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THE LUTHERAN NATIONAL COMMUNITY IN 18TH CENTURY SWEDEN AND 21ST CENTURY FINLAND

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In early modern Europe, the contemporary concepts of "nation" and "fatherland," as used in official state propaganda, were still frequently constructed with language that we would easily categorize as "religious". National churches retained their status as formulators and educators of the official values and identity of each state for much of the 18th century as well. Their pulpits provided one of the most powerful media of the era, and thus the views expressed in them were truly of great significance. In their formulations of the values of the political community, the clergy reflected and were often more capable of responding to the changing conceptions of the political elites than has been previously understood.

The rise of modern, more secular nationalism in the 19th century did not lead to the disappearance of the role of churches as cherishers of the identities of political communities. In some Western countries, the role of public or civil religion as the core of the official values of the state, and more particularly its institutional national identity,[1] is considerable even today. By focusing on the use of the concepts of nation[2] and fatherland in 18th-century normative texts and early 21st-century debates on the key values of a nation, this article demonstrates how well some religion-based interpretations of a political community are able to be preserved over centuries within a homogeneous political culture and how difficult it can be to redefine them even within a far more secularized and increasingly pluralistic society. While the first part of the article is based on a long-term semantic

analysis of the concepts of "nation" and "fatherland" in 18th-century sources, the second part constitutes a rhetorical analysis of how individual politicians used related arguments and more "fashionable" political concepts to describe the uniting values of a nation in the context of an early 21st-century political conflict related to the same tradition of defining the political community. This long-term comparative analysis – though based on sources created in dramatically different circumstances – helps us to understand prevalent conceptions of political community both in 18th-century Sweden and 21st-century Finland. The findings of the analysis also suggest a surprising degree of continuity between the two.

In the 18th century, religion could still be used very effectively to express and construct uniform understandings of a national community. This was particularly true of the Kingdom of Sweden (which then included present-day Finland), which was an unusually uniform realm in religious terms. Every proper Swedish subject was also a pious Lutheran; it was impossible to be one without being the other. It will be argued in this article that some 18th-century Swedish Lutheran constructions of political community were so influential that their impact can still be felt in countries that inherited such self-conceptions, most especially in Finland. It will be suggested that the Finnish state has retained some Lutheran features more effectively than modern Sweden itself. Due to the intimate relationship between Swedish and Finnish political terminologies and political cultures, the willingness to cherish much of the Swedish inheritance during Russian rule in the 19th century and the new republic in the 20th century, as well as the support of Hegelian philosophy and the traumatic war experiences of the 20th century, the Finnish state has conserved some Lutheran features of defining political community. It will be shown that conceptions of the identical character of the religious and political communities, the tendency to define the limits of religious liberty in a rather intolerant manner and to exclude outsiders, as well as the ideas of the head of state as a religious leader and Lutheranism as an efficient educator of ideal citizens have survived in the Finnish concept of political community and still play a role in argumentative strategies employed by some Finnish politicians today.

The first part of this article is based on some major findings of a comparative study of the uses of the concepts of "nation" and "fatherland" by the clergy of the public churches of England, the Netherlands and Sweden in the period of 1685-1772. On the whole, the period witnessed a considerable secularization in its political discourse and

major turns toward alternative, non-religious ways of using the concept of nation, particularly in England. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) had revitalized old Protestant rhetoric, but, by the 1760s, the English, and to a lesser extent also the Dutch and Swedish clergy, had begun to describe the community in new ways. The purpose of the study has been to explain when, how, why, and to what extent religion-derived Protestant constructions of national identity began to lose credibility and new languages of politics supplement and substitute such traditional Christian constructions. The analysis reconstructed interpretations of the character of political community on the basis of approximately 500 state (or parliamentary) sermons preached by eminent clergymen to monarchs or representative bodies such as the two Houses of Parliament in Britain, provincial estates in the Netherlands, and the four estates of the *Riksdag* in Sweden on national days of celebration. These occasions provided the highest forum for defining the religious and political values of each state. Importantly, the speakers acted under strict religious and political control: Orders to preach came from political rulers, who formed the audience, and the same political rulers decided whether the sermon was published or not. Interestingly, in the 1740s and 50s, no spatial distinction between the opening service and the secular opening of the Swedish *Riksdag* was made, and thus the two tended to become intermixed in a manner that was unfamiliar in England or Holland. This kind of confusion of politics and religion was not considered a problem in Sweden; the secular and ecclesiastical dimensions of the powers that be were simply present at the same time and in the same place. On such occasions, the religious dimension of the Swedish 18th-century political culture appears as particularly striking.[3]

On the basis of *Riksdag* sermons given in Sweden during the Age of Liberty, or the estate rule from 1718 to 1772, it is possible to put forward several theses on the essential content of the concepts of fatherland and nation in 18th-century Sweden as propagated by the state church. After reviewing some of these basic characteristics of 18th-century Swedish Lutheran constructions of national identity, we shall have a look at related, tradition- and religion-based concepts of nation upheld by present-day Finnish politicians in parliamentary debates. We shall also focus on the rhetorical attempts by some of those politicians to redefine the nation in increasingly secular terms.

Identical religious and political communities

In 18th-century Sweden, as seen through state sermons, the redefinition of the identity of the political community was a slow process, in part because of the strong status of the Lutheran clergy in a society which was unusually uniform in terms of confession. Conceptual changes in Swedish state sermons were rather modest when compared with their English equivalents, which suggests that there was no willingness or need to reconsider language use in as fundamental a way as in England. Yet there is no doubt that the set of values adhered to by the secular elite was changing and that the leaders of the Swedish Lutheran clergy also participated in the redefinition of the identity of the political community in the 18th century. Some clergymen also attempted to actively influence the development of political values and the language of politics. There were several factors in Swedish Lutheran state sermons, however, which supported the continuity of the basic ideal of identical religious and political communities.

In early modern societies, the concept of Israel provided the most familiar inspiration for the construction of national consciousness and was also the concept that was best suited to sermon literature. This concept, which carried a multitude of political meanings, was used with different degrees of seriousness and success in different national contexts. It was sometimes used to refer to local confessional communities, but could also stand for the national community or even the international community of Protestants.

In Sweden, the concept of Israel was able to be used in a more inclusive manner than in England or the Netherlands and could hence constitute a more realistic basis for the maintenance of the ideal of a unified politico-religious community with an identity. While theocratic connotations of the Israelite metaphors declined as a consequence of the transition from absolutism to the rule of the estates, the role of the concept of Israel as a definer not only of the religious but also the political community retained its status and even strengthened. The religious and political communities were frequently identified in the prayers of the *Riksdag* and the events of the royal family. The confessional uses of the concept of Israel and those referring to Israel as a model political community were combined in Sweden to an extent that did not occur in England or the Netherlands, which allowed for the use of the concepts of fatherland and Israel as nearly synonymous expressions. In 1756, for instance, Olof Osander combined the politi-

cal and religious communities in explicit terms when he talked about "the citizens and inhabitants of our Swedish Zion".[4]

A rather fictional construction of the Israelite model of political community was frequently used to describe the political reality of contemporary Sweden. The union of the religious and political communities was strengthened even further by the use of the inclusive vocabulary of the "children of Swea," which was founded on biblical Israelite precedents and could provide the basis for a positive conception of political community. No parallel expression describing the national community as children of both God and fatherland can be found from English or Dutch sources. In Sweden, in contrast, the combination of familial metaphors of the politico-religious community with Israelite metaphors was quite common. Only the most enlightened of the Swedish preachers of the 1760s could draw a slight distinction between the concepts of "the children of God" and "the children of Sweden," thus separating the true church and the members of the political community.[5] Ideas of a special divine favour towards Swedish Israel as distinguishing it from other communities were common, but references to a special covenant between God and the Swedes in addition to the practice of baptism only occurred on special occasions. By the 1760s, the existence of such a covenant was already openly questioned. Yet not even the reforms of the 1760s changed the content of the concept of Swedish Israel in any fundamental way. The political parties could debate the state of Swedish Israel in religious terms from the pulpit, referring to the politico-religious community as an indivisible entity,[6] and the Gustavian monarchical propaganda campaign of the early 1770s brought with it the reintroduction of some of the theocratic, monarchical and covenant-derived uses of the concept of Swedish Israel. Carl Magnus Wrangel, for instance, described Gustavus as "the deliverer of his people and realm from ruin and destruction," which the sins of the people – their disunity, division and party-strife – had nearly caused. According to Wrangel, Gustavus had been "chosen to perform the greatest action of mercy which a mild God can reveal to a sinful people". Gustavus appeared as no less than "our guardian angel through which [God] will soon make us a happy people".[7] Such was the genre of biblical rhetoric during the time of a coup that had met with hardly any opposition. Israelite metaphors would retain their relevance for much longer in Sweden and Finland than in England or the Netherlands.

The connection of the state church to the fatherland was also much stronger in Sweden than in England or the Netherlands. Evangelical

-Lutheranism and the institutional identity of the state remained intimately connected, the Swedes often being described as essentially "Lutheran" or "Evangelical" in a national rather than international sense. The supranational terminology of "Protestantism" was rejected in Sweden, which thus distanced itself from other Protestant churches, as it was assumed that the Swedish form of Christianity (or even Lutheranism) was the best (and even only) form. In Sweden, a nationalized concept of Christianity, which embraced all members of the political community as well, could be used to construct the conception of a unique politico-religious community even without the application of the Latin-derived language of nation. The concepts of "Swedish" and "Christian" were intimately linked to each other, as were national and religious identities. One of the clearest illustrations of the official Christian identity of the Swedish realm dates from 1748, as Sven Baelter spoke on the occasion of a happy event in the lives of the royal family and defined the major institutions of the realm through the concept of Christianity. These institutions included "the Christian congregation of the Swedish realm," "the Christian government of the Swedish realm," "the Christian economic order of the Swedish realm" and, finally, "the Christian royal house of the Swedish realm".[8] It was through the Christianity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church that such key institutions of the state could be defined.

Political and spiritual identities also became intertwined in parliamentary sermons, which often adopted a more confessional approach than in England or the Netherlands and sometimes employed patriotic language derived directly from the New Testament. On the 26th of April, 1769, for instance, the Bishop of Skara, Andreas Forssenius, chose to speak about the duty of a Christian citizen to promote the love of fatherland at the opening service of the Diet. He presented a number of reasons for loving the one's fatherland, beginning with the Israel of the Old Testament and ending up with fashionable Enlightenment arguments according to which it was *natural* to love one's country. However, the most important albeit somewhat unusual argument for loving Sweden originated from the New Testament. Forssenius asked the monarch, the councillors and the members of the estates of Sweden: "Do we not have evidence to show that our Saviour Jesus loved his fatherland? Should not then his example be a rule for us to be followed? Yes, certainly it should." In Forssenius' sermon, it was Jesus who appeared as a model patriot. Patriotism thus appeared as a *religious* duty which concerned every inhabitant of the realm of Sweden.[9]

A collective fear of God on the part of the members of the political community could also be defined as true patriotism, which made the teachings of the Lutheran Church and the ideology of the state appear as nearly identical. Abraham Petterson called for patriotism on the basis of New Testament teachings, maintaining that patriotism and the fear of God were inseparable and truly religious duties:[10]

> Apostle Peter . . . sets the fear of God in the middle, like a heart, and on both sides of the fear of God he sets the love of fatherland and obedience to the powers that be. One cannot exist without the other. --- The fear of God, the love of fatherland and obedience to the powers that be, in civil government, should unite our hearts, so that in the future we will gain a right reward and eternal bliss.

A dutiful Swede loved his or her country and obeyed its rulers as much as he or she feared God. Only by demonstrating all the virtues of a dutiful Swede could he or she expect to receive eternal life in another world.

The exclusion of outsiders and strict limits of religious liberty

The Swedish Lutheran conception of foreign Protestants differed fundamentally from the English and Dutch conceptions. Regardless of the extent of Gustavus Adolphus' fame as a defender of the Protestant cause, international Protestantism no longer played a noteworthy role in 18th-century Swedish state sermons. This absence of references to foreign Protestantism was mainly the result of Lutheran suspicions toward Calvinist and non-orthodox Lutheran forms of theology. On any and all occasions upon which the so-called "true religion" was defended, it was the Evangelical-Lutheran doctrine of the domestic church that was implied and no sympathy toward foreign nations or religious communities – whether they be Lutheran or Protestant in a more general sense – was usually expressed. The Swedish clergy constructed a conception of the Swedish "fatherland," or "Swedish Christendom," as a unique and isolated community from which all non-Lutheran Swedes/Finns were excluded. Within that community, the 17th-century traditions obliged the members to maintain strong solidarity toward each other as brethren, while all "foreign" deviations from the Swedish Lutheran norm were rejected, particularly if they advocated individualistic rather than collective religiosity or seemed to allow religious diversity. Sweden, as a favoured commu-

nity that was based on the ideal of religious unity, provided a religious model for foreign Protestants to follow.

This pattern of conceptualizing Protestantism differs radically from the Dutch understanding of the people as a part of a Europe-wide Protestant community. In England, too, some sympathy toward foreign Protestants was expressed every now and then, although the expression of such sentiments did not significantly weaken the belief in the unique character of the English nation. In contrast, the Swedish understanding of the borders of the religious community as strictly defined and as correspondent with the borders of the Swedish realm and the habit of excluding foreigners would seem to have provided the best possibility for the construction of a strong and unified conception of the politico-religious community.

According to many Swedish 18th-century preachers, the maintenance of complete religious uniformity and consequent unity – Sweden's distinguishing characteristic when compared with Calvinist countries in particular – was the best way of guaranteeing the happy future of the country. In 1752, these ideals were expressed in the form of Sven Baelter's description of the future blessings of the Swedish politico-religious order to the Royal Court:[11]

> Unity and harmony are also such an agreeable and useful virtue, . . . A virtue, my listeners, which makes a country a Lord's paradise. Then everyone sits in tranquillity under his vine and fig tree; then people consult each other with success to the good of the entire civil society; then foreign powers look upon us with respect; then we win a paradise on earth.

Unity and harmony appeared to be the means of advancing the interests of the fatherland, even to the extent that the achievement of an earthly paradise could be possible. Another point of interest is that the cautious belief in progress was derived from the traditionalist Lutheran doctrine and the emphasis on the good of the whole of society (*Samhället*), which only became a fashionable concept in much later times. In the 18th century, unity was clearly a major pillar of the official ideology of the Swedish state. Much more was heard about the essentiality of unity in Swedish state sermons than in the Anglican or Dutch Reformed sermons.

We might add that, at the same time, the Swedish clergy was less eager to discuss liberty than their colleagues in other Protestant states with a free constitution. Most preachers, if they even discussed free-

dom at all, defined the prevalent religious and political order as freedom. In the "Age of Liberty," the "Swedish liberty" of the state sermons remained strictly Lutheran in nature, meaning that it made no concessions to dissenters of the kind that the nobility and burghers might have been prepared to give. Religious and political freedom were closely linked, the Vasas appearing as the God-given liberators of the fatherland from spiritual and political tyranny, and Lutheran liberty being described as liberty under law and order. While religious liberty was strictly defined, a few attempts to redefine political liberty did take place. By mid-century, the concept of liberty was already used to suggest that at least the most well-to-do Swedish subjects enjoyed political rights. At the very end of the Age of Liberty, the Swedes were defined as a "free people," but the concept of "true liberty" was still assigned a content that supported the goal of restoring monarchical power.

The head of state as a religious leader and Lutheranism as the educator of ideal citizens

The Swedish monarch continued to be seen as the defender of the right faith in the Age of Liberty, although little was said about him as being a champion of an international Protestant cause in the 17th-century fashion. Not even the beginning of the Age of Liberty with its transformation of political power from the monarch to the estates could radically alter the role of the monarchy as both a model and an object of the love of one's fatherland. In fact, the religion of the Swedish monarch would seem to have been a matter of state and symbol of his love of country to an even higher extent than that of the Protestant princes of England or the Netherlands. By mid-century, the advance of a more individualistic understanding of religion tended to render the religious devotion of the prince an increasingly private matter in many countries, although it did not remove the role of religion from constructions of monarch-centred identity. In Sweden, the coup of Gustavus III in 1772 even entailed a revival of the concept of the Evangelical prince, which had not completely lost its significance at any stage over the course of the Age of Liberty. No clear privatization of the faith of the ruler occurred. The image of a pious monarch was most blatantly used in Gustavian propaganda independently of the monarch's personal lack of interest in religion.

Some Swedish preachers also argued that Lutheranism produced the best kind of subjects or citizens, as it considered patriotism to be a religious duty. In 1762, Gabriel Rosén combined the teachings of ancient authors on the duty of the love of country and an enlightened emphasis on reason with the Lutheran tradition, arguing that together they created an ideal citizen. The list of the positive qualities of such an ideal Lutheran citizen reveals a number of ideal characteristics of a Nordic citizen, both at that time and in later ages. Rosén made his listeners make the following promise to their fatherland:[12]

> We promise . . . to conform to one religion, which, when practised, and when it may descend in the heart of its confessor out of an enlightened reason, prepares the most useful, healthy and amiable citizen which a state can ever possess . . . upright, moderate, helpful, loyal, honest, sincere, loving, charitable, gentle, peaceable, conciliatory, non-partisan, unselfish, unanimous, hard-working, in brief, to an entire collection of such virtuous qualities that the welfare of the state may increase in the same proportion as the number of such citizens grows . . .

It was, once again, on the true Lutheranism of its citizens that the welfare of the Swedish state would depend. In an ideal Lutheran society, citizens would be upright, moderate, helpful, loyal, honest, sincere, loving, charitable, gentle, peaceable, conciliatory, non-partisan, unselfish, unanimous and – last but not least – hard-working.[13] In Rosén's sermon, increasingly secularized Lutheranism metamorphosized into patriotism and then developed further to become the Nordic form of nationalism. The combination of Lutheranism, classical patriotism and a degree of Enlightenment philosophy led to thought constructions that might be characterized as an early Lutheran version of the Nordic model, in which the hard-working citizens placed the harmony and welfare of the community above their own private interests and were prepared to make any number of compromises and to support charity in order to attain an ideal society. It may not be a mere coincidence that in present-day self-conceptions of the Swedes and Finns, the most positive qualities with which people associate themselves often include attributes such as honesty, conciliation and diligence.

The 18th-century Swedish Lutheran understanding of the institutional identity of the state was characterized by traditionalism. Not even the constitutional changes of the period altered this understanding in any radical way. It is possible, of course that the clergy contin-

ued to use old forms of language independently from the language use of the other estates. A certain "church party" undoubtedly did exist. At the same time, the gradual secularization of values among secular estates still had a modest influence on the construction of the institutional identity of the political community. It is likely that even the values of the other elite groups were, in spite of 18th-century modernization developments, still rather traditional. A relatively wide consensus on basic values, including the identity of the politico-religious community, existed in 18th-century Sweden, and this consensus was supported by the clergy through their sermons, which recycled conventional arguments.

In the eastern half of the former realm, at least, some of this tradition still lives on to this day. Finnish has been the language of the Lutheran Church in Finland ever since the 16th century. All major teachings of the Swedish Lutheran Church, including its political teachings, were translated into Finnish by Lutheran clergymen. In the relatively unified realm of Sweden, the Finnish-speaking subjects hence adopted much of the same social and political values as their Swedish-speaking fellow subjects. The Swedish language continued to play a dominant role in Finland in the 19th century, and the basic political concepts continued to carry closely related connotations in the two languages. In the case of Finland, Russian rule in the 19th century may actually have functioned as a factor that contributed to the conservation of the early modern Lutheran conceptions of the political community. The Czar wished to retain the established order and to pacify the conquered country, even to the extent that he began to give prayer-day declarations in the name of the powers that be in a manner reminiscent of the Swedish period. The Finnish political elite in turn saw the Swedish constitution of 1772 and the Lutheran Church as the best guarantee against a potential Russian innovation.

Once Finland gained independence in 1917, was declared a republic and experienced a bloody civil war, the new elite of "White Finland" thought it necessary to construct the institutional identity of the new state upon inherited values. It adopted a form of republican constitution which kept many traditions of the Swedish period alive, including a monarch-like president and a Lutheran state church with an active role as an educator of the members of the political community in increasingly nationalistic terms. Recent research suggests that the White elite consciously employed the doctrine and ceremonies of the church in order to strengthen their nationalistic project of "home, religion and fatherland". Following the Hegelian tradition

of thought, the White elite also cherished the notion of one national mind, which was not unlike the older Lutheran ideal of unity.[14]

The military conflicts of the 20th century – particularly the experiences of the Winter War with an atheistic enemy attempting to destroy all that was holy to a small Israel-like Protestant nation – still reinforced the status of the Lutheran Church as a major definer of "Finnishness". Though Finnish society had experienced major social, political and intellectual changes during the early 20th century, the Lutheran Church continued to play a major role as the unifier of a divided nation and constructor of national identity during the Winter War. Political leaders also favoured religious references as a means to the same end.[15]

No decisive break from the Lutheran tradition occurred during the first half of the 20th century. The church has retained its hold in schools, the army and all major national celebrations since that time, particularly those marking the commemoration of the past crises of the nation. Its status as the cherisher of national identity was not even really challenged by the radical leftists of the 1960s and 1970s, many of whom are now in power and conform to the same tradition of civil religion. Membership in the Lutheran community is still widely considered a part of proper citizenship, although it is no longer an imperative part.

Lutheran national identity in the prayer-day declaration debates of the Finnish Parliament in 2003

On the 20th of November 2003, the Finnish government decided to put a bill before Parliament – after a division in which ten ministers from the Finnish Centre Party and the Swedish People's Party and one Social Democrat seconded the motion and four Social Democrats opposed it – according to which the President of the Republic would annually sign a prayer-day declaration addressed to the nation. The law would keep alive an old tradition which had been carried out in the realm since 1612. For the first 200 years, beginning with Gustavus Adolphus, the declaration ordering subjects to pray for matters considered to be of importance to the nation as a whole had been given in the name of the Swedish monarch. In the 18th century, prayer-day declarations had been sent annually to the provinces and published among the statutes of the state. During Russian rule in the 19th century it had been the Orthodox Czar of Russia who had signed these

deeply Lutheran documents calling for obedience to the powers that be. After Finland gained independence in 1917, the tradition continued to be followed first by the government and then the President.

In the year 2000, however, a new constitution was adopted in Finland, which reduced the powers of the President within the political system. According to the new constitution, the President should only have duties which are based on law. The problem that ensued was that prayer-day declarations had been given on the basis of custom as opposed to law. In 2003, a new law on religious freedom also made the prayer-day tradition appear as questionable in the eyes of the Committee for Constitutional Law. Consequently, the majority of the Centre-led government considered it necessary to enact a law on prayer-day declarations in order to preserve the tradition.

The introduction of such a bill was problematic from the point of view of the principle of the freedom of religion as stipulated in the new constitution. The texts of the declarations had become slightly more ecumenical since the 1980s, as Christian minority churches had been called to join the committee preparing them. The declarations were, however, still very much religious documents propagated most actively by the Evangelical-Lutheran Church to which 84% of Finns belong. Interestingly – and perhaps paradoxically – the declaration presented in 2003 urged the Finns to pray for an increasing degree of multiculturalism and toleration[16] in a society which continues today to be exceptionally uniform in ethnic, cultural and even confessional terms.

At first it seemed likely that Parliament would enact the law without seeing any particular problem in the involvement of the head of state – as a symbolical religious leader – in advising citizens on how to pray. The Committee for Constitutional Law had previously called for the enactment of such a law if the tradition was to be continued, and discussions on a private bill had suggested that a law would probably be passed if a bill was presented. In the preliminary debate on the bill in Parliament, only enthusiastic supporters participated in the discussion while the opponents remained absent or silent.

Once the bill faced the main debate in Parliament, however, it gave rise to an unusually intense controversy over the interpretation of the constitutional role of the President, traditional values, the relationship between church and state, freedom of religion, and toleration. Though not explicitly stated, the debate also concerned the institutional national identity of the Finnish state.[17] The debate deserves special attention as an example of the potential long-term impact of

religious constructions of national identity. It illustrates that institutional Lutheran national identity still has a strong hold in Finland, particularly when compared with other countries with a Protestant public church, such as Britain, the Netherlands or Sweden. In these countries, politico-religious rituals used to construct the identity of a confessional state have mainly been removed. In the Netherlands, the first steps toward the separation of the public church and state were taken during the French Revolution, and the present hour of devotion held in conjunction with the opening of the parliamentary session contains elements of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as those of Christianity. In Britain, annual national days of prayer were removed from the Book of Common Prayer in 1859. In a pluralistic society such as Britain it is mainly the monarchy which keeps the institutional connection between church and state alive. In Sweden, state services were abolished in the early 1970s and prayer-day declarations in 1983.

In Finland, however, some early modern Lutheran constructions of national identity are still present despite the fact that the country lived for a century under Russian rule in the 19th century, adopted philosophical traditions different from Sweden, saw the rapid development of a new political culture after the parliamentary reform of 1906, and has experienced a number of fundamental economic, social and intellectual changes since World War II. The Finnish example illustrates how powerful religious constructions of nation can be in a religiously relatively homogeneous society in which national identity continued to be constructed through religion also during the military conflicts of the 20th century. Though Finns may not be considerably more religious as *individuals* than the citizens of Britain, the Netherlands or Sweden, arguments derived from a secularized form of Lutheranism still play a key role in Finnish civil religion and *institutional* national identity – without many Finns even being actively aware of their existence. Lutheran features of the Finnish political culture are mainly considered self-evident and remain implicit, as issues associated with religion are regarded as private matters not to be discussed in public. In some special cases, such as the prayer-day debates, Lutheran conceptions of political community can, however, be expressed in more explicit terms.

We also need to keep in mind recent sociological research which suggests that the values of the Finns differ to some extent from the overall Scandinavian pattern. It has been shown that an average Finn lives according to slightly less secularized and more patriotic values

than an average Swede, for instance. It should thus come as no surprise that, in the official celebrations of the millennium, Finns were probably the only nation to end the 20th century with Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God" and to begin the new one by singing the National Anthem.[18]

Available argumentative strategies

It is worth analysing some of the parliamentary language games provoked by the bill on presidential prayer-day declarations, keeping in mind some basic assumptions by which a Lutheran identity of the political community was constructed already in the early modern Swedish realm. These include the ideal of identical religious and political communities, the tendency to exclude outsiders, strict limits on religious liberty, the idea of the head of state serving as a religious leader, and the conception of Lutheranism as a necessary educator of ideal subjects or, increasingly, citizens. All of these found both advocates and opponents during the debates of 2003. Comparisons between related 18th-century arguments and those put forth in 2003 help us not only to recognize long-term conceptual continuities but also to point to an ongoing change in the Finnish conceptions of the religious dimension of institutional national identity.

The parliamentary minutes of the sessions held in November and December 2003 reveal at least four constantly used semantic fields linked to the Lutheran tradition of constructing national identity. Three of these reinforced traditional interpretations of the nation and one questioned them. A Lutheran conception of political community was reinforced by the use of (i) the language of *heritage*, *tradition* and *history*, (ii) the concepts of *nation* and *fatherland*, and (iii) traditional descriptions of the proper relationship between *church* and *state*, or, *religion* and *politics*. While argumentative strategies (i) and (ii) were usually taken as givens, particularly by the more traditionalist speakers, the relationship between religion and politics became a topic of open dispute, as did the fourth argumentative strategy, which was based on (iv) the concepts of *toleration* and *multiculturalism*. In 18th-century state sermons, the status of the established church as the cherisher of the traditions of the fatherland had gone unquestioned. Toleration, in contrast, had been an excluded possibility and multiculturalism an entirely foreign concept.

Though the practical relevance of the prayer-day declarations has declined dramatically since the 18th century due to secularization, the possibility of the abolition of the practice gave rise to several debates in Parliament. Few leading politicians were actively involved in these debates, but 21 members did participate. Four basic approaches to the question were adopted:

(i) The first approach can be characterized as the defence of all of the major features of Lutheran (or more broadly Christian) national identity, even by means of openly religious arguments. This approach also involved support for a strong presidency in the spirit of traditional Protestant monarchy. Religiously conservative backbenchers, such as true believers belonging to the religion-oriented party of Christian Democrats[19] and the only Lutheran clergyman with a seat in Parliament,[20] actively supported the adoption of a law on presidential prayer-day declarations. The approach shared many of the values and ideas supported by the defenders of Christian values in other European countries but was evidently advocated by no more than a noisy minority in the Finnish Parliament.

(ii) The second approach was to defend traditional Lutheran values understood and advocated in more secular terms. This was a popular approach among the members of the Centre Party[21], a value conservative and originally agrarian party with the highest number of seats in Parliament. All of the representatives of the Centre Party would support the bill in the final vote. Their opinions certainly followed also from the need to defend both the controversial bill and the government itself, as a failure to win the case would mean a loss of prestige for the government in general and the Minister of Culture in particular. Some opposition MPs also joined the chorus of those supporting the secular defence of the traditional values of the nation.[22]

(iii) Probably the most widespread, although rather inactively articulated, approach to the issue can be characterized as pragmatic secularism or modernism. This entailed the simultaneous maintenance of the tradition of prayer-day declarations and the removal of its openly political content, in other words its reformation so as to better correspond with the circumstances of a secularized society. This approach may also have been motivated by an un-

willingness to increase the power of the President, which had just recently been reduced. The creation of a law-based practice in which the President would use symbolic power derived from his/her status as the head of state of a Lutheran nation would have strengthened the institution once again. The propagation of the traditional values of the nation was not questioned as such by the advocates of this approach, probably in order to avoid irritating many voters who were sympathetic to the Lutheran Church, particularly the actively voting elderly population for whom the Lutheran-nationalistic values, or, the values of the wartime generations, were (and are) holy. Such a pragmatic modernist approach to the dispute was adopted by the majority of the Committee for Constitutional Law, which presented a report on the bill and made a compromise proposal on *unofficial* presidential declarations.[23] This proposal won the support of the majority of Parliament, as practically all Social Democrats and the majority of the National Coalition, for instance, voted against the governmental bill.

(iv) The fourth approach could perhaps be termed as "radical secularism" or "radical modernism," in the sense that some speakers were prepared to go further in challenging the conventions of the Lutheran concept of nation. Though openly questioning all practices mixing religion and politics in the spirit of a unified Lutheran nation, even the supporters of this approach were not campaigning for a total abolition of prayer-day declarations. They did not oppose the involvement of current President Tarja Halonen – a former Social Democrat who does not belong to the Lutheran Church but is well-known for her support of values such as toleration and social equality – *as a person* in the practice of giving prayer-day declarations. Three leftist female members of the Committee for Constitutional Law were prominent advocates of this approach.[24] The support of the radical modernist approach both within Parliament and among the electorate may have been more considerable than this, however. Many male supporters may have stayed quiet during the debates either because of an unwillingness to risk losing popular support for advocating overly radical views or simply because of a pure lack of interest.

How to best preserve tradition

The frequently used concepts of heritage, tradition and history provided the basis for an almost total consensus among Finnish MPs regarding the need to safeguard tradition. At the same time, disputes emerged as to what the right way of conserving the tradition was. The debaters also disagreed on what actually constituted innovation.

The defenders of the Lutheran concept of nation readily described the tradition of prayer-day declarations with adjectives such as “good, old”, “old, valuable”, “old, excellent”, “very valuable”, “centuries-old”, “long”, “very deep” and “strong Finnish national, spiritual, patriotic”. They also saw the tradition as “very significant in the history of our people” and underscored its character as “a centuries-old customary law” based on “Christian values” (Kankaanniemi, Oinonen, Rauhala).[25] In his private member’s bill, Kankaanniemi defined the prayer-day declaration as “purely a part of Finnish spiritual and national tradition”[26] – connecting the attributes of “spiritual” and ”national” in a manner that linked the religious community of “Christians” with the political community of “Finland”. History was also employed by the same speakers as a source of argumentation. Oinonen, for instance, repeatedly quoted the explanatory memorandum of the governmental bill, interpreting prayer-day declarations as a political tradition originating from the Roman Empire and “continued through the history of the Middle Ages in different forms and through the Reformation to here our Finland both in the days of a Grand Duke and then during independence”. The conclusion was that a break in such a tradition caused by the failure to pass a law on presidential prayer-day declarations would have been “sad and downright shameful,” “regression, a deplorable event,” “a very questionable act” and “a very dangerous action”.

More secular arguments defending the tradition were heard from Minister Karpela, who had advocated the law in government and introduced the bill to Parliament. She favoured attributes such as “old” and “invaluable” when talking about the tradition, maintaining that it was “an integral part of Finnish cultural tradition” and insisting that it should not be “rejected on the basis of light arguments”. A similar description of the declarations as part of Finnish “cultural tradition” was also provided by a former Minister of Culture (Dromberg). Advocates of a Christian political community also referred to the “invaluable Christian tradition of customs” which needed to be saved primarily because of its significance with regard to Finland’s

"national cultural heritage" rather than merely because of the existence of an inherent need for congregations to be advised by the President on how to pray (Räisänen).

Karpela's fellow party members employed similar arguments on the conservation of "cultural heritage" but also emphasized the importance of cherishing "values" (Vihriälä, Nousiainen). Lahtela presented the most original and outspoken interpretation, viewing the religious and national communities as identical, arguing that "permanent concepts connected with traditions of popular culture" were under attack by the advocates of the liberty of religion and depicting the government as a defender of the basic values of the nation against such attempts. According to Lahtela, the Committee had understood the matter completely incorrectly in its attempt to break a tradition established during the Roman Empire. Such reasoning originated from a simplistic historical account in the introductory part of the bill which did indeed present the prayer-days as a Roman invention that had been followed without major modifications in the Swedish realm and Finland, including during the period of Russian rule.[27]

In its report, the majority of the members of the Committee for Constitutional Law rejected this pseudo-historical perspective and viewed the case on terms set by the current constitution.[28] Chairman Sasi did concede that the declarations were based on "a tradition which is hundreds of years old," but he advocated a compromise that would allow the tradition to live outside the legal confines of the new constitution as one of the "other activities" of the President. Vice Chairman Alho argued in a modernist fashion that the "creative solution" of the Committee allowed the tradition to take on "a more proper and better form that is more suitable for modern times and the spirit of the new constitution". Combining the vocabularies of tradition and modernity, she suggested that, thanks to the compromise, "this invaluable tradition" would acquire "a new and even more modern and valuable content".

While the chairmen only claimed to be preserving the tradition, some of the members of the Committee went further, questioning the unity of the religious and political communities, playing down the idea of the head of state as a religious leader and calling for the extension of religious liberty. One of their strategies was to argue that the traditionalists were advocating a worrying backwards turn. Krohn began by insisting that the compromise proposal would allow the tradition to continue in a way adapted to modern Finnish society and to the new constitutional role of the President. She continued, how-

ever, by accusing the church and its allies of promoting a law that would begin "an entirely new tradition," as it would logically entail that in the future the President would give declarations on behalf of "Mormons, atheists, Jews, Mohammedans [sic], Christians".[29] Rejecting such attempts, Krohn described prayer-day declarations given by President Halonen without any legal guidance as "a beautiful and currently very humanistic tradition which unites the nation". While "the old practice" of presenting the declaration as a governmental decision signed by the President was unacceptable from the point of view of the right to freedom of religion, Krohn conceded that a balance between continuity and change could be struck by allowing the tradition to exist in a slightly modified form, the President retaining the right to give a declaration at her own discretion. This would happen even though "the original meaning or cause of traditions has already disappeared". Krohn's speech thus explicitly revealed that the entire practice had actually lost its relevance in the eyes of many but that, in the current circumstances, it could be allowed to continue in a "watered-down" form.

Representatives of all sides of the dispute seemed to be prepared to preserve the tradition but they disagreed on the proper means of doing so. The most enthusiastic defenders of a Lutheran political community insisted that the bill was the best way to prevent a questionable break in "a tradition which is hundreds of years old" and attempts to "change this tradition" (Rossi, Särkiniemi, Oinonen). Lahtela suggested that "this sort of Green worldview has infected and overtaken this Parliament and society and that there is readiness to tread underfoot and reject everything old, sacred and valuable". One of the reformers responded by suggesting that the Centre Party was – for party-political reasons – merely attempting to make it appear as if some wished to continue the tradition and others did not (Huotari). Even this reflects the prevalent unwillingness to redefine institutional national identity in radically novel terms. No speaker questioned the construction of a Lutheran national identity by suggesting that prayer-day declarations should be abolished. In contrast, the connection between the institutional identity of the nation and Lutheranism was generally recognized as an intimate one. It was something that was too risky to intervene with through the introduction of excessively reformist ideas, particularly as the debate took place only days after the celebration of Finland's Independence Day. On that day, Lutheran churches around the country had served as major forums of the commemoration of the hard times of the nation – the Winter War included.

Lutheran national identity defended and redefined

The "identity" of the nation may not have been discussed in explicit terms, but it was one of the very issues around which the debate centred. The concepts of nation and fatherland – together with the closely related terms of "society" and "state" – were in frequent use. The concepts of "people" and "citizen" were also linked with the debate, partly because the Finnish concepts of "nation" (*kansakunta*) and "citizen" (*kansalainen*) are both derived, unlike many other European languages, from the ethnic concept of "people" (*kansa*).[30] The concepts of society, state, people and citizen were all repeatedly mixed with that of nation.

The defenders of a Lutheran interpretation of political community willingly employed the semantic field of "nation" in their arguments and described Lutheran national identity in terms not unlike those we encountered in 18th-century Sweden. Kankaanniemi, when introducing his private bill, linked the feelings of nationalism, patriotism and religion and described prayer-day declarations given in the name of the powers that be as "a strong Finnish national, spiritual and patriotic tradition". The same rhetorician combined the concepts of "society," "state" – as represented by the President – and "the Finnish people" in a manner typical of Scandinavian political rhetoric when suggesting that prayer-day declarations were a demonstration "by our society and also the President of the Republic" that "we still respect these old traditions and also these Christian values on the basis of which the Finnish people has in difficult years and decades thrived". This linkage of Lutheranism and national identity culminated in a reference to President Kyösti Kallio's politico-religious advice to the Finns dating back to the time of the Winter War, which suggested in implicit terms that it was the glorious legacy of the Winter War that was being protected by the advocates of the bill. This type of argument touched an area of patriotic values holy not only to the generations of voters who actually fought in the wars but also to most other Finns.

Chaplain Oinonen's conception of the Finnish national identity as essentially Lutheran and the declarations as a major expression of that identity was also outspoken, as he stated that: "It demonstrates the value basis on which we want to build the life of our nation that the supreme political leaders of the country give a declaration on four days of thanksgiving, repentance and prayer." Indeed, there was no hiding the fact that by doing so the rulers "remind the nation via

the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and other churches about what is most durable in our society". This Lutheran clergyman viewed one of the main duties of the church as being the education of the nation in politico-religious values. He saw the prayer-day declaration as an essentially "national" question, as "a very valuable thing to the nation" which "needs this kind of value basis". Politics and religion appeared as closely connected: it was necessary that "the government gives clear signals on the value basis on which public life can be constructed" by publishing prayer-day declarations and that "Finland as a nation remembers that value basis on which previous generations wanted to construct this society". Oinonen welcomed this ongoing debate in that it made "us as a nation" recognize the importance of the issue so that "the nation acknowledges what is durable" and avoids "such a shame in the history of the nation that, just before the Day of Independence [6 December], the authorities would fail to give a declaration on four days of thanksgiving, repentance and prayer". Like many other defenders of the Lutheran political community, Oinonen associated the "nation" with the government of the "state" and further with "society," maintaining that "society must have a right to acknowledge its value basis" through the actions of political leaders.

During this debate on Kankaanniemi's private bill, some devout advocates of a Christian conception of political community introduced openly confessional arguments into the debate, pointing out that "Finland needs the basic message of the gospel, the message on mercy and forgiveness" (Essayah). More secular arguments based on the nation also appeared. Lahtela, for instance, emphasized the significance of the prayer-days for "Finnish culture, life, values and future". He combined the language of the Lutheran political community, militant rhetoric and elements of late-twentieth-century Nordic discourse on welfare society, arguing that a law on prayer-day declarations would "strengthen this nation and the perseverance of the nation in those depressing battles which are currently being fought to defend welfare society". Among the True Finns, an opposition party with a considerable record in populist rhetoric, the will of the "people" was the ultimate argument. As "the majority of the Finnish people belong to the national church," "Christian values are the basis and bedrock of the Finnish people" and hence prayer-day declarations were a necessary part of the political life of the nation (Soini). The former Minister of Culture also emphasized the importance of Christian values "to us Finns" and maintained that the supreme po-

litical leaders of the country should express their respect for these values (Dromberg). All the speakers called for the introduction of a law in this debate, which may have given the majority of the government the wrong impression with regard to what Parliament actually wanted.

The introductory part of the governmental bill, which was presented to the Parliament two weeks later, was not equally dependent on the languages of nation or Lutheranism but made only a general reference to the fact that "the majority of the people belong to Christian churches".[31] The advocates of the Lutheran national community were eager to repeat their arguments based on the concepts of "our nation" and "our people," however. For Chaplain Oinonen, it was "the nation," "our state" and "society" (all three concepts sharing the same basic meanings), and not so much the church, which needed the presidential prayer-day declarations to "create the value basis of the nation". It was a statement of the entire Finnish "society" that the Minister of Culture and President signed the declaration.[32] As to the roles of the church and the people in this construction of Lutheran political community, it was "the duty of the church to announce and the duty of the people to find this message of the prayer-day". Furthermore, the people had the duty of ensuring that only such presidents would be chosen who would sign the declaration. Summarizing his national rhetoric, Oinonen considered it necessary that "Finland as a nation acknowledges the long tradition" and that the tradition would continue "for as long as Finland is a nation".

Lahtela, a Centrist populist reiterating Oinonen's arguments, insisted on the need to view the issue from a "popular" perspective, "popular" meaning that "the majority of the people belong to Christian churches" and hence "the great majority of the people" would support the bill. Knowing what people wanted, Lahtela argued that the law would be "the best we can give to the Finnish society, its present people and future generations". This enthusiastic debater also suggested that similar "fundamental" debates on "the state and future of the nation" should actually be held in Parliament weekly, as they would promote familiarity with values which "dozens of generations before us have heard in declarations, believed, hoped for and on the basis of them built this our fatherland".[33] This lay interpretation of the Finnish Lutheran national identity certainly corresponded with that of a number of rural supporters of the Centre Party.

The pragmatic modernists of the Committee for Constitutional Law bypassed the language of nation in their report, however, and

focussed instead on the concept of "citizen". The chairman of the Committee defined the proposed unofficial presidential prayer-day declaration as a recognition given to "the activities of the citizens" (Sasi). Radical modernist members of the Committee opposed all formulations which would urge or oblige citizens to become involved in religious activities, seeing such orders as unconstitutional and as rising from the lack of respect for non-Christian citizens of the Republic (Lapintie). Recognizing the role of the declarations as "a tradition which unites the nation," one speaker rejected the custom of giving an institutional declaration as something that "violates the freedom of religion of very many citizens". According to the compromise proposal, in contrast, the President, as "the symbol of the nation and as a national actor," keeps contacts "with different forces supporting society" but does not do so as an institution (Krohn). Vice Chairman Alho would have allowed the President to sign the declaration as a person but not as an institution whose decision would oblige citizens. The President would then show "intellectual leadership unifying the nation" and contribute to "the search of the intellectual way of the nation". In this modernist approach, the language of "nation" made an appearance but carried secular rather than religious connotations. State-imposed restrictions on the religious liberty of the citizens were rejected, as was the notion of the head of state as a religious leader. The presidency was secularized by reference to the "intellectual" leadership of the nation.

Some defenders of the Lutheran political community defined the relationship between the state, religion and citizens differently, arguing that there was nothing wrong with "urging citizens to do good things" and educating them through public religion. The official declaration of Christmas peace in Turku on Christmas Eve – with the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God" and the performance of the National Anthem – provided them a further example of how "us, citizens" and "all people" could be addressed and advised (Rossi). This traditionalist Lutheran conception of the nation (state, society, people, citizen) was countered by one emphasizing the rights of the citizens and active civil society. The two sides clearly had difficulties in agreeing on much else than the existence of the need to maintain the tradition of prayer-day declarations for historical reasons.

Diverse conceptions of the relationship between politics and religion

The proper relationship between the church and state, or religion and politics, unavoidably turned into an object of dispute in the debates. The traditionalists and modernists disagreed on the role of political institutions in defining the values of the nation. The ongoing talks on the need to refer to Christianity in the constitution of the European Union as the value basis of the community provided a further context for this dispute.

The advocates of a Lutheran political community and the only Catholic member of Parliament considered it self-evident that political leaders both in Finland and the EU recognized the status of Christian values (Oinonen, Soini, Essayah, Rauhala). Chaplain Oinonen prophesied that a failure to do so would before long lead to the collapse of the entire community. Lahtela called the Committee for Constitutional Law "the legislator of the basic and highest values of the Republic" [*sic*] and urged it to recognize the need for the authorities to support Christian values.

In the governmental bill and the Minister's introductory speech, the need for the state and church (or "churches" or "religious communities" in plural) to "interact" was approached in a more conciliatory manner. The government emphasized the "common causes of anxiety of the state and churches such as social justice and charity". Another governmental argument was the need for the head of state to recognize the fact that most inhabitants belonged to Christian churches.[34]

The majority of the Committee, however, emphasized the need to separate religious and political communities and to broaden the religious liberty of citizens. According to the Chairman, recent constitutional changes made it necessary that "the government distance itself from religious activities," which meant that future presidential declarations should thus be given according to the President's discretion as a person as opposed to on the basis of a legally binding institutional decision (Sasi). More radical reformers saw the proposed law urging citizens to take part in Lutheran religious activities as downright unconstitutional and as a violation of the religious views of many citizens. The law would have halted the development toward religiously neutral political institutions and restored an older conception of the relationship between church and state (Lapintie). Krohn concluded that the Finns still had "an unclear conception of

the relationship between state and church" and hence had difficulties in accepting the neutrality of state institutions in religious issues. She even suspected that the church was actively campaigning to re-establish its status in society with the support of some political groups. The Vice Chairman saw the adoption in Finland of "a fundamentalist way of thought within the European community" as troublesome, and Huotari echoed the same concern by suggesting that the bill was no more than a hidden attempt to reinforce an old-fashioned and dangerous conception of the relationship between religion and politics. Breaking a basic convention of Lutheran Finnishness, this leftist MP pointed out that it was impossible to foresee which religion and what kind of ideologies the Finns would profess in the future.

The advocates of the bill employed an equally harsh tone in their argumentation. Rossi accused the modernists of forgetting the traditions of the state and of attempting to make "the society turn its back on the church". While it was suggested that the Ministry of Education and the President, and thereby the entire "society," could control and renew the content of the declarations, the notion of the President failing to give a declaration was considered "very strange," as it was one of the duties of the powers that be to lead the way of the "nation" or "society" (Kankaanniemi, Rossi, Oinonen). There was a clear call for a president who was also willing to pursue the role of a religious leader.

Calls for the religious neutrality of the state were encountered with arguments according to which the Finnish state was not truly "neutral in religious questions". There were Christian programmes on public television, religious education in schools and state services on Independence Day. Furthermore, there was no European-wide development toward religiously neutral institutions. It was maintained that religion and politics had not been mixed by the defenders of the bill in the manner to the degree to which they could be mixed "abroad". Indeed, the argument that political institutions should remain neutral with regard to religious issues was seen as the worst possible kind of politicization of religion (Särkiniemi). Clearly the arguments of the two sides did not meet, as one side supported a traditional Lutheran state where religious and political communities overlapped and the other favoured a radically secularized conception of the political community.

Religious liberty and toleration in an increasingly multicultural and pluralistic society

Unlike 18th-century state sermons, the concepts of toleration, multiculturalism and pluralism played an important role in the Finnish debates of 2003, as did the suggested synonym "ecumenism" and the opposing expressions "intolerance" and "bigotry". The use of these concepts reveals that Finnish politicians held very different views on what toleration was and whether it was a desirable phenomenon.

Among the defenders of the Lutheran national community, much effort was made to counter expected accusations of intolerance in advance. This was done by redescribing the opponents of the bill as advocates of "bigotry" and "intolerance" toward "basic Finnish values" (Kankaanniemi, Lahtela). They had also misunderstood the concept of "toleration". According to Oinonen and Essayah, it was a "strange interpretation of religious liberty in Finland according to which people should keep themselves detached from religions," whereas "the Western and American interpretation of religious freedom . . . is that people should have a right to practise religion and that society has the right to acknowledge this value basis". While it was "good to tolerate, doing wrong cannot be tolerated". It was a mistake to give up one's own values in the name of toleration. For Essayah, toleration was "to adhere to one's own values while appreciating different views as well". Soini declared that "there are limits to toleration and the down-play of values, and those limits run here at this time". The limits of religious liberty and toleration were thus still in place. Another argumentative strategy of the traditionalists was to assure people that they had the good of *all* religious groups in mind and that members of non-Lutheran religious communities had no problem with prayer-day declarations. Oinonen and Kankaanniemi repeatedly referred to a newspaper interview with a Muslim who stated that Finland would be a better place to live, even for Muslims, if the Finns would adhere more strictly to Christianity. For Oinonen, such a statement was an expression of "positive, true religious liberty".[35]

Aware of the demands of the recently passed law on the freedom of religion, Minister Karpela presented the prayer-day declarations as symbolic rather than legal measures and maintained that they allowed citizens to retain their freedom of religion. She underscored the "ecumenical" character of the declarations and their tendency to advocate toleration, thus attempting to give the adjective "ecumenical" such meanings that would make it appear as synonymous with

the adjectives "tolerant" and "pluralistic" (see also Oinonen and Dromberg).

The Committee adopted a different interpretation of the freedom of religion and conscience, arguing that such constitutional civil rights made it impossible for the head of state to give official prayer-day declarations, particularly ones urging the citizens to act in a certain religious way.[36] One of the members, Lapintie, gave the clearest indication of social change that called for such a reinterpretation:

> Society is no longer as uniform as before, as we do, after all, have this multiculturalism and different world-views. Hence it is, in my opinion, . . . more important than before to take into account the religious and ideological views of those groups and individuals who deviate from this main religion.

The conclusion was that "this variety of religion and society and multiculturalism" and the need to treat all citizens on equal terms called for the religious neutrality of political institutions. Vice Chairman Alho defended religious toleration also on economic and cultural grounds, arguing that "toleration is a positively important issue for the nation". Attempting to reconcile tradition with this ideal, she suggested that prayer-day declarations given outside the constitutional role of the President could also advance the cause of toleration.

Such an understanding of toleration was countered by Satonen with the widely held assumption that it was not multiculturalism but the "Lutheran work ethic" that had played a role in the rise of the Finnish economy and the uncorrupted nature of Finnish society. In Satonen's view, such values could be best advanced through law-based declarations, which in no way denied the rights of the supporters of other religions. Some secular defenders of the Lutheran national community saw the tendency to emphasize the religious freedom of minorities as something that had been used "to destroy many good things in this society," including religious celebrations at schools. Oinonen argued that it was precisely this rise of multiculturalism which made a law on prayer-day declarations necessary. Särkiniemi warned the members about advocating both this brand of "negative freedom of religion," in which all religious statements by institutions would be seen as negative, and a multiculturalism in which no values mattered.

The prayer-day dispute ended, after a vote,[37] with the victory of the compromise proposal according to which the declarations went

from being an official decision of the President to an unofficial appeal lacking legal status and imperative verbs. The Finnish Parliament thus took a cautious step toward an increasingly secular definition of the institutional identity of the nation while simultaneously ensuring that the formal tradition and connection between the state and church were kept alive. The abolition of the practice would have been seen as an excessively radical redefinition of the official identity of the state and might have led to strong emotional reactions in future elections.

The above analysis of the debates shows that present-day Finns are divided in their conceptions of the institutional national identity of the state. The majority of politicians recognize the need to build a secular state, are aware of the realities of growing multiculturalism, and wish to advance toleration, at least in theory. They see religious and political communities and identities as separate phenomena, at least in principle, and some of them consciously attempt to include non-native Finns in the national community by widening the limits of religious liberty, questioning the Lutheran tradition of the head of state as a religious leader, and openly doubting whether Lutheranism alone suffices as an educator of ideal citizens. At the same time, there is a considerable minority which is strongly committed to the inherited Lutheran identity of the nation. Many among this minority find it inconceivable to distinguish between Finnishness and Lutheran confessional identity.[38] Even the majority, when redefining the Finnish institutional identity in modest ways, pays lip-service to the old church-built national identity. Above all, the comparative analysis of the construction of the institutional identity of the Finnish state demonstrates the kind of long-term impact that aspects of a religion-based national identity, many of which were widely held already during the Swedish rule, can have. In order to understand national identities even in the most secularized modern societies we clearly need to take their historical and religious dimensions into account.

NOTES

1. "National identity" was not an 18th-century concept. The historical use of concepts is best achieved by reconstructing and analyzing the scale of meanings attached to the concepts of nation and fatherland by 18th-century speakers themselves through their use of these concepts. The concept of "national identity" merely provides a guiding translation of 18th-century patterns of thought into the language of modern research and does not suggest that the content of 18th and 19th-century national identities were

entirely similar. "National identity" refers to what Greene has called "the intellectual constructs by which leaders of opinion seek to identify the attributes that distinguish the people of one nation . . . from another." Greene 1998, p. 208; "Institutional" national identity refers to official values, opinions and ideals concerning the state and nation and its limits as separate from the national identities held by groups of citizens and individuals.
2. Importantly, the 18th-century concept of nation did not usually include ideas of popular sovereignty, citizenship or representation in senses that became popular after the French Revolution. See Pulkkinen 1999, 124; The word "nation" was still rare in 18th-century Swedish but was widely used in English, for instance.
3. For a wider analysis of the state sermons and for references, see my forthcoming book Ihalainen 2005.
4. Osander 1757, p. 25.
5. Mennander 1762, p. 35; Ekedahl, p. 50ff.
6. Ihalainen 2003a, pp. 77-84.
7. Wrangel, pp. 4-7.
8. Baelter 1748, p. 11.
9. Forssenius 1769, pp. 8, 21.
10. Petterson 1764, pp. 36, 38-9.
11. Baelter 1752, pp. 27-8.
12. Rosén 1762, pp. 9, 13.
13. Jonas Nordin has also suggested on the basis of secular political discourse that honesty, bravery, Lutheran morality, industry, simplicity and the love of freedom were the basic elements of the identity of the 18th-century Swedish political elite and thus of much of the nation. Nordin 2000, pp. 255, 262, 434.
14. Pulkkinen 1999, p. 131, 133; Siironen 2004.
15. Vesa Pietilä (University of Helsinki) is currently studying the role of the Lutheran clergy as constructors of national identity during the Winter War. I am grateful to him for advice on this time period.
16. Press release of 28 November 2002 at *http://www.evl.fi/kkh/kt/uutiset/mar2002/rukousp.htm#TopOfPage.*
17. There were exceptions to this, however. On 18 October 2003, the leading newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* stated in its editorial that the church was right to be concerned about the continuation of the tradition in the midst of constant change. According to *Helsingin Sanomat*, "a nation without a strong identity is weak, and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church is a part of Finnish identity." The editor suggested, however, that the President should no longer have a major role in the process, as "elsewhere in Europe the head of state no longer has this kind of role"; Ihalainen 2003b, pp. 671-4.
18. See the *World Values Survey* of the University of Michigan (*http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/fig.shtml*), particularly the figures on "Three broad cultural zones: the historically Protestant, Catholic and Communist societies" and "Mapping Authority and Survival or Well Being"; The Millenium TV-broadcast on 31 December 1999. The said hymn has been sung in connection with national events at least since the Russification period at the turn of the 20th century. Its reference to "the old foe" can be understood also in more concrete terms than as a name of a spiritual arch-enemy.
19. Mr. Toimi Kankaanniemi, Ms. Sari Essayah, Ms. Leena Rauhala, Ms. Päivi Räsänen.
20. Mr. Lauri Oinonen, Centre.
21. Minister of Culture Ms. Tanja Karpela, Mr. Seppo Lahtela, Mr. Jukka Vihriälä, Mr. Pekka Nousiainen, Mr. Markku Rossi, Mr. Seppo Särkiniemi and Mr. Klaus Pentti.

22. These included former Minister of Culture Ms. Kaarina Dromberg and Mr. Arto Satonen of the National Coalition, from which 13 out of 41 members voted for the bill in the division; The Catholic Chairman of the True Finns Mr. Timo Soini favoured this approach as well.
23. Mr. Kimmo Sasi, National Coalition, Chairman of the Committee for Constitutional Law; Ms. Arja Alho, Social Democrat, Vice Chairman of the Committee.
24. Ms. Annika Lapintie and Ms. Anne Huotari of the Leftist Alliance; Ms. Irina Krohn of the Greens; These two parties as a whole opposed the governmental bill in the final vote.
25. The names in brackets indicate the MP who spoke either during the debate on Kankaanniemi's bill (PTK 92/2003 in *www.eduskunta.fi*), the preliminary debate on the governmental bill (PTK 99/2003 in *www.eduskunta.fi*), or during the main debate (PTK 111/2003 in *www.eduskunta.fi*).
26. Toimi Kankaanniemi, LA 136/2003 in *www.eduskunta.fi.*
27. *www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/utahref.scr?{KEY}=HE+147/2003.*
28. PeVM 6/2003 in *www.eduskunta.fi.*
29. Lapintie and Pulliainen also maintained that the bill that would start "an entirely new tradition, an entirely new system", while the compromise would keep things as they were.
30. For the identification of the concept of "society" with a nation-state in Scandinavian political cultures, see Pulkkinen 1999, p. 119, Kettunen 2003, pp. 169-74, and Stenius 2003, pp. 356-7.
31. *www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/utahref.scr?{KEY}=HE+147/2003.*
32. This collectivist understanding of society, state, nation and religion can also be discerned in Markku Rossi's manner of seeing the President as the embodiment of the society when giving prayer-day declarations. A law on presidential prayer-day declarations would give "the society, the President of the Republic, a possibility to participate in the formulation of the content of the prayer-day declaration". Furthermore, "as signed by the President, and the society being involved, [the declaration] gives people more spiritual and possibly other security" (Rossi).
33. A possible source for this formulation is hymn 577 in the hymnbook of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church (*http://www.evl.fi/kkh/to/kjmk/virsikirja1986/*), which had been widely sung in churches on Independence Day just five days earlier. The patriotic hymn refers to how "fathers have fought here, and believed and hoped for" (strophe 3).
34. *www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/utahref.scr?{KEY}=HE+147/2003.*
35. In Hannu Takkula's (Centre) injected remark later during the debate, however, Islam appeared as the opposite of "true religious liberty".
36. PeVM 6/2003 in *www.eduskunta.fi.*
37. The bill was opposed by 92 and supported by 74 MPs. The division list of PTK 112/2003 at *www.eduskunta.fi.*
38. In geographic terms, most opponents of the bill came from the south of Finland and supporters from the rural central part of the country, more particularly from Ostrobothnia. It may have been a reaction of the advocates of the tradition and Lutheran national identity that the prayer-day declaration for the year 2004, which focussed on concern on the status of children, was printed in some local newspapers of Centre-dominated rural areas and thus given wider publicity in the countryside than had been the case before. See *Pielavesi-Keitele*, 7 January 2004.

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