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The Nationalization of Christianity. Theology and Nationalism in Nineteenth- Century Denmark

In 1853 the Danish court chaplain Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-1884) wrote to a close friend and colleague the following lines:

pastors from Schleswig have confided to me, that they have been so involved in politics and language questions that by now they feel hollow and long for a return to theology and strictly religious duties.¹

The quotation stems from a letter that had been written during Martensen's vacation in the duchy of Schleswig, the region of his childhood. He was born in the major city Flensburg in 1808 of a German mother and a Danish-speaking father from Schleswig. The family moved to Copenhagen, where Martensen studied theology at the university. He continued his studies in Berlin and became a

¹ H.L. Martensen, *Biskop H. Martensens breve. Breve til L. Gude 1848-1859*, Vol. 1 [B. Kornerup., ed.], (Copenhagen 1955), nr. 39, 28-7-1853, 87. [Præster have tilstaaet for mig, at de nu i lang Tid have været saaledes optagne af Politik og Sprogforhold, at de nu omsider begynde at føle sig aldeles tomme og trænge til at vende tilbage til Theologie og de reent religiøse Opgaver.] [Translations are by the author of this article]

professor of theology in Copenhagen in 1837. In 1845 he was appointed court chaplain and was to succeed his mentor, the bishop J.P. Mynster (1775-1854), in 1854. In the preceding years, Martensen had been asked to become the bishop of Schleswig, partly because of his familiarity with the region. He had declined the offer, as he feared becoming involved in the political and nationalistic struggles in this duchy.

In 1848-1850, and again in 1864, Schleswig had been the object of battles between the Danish army and the restive inhabitants of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, who received help for their revolt from the German League. In the Danish capital, Copenhagen, serious suggestions had been put forward aiming at separating the duchies and tying Schleswig closer to Denmark. For a growing number of inhabitants of the duchies though, the bonds between Schleswig and Holstein outweighed in importance their relation to the Danish kingdom. In the duchies as well as in Denmark, an explicit sense of national identity had developed amongst the higher social strata in the first half of the nineteenth century. These feelings were politicized by the citizenry from the 1830s on and succeeded in mobilizing large parts of the population. The construed 'Schleswig-Holsteinian' and Danish identities and the opposite positions they had taken by the 1840s were especially problematized in the differences between the spoken languages and highly tangible in the Duchy of Schleswig, where the Danish-German language-border was located.²

The Danish ethnologist Bjarne Stoklund pointed out in his introduction to *Kulturens nationalisering* that the relation between religion and nationalism, as problematized by Martensen, constitutes

² N.H. Bijleveld, 'Language, National Culture and the Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Denmark', in: P. Broomans, G. Jensma, H. Vandervoorde, M. van Ginderachter, eds., *The Beloved Mother-tongue. Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Small Nations: Inventories and Reflections* (Louvain 2008), 93-107.

an interesting field of research.³ In this volume as well as in other contemporary literature on nineteenth-century nationalism, this topic is addressed, at the best, only marginally. This is remarkable, since N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), one of the most prominent figures in the construction and dissemination of Danish culture, was a theologian, for many years a pastor and eventually a bishop. He was very successful in bringing Lutheranism and Danishness together.⁴

However, in those cases where academic research addresses the relation between religion and nationalism, there is a clear tendency to regard religion and nationalism as two poles. In Denmark, Ole Feldbæk, the editor-in-chief of a large project on Danish identity published in the beginning of the 1990's, discussed Danish nationalism, or proto-nationalism in the period 1720-1800.⁵ According to Feldbæk, the disestablishment of the church in modern times and a declining religiosity paved the way for national identity and nationalism. Ove Korsgaard, among others, has argued in favour of this transformation from religion to nationalism, too, and connected this movement with a supposedly declining importance of the clergy for the nation-state from the 1840's.⁶ The relation between religion and nationalism is predominantly regarded in terms of a

³ B. Stoklund, 'Kulturens nationalisering – et kapitel i Europas kulturhistorie', in: B. Stoklund, ed., *Kulturens nationalisering. Et etnologiske perspektiv på det nationale* (Copenhagen 1999), 9.

⁴ For detailed studies of Grundtvig's ideas on Christendom and Danish identity: S. Auken, *Sagas spejl. Mytologi, historie og kristendom hos N.F.S. Grundtvig* (Copenhagen 2005); F. Lundgreen-Nielsen, 'Grundtvig og Dankshed', in: O. Feldbæk, ed., *Danske Identitetshistorie* (Copenhagen 1992), Vol. III, 9-187.

⁵ O. Feldbæk, 'Borgerskabets danskhed. 1720-1800', in: F. Lundgreen-Nielsen, ed., *På sporet af dansk identitet* (Copenhagen 1992), 106-107. The project referred to resulted in: Feldbæk, ed., *Danske Identitetshistorie* (Copenhagen 1991-1992), Vols. I-IV.

⁶ O. Korsgaard, *Kampen om folket. Et dannelseperspektiv på dansk historie gennem 500 år* (Copenhagen 2004), 105-267, esp. 211-254.

succession or a replacement of religion by nationalism. This position implies that the two poles can not be united.

These opinions fit in with a long tradition which regards national identity and the nation-state as manifestations of modernity which do not mix with religion.⁷ This is due to the functioning of the secularization-thesis as a master-narrative, defining the separation of church and state, the privatization of religion and a decreasing church attendance as main criteria for modernity. Recent developments have made abundantly clear though, that religion and nationalism or politics are neither incompatible nor incommensurate. One can think of the growing importance of religion in the nation-states emerging after the demise of the USSR, or of the role religion plays in American politics. The increasing presence of religion in the third millennium, calls for a reconsideration of the relation between nationalism and Christianity in the nineteenth century too.

The discussion of the secularization-thesis gives Martensen's statement from 1853 an interesting position. It appears to advocate the view that theology and nationalism do not mix, especially not within the setting of the church. On the other hand, it is a clear reaction to the actual involvement of Danish pastors in the nationalistic upheaval of this period. Religion and nationalism do not necessarily succeed each other and one may ask how nationalism relates to theology in nineteenth century Denmark. This question will be discussed in this article by studying a number of published Danish sermons held on the annual day of national prayer [*almindelig eller store bods- og bededag*] during the two Schleswig Wars (1848-1851 and 1864).

The Danish Church and its annual day of national prayer

⁷ P. van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1750-199* (Amsterdam 1996), 78.

From the Reformation (1536/7) all inhabitants of Denmark – with only some exceptions – were obliged to confess to Lutheranism. The king headed the church and the pastors functioned as local representatives of the authorities. The complete incorporation of the church into the state which took place during the Reformation, made it possible to involve this institution in disciplining the people. Church-attendance was obligatory and the ministers were ordered to teach the fear of God and obedience to the king. As a reminiscence of these close bonds between church and state, it is still customary during a service to pray for king and country. This prayer did initially not denote a sense of Danishness, nor aimed at stimulating it. Obedience to the king was a religious duty for all subjects, whether they lived in Denmark, Norway or Schleswig-Holstein (the two latter under the rule of the Danish king until respectively 1814 and 1864).⁸

The first constitution of 1849 named the Evangelical Lutheran Church (the state church) the ‘people’s church’ [*folkekirken*] (§3). Freedom of religion (§§ 81, 84) was introduced, but the church was still governed by the state and the vast majority of the Danes remained Lutheran. From the reforms of local government, beginning round 1840, however, it became clear, that the church had lost its obvious and prominent position within state administration.⁹ But pastors still occupied central positions in cultural and political circles. Their position within the social network of the higher social strata mainly derived from a clear and well-cultivated sense of class as well as from their academic education.¹⁰

Preaching was considered to be the clergy’s most important reli-

⁸ Cf. T. Damsholt, *Fædrelandskærlighed og borgerdyd. Patriotiske diskurs og militære reformer i Danmark i sidste del af 1700-tallet* (Copenhagen 2000).

⁹ D. Tamm, ‘Staternes skæbne står i forsynets hånd’, in: T. Knudsen, e.a., eds., *Dansk forvaltningshistorie. Stat, Forvaltning og Samfund* (Copenhagen 2000), I, 358-359.

¹⁰ Bijleveld, ‘Language, National Culture and the Clergy’, 94-96.

gious duty. During the two Schleswig Wars, virtually all published sermons and probably many of the delivered ones as well, touched upon the battles, the bravery of the soldiers, and the losses and the victories in the wars over Schleswig and Holstein. Ecstatic joy could be replaced on short notice with great concern for the future of Denmark. This was also the case in the sermons from the day this article focuses on: the annual day of national prayer, on May 19, 1848 and April 22, 1864. The purpose of the day required this attention for the country. From its installation in 1686, every fourth Friday after Easter, the king's subjects were to gather in the church to repent their sins and pray to avert the threats to church and realm.

Sanctioning in prayer

On May 19, 1848 the Danish pastor H.C. Rørdam (1803-1869) preached in St. Michael's Church in Fredericia.¹¹ He called upon his churchgoers to acknowledge their sins and convert to God, completely in line with the purpose of the day. At first glance, his sermon may serve as a confirmation of Martensen's ideas, since the need for repentance and redemption are not limited to the Danish people. The minister presented salvation as a universal message. There may be a connection with the course of the war, since German forces had succeeded in taking a large part of Jutland and even occupied the pastor's benefice. Prussian forces were stationed in Fredericia and used St. Michael's Church for their services. On the day of national prayer, a Prussian army chaplain had even delivered a sermon preceding H.C. Rørdam's service. And one can expect that the Danish minister therefore refrained from topics that related to the Danish cause.

¹¹ H.C. Rørdam, 'Gud kræver Omvendelse, for at han kan forbarme sig over os. Almindelig Bededag', in: H.C. Rørdam, *Erindring om Krigstiden i Aaret 1848. Ni Prædikener* (Copenhagen 1849), 51-67.

Nevertheless, one can clearly discern a national orientation in the published sermon, which probably contributed to his reputation of having the right national sense and being fearless.¹² H.C. Rørdam concluded with a long prayer [*kirkebon*] that was in accordance with church regulations: he called upon his community to pray for king and country. But the old formulations were expanded and adapted to the contemporary situation. The year of revolution had resulted in the disestablishment of Danish absolutism in 1848 and the newly installed government was included in H.C. Rørdam's prayer. Relatively much attention was dedicated to the battle and its consequences, too. The pastor urged the church-goers to pray for the Danish soldiers in order to obtain God's care for their safety and fortune. But more was being asked for than God's blessing alone. H.C. Rørdam led the way for his community to pray to God for animating the soldiers with the right spirit:

Put, oh Lord, a sound courage in their chests, give every arm that lifts a weapon for the just cause of its country strength to fight courageously. [...] let them enter the battle and face their death frankly in the name of their savior, Jesus Christ. [...] Lord Christ, savior of souls, support the dying men; let them bow their heads and die with consolation and faith in their hearts, with a smile on their lips, as strong heroes in your name of savior, and lead the immortal soul, saved by your divine mercy, to the eternal triumphal home.¹³

¹² *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (Copenhagen 1982), Vol. XII, 535.

¹³ H.C. Rørdam, 'Almindelig Bededag', 66-67. [Læg du, Herre, et urokkeligt Mod i deres Bryst, giv hver Arm, som løfter Vaaben for sit Fædrelands retfærdige Sag, Kraft til at kæmpe mandigen. [...] lad dem træde til Kampen og freidigen see Døden under Øie i deres Frelser's Jesu Christi Navn. [...] vær du, Herre Christus [...] hos dem som blegne, i deres Dødstund; lad dem bøie deres Hoved og blegne med Trøst og Troe i Hjertet, med Smil paa Læben, som stærke Helte, i dit Frelsernavn, og før den udødelige Aand forløst ved din Guddomsnaade, til det evige Seiershjem.]

God provided the Danish soldiers with the faith and the willingness to fight, even the selflessness to sacrifice themselves for their country. Fighting for Denmark was perceived and presented in terms closely connected to Christendom itself. H.C. Rørdam spoke amongst others of the Danish battle as a good and almost holy cause that with Gods approval would lead to salvation from the world and elevation in an almost Christian version of the Viking Valhalla. There are some striking parallels to our days when the term Holy War is used to refer to the islamist's cause. The pastor implicitly even draws parallels between the sacrifice made by Christ and the sacrifice the soldiers are urged to make. The act of Danes fighting for their country was legitimized within a Christian context and supported quite martially in the church of Fredericia.

Important stimuli for the soldiers to fight for their country were their faith in God and the love for their country. H.C. Rørdam sanctioned these feelings explicitly in his prayer by calling upon God to instill a strong sense of nationalism:

Strengthen the noble, burning feelings of love for their country in all the Danes' hearts, that all may be found willing to [...] bring to the holy cause of the country that sacrifice, which is needed to defend its rights and independence.¹⁴

God-given

As many perceived God as the foundation of all human life on earth, it came naturally to understand the state and nation as fixed entities given by God. On the one hand, this idea made critique of the nation possible. For, as a great number of ministers argued,

¹⁴ H.C. Rørdam, 'Almindelig Bededag', 65. [Styrk Fædrelandskjærlighedens ædle, brændende Følelse i alle Danskes Hjerter, at Alle maae befindes villige til [...] at bringe Fædrelandets hellige Sag det Offer, som er fornødent for at værne om dets Ret og Selvstændighed.]

God had called Denmark as a country and the Danes as a people into existence. A deterioration in their situation would be the result of God's dissatisfaction with the people. Elaborating on this topic, the nation could be lectured on its faults. On the other hand, it could offer consolation, since God could ensure that the war was not to disturb the world order and the Danes and their country would survive, provided the nation abided by God's will.

This idea already made it possible to presuppose the existence of a national community. The elements that characterized this Danish nation were presented as God's creation too, as can be illustrated from a sermon by Peter Rørdam, related to H.C. Rørdam, in 1864. This pastor worked in Lyngby, some fifteen kilometers from the centre of Copenhagen. He was so popular that the Danish railways had to adjust their time-table in order for the church-goers from the capital to arrive in time for the service.¹⁵ Nevertheless, he was ill-liked by churchmen like Martensen. At the outbreak of the war in 1864, Peter Rørdam left his parish and enrolled voluntarily as an army-chaplain, despite his age of 58. Twenty-four of his field-sermons were published. All express a clear sense of Danishness – inspired by Grundtvig – which derived from God: “God's creation, order and blessing [...], which is our own Danish mentality, our own Danish language, our own Danish nature.”¹⁶

To argue explicitly in favour of the idea of a God-given geopolitics, ministers referred to the Bible too, amongst other texts to Acts 17: 26.¹⁷ Comparing several sermons, it becomes clear how many

¹⁵ *DBL*, 541-542.

¹⁶ P. Rørdam, ‘Feltprædiken, paa Store Bededag 1864, i Frederits’, in: P. Rørdam, *Fireogtyve Feltprædikener, samt een Prædiken, holdt i Taarbæk Skovkapel* (Copenhagen 1864), No. VII, 10. [Guds Skabning, Ordning og Velsignelse [...], som er vor egen danske Tankegang, vort eget danske Tungemaal, vor egen jevne danske Folkenatur.]

¹⁷ [And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation]

possibilities there were in the use of one pericope. The verse declares that God made all people from the same source, and determined the times and the geographical borders for their lives. In 1848, H.C. Rørdam referred to the New Testament text.¹⁸ The pastor not only used Acts to emphasize that the geopolitical situation in the world was fixed by God. In the nineteenth century, Danish nationalism had been influenced heavily by Romantic thinking. Herder's ideas gained much popularity in Denmark too and the term 'people' was no longer primarily understood as all the king's subjects, but as a nation which should be congruent with the state. H.C. Rørdam used Acts to argue in favour of the existence of borders that also discerned between and defined peoples of different nationalities. These national borders ('borders of the people' [*Folke-Grændser*]) were allotted by God.¹⁹ Thus, the pastor used the biblical text to advocate the modern understanding of the nation-state as the political territory where one people, or nation, lives.

In mid-nineteenth century, Danish national culture had not yet crystallized, as the sermons from this period may illustrate. One comes across texts that only understand the Danes as the people that live in the country Denmark. In this case, the people as a cultural category is defined by the political category of the state. Extra arguments for a national identification with the state would be the benefits the people had enjoyed from the soil and the sea. At the other end of the scale, one can engage in a presentation of the Danes as a national community which is united by a shared place of birth, language, history and habits, all elements which have imprinted the nation with its own national character. Whereas the above sermon by H.C. Rørdam may be close to the former position, the latter is represented by the text of the pastor from Slagelse, K.F. Viborg (1813-1885):

¹⁸ H.C. Rørdam, 'Almindelig Bededag', 64-65.

¹⁹ H.C. Rørdam, 'Almindelig Bededag', 64-65.

Who gave us our country? who designated the borders of the peoples? and who let us be born as Danes? who gave every nation its nature and characteristics? yes, God wished explicitly, that there would be different nations, each within its own borders, across the world; and therefore he gave them each their own mother tongue, because he gave them each their country.²⁰

Whereas Acts starts from the idea of the shared origin of mankind, Viborg here actually uses the pericope to stress the borders between the people on earth. Furthermore, besides determining territories and periods for nations, God is said to have given every people its own national characteristics too. Keeping the arguments in the conflict over Schleswig in mind, it comes as no surprise that the pastor attributes special significance to the mother tongue. The languages characterize nations and define states, and are therefore God-given.

Conversion and rebirth to a new and better life

Conversion in mid-nineteenth century Denmark was used in terms of a turn towards, as well as a return to, God. In the former case, one can also speak of baptism. Since virtually all in Denmark were baptized, the call for conversion made by the ministers from the Lutheran church must be understood as the call for a return to God. In accordance with the purpose of the national day of repentance, this return to God was not only explained as an individual conversion but also as a collective conversion. The war, according

²⁰ K.F. Viborg, *Folkeforsyndelsen og Folketugtelsen. Prædiken på Almindelig Bededag 1864* (Slagelse 1864), 8. [Hvo har givet os vort fædreland? hvo bestemte folkene deres grændser? og hvo lod os fødes som danske? hvo gav hvert folk sin natur og sin ejendommelighed? ja Gud vilde jo udtrykkeligt, at der skulde være forskellige folk, hvert inden sine grændser, over den ganske jordens kreds; og derfor gav han dem hvert sit modersmål, idet han gav dem hvert sit fædreland.]

to the pastors, indicated the need for national repentance, followed by a return to God.

In a small hamlet in Jutland, pastor H.W. Tetens (1802-1888) interpreted the revolt in the duchies and the German assistance as God's call for conversion.²¹ The war was a punishment of the local congregation as well as of the inhabitants of the country for their sins. The pastor clearly presupposed a link between the churchgoers and the Danish nation. As Tetens held them partly responsible for the invasion of the state, the small religious community in Jutland became part of a national moral community. The pastor, however, did not proceed beyond proclaiming this weak sense of nationhood and responsibility for the territory.

Quite explicit were the ideas presented by Viborg. In 1864, he distinguished between the need for individual and collective conversion. Focusing on the latter, he stated clearly that a sinner is punished with his own sins.²² This made the war an indication of the national sins. Viborg summarizes them as follows: "our sins, our disrespect for what is Danish was a disrespect for the most valuable and precious of all of Gods temporary gifts: our nationality, our mother tongue, our country".²³

Consequently the object of the national conversion was not solely located in Lutheran Christianity. God's purpose with the war was to let the Danes recall their Danish nature. The Danish nation was to blame for having been influenced by German culture at the expense of its nationality. The Danish government was criticized

²¹ H.W. Tetens, 'Hvad skulle vi angre, og hvorom skulle vi bede? Paa almindelig Bededag', in: H.W. Tetens, *Syv korte christelige-fædrelandske Prædikener, holdne under Krigen* (Aalborg 1848), 37-42.

²² Ecclesiasticus 11: 16, a so-called Apocryphal book that is not generally used in Lutheran contexts. Viborg wrongfully refers to vers 17. Cf. P. Rørdam, 'Feltprædiken', 11.

²³ Viborg, *Folkeforsyndelsen og Folketugtelsen*, 10. [vor forsyndelse [...] vor ringeagt for, hvad der er dansk, var en ringeagt for de kosteligste og dyrebareste af alle Guds timelige gaver, vor folkelighed, vort modersmål, vort fædreland.]

especially, as they were said to have paved the way for the German influences in Denmark, prohibiting the clergy, among others, to educate the people in an awareness of their national identity and culture.

The criticism of too weak a sense of national identity was shared by L.A. Warburg (1821-1886) in 1864.²⁴ The chaplain of Holmens Kirke, Copenhagen, is remembered as a quiet and friendly minister who did not participate in the ecclesiastical discussions of his time.²⁵ This did however not keep him from expressing his concern for the future of Denmark and relating it to the lack of faith, of a sense of Danishness and of clerical involvement in the national cause.²⁶ Besides calling upon the nation to convert to God and to Denmark, which was to become manifest by, among other things, church-attendance and clerical involvement in the national cause, Warburg – referring to John 16: 21 – also spoke of a rebirth: “Denmark, our mother, is in labour pain, because a new generation will be reborn, a new age will begin”.²⁷ This new generation would be a faithful and strong national collective.

In Denmark, Grundtvig especially had contributed to depicting the kingdom as ‘Mother Denmark’, which, from the 1840s, had gained popularity, especially through the painting ‘Danmark’ from 1850-1851 by Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann (1819-1881).²⁸

²⁴ L.A. Warburg, *En almindelig Bods- og Bededags Prædiken, fra Aaret 1864* (Copenhagen 1865).

²⁵ *Dansk Biografisk Lexicon, tillige omfattende Norge fra tidsrummet 1537-1814* (Copenhagen 1904), Vol. XVIII, 259-260.

²⁶ Warburg, *En almindelig Bods- og Bededags Prædiken*, 9-10.

²⁷ Warburg, *En almindelig Bods- og Bededags Prædiken*, 21. [Danmark, vor Moder, er i Fødselssmerter, fordi en forventt Slægt skal gjenfødes, en ny Tid bryde frem]

²⁸ I. Adriansen, *Nationale symboler i Det Danske Rige 1830-2000* (Copenhagen 2003), Vol. II, 451-452.



Ill. 'Danmark' by Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann.

Jerichau-Baumann was born of German parents in the Russian part of Poland, educated in Germany and Italy and married to a Dane. It was quite an international woman whose personification of the country became a strong Danish symbol.

People's mission

Warburg warned against the ministers who regarded Denmark as a chosen nation and therefore concluded that God would spare the people. Especially Grundtvig and the Danes inspired by his thoughts had formulated this position. Like other pastors in Denmark, they were convinced that the Danish nation had a mission. This idea was based on the teachings of the Bible, which held that it was humankind's purpose to restore itself to the image and like-

ness of God preceding the Fall of Man. In Germany, the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) had, among others, interpreted the idea of humankind's mission in a national sense and thus succeeded in uniting German nationalism with Christian universalism.²⁹

In Denmark, the pastor E.C. Tryde (1781-1860) referred explicitly to the Romantic idea in his 1848-sermon entitled *God save our country!* During the war, Tryde was a minister at the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen.³⁰ He had been influenced by Romantic ideas since their (formal) introduction into Denmark by the philosopher H. Steffens (1773-1845) in 1802.³¹ In 1848, these ideas had not lost their meaning for him. He described the Danes as a unity “animated by one soul, which speaks with one tongue, which has customs and habits, which wanted to have law and justice in common”.³² Besides these clear criteria for the nation, he stressed the importance of the soil for the Danes:

Who does not feel, that the essence of his soul is attached to this soil, that it is more than just a word, when we call our country our mother, that we in our nature, in our complete way of thinking and feeling have absorbed a lot from its nature [...] it has imprinted our being inwardly and outwardly with a mark.³³

²⁹ L.N. Henningsen, ‘Lutherske kirker mellem dansk og tysk. Omrids af Sønderjyllands kirkehistorie efter reformationen’, *Sønderjyske årbøger* 2004, 149.

³⁰ *DBL* (Copenhagen 1984), Vol. XV, 57.

³¹ Cf. N.H. Bijleveld, ‘Germans making Danes. Germans and the German Language in Copenhagen and the Construction of Danish Culture 1750-1880’, in: P. Broomans, G. Jensma, eds., *Battles and Borders. Cultural Transfer and Minor Language Areas* (Groningen [2010]).

³² E.C. Tryde, *Gud bevare Fædrelandet! Prædiken på Store Bededag* (Copenhagen 1848), 11. [belives af een Sjæl, der taler med eet Tungemaal, der have Sæder og Skikke, der ville have Lov og Ret tilfælleds]

³³ Tryde, *Gud bevare Fædrelandet!*, 8-9. [Hvo føle ikke, at han ogsaa med sin Sjæls Væsen sætter Rod i denne Jordbund, at det er mere, end blot et Ord, naar vi

Despite the semantic irony in calling the father land a mother, this quotation expresses Tryde's clear understanding of, and love for, his country and countrymen. It made him adapt a classical hymn. The original presumably stems from the bishop H.A. Brorson (1694-1764). Whereas the latter had painted a picture of the earth in its original state before creation of man, Tryde turned it into an appraisal of Denmark. The song lost its universal character and became a national hymn:

[Brorson's original:]

The air in which we walk,
The soil on which we step,
The wall of sea and brook,
The star decorated cover,
Was filled with good and pleasure
For Adams country.³⁴

[Trydes nationalization:]

The soil on which we step,
The air, in which we walk,
The garland of sea and brook,
The flower decorated cover,
The country for peace and pleasure
The Danes' country.³⁵

kalde Fædrelandet vor Moder[,] at vi i vor Natur, i vor hele Maade at tænke og føle paa have optaget meget af dets Natur [...] det har paatrykket vort Væsen baade udvortes og indvortes et Præg]

³⁴ H.A. Brorson, *Samlede Skrifter* (Copenhagen 1951), I, Nr. 78, 220. [Den luft hvori vi gaae, / Den jord vi trine paa, / Den muur af hav og bække, / Det stjerne-pyntet dekke, / Blev fyldt med got og glæde / Til Adams herre-sæde.]

³⁵ Tryde, *Gud bevare Fædrelandet!*, 8. [Den Jord vi trine paa, / Den luft, hvori vi gaae, / Den Krands af Hav og Bække, / Det blomsterprydet Dakke, / Det land for Fred og Glæde / De Danskes Herresæde.]

Tryde was convinced of the benefits Denmark's salvation would bestow upon all nations. He explained that God had given every individual a meaning to his life and every nation its own purpose. This national mission is the nation's contribution to mankind. The pastor did not elaborate on the purpose God had with the Danes. The ability "to give something that will elevate the nation in grateful memory amongst the people on earth" nevertheless required that the nation be truly Danish.³⁶

The moderate H.C. Rørdam and the nationalistic Viborg preached, too, of the nation acting as God's servant or tool.³⁷ A Danish nation would contribute to the spiritual and temporal development of the human race. In this case, Christendom's universal message remained intact, but the achievement of its ultimate goal depended on strong feelings of nationhood.

Understanding Martensen's remark

In the nineteenth century, preaching was regarded as one of the main duties of the clergy. In times of war, the pulpit was used as a platform for offering the religious communities an explanation for the war and consolation in the distress. Within the setting of the church, a number of pastors criticized the nation. Warburg condemned the Danish people for their absent sense of nationhood, while Peter Rørdam and Viborg spoke of cleaning Danish culture and character from German pollution. Many pastors hoped to strengthen the nation by pointing out the national sins from the pulpit. In this process, Warburg criticized some of his colleagues for their lacking involvement in the national cause, and Viborg

³⁶ Tryde, *Gud bevare Fædrelandet!*, 15-16. [at det [det danske Folk] har Noget at give, som vil hævde det en taknemmelig Hukommelse blandt Jordens Slægter.]

³⁷ H.C. Rørdam, 'Almindelig Bededag', 64-65; Viborg, *Folkeførsyndelsen og Folketugtelsen*, 9-10.

condemned the state for obstructing the clergy in their duties for the nation.

Moderate voices from the pulpit could be heard, too. In a sermon from 1864, the bishop G.P. Brammer (1801-1884) described a situation where a wounded German soldier was put beside a wounded Danish soldier.³⁸ They both owned a Bible, and through the use of the German and Danish texts they learned to speak with each other. Of course, this situation functioned as a metaphor for illustrating how one comes to mutual understanding through the Gospel. But it may also point to the fact that some members of the clergy opposed the nationalistic upheaval within the conglomerate state. Martensen shared this position. On the annual day of prayer in 1848, he stressed that even though Man can not explain why there is a war going on, one must remain faithful.³⁹ Here, Martensen took a classical solution to the theodicy problem: a complete faith in God which is connected with eschatological expectations. What counts is heaven, earth is a place which one passes through. Martensen's position of stressing faith and salvation gave less weight to nationalistic sentiments within the conglomerate state and advocated a mutual understanding and the co-existence of all people.

As a protagonist of the conglomerate state and with a conservative theological position, the pastor opposed the participation of the clergy in the Danish cause and rejected the possibility of uniting theology and nationalism. Thus, Martensen's statement as quoted in the introduction to this article should not be regarded as a factual description of the incapacity of pastors to incorporate a sense of national identity into their theology. On the contrary, it objected to what the study of sermons from this period clearly indicates,

³⁸ G.P. Brammer, *Christi Fred. Pintse-prædiken i Aarhuus Domkirke* (Copenhagen 1864), 21-22.

³⁹ H. Martensen, 'Du leder mig ved dit Raad!', in: H. Martensen, *Prædikener af dr. H. Martensen* (Copenhagen 1849), Vol. II, 195-211.

namely, that many pastors did not find it impossible to be actively involved in disseminating a strong sense of Danishness.

It is important to note that Christendom and nationalism can be united. Despite the fact that Christianity in general is regarded to be universalistic in its message of salvation and love of one's neighbour, several theological concepts made it possible for the pastors to take positions that excluded other *ethnie* and supported the nationalistic sentiments. In this article, the different applied rhetoric, Christian notions and concepts have been separated for the sake of methodology. In the sermons however, they would more often be used simultaneously to disseminate a national gospel. Many of the published sermons from the two Schleswig Wars have in common a strong religious-national self-image. For some of the pastors Grundtvig may very well have been an inspiration, while others – like in other European countries – gained their insights independently. These images were an integrated part of the pastors' theologies, since ideas about Danish culture and identity and concepts like the nation and the *patria* had been integrated successfully into Lutheran theology. Many of those versions could be labeled as national in one or more respects, even to such an extent that Nationalism became a condition for Christendom. Thus, the preaching as well as the subsequent publication of the sermons may be labeled, not necessarily as a reaction against trends of secularization,⁴⁰ but as actions for the Christian-national cause. Therefore, the relation between religion and nationalism should not only be understood in terms of a succession. In mid-nineteenth century we witnessed the incorporation of nationalism into theology, a process which perhaps should be labeled as the nationalization of religion.

Panorama from the pulpit

⁴⁰ Cf. M. Bregnsbo, 'Præster under pres – Den danske statskirkegejstlighedens reaktioner på udfordringen fra Oplysningen i 1790'erne', *Den Jyske Historiker* 105 (2004), 94-108.

That the act of preaching cannot be detached from the clergy being involved in the national cause becomes clear from the considerations which led to publishing the sermons. Judging from the pastors' statements in the introductions to their published sermons, most often some of the church-goers requested the publication for reasons of edification. But other pastors had other aims, as the sale of a sermon could give profit and contributed to the fame of the preacher.⁴¹ In times of war, many of the published sermons were sold and the revenues would be intended for such goals as aiding the wounded from the war or the mobilized soldiers. Besides the material contributions, the texts were also regarded as patriotic documents that explicitly aimed at documenting, strengthening and improving the understanding of the awakened sense of nationhood. Some even criticized pastors and other fellow countrymen of a lacking involvement in the Danish cause. The pastors themselves regarded their work from the pulpit and the subsequent publication of the sermon often as contributions to Danishness.

An interesting question would be to what extent the pastors succeeded in educating the nation. We have some indications that the preaching had impact on the church-goers. At least, the Danish fairy-tale writer and author H.C. Andersen (1805-1875) attended a service on the annual day of national prayer in 1848 and wrote afterwards in his diary that in the church of Svindinge "the young *Riis* preached [...] he touched upon the war and the enemy in Jutland, a soldier especially cried".⁴² In general, in the nineteenth century published sermons had a substantial part of the book market

⁴¹ M. Bregnsbo, *Samfundsorden og statsmagt set fra prædikestolen. Danske præsters deltagelse i den offentlige opinionsdannelse vedrørende samfundsordenen og statsmagten 1750-1848, belyst ved trykte prædikener* (Copenhagen 1997), 45-46.

⁴² H.C. Andersen, *H.C. Andersens Dagbøger*, III 1845-1850; Helga Vang Lauridsen, Tue Gad, eds., (Copenhagen 1995 (1974)), 282. For another example, K. Larsen, *Under vor sidste Krig. Samtidige Dagbogsoptegnelser og Breve fra Mænd og Kvinder af alle Stænder* (Copenhagen 1897), 79.

and were a popular product: several sermons were even reprinted. When we relate the sermons to other media in this period, we get a strong indication of the importance of the role of pastors in the construction and dissemination of the national. National opinions reached the population through newspapers, songs, poems, paintings as well as through sermons. As the pastors, with the authority they had in the nineteenth century, preached the national gospel from the pulpit, the feelings of nationhood were repeated and – importantly – sanctioned and strengthened.

The study of religion and of sermons in particular in relation to nineteenth-century nationalism has too long been neglected. This article does not only show the clerical involvement in the national cause. It also draws our attention to some other interesting themes in the study of nationalism. One finds in these sermons the classical elements constituting national identity and culture such as language, people, history and territory.⁴³ The pastors however, could differ profoundly in their national definitions and, in the search for such sermons appear to be a good source for studying the formation of national culture. Furthermore, as the pastors worked all over the country they could play an important role in the dissemination of national culture.⁴⁴ As recent research on the Netherlands makes clear, the Danish pastors and their national involvement were no exception.⁴⁵ This calls for a study of religion, politics and nationalism that transcends national borders and even the nineteenth century.⁴⁶

⁴³ Cf. J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* (Amsterdam 2008); O. Löfgren, 'The Nationalization of Culture', *Ethnologia Europaea* 10 (1989), 5-24.

⁴⁴ Bijleveld, 'Language, National Culture and the Clergy'.

⁴⁵ N.H. Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland. De plaats van de hervormde predikant binnen de nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Delft 2007).

⁴⁶ I thank Arie L. Molendijk and Alan Swanson for their comments on an earlier version of this essay.