stephan Tschudi, *Norsk kirke i dag* (Oslo: Land og kirke, 1945), 171.

cation. The church of the future could be seen in light of what he called “the third position”, which aimed to unite the different directions and points of view which were then existing within the Norwegian church.<sup>170</sup> This “third position” could be seen in light of the manifest *Kirkens Grunn* [The Church’s Foundation]. *Kirkens Grunn* came out in 1942 and served as confessional writing in which the church expressed a united front in the fight against the Nazi regime. However, Tschudi’s line of theological and ecclesiastical consensus did not appeal to the conservative wing of the theological landscape. Neither was it well received in the contemporary Inner Mission environments. The tension between liberal and conservative factions of the church was still existing beneath the surface of unity that emerged during WWII. Tschudi provoked the Inner Mission circles with his ecclesiastical profile and openness towards profane culture, and the board of *Vårt Land* consisted of many members with backgrounds in Inner Mission environments.<sup>171</sup> When the editor for the paper’s religious section was to be appointed, it was not Stephan Tschudi who was given this post, even though he had been an obvious candidate for the job. Rather, the board chose the theologian John Nome (1904–1980). Nome’s traditional and low-church Lutheranism was more important to the board than his lack of journalistic experience.<sup>172</sup> Thus, rather than becoming a newspaper for all Christians in the country, the establishment of *Vårt Land* became a symbol of a divided Christian public sphere.

The dispute rose out of several theological aspects. Firstly, it was an ecclesiological matter related to the question of the true church. For Tschudi, for example, baptism served as the point of departure for the church, while low-church representatives wanted to build a congregation that was based on Christian revival in local religious meeting houses. Moreover, it was also a cultural question. Should Christians engage in a dialogue with the culture and develop their theology in dialogue with the surrounding contexts, as liberal theology had done since the last decades of the nineteenth century? Or should the church separate itself from a secular society, as the pietists argued for? And how should one relate to the liberal theological currents, which in their time had resulted in the establishment of the Free Faculty of Theology (MF) and the decisions at the Calmeyergate meeting? These questions were among those dividing the theological and ecclesiastical landscape in the post-war decades.

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170 Tønnessen (2000).

171 According to Per Voksø, the board of *Vårt Land* feared Stephan Tschudi’s understanding of ecclesiology. See Voksø (1994), 48.

172 Per Voksø describes Nome’s journalistic talent in the following manner: “Nome was not exciting, neither in style nor the choice of theme, and it took far too long for him to get to the point”. Voksø (1994), 56.

The divided Christian public sphere was also expressed through other channels. Stephan Tschudi had previously also worked as a journalist for the magazine *Bymisjonæren* [The City Missionary], published by Oslo Inner Mission Association since 1887. *Bymisjonæren* was an edifying magazine that also engaged in humanistic work outside the Norwegian borders. In 1951, the magazine changed its name to *Vår Kirke* [Our Church]. The title was deliberately chosen: “When *Bymisjonæren* changes its name to *Vår Kirke*, this is not a narrowing. Rather, it means an expansion. We want to open doors where everyone can enter and open windows with a fresh draught”, the paper read.<sup>173</sup> *Vårt Land* and *Vår Kirke* came to represent opposite sides of the theological landscape. Where *Vårt Land* was strongly tied to low-church environments and the Free Faculty of Theology, *Vår Kirke* became a newspaper for culturally oriented Christians who counted baptism to be the true precondition of the church.

The establishment of *Vårt Land*, and the religious public sphere this newspaper became a representative of, anticipated the conflict between Hallesby and Schjelderup (the hell debate) a few years later. Among those who initiated the newspaper was also the writer and journalist Ronald Fangen (1895–1946). Fangen had explicit and high-pitched cultural ambitions for the new paper. His goal was for *Vårt Land* to become a Christian equivalent to *Aftenposten*, one of the leading cultural newspapers in Oslo.<sup>174</sup> Yet, *Vårt Land* did not become what Fangen hoped for. During the paper’s first years, there were, among other things, fierce disputes on whether the newspaper should include cinema advertisements.<sup>175</sup> Fangen, who was in favour of an inclusion, had made an agreement with Oslo Cinematographs that the newspaper would advertise cultural and social films, but not pure entertainment films. This was intended to be a compromise with board members and readers who believed that cinema announcements did not belong in the newspaper. Nevertheless, many conservative voices reacted against the inclusion of cinema announcements, and not least among them was Ole Hallesby, president of the newspaper’s general assembly. At the general assembly in 1946, Fangen managed to get a narrow majority for his view, thanks to Hallesby’s absence due to illness. However, the day after the general assembly, Fangen was among those who perished when on a Stockholm-bound plane which crashed right after departure from Oslo. Eventually, Hallesby was again able to mobilise his like-minded peers, and get a majority for his point of view a few months later. The antagonists viewed entertainment films as morally reprehensible and saw Christianity as a

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173 *Vår Kirke* (1951), 12, 3.

174 Slagstad (1998), 467.

175 *Ibid.*, 467. See also Voksø (1994), 74.

counterweight to all secular culture. Ronald Fangen, on his part, had argued that Christianity had to engage in dialogue with culture, in order not to end up as the “curse of our time”.

Despite this theological discord and divided Christian public spheres, Christians managed to gain influence over the political landscape. In the 1945 election, the Christian Democrats received a support of 7.9%, and were declared the big winners of the election, together with the Communist Party. The support was evenly distributed throughout the country, and eventually all counties had their own party organisation. The leader of the party, Nils Lavik (1884–1996), stated that one of the most important tasks for the party was to build the Kingdom of God on the earth. This task was given to them from God.<sup>176</sup> At the Storting, the Christian Democrats became a clear voice in matters concerning moral issues and the place of Christianity in school and society. In all negotiations in parliament, the Christian Democrats stressed that “Knowledge of Christianity” should be a central and compulsory subject in all types of school. They were also engaged in moral questions, not least in issues relating to sexual education. One of these questions concerned the Family Planning and Maternity Clinic, where the party clearly opposed the idea that the clinic should provide training in “preventive techniques” to unmarried women. Neither should the soldiers in the German brigade have access to contraceptives, as the Ministry of Defence had proposed, not least since venereal diseases were an increasing problem. The Christian Democrats also waged an uncompromising fight against all forms of alcoholic beverages and used all means to reduce the consumption of alcohol. Moreover, gambling was viewed as a moral matter. In their view, games and bets were an obstacle to good morals, and built up an unhealthy view of money.<sup>177</sup>

In the post-war years, social work was also strongly influenced by the church. The national confederation of church care (Menighetspleiens Landsforbund) was established in 1945 in order to coordinate the church’s social aid. Two years later, the organisation initiated a fundraising campaign for the needy in Germany.<sup>178</sup> During the first months of 1948, 160,000 NOK was collected through Norwegian congregations, and this money was used to provide food to children, students, and elderly people in several German cities.<sup>179</sup> The campaign came to be called Norwegian Church Aid. In 1953, Norwegian Church Aid developed into an inde-

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<sup>176</sup> Kåre Olav Solhjell, *Tru og makt. Kristeleg Folkepartis historie 1933–2008* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2008), 150.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>178</sup> Aud V. Tønnessen, *Kirkens nødhjelp: Bistand, tro og politikk* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2007), 27 ff.

<sup>179</sup> The average inflation in Norway in the years between 1948 and 2023 is 4.4% p.a., and 160,000 NOK in 1948 is thus equal to appr. 4,100,000 NOK today.

pendent organisation, and became part of a larger international group of organisations. These organisations were under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation, which set the premises for which tasks should be given priority and how they should work. Eventually, Norwegian Church Aid developed into one of the largest aid organisations in the Nordic countries. The Norwegian Church was also involved in international church issues, and was among the founders of the Lutheran World Federation in 1947 as well as the World Council of Churches in 1948.

The establishment of other institutions aimed to create dialogue between the church and secular culture followed rapidly in the 1950s. In 1956, *Norsk Menighetsinstitutt* (the Norwegian Congregational Institute) was founded by the Bishop's Conference, in order to engage in dialogues with groups that traditionally stood far from the church.<sup>180</sup> One of these groups was the Labour movement, and the aim was to set aside old antagonism between the church and members of the Labour Party. Current social ethical issues were also worked on. The idea for this institute can be traced back to 1949, when the bishops' meeting proposed to establish an institute that would train laity and "ecclesiastical specialists".<sup>181</sup> Similar institutions had also been established in Sweden and Germany. The theologian Tor Aukrust, who we will hear more about shortly, was employed as the leader of the institute, and in his social-ethical work, *Mennesket i samfunnet* (1965–1966), he addressed new challenges in contemporary society. *Norsk Menighetsinstitutt* was a common church organisation, and all the diocesan councils in the country were involved in approving statutes and appointing council members. The institute was closed in the 1960s, due to economic challenges.

In the same year when the Humanist Association was founded, *Norsk Kirkeakademi* [Norwegian Church Academy] was also established in Oslo.<sup>182</sup> The point of departure for the academy was a young and proactive Christian environment on the city's west side, which was worried about what they saw as a lack of contact between the church and secular culture. This group, called the Frederiksborg Circle, had initiated a series of lectures and seminars which became very popular, attracting listeners from far beyond church circles.<sup>183</sup> The seminars addressed cultural questions and challenged the traditional understanding of which topics the

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**180** Trond Bakkevig, "Kirke og arbeiderbevegelse. En undersøkelse av samtalen mellom kirke og arbeiderbevegelse i regi av Norsk Menighetsinstitutt i slutten av 1950-årene," in *Tidsskrift for teologi og kirke* 52 (1981), 21–41.

**181** Agøy (2023), 286–287.

**182** Hallgeir Elstad, *I dialog. Norsk kyrkjeakademi 1956–2006* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2006).

**183** "Vi må ta opp 'grenseproblemene'. Metodene i kristen virksomhet er ikke avgjørende. Frederiksborg på Bygdøy vil skape et nytt kristent miljø," in *Vårt Land*, 1.10.1953.

church should deal with, and to what extent culture could engage in Christian questions. Important names in the public sphere were invited as speakers, including both church representatives as well as people considered to be far removed from the church.<sup>184</sup> The Frederiksborg circle also brought together occupational groups who worked on the fringes of the church, such as architects and painters, and brought them into dialogue with theologians. The tasks they wanted to solve could be seen as the church's "boundary problems". In the extension of this activity, the Norwegian Church Academy arose.

Church historian Hallgeir Elstad has pointed out that it is hardly a coincidence that the Norwegian Church Academy was established in the same year as the Norwegian Humanist Association. The Frederiksborg Circle had reacted negatively to the church's position in the hell debate and believed that the dispute caused isolation and a crisis of confidence for the Norwegian church. This had resulted in a favourable climate for the Norwegian Humanist Association. The church had too many closed doors, the members of the Frederiksborg Circle argued, and these doors could be seen as a symbol of the church's attitude to cultural and social life. The following was stated in the first paragraph of the Church Academy's program statement:

The Norwegian Church Academy will be a body for the Norwegian Church's work with ethical and general cultural issues. On the basis of the church's heritage and confession, and in awareness of its binding relationship to church and social life, the Norwegian Church Academy will take up questions for consideration by a) creating an open forum for meetings between the church and cultural life, b) undertaking and studying the contemporary spiritual situation, c) carrying out educational work.<sup>185</sup>

The Church Academy was thus to be an open door to the church's community and buildings, as well as providing a space for reflection and thought.

### **Liberal theological voices**

In the previous section, we have drawn an outline of a complex theological landscape, where many experienced the dominant ideas and currents of the time, i. e., the Labour Party and social democracy, as a contradiction to what the church was supposed to stand for. At the same time, there were strong forces willing to open

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<sup>184</sup> The names included Kristian Horn, Bjarne Hareide, and Torolf Elster and the writers Sigurd Hoel and Finn Carling (1925–2004).

<sup>185</sup> Elstad (2006), 90.

theology and Christianity to culture and society. It became a question of what the church should be: a congregation of confessors, or a folk church. Kristian Schjelderup, who was a participant in the hell debate, was perceived as controversial and problematic by many within the church. Nevertheless, he may also have contributed to building bridges to culture and society at large. However, other names are also interesting when it comes to drawing a theological context for the subject of this book. One of these is Tor Aukrust.

Of all theologians who must be considered remarkable in post-war Norway, Tor Aukrust is one of the most remarkable of them all, and perhaps one of the most interesting. As a theologian, Aukrust was brave, bold, and productive, distinguishing himself as an important bridge-builder between Christianity, the church, and social democracy in the latter half of the twentieth century. In his work on the Norwegian strategists, Rune Slagstad pointed out that Aukrust had not been given the attention he deserved and Slagstad emphasised his role as the consensus theologian in the Labour Party state.<sup>186</sup> What is most interesting in this context is that Aukrust gave theology a humanistic foundation – that is, he created a space for doubt and reflection, within the framework of Christian faith. This humanistic orientation was also tied to an emphasis on humankind's possibilities and responsibilities. It is not easy to place him within a distinct theological tradition, but he clearly orients himself towards contemporary Protestant theology, with kerygma as the centre of practical faith. Previous research has pointed to Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and Wolfgang Pannenberg (1928–2014) as theological “relatives”, although Aukrust also uses one of his first publications, *Kristendom og Verdensbilde* [Christianity and World View] to criticise Bultmann.<sup>187</sup> Theologian Svein Aage Christoffersen points out that Aukrust also adapts to postwar Scandinavian creation theology, although without referring to Knud E. Løgstrup (1905–1981) or Gustaf Wingren (1910–2000).<sup>188</sup>

Aukrust was educated as a theologian (University of Oslo) in 1949 and awarded a theological doctorate in 1958. In 1959, he was employed as head of Norsk Menighetsinstitutt, and after having worked as a priest in Hamar during the 1960s, he joined the theological faculty as a teacher in the history of religion in 1971. Between 1978 and 1988, he was head of the University's practical-theological semina-

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**186** Slagstad (1998), 470.

**187** Jan Olav Henriksen, “Forkynnelse og historie – et gjensyn med Graben-problemet i en norsk bearbejdsels, e, and Svein Aage Christoffersen, “Teologisk forankret – humanistisk orientert. Om Tor Aukrusts *Kristendom og verdensbilde* (1953),” in Sigmund Hjelde (ed.), *Festskrift til Tor Aukrust: mennesket, kulturen, samfunnet*. Det praktisk-teologiske seminars skriftserie 6 (Oslo: Det praktisk-teologiske seminar, 2001), 19–34, and 35–49.

**188** Christoffersen (2001), 32.

ry, thus becoming the first rector at the seminary to hold a doctoral degree. Aukrust's decisive role in the rapprochement between the church and the Labour movement after WWII was particularly given through his cultural analytical work *Mennesket i kulturen* [Man in Culture, 1958], and his theological social ethics, *Mennesket i samfunnet* [Man in Society, two volumes, 1965–1966]. In the latter work, he places great emphasis on analysing and discussing the relationship between Christianity and socialist and Marxist ethics. When the Labour Party assessed its relationship to Christianity in 1973, Aukrust wrote a substantial part of the report.<sup>189</sup> Helge Sivertsen functioned as chairman of this committee.<sup>190</sup> Aukrust was also concerned with man's global responsibility, and became involved in the battles against nuclear weapons, war, and poverty.<sup>191</sup> Thus, Aukrust's practical social commitment coincided with that of Eva Nordland.

However, it is Aukrust's activities in the 1950s that are most interesting in this context. At that time, the young Aukrust held a university scholarship, and was a diligent contributor in the public sphere, both as a feature writer in the newspapers *Vårt Land* and *Morgenbladet*, and as a book reviewer for several newspaper and magazines. In 1954, he also published *Kristendom og Verdensbilde*, in which he addressed the relationship between theology and science. At the same time, he was also a frequent contributor to the national radio's devotionals and gave speeches and lectures in various contexts. Thus, a wide audience was familiar with Aukrust's views.

The young Aukrust's chronicles and book reviews anticipate the theological and social ethical views that he will present in his more mature works. The theological points of view turn away from dogmatics and towards humankind and open the believer's possibilities for interaction and social action in a demythologised world. This can be seen in several texts, among them *Kristendom og Åndsliv – en ny situasjon* [Christianity and Spiritual life – a New Situation], published in

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<sup>189</sup> Midttun (1995), 56.

<sup>190</sup> The other members of this committee were Jørgen Karlsen, Aase Bjerkholt, Grete Bjørlo, Alex Johnson, Martin Kolberg, Eigil Liane, Bodil Skjånes-Dugstad, Kjell Steinsvåg, Odd Syvertsen, and Ingvold Ulveseth. The mandate of the committee was the following: "The committee will give a presentation of the basic ideas of democratic socialism (DNA's principal program) seen in relation to Christianity. In this context, the committee will also assess private capitalism and Christianity. The committee will seek to clarify the prerequisites for people with different views of life to be able to be gathered in the efforts of the Labour Party's economical and social policies and be in front of the development of a society characterised by democracy and equality."

<sup>191</sup> See particularly his work *Tilbake til det ukjente* [Back to the unknown], 1981, and Trond Berg Eriksen, "Tilbake til det ukjente," in Hjelde (2001), 81–88.



three editions of *Vårt Land* in 1954.<sup>192</sup> In this text, which will serve as an example of the views that Aukrust conveys to the public, Aukrust aims to analyse the conditions for spiritual life, Christianity, and religion in his own time. On one side, he says, the present could be considered as the interregnum of the radicals, in the sense that intellectual life is characterised by radical currents to a lesser degree than before. This applies to both atheism and radical preacher enthusiasm, which were far less popular in his time than they had been a couple of decades earlier. Yet at the same time, the radicals had chosen a new strategy, seen in more practical measures such as religious teaching in school and civil confirmation.

Nonetheless, at the same time, says Aukrust, one could notice a more general religious trend. People were interested in religious questions. This can be seen through an increased interest in spiritualism and religious mysticism. Aukrust sees this as an expression of something else: to a greater extent than before, humankind knows the painful choices, the responsibility of decision, and the burden of judgment. At the same time, the human being is overwhelmed by unrest and anxiety, and has lost their fixed point in existence. Thus, we find ourselves in a typical time of crisis and transition, Aukrust points out. Consequently, we need an intellectual and spiritual life. Intellectual and spiritual activities develop our human capacity and can make us more open to creation. It follows from this that by virtue of its nature, spiritual life cannot have any definite ideological anchoring. We cannot claim that spiritual life should be Christian, Aukrust says. In this area, the intellectual and spiritual life has undergone a legitimate secularisation, and the church cannot dictate how cultural life should shape its expressions. The intellectual and spiritual life gives us a recognition of reality and appears as the meeting place where a human makes themselves known as they are. It is also the battlefield where the good and the bad break against each other.

For Aukrust, the intellectual and spiritual life stands out as the great opportunity to meet humankind where they are, with their shortcomings and faults, thus clearly demonstrating their affiliation with creation theology. Aukrust downplays the Christian's self-understanding: Christ is the only one who comes from outside, all human beings are a part of the sinful world and are sinners themselves. The intellectual and spiritual life thus becomes the most important place for preaching the gospel, not through dogmas and moral injunctions, but rather through taking part in the spiritual life. Through spiritual life, Christians could bring their neighbours in contact with God, and spiritual life thus has a positive Christian value.

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192 "Kristendom og åndsliv – en ny situasjon," in *Vårt Land*, 16.–18.11.1954. See also the critical editorial in *Vårt Land*, 23.11.1954, and Aukrust's reply, in *Vårt Land*, 30.11.1954.

This could also solve the church's contact problem, Aukrust underlined. The priests often complained that it was so difficult to communicate with modern people, and that people did not understand the sermons. To solve this problem, the church had to change. Rather than strengthening the faith, Aukrust stressed that the human aspect should be strengthened; Christians should increase their human compassion. In this regard, we could learn from the Catholic church, as the Catholics have a strong and remarkable activity when it comes to the area of intellectual and spiritual life. They write in newspapers and periodicals on theatre, science, and art, and have important contact with academics. The Catholics thus give the outside world the impression that they are interested in life, and that they do not turn away from the world around them.

The views Aukrust conveys in this chronicle can be found in a number of those texts printed in newspapers and periodicals throughout the 1950s.<sup>193</sup> As a consequence of his point of departure in creation theology, he can also emphasise the importance of cultural expressions, as he does in his reviews of films and books.<sup>194</sup> He can also see the value of his opponents and in political expressions as he does, for example, in his text on Gabriel Langfeldt in *Morgenbladet* December 1955 and in the analysis of the Labour Party's cultural programme in *Aftenposten* 1957.<sup>195</sup> His cultural openness was also duly noted in the surroundings. It is criticized by some and admired by others.<sup>196</sup> With his cultural openness and public activity, Aukrust forms an important background for the context in this book.

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**193** See for instance his text "Kirkens Chanse" (The Church's chance), in *Morgenbladet*, 9.2.1957.

**194** See for instance his review of the film *Pastor Jarmann kommer hjem* [Pastor Jarmann comes home] a criminal drama directed by the famous Norwegian film director Arne Skouen (1913–2003). Aukrust states the following: "When it comes to Christianity, Arne Skouen plays with mute in this film, but the sound that is played is real. (...) The film says something substantial about the priest's call and work, and it challenges us by reminding us of the importance of the silent testimonies – also from a preacher of the word." See "Er Jarmann prest?," in *Morgenbladet*, 20.9.1958. See also his text on August Strindberg, in *Morgenbladet*, 7.7.1953.

**195** In his critical review of Gabriel Langfeldt's book *Personlighetsutvikling, moral og livssyn* [Personality development, morals and philosophy of life], Aukrust concludes with the following: "Langfeldt is not an aggressor attacking the church (...) When it comes to the question of child-raising, he is a loud man that the church needs," in *Morgenbladet*, 14.12.1955. See also his thorough analysis and comparison of Karl Marx and Torolf Elster in his analysis of the Labour Party's cultural programme, "Arbeiderpartiets kulturprogram," in *Aftenposten*, 2.4.1957–3.4.1957.

**196** See for instance the philosopher Hjalmar Hegge's positive analysis of *Kristendom og verdensbilde*, in *Verdens Gang*, 17.3.1954. An interesting example of a critical attitude towards Aukrust's theological views can be seen in the editorial in *Vårt Land* in October 1956, after Aukrust had claimed that the golden era of organisational Christianity was gone (*Morgenbladet*, 18.10.1956). Aukrust had ascribed the sociological structure of the Christian lay movement in Norway to a time-typical tendency, which the editor of *Vårt Land* says is wrong. Rather, "it sprang forth



**Fig. 7:** Tor Aukrust, ca. 1921. Photo: Kristian Stakston / Gudbrandsdalsmusea.

Another author and theologian worth noticing is Johan B. Hygen. Hygen was employed as a senior lecturer in systematic theology at the University's theological faculty in 1942 and defended his theological doctorate in 1948.<sup>197</sup> He was appointed full professor of ethics and philosophy of religion in 1954 at University of Oslo and held this position until his retirement in 1978. Hygen had also studied philosophy

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from an inner spiritual need and has little to do with sociology". See "I Samme båt," in *Vårt Land*, 20.10.1956.

<sup>197</sup> The title of his doctoral dissertation was *Moralen og Guds rike* ([Morality and the Kingdom of God], a systematical-theological discussion of teleological problems in Christian ethics.

in Germany and Switzerland in the late 1930s, and was also educated as a sculptor. His publications include theological textbooks as well as several treatises, like *Elementær etikk* [Elementary Ethics] in 1954, and a major work on the teodicé problem, *Guds allmakt og det ondes problem* [God's Omnipotence and the Problem of Evil, 1973]. Hygen also published his open lectures on Albert Schweitzer, held when Schweitzer came to Oslo to deliver his Nobel speech in 1954.<sup>198</sup> As Tor Aukrust had done, Hygen brought theology and church into interaction with culture, both through what he wrote in his theological publications as well as through chronicles and articles in newspapers and periodicals.<sup>199</sup> He was also a frequent participator in debates and radio programs.<sup>200</sup> His theological ideas are influenced by ethical idealism and can, for instance, be traced back to Immanuel Kant, but he also draws inspiration from existentialist traditions and from philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>201</sup> These philosophical ideas are conjoined with creation theology, in which the idea of man as created in the image of God also gives man responsibilities towards their neighbour. Also Hygen shared Eva Nordland's opposition to nuclear weapons.<sup>202</sup> Among other things, he was one of the initiators of the campaign De 13 [The Thirteen], which mobilised mass demonstrations against nuclear weapons in 1960–1961.<sup>203</sup>

Hygens theological view can for instance be seen in his article *Menneskesyn og moral* [View of Humanity and Morals], published in 1949.<sup>204</sup> The article is a critical analysis of man's moral position at that present time. Hygen draws a glum picture of humanity: it has lost its moral compass, and its ideals have disintegrated. The situation can be compared to a burglary: "The storage building of moral values seems to have been broken into. Everything is in a mess, and nothing is in its right place."<sup>205</sup> The contemporary diagnosis is presupposed by three issues

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198 Johan B. Hygen, *Albert Schweitzers tanker om kulturen* (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1954). The lectures were open to all students at University of Oslo in the spring of 1954.

199 See for instance his involvement in the Frederiksborg Circle, "Kultursenteret Frederiksborg starter nye kurs," in *Aftenposten*, 9.9.1954.

200 Lønning (1981), 13 ff.

201 See for instance his article on Sartre, "Jean Paul Sartres eksistensialisme," in *Kirke og Kultur* 1 (1947), 23–41.

202 Eva and Odd Nordland are listed in the Tabula Gratulatoria in the Festschrift written for Johan Hygen's 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 1981.

203 See for instance his articles in *Dagbladet*, 05.12.1960 and 07.12.1960, "Kristendommen og atomvåpnene."

204 The article was originally published in the periodical *Kirke og kultur* (1949), and is reprinted in the edited volume published for his seventieth birthday. The following references refer to the reprinted version in the edited homage volume, see note 307 above.

205 Hygen (1981), 21.

which reduces humankind's intrinsic value, says Hygen. Firstly, his own time was characterised by a strong collectivist tendency. This erased the human aspect and transferred people into a unit in an unmanageable, cold, and inhuman society. Hygen sees this collectivist tendency as intimately tied to individualism. In its eagerness to let humankind reach its full potential, individualism may isolate a person and make them lonely and poor. "If people have lost their roots in the personal, natural, and living community and become lonely, the dead, impersonal and abstract community has its great chance."<sup>206</sup> Secondly, the twentieth-century understanding of humanity is based on evolutionism. In scientific matter, evolutionism is an epoch-making incident, Hygen admits. Yet new scientific insights can be difficult to adapt to people's philosophy of life. Its philosophy could predispose for naturalistic morals, and consequently, there could be an overemphasis on the animal aspects of humanity. Related to this is the third issue: psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis had demonstrated the primitivity of our conscious thoughts, actions, and convictions, and showcased the instinctive character of many of our moral and religious life utterances. The ideal was a conflict-free life. A new understanding of happiness arose, where the concept of happiness was tied to a spiritual truth in a rather primitive sense. The truth should be reached through the paths of least resistance. Thanks to the effective distribution systems in our time, these destructive tendencies have reached so far that there is practically no one who has not been affected by this. The consequences were that what was specifically human had become more obscure, and that humans had lost their metaphysical dignity of being human. This went hand in hand with the fact that God had disappeared from humankind's visual field.

This reduction of human dignity also meant that morality has become relative. Hygen looked upon the situation in his own time: "We are outraged that man is reduced in human dignity and human rights because he is Jewish. Rightly! We unanimously reject anti-Semitism. But what about anti-Germanism? Are we equally outraged when a person is reduced in human dignity and human rights because he is German? There are many indications that we do not."<sup>207</sup> For Hygen, these tendencies proved that our judgment of people was dependent upon accidental, external, and impersonal concerns. These new tendencies had led to our foremost cultural personalities engaging in a quest for a new view on humanity, and Hygen mentions Jean-Paul Sartre, Arthur Koestler, and Aldous Huxley. In their own way, all of them have used their philosophical authorship to emphasise how the

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

modern human is bound and unfree. Through their philosophical systems they aim to restore humanity, and to save humans from disappearing into the collective.

Hygen adapts God into these existentialist life philosophies. Twentieth-century man had lost sight of God, in the sense that God was no longer an integral part of Western culture. It was an important dimension that had been lost in human life. In Hygen's opinion, the church itself is to blame for this. The church has chosen to isolate itself from culture, including not least the progress of science. Rather than integrating Christianity into the scientific worldview, the church had chosen to declare science as impure and impious. Hygen's point is that humans must dare to let God have a central place in their life, as a transcendental and holy force. One must dare to make room for a renaissance for the religious, the Christian view on humankind as God's creation and property. Christianity and morality are closely related, and Hygen can therefore conclude his article with the following proclamation: "Restore the Christian view on humanity, and a restoration of morality will not be long in coming".<sup>208</sup>

With this understanding of morality, culture, and humanity's lack of spirituality, it is easy to understand that the theologian Hygen engages in the broad society and in the contemporary cultural debate. As created in God's image, all humans have a duty to interact with others, and to take part in each other's lives. It is a willingness to life, a willingness to optimism, of which Albert Schweitzer's life and work, among others, is an example.<sup>209</sup> On this background, Hygen can refer to Schweitzer as a "reliable adviser in an irresolute time, and an unshakeable guide in a world that is shaken to its foundations". This is independent of Schweitzer's own view of life: "Is this humanism, we would like to be humanists. Is this Christianity, we would like to be Christians". Hygen is more concerned with the fundamental insights of the Bible and the biblical message than with the church's confession, and this brings him into debate with theologians who maintain the importance of the church's confessional writings.<sup>210</sup> His understanding of Christianity can also allow him to emphasise Gandhi as an example to follow, as he does in his March 1955 *Aftenposten* review of Johan Galtung's and Arne Næss' publication of Gandhi's ethics.<sup>211</sup> Hygen aims to create an open space for man's search for mean-

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208 *Ibid.*, 31.

209 Johan B. Hygen, "Albert Schweitzer og vi," in *Morgenbladet*, 6.1.1954. This chronicle quotes the speech Hygen delivered in Oslo town hall when Schweitzer visited Oslo in November 1954.

210 See for instance the articles "Kirkens teologiske selvkritikk," in *Vårt Land*, 26.3.1953 and 27.3.1953. See also Andreas Seierstad's article "Vedkjenningskrifter og prestelovnad," in *Vårt Land*, 12.3.1953, Carl Fr. Wisløff's "Bekjennelsen og presteløftet," in *Vårt Land*, 26.2.1953, and Johan B. Hygen, "Autoritet og frihet," in *Vårt Land*, 2.3.1953.

211 Johan Hygen, "På talefot med Gandhi," in *Aftenposten*, 22.3.1955.

ing and give sufficient space for human doubt.<sup>212</sup> This makes him an important part of the background in this context.

## Summary

In this part of this book, we have drawn a picture of the social democratic order which distinguished Norway in the post-war period, and which is important for understanding the background of contemporary political actors. We have highlighted three contexts which are relevant for understanding the school's development in the 1950s. These are: a) the political context (the development of the welfare state), b) the cultural context, and c) the theological context. As we have seen, the issue at stake in this book is played out in a complex intellectual landscape, where different movements, currents, and ideas intertwine. Nevertheless, in this complex landscape, it is possible to chisel out a basic narrative that characterises the period: it is about human autonomy, and the autonomy's foundation in knowledge. Autonomy could arise by detaching oneself from normative systems, be they religious, linguistic, or others. This climate created favourable conditions for organisations with secularisation as a goal, such as the Norwegian Humanist Association, as well as providing the basis for a school that was detached from the church to a greater extent than had previously been the case. At the same time, the development of the welfare state required increased knowledge, and this knowledge could be achieved through expanding the school – through the idea of “the same school for all”. Education was an important determinant for economic and social well-being, and it could potentially increase the human capital inherent in the labour force, thereby also increasing the innovative capacity of the economy. Nine years of compulsory schooling therefore became an overall goal in the post-war development of the welfare state in Norway, rather than seven years, as had previously been.

The narrative of autonomy is also about the extent to which the church, which had been in a symbiotic relationship with the school for centuries, should be part of this post-war development, or whether the church should distinguish itself as a counterculture. Increased autonomy, according to the opinion of many Christians, would contribute to the church losing its power over the school, which in turn would result in a secular society. In order to prevent these secular tendencies

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<sup>212</sup> On 11.9.1954, *Vårt Land* made a great point of Hygen's idea to establish a house academy for people seeking meaning. Hygen argued that groups of people should gather in homes and discuss questions they were concerned about. See “Kunne vi bare få være litt beskjedne med ordene,” in *Vårt Land*, 11.9.1954.

from gaining ground, strong and powerful forces attempted to demarcate the school from society, and to maintain the church's close relationship with the school. This could be seen, for example, through the establishment of IKO and through numerous statements in the press, for example in the newspaper *Vårt Land*. However, the post-war ecclesiastical landscape in Norway was not univocal. The Christian public sphere was divided in two. One of these public spheres was arguing for the church being a counter-reaction to the effects of political and social development, while the other emphasised the church's responsibility to communicate with a broader culture. This cultural openness argued by the latter could, for example, result in Christianity's ethical narrative being preferred over the dogmas. Consequently, the distance between this cultural openness, which many perceived to be the counterpart to Christianity, and Christianity itself was believed to be lessening, as seen, for example, in the dialogue between Kristian Horn and Johan B. Hygen in a 1956 edition of the newspaper *Dagbladet*. The cultural openness also resulted in institutionalised attempts at dialogue, as could be seen, for example, with the establishment of the Frederiksborg Circle.



### 3 Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland. Parts of the Social Democratic Project

This book is based on the fundamental assumption that Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland play a significant role in the development of the social democratic school project in post-war Norway. This assumption is in accordance with previous research.<sup>1</sup> However, previous works have paid little attention to understanding their contribution to the school's development in light of the contexts that surround them. There is reason to believe that the connection between their texts and their intellectual, cultural, and political surroundings can offer new nuances to understanding Christianity's role in the school's development in the post-war period. In this part of the book, we will take a closer look at some of the texts they authored in the public debate on school and education. These texts will be seen as a part of the different contexts they relate to, but the texts will also be seen in relation to Sivertsen's and Nordland's background. We will start by taking a closer look at Helge Sivertsen: who he was, and what he wrote.

#### Helge Sivertsen – School and Democracy

##### Biographical notes. Grundtvig and the folk high school movement in Norway

Helge Sivertsen was born 12 June 1913 in Mandal, the southernmost city of Norway. His parents were Nils Sivertsen and Marta Haddeland (1883–1962), and as previously mentioned, Sivertsen grew up at the folk high schools where his father worked. Thus, at 13 years of age, Helge Sivertsen moved with his family to Inderøy, 120 km north of Trondheim, where his father was to establish new folk high schools. Sivertsen completed the gymnasium with highest distinction in Orkdal in 1933, and continued his education at University of Oslo, initially in law studies and thereafter in philological and humanistic subjects.<sup>2</sup> He graduated in 1940, with history as his main subject, and German and Norwegian as subsidiary subjects. Sivertsen qualified to become a teacher through taking the pedagogical seminary, and in 1938–1939 he received a scholarship to study economic history at Oxford. At the gymnasium in Orkdal, he had also met his future wife, Merle Five (1914–

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1 Helsevig (2005), Helsevig (2017), Telhaug (1989), Telhaug (1990), Telhaug and Mediås (2003), Slagstad (1998), Volckmar (2004a), Volckmar (2004b).

2 Volckmar (2004a), 34.

2003), daughter of the country governor Håkon Five (1880–1944). They married in Oslo in 1940 and had three children, Bodil, Nils, and Tore.<sup>3</sup> Helge Sivertsen was also an excellent athlete, being part of the Norwegian national team in discus and shotput in 1930–1939. He became Norwegian champion in discus twice, and in 1936 he represented Norway at the Olympic Games in Berlin.

As a young student, Sivertsen got involved in student politics, and in 1938, he became the leader of the Student's Joint Committee. By virtue of having this position, he asked, among other things, the Ministry of Church and Education to establish a student organisation at University of Oslo. Sivertsen formulated the draft law himself.<sup>4</sup> The proposal was approved, and in 1939, Studentsamskipnaden [The Student Association] was established in Oslo, and between 1941 and 1947, Helge Sivertsen functioned as the leader of its economic board. During WWII, Sivertsen became a part of MILORG, the main Norwegian resistance movement, and as a member of the Besserud circle, he was a keen contributor to the question of how Norway should solve the problems they would be facing after the war. After the end of the war, Sivertsen participated in an organised search for documents that could document contact between the Norwegian traitor Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945) and the Germans before April 1940.<sup>5</sup> As a historian, Helge Sivertsen published works on medieval history, the home fronts, and the attack on Denmark and Norway in edited volumes on WWII.<sup>6</sup> He also contributed to the report from the 1945 investigation committee.<sup>7</sup> In 1947, Sivertsen was appointed secretary for the ministry of education, thereby initiating a long political career in service of the school. He was also involved in different kinds of cultural work and was given a number of positions of trust in cultural life over the years.<sup>8</sup> Cul-

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3 Skadsem (1983).

4 Volckmar (2004a), 34.

5 See for instance "Quisling-dokumenter funnet i Tyskland nedgravd i jorden og bak vegger," in *Arbeiderbladet*, 28.8.1945. This report documents how Sivertsen, together with the partisans Jens Christian Hauge (1915–2006) and Ivar Follestad, found valuable documentation of contact between the Norwegian traitor and the Germans.

6 *Innocens III og hans tid* [Innocens III and his time] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1942), *Byer og bykulturer i middelalderen* [Cities and city cultures in the medieval age] (Oslo: 1945), "Hjemmestyrkene," in *Våre falne* [Our fallen] (vol. IV) and *Norges krig* [Norway's war].

7 Trond Nordby, ed., *Storting og regjering 1945–1985. Biografier* (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1985), 842.

8 Sivertsen served as the chairman of Statens filmsentral, the governmental film distributor in Norway, 1947–1953, the deputy chairman of the board of Norsk Film 1948–1960, the chairman of the board for planning of the Norwegian School of Sports Science 1949–1953, member of the British-Norwegian cultural commission 1949–1972, and member of the Nordic cultural commission 1950–1960 and 1966–1971. *Ibid.*

ture became an important part of the political agenda in the years after WWII, and in 1953 the Labour Party set up a committee tasked with formulating a program in line with the Labour movement's ideology. Helge Sivertsen was appointed chairman of this committee.<sup>9</sup>

With a background in the folk high school movement, Helge Sivertsen took part in an intellectual tradition that had characterised Scandinavian culture, and in particular that of Denmark and Norway, since the latter half of the nineteenth century. N. F. S. Grundtvig and his ideas are central to this tradition. Grundtvig left a voluminous authorship to posterity, comprising 37,000 pages and more than 1,500 hymns, in addition to popular songs and national poems.<sup>10</sup> Previous research has pointed out the existence of different stages in his authorship, with the interpretation of Nordic mythology as the signpost for the most important changes. The years 1825 and 1832 are normally regarded as turning points in Grundtvig's development as a theologian and author, and are essential for understanding Grundtvig's role for the folk high school movement.

Grundtvig had caused a great controversy in Denmark in the 1820s. In 1825, he made his so-called matchless discovery, with which he argued that true Christianity was not found in the Bible, but rather in the faith and creed of the church. According to Grundtvig's opinion, this faith and creed were always present in the living word and they were bestowed and renewed in the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. Consequently, the living word was not legitimated by the Bible, but rather, the Bible should be seen as a witness of the Holy Spirit's work in history. The consequence of Grundtvig's 1825 pamphlet *Kirkens Gienmæle* [The Church's Retort], where these ideas were presented to a broader audience, was a theological feud with the young and promising theology professor Henrik Nicolai Clausen (1793–1877), which in turn resulted in Grundtvig being put under lifelong police censorship.<sup>11</sup> In protest against the case and in great disillusionment with the Dan-

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9 The final program, *Et kulturprogram til debatt*, was completed in 1959. Other members of this committee were Torolf Elster, Trygve Bull (1905–1999), Kolbjørn Varmann (1904–1980), Bjarne Thorud (1913–1993), Anton Andreassen (1903–1963), Helge Bratlie, Kåre Holt (1916–1997), Rebekka Selte (1975), Kjell Aabrek (1901–1967), Tertit Aasland (1928–2017), and Reidar Aamo (1898–1972).

10 Nils Henrik Gregersen, "Church and Culture in Living Interaction – Grundtvig the Theologian," in *Human Comes First: The Christian Theology of N. F. S. Grundtvig*, ed. Edvard Broadbridge (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2018), 22–55.

11 In *Kirkens Gienmæle*, Grundtvig accused Clausen of defending an unchristian theology, and required him either to apologise for his views or to resign his university chair and discard his name as a Christian. Clausen brought and won a libel case against Grundtvig, which in turn resulted in Grundtvig being fined and placed under lifelong censorship. However, censorship of Grundtvig was lifted in 1837, probably due to pressure from Prince Christian Frederik, who admired him. See Henrik Yde, "Inledning til Skolen for Livet og Akademiet i Soer borgerlig betragtet og Hr. Krigscommi-

ish church, Grundtvig resigned from his pastorate in Our Saviour's church in Copenhagen in 1826. However, he continued to work as a freelance writer, and in 1832 he authored a volume on Nordic mythology, where he argued for a shared context of the Nordic spirit and the Christian spirit, in the sense that the Nordic spirit represented a continuity in the people's history that allowed it to live alongside the Holy Spirit. This continuity encompassed a heroic spirit that functioned as a basis for humanity's interpretations of life, closely connected to the gods of Nordic mythology. This juxtaposition of the Holy Spirit and the Nordic spirit implied a new take on Nordicness in general and Danishness in particular, which was connected to poetry and mythology, in which the myths constituted the key to a specific type of understanding forming bonds between past and present. Grundtvig interpreted the myths as universal parables explaining the extraordinary character of the Nordic people. Consequently, his interpretation of Nordic mythology also implied a new anthropology, in which the Nordic represented the giants of history. In the myths and in Nordic history, the Nordic (and Danish) people were able to find role models for fulfilling their origin and goals as human beings.

In this volume on Nordic mythology, Grundtvig had also argued for a school for "all civil servants of the state who do not need scholarship, but life, insight and practical ability".<sup>12</sup> This had initiated his long-standing battle for the "school for life" (the folk high school), which contrasted with the "school for death", characterised by memorisation, strict order, book learning, Latin, and lectures.<sup>13</sup> This school for life also possessed the key to modern enlightenment as well as the realisation of the Nordic people, and the folk high school was thus given an anthropological motivation, connected to the "nature and character of the people, the country, and the mother tongue, its present condition and natural improvement and progression".<sup>14</sup> The folk high school should orient itself towards man as a spiritual being, and the school's purpose should be general education. The idea of the folk high school soon spread to other countries. In Norway, the ideas were brought for-

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sjar Fibigers Fuldkomne Enighed med mig om den Danske Høiskole i Soer;" in *Grundtvigs Værker, Skolen for Livet og Akademiet i Soer* (xn-grundtvigsvrker-7lb.dk)

12 N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Indledning til Nordens Mythologi eller Sindbilled-Sprog historisk-poetisk udviklet og oplyst*, www.grundtvigsverker.dk.

13 Grundtvig unfolded his educational aim in seven writings, published between 1836 and 1847, starting with *Det Danske Fiir-Kløver eller Danskheden partisk betragtet* [Danish Four-leaf Clover or a partiality for Danishness] and ending with *Lykkeønskninger til Danmark med det danske dumme hoved og den danske høiskole* [Congratulations to Denmark on the Danish blockhead and the Danish high school]. See Knud Eyvin Bugge, "Indledning," in *Grundtvigs skoleverden i tekster og udkast* (København: Institut for Dansk kirkehistorie, 1968), Vol. 1, 25.

14 N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Til Nordmænd om en Norsk Høi-Skole* [To the Norwegians on a Norwegian high school] (Christiania: Chr. Grøndahl, 1837), 7.

ward by pioneers such as teachers Herman Anker and Olaus Arvesen and the priest Christoffer Bruun (1839–1920).<sup>15</sup> In particular, Christoffer Bruun's *Folkelige Grundtanker* [People's basic ideas], first published in 1878, came to be regarded as the folk high school's manifesto.<sup>16</sup> The book was based on a series of lectures held in the students' association in Christiania in 1870.<sup>17</sup>

Put simply, *Folkelige Grundtanker* can be summarised in two concepts: *Christianity* and *Norwegianness*. These concepts are based upon a particular view of Bildung, or education, which is crucial for understanding the ideological basis of the folk high school. Norway's geographical location was central to Bruun's argumentation. Norway was placed at the periphery of Europe, and the Norwegian farmer was little affected by the "over-civilisation" found on the European continent.<sup>18</sup> However, in Bruun's opinion, this was a great advantage. The civilisation seen in Europe was negative, and the Norwegian farmer was in touch with the origin of his own tribe, and with his original roots. These roots were not immediately available, but could be found as a "spark hidden in the ash heap".<sup>19</sup> It became the task of the folk high school to help the farmer out of the darkness in which he had found himself in recent centuries, in order to get in touch with his roots. Bruun's ideas were based on Grundtvig's understanding of the necessity of returning the nation to its appropriate cultural foundation to strengthen the nation's future.<sup>20</sup> This could be redeemed, among other things, through using the mother tongue.

The folk high school, in Bruun's opinion, should facilitate both a rebirth of Norse culture and a Christian revival. Bruun believed that Christianity, since pietism, had been too concerned with the salvation of the individual.<sup>21</sup> However, in Bruun's opinion, the origin of Christianity was linked to the nation and the people. The deeds of Jesus could be seen as a continuation of Moses' prophetic task of leading the Jews out of captivity and into the promised land. The love for the nation and the people was a prerequisite for being able to develop love for God's king-

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15 Sigvart Tøsse, "Frå folkeopplysning til vaksenopplæring" (Dr. Philos. diss., Norwegian University of Technology, 2004), 133 ff.

16 Knut Aukrust, "Fra Dybbøl til trøbbel. Christoffer Bruun som biografisk utfordring," in *Tidskrift for Kulturforskning* 3(2) (2004), 30.

17 Knut Aukrust, "Det utvalgte folk. Aspekter ved nasjonal identitet," in *Norveg* 39 (2) (1996): 24–51.

18 Christoffer Bruun, *Folkelige Grundtanker*, 2nd ed. (Christiania: Det Steenske Bogtrykkeri, 1874), 52.

19 Ibid.

20 In his *Nordic mythology* (1832), Grundtvig had proclaimed that the Nordic people should be regarded as one of the world's main tribes.

21 Bruun (1874), 209.

dom. The folk high school should strive for a spirituality which could bring the Norwegian people back to their origin and which could unite the people:

It is this Christian revival that I hope will have a telling effect on the Nordic people's life and bring to fulfilment the old saying that what Norway was, it will be again. We need a revival of the old Christianity, wherever it starts in the world. And it is certain that this Christianity must not, in a pietist way, withdraw from the human spiritual life and allow the development to take its course. With the power and clarity of divinity it must enter the struggles of the world and bring the development back into the right path. It is a human spiritual life, which is appropriate for this Christianity, which the folk high school has the ambitions to promote among the Norwegian farmers. Until such a Christianity comes, which will claim a complete use of the human, they would obviously not be able to accomplish much. The prevailing pietism will continue to embrace them. But when a better Christianity comes, they will be able to help in the rebirth of the people, just as a school will also be able to help in such deeds.<sup>22</sup>

The basis of all education was, according to Bruun, a Christian revival aimed at the collective nation and human spirituality, and all acquisition of knowledge should build upon this revival.<sup>23</sup> Through revival, man would develop a self-awareness, that is, would realise himself and his divine potential. Man was a spiritual being, and if man's spiritual power could be strengthened, it would result in competent individuals who could solve society's great tasks. These ideas rested upon the belief that man was created in the image of God, and that he was thereby divine. However, this spiritual awakening was only a part of the process of change implied in the *Bildung* process. The educated man possessed several personal qualities, such as conscience and spirituality. Spirituality was opposed to anything that could be called material. Thus, if material development should be the goal, the consequences would be a generation whose characteristics would be thuggery, selfishness, and animality. In contrast, through a well-developed conscience, man would have cultivated the ability to distinguish right from wrong and to see what one's neighbour needed. The *Bildung* process was also supposed to take place voluntarily, but freedom was something existential that belonged to man's basic narrative. Thus, man was condemned to be free, as Jean-Paul Sartre would formulate this much later.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 214–215.

<sup>23</sup> In the newspaper *Oplandenes Avis* January 1874, Olaus Arvesen stated the following: Firstly, the education of the heart, must come, then the urge for enlightenment is awakened. This is and has always been the way, even if people probably imagine that it is the knowledge that has awakened them, they will, by a closer examination, find their education can be ascribed elsewhere, mostly from the home, enlightening words form a teacher, etc. But once the formation of the heart has begun, it requires knowledge. See *Oplandenes Avis*, 21.1.1874.

The language became an important aid in achieving this educational goal. Mother tongue education was therefore central to the folk high school pioneers, just as the Norwegian language and Norwegianness was an important part of the nation-building in the mid-nineteenth century. Bruun tied the mother tongue together with the folk spirit and the peculiarity of every nation: “The language reflects the people’s innermost and finest peculiarity. (...) The folk spirit has its best reflection and fullest reflection in the mother tongue of every nation”.<sup>24</sup> Bruun believed that the original Norwegian language was still alive among the farmers, and that this language was a direct descendant of the language spoken in ancient times. Consequently, this Norwegian language – the language spoken by the farmers – should be implemented as the country’s official written language. Bruun’s understanding of the language built upon Grundtvig’s idea of the mother tongue which was, in Grundtvig’s view, an important part of the identity of the nation. The mother tongue could be characterised as a heart language, thus being the verbal expression of the national spirit that Grundtvig saw as a parallel to the Holy Spirit. Language provided for communication in and across history, making it possible for humanity to distinguish itself as the privileged work of creation. Grundtvig saw the mother tongue as the “natural, living expression” for the thoughts and feelings of a nation, and the mother tongue laid the foundation for the specific identity of a nation. It was a closed semantical system, only accessible to those born into the nation and the language.<sup>25</sup>

These ideas became central to the folk high school pioneers. However, it should be noted that the pioneers did not agree upon what should be the main purpose of the folk high school. In Olaus Arvesen’s view, the folk high school should qualify the students to participate in politics and social life. Arvesen meant that Norway’s free constitution had given everyone the possibility to become a part of the political power. Thus, the country’s political structure presupposed a broad enlightenment, and the goal of all education was to raise the young generation to political participation and to service of others:

The first thing I want to say is that the goal of these folk high schools is to give the coming generations the enlightenment, or rather, the sense of enlightenment, which their future civic position and their earthly welfare and happiness constantly demand. We are called and we are a free people, but it is impossible that we can use and preserve freedom properly without insight and without an ever-increasing knowledge of the benefits that freedom possesses, and also of the good forces in the people, which are to be released by its warmth and thrive in its shelter. We are considered to be a small nation, but we are endowed with several

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<sup>24</sup> Bruun (1874).

<sup>25</sup> Ove Korsgaard, *Kampen om folket. Et dannelseperspektiv på dansk historie gennem 500 år* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2004), 284.

goods and spiritual powers, and by giving us freedom, Our Lord has also given us the right, nay, encouraged us to develop all these spiritual gifts and powers so that they may be of benefit for ourselves and or fellow men and to his glory.<sup>26</sup>

For Christoffer Bruun, on the other hand, the folk high school should educate the students for freedom and independence and help them to become what they were meant to become. Thus, in Bruun's view, the purpose of schooling was self-realisation. Political freedom should be regarded as a means to achieve a higher goal than itself, it aimed towards *Bildung* and independence. For the folk high school pioneers, the original purpose of the school was thus both political and personal development.<sup>27</sup>

The folk high schools eventually became a national movement, and nation-building and public education soon became the school's foremost goal.<sup>28</sup> The founders were idealists and public enlighteners, and in the first decades, the folk high schools were financed privately and without government support.<sup>29</sup> In order to keep the costs as low as possible, the schools were frequently moved around to where temporary and cheap school buildings could be rented. In this way, they could also get closer to people's life, so that the school idea could spread further. Although the folk high school was originally initiated for young people, it soon became common to keep it open to everyone in the village. This was in accordance with the idea that the folk high schools should also be involved in a general enlightenment. Some folk high schools had been open for students down to the age of 14–15.<sup>30</sup> In 1911, the age limit of 16 years was introduced.<sup>31</sup>

The schools were supported economically by the state from 1898, which improved their financial situation. Between 1898 and 1912, nine new folk high schools were established. In 1912, a decision was made at the Storting which implied that

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26 Olaus Arvesen, "Er folkelige høiskoler ønskelige," in *Høiskolebladet* no. 27, 3.7.1874, 218–219.  
27 Tøsse (2004), 146.

28 Jostein Gripsrud, *Folkeopplysningens dialektikk. Perspektiv på norskdomsrørsla og amatørteateret 1890–1940* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1990), 87 ff., Dag Thorkildsen, *Grundtvigianisme og nasjonalisme i det 19. århundre*. KULTs skriftserie 70 (Oslo: Norges Forskningsråd, 1996), 184.

29 The establishment of the folk high schools coincided with the initiatives taken by the Society for the Promotion of Public Enlightenment, established in 1851. This society strove to increase the level of enlightenment in the population at large through initiatives directed towards the adult population, as well as by measures aiming to improve mandatory education. The society attracted members from all over the country, even if the most active and influential representatives were based in the capital. See Roos (2021), 24 ff.

30 This pertained for instance to Jakob Sverdrup's (1845–1899) folk high school in Sogndal. See Tøsse (2004), 167.

31 Stein Fossgard, *I arbeid og strid for ein idé. 75 årsskrift for Norsk folkehøgskolelag – Noregs høgskolelærarlag* (Oslo: Norsk folkehøgskolelag, 1980), 25.



the state should cover 4/9 of teacher's salaries. In 1919, the governmental subsidies increased even more, and the responsibility for the folk high schools was in principle taken over by the state. The number of these schools now grew substantially, and already in 1914, there were 21 folk high schools in Norway.<sup>32</sup> The development of the folk high schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century coincided with the development of youth organisations, which in turn was a result of a strong national identity that had developed in the Liberal Party towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the folk high schools were relatively small institutions, and at the turn of the twentieth century the number of students was often no more than 10–20 in each class. This trend continued in the interwar period, and in 1937 10% of the total number of 17 year olds were students in folk high schools.<sup>34</sup> The folk high school teachers and headmasters were often enthusiasts with a great personal commitment to the school and its students, as was the case with Helge Sivertsen's father and uncle.

The Labour movement's folk high schools should also be mentioned as an important part of Helge Sivertsen's background. Public enlightenment had been part of the Labour movement's activities since the Labour leader Marcus Thrane ran his labour unions in the 1850s.<sup>35</sup> In the years before WWII, public education and democracy had been actualised as a part of the party's program. In 1939, the Labour Party's local organisation in Hedmark county succeeded in establishing a folk high school at Ringsaker.<sup>36</sup> The previous year, initiatives had been taken by LO (Labourers Work Organisation) in order to establish a folk high school at Sørmarka outside Oslo. Through practical education in political work as well as through general Bildung, it aimed to strengthen student's abilities for democratic participation. The purpose clause for the folk high school at Sørmarka stated the following: "The aim of the school is to give the youth knowledge about social life today and knowledge of the forces that have worked together to create it, and which continue to work and recreate it".<sup>37</sup> In particular, Sørmarka addressed the working-class youth, and it supported a political vision of creating better life conditions for "the working people". Social science became the most important

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32 Tøsse (2004), 166.

33 Trond Nordby, *Det moderne gjennombruddet i bondesamfunnet: Norge 1870–1920* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991), 106.

34 This number remained stable in the decades after WWII. See Tøsse (2004), 378.

35 Merethe Roos, "Marcus Thrane, demokratiet og 1850-tallets opplysningsvirksomhet," in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 35 (2) (2018), 138–150.

36 Harald Berntsen, *Sørmarka. Fagorganisasjonens høgskole 1939–1989* (Oslo: Tiden forlag).

37 Tøsse (2004), 282.

school subject, and this subject included social economics, economic geography, and social legislation, as well as knowledge of the government apparatus. The students were also educated in the Norwegian language, history, science, accounting and bookkeeping, drawing, and singing. Yet, the pedagogical methods were more important than the school subjects. In pedagogical matter, the school was inspired by contemporary reform pedagogy, and it became important that the students should be qualified in practical and useful working methods. The students should also be trained to be reflective individuals who could form their own opinions. Thus, the folk high school at Sørmarka came to strengthen the student's knowledge on politics rather than its ideological dimension. Sørmarka Folk high school was run until 1955.



**Fig. 8:** The Labour movement's folk high school at Sørmarka. Photo: Unknown/The Norwegian Labour Movement Archives and Library.

### Helge Sivertsen's ideas on school and education

Helge Sivertsen sets the agenda for his policy on school politics in the pamphlet *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole* [Democratic and national upbringing in the Norwegian school], published in 1946. The pamphlet is a relatively short work, counting 77 quarto pages. Throughout the work, Sivertsen demonstrates great insight into the history of the Norwegian school in general and the history of the folk high schools in particular. In the introduction, Sivertsen starts off

with a rhetorical question: Should the school create a positive attitude towards democracy and Norwegian cultural heritage, and would it be able to create such an attitude? To answer this query, Sivertsen informs the reader that he will proceed historically. He criticises the public school for not paying enough attention to the task of developing students into democratic citizens. In his opinion, the folk high schools had been alone in having a democratic and national aim. Already from the outset, Sivertsen announces that the folk high school will be a significant part of the book.

After a brief review of the Norwegian school's development in the nineteenth century, Sivertsen draws a picture of how the folk high school introduced a democratic and national program into Norwegian cultural life. These schools were founded by men who were passionate about their ideas, says Sivertsen. The school's pioneers, such as Olaus Arvesen, Herman Anker, and Christoffer Bruun, had emphasised that the schools should be private and independent from the state, in order for them to be able to work in accordance with their own program. Throughout this part of the pamphlet, Sivertsen placed much emphasis on Bruun's ideas on the folk high school, as had been expressed in *Folkelige Grundtanker* and elsewhere, and Bruun thus appears as Sivertsen's main source. Bruun had been an important source for making Grundtvig's ideas known in Norway, and particularly Grundtvig's ideas on the folk high schools. Like Grundtvig, Bruun had argued for the necessity of a national spirit, and based on this, he had also underlined the importance of national identity as the point of departure for the folk high school's educational program. At the same time, Sivertsen underlined, Bruun had highlighted the necessity of the love of one's fatherland. This was in accordance with God's words: "God himself had said that you should honour your father and mother that you may live long in the land the Lord had given you. Bruun referred to this commandment as one of the old basic life rules given to humanity to shed light upon their life, and he extended this [the obligation to honour your father] to the fathers in distant lineages."<sup>38</sup> Sivertsen saw this as an expression of a particular view of history: "He [Bruun] believed God controlled the course of history (...) thus, it was also God who stood behind history's victorious ideas." The folk high school aimed at realising the most important ideas of Bruun's time: nationality and individual freedom. Consequently, Bruun's national educational program was directed towards awakening love for everything that was Norwegian. His motto was patriotism in its widest sense: it included love for the nation, the people, and everything that was created by the particular folk spirit.

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<sup>38</sup> Sivertsen (1946), 21.

Sivertsen continues with a systematic review of the folk high school's educational program, as had been presented when the schools had been initiated. He gives particular weight to the folk high school's role in the national awakening: "The folk high school came to work for a cultural renaissance in which intellectual properties characterised by a Norwegian flair came to be the basis of all education." This renaissance, he explains, had certain characteristics. One of these was the living word:

Bruun and all folk high school teachers agreed with Grundtvig's belief in the living word, and this came to leave its mark on the teaching methods at the Norwegian folk high schools, just as it did in the Danish folk high schools. Through oral speeches, story telling and performance of Norwegian poetry they hoped to awaken their goal: to awaken the love for one's fatherland.<sup>39</sup>

This love was implemented in all practical work and all teaching at the folk high school, and Bruun had underlined that the school taught about the "importance of belonging to a people and a fatherland", and about the "fight for the right of the peculiarity of all nationalities". Sivertsen substantiates his claims by quoting one of Bruun's students, who after 40 years still had a vivid memory of his teacher's lectures: "And how he could speak about the fatherland and those things – burn his views into us! We saw the pale blue sea out there and felt the fresh taste of salt in our mouth."<sup>40</sup>

History and the mother tongue took a particular place in the folk high schools:

To Bruun, the respect for the ancestors and for the national history was one of the noble characteristics of humanity, an important part of being human, that he aimed to develop among his students. (...) Every nation had its own history which reflected the national spirit, and the Norwegian national history was thus a product of the Norwegian national spirit.

However, he criticises the thematic selection of teaching materials in history for being tendentious. The textbooks were chosen in accordance with what was the aim of the folk high school's history teaching: to give a strongly idealised picture of the past. This idealised presentation of the past could partly be seen as a result of the selection of learning materials, but it was also a consequence of the presentation form: "the enthusiastic living speech". The students should learn to love the best that had been created in thought, art, and noble deeds, and this could also be awakened through oral presentations.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Like history, Bruun had also viewed the mother tongue as a consequence of the Norwegian national spirit. “What was written in Norwegian literature should be seen as a distinctive Norwegian intellectual work.”<sup>41</sup> In accordance with this, the folk high schools emphasised the importance of awakening a love for Norwegian poetry that was in accordance with their conscious national education programme: “Poetry was a part of the national culture that the people had to acquire knowledge of in order to become spiritual beings.” The language also became an important part of the folk high school’s educational program, as it provided the basis for Norwegian national life, as well as becoming one of the major hallmarks of the folk high school in political education:

National and democratic conviction has flowed like a stream through all teaching, and the folk high school has contributed to the political education of the people in two areas. Primarily, it provided a social orientation through study of the constitution and an introduction to important social problems. Furthermore, it deliberately tried to give the students a national and democratic attitude.<sup>42</sup>

Singing was also important in the folk high school. Singing served national education, both through the students acquiring good Norwegian poetry, and because the selection of poetry could potentially awaken love for the fatherland.<sup>43</sup>

Sivertsen then continues with shedding light upon the folk high school’s democratic-political education and the Liberal Party’s [Venstre] school acts. He points out that in the nineteenth century, the folk high school was perceived to be a political school, and a school in the service of the Liberal Party. The folk high school pioneers had emphasised the connection between education for the love of the fatherland and education for good work in public and political life. The farmer could be seen as a good example of the need for these schools. The farmer was often tempted to bury himself in his daily work, and consequently did not look beyond the boundaries of his own farm and village. The folk high school should broaden his perspectives: love for the fatherland should be transformed into a willingness to sacrifice for the country. The folk high school students should be a part of a society that was built on the Norwegian constitution, and the Constitution of Norway and the constitutional ideas were thus central to the teaching: “Bruun had proclaimed that 1814 was an outcome of God’s will, an event in history that had been under the law of the great blessings.”<sup>44</sup> The democratic-political influence in the folk high school could also be experienced in other ways than providing

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 30.

knowledge about the constitution. The pioneers had been working in order to involve young people in political issues and to orient political themes towards contemporary ideas and actual societal problems. Accordingly, to a fairly large extent, the teachers had consciously taken a stand on concrete issues.

The compulsory school also plays a role in Sivertsen's presentation, and the school acts in the last decades of the nineteenth century are presented as the work of the Liberal Party. However, the Liberal Party's clear democratic and national programme had not been sufficiently adopted into public schools' curriculums. According to Sivertsen, the reason for this was twofold. First and foremost, the Norwegian school system already had a fixed form.<sup>45</sup> The public school could not adapt to radical ideas and changing ideas as easily as newly established folk high schools. Yet, more important, said Sivertsen, was the contemporary understanding of the relationship between the state and the individual: "It would break with the principle of full freedom for the individual to give students a certain attitude in profane matters." Both liberal and conservative voices had agreed that the school had to be neutral, just like the folk high school pioneers had argued against a state-controlled school. The last decades of the nineteenth century were thus characterised by an idea about the freedom of the individual which also had a great importance for the school. The individual person was not to be influenced in any kind of direction, but he should have the freedom to develop himself, completely independent of others.

Nevertheless, the 1889 and 1896 school acts marked a watershed in this regard. In these school acts, one could find traces of the current societal ideas. However, it was teaching in language, history, and eventually also science, that had been prioritised in the school's curricula. In higher education, teaching in the mother tongue had been given a strong position at the expense of Latin, and history teaching had likewise been given high priority. This was in accordance with Grundtvig's view on the importance of history and the mother tongue. The political landscape had not always agreed on what the school's curricula should be, not least when it came to methods of teaching the Norwegian language. Should Old Norse be taught, and to what extent should the pupils be educated in New Norwegian? The school had thus been an important political issue for many decades. According to Sivertsen, one could interpret the strong position given to the mother tongue in the 1889 and 1896 school acts as a consequence of a national tendency, even though this tendency had not been clear.

Yet, when it came to the question of democratic-political upbringing, this had been defined as a question of knowledge rather than a question of forming the stu-

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

dents to become democratic citizens. However, there had been a concrete attempt to awaken a democratic attitude among the students. In 1877, Johan Sverdrup (1816–1892), at that time editor in chief for the newspaper *Verdens Gang*, published a series of editorials called “Politics in School”. To Sivertsen, this was a rare example of how the late nineteenth-century school could develop a democratic mindset among the students. In the articles, Sverdrup had emphasised the importance of pupils’ political and civic education:

Admittedly, Sverdrup claimed that it was not intended that the school should develop into a political club, but it is clear from the analysis that the students were to be educated in a democratic view of the government. They had to learn to judge history correctly, learn to discern which men should be loved and admired, (...) and they had to understand *why*. Sverdrup mentions that in a school, a written assignment had recently been given with the heading: “Which state constitution is the best?” He [Sverdrup] continues: the fact that among the answers, there was a praise of absolutism, which for the youthful imagination assumed the form of a Roman or Napoleonic empire, was a clear indication that the uncritical, thoughtless reading of history leads one astray.<sup>46</sup>

However, Sverdrup’s proposal did not gain ground, Sivertsen explained. It had been opposed by the conservative voices, not only because it was put forward by the leader of the Liberal Party (who would also be the first prime minister after parliamentarism was introduced in 1884), but also because it opposed the liberal principle that individuals should develop freely. Sverdrup’s proposal for “politics in school” thus had no influence, either in the 1889 and 1896 school acts or in the school’s curriculum. The liberal understanding of the state’s task and the belief in the individual had created too much opposition.

For Sivertsen, Sverdrup’s idea on “Politics in school” became an ideal model for democratic education and development. This model was pursued by the Labour movement’s folk high schools. In these schools, political science had become the major subject. Sivertsen saw this as a consequence of the Labour Party’s school policies: “It was an old idea that was now put into practice.” Already at the Labour Party’s national convention in 1918, a decision had been made on a committee to prepare the case, but at that time, the plans had not been implemented. When the folk high schools finally started in the late 1930s, their curricula had included much more political science than any Norwegian school previously had.<sup>47</sup> Political science was broadly defined: it included economy, politics, and history. History education should be organised in order to be relevant for the modern student, rather

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

than giving insight into antiquity or the Norwegian heyday. The teaching in political science was in accordance with the aims of the Labour movement:

The schools aimed at creating an attitude in the students that made them valuable employees in a democratic society that was built upon socialist principles. The Labour movement's folk high schools aimed at training students who had competence in democratic social work, while the old folk high schools believed that one had to awaken a national feeling in order to be able to solve problems in a democratic spirit.<sup>48</sup>

The teaching at the Labour movement's folk high school gave knowledge about what society was like, and how it had become that way. It was highly relevant, as it supported the peasant youths' thirst for knowledge and complied with a strong need among the youths from the working classes. The school was also oriented towards international work and interpersonal issues, and the curriculum thematised important issues such as peacekeeping and disarmament.

In *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole*, the value of the folk high school lies in its goal of a broad education, *Bildung*, as well as its aim of students' future democratic participation in society. However, in Sivertsen's view the nineteenth-century folk high schools were too individually oriented. He rejects the goal of self-realisation, as this particularly had characterised Bruun's *Folkelige Grunntanker*. The Labour movement's folk high school aimed at democratic and political participation, and they were thereby in accordance with Sivertsen's ideas on what childrens' upbringing should be. Sivertsen's mentioning of Johan Sverdrup's editorial articles on "Politics in school" is highly interesting. When Sverdrup published his editorials in VG in August 1877, they were primarily written as a protest against that period's education in "Knowledge of Verdens Gang".<sup>49</sup> Sverdrup meant that Christian education was characterised by spiritless rote-learning, rather than a love for the Christian gospel. Thus "Knowledge of Christianity" could just as well be taken out of the school and be replaced with a broadly oriented political subject, "Politik i skolen" [Politics in School], which would aim at getting the pupils involved in political life. This could take place through a "heartfelt appropriation of the constitution's spirit", rather than learning the most important paragraphs of the constitution by heart.<sup>50</sup> Political knowledge was defined by Sverdrup as being able to reflect upon history and society in order for it to benefit the immediate environment. In later editions of the same

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>49</sup> Merethe Roos, "Mot en mer demokratisk og folkelig skole. Johan Sverdrups forsøk på å innføre "Politik i skolen, 1877–1878," in *Teologisk Tidsskrift* 3 (1) (2014), 19–32.

<sup>50</sup> Johan Sverdrup, "Politik i skolen," in *Verdens Gang*, 7.8.1877.



newspaper, Sverdrup elaborated his argumentation. According to him, the situation in Norway could be compared to that of Hungary.<sup>51</sup> In Hungary, the need to educate the students to become good citizens had been taken seriously: each school was obliged to provide education in civic rights and duties. This included constitutional law, public law, and private law. Additionally, the Hungarians also offered education in rhetoric. This was engendered by the fact that Hungary was a country where many different people lived together, causing the government to recognise the need for training in communication. Consequently, Hungary could be called a “mature” country, in contrast to what Norway at that time was still aspiring to be. Correspondingly, Sverdrup aimed for a school subject that generates maturity and independence, where each individual should be trained to see the value of democratic participation and political activity. Sverdrup’s argumentation is in line with that of Olaus Arvesen, who underlined that the school’s aim was to qualify the students to participate as democratic citizens in political and social life.<sup>52</sup>

Sivertsen is right in indicating that Sverdrup’s editorials on “Politics in school” were controversial at that time, and that the subject was never directly included in the school’s curricula. The articles caused extensive discussion in the press, and Sverdrup was criticised both by the political right and by teacher.<sup>53</sup> However, Sverdrup’s ideas on the democratisation of the school had a major impact on practical school policy. One of the first things Sverdrup did after he took office as a prime minister in 1884 was to send a letter to his nephew Jakob Sverdrup (1845–1899), then minister of church affairs, about his ambitions for the school. The letter was later published in *Dagbladet*, causing much commotion because it was seen as the first time a Norwegian prime minister had used his lawful rights as a prime minister.<sup>54</sup> In this letter, Sverdrup advocated a democratisation of

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51 Johan Sverdrup, “Politik i skolen,” in *Verdens Gang*, 13.11.1877.

52 See above, p. 97.

53 Sverdrup’s antagonists addressed three issues: 1) the fear that the subject should promote party politics, 2) the claim that the subject matter was already well taken care of through the school’s current curriculum, and 3) the claim that development of good citizens was already ensured through “Knowledge of Christianity”. Cf. particularly Nils Egede Hertzberg’s (1827–1911) contributions. Hertzberg represented the conservative factions at the Storting, and he was minister of church affairs in Johan Selmer’s government between 1882 and 1884. See “Angaaende Politik i Skolen – Hr. Redaktør!,” in *Verdens Gang*, 6.12.1877, *Oppseding i hjemmet: otte forslag* (Kristiania: Malling, 1880), and “Skolens pligt til gennem sin hele paaavirkning at hevde den kristelige livsanskuelse,” in *Norsk Skoletidende* (1880): 273–278. See also anonymously published texts: “Om Politik i Almueskolen,” in *Norsk Skoletidende* (1878): 212–216, “Politik i skolen,” in *Morgenbladet*, 3.12.1877, “Politik i skolen,” in *Morgenbladet*, 10.12.1877, and “Politik i skolen,” in *Verdens Gang*, 26.2.1878.

54 Johan Sverdrup, “Reform i vort skolevæsen,” in *Dagbladet*, 8.10.1874.

schooling and education, and stated that it was his duty to work for the people's enlightenment, just as he had also worked for the people's self-government.<sup>55</sup> Sverdrup's ambitions pointed forwards towards the 1889 School Act. This act entailed, among other things, a significant democratisation of school and education, not least because the previous ecclesiastical school board was replaced by an elected school board.<sup>56</sup> The change both reduced the clergy's power over schools and strengthened the secular dominance respectively.

Sivertsen's visions of a school which aimed at shaping the students for democratic participation seems thus to be shaped by his Grundtvigian legacy to a greater extent than he might have been aware of. In his opinion, the Labour movement's folk high schools were in accordance with the ideal of his own time: they put political participation at the centre and strove towards internationalisation and community, rather than the individual development characterised by the previous century. On the one hand, this can be seen as a response to the post-war fear of nationalism. WWII was fresh in their minds, and intellectuals and policy makers wanted to avoid everything that reminded them of the nationalist ideologies of the Nazi regime.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, this can be seen as an obvious transformation of nineteenth-century school ideas and a continuation of a legacy that has become a part of the school's practice and policy. Sivertsen highlights Sverdrup's "Politik i skolen" [politics in school] and makes it a role model for schools and teaching in his own time, without considering the influence Sverdrup actually had on education and school policy towards the end of the nineteenth century. He also seems to place too much weight on Christoffer Bruun's *Folkelige Grundtanker* as the ideological basis of the folk high school movement and pays no attention to the differences that actually existed between nineteenth-century folk high school pioneers, not least when it came to the school's main purpose. Helge Sivertsen's goal for the school is in accordance with that of Olaus Arvesen, as had been formulated in *Høiskolebladet* in 1864.

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55 Sverdrup ended his letter with a statement that has become famous in Norwegian educational history: "I have spoken and worked for people's self-government, this obliges me to speak and work for the people's enlightenment". Ibid.

56 Merethe Roos, "Educating for ecclesia – Educating for the Nation: Theological Perspectives in Nils Egede Hertzberg's (1827–1911) Understanding of Schools," in *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* 1 (2020), 47–66.

57 Volckmar (2004), 41. Ove Korsgaard points to the same situation in post-war Denmark: "After the war, the school's ideology was partly reformulated, and the word "national" was to a great extent replaced with democracy (...) The people-oriented was positively associated with democracy, the national was negatively associated with nationalism." See Ove Korsgaard, *Kundskabsløbet. Uddannelse i verdenssamfundet* (København: Gyldendal, 1999).

In the postscript to *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole*, Sivertsen advocates that the school should put more weight on education in social sciences. This was in accordance with its superior goal: “It is a main task for the school to give students social knowledge and civic spirit; one could call it democratic education”.<sup>58</sup> Admittedly, Sivertsen says, education in social sciences had gained an increasingly strong importance in Norwegian schools from 1814 to the present day. From the 1930s, social studies had been integrated in the school’s history teaching, and in the Labour movement’s folk high schools it had even become a major subject. Moreover, the subject included a much wider scope than it previously had done. In the nineteenth century, it had largely been defined as knowledge on the constitution, but as the modern state had developed, it had also included political science and economy. Yet this was still not sufficient. Scientific research was needed to find the pedagogical forms that gave the best results, and a radical will was needed to implement this in practice. The need was actualised by WWII: “It dawned on many that democracy was in danger when Nazism came to power in Germany.”<sup>59</sup> Radical measures had now to be taken when it came to the school’s curriculum, and social studies had to become a separate school subject, at the expense of other subjects. Sivertsen suggests, perhaps not surprisingly, to reduce the teaching hours in German.

The subject should also, in accordance with prevailing tendencies, offer schooling in international perspectives: “Promoting international cooperation and solidarity is an important aspect of good democratic education.”<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, interestingly, Sivertsen also pursues the understanding of the value of national education promoted by the folk high school pioneers:

Social studies, as it has been defined here, also includes the ideas that have been mentioned in this presentation as the basis for national education in schools. Knowledge of the Norwegian language, history, literature, and geography is a significant part of Norwegian social studies. (...) At the same time as the society has increasingly been influenced by its relation to other countries, the national aspect has also steadily increased, until the last school act, when it perhaps became slightly reduced. Today, it could seem appropriate to scale down the national aspect, because the world is becoming more international than before. Yet the question is still not that simple. A large part of the Norwegian subject is necessary education in Norwegian language. Norwegian schools must put a lot of effort into giving the students good language tools, and perhaps more than other countries, because our language situation is difficult. When it comes to knowledge of the fatherland, what Christoffer Bruun mentioned

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58 Sivertsen (1946), 72.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 74.

is correct, that it is necessary to acquire a certain amount of one's own cultural heritage before adapting what other nations have made.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, a close reading of Helge Sivertsen's 1946 text throws a new light upon the debates on Christianity and the school's curriculum in the years immediately after 1945, given the influence he had on post-war school policy. As we have seen in the previous parts of this book, the Labour Party was accused of instigating the weakening of the school's anchoring in Christian values in general and the position of "Knowledge of Christianity" in particular in the years following WWII. This caused, among other things, the establishment of IKO as well as a polarised public debate. Helge Sivertsen's use of Grundtvig nuances this picture, as well as the picture that research has subsequently drawn. The Labour Party included a broad spectrum of voices in the post-war period, not only those who were sceptical of the school's Christian values. One of those who was most significant with respect to the Labour Party's school policy demonstrates a clear Grundtvigian anchoring, as well as a willingness to apply and actualise Grundtvigian ideas to the current political and social situation. Sivertsen performs a transformation of a Christian legacy which keeps schools' and society's ideological basis unaltered. His strengthening of social studies, by many Christians regarded as a weakening of school's Christian values, can be seen as an expression of a Christian tradition different from that which many of the critics represent. He does not intend to take Christianity out of school, as Bjarne Hareide will later express, but rather applies an understanding of Christianity in which the church's creed and faith is at the centre. This is in accordance with Grundtvig's matchless discovery. Protestant Christianity is, as Mette Buchardt has formulated, still at the nation's inner core, despite many eager attempts to reduce the church's influence over schools, not least by members of the Labour Party.<sup>62</sup>

Helge Sivertsen pursued his visions on school and education in other writings. Already in 1947, the same year in which Sivertsen was appointed as secretary of the Ministry of Education, he published the text "Moderne samfunn, meir skole" [Modern society, more school] in the youth magazine *Jorda Rundt*, in which he advocated an increased emphasis on school.<sup>63</sup> In this text, his concrete plans for the school, which will be realised in the coming years, start to take shape. Sivertsen states that the compulsory primary school is a school for all children, and that it is absolutely crucial for most Norwegians to be able to use their potential. Con-

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> See above, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> Helge Sivertsen, "Moderne samfunn, meir skole," in *Jorda Rundt. Samtidskronikk for norsk ungdom og studiesirkler*, October (1947), 6–7.

sequently, the school had to be further developed and extended. More school buildings had to be built, more teachers had to be employed, and the school had to be better organised pedagogically and to build on current research. Furthermore, the school hours should be extended. Teaching should be in accordance with the needs of the society, and one had to break free from old habits and fixed traditions.<sup>64</sup> Because school should always provide the societal knowledge which was necessary to take part in the government of state and the municipality and in organised society in general, social studies [samfunnsfag] should be regarded as the most important school subject. In a later text, he defines education as a human right, in line with the guidelines laid down by the UN.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, he believes that there is reason to ask a critical question: Do we fill our educational system with the categorical demand for equal right to full education for all? For Sivertsen, human rights are a significant driving force for fighting for an extended and improved compulsory schooling, and according to him, an improvement of the school would contribute to social and geographical equalisation. Thus far, the cities and the countryside had not been able to offer the same schooling. The schools in the cities were generally better equipped, with better teachers and better school buildings. As many as one third of the pupils left after the compulsory seven years, and only one fourth of the pupils who continued schooling would continue with the theoretical “real school”. There were also large socio-economic differences. In the West End districts of Oslo, for example, 80–90% of the cohort went on to schooling in “real school” or gymnasiums.<sup>66</sup> Oslo was then (and to a certain extent still is) a segregated city, with significantly higher income, real estate prices, and cultural capital in the West End districts than in the East End districts.

According to Nina Volckmar, Sivertsen was as much a cultural politician as he was an education politician, and he saw the school as our foremost institution for the spread of culture.<sup>67</sup> Formally, cultural policy was the responsibility of the Ministry of Church and Education, and as a state secretary, cultural policy became a part of Sivertsen’s tasks. Sivertsen was given a formal role as the head of the Labour Party’s cultural committee, and he disseminated the committee’s work in several contexts. One occasion was the Labour Party’s national congress in 1955,

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64 “The school has often fixed traditions, and it could therefore hold on to ways of working, curricula and school subjects that are no longer needed in modern societies. Demands for new knowledge and training might exert pressure without being adapted into school policies.” Sivertsen (1947), 6.

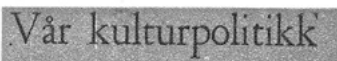
65 Helge Sivertsen, “Utdanning – en menneskerett,” Part 1, in *Skole og samfunn* 2 (1952), 34–36. Part 2, in *Skole og samfunn* 1 (1953): 3–6.

66 Volckmar (2004), 76.

67 *Ibid.*, 69.

where he gave a lecture that later came to be published under the title *Sosialistisk kulturpolitikk* [Socialist cultural policy].<sup>68</sup> This text is primarily an account of what socialist cultural policy is all about, even if Sivertsen in this same text also argues for the necessity of expanding the school.

HELGE SIVERTSEN:



Vår kulturpolitikk

**Fig. 9:** Helge Sivertsen's article in *Kontakt* 9/1953.

However, Sivertsen is significantly clearer when it comes to the school's role as a cultural institution in the cultural policy articles published in the periodical *Kontakt*.<sup>69</sup> These articles can be seen as an explanation of how the Labour Party will facilitate a strengthened and more fair school and educational system. Sivertsen's presentation is based on the Labour Party's working programme for cultural initiatives 1954–1957.<sup>70</sup> The Labour Party will, says Sivertsen, expand the school's physical premises, and enable everyone to finance their own education. Consequently, they had established Lånekassen [Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund] and increased the students' grants. Lånekassen was supposed to provide interest-free loans to young people. Initiatives had also been taken to establish student associations, which could take care of the students' interests at their place of study. As well, the Labour Party had invested significantly in adult education, for instance by strengthening the folk academies and expanding the libraries. Furthermore, they had taken an initiative to develop cultural institutions throughout the country.<sup>71</sup> Art should also be mediated to the young generation through the school.

The articles in *Kontakt* also demonstrate Sivertsen's strong roots in Grundtvigianism. He connects cultural life with schools and points out that the Labour Par-

<sup>68</sup> Helge Sivertsen, *Sosialistisk kulturpolitikk* (Oslo: Arbeidernes opplysningsforbund, 1955).

<sup>69</sup> Helge Sivertsen, "Grunnsyn og retningslinjer i kulturpolitikken," in *Kontakt* 3 (1950): 30, and "Vår kulturpolitikk," in *Kontakt* 9 (1953), 26–30.

<sup>70</sup> He opens his text in *Kontakt* 3 (1953) with quoting the introduction to the program: "Full freedom in intellectual life and social life must be protected. Science must be given a central position in our progress work. The school must be expanded so that everyone can receive a full education. New groups of people must share in the joy and enrichment that art in its many forms can bring to the individual." See *Kontakt* 9 (1953), 30.

<sup>71</sup> Sivertsen mentions the following institutions: the National Theatre, the Norwegian Theatre (Oslo), the National Scene (Bergen), Trøndelag theatre, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (Filharmonisk selskabs orkester), Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra (Harmonien), the Academy of Art (Kunstakademiet), and the National Gallery (Oslo).

ty's cultural committee had tried to create a framework for cultural policy in their outline for cultural politics. This framework demonstrated the connection between culture and education:

We must create a cultural life that develops thinking, socially conscious people, and we must establish democratic freedoms and rights as inviolable. It is a program that the Storting and our government must transfer from guidelines to practical policy. This program is not new. A major part of the educational system possesses teaching plans that aim to develop people who can think and evaluate for themselves, and who know the rights and responsibilities that follow with living in a democratic society. In most cases, in school, it is only a matter of finding the best methods for carrying it out and ensuring that the teaching materials are in accordance with the purpose.<sup>72</sup>

In order to achieve the goal of democratic freedom, safeguard intellectual freedom, and promote tolerance, it was necessary for schooling and education to improve. Through its cultural work programme, the Labour Party had shown that it was committed to a complete expansion of the educational system, from childhood education up to university. With respect to science, the Labour Party had, among other things, ensured the establishment of the university in Bergen.<sup>73</sup> They had also secured that the number of university employees would increase in the years after WWII.<sup>74</sup> This proactive effort for scientific work was in accordance with the Labour movement's ideological basis: they believed that humankind had opportunities to acquire intellectual control over natural forces and social development through their own thought. Science and universities had therefore been given a considerable space in the new working program. Correspondingly, the Labour Party had also increased funding for research.<sup>75</sup>

It was also an important cultural task to ensure that basic schooling was extended. Nine years of compulsory schooling should be introduced, rather than the practically oriented "continuation school" [framhaldsskole] and the more theoretical "real school" [realskole]. This would ensure that all young people received an equally good general education. There was no reason why young people who chose agriculture, forestry, or fishing should receive less general education than those who, for example, chose commerce, said Sivertsen. The new nine-year school should incorporate both the practical orientation of the "continuation school", as

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<sup>72</sup> Sivertsen, "Grunnsyn og retningslinjer," 30.

<sup>73</sup> University of Bergen was established in 1946.

<sup>74</sup> According to Sivertsen, University of Bergen had 72 employees in 1948–1949, and 150 employees in 1953–1954. University of Oslo had 388 employees in 1938–1939, and 710 employees in 1953–1954.

<sup>75</sup> Sivertsen points out that research funding had increased from 9.2 mill NOK in 1930 to 84.3 mill NOK in 1952.

well as the theoretical framework of the “real school”. It was not Sivertsen’s aim to academicise practical education and create polarity between theory and practice. Thus, the articles in *Kontakt* demonstrate the strong connection between the Labour Party’s cultural policy and school policy in the post-war decades, and can be seen as a concretisation of the Labour Party’s long-term program for schools, which Sivertsen had published in *Arbeiderbladet* a few years previously.<sup>76</sup>

The broad range of subjects that Sivertsen argues for in these articles, and which is also central to the Labour Party’s 1952 school programme, finds clear support in Grundtvig’s ideas on schools. A fundamental principle in Grundtvig’s ideas on schooling and education was that the school should offer the broadest possible range of subjects in order to communicate with a manifold of human qualities.<sup>77</sup> When Sivertsen integrates practical and theoretical knowledge in nine-year compulsory school, he advocates the interplay between general education and practical education that Grundtvig also emphasised in several of his writings.<sup>78</sup> This view is later continued and put into practical life in the folk high schools, including those established in Norway. For Grundtvig, the school’s task was to help students to find out what they were good at, and therefore a broad and general education was necessary.<sup>79</sup> In his opinion, this followed as a consequence of man being created in God’s image.<sup>80</sup> Sivertsen transfers this view to his own time and reconciles it with the Labour Party’s policy: “It is in accordance with our cultural ideal that everyone utilises their abilities”.<sup>81</sup>

Also in terms of practical pedagogy, Sivertsen adapts to Grundtvigian principles. He argued that the theoretical education had to be more vivid, as the “real school” was “too grey and too dry for a young person”.<sup>82</sup> Admittedly, says Sivertsen, the folk high schools had met this principle in a good way and in this regard they were worth looking at. This resembles Grundtvig’s idea of the “living word”.

Several commentators and scholars have pointed to Sivertsen’s roots in the Grundtvigian tradition, and his dependence upon the heritage of the folk high schools.<sup>83</sup> Just like Grundtvig, they have argued, Sivertsen showcases a commit-

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76 See above, p. 38.

77 Merethe Roos, *Hartvig Nissen. Grundtvigianer; skandinav, skolemann* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2019). See also Walstad (2006).

78 See for instance *Statsmæssig Oplysning* (1834).

79 Walstad (2006), 131.

80 See for instance N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Taler paa Mariebyst Højskole 1856–71*, ed. Steen Johansen (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel – Nordisk forlag, 1956).

81 Sivertsen (1955), 22.

82 Helge Sivertsen, “Langtidsplan for skolen,” III, in *Arbeiderbladet*, 26.4.1952.

83 Volckmar (2004), 91. See also Kjølvs Egeland, “Helge Sivertsen og Norsk kulturfond,” in I. Lycke (et. al) (1983), 57–68, Eva Nordland, “Helge Sivertsen – et lysende navn,” in *Norsk Pedagogisk Tids-*



ment and a willingness to take an active part in the development of society, and he equates school and culture. Heredity and environment became a compelling commitment to efforts for society. In accordance with this, the folk high school also became his ideal model for the public school. Yet Sivertsen's Grundtvigian legacy points beyond his own writing and political practice, and towards post-war social development in general. It has greater significance than research has so far indicated. Given his great importance as a schooling and education politician, this also sheds new light on a polarised cultural landscape. As a secretary for the ministry of education, as a leader for the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education and the Labour Party's cultural committee, and as a member of the Labour Party, Helge Sivertsen pursues his legacy and merges it with the Labour Party's visions of developing the welfare state and the need to rebuild a war-ravaged Norway. In parallel with him gaining more political influence, these ideas also flow into concrete school policies.

Consequently, Helge Sivertsen clearly demonstrates the ideological connections that existed between the Liberal Party [Venstre] and the Labour Party. When Sivertsen moved to Oslo in 1933, he was a member of the Liberal Party, but like many others he quickly changed his political affiliation and joined the Labour Party.<sup>84</sup> In an interview with *Dagbladet* in 1956, he criticised the Liberal Party for having lost its old affiliation with the common people.<sup>85</sup> It had transformed itself into a conservative party, and it viewed the Labour movement as its worst enemy. The Labour Party had now taken the place previously held by the Liberal Party. Sivertsen thus appears as a good example of how the mid-twentieth-century Labour movement also included perspectives that had traditionally been part of the Liberal Party's policies. When the Liberal Party was established in 1884, it had strong ties to school and teacher organisations, just as the Liberal Party is also considered to have represented and defended traditional cultural and national interests.<sup>86</sup> Many members of the Liberal Party were part of the folk high school environments, and the Liberal Party was established in the wake of the typical nineteenth-century folk grassroot movements. In the 1930s, the Liberal Party be-

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*skrift* 71 (2) (1987), 101–104, Arthur Gjermundsen, “Helge Sivertsens livsverk – et verk som ruver,” in *Skoleforum* 86 (2) (1987), 30–32.

<sup>84</sup> Slagstad (1998), 202.

<sup>85</sup> Eich, “Reven bak Bergersens øre,” in *Dagbladet*, 31.3.1956.

<sup>86</sup> Leiv Mjeldheim, *Folkerørsla som vart parti. Venstre frå 1880-åra til 1905* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984).

came an important partner for the Conservative Party in a common front against the Labour Party.<sup>87</sup>

### Helge Sivertsen and Christianity

With Helge Sivertsen's Grundtvigian heritage in mind, it is relevant to ask to what extent he mentions Christianity, and what understanding of Christianity he himself possibly represents. In her thesis, Nina Volckmar points to Helge Sivertsen's positive view of "Knowledge of Christianity", and to the fact that he defends Christianity's place in school on a number of occasions.<sup>88</sup> Volckmar had access to his private archive and refers to a number of letters written to people who have criticised the Labour Party's stance on the school's Christian education during his years in service. In these letters, Sivertsen made it clear that the Labour Party had never intended to interfere with the school's Christian education. He meant that there were many people who had a wrong idea of the Labour Party's opinion on "Knowledge of Christianity" and admitted that the Ministry of Church and Education had difficulties in reaching public opinion with the right information. Volckmar also emphasises that Sivertsen eventually came to chair the 1973 committee, established in order to assess the Labour Party's relationship to Christianity. As we have seen, Tor Aukrust was also a member of this committee. In an interview in *Arbeiderbladet* in June 1963, Sivertsen argued for an open and inclusive church strongly tied to the state. In his opinion, good church work was not characterised by Christian dogma, but rather by idealism, honest conviction, and willingness to sacrifice.<sup>89</sup>

However, Volckmar does not analyse Sivertsen's understanding of Christianity and her description is generally descriptive. One of the texts where this understanding is clearly shown is *Sosialistisk kulturpolitikk*. Sivertsen opens the section on religion with the following:

The Labour movement is aware that it is indebted to Christianity, and it places Christianity's commandment of charity at the centre of its politics. Christianity is part of the heritage we have inherited in our country, and it is passed on through the school to new generations. This heritage is a part of our cultural foundation, and it should not be taken out of the school. That would be detrimental to the way of life that the Labour movement is working towards.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Leiv Mjeldheim, *Den gylne mellomvegen. Tema frå Venstres historie 1905–1940* (Bergen: Vigmostad and Bjørke, 2006), 572.

<sup>88</sup> Volckmar (2004), 59–61.

<sup>89</sup> Bj. G., "Helge Sivertsen om kirke og kultur", in *Arbeiderbladet*, 12.6.1963.

<sup>90</sup> Sivertsen (1955), 18.

He continues by stating that the claim of a contradiction between the Labour movement and Christianity is absurd. Religion can provide essential values to the human mind. The Labour Party had also ensured a significant increase in the number of clerical positions.<sup>91</sup> However, it is a particular form of Christianity that Sivertsen will promote. In accordance with contemporary liberal theology (cf. Aukrust and Hygen), Sivertsen advocates religious tolerance: “Included in the education for charity and tolerance which is our first goal, is also the recognition that there is more than one faith in this country and in the world. There is more than one symbolic language for that which is beyond human comprehension.”<sup>92</sup> He also believes that too little has been done in order to promote the necessary religious tolerance. In this area, Sivertsen is clearly on a collision course with conservative voices in Norwegian church life. He advocates religious freedom for school administrators as well as an exemption from civil servants’ duty of confession, while conservative Christians underlined the importance of their Evangelical-Lutheran affiliation. Other countries were much more developed than Norway, said Sivertsen, and pointed to the fact that he recently had met a principal for a higher school in India, who was a confessing Christian. All teachers and all students at the school were Hindu, but they had no objections to the government appointing this man as the headmaster. This demonstrated an openness he believed that Norway had to strive for. In accordance with his Grundtvigian view, Sivertsen also spoke in favour of art and human cultural values. He argued against the puritan religious understanding of art and cultural expressions having no place in school or social life, and he believed that it is a task for the democratic state to create contact between art and culture. He had also defended this view earlier, in direct opposition to Ole Hallesby.<sup>93</sup>

Helge Sivertsen’s understanding of Christianity is thus in several ways characterised by his present time as well as his Grundtvigian heritage. He communicates with the openness of liberal theology, as well as with a general demand for intellectual freedom and independence. His understanding of the church is in accordance with Grundtvig’s ecclesiology: Grundtvig believed that the church should go out into the world and be integrated into society and that cultural life, church,

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91 Between 1900 and 1935, the number of clerical positions had increased by nine. During the last 20 years, the number of clerical positions had increased from 730 to 900. Sivertsen also comments on this in the 1956 interview with *Dagbladet*, see above, p. 115.

92 *Ibid.*

93 See “Statssekretær Sivertsen og professor Ole Hallesby,” in *Vårt Land*, 2.3.1953. The anonymous author of this text refers to a meeting held in Horten. In this meeting, Sivertsen had argued for religious freedom, but he had also underlined that the Inner Mission – and other religious organisations – had the right to be included in society.

and culture were in living interaction with each other.<sup>94</sup> In Grundtvig's view, different expressions of life, such as love, beauty, truth, and goodness, can exist outside the Christian congregation, and Christians should support any expression of a shared humanity, regardless of their world-view.<sup>95</sup> The contemporary demand for intellectual freedom had resulted in the establishment of the Norwegian Humanist Association, and contributed substantially to a polarised public sphere. Profiled members of the Labour Party were active in the efforts to establish civil confirmation and eventually came to become members of NHA. As a state secretary and an ambitious politician, Sivertsen should be able to communicate with the entire range of opinions within his own party. By promoting these views, he is in accordance with this range without compromising his own integrity.

## Eva Nordland – the Cultivated Human Being

### Biographical notes. Reform pedagogy in Norway

Eva Nordland was born on 3 January 1921 in Bærum outside Oslo.<sup>96</sup> Her parents were Hans Bauge and Ester Egede Nissen (1894–1992), and Eva came as the fourth of six children. Like her father, her maternal grandfather Christian Egede Nissen (1866–1950) was also a priest. Soon after her birth, the family moved to Levanger in Trøndelag, where her father worked as a teacher of religion at the teacher training seminar. After five years, Hans Bauge was employed as a vicar in Bud in Romsdal, a small settlement at the mouth of the fjord in western Norway. In her autobiography, Eva Nordland tells of how the hard life and the poverty of the rural community made an impression on her, and in the family home she learned that this poverty was something that could be avoided if one shared fairly with others. In 1932, Nordland's father was appointed as a minister in Sandviken in Bergen, and already two years later the young Eva Bauge met Odd Nordland, whom she eventually came to marry in 1944. Eva and Odd Nordland had four children, Kari, Lars Erik, Sigrid, and Ester. Eva Nordland completed Sydneshaugen gymnasium (Bergen) in 1940, and together with her prospective husband, she helped ensure that young people in Bergen could get a study offer and be able to take

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<sup>94</sup> Hans Raun Iversen, "N. F. S. Grundtvigs trinitariske folkekirketeologi i nordisk kontekst," in *Grundtvig-studier* 63 (1), 89–109.

<sup>95</sup> Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Church and Culture in Living Interaction: Grundtvig the Theologian," in *Human Comes First: The Theology of N. F. S. Grundtvig*, ed. Edward Broadbridge (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2018), 22–53.

<sup>96</sup> Turid Løvskar, ed., *Hvem er hun?* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag, 1989), 250.

exams during the war years. This happened through the establishment of *Språkinstituttet* [The Language Institute], where the young couple, together with others, taught foreign languages until the war ended.<sup>97</sup>

After WWII, Eva and Odd Nordland went to Oslo to study. After courses in English and German at University of Oslo, Eva Nordland continued her studies in pedagogy under the influential reform pedagogue Helga Eng. The university's pedagogical institute was established in 1939, and Nordland was among the first students to graduate from the institute.<sup>98</sup> She had become acquainted with the pedagogue Erling Kristvik's (1882–1969) ideas through her husband's studies at Stord teacher training academy during the war years, and became interested in pedagogy as an academic discipline. Nordland graduated as Magister Artium in 1947 and received her philosophical doctorate (Dr. Philos.) from University of Oslo in 1955.<sup>99</sup> In addition to having an academic career at University of Oslo, she also worked as a professor of psychology at Århus University in 1970–1971. Her husband studied cultural history, and eventually became a professor in this field at University of Oslo.

Eva Nordland's authorship extends from 1947 well into the 2000s, and includes academic dissertations, textbooks, articles, and speeches. Thematically, it includes the entire wide range of Nordland's interests. As a scholar and university professor, she is first and foremost known for having implemented social psychology and sociology into pedagogics. Harald Jarning points out that already from the beginning of the 1950s, she was writing about fundamental pedagogical issues related to key concepts such as the school's place in society, professional elite cultivation, social education, and education of the personality.<sup>100</sup> In accordance with Wolfgang Klafki's theories, she prioritised formal over material Bildung, and she emphasised the importance of competence rather than expert knowledge.<sup>101</sup> From the very beginning of her career, she proved to be well-versed in relevant specialist literature, but she also oriented herself towards a wider cultural landscape. In her autobiography, Eva Nordland refers to Ellen Key, in addition to Helga Eng, as an important

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97 *Språkinstituttet* regularly advertised in Bergen's newspapers during the war years. They offered tuition in English, German, and French, and they were housed in the YMCA's premises.

98 Harald Jarning, "Eva Nordland. Mellom psykologisk og samfunnsrettet profil," in Vaage and Thuen (2003), 323–341.

99 The title of her doctoral thesis is "Sammenhengen mellom sosial adferd og oppdragelse: med en studie av foreldreholdningen som særskilt faktor" [The connection between social behaviour and upbringing, with a study of parental attitudes as a special factor].

100 *Ibid.*, 325.

101 Jesper Sjöström and Ingo Eiliks, "The Bildung Theory – from von Humboldt to Klafki and Beyond," in *Science Education in Theory and Practice*, ed. Ben Akpan and Teresa J. Kennedy (Cham: Springer, 2020), 55–67.

source of inspiration, but Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi also get their own chapters in the autobiography.<sup>102</sup>

Nordland's presentations of Key and Eng are primarily biographical. However, she also addresses how Ellen Key focused on the child and became a role model for a pedagogy that puts the child at the centre. Ellen Key was particularly known for *The Century of the Child*, published on New Year's Eve 1900. According to Nordland, Ellen Key had, among other things, emphasised how the school should be a place for interaction with others, and how the child should be perceived as inquisitive, active, and curious. Based on Charles Darwin's theory in the *Origin of the Species*, Key had also been interested in the idea of eternal development. This should start with the quality of life experienced by the child, which in turn had to be based on the inherent naturalness of childhood. Key had asked a number of important questions: What would happen when humans were allowed to develop in accordance with their own abilities? What could happen when children could be raised at their own tempo, without dancing to another's tune? The child had to be given freedom to live their own life. According to Nordland, Ellen Key had transformed Friedrich Fröbel's (1782–1852) well-known statement *Let us live for the Children* into the somewhat more meaningful *Let us ensure that the Children get to live*. In Norway, these ideas had been taken forward by Helga Eng, who, among other things, had contributed to ensuring that the aesthetic aspects of education had been secured. Eva Nordland's interests in the child and the living conditions of childhood, as is evident in her authorship, can be seen in light of the role Ellen Key and Helga Eng played as role models for her writing.

Ellen Key and Helga Eng both belong to the era of reform pedagogy, which gained great influence in the Western world in the twentieth century. Its roots can be traced back to Rousseau, but it acquired more concrete delineation at the turn of the century. The early twentieth-century reform movements had different characteristics. While Georg Kerschensteiner (1854–1932) emphasised manual work through his *Arbeitsschule*, launched in a book published in 1912, others preferred intellectual work and individual character.<sup>103</sup> Reform pedagogy also became important for Norwegian twentieth-century educational thinking, but it was only through Helga Eng's efforts in University of Oslo's pedagogical environment that it was given institutional significance.<sup>104</sup> As Harald Jarning has pointed out, peda-

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**102** Elisabeth Lønnå, *Helga Eng: psykolog og pedagog i barnets århundre* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2002).

**103** Reidar Myhre, *Europeisk reformpedagogikk i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Fabritius, 1971).

**104** Kim Gunnar Helsvig, "Norsk reformpedagogikk i historisk perspektiv," in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 21 (2) (2004), 172–182.

gogy is a relatively young subject in Norway.<sup>105</sup> It was not until 1899, almost 90 years after the Royal Frederik University (University of Oslo) was established, that the first pedagogical doctorate was approved in Norway. Two pedagogues came to shape the early Norwegian reform pedagogy in different ways: Anna Sethne (1872–1961) in Oslo argued for effective and inclusive education, while Erling Kristvik, connected to the teacher training seminar in Volda, focused on a revitalisation of Christianity and Norwegianness.

Eng held a doctorate in psychology from 1912, when she defended a thesis on the child's understanding of abstract concepts.<sup>106</sup> She was particularly interested in how reform ideas could be transformed into educational practice and carried out a number of study trips to Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, where reform pedagogics had been adopted into practical pedagogy in various ways. Eng became a professor in 1932, as only the third woman in Norway and the first woman in a historical-philosophical faculty.<sup>107</sup> After she had founded the pedagogical institute, she prepared the study plan for their courses, together with her colleague Einar Høigård (1907–1943) and a committee appointed by the university. Her primary aim was to establish a research environment in educational science, and according to Erling Lars Dale, this plan could be described in four phases: 1) to establish a specific empirical research profile, 2) to make educational research an important basis for teaching, 3) to base the psychological research on an educational philosophy called universal realistic humanism, and 4) to conduct empirical school research.<sup>108</sup> In accordance with this, the study of pedagogy should be divided into three main parts. In the first main area, the student should develop their knowledge of general psychology, particularly child psychology, youth psychology, and educational psychology. In the second study area, the students were to be presented with systematic and historical studies of pedagogy, while the third study area covered didactics.<sup>109</sup> In Helga Eng's view, humanism had to form the basis of her psychological and educational activities and she argued that the school should create a humanistic culture that enabled students to meet the challenges created

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**105** Harald Jarning, "Reform Pedagogy as a National Innovation System: Early Twentieth-Century Educational Entrepreneurs in Norway," in *Paedagogica Historica. International Journal of the History of Education* 45 (2009), 469–484.

**106** Title: *Abstrakte begreper i barnets tanke og tale. Psykologiske undersøkelser paa grundlag av iagttagelse og eksperimenter med skolebørn* [Psychological investigations based on observations and experiments with school children].

**107** Elisabeth Lønnå, "Helga Eng. Pedagogikken forankres i forskning om barnet," in *Thue and Vaage* (Oslo: Abstrakt forl., 2003), 159–178.

**108** Erling Lars Dale, ed., *De strategiske pedagoger. Pedagogikkens vitenskapshistorie i Norge* (Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1999), 105 ff.

**109** *Ibid.*, 110–112.

by contemporary materialism. This culture should be universal and world-wide, thus different from the pedagogy in her own time, which was too much adapted to “one state, one class, one race”, and was different in Soviet, in Germany, and in America.<sup>110</sup> This meant that the school had a mandatory cultural task. The school should

(...) orient the student in the world of which they are a part. It must provide situations with the aim of leading the student to guide their behaviour in accordance with integrated and harmonious attitude. The school must encourage the development of the student’s independent, aesthetical, intellectual, or practical interests, and create an environment where everyone, by taking an active part in organisation and control, can grow in understanding of the deeper meaning of a democratic way of life.<sup>111</sup>

Eng’s argumentation for the child’s freedom was based on empirical studies. Among other things, she had studied her niece Margrethe’s drawings from the time she drew for the first time until she was eight years old. Eng used this study to argue that the child had to develop at their own pace and draw from their own imagination and memory. She was also concerned with testing, and she is regarded as having paved the way for test psychology in Norway.<sup>112</sup> Eng believed that testing could be an important pedagogical tool, arguing that tests could be used to distinguish between gifted children and children who needed extra teaching.<sup>113</sup> Thus, Helga Eng belonged to a strongly empirical branch of the reform pedagogy tradition.

In the post-war period, the reform pedagogical line at University of Oslo was pursued by Johs. Sandven (1909–2000), who had spent six months at the Teacher’s College at Columbia University in 1947 in order to qualify for a full professorship in Oslo. John Dewey, by many regarded to be the most significant thinker within reform pedagogy, came to Columbia University in 1905 and taught there for 30 years, until he retired in 1930 and eventually became an emeritus. Dewey was still associated with Columbia when Sandven stayed there. Like Dewey, Sandven believed that the most important task for the science of pedagogy was to develop teaching

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110 Helga Eng, “Eksperimentalismen – en retning i nutidens pedagogiske filosofi,” in *Festskrift til Anathon Aall på 70-årsdagen hans, 15. august 1937* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1937), 167.

111 *Ibid.*, 169.

112 For 13 years, she headed the psychotechnical institute, which aimed at testing youth to find out which vocational training was best for them. Lønnå (2003), 171.

113 The interwar testing regimes have come under strong criticism. Among other things, it has been argued that testing was used to distinguish the resourceful elite, and that testing particularly affected Romani children. See Slagstad (1998), 125, and Joronn Pihl, “Monumenter og motmonument,” in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift 2* (2002), 141–154.





**Fig. 10:** Helga Eng, ca. 1925–1935. Photo: Unknown/Oslo Museum, CC0 1.0.

and education that promoted the pupil's maturity and adaptability in a modern and complicated society.<sup>114</sup> Dewey had also been an important inspiration for Helga Eng, and Sandven thus continued a tradition already established at the university's pedagogical institute. Sandven saw himself as Helga Eng's successor, not only as the head of the department, but also because they both carried out research of an empirical-pedagogical nature.<sup>115</sup> Under Sandven's leadership, the institute gained access to important research funds from the Norwegian Research Council, and the 1950s and 1960s is characterised as the "golden age of Johs. Sandv-

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<sup>114</sup> Helsvig (2005), 66.

<sup>115</sup> Lønnå (2002), 234. Both Sandven and Eng sought to unite three dimensions central to Dewey's reform pedagogical tradition: the progressive, the mental hygienic, and the democratic. See also Helsvig (2004), 173.

en” for the university’s pedagogical institute.<sup>116</sup> This implied an increased opportunity to strengthen the academic identity set out by Sandven and his peers.<sup>117</sup> Kim Helsvig has pointed out that Sandven’s educational program was characterised by an Americanisation which was also in a general sense a typical feature for the social sciences in Norway at that time. Fredrik Thue, on his part, has emphasised that this American turn was particularly influenced by the activities in the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.<sup>118</sup> Literature from American research environments and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues came to be central to the curriculum at the university’s pedagogical institute in the 1950s.

However, the pedagogical research environment at University of Oslo was by no means uniform and unified. IKO (Institute for Christian Upbringing) was also represented at the pedagogical institute not least through Reidar Myhre, who in 1953 had obtained a magister’s degree in pedagogics with a thesis on Ludvig Holberg’s pedagogical ideas.<sup>119</sup> The same year, Myhre was employed as an assistant teacher at the institute, in order to give weekly lectures on the history of educational ideas. In the first year of *Prismet*, IKO’s pedagogical journal, two views were drawn that outlined the differences between IKO’s pedagogical view and the pedagogical view represented by Sandven.<sup>120</sup> IKO’s views were presented by the young theologian Åge Holter, to whom Johs. Sandven replied in a later issue. The main argument was as follows: IKO (and Åge Holter) argued that the university’s pedagogical environment prevented people from developing a true Christian identity. For Sandven, the Christian pedagogy defended by IKO represented an obstacle to the pragmatic educational philosophy that he had set himself the goal of developing.

Myhre and Sandven also had different understandings of what pedagogy should be. While Sandven argued that academic pedagogy should be based on psychological perspectives and be related to scientific ideals, Myhre was concerned that pedagogy should be a spiritual science that embraced the human being.<sup>121</sup>

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116 Lise Vislie, “Den Sandvenske ‘gullalder’ på 50- og -60-tallet,” in *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift* 1 (2010): 445–458.

117 *Ibid.*, 122.

118 Fredrik W. Thue, *In Quest of a Social Democratic Order: The Americanization of Norwegian Scholarship 1918–1970* (Dr. Philos. Diss., University of Oslo, 2006).

119 Helsvig (2005), 174. Also, the brothers Reinert and Torstein Harbo were connected to the IKO environment. They submitted their magister theses in 1955. From 1953, Reinert Harbo had also been a research assistant for Johs. Sandven.

120 Åge Holter, “Pedagogikk på skilleveien,” in *Prismet* 1 (1950), 11–12, and Johs. Sandven, “Det pragmatiske innslaget i oppdragelsesfilosofien,” in *Prismet* 7 (1950), 212–218.

121 See above, p. 123.



**Fig. 11:** Johs. Sandven, ca. 1950. Photo: Schrøder/Sverresborg Trøndelag Folkemuseum

The contradictions between Myhre and Sandven eventually led to an fiery conflict, which resulted in Myhre being dismissed from the institute in 1958. This happened despite the fact that Myhre was a very popular lecturer, and undoubtedly added valuable perspectives to the academic community at this pedagogical institute. After being dismissed, he continued to work as a lecturer at Oslo Lærerskole [Oslo Teacher Training Academy] and, together with Torstein Harbo, he did his best to prevent Johs. Sandven from having sole power to define the field of pedagogy in Norway.<sup>122</sup> Harbo and Myhre were also in charge of targeted campaigns to

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<sup>122</sup> Helsvig (2005), 186.

ensure that the school maintained its Christian values.<sup>123</sup> This contributed to the eventual formation of an alliance between defenders of parental rights and Christian conservative voices in the Norwegian public sphere.

Thus, in her daily working environment, as a young scholar and lecturer, Eva Nordland was surrounded by one of the conflicts that characterised the Norwegian public sphere in general. It was a conflict between a conservatively oriented Christian opinion, strongly connected to IKO and the Christian lay movement, and a more culturally open landscape which had tributaries both inside and outside the church. The conflict reflected a tension which had also surrounded Eva Nordland as a child, as the daughter of a priest with strong ties to liberal theology in environments where these aspects were not always respected or well received.

### Eva Nordland's authorship 1947–1961

Eva Nordland's great oeuvre was initiated with two texts on children with developmental disabilities, one printed in *Norsk Skuleblad* and the other in *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift*.<sup>124</sup> In the years up to the beginning of the 1960s, Nordland published more than 100 different texts, the vast majority of these in the periodical *Norsk Skuleblad*. Several texts also appeared in print in the pedagogical journal *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift* and the newspaper *Arbeiderbladet*. Many of her contributions were shorter works, such as book reviews, short debate articles, essays, and papers in journals. She also authored four books during this period, in addition to her doctoral dissertation. Two of these address psychology, with one shedding light upon the debate on the school in Swedish newspapers from 1920–1956, while the other is a collection of translated short educational texts written by different American scholars.<sup>125</sup> The two books on psychology, one on youth psychology and the other a textbook written together with Eva Balke (1921–2002) and Aasta Vegum (1920–2003), are both clearly influenced by Helga Eng's ideas, and

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123 Harbo and Myhre were active in the campaign against reducing the weekly hours of “Knowledge in Christianity”. This campaign collected in total 725,614 signatures. At that time, Norway's total number of inhabitants was ca. 3.5 million.

124 “Arbeidet for utviklingshemmede barn i Sveits,” in *Norsk Skuleblad* 46 (1947), and “Utviklingshemmede barn og deres pedagogiske behandling,” in *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift* 31 (1947): 289–301.

125 1949: *Ungdomspsykologi: tilpasningsproblemer i ungdomsalderen*, 1952: *Innføring i psykologien*, written together with Eva Balke and Aasta Vegum, 1956: *Tema for en ny tid: oppdragelsestanker i etterkrigsårene, Verdier i gammel og ny skole: fra debatten om reform i skolen i svenske aviser 1920–1956*. The book *Innføring i psykologien* is published in several editions, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1955).

much of the reference literature are American titles written by authors more or less connected to the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. In the textbook, testing and test regimes receive much attention.<sup>126</sup> The influence of Helga Eng and Johs Sandven is also obvious in many of the shorter texts she published.<sup>127</sup>

However, in this context, the most interesting texts in Eva Nordland's early authorship are those where she takes a clear stand on value-related issues, and those where she discusses the Labour Party's plans for a new curriculum. One of these is "Oppdragelse til menneske. To ulike pedagogiske syn i vår tid. 1. Et sosial-radikalt syn, 2. Et kristent syn" [Education to become human. Two different pedagogical views in our time. 1. A social-radical view, 2. A Christian view], published in two issues of the periodical *Kirke og Kultur* in 1957.<sup>128</sup> In this two-part article, Nordland outlines two basic educational views: a secular (social-radical) one and a Christian one, which she believes are in a tense relationship with each other. Her overall aim is to show that the secular and Christian views of life can be united in a superior purpose: to make people citizens who have a responsibility for everyone else. The text is a very interesting example of how Nordland combined the time-typical Americanisation within the Norwegian social science with a culturally open and liberal theology. All the sources she refers to are American, as are those which she uses to emphasise the importance of the value of Christianity. It is in itself interesting that she chooses to publish these articles in this particular journal. Since it was established by Christoffer Bruun and the liberal theologian Thorvald Klavness (1844–1915) in 1894, *Kirke og Kultur* had been (and still is) a leading national outlet for publications thematising the church's place in society. The journal also addressed cultural and value-related questions. When Nordland was publishing in *Kirke og Kultur*, she was also participating in a theological debate, and she communicated her pedagogical and theological view to a readership with broad theological interests.

Nordland starts the first part of this article by describing the great weakness of the time, as the American reconstructionists, represented by George Counts (1889–1974) and Theodore Brameld (1904–1987), had outlined it. According to Counts and Brameld, says Nordland, the present time was characterised by a typical individualism, which stressed that man must realise himself and be in constant development. This caused isolation and made each individual think primarily

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<sup>126</sup> Eva Nordland taught courses in testing at the university in the 1950s. See Vislie (2010).

<sup>127</sup> In the preface to several of her early works, she thanks Helga Eng and Johs. Sandven for "their stimulating help" during her study time at University of Oslo.

<sup>128</sup> "Oppdragelse til menneske. To ulike pedagogiske syn i vår tid," in *Kirke og Kultur* 5 (1957): 291–303, and 6 (1957), 342–358.

about themselves and not care for other people. This could, in turn, lead to conflicts between different groups with monopolies and particular interests. In the text, Nordland makes the American's words her own and uses dramatic images and powerful images to illustrate her points. The world is tyrannised by these special interests, she says, and in the end, these perspectives may destroy humanity.

In contrast to this independence and selfishness, Nordland demonstrates that Counts and Brameld assert a collectivist view of life, in which man is brought up to the good through interaction with others. The good man must be created by the good society; it is not what they are, but what they are for each other, that separates men from the animals.<sup>129</sup> This collectivist approach must be built on a common plan and a common control. Not least, it must allow space for each individual to be able to find their own religious conviction. The ideal society should be built up by cultural human beings. These cultural human beings were formed in living interaction with their peers only, and by expressing themselves through artistic and cultural expressions. This means that one could be knowledgeable and well educated without being a person of culture. And, conversely, one could be a person of culture without having higher education. Counts' and Brameld's theses could be substantiated by social psychological research, said Nordland. Psychologists like Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), Ronald O. Lippitt (1914–1986), and Robert W. White (1904–2001) had conducted experiments in boys' clubs, in which they had studied how the environment in these clubs changed according to how the clubs were managed. The experiments showed that clubs characterised by a democratic leadership created significantly more harmonious participants than clubs with a strict leadership or a *laissez-faire* leadership. Similar results had been shown in the case of changes in a company, and in experiments that studied different methods of changing people's habits. The more democratic the change was carried out, the less resistance or production failure was experienced in the transition to what was new.

It was now time to transfer these principles to school and education. However, several scholars had pointed out how the school fell short in this area, among them the American Ernest Melby (1891–1987). Melby had called attention to the fact that both teachers and students had to be involved in schools' administration, as well as in all the pedagogical activities carried out. The future of all cooperation between people depended on whether one succeeded in creating a better atmosphere at home and in the schools, and in larger communities of society. According to Melby, the school's goal was to "create security and respect for everyone", and to "provide training for the individual to help lead and decide in matters that have to

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129 Nordland (1) (1957), 291.

do with the community, so that we get the most active and positive support for the various social initiatives”.<sup>130</sup> The school could thus potentially play an important role in training for a democratic community. Hence, Eva Nordland will emphasise the importance of a society where everyone is an equal participant, and where everyone is allowed to grow freely.

In the second part of the texts, Nordland starts by pointing out that Christians have often raised criticism against the philosophy behind recent pedagogical trends, and against its results.<sup>131</sup> On the contrary, her aim is to demonstrate that the essence of the new pedagogy fits well with Christianity. In this part of the article, Nordland mainly builds her argumentation upon the works of two scholars who must have been relatively unknown to a Norwegian audience, the pedagogue Tunis Romein (1912–2004), and the philosopher Theodore Meyer Greene (1897–1969).<sup>132</sup> She also refers to the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner (1888–1966), who studied under Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) and who must have been more familiar to her readers, as well as to the philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965). Nordland’s point of departure is clearly connected to creation theology and Christian existentialism. She introduces the text with the following statement: “Every single person is not only an accidental product of heredity and environment, but the eternal creation of God or the timeless value that cannot be measured and compared with others, because man is an end in itself.”<sup>133</sup> Thus, she continues, it was also necessary to subordinate all qualities that man possessed, for example knowledge, intelligence, balance, security, etc., to a higher power and a higher purpose. This transcendental power should also be the point of departure for human freedom.

In accordance with Protestant theology, Nordland maintains that humanity is sinful. Man therefore needs a personal God who functions as an authority in one’s life. She argues by quoting Tunis Romein:

We must find our way back to an authority that does not bind us to a certain opinion or the discretion of certain people. Therefore, the notion of God as the highest authority is our only option. God is the permanent lasting relationship and the unchanging authority that we have only partially experienced, and that we only imperfectly, partially incorrectly, have seen. But if we experience God as a reality and as a personal power, we can feel obligated to him and

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**130** Ibid., 302.

**131** Nordland (2), (1957), 342.

**132** In the 1950s, Tunis Romein served as a dean at Mitchell College in North Carolina. Theodore M. Greene was a professor at Yale University.

**133** Nordland (2), (1957), 343.

we can be on a lifelong search for God, each based on his own assumption with his special abilities and possibilities.<sup>134</sup>

For Eva Nordland, the theoretical value of Greene and Romein is related to the fact that they differ from the theology on which many institutional churches are built. This differs, for example, from the Catholic church, where God is portrayed as a transcendent authority who reveals himself as an ontological other. Nordland places particular weight on how Romein had emphasised the need for a personal God who is also the highest being. This experience is independent of time, but is nourished by people having improved their conditions of life: “The external circumstances and the improved conditions must clearly be understood as means to achieve this goal.”<sup>135</sup> However, the depersonalisation of God was one of the great dangers of our time. The depersonalised God, i.e. a God who appeared only as a symbol and a principle, had no power to become the supreme authority, and it caused a depersonalisation between people. This depersonalisation, which also could be seen in some Christian denominations, had recently been criticised by more liberal Christians. They had pointed to how people in the name of religion had gained power over others and prevented fellow human beings from a personal development and spiritual growth. The result of this depersonalised society, said Nordland, again with reference to Romein, was that relationships between people were measured in terms of time and material goods. What people did for each other was work that should be paid for with money. People had less personal contact and there was little opportunity for conversations and community.

To prevent this depersonalisation from gaining ground, man needed a personal experience of God. Home, school, and church could here take on a shared task. The child must be raised to believe in a personal and loving authority above all else. Such faith can give confidence and personal strength, security, direction, and independence. The family home did not have to be rich in material goods, but the child could encounter God’s love through parents’ care, and thereby be better equipped to face their environment later in life. In this way, the family home could also become a model for the relationship between people. The church’s overall aim was to lead people to the same personal relationship with God. Although man could never gain full clarity as to what God’s being was, they could be taught the concept of God that their educators had arrived at, and at the same time be brought up to be in search of a better understanding of what God actually is. “A person with a firm conviction of a supreme personal power will be able to be

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134 *Ibid.*, 345.

135 *Ibid.*, 346.



safe and stable, and a person who is at the same time receptive to new knowledge will be an independent person and a person with the ability to show respect for those with a different view of life.”<sup>136</sup>

In a final comment to the article, Nordland points out that both Christians and rationalists were taught that Christian and social-radical views of education were not compatible with each other. This weakened the possibility for raising strong and stable human beings. Yet the believer and the non-believer could be united in a belief in timeless values. The Christian was brought up to believe in a personal God, yet at the same time to an inadequate understanding of what God is. The Christian could grasp God’s attributes, such as goodness, love, beauty, and truth, but constantly had to make sense of what these concepts were. The imperfect, tied to an understanding of oneself, would always fall short due to the status of being a sinful creature: “Man constantly falls short, most often because selfish motives interfere and prevent one from seeing what gives the highest sum of goodness, beauty, and truth for the community and for the individual person.”<sup>137</sup> The values tied the Christian and the non-Christian together. The non-Christian humanist could, said Nordland, teach his child that the idea of God was not in accordance with his reason, or he could teach the child that he knew no means of knowing whether God existed. But like the Christian, he could emphasise a need to believe in eternal ideas of value. Neither the Christian nor the non-Christian could know exactly what these ideas were, but one could know what they were not. All people, regardless of who they were or what they believed, could identify what was unloving, deceitful, and dishonest, what is ugly and evil, and what is empty and vacuous. Therefore, both Christians and non-Christians needed help to achieve the goal of realising these ideas. Nordland was able to conclude with the following:

What I would like to emphasise with these reasonings is that in our daily practice, in dealing with each other, there are no significant differences in the ethical situation of the open Christian and the value-conscious rationalist. We strengthen each other as human beings if we, in the new generation, strengthen the awareness of the values we have in common, without thereby destroying anything for our particular convictions. As far as the Christian is concerned, the cooperation can take place without it destroying the growth of Christianity, if the rationalist does not demand that Christianity should be taken out of school and society. The awareness of the common values – the common faith – is the basis which unites the new generation (...).<sup>138</sup>

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136 Ibid., 353.

137 Ibid., 355.

138 Ibid., 356.

In this article, Eva Nordland seems to end up in a position where she rejects the question of whether there is a specific Christian material ethics, roughly identical to that defended by the Danish philosopher and theologian Knud E. Løgstrup at about the same time.<sup>139</sup> However, also similar to Løgstrup's ideas, Nordland's understanding of a Christian material ethics seems to be based on fundamental Christian ethics, which takes the idea of man as created in the image of God as its point of departure. Løgstrup's project marks a break with all forms of subjectivism, and he uses the phenomenon of "the other" as the ground for his ethics. He advocates an ontological understanding of the moral imperative: it is silent, radical, one-sided, unarticulated, and anonymous, and it involves a basic trust.<sup>140</sup> Thus, there can be no Christian morality or secular morality, only human morality. Løgstrup's *Den etiske fordring* [The Ethical Demand], was published the year before Nordland published her article, and at that time was more or less unknown to a Norwegian audience.<sup>141</sup> It is therefore not likely that she could have been aware of Løgstrup's ideas upon publishing her articles in *Kirke and Kultur*. However, Løgstrup represents a broader phenomenological moral philosophical tradition which also includes Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995), among others. These philosophers are, among other things, characterised by their awareness of human interdependency. With the article published in *Kirke and Kultur*, Eva Nordland can also be included in this tradition. For Nordland, the idea of Creation functions as a corrective to an individualistic and subjectivist understanding of an ontological normativity, yet with this understanding of creation as the background, she can also include non-Christians in value-related questions on the same level as Christians.<sup>142</sup> The fundamental moral and ethical outlook for both Christianity and humanism should be seen as being the same. This communicates well with the broad general public that Nordland, and others, had to deal with in the 1950s.

It is hard to know how Eva Nordland has become familiar with the works of Tunis Romein and Theodore Meyer Greene. Greene has a more extensive authorship than Romein, but both of them seem to have been rather unknown in Norway

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139 Svein Aage Christoffersen, *Etikk, eksistens og modernitet: innføring i Løgstrups tenkning* (Oslo: TANO Aschehoug, 1999), 48.

140 Knud Eijler Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, Introduction by Hans Fink and Alastair MacIntyre (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1997).

141 *The Ethical Demand* was reviewed in the newspaper *Frisprog*, 9.3.1957. In this text, the reviewer Herulf Froberg considers Løgstrup's ethics as a solution to the problems that the school was facing at the time.

142 See also Karstein M. Hansen, *Skapelse og kritikk. Skapelsestankens kritiske funksjon i K. E. Løgstrups forfatterskap med særlig vekt på den unge Løgstrup* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1996), 211.

at that time, even if Reidar Myhre later came to mention Theodore Meyer Greene as one of the “leading representatives of the American philosophical idealism”.<sup>143</sup> However, Eva Nordland wrote a review of Tunis Romein’s main work, *Education and Responsibility* (1955), in the first edition of the periodical *Skole og Samfunn* [School and Society] in 1956.<sup>144</sup> In this review, Nordland places emphasis on showing the responsibility we have for bringing up a democratic society, and on the recognition that everyone has a responsibility for each other. The review is relatively short, and Nordland does not mention the theological background underlying Romein’s text.

In a theological sense, Romein’s and Greene’s ideas can be seen against the backdrop of contemporary theology, not least the ideas of German-born Paul Tillich (1886–1965), who at that time had finally achieved his breakthrough in the USA.<sup>145</sup> One of Tillich’s most important achievements was to reform liberal theology in order for Christianity to meet the challenges of the twentieth century. Yet more important than the theological anchoring in their native America is that Romein and Greene fit well into contemporary liberal theology in Norway as well as with Eva Nordland’s background. Both Johan Hygen and Tor Aukrust downplay the Christian self-understanding and emphasise the importance of universal depravity. Hygen and Aukrust are representatives of a negative understanding of the present: it is characterised by a collectivism that depreciates man’s intrinsic value and replaces it with a cold and selfish individualism. In an ontological sense, man is thereby in need of a personal and forgiving God. Through her articles in *Kirke og Kultur*, Eva Nordland comports with a tradition with strong roots in contemporary theology, both in Norway as well as internationally. This tradition surrounds her as a young adult, and it has been a part of her intellectual context since she was a child.

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143 See Reidar Myhre, *Store pedagoger i egne skrifter. 6: Amerikansk progressivisme og essensialisme* (Oslo: Fabritius forlag, 1972), 165. Romein is listed in Reidar Myhre’s introduction to pedagogical philosophy as an example of how Christian ideas had recently gained an increased educational relevance, for instance in the USA. See Reidar Myhre, *Introduksjon til pedagogisk filosofi* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1959), 92. Compared to Greene, Romein’s work is also given relatively little attention in an American context. The book is reviewed in a couple of contemporary periodicals, like *The Journal of Religion* 3 (1957), and the *South Atlantic Quarterly* 55 (2) (1956). Greene, on the other hand, is far better known in the American public sphere.

144 *Education and Responsibility* is listed as “The Book of the Month” in *Skole og Samfunn* (1) (1956). See Eva Nordland, “Oppdragelse og ansvar,” in *Skole og Samfunn* (1), (1956), 29.

145 Christian Danz, Werner Schüssler, and Erdmann Sturm, “Paul Tillich Online: An Introduction to his Work. Werkgeschichtliche Einleitung”, in *Tillich Online* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), accessed 17 October 2023, <https://www.degruyter.com/database/tillo/html>.

Eva Nordland presented related views in a much later edition of *Kirke og Kultur*: In the article “Trenger kristendomsundervisningen en fornyelse” [Does Christian education need a renewal], published in 1966, Nordland advocated that Christian education had to become far more inclusive, and that Christian education, as it appeared in the schools at that present time, could not be regarded as being suitable for meeting the challenges of her time.<sup>146</sup> In her opinion, Christian education was unable to give ordinary young people a life pattern that they could perceive as their personal vision for the beginning of adulthood. This resulted in only a few having a personal relationship to Christianity. Nordland pointed to a survey conducted by the newspaper *Aftenposten* earlier that year.<sup>147</sup> In this survey, 80 % of young adults said they believed in God, while only 14% said they were devout Christians. This was related to the fact that those who defined what Christianity should be, understood it so narrowly that many felt excluded. The dogmas largely defined the content of true faith. Consequently, Nordland meant that the church could be understood as a culture of fear: it gave requirements for what people should believe and deviations from these requirements were not accepted. An example of how narrowly Christianity was understood, was seen in the fact that the hymn *Leid milde ljøs* [Lead kindly light] was not included in the school’s hymn selection, as it was considered to be too dogmatically weak.<sup>148</sup> Christianity and Christian education extolled itself, said Nordland. Believers should be more humble, and Christian education should strive towards engagement in moral and ethical problems, rather than the dogmas. One should endeavour to work towards an inclusive understanding of Christianity where, on the one hand, no demand was made for dogmatic achievements, and, on the other hand, there was no need to distance oneself from one’s own reason. This inclusiveness was also the essence of the Christian gospel:

What is important is that the teachings of Jesus so insistently emphasise the self-sacrificing love and the humble attitude in relation to what is perfect. The initial Christianity, as it meets us in the Gospels, embraces the weak people, those who made mistakes, those who were selfish and self-loving, those who were publicans and sinners against the perfect. Jesus, on the other hand, sharply distanced himself from the attitude that characterised the Pharisees: self-righteousness, the feeling of being better than others, the feeling of having the truth. (...) The initial Christianity assumed that there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither

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**146** Eva Nordland, “Trenger kristendomsundervisningen en fornyelse,” in *Kirke og Kultur* 6 (1966), 321–339.

**147** See “Ukens gallup: Tro på Gud og liv efter døden,” in *Aftenposten*, 1.2.1966.

**148** Nordland points to an article in IKO’s periodical *Prismet* 4 (1962), which refers to a committee that has worked on the selection of hymns for the school.

male nor female, neither slave nor free. Everyone was equal, with the same opportunities to realise their own values.<sup>149</sup>

Based on this, the school's Christian education had to be reformed, Eva Nordland believed. Instead of marking boundaries and being concerned with everything that made Christianity special, the school's Christian education had to aim for everyone to experience charity, a shared responsibility, and cohesion. This teaching could be conveyed through the teaching and it could engage when it was mediated through the Gospels, as well as other religious and ethical images, stories, and parables.

Thus, this article in the 1966 edition of *Kirke og Kultur* substantiates Eva Nordland's previous theological points of view, and she uses these points of view to argue for the necessity of a new orientation in "Knowledge of Christianity".<sup>150</sup> She allows herself to be personal: "My expectation of Christian teaching is in many ways subjective. I have personally experienced our educational dilemma and believe that the solution lies in us working towards an inclusive understanding of Christianity."<sup>151</sup> On the background of her ideological orientation, she was also able to underpin the school policies that the Labour Party defended in the post-war period, both when it came to the school's anchoring in Christian values in general, and the content and place of "Knowledge of Christianity" in particular. These policies can also be defended in a theological sense: Nordland demonstrates strong ties to contemporary liberal and culture-oriented theology and its emphasis on the ethical and universal.

Eva Nordland came to take these ideas into a general defence of the Labour Party's school policy, as this had been developed earlier in the 1950s. In an article

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>150</sup> It should not come as a surprise that Nordland's article caused reactions. Already in the following edition of *Kirke and Kultur*, Bjarne Hareide advocated that "Knowledge of Christianity" was satisfactory, and that it could complete its task without being changed. See "Kristendomsundervisningens fornyelse. Eva Nordland til ettertanke," in *Kirke and Kultur* 7 (1966), 427–434. Hareide is, however, much more diplomatic than he was in his earlier writings and agrees with many of Eva Nordland's claims on "Knowledge of Christianity". The engineer Rolf Kirkedam (1931–2010), who also works for the periodical, gives his support to Nordland in the text "Kristendomsundervisningens fornyelse," in *Kirke and Kultur* 9 (1966), 550–555. Kirkedam's point is that the school's Christian education should be far more open. Later articles also support Nordland's view that "Knowledge of Christianity" needs renewal. See Bjarne Slaggard, "Trenk kristendomsundervisninga ei fornying," in *Kirke and Kultur* 10 (1966), 617–623, and Ragnar Brandt, "Kristendomsundervisningen under debatt," in *Kirke and Kultur* 4 (1967), 217–227. It is worth noting that even if most of the writers give critical input to Eva Nordland's text, they also agree that "Knowledge of Christianity" is in need of change and must be revised in order to become more inclusive and tolerant.

<sup>151</sup> Nordland (1966), 351.

published in two editions in *Skole og Samfunn* in 1956, Nordland presents three different views on education and upbringing: the pragmatic, the humanistic, and the Christian.<sup>152</sup> The pragmatic upbringing, represented by John Dewey among others, aimed to realise the value of the individual human being. The humanist view was based on common values and a common goal, without necessarily linking it to a deity or a transcendental force, while representatives of a Christian view believed that the most important thing was to teach the child how to live in a community with God. The topic in this article is thus related to what she will present in *Kirke or Kultur* one year later. Nordland was concerned that these different views were unable to gather around a common goal for the child's upbringing. In light of this, she argued, the school's statutory objective was outdated, because it had a wording that failed to include all those who were supposed to interpret its content. The statutory objective had a pronounced emphasis on Christianity. It stated that the "folk school should help to give the children a Christian and a moral upbringing and work to make them useful people both spiritually and physically".<sup>153</sup> Nordland believed that the definitions of the words in the statutory objective were to a large extent up for interpretation: "What those who represent different philosophies of life should put into words as Christian, moral – or honest – and useful, or skilled, is up to each individual."<sup>154</sup> The situation was aggravated by the fact that the different life philosophies were regarded as representing irreconcilable opposites. Thus, the young generation grew up with the understanding that it was not possible to reach an agreement on fundamental issues. The question of values was always relative, and it was dependent upon time, person, and place.

This caused the young scholar and theologian Ivar Asheim (1927–2020) to react. Asheim was a part of the environment around Bjarne Hareide, and he held a scholarship from the Free Faculty of Theology between 1945 and 1960.<sup>155</sup> In the third edition of *Skole og samfunn* the following year, he initiated a debate with Eva Nordland which came to extend over several editions.<sup>156</sup> Asheim accused Nordland of going in circles, *from* the ambiguous and *to* the ambiguous. A key issue was the fact that Nordland believed that there existed some overarching values that people could agree upon. The universal aspect was relative, Asheim believed, because the definition necessarily had to include "materialists, Marxists,

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152 Eva Nordland, "Personlighetsoppdragelse i vår tid," in *Skole og samfunn* 9 (1956), 258–264, and 10 (1956), 290–302.

153 *Ibid.*, 300.

154 *Ibid.*

155 Ivar Asheim defended his PhD in theology at the University of Oslo in 1962.

156 Ivar Asheim, "Forelda formålsparagraf," in *Skole og samfunn* 3 (1957), 82–87.

and Nazis”.<sup>157</sup> Thus, the statutory objective could, by virtue of its nature, not be unambiguous, a fact that Eva Nordland also admitted by pointing to the impossibility of rejecting the objection that “each individual has its own accidental content in the concept of values”. Another objection against Nordland, said Asheim, was that most philosophies of life would agree upon the fact that our faith was incomplete, and that we all needed to be growing towards greater clarity. But would the development necessarily lead us in the direction of a common faith, he rhetorically asked. Was it not just as close to think that greater clarity could also mean greater differentiation? In Asheim’s view, the different philosophies of life also represented different values, which were not necessarily compatible. One should therefore not underestimate the difficulties in arriving at a joint, clearly formulated statutory objective.

Eva Nordland’s reply to Asheim was published in the same edition of the periodical, in which Nordland demonstrates how the different words in the statutory objective actually had different meanings.<sup>158</sup> This applied not least to the word *Christianity*. She connects to the differences between herself and Ivar Asheim: “I could well imagine that if Ivar Asheim and I raised a group of children to become Christian people, we would consciously use two types of education because we put different content in the terms.”<sup>159</sup> These different understandings of Christianity also had consequences for practical life: some parents deeply mistrusted the schools because they encountered frightening, threatening, or strictly dogmatic forms of Christian education. A Christian education could also have opponents because the term failed to be interpreted or elaborated: some could attribute a sectarian content to it, while others could think that Christian education was primarily related to Christian culture. Nordland believed that one should arrive at an understanding of man that was common to all. It was possible, she believed, to find a core point that Christians, humanists, and pragmatists could all agree upon – the belief that each person was a final goal in itself, and that this final goal should not be used as a means to promote the aims of groups and individuals. She concludes with explaining her own view on Christianity:

Ivar Asheim asks if I react to the statutory objective because it is *too* clear. By this he means, I think, to ask if I react to it as obsolete because I am against Christianity. I do not realise that what I personally put in the word Christianity has anything to do with this. But since Asheim believes that it is essential for an open and real debate to get an answer, I will try to give it to

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<sup>157</sup> Asheim (1957).

<sup>158</sup> Eva Nordland, “Svar til stipendiat, cand. theol. Ivar Asheim,” in *Skole og samfunn* 3 (1957), 85–88.

<sup>159</sup> Nordland (1957), 85.

him: I am very happy to have been brought up in a liberal Christian home, and I have taken with me the knowledge of childhood as something I neither can nor will get rid of.<sup>160</sup>

Nordland and Asheim continued the debate in a later edition of *Skole og Samfunn* the same year.<sup>161</sup> In these texts, both sides repeated and sharpened the points of view that they had made in the previous contributions. The disagreements that existed between Nordland and Asheim when it came to their understanding of the school's statutory objective would also come to the fore in a debate in *Norsk Skoleblad* in 1961.<sup>162</sup> This debate would also come to include other contributors.<sup>163</sup> Yet, more important than the actual content of these texts are the actual differences that exist between Asheim and Nordland, which were linked to their basis of values and their perspectives on human life. While Nordland unfolded the same theological ideas that she also came to defend in the articles in *Kirke og Kultur*, Asheim shows himself to be a representative of an ethic where faith, human utterances, and philosophies of life are inextricably intertwined. Unlike representatives of Scandinavian creation theology, Asheim would give a positive answer to the question of whether there is a specific Christian ethics. The discord in Nordland's and Asheim's articles underlines the polarisation in the contemporary theological landscape, in which a liberal and culturally open faction stands out as antagonistic to a normative and biblically grounded theology. Asheim will later develop these ap-

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160 Ibid. 88.

161 Ivar Asheim, "Overflatisk kjennskap til formålsparagrafen," in *Skole og samfunn* 6 (1957), 149–152, and Eva Nordland, "Svar til cand. theol. Ivar Asheim," in *Skole og samfunn* 6 (1957), 152–154.

162 Eva Nordland, "Skolens allmenndannelse i søkelyset. Et forsøk på analyse av formålsparagrafen i folkeskoleloven," *Norsk Skoleblad* 8 (1961), 236–38, Ivar Asheim, "Til tolkninga av formålsparagrafen," in *Norsk Skoleblad* 17 (1961), 593–595. See also Eva Nordland's reply, "Formålsparagrafen – en subjektiv tolkning," in *Norsk Skoleblad* 23 (1961), 832–834.

163 In the short notice "Skal dogma diskutert" [Should the dogmas be discussed], the teacher Einar Helde (b. 1923) ties the school's purpose inextricably to the teachings of the church. He states: "The Christian education in school is the baptismal education of the Norwegian church. Therefore, it must be the church's correct and pure teaching which the children encounter at school. The teacher has textbooks to follow, he knows the views of the church, and he must teach according to this, or hand over the teacher's desk to someone else." See Einar Helde, "Skal dogma diskutert," in *Norsk Skoleblad* 17 (1961), 596. A more discursive text that reaches the same conclusion as Helde was published by Ole Øystese (1922–2014) in 1961. See "Hva betyr målsetningsparagrafen i skoleloven," in *Norsk Skoleblad* 23 (1961), 809–812. The bottom line in Øystese's argumentation is that § 1 in the school act makes the Norwegian school into a Christian school. This was legally binding for both parents and teachers.



proaches and present them in more comprehensive and systematic representations of Christian ethics.<sup>164</sup>

Eva Nordland also took her views into other texts, and into discussion with other opponents. Another example is an article she published in the newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* in January 1959.<sup>165</sup> This text was published as a response to an article by the resident chaplain Odd Godal printed in the same newspaper some weeks earlier.<sup>166</sup> Godal had earlier distinguished himself as an open-minded and dialogue-oriented theologian, something that came to the fore for instance in the book *Human-etisk eller kristent livssyn [Human-ethical or Christian philosophy of life]* co-published with Georg Langfeldt earlier in 1956.<sup>167</sup> In his text in *Arbeiderbladet*, Godal had argued that the new statutory objective had an incorrect focus. Rather than emphasising what the child was, it emphasised what the child should become. The formulations were imprecise, he stated. What was a useful person? Was it a good citizen? Or was it the streamlined person who could adapt to everything? To a large extent, the formulations in the new statutory objective echoed the contemporary urge to control man and adapt him to the social process that we ourselves wanted to promote, Godal believed. According to him, the older wording of the statutory objective was sufficient, as it pointed out that the school should provide moral and Christian education. This wording was also in accordance with modern pedagogy: the child was growing, and teaching and environment should be adapted to the laws of growth.

In her response, Nordland emphasised that the new statutory objective could give the child opportunities that the previous statutory objective had not been able to include. What was decisive now was to see the child as part of a larger society; to raise them to shape a democracy, just as much as they themselves were part of a democracy. This also provided the basis for the changes that could be found in the most recent statutory objective:

In contrast to Godal, I believe that the two most recent statutory objectives, the one from 1936 and the proposed one from 1958, represent important progress compared to the earlier ones.

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**164** See for instance Axel Smith, ed., *På skaperens jord. Innføring i kristen etikk* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1988), and Ivar Asheim, *Mer enn normer. Grunnlagsetikk* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1994). Similar views can also be found in major works by other representatives of this faction, for instance in Aksel Valen-Sendstad's biblical revelation ethics. See Svein Aage Christoffersen, *Handling og dømmekraft. Etikk og menneskesyn i lys av en kristen kulturarv*, 3rd ed. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2022), 136 ff.

**165** Eva Nordland, "Skolens formålsparagraf i lovtekst og anvendelse," in *Arbeiderbladet*, 13.01.1959.

**166** Odd Godal, "Skolen og menneskebarnet," in *Arbeiderbladet*, 16.12.1958.

**167** See above, p. 165.

In the last century, the purpose of the school, its structure and work were highly individualistic, in favour of the children who were privileged in terms of abilities and finances. In our century, greater emphasis is placed on the social side of education.<sup>168</sup>

Of course, the words that Godal had pointed to as ambiguous were actually ambiguous, Nordland emphasised. But the same could be said about all other concepts, including those that could be found in previous curricula. The most important thing in our time was to raise the children to activities and deeds that served the community: to “learn to enjoy giving and helping and inhibit negative or aggressive actions and attitudes”. Closely related to this was the question of what the school should give to the children. There was no doubt about the main purpose: “The school should help to give the child a Christian and moral education.” However, it did not mean that the school, against the will of the parents, should give the child a specific moral and Christian education, but rather that it had the purpose of providing the best moral and ethical education that the society could offer. In Norway, where 96% of the population belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran church, it almost went without saying what should be the basis of the school’s education. The school should provide education in the teachings of this denomination, and by so doing, it supported the choice that the parents also had made. Furthermore, one could expect that the school’s religious education did not become one-sided and intolerant, and that the child heard about other religious beliefs, in order to make their own choices in matters that had to do with religion and morality. Nevertheless, Eva Nordland’s openness is strongly dependant upon her surrounding culture:

With the opportunities the children have, no matter how small or weak they may be, the school must take into account the child as an individual and help the child in its present condition to further development: it should teach the child to acquire the culture into which he or she was born, and to work in that culture as a creative being who can receive with joy and who can give back to the group that it belongs to.<sup>169</sup>

This background also provides an important frame for understanding and contextualising the religious freedom and tolerance that Nordland advocated on a much earlier stage in her authorship. In the book *Ungdomspsykologi. Tilpasningsproblemer i ungdomsalderen* [Youth Psychology. Adaption problems in adolescence], published in 1949, Nordland had devoted an entire chapter to religion.<sup>170</sup> The

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168 Nordland 13.01.1959.

169 Ibid.

170 Nordland (1959).

first part of the chapter is strictly technical. She goes through central development characteristics in the child's religious development, as this had been expressed in studies by German researchers H. Frisch and H. Hetzer and Finnish scholar Jan Gästrius.<sup>171</sup> Frisch and Hetzer had shown that religious narratives were most important when it came to the child's relationship to religion, followed by prayer, and then, to a small extent, religious reflection. Gästrius, on his side, had pointed out that boys were more liable to doubt than girls were. Their surveys demonstrated that the age of 16 was crucial for the youth's religious development. The 16-year-olds doubted the most, while older youths showed a declining interest and a clarification in either a negative or positive direction. Before the age of 16, the doubt was mainly linked to religious forms, while to a greater extent it was linked to the content of religion for older young people. Nordland concludes this chapter by arguing for the need of religious freedom, and by emphasising the school's role in the development of this religious freedom. The need was related to adolescence's character of being a time of exploration. The school cultivated the extremes: on the one hand, it taught natural science, and on the other hand, training in orthodox religion. Religious education also tended to be the subject of instruction and cramming, without considering the problems that preoccupied young people at different levels. Nordland believed that the teacher should be willing to give a more general religious orientation, without pressing his or her own view. She also believed that the different views on life had to be heard, for example through presentations written for young people and through lessons and discussions. This freedom is easy to assert when the school's confessional basis is taken as a fundamental prerequisite, as Nordland demonstrates in a number of her other writings.

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the disagreements between Eva Nordland and her antagonists boil down to the fact that the opponents believe that the statutory objective, as it has been formulated since the adoption of the preceding school act, provided a sufficient background for realising the school's objective, as this was legally mandated. Eva Nordland, on her part, links to a greater extent the idea of man as created and builds upon a phenomenological understanding of reality as the basis for the idea that school must include everyone. Her liberal theological background and upbringing comes to the fore in a number of texts, not least those which are published in *Kirke og Kultur*. She argues as a pedagogue, but also as a close ally of Helge Sivertsen, a strong sympathiser with the Labour Party and as a person with strong ties to a culturally conditioned understanding

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171 The study by Frisch and Hetzer is *Die religiöse Entwicklung des Jugendlichen*, in *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*. LXII (1928), the study referred to by Gästrius is *De växandes religiöse liv* (Helsingfors, 1936).

of Christianity. With this phenomenological background, she can also encounter the broad spectrum of different voices in her surroundings and adapt to and justify Labour Party's political orientation.

Interestingly, Eva Nordland's authorship also reflects the strong connection lines that exist between reform pedagogy and the twentieth-century culturally oriented theology. The religious dimension of reform pedagogy is also emphasised in international research.<sup>172</sup> The reform pedagogy, as it appears in Sandven's and Eng's texts and in their works as university teachers, as well as in the texts of a number of international pedagogues belonging to the reform tradition, emphasise the opportunities, rights, and duties of each individual person in society. Consequently, it builds its child-rearing and practical pedagogy on these ideas. The individual orientation and the emphasis on the individual's viability and individual value can also be found in Scandinavian creation theology. This theological tradition presupposes that each individual has an inviolable value as created in the image of God, and that the community that is established through the creation links all people together. Or, in Løgstrup's words, there is a demand implicit in each encounter between persons that remains silent.<sup>173</sup> Thus, both reform pedagogy and Scandinavian creation theology point towards a democratic society in which everyone is responsible for each other and in a binding relationship. Reform pedagogy and theology are anchored in a common theoretical ground; their foundation is clearly phenomenological.

## Summary

In the preceding part of this book, we have looked more closely at the two main figures in this book, Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland, and their respective backgrounds. Their early writings have been the subject of close reading as well as of content analyses. We have pointed out that Helge Sivertsen was born into the folk high school movement, and that he took the movement's ideals and his Grundtvigian heritage into his political life and his work as an educational strategist. This is most clearly demonstrated in the pamphlet *Demokratisk og nasjonal oppseding i norsk skole*, published in 1946. In this writing, he highlighted the value of the folk high schools as they appeared in Norway in the latter half of the nineteenth century and singled out Christoffer Bruun as the Norwegian folk high school movement's most important ideologist, without considering the actual differences that

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<sup>172</sup> Baader (2002) and Baader (2005).

<sup>173</sup> Løgstrup (1997).

existed between the folk high school pioneers in Norway. The pedagogue Sigvart Tøsse has pointed out that Olaus Arvesen and Christoffer Bruun had different understandings of what the aim of the folk high schools were. Arvesen believed that the folk high schools should aim at training for democratic participation in political life, while Bruun emphasised freedom and independence as the aim of folk high school's education.<sup>174</sup> Thus, when Sivertsen highlighted the Labour movement's folk high schools in the twentieth century and emphasised the need for education for democracy, he drew on theories that were also evident among the folk high school pioneers in Norway. Sivertsen's commitment to school's social studies had also been anticipated in the nineteenth century, through Johan Sverdrup's defence of "Politics in school". Johan Sverdrup, who took office as Norway's first Prime Minister after the introduction of parliamentarism in 1884, made a significant effort to modernise the Norwegian school in the 1880s. Sivertsen's manifesto for the Norwegian school's development is thus broadly rooted in the Norwegian reception of Grundtvig's ideas on school and education.

Sivertsen's Grundtvigian heritage can also be found in other writings. Dissemination of culture was closely linked to the folk high school's activities, and it was contrasted with dead school and dead books, which Grundtvig believed characterised education in his own time. In the articles written in the periodical *Kontakt* in the 1950s, he placed great emphasis on the school's role as a cultural institution and connected the task of cultural dissemination with the need of nine-year compulsory schooling. This reflects Sivertsen's broad commitment to culture. The need for a cultural offensive is also apparent in practical political life, not least through the Labour Party's cultural program in 1954–1957. Helge Sivertsen was the leader of the committee that worked on this program. Sivertsen's school politics also echo Grundtvig's emphasis on the importance of a broad curriculum including different school subjects. In influential writings in the 1830s, Grundtvig had argued for the necessity for the school to provide training in many subjects, in order to be able to communicate with different human qualities. This diversity is also an important principle in the Labour Party's long-term program for schools.

Helge Sivertsen's Grundtvigianism is thus far more comprehensive than what Nina Volckmar had argued for in her important doctoral thesis. Volckmar emphasises Sivertsen's Grundtvigian background but understands his emphasis on the Labour movement's folk high schools as an orientation away from his original background. Yet there is good reason for Sivertsen's emphasis on the necessity of educating for democratic participation, and his defence of the Labour Party's folk high schools is a continuation of Grundtvigian thinking, rather than a contra-

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<sup>174</sup> See above, p. 97–98.

diction of it. Helge Sivertsen thus becomes an interesting example of how the mid-twentieth-century Labour Party can include political ideas that originally had strong roots in the Liberal Party (Venstre).

The priest's daughter Eva Nordland, on her part, was brought up in a home strongly influenced by a liberal theological tradition, and in her autobiography she emphasised how the environment in which she grew up had a formative significance for her adult life. As a pedagogue connected to University of Oslo, she was strongly influenced by contemporary reform pedagogy, and reform pedagogy forms an important background for her writings and work as a university teacher. Interestingly, several works in her early oeuvre are examples of how reform pedagogy and a culture-oriented liberal Protestantism can be integrated with each other. Nordland is obviously fascinated by the American Christian educators Tunis Romein and Theodore Greene, and she incorporates their ideas into important journal articles written in the 1950s and 1960s. Romein's and Greene's ideas have much in common with the theological traditions that have surrounded Nordland since her childhood, and which are also part of the theological landscape in her adult life. This tradition places strong emphasis on man as created and on phenomenological cognitions as the basis for the individual's responsibility for the other. In the immediate context of Eva Nordland, this theological tradition is represented by Tor Aukrust and Johan Hygen but, through the articles we have highlighted above, she also anticipates Scandinavian creation theologians such as the Dane Knud E. Løgstrup and the Swede Gustaf Wingren.

Eva Nordland's views underline the complexity of the theological and cultural landscape in Norway. Through a number of articles and essays in periodicals such as *Kirke og Kultur* and *Skole og Samfunn*, her views were contested and debated, not least by the young theological scholar Ivar Asheim. Asheim belonged to the circle around Bjarne Hareide, who from the end of the 1940s had been the charismatic leader of IKO [Institute for Christian Upbringing]. This institute took a central place in the post-war educational landscape and fought in order to preserve the school's Evangelical-Lutheran character. Ivar Asheim demonstrates an understanding of Christianity that is fundamentally different from that of Eva Nordland. Asheim is concerned with maintaining the Bible as a normative foundation for faith, and also for school and education. Eva Nordland, for her part, is more concerned with the relationship between people as the background for the individual's responsibility in society. This also allows the individual the freedom to make their own reasoned choices. Eva Nordland's authorship thus becomes a good example of how theological, pedagogical, and cultural perspectives can merge and be integrated into practical school policy.

## 4 Concluding Part: a Social Integration Project. The Labour Party, the Welfare State, and the School. Authors' Intention in Doing

It is finally time to discuss how the findings we have made in the preceding parts can be seen against larger contexts, and to reflect upon the author's *intentions in writing*, as is described in the introductory part of this book. The book's main actors, Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland, are both part of a larger narrative about how the Labour Party dominated the political landscape in post-war Norway. This dominance was so complete that post-war Norway has been referred to as a one-party state by both historians and social scientists. A central element in this narrative is the account of the development of the welfare state, in which the school also played an important part. In respect to the school, the history has thus far been related as a goal-oriented process of secularisation, in which the Labour Party was at the forefront in the process of weakening the church's influence over the school. This referred to a process particularly prevalent in the interwar years, and which was linked to the radicalisation of the party seen in this period. The Labour Party had a background rooted in communism, and high-profile politicians had come across as hostile to religion. This point of departure is also highlighted in recent research, and most recently in historian Nils Ivar Agøy's book on the Labour movement, the church, and the welfare state in Norway, published in the summer of 2023.<sup>1</sup> When considering the legitimacy of the suspicion held by many Christians and church representatives in the post-war decades that the church's influence over school had been weakened after WWII, Agøy gives the following answer:

Were the suspicions justified? The answer must be affirmative, based on the view of the school that most of the churchgoers (including many social democratic voters) took as a basis. For them, one of the primary tasks for the folk high school was to provide solid training in Lutheran Christianity to the members of the church of Norway, and the church had an obvious right to set premises for the schools teaching. The Labour Party's leadership was in favour of a secular school, where knowledge of Christianity should indeed be included, but which the school should not be able to direct. In the opinion of the party, the school act of 1959 was only a phase in the long struggle to wrest the school out of the church's grip. The folk school started out as a church school, but this characteristic had to be removed.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Agøy (2023).

2 *Ibid.*, 231.

There is nothing wrong with Agøy's conclusions, and his book is based on thorough analyses of highly relevant historical material. Seen from one angle, the history of the Norwegian school in the post-war period is a story of how the church gradually loses its grip on the school (continuing a process that had been going on at least since the 1860s). The story reached a peak in 1969 through the enactment of Grunnskoleloven [The law of nine-year compulsory primary and secondary school]. This law enacted that „Knowledge of Christianity“ should be a school subject on a par with all other school subjects, and that „Knowledge of Christianity“ should no longer be a preparation for the church's confirmation, as it had been since the first school law was enacted in 1739. At the same time, there is no doubt that there were strong forces in the Labour Party who wanted to reduce the importance of „Knowledge of Christianity“ in the school's curriculum. It was precisely the concern about a de-Christianisation of school and society that led to the establishment of the Institute for Christian Upbringing [IKO], as well as to strong agitation among Christians in the years after WWII. Christians also received support from the conservative wing in the political landscape, and the Christian Democrats [Kristelig Folkeparti] became a political voice which could ensure that Christians entered the political arena.<sup>3</sup>

However, there may be reason to nuance this picture. On a general level, the Labour Party had a very heterogenous group of members, many of whom wanted to preserve the school's Christian character and to maintain the content and status of „Knowledge of Christianity“. The discussions at the Storting show that there was often disagreement within the party concerning this matter. This is well documented in Svein Tuastad's doctoral dissertation, cited in the introductory part of this book, and Tuastad distinguishes between internal and external approaches to religion.<sup>4</sup> Those who defended an internal approach meant that the Christian message should be as widespread as possible, while the defenders of an external approach accepted Christianity's influence over society as a historical fact. Secondly, and perhaps more important, recent scholarship has also to a greater extent problematised the concept of secularisation. It is increasingly claimed that characteristic movements in Western Europe, both in the twentieth century and earlier, are actually expressions of a delocalisation, where religion is transformed into culture and politics instead of being expressed through dogmas and doctrines. Religion, and Protestantism in particular, has circulated globally and been used in nation-building, and has played a central role in colonisation and globalisation. Educational historians, such as Daniel Tröhler, have highlighted how this circulation can be understood as different languages and transformations which blend into and adapt to the environment in

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3 Rovde (2016), 130.

4 See above, p. 12.



which they are a part. Consequently, secularisation is regarded as not being an adequate research paradigm.<sup>5</sup>

This rethinking of the concept of secularisation, and the change in the understanding of how Christianity is seen as a cultural force with political significance, allow us to bring in new perspectives on sources that, to a limited degree, have been the subject of examination. Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland are good examples of the ideological heterogeneity in the post-war Labour Party, and the review of their texts shows that the process of secularisation normally regarded as characterising Norway after WWII is not as uniform as has previously been claimed. Their intellectual surroundings are central to this thesis. The so-called pragmatic turn in intellectual history, dominated by the Cambridge school and academics like Quentin Skinner, J. G. A. Pocock (b. 1924), James Tully (b. 1946), and John Dunn (b. 1940), allows a completely different emphasis on the intellectual context and the historical conditions of the discourse of a given historical era than had been seen previously. Sivertsen and Nordland, who represent a different theological understanding than that which dominates their contemporary ecclesiological landscape, integrate their liberal understanding of Christianity into their understanding of politics, culture, and education. This understanding is closely related to theological and cultural ideas that have surrounded them since their childhood. By doing so, they challenge the sharp historiographical distinction between modernisation and secularisation that in particular has characterised theologians' and church historians' understanding of post-war Norway. They contribute to making the history of Norway in the aftermath of WWII into a prominent example of how Protestant Christianity blends with culture, or, in the words of Mette Buchardt, they contribute to demonstrating how the state can be sacralised.<sup>6</sup> The analyses of Sivertsen's and Nordland's texts presented in the previous chapter are based on the intersection between text and context, and they relate to the insight that the meaning in their utterances may transcend what they are able to control themselves.

But how can Sivertsen's and Nordland's work be viewed against the overall narrative of post-war Norway? Can the development taking place in Norway be seen against a wider international background? And what was Sivertsen's and Nordland's intention in speaking and writing? In this short final part, we will look further into these questions. The first discussion will focus on the development of the welfare state and its international context, while the second discussion will address the authors' intention in doing.

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5 Mette Buchardt, „Religion and Modern Educational Aspirations,“ in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael A. Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 2027–2032.

6 Buchardt (2015).

## The Welfare State: National and International Aspects

Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland are primarily contributors to an era in Norway's history characterised by strong social growth and systematic progress. The story of the development of the welfare state in Norway is equally a story about equality and universality as it is a story about distribution of power and integration. On the one hand, the welfare state is characterised by a national welfare policy which aimed at integrating all citizens into a common society.<sup>7</sup> The post-war era was characterised by a collectivist norm of solidarity and the understanding that the individual should serve something greater, and social benefits should therefore be given as a right. The Joint Program, which united all political parties in 1945, had already called for strong unity, fair distribution, and an effective and targeted politics. The ambition reflected the unity that had been created during the war, but it also pointed forward towards a society with equal opportunities for all:

In light of the tasks of the future, we will call for the same willingness to sacrifice, the same friendship, and the same ability to preserve and stick together. The task for our industry and for all economic activity in our country is to create work for everyone and to increase the productivity, so that a fair distribution of the goods can give everyone good conditions.<sup>8</sup>

The system should be secured through taxes and fees, rather than individual insurances and purchased services that could lead to social differences. It built on the idea that everyone should contribute, and that those who had more and earned more should contribute more to the society than those who had less and earned less. Moreover, the nuclear family gained a new position and status, and there was not least a new awareness of the importance of housewives' tasks in home and society.<sup>9</sup> Even the housewife had her own rights, and concepts such as housewife holiday, home help, and the school of domestic economics became a part of the language in the post-war decades.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the welfare state was also characterised by a strong state which at the same time also emphasised the municipalities' right to self-governance,

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<sup>7</sup> Anne Lise Seip, *Veiene til velferdsstaten. Norsk sosialpolitikk 1920–1975* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> *Arbeid for alle. De politiske partienes felles program*, accessed 20 September 2023, Fellesprogrammet – Norgeshistorie.

<sup>9</sup> Gro Hagemann, „Husarbeid og medborgerskap: sosialdemokratisk husmorpolitikk i etterkrigstidens Skandinavia,“ in *Arbeiderhistorie* (2009), 169–187.

<sup>10</sup> Terje Lillebo Aavatsmark, *Husmorrollen i Norge – Arbeiderpartiets politikk 1945–1951*, Master's thesis in history, University of Oslo, (2019), 26.

as well as integrating the local into the state administration apparatus.<sup>11</sup> The public sector took care of the tasks that had previously been classified under the private sector and ensured an increased trust in the state and the municipality.

Education historian Alfred Oftedal Telhaug has underlined that post-war school policy in Norway can be seen as a reflection of the social policy in the same time period, even though previous scholarship had tended to overlook the school's role in the development of the welfare state.<sup>12</sup> Where the social policies of the welfare state were supposed to help and support society's members, education was supposed to shape and form the citizens of the welfare state. School and education were also one of the areas where the different political wings could more or less agree. In 1975, the well-read educational historian Hans Jørgen Dokka wrote the following: „In post-war school policy in our country, only a relatively few significant issues of principal and party-political controversial issues have developed.“<sup>13</sup> This applied, Dokka believed, despite the fact that there had been disagreements when it came to the school's organisation and structure, about its tasks and purposes, legal content and working methods, assessment, and so on. The general agreement on improving the school ensured that political authorities could be able to work relatively undisturbed with a school program that could include everyone, culminating in the 1969 school act. The school's further development was founded on scientific grounds, not least expressed through the establishment of the Council for the Pilot Schemes in Education (1954). In order to give the best possible opportunities for everyone, seven-year compulsory schooling was eventually changed into nine-year compulsory education.

The Norwegian post-war era, however, also provided space for a diversity of voices. Norway had a strong Evangelical-Lutheran foundation, and this orientation was incorporated in § 2 of the national constitution. This strong orientation could, however, easily become dogmatic, and Christianity's dogmatics was difficult to reconcile with a demand for intellectual freedom, as had been apparent among intellectuals in western Europe in recent decades. As a consequence, the Association for Civil Confirmation was established in Oslo in 1950, by driving forces who wanted to awaken a sense of moral and ethical values based on a non-religious foundation. The establishment followed the pattern of similar organisations in other countries, not least Denmark. The organisation soon developed further into a secular organisation that could provide alternatives to the ecclesiastical *rites de passages*, and the Norwegian Humanist Organisation was founded in 1956. Ole Hallesby and the

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<sup>11</sup> Yngve Flo, *Staten ut til folket. Desentralisering som styrings- og forvaltningspolitisk strategi. 1945–1975*, Rapport 9901 (Bergen: LOS-senteret, 1999), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Telhaug (2006), 40.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Jørgen Dokka, *Vår nye skole*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: NKS-forlaget 1975), 189.

debate that arose in the wake of the hell speech in 1953 had contributed to further polarisation, and non-believers and sceptics had been provoked by the stubbornness and lack of tolerance within certain Christian environments. The establishment of the Norwegian Humanist Association also caused much commotion among Christians and contributed to increased efforts to secure the school's Christian foundation. Another issue that had caused concern was the transfer of Oslo Lærerskole [Oslo teacher training school] from the local Inner Mission association to the state in 1946. The majority at the Storting had claimed that democracy was presupposed by the freedom of spirit, and that this prevented an institution that was supposed to train teachers from being owned by private organisations. The Labour Party representative Svein O. Øraker's (1886–1963) illustrates the attitude:

We need free, independent, and responsible people also as teachers in primary school, but we do not achieve that through untimely guardianship, which acts as spiritual terror, and which can easily lead to spiritual conformism.<sup>14</sup>

Christians and conservative voices, however, considered the transfer of Oslo Lærerskole as a symbol of the Labour Party's totalitarian and de-Christianised state. The political turmoil surrounding Oslo Lærerskole is a good example of the polarisation of the cultural and religious landscape in the years after WWII. This landscape also included Christian voices who took an initiative to establish arenas for dialogue that could contribute to mutual understanding and respect. Liberal Christians could also, at least to a certain extent, sympathise with NHA in their opposition against dogmas and normative teachings. The theological tensions which in their time had caused the establishment of the Free Faculty of Theology in Kristiania in 1908 came to the fore in the post-war period.

Soon, the demand for spiritual freedom also showed itself in the area of language, and the language dispute in the 1950s fully demonstrates the need for autonomy, as well as the refusal of individuals to allow themselves to be subordinated to certain norms. The point of departure for the language dispute was a statutory provision that allowed the local school boards the right to choose between a common language form or riksmål, and the dispute resulted in a campaign that had a major influence on language policy and cultural life for several decades to come. The campaign had, however, roots back into the nineteenth century. The demand for intellectual freedom in the area of language reflected the insistence on intellectual freedom of thought, and several cultural personalities, among them not least the writer and intellectual Arnulf Øverland, were involved in both areas.

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<sup>14</sup> Tønnessen (2000), 252.

As educational strategists and school politicians, Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland were to communicate with the entire breadth of this complex landscape, and as representatives of the post-war Labour Party, they were at the forefront of the welfare state's integration policy, which strove to give equal rights and better opportunities for all. Therefore, they also had to champion a school policy that could embrace the widest possible ideological basis. At the same time, Sivertsen and Nordland were at the forefront of a school that aimed at making its students better equipped to make their own choices, to become democratic citizens who would participate actively in the society. Against this background, „Knowledge of Christianity“, as it had traditionally been taught, could not be regarded as sufficient or appropriate. It had been based on a specific set of dogmas and had distinguished itself as intimately tied to confession and repentance, as well as to the church's baptismal education. This did not correspond with the inclusive principle that underpinned the development of the welfare state, and as driving forces for an improved compulsory education, Sivertsen and Nordland strove to give „Knowledge of Christianity“ another role than it had occupied so far. Its content should to a lesser degree appear as dogmatic, and to a greater extent as inclusive, simultaneously with its content as moral education being adapted in other school subjects. At the same time, they could allow the Labour Party to question how the statutory Bishop Eivind Berggrav's criticism of the welfare state project was legitimate. One of Berggrav's objections against the welfare state was that it had put itself in the place of God, and that the welfare state took the role as a religious superstructure.<sup>15</sup> Berggrav's view was supported by other church leaders in the post-war years, as demonstrated by Aud V. Tønnessen in her doctoral dissertation from 2000.<sup>16</sup>

Paradoxically, it is precisely Protestant theology in its distinctive Scandinavian form that gives Helge Sivertsen and Eva Nordland an ideological basis for promoting the school policy that they do. As a Grundtvigian, Sivertsen defends the idea of school as a cultural institution, in which the Grundtvigian emphasis on humanity allows a focus on the human being rather than dogmatism. In light of this, the school's social science education is just as important as education in „Knowledge of Christianity“. This openness for humanity also pointed towards a reformation of the school's statutory objective, as seen in the 1950s. Nordland could, on her part, unite reform pedagogy and liberal Christianity. She is well-versed in contemporary American pedagogy, as most people in her environment were at that time, and she is well acquainted with pedagogues such as Tunis Romein and Theodore M. Greene. Romein's and Greene's authorship and theological ideas fit well into the theological

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15 See above, p. 75.

16 Tønnessen (2000).

contexts that had surrounded Eva Nordland since her childhood and that also provides the environment in her adult life. These contexts orient themselves towards man as created and towards the responsibility that each individual has for each other. It is also interesting that one of the theologians who formed an important part of Nordland's surroundings in the 1950s later came to be an important bridge builder between the church and the Labour Party's policy. Tor Aukrust was a part of the committee investigating the relationship between church and culture initiated by the Labour Party in the first half of the 1970s, and he wrote substantial parts of the report.<sup>17</sup> This report built more or less on Aukrust's social ethics. Eva Nordland also eventually came to find an important community with university theologians such as Tor Aukrust and Johan Hygen in their joint fight against nuclear weapons.

At the intersection between liberal Christianity, social and integration policy, and reform pedagogy, a new dimension arises in the theory of Protestantism's influence on the Norwegian welfare state. So far, this dimension has been little emphasised in previous Norwegian scholarship. As pointed out in the introduction of this book, there have been a number of scholars who have drawn parallels between the development of the welfare state in the Nordic countries and the countries' Evangelical Lutheran background. Scholars have emphasised a conflict-free relationship between the state and the church, and the welfare state has been seen in light of Weberian Protestant ethics and work morale, although Nordic researchers have also emphasised the tensions between the Lutheran church and the welfare state.<sup>18</sup> In the Norwegian context, the question of how Protestantism affects concrete political processes in the post-war period is practically unexplored. Through Sivertsen's and Nordland's political and pedagogical work in the post-war decades, the Protestant dimension of the welfare state in Norway is given a political expression. They demonstrate an innovative use of their own religious heritage, which again helps explain how the Lutheran tradition can facilitate reforms and systemic changes in society.

However, this political and cultural adaption of twentieth-century Protestant tradition has several international counterparts. A very close example is Paolo Borioni's analyses of the Lutheran background of the Danish Welfare Reform in the mid-twentieth century, published in a special edition of the *Journal of State and*

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<sup>17</sup> *Arbeiderpartiet og kristendommen. Innstilling fra et utvalg nedsatt 26. november 1973 av Arbeiderpartiets sentralstyre. Tidens Tema* (Oslo: Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1974). See also NOU 1975: 30, *Stat og kirke* [White paper] (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975).

<sup>18</sup> See Aud V. Tønnesen, „The Church and the Welfare State in Postwar Norway: Political Conflicts and Conceptual Ambiguities,“ in *Journal of the Church and State* 1 (2014), 13–35, and Ingela K. Neumann, „Consensus, Conflict, or Compromise,“ in *Journal of the Church and State* 1 (2014), 60–80.

*Church* in 2014. This special edition examined Lutheranism and the Nordic welfare states.<sup>19</sup> In this article, Borioni demonstrates that Nordic – and specifically Danish – religious movements showed a particular adaptability to public social reforms in the interwar period. Borioni connects to Swedish historian Bo Stråth's use of the concept *depository*, which unfolds „how arguments from discourses and ideologies of various provenience are stored and then, in political debates, selected and combined in a rich variety depending and contingent on the context“.<sup>20</sup> Different discursive strains accessible for the public sphere – for example socialist, liberal, and Christian – intertwine with each other and are used pragmatically in political and intellectual discussions. The cultural „depositories“ will then be mobilised by concrete needs and used in light of the certain intellectual surroundings at the given time. In Borioni's article, the topic is voluntary welfare organisations in mid-twentieth-century Denmark, and he argues that the Nordic branch of Lutheranism can explain why voluntary welfare organisations in Denmark ended up adapting to the expansion of public initiatives in welfare provisions and institutions. Borioni sees this in light of a similar theological background as we have done in this book: the source of this sociopolitical elasticity, he says, is Knud E. Løgstrup, in addition to the Danish theology professor N. H. Søe (1895–1978). Løgstrup's and Søe's interpretation of the Lutheran tradition gives authoritative support for „a highly diffuse and shared notion of religious ethics“.<sup>21</sup> Based on empirical research, Borioni shows how voluntary religious organisations can use their religious background as a social and societal corrective:

The religious background and its values need not be limited to the subjective experiences mentioned above. They could also fuel critical standpoints. A voluntary religious and socially active association can in other words also use its basic values and its daily chances to observe the flaws in contemporary society and then become part of the public social debate.<sup>22</sup>

Borioni's findings are then a strong parallel to how Protestant theological traditions also can be seen as an important driving force in Helge Sivertsen's and Eva Nordland's commitment to school and education. By virtue of their own background, they are able to function as a corrective to how the school's teaching had previously

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<sup>19</sup> Borioni (2014).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. It is, however, important to notice that Søe opposes Løgstrup on several issues, for instance when it came to Luther's understanding of the relationship between law and gospel and Luther's view of temporal authority. Søe was particularly inspired by Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Karl Barth (1886–1968).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

been conducted, and they are used in an argument for improvement and change, together with other strains that originate in their cultural depository.

Another parallel worth mentioning is Mette Buchardt's article on pedagogical transformation of religion into culture in Danish state mass schooling from the 1900s to the 1930s, published in *Paedagogica Historica* in 2012.<sup>23</sup> Buchardt highlights how the introduction of the „school subjects of culture“ [da: kulturfagshelheder; kulturfagsemne] in Danish school political terminology in 1936 indicated a shift in the Danish school system and constituted an important element in reforming the Danish school system into a modernised mass schooling. Buchardt points to the fact that two Danish liberal theologians were involved in the question of education. These are Aage Bentzen, an Old Testament scholar and a defender of biblical criticism, and Edvard Lehmann, who was regarded as the founding father of liberal theology as a movement in Denmark. Bentzen was called upon as an expert by the Danish school book commission in the early 1930s. The report that resulted from the commission's work defended a new form of school knowledge, „defined and described by 'culture', and with source-critical objectivity-orientated history as one of the main strategies (...)“.<sup>24</sup> This is commonly regarded as an important step in the process towards secularisation, because it weakened the denominational foundation of the school subject Religion. However, Buchardt argues, through the work of and influence by Danish liberal theologians (here, Bentzen and Lehmann), Christianity in an objectified, historically scientific form, produced within the academic field, plays an important role in the inner work of state governing. The liberal theologians are involved in the modernisation of the mass schooling, and they transform their theological categories into new categories related to culture. In light of this, there is good reason to talk about a „sacralisation of the state“ in the way Buchardt does in this article, as well as in other of her works. Theology and theological traditions are adapted and transformed into culture.

Thus, the preceding analysis of Helge Sivertsen's and Eva Nordland's work blends into a research context which focuses on cultural continuity rather than divide, as well as refusing to take the idea of a gradual disappearance of religion in society (normally referred to as secularisation) for granted. Buchardt and Borioni both stand out as prominent examples of scholars within this research paradigm, and their works are highly relevant as a research context for the topic in this book. Others can be mentioned as well. In addition to Daniel Tröhler and the scholars highlighted in the introductory part, Daniel Lindmark and Thomas Popkewitz have demonstrated important transformations of religion in nineteenth- and twentieth-

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<sup>23</sup> Buchardt (2012).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.



century pedagogy and political culture. Lindmark has particularly focused on the Swedish eighteenth and nineteenth century, while Popkewitz has focused on American progressive education.<sup>25</sup> The findings in this book, as well as in the related scholarly works mentioned above, call for more research on the intersection of theology, culture, politics, and education.

## The Intention in Writing and Speaking

One question raised in the book's introductory chapter is still unanswered. What were Helge Sivertsen's and Eva Nordland's intentions in writing and speaking? As explained in the opening section of this book, the concept of intention should here be understood as explained by Quentin Skinner, i. e. as the interworking of a given expression (or expressions) and the expression's contextual conditions. To grasp the intention in doing, Skinner says, one must compare all the possible ways a specific concept or expression could be used within its ideological context. Doing this will reveal which speech act the author made with his or her expression. Through what Skinner calls „the manipulations of the conventions of the available ideology“, he thus admonishes the historian to see how the author related to the relevant conventions in the contexts, whether he or she, for instance, provoked, accepted, challenged, adapted to, or opposed the prevailing conditions.<sup>26</sup> Through this interplay between author, language, and context, Skinner explicates the dynamics of the language, pointing to how all speech and writing must always be seen as parts of their practical connections. Thus, according to Skinner's theories, the author is not entirely *dead*, but he or she is not in a particularly good condition either.

Following Skinner's method, Sivertsen's and Nordland's intentions in writing and speaking must be derived from studying their practical and concrete use of language, that is, how they relate to the conventions dominant in their contexts. The context here is the rise of the welfare state, with all this implies of the right to democratic participation, freedom for the individual, social security, and improved

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<sup>25</sup> See for instance Daniel Lindmark, „New Wine in Old Bottles: Luther's Table of Duties as Vehicle of Changing Civic Virtues in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Sweden,“ and Tomas S. Popkewitz, „From Virtue as Pursuit of Happiness to Pursuing the Unvirtuous: Republicanism, Cosmopolitanism, and Reform Protestantism in American Progressive Education“. Both chapters are printed in *Schooling and the Making of Citizens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Comparative Visions*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Thomas S. Popkewitz, and David F. Labaree (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), resp. 31–49, and 219–239.

<sup>26</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Vol. 1, the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), XII.

material living conditions. Post-war Norway is also characterised by a strong demand for intellectual freedom, as this becomes apparent, for example, through the establishment of the Norwegian Humanist Association and through the language dispute in the 1950s. At the same time, the intellectual landscape in Norway after the Second World War was by no means homogenous, as it was also characterised by a number of different voices, political as well as religious, who wanted to ensure the Christian foundation of the school and society, and to maintain the dogmatic and confessional character of the school's Christian education (Knowledge of Christianity). This polarised landscape increases in tension through events that gave rise to strong controversy, for example in the aftermath of Ole Hallesby's controversial radio speech in 1953.

In light of this, Sivertsen's and Nordland's illocutionary force, or what they do when speaking and writing what they speak and write, can be said to be twofold. On the one hand, they use their theological and cultural heritage to *support* parts of the contemporary and cultural landscape, while on the other hand, they *distance themselves* from those who want to keep the society as it had been. Their theological and cultural background allows them to be progressive and gives them a strong ideological foundation in the struggle to improve society. The analysis of Sivertsen's and Nordland's texts also fully demonstrates one of the great strengths of Quentin Skinner's theoretical insights and his speech act theory: it offers the historian a tool for elucidating how an individual historical actor can contribute to historical changes through his or her language or expressions. The theories only assume that those who will use them approach the task with contextual awareness and attention, and are willing to make thorough studies of the actors' backgrounds and intellectual surroundings.

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