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Author(s): Mangeloja, Esa

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On the Legacy of Lutheranism in Finland

Societal Perspectives

Edited by

Kaius Sinnemäki, Anneli Portman, Jouni Tilli and
Robert H. Nelson



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Religious Revival Movements and the Development of the Twentieth-century Welfare-state in Finland

Abstract

The Lutheran state church had a monopoly status in Finland for centuries. But its dominance slowly weakened as pietistic revival movements spread in Finland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These movements had religious purposes, but they were also forerunners of profound social and economic changes in Finland in the twentieth century. In challenging the role of the state church, they challenged national unity, spread Western cultural values, emphasized individual rights, and improved the status of women in society. Men of political eminence, such as Anders Chydenius, introduced these influences on Finnish economic life. Overall, the revival movements helped to pave the way for the modern Finnish welfare state. During that process, the church lost some of its most important social responsibilities – health care, education and social work – as these tasks were assumed by the secular Finnish state.

Introduction

As previous studies have shown, religion is a significant factor in explaining the development of the Scandinavian welfare system.¹ In this chapter I argue that the effects of religious developments should be included as explanatory variables in accounts of the historical rise of the welfare state in Finland as well. My focus is the influence of pietistic revival movements.

Pietist revival movements are an important part of Finnish religious history. Ecstatic movements were born in the 1770s in various parts of Finland and were initially independent of one another. During that time the Christian religion held an unrivalled influence on the beliefs of Finnish citizens, thanks to the determined efforts of the dominant Lutheran state church.²

1 See, e.g., Manow (2002) and Anderson (2009).

2 Ruokanen (2002: 37, 253).

The most noteworthy revival movements were those that remained within the Lutheran state church. They began mainly as protest movements, and the followers were somewhat spurned by the officials of the church. These followers belonged formally to the church but were also, to a greater or lesser extent, involved in their own separate groups.

The diversity of Finnish revival movements reflects the fact that they have often been most successful individually in particular geographical areas. Some of the important revival movements in Finnish history are the Awakening Movement (or just the Awakening; *herännäisyys* in Finnish), Besecherism (*rukoilevaisuus* in Finnish), the Laestadian Movement (*lestadiolaisuus* in Finnish) and the Lutheran Evangelical Movement (*evankelisuus* in Finnish). All these movements have their own traditions, hymns, and religious rhetoric. The latest large revival movement is the Fifth Revival (*viides herätysliike* in Finnish), which has also remained inside the Lutheran church.

The political state of affairs in Finland in the nineteenth century was somewhat different than that of the other Nordic countries, as its separation from the Kingdom of Sweden in 1809 raised the need to strengthen Finnish nationalism. In nineteenth-century Finland the Lutheran church functioned as a safeguard against Russian hegemony. As a result, religious revival movements played an important national unifying role. For political, sociological, and cultural reasons, Finland proved to be fertile soil for new revivals.³

Finnish revival movements were thus important cultural and political forces because they spread Western cultural influences, strengthened the work ethic, and emphasized individualism and civil rights. The emphasis of Lutheranism on the importance of daily work and a 'priesthood of all believers' corresponds to values central to the Finnish welfare state: full employment and equality.⁴

History of pietism

In Germany, important dissident voices against the theological mainstream appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century, most notably in the pietist movement led by Philipp Jacob Spener (1635–1705), who was the leader of the congregation in Frankfurt. Pietists accused the Lutheran church of having lapsed into its own version of Scholasticism, its theology repeating similar themes with increasing logical sophistication but showing little real new life. Spener argued that the Lutheran orthodox ecclesiastical establishment had become so absorbed in the defence of doctrinal correctness that it was neglecting the pastoral needs of ordinary Christians. The religious life of the Lutheran parish had become desiccated and stale.⁵

3 Kakkuri (2014: 111).

4 Anderson (2009: 213).

5 Clark (2007: 124).

After Spener, August Herman Francke (1663–1727) founded the famous Francke Foundations. The establishment of this foundation signalled that pietism was not only demanding personal faith, but was a practically oriented movement, emphasizing education, missionary work, and social care.

In Finland, an early forerunner for pietism and a main figure in challenging later Lutheran orthodoxy was Johann Arndt (1555–1621). His books *The Garden of Paradise* (first Finnish translation published 1732, with three other additional editions published during the eighteenth century in Finland) and *True Christianity* (published in 1832 in Finnish) were important guides for Finnish revivals. Pietism proper came ashore in Finland relatively rapidly. One of the first importers of pietism was Johannes Gezelius the younger (1647–1718), who later became the Bishop of Turku. He lived in Frankfurt am Main during the years when pietism was gaining force. There Gezelius became acquainted with Spener and other pietists, with whom he also corresponded after he left Germany.

However, in the eighteenth century, religion was far from being a private matter; it was also an essential political factor. If one struggled against the Lutheran state church, one was fighting against the very identity of the nation and society.⁶ This meant severe punishments for some of the more influential pietists. For instance, the most influential early pietist in Finland, Laurentius Ulstadius, caused a riot in Turku during a Mass in 1688 and was sentenced to death in 1692, with the sentence later changed to life in prison. He died in 1732 after spending 44 years in prison. Another early pietist in Finland, Petter Schäfer (1663–1729), first escaped to Germany and later to North America because of his religious convictions. After his long travels, he finally returned to Turku and in 1709 was sentenced to death and imprisoned for his lifetime.⁷ Schäfer was detained in the castle of Turku and during his last years in Gävle, Sweden, where he died in 1729. Yet another of the early pietists in Finland was Isaacus Laurbecchius (1677–1719), who was a learned son of the bishop of Viipuri. He got a Doctor's degree at the University of Altdorf at the age of only 23. His contacts with Schäfer caused him serious problems, and he subsequently lost his degree, priesthood, and academic position.⁸ Thus, when analysing the importance of the Lutheran church in Finland, not only the theological dimensions are important, but the political as well.

The period when Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia (1809–1917) was a difficult one for Finnish identity. Under Russian rule, Finland struggled to maintain its Scandinavian culture and autonomy. Several important institutions were 'Russianized' during this time, such as the Senate and the University of Helsinki, among many others.

Nevertheless, one central Finnish authority and institution which was never Russianized was the Lutheran church. It retained its position as a symbol of Western culture. Finland did not change its state religion to Russian Orthodoxy, and the Lutheran church remained as a cultural – and

6 Kakkuri (2014: 74).

7 Schäfer (2000).

8 Schäfer (2000).

a political – symbol of Finland’s desire to maintain its Scandinavian and Western culture. This high societal status of the church explains why the Russians never really challenged the monopoly status of the Lutheran church in Finland during the Grand Duchy but even promoted it.⁹ The Lutheran church in Finland is more than a religious institution; it is a strong national and political force, supporting Finnish culture and its Scandinavian roots.

In addition to such developments within Lutheranism, another, partially related, impetus for societal change was the Enlightenment. It brought new optimism about the human condition and the prospects for social and economic progress. With the astonishing discoveries of Isaac Newton and others who applied the scientific method, it also appeared that the corruption of human nature had done less damage to human rational capacities than had been supposed. Such events also contributed to the need for a wider rethinking of Lutheranism, also among theologians, as calls for a ‘second Reformation’ began in the Nordic countries in the late eighteenth century.

The Enlightenment-era clergy believed that when the common folk became more affluent, they would have more opportunities to read and learn Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, at the same time the content of such doctrine also changed. The Enlightenment philosophy supported ‘natural theology’ and relegated several longstanding fundamental doctrines to a secondary status. Yet this new natural theology had little to offer the common folk, who were more concerned with the individual salvation of their souls.¹⁰

Through the actions of individual priests, pietistic influences affected public policy-making. One of the most influential was Anders Chydenius (1729–1803). He was a Finnish priest, a member of the Swedish Riksdag, and is known as the leading early classical liberal of Nordic history. He advocated openness and good governance. Ideologically, Chydenius followed a pietist theology and worked hard to advocate anti-monopolistic laws and supported strong protections of private ownership in society.¹¹ The writings and sermons of Chydenius reflect the influence of emerging pietism in that they emphasize individual religious responsibilities not only in the continuous struggle for righteousness and eternal life, but also for economic success, a strong work ethic, and social responsibility. Chydenius supported diligence, honesty, and modesty. He wrote harshly about luxury consumption and a lifestyle of extravagance.¹² In his writings, Chydenius closely follows the economic arguments of Martin Luther and later pietists.

Revival movements in Finland

As with most major changes in Finnish society, the pietistic revival movements also started small. The first movement to emerge in Finland was Besecherism. It began when a young herder girl and maidservant, Liisa

9 See, e.g., Portman (2017).

10 Kakkuri (2014: 33).

11 Virrankoski (1986: 383–387).

12 Chydenius (1782: 298–323).

Eerikintytär, from the rural hamlet of Santtio (situated in the village of Kalanti), was 'born again' in 1756. While herding cattle, she read a book by an English Puritan cleric, Arthur Dent, from 1624. Its title was *The Opening of Heaven's Gates* and it created a terrifying fear in Liisa concerning the status of her soul and her possible everlasting fate in hell if she did not enter into full-hearted repentance. Liisa's mystical experience soon had an impact beyond the hamlet of Santtio, spreading like wildfire to towns throughout Southwest Finland, Satakunta and Ostrobothnia. Hundreds of people, especially women, experienced ecstatic visions and screamed as the flames of hell seemed to be appearing before them. Others had ecstatic seizures and visions of good and bad angels and prophecies of a coming heavenly judgment. The local Lutheran priests were astonished and did not know how to deal with the situation.

Only two years after Liisa's first ecstatic vision, vicar Laihiander of the Eura parish (in Satakunta) became aware of hundreds of people who had become active members of this new movement. It was not always well regarded by the state church, although some Lutheran priests supported it, especially vicar Abraham Achrenius (1706–1769), who is usually named as the later leader of the movement. Vicar Immanuel Brunlöf in the nearby town of Uusikylä was not as enthusiastic, sending subordinates Johan Tenlenius and Carl Wallenström to threaten believers with long imprisonment. Strangely, all information about Liisa has disappeared beyond the two to three years after her ecstatic experiences. Some rumours even suggest that the priests might have murdered her, but no evidence of Liisa's later life can be found.

It is important to note that this movement, as well as most of the later revival movements, originated among the common folk. They were the religious expressions of ordinary people, who were taking their religious needs into their own hands, without expecting any help from the established Lutheran state church. Therefore, it is not surprising that these movements were regarded suspiciously, to say at least, by the established religious institution, the monopolistic Lutheran state church. These revival movements challenged the clergy of the Lutheran church, which wielded both religious and political power.

Besecherism, or Prayerism, was not the only revival movement in Finland heavily influenced by pietism. Another important movement, the Awakening, began as an ecstatic movement in 1796 in the fields of Telppäsniitty where people were collecting hay. Several working people fell to the ground, attributing this to the power of the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in tongues and see spiritual visions. The main leaders of the movement were layman Paavo Ruotsalainen and Lutheran pastor Nils Gustav Malmberg, followed later by his son, pastor Wilhelmi Malmivaara. The Lutheran Evangelical Movement was born in 1843, when Lutheran pastor Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg left the Awakening movement. This revival movement emphasized the original theology and writings of Martin Luther, gaining the largest number of followers in Western Finland.

One of the most important early revival leaders in Finland was Paavo Ruotsalainen (1777–1852). His form of religion was strictly individualistic and had strong pietist roots. As Ruokanen notes, 'Paavo encouraged all his

followers to think, read the Bible and also understand it by themselves. In this was the core of the freedom of thinking and religion.¹³ According to Ruotsalainen, a Finnish peasant was alone, facing his God by himself. He did not need any church, religious institution, or priests between God and himself.

A BIBLE FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE

In all these revival movements, the individual reading of the Bible was important. This was made possible by the increasing use of a Finnish-language Bible including the New Testament, which started to find its way into the hands of common people in Finland during the early nineteenth century. This was assisted by the founding of the Finnish Bible Society (FiBS), whose roots trace back to the Evangelical missionary movement in England of the eighteenth century. The core goal of this English missionary movement was the distribution of affordable Bibles throughout the world. The FiBS was founded in 1812 and started printing small and less expensive Bibles. It established local societies around Finland and printed thousands of affordable Bibles. This work was essential for the emerging revival movements in Finland.

The establishment of the Finnish Bible Society was related to three other contemporary developments in Finland. First, FiBS was controlled not only by religious bodies but also by the political elite. One of its aims was to spread the values and thinking of the ruling class among the common people. Increasing access to Finnish-language Bibles was seen as enhancing literacy skill, diligence and perhaps some positive personal traits (such as integrity and a work ethic) among the people. The Russian emperor Alexander I was the official protector of the FiBS from its inception, which was meant to increase the level of trust between Russian officials and the Finnish people. Another factor was an emerging evangelical Christianity and the revival movements. They benefited greatly from increased access to affordable and small-size Bibles. Third, the FiBS was also the first Christian organization in Finland which was open to all people, regardless of social class. The organization was also effective in its work. According to market research done by the British Bible society, in 1834 about 40 percent of Finnish households in Western Finland already had a Bible. Nevertheless, there were large differences in the country, as in Eastern Finland only 20 percent of households had a Bible that year.¹⁴

Yet it should be noted that not all people among the elite of society supported the FiBS and its aims. Some feared that the organization would put the Bible in the hands of people who lacked the necessary intellectual capacity to interpret it properly. For example, a professor of Greek and Oriental languages from the Academy of Åbo, Johan Bonsdorff, did not join the FiBS. Nevertheless, Bishop Jacob Tengström so vigorously supported the FiBS that no significant opposition emerged.¹⁵

13 Ruokanen (2002: 94).

14 Kakkuri (2015: 121–122, 149).

15 Björkstrand (2012: 307).

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Women had an important role in the early revival movements, paving the way for the equality of women in the twentieth century. In addition to Liisa Eerikintytär, mentioned above, Anna Jaakontytär lived in the same town as Liisa and was accused of being a religious separatist in 1759. She had failed to take Communion and attend Mass for seven years, which was seen as a worrisome accusation. Yet Anna Jaakontytär explained that she was receiving Communion directly from Christ and was in no need of spiritual counselling from the official parish. In that time, such thinking and behaviour was considered treason against the state.¹⁶

Even though the active lifetime of Liisa Eerikintytär was short, she attracted several important followers in the later revival movements. In the city of Pori, on Finland's West coast, three influential women emerged. Two of those, Anna Lagerblad and Juliana Söderborg, were mystic prophets who saw heavenly visions and preached to large crowds. They were investigated, but they were not separatists and were not harshly treated by the Lutheran authorities. Juliana was an active parishioner and was commonly called by priests as one of the 'angels of Lord Sabaoth.'

A third important woman in the Pori area was Anna Rogel, who died young in 1784 at the age of 31. For ten years, however, she was perhaps the best-known female spiritual figure in Finland. She became very ill in 1770 and lay unconscious for seven months. But suddenly, on Christmas Day 1770, she began to preach. She was very weak, not able to eat for several weeks, but could nevertheless preach, sing, pray, and prophesize for hours, lying half-conscious in her bed. Large crowds gathered to hear her words. She kept on preaching for 14 years, until her death in 1784.¹⁷ Again, the official Lutheran church did not react favourably to the new movement. Anna found her leading antagonist in the person of the Lutheran vicar of Merikarvia, Andreas Eneberg. Nevertheless, the movement had a strong and long-lasting effect over a large area of Finland and several laywomen followers emerged during the later years.

Later, the Free Church movement also had its important women leaders. One such figure was Jessie Penn-Lewis (1861–1927), a Welsh evangelical speaker and author of a number of Christian evangelical works. She visited Finland in 1888 and offered a Bible course in Joensuu.¹⁸ She was later a part of the Wales revival in 1904–1905, one of the largest Christian revivals ever to break out.

These revival movements, often dominated by strong female presences, advanced the political movement for increasing the political participation of women in Finland. It should be remembered that Finland was the first European country to introduce universal women's suffrage in 1906 and elected the world's first female members of parliament in the 1907 parliamentary elections. These Finnish women set an example that also helped pave the way for the greater political and cultural role of women elsewhere in Europe.

16 Sulkunen (1999).

17 Sarlin (1961: 5).

18 Nyman (2014: 118).

There was also at least one unfortunate sect, controlled by two spinster women with socialist backgrounds, Alma Kartano and Tilda Reunanen (both from Huittinen), who used their authority in criminal ways.¹⁹ Nevertheless, this sect was an isolated case in the long history of women in religious movements, enabling women's eventual political emergence as equal political and economic participants in Finland's social and economic life.

THE FREE CHURCH CHALLENGE

The religious movements discussed up to this point mostly came from within the Lutheran state church. However, other religious revivals led to the development of new religious organizations outside the state church, thus challenging the dominance of the Lutheran church establishment. The Free Churches disputed the privileged role of the Lutheran church of Finland, as did the labour movement, which was often antireligious.²⁰ In Finland most revivalists remained officially inside the Lutheran state church but some 'free churches' were also established outside the state church, although they did not gain a legally authorized outside status until the second half of the nineteenth century, thus delaying their full emergence.

By the late nineteenth century missionaries from non-Lutheran religions in other countries were coming to Finland, where they enjoyed a growing influence. It should be noted that many of these later revivalists spread among the upper social classes in Finland, unlike the earlier revivalists, who came from the common Finnish-speaking folk. For instance, the Swedish Missionary organization sent Constantin Boije to Helsinki in 1879, who shortly thereafter invited English revivalists to assist him in his efforts, including Lord Radstock.²¹ The real name of Lord Radstock, member of the House of Lords of Great Britain, was Granville Augustus William Waldegrave (1835–1913). His father was a vice admiral and lord, and his honorary title was later inherited by his son. His mother was a daughter of the head of the Bank of England. The English revival movement had thus spread especially among the upper classes and academics and through them to the upper classes in other countries, such as Finland. For instance, Edward Björkenheim, a wealthy landlord, became an enthusiastic Free Church preacher as the revival gained momentum in Finland during the 1880s.

The birth of the Free Church in Finland illustrates the importance of foreign influences on religious developments in Finland. Juho Lehto, the pastor of the Free Church congregation in Helsinki, writes in his Free Church history that 'all Christianity in Finland has been brought from foreign countries: Germany, Sweden, Great Britain and the US. Domestically there is nothing but old Finnish paganism and superstition.'²² Pastor Lehto also

19 Appelsin (2010).

20 Anderson (2009: 218). However, these antireligious views may have reflected the sentiments of the labour movement's leadership more than those of their followers (see Kannisto 2016).

21 Westin (1975).

22 Nyman (2014: 114).

illustrates the cold attitudes of the Lutheran church towards its competitors during the nineteenth century by writing: 'In its haughty piousness, the Lutheran church walked past the rotting victim of the robbery, lying by the road to Jericho. The religious life was uncivilized and slept its sleep of insouciance.'²³

Although most foreign revivalist preachers spoke only English or Swedish at first, a Finnish-speaking Free Church had been established by 1885. After Finland's independence in 1917 and the Freedom of Religion Act in 1923, the Free Churches in Finland would split into Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking congregations, gathered together into the Swedish-speaking *Fria Missionsförbundet* and into the Finnish speaking *Suomen Vapaakirkko* (Evangelical Free Church of Finland). While these organizations have remained small in number, their influence as a forerunner and strengthener of pietistic theology and individualistic life norms in Finland has been significant. They have always also had extensive poor relief and nursing operations.

Other Protestant churches came to Finland as well. The Baptists were first in establishing new Finnish churches. They began their revival meetings first in Åland in 1856 and the first Baptist congregation was established in Luvia, close to Pori, in 1871. The first Methodist congregation was established in Vaasa in 1881 (Swedish) and the first Finnish-speaking Methodist congregation in Pori in 1887. The Pentecostal movement came to Finland in the 1910s after visits by the Methodist preacher Thomas Ball Barratt from Norway.

The leaders of the Free Churches usually came from the agricultural as well as urban upper classes, but the ordinary members were often industrial workers. The Dissenters' Act of 1889 had allowed for non-Lutheran Protestant denominations, and the constitution of 1919 guaranteed religious freedom, which was subsequently defined more precisely in the Freedom of Religion Act in 1922.²⁴ The establishment of the Free Churches thus challenged the privileged role of the Lutheran state church.

Nevertheless, the numbers of members in Free Churches and other non-Lutheran Protestant congregations remained low. Their influence in the Finnish religious culture, however, is much larger than what is reflected in membership numbers. These revivals, which led to the building of new Free Churches, spread among the common people, so they did not remain for long as movements of the upper social classes alone.

Such movements have brought new cultural influences and ideas from outside Finland, as these revivals have often been connected to the emerging revivals in the UK and in the US. Because of these connections, the Finnish religious landscape is more Western, diverse and adaptive than would have been the case under the continuing near-complete monopoly of the Lutheran state church. As already noted, the Lutheran church was not especially welcoming to such emerging religious competitors, but it ultimately had to make concessions as legislation gradually allowed for religious freedom.

23 Lehto (1945: 23). Translation by the author.

24 Markkola (2011: 105–106).

Economics of the revival movements

Pietistic Christianity has had a profound influence on the Finnish way of life and mindset. For instance, Finnish people separate faith and everyday life exactly according to pietistic teaching. As pietistic sermons have emphasized, religion is a private matter.

One reason for this strong influence may be that the religious views of Finnish pietism were not so radically different from those of orthodox Lutheranism. It was more important that pietism challenged the established national power structures, that is, the state and the church. The kingdom of Sweden, to which Finland belonged until 1809, based its existence significantly on religious unity: Lutheranism was the binding force of the state because it held the whole Swedish nation together. Every threat to this unity had to be resisted. Pietistic revival movements may seem to be lesser actors, but they were seen as a challenge to Swedish (and later Finnish) national unity. This is why radical pietists were commonly persecuted and sent to jail, largely based on the Conventicle Act passed by the Swedish king Fredrik I in 1726. It remained in force until 1870 and its intent was to restrict the pietistic revival movements in Finland. Using the Conventicle Act, authorities punished pietistic movements and figures, such as Abraham Achrenius at Nousiainen in 1761.²⁵

In orthodox Lutheranism the prevailing teachings emphasized the central importance of God's Word and the sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist). Pietists questioned the central importance of the national state church and saw the Holy Spirit as an essential sign of a true congregation. Pietism was also a threat to the privileged position of the clergy. In pietism, the laymen were expected to preach the Gospel. Pietist laymen broke the unity of the church and thus threatened the unity of the nation. Additionally, one of the reasons for seeing pietism as a threat to national unity was its Prussian origins. The pietist Francke Foundations were very popular in Prussia and thus pietism was sometimes seen in Nordic countries as advancing a foreign influence.²⁶

In the Nordic countries, ethnic and religious differences were smaller than in most other parts of Europe. Religion in the German-speaking world showed the danger of differences, whereas in the homogeneous Nordic countries religion demonstrated and underscored that the people were united. The Nordic countries were peasant societies with a weak urban culture. It should be noted that one main bonding force in the Nordic nation-states of the nineteenth century was the 'Bildungsbauertum,' the broad layer of society consisting of a free and educated peasantry. Because of this societal structure, Finland and Norway, two examples of young nations born after the turmoil of the French Revolution, were united in a way that was completely different to the spirit of the French Revolution. In these two countries there was no strong old officialdom to be cast aside. The elite were subordinate to the 'national interest' and thus did not resist

25 Kakkuri (2014: 61, 220).

26 Kakkuri (2014: 44).

state initiatives but emerged instead as parts of a new type of corporate regime based on a division of labour between state, municipality, church, and voluntary agencies, reflecting the ideal of a common set of norms. Even the new revivalist movements of the nineteenth century became important and trustworthy 'nation-builders,' accepting the objectives of the nation to such an extent that they never left the Lutheran state church.²⁷

Lutheranism was thus needed as part of the national identity. The Finnish people have strong traditional values anchored in a traditional free peasant society. One could rely on 'positivist' thinking according to which parliamentarians had the legitimate right to decide what was right and wrong (instead of putting faith in such metaphysical concepts as natural law), because one could count on the legislators being steered by fair and just values.²⁸

If Finland had remained Catholic, the church and state would not have been one national body, and the country would instead have been modernized according to a conviction that society does have at least two different epistemic and moral authorities. Work, paying taxes, and taking responsibility for the defence of the country were powerful forces bringing the whole population into one and the same societal body. In Finland there is a stronger belief in the existence of fair and above-board solutions, anchored in the strong historical experience of one-norm consensus based on a single common religion.²⁹

THE THREAT OF RUSSIFICATION

During the nineteenth century in Russia, a number of anarchist movements emerged that took aim against the state. Russian authorities were afraid that Finnish pietists would similarly support such revolutionary designs. Since that did not happen, czars accepted some religious departures from orthodox dogma as long as they were not directed against the state.

Large European revival movements were born in the industrial centres of England, where Free Churches deviated from the Anglican state church. They demanded social equality and schooling for the emerging labour class. Free Churches paved the road for the Labour Party, while the Anglican Church supported conservatives and the British Empire. In Finland, the pietist movements were pre-political forces. They gave peasants self-esteem and literature to consume.³⁰

Wilhelmi Malmivaara wrote in 1906 that the suggested separation of church and state would bring a great danger for Finland because it would increase the risk of Russification. The Lutheran church and Lutheran citizens were the best supporters of the Finnish nation by functioning as a bulwark against Russification.³¹

27 Stenius (2015).

28 Strang (2010).

29 Rainio-Niemi (2014); Stenius (2005).

30 Ruokanen (2002: 39–40).

31 Huhta (1999: 25).

Pietistic leaders stressed their loyalty to the czar and other secular authorities. Revivals were not politically revolutionary. On the contrary, from the viewpoint of the Lutheran church, the most important task was to maintain free Lutheran worship and religious practice under the orthodox czar. The diet of Porvoo 1809 did dispel some concerns when the Lutheran church and priests retained their position and privileges.³²

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC POLICY

The privileged status of the Lutheran church meant that its social and religious position was protected, forming a virtual monopoly, as the vast majority of the population remained tax-paying members. As a result, the Lutheran state church faced little pressure to adjust its teachings to new social and economic circumstances. The church thus retained a conservative set of teachings that had little appeal to the working classes. It also did not intend that political actors would actually listen to its teachings, so alternative sources of social policy thinking emerged. Therefore, this state church status left a vacuum that could be filled by other actors, such as religiously motivated lay people and secular political forces.³³

The Lutheran church was gradually losing its central role in the social and economic management of Finland. First, liberalism emphasized individualism and second, revival movements criticized the church on theological grounds.³⁴ Moreover, with the church law of 1869 and the liberally oriented statute of 1879, responsibility for social assistance slowly shifted from Lutheran congregations to municipalities.³⁵ Finally, this development led to a political environment where the contemporary welfare state model can be seen as representing a transformation from the original Lutheran ideal of society.³⁶ Additionally, it should be remembered that the Lutheran church in Finland did not oppose state involvement in social welfare. In this sense it can be said that Lutheranism shaped the development of the Finnish welfare state because, as an organized state religion, it welcomed state involvement in social welfare and even viewed the state as an essential partner in the development of the poor relief system.

Later on, rural parishes and municipalities were separated in Finland and the local responsibility for the poor became a municipal issue. At the same time, the church lost its local administrative function as an organizer of poor relief.³⁷ These developments were welcomed by both the revivalists and the Lutheran clergy. The revivalist movements had expressed a fear that the church would become an administrative institution solely existing to uphold morality and social order.³⁸ The clergy, on the other hand, was happy to be relieved from the obligations of poor relief.

32 Ruokanen (2002: 122, 227–228).

33 Anderson (2009: 233).

34 Heininen & Heikkilä (2010: 188); Karisto, Takala & Haapola (2009: 233–237).

35 Heininen & Heikkilä (2010: 181); Malkavaara (2000: 22).

36 Salonen, Niemelä & Kääriäinen (2001: 12–13).

37 Angell & Pessi (2010).

38 Markkola (2011).

Three main social movements and power blocks can be identified over the course of the nineteenth century in Finland. The Lutheran church was, at first, a monopoly ruling institution, which also had major secular tasks, especially in matters of local governance. Later, the emerging labour movement was turning towards ideas of class revolution and gaining followers among the lower social classes. It became somewhat negative in its attitudes towards religion and saw priests and the church as its enemy in the class struggle. Finally, a third faction was the revival movements, both inside and outside the Lutheran state church, which supported their own religious views and began to see the labour movement as opponents, because it had become somewhat atheistic in its thinking.

THE SOCIALIST BELIEVERS OF REKIKOSKI

Finnish sociologist Risto Alapuro has used Huittinen, an agricultural town in the Western Finland agricultural heartland of Satakunta, as a micro-cultural dataset.³⁹ It was precisely in Huittinen, where the tensions between opposite social classes erupted into violent clashes in 1917. The stage for this historical event was interesting, since the labour movement at that time was not well organized and there were few prior signs of possible violence. That was the first clash between the owners of capital and labour in Finland. Industrialization was slowly developing and the labour movement's self-consciousness was low at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, there were already in the nineteenth century several active ideologically motivated organizations in Huittinen, including the temperance movement, the fire brigade, the retail co-operatives, and most of all, the religious revival movements.

Alapuro provides a more detailed micro-evaluation of one small locality in Huittinen, named Rekikoski, which offers a revealing example of what these social and religious tensions finally yielded. In Rekikoski, most citizens were active members in the Lutheran Evangelical Movement (*evankelisuus*). Alapuro writes that the aggressive agitators in the labour movement had to 'fight against the believers in Rekikoski.' In Rekikoski, the evangelical revival movement was active even after it had somewhat subsided in the central parts of the region of Huittinen. As would be expected, the born-again believers and members of the revival movement in Rekikoski held an opposing worldview compared to atheist socialists.

Nevertheless, it is strange that the majority (80 percent) of the people in Rekikoski voted for the labour movement, with voting participation high. It would have seemed more likely that the believers in Rekikoski would have voted for candidates supporting Christian values or would have otherwise abstained from voting altogether. But the Christian believers in Rekikoski did neither; they 'voted for openly godless candidates in great numbers.' Parikka even suggests that the religious folk in Rekikoski 'had their very own interpretation of Christianity.'⁴⁰

39 Alapuro (2001).

40 Parikka (1997).

In spite of all their major differences in values, religion and ideology, the Christian believers and socialists found each other in agreement in one key respect: Negative attitudes against the 'rulers' and 'higher social classes.' Both ends of the political spectrum saw themselves as opposing the ruling Lutheran governance of 'rich and proud' office-holding priests and the monopoly church. The socialists saw the Lutheran church as an oppressive instrument of reaction and the tool of the capitalist owning class, as 'the opium of the people.' The revivalist believers saw the state church as a bureaucratic group of nominal Christians and the extinguishers of the true Spirit, perhaps even persecutors to some extent. Therefore, the political voting behaviour of the believers and the socialists was surprisingly similar. 'Votes were given rather against the candidates of the ruling classes than for the labour movement.'⁴¹ The hard work, individualism, and entrepreneurship of Christian revivalism were perhaps quite compatible with the Finnish understanding of democratic socialism of the time.

If so, the example of the small town of Rekikoski illuminates the complex but fertile soil where the revival movements were operating. Remarkably, pietistic revivalists joined forces with atheist socialists. Revival movements were brought to Scandinavia with the winds of Calvinist individualism and supported a larger role for women in society and helped to undermine the monopoly of the Lutheran state church. Social democrats in Finland built the Scandinavian version of 'the socialist paradise on earth' and perhaps owe a debt of gratitude to the pietistic revival movements for aiding their success. It is paradoxical that the lower social classes of Finnish society found each other, by uniting against the common enemy, as warriors fighting the authority of the Lutheran state church.

Conclusion

The monopoly of the Lutheran state church was challenged from two opposing directions. Both extremes, religious revival movements and socialist class warriors, found their enemy in the Lutheran state church. The religious revivalists became economically significant as they empowered the common people to take their economic destiny into their own hands.

Revival movements and several Free Churches partly paved the way for the emergence of the labour movement and secular social care services by challenging the leading role of the Lutheran state church. Therefore, the temporal authorities slowly assumed more responsibility for social care, education and health. Revival movements emphasized individualism, civil rights, and freedom of speech and channelled Western cultural influences to the Nordic countries, thereby easing the transition of Finnish society towards Western capitalism. Many pietists would likely be embarrassed to find out that their eagerness and fervour for Christian revival opened the doors not to the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth, but to modern Finland, where the church's role in society is minimized.

41 Alapuro (2001: 125).

Early pietistic preachers such as Anders Chydenius emphasized the themes of a work ethic, economic success, and social responsibility. Religious revivals supported economically beneficial moral traits such as diligence, honesty, and modesty. Due to the religious revivals the literacy rate rose in Finland, as common people obtained their own Bibles and studied them closely. Pietism strengthened the work ethic, rule of law, and the rights of private ownership. Revival movements also gave women new leadership roles in society and enabled them to achieve a growing status in economic life.

Nevertheless, the Lutheran state church remained a national institution. For political reasons, including the need for a bulwark against Russian rule during the Grand Duchy, few people desired to see it completely removed from its position. The Lutheran church needed to remain an essential national institution, connecting Finland strongly to Scandinavian and Western culture and its heritage, where it has always wanted to be found. This development challenged the state church, emphasized individual rights and took from the church some of its most important responsibilities such as health care, education, and social work, and gave these tasks to the secular state. It should also be emphasized that women's role in all these developments was significant. The women's religious movement later assumed a secular form with the development of the temperance movement and the suffrage movement.

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