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i alltför hög grad förekomsten av folkliga föreställningar rörande kollektiv magisk skadegörelse med den av överheten omhuldade idén om att häxorerna var samlade i en samhällsomstörtande sekt. Därmed stängs dörren till en mer komplex bild av framväxten av häxsabbaten, där dynamiken i processerna inte uteslutande berodde på fantasier hos präster och jurister. Vidare hade det varit intressant om Malmstedt utmanat sin egen grundläggande tes om den förtrollade världen. Bohuslän 1669–1672 skildrar eventuellt ett extremtillstånd. I ett sådant sammanhang blir folklig skepsis ett lika relevant studieobjekt som övertro, vilket skulle varit intressant att få belyst. Men å andra sidan är det kanske mycket begärt att få plats med i en bok, då det sannolikt skulle fordra att kompletterande källmaterial togs i bruk.

Per Sörlin

Lutheranism and the Nordic Spirit of Social Democracy: A Different Protestant Ethic

Robert H. Nelson

Aarhus University Press, 2018, 324 s.

Robert H. Nelson, professor in political economy at the University of Maryland, advocates the claim that Nordic social democracy and the welfare state arose from a modern religion of “secular Lutheranism”. Parallel to the Weberian thesis on Protestant (Calvinist) ethics, he sees the Lutheran ethics as a normative foundation of “Nordic social democracy”, which turned the Nordic countries into “the leading examples of nations that have been successful in creating modern societies that behave ‘rationally’” (p. 216).

Nelson’s challenge to the secularisation theses and their notion of unbridgeable distinctions between early modern religion and modernity is welcome. Nelson emphasises alternative paths to modernity and provides an intriguing summary of

comparisons between political systems and welfare policies derived from competing political theologies.

Starting with commonplace narratives on the Vikings and the Protestant Reformation, Nelson reviews Nordic scholars from sociologists to historians and political scientists in order to demonstrate that “social democracy in the Nordic world” is based on the Lutheran notions of calling and the priesthood of all. Risto Alapuro, Øystein Sørensen, Henrik Stenius, Bo Stråth, Dag Thorkildsen and Uffe Østergård have previously presented social democratic parties as secularised constructors of an initially Lutheran welfare state. Nelson adds Pirjo Markkola’s research on gender, churches and welfare and Jóhann Páll Arnason’s and Björn Wittrock’s reviews of Nordic cultural development to this argument. Referring to Østergård, he claims that it is a mistake to look upon Nordic social democracy as “a translator of international socialism” to Nordic contexts (p. 283).

The book addresses its thesis from diverse angles, bypassing research that might not support it. No reference is made to historical research on the construction of early modern Lutheran national identities in the Danish and Swedish realms (e.g., *Scandinavia in the Age of Revolutions*, eds. Pasi Ihalainen, Michael Bregnsbo, Karin Sennefelt & Patrik Winton, 2011) even if comparisons between preached Lutheran political theology and Anglican and Reformed churches point to no differences in the field of “welfare” (Pasi Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined: Changing Perceptions of National Identity in the Rhetoric of English, Dutch and Swedish Public Churches, 1685–1772*, 2005). Nor does Nelson discuss tensions between social democracy and the Lutheran Church in the early twentieth century. Research on nationalism (by A.D. Smith among others) having argued for a transition from early modern religious identities to modern nationalism is not mentioned, nor does

he consider research on constitutionalism or democratisation in the Nordic context.

Instead we get a teleological narrative on the emergence of a Nordic paradise of peace, excellent governance and welfare not abused by anyone. This story is not problematized or proven with references to empirical historical data; it is based on Nelson's thesis on "secular" or "implicit" religions, including Marxism and social democracy as "disguised Christianity" (pp. 34, 196). Counterarguments are considered only in relation to the failed projects of temperance and eugenics.

Is this perhaps an ideological interpretation arising from Nordic narratives of exceptionalism uncritically received by a liberal academic with Scandinavian roots in the context of the highly polarised debates of the current political crisis in the United States? Historians of the eighteenth century may recall how Michael Roberts and Michael Metcalf echoed Fredrik Lagerroth's (1915) narrative on the Age of Liberty as the revival of ancient Swedish democracy and the anticipation of modern parliamentary democracy. Their English-language accounts were subsequently adopted by Scandinavian historians as support for the established narrative. The current reviewer here foresees a parallel risk of historiographical interpretations on Nordic exceptionalism being radicalised in an English-language survey and applied to construct present-day Nordic identities, reinforcing the thesis that social democracy is rooted in our historical tradition. Will Nordic scholars find themselves spreading "the progressive word of these past Nordic successes to create a new basis for fundamental improvement in the human condition throughout the rest of the world" (p. 274)? My advice is that we should not be seduced to engage in such cultural imperialism.

Nelson's book is problematic from a methodological perspective as well. It examines Lutheran ethics on the basis of English-language secondary litera-

ture without making a single reference to Luther's German-language texts. We receive little evidence on *how* Luther's ideas turned into social democracy and the welfare state – other than anachronistic characterisations of Luther as a "political revolutionary" (p. 80), source of "democratic state power and legitimacy" (p. 84), close to "modern socialism" (p. 117) and even "feminist" (p. 151). Not only is such a neglect of the exact language of past actors questionable, so is the lack of contemporary academic debate not published in English: There is always some selectivity regarding the nice things Scandinavians want to tell outsiders as opposed to what we debate among ourselves in Danish, Finnish, Norwegian or Swedish.

The reader would need to rely on a general theory on the continuous relevance of religion and on Nordic and other scholars (often with a Nordic background) who have put forward related arguments and whom Nelson creatively quotes and paraphrases. In the midst of anecdotal examples, the complexities of historical development remain unproblematised. Analogous features are no proof of causality, at least not in the history of political thought or conceptual history. How and why did Lutheran theocracy and absolutism turn into "a theocracy of a new secular social democratic religion of modern scientific and economic progress" (p. 99)? Are the continuity of a politico-religious body or nineteenth-century revivalism the only explanations? Distinctions drawn to Lutheranism in Germany are not particularly convincing either given the long-term Nordic cultural dependence on Germany.

Nelson does not define social democracy, but his usage of the term suggests that he refers to the present-day Nordic societal systems as a whole. But is social democracy synonymous with modernity? Are social democracy and welfare the same thing? And is it fair to talk about "the social democratic culture and political and economic institutions of the five Nordic countries" (p.

40), "the social democratic state" (p. 125) and "the Nordic social democratic religion of the welfare state" (p. 181) when it is evident that: 1. Nordic poor relief has been secularised since the nineteenth century when the social democrats were not yet in power; 2. welfare states were built since the 1930s in cooperation with liberal and agrarian forces; and 3. welfare has been advocated even by parties originally conservative in nature? Are the Nordic countries simply "social democratic" even after the social democratic ascendancy from the 1950s to the 1970s and in a period of support for the party of 20–30 per cent? "The crisis of social democracy in the Nordic world today" is mentioned but not analysed by Nelson.

What Nelson is perhaps saying is that social democratic *political discourse* has become so mainstream in Scandinavia that practically all political parties (and genres of historiography) represent its different versions. Such a development should be analysed empirically with due respect for remaining ideological differences. One might start with the redefinition of social democracy that replaced class struggle with parliamentarism and continues with the "social-democratisation" of Nordic conservatism. As Nelson concedes, Nordic welfare and more extensive social democratic influence only emerged after the Second World War – at a time when Lutheran churches turned increasingly "social democratic" in their political rhetoric.

Nelson provides thought-provoking reading but fails to convince a historian expecting extensive evidence drawn from primary sources. There is a risk that this book supports Nordic myths of exceptionality from outside rather than deconstructs them. Nelson's book nevertheless constitutes a new stage in a continuous debate on the historical roots of the Nordic welfare state – a key topic in the construction of present-day and future Nordic national identities.

*Pasi Ihalainen*

## Avhandlingar

Fångna i begreppen?  
Revolution, tid och politik i  
svensk socialistisk press 1917–  
1924

*Karin Jonsson*

Södertörns högskola, 2017, 349 s.

När ordet revolution användes under medeltiden var det i astronomiska och astrologiska skrifter och syftade då på himlakropparnas kretslopp. Denna cykliska innebörd av ordet följde med i påföljande århundradens beskrivningar av politiska händelser, som när "den ärorika revolutionen" i England 1688 framställdes som ett slags återgång till en tidigare ordning. Ett definitivt genomslag för tolkningen av revolutionen som en helt nydanande omvälvning går att slå fast efter franska revolutionen. Som modernt begrepp blev revolutionen sedan central i den socialistiska idévärlden, där den betecknade ett nödvändigt steg på vägen till det slutgiltiga, klasslösa samhället. Det är detta moderna begrepp som Karin Jonsson analyserar i sin avhandling, där hon med utgångspunkt i Reinhart Kosellecks begreppshistoriska perspektiv undersöker svenska socialisters kamp om revolutionens sanna natur i samband med de ryska februari- och oktoberrevolutionerna 1917.

Avhandlingen börjar med en relativt konventionell karaktäristik av den undersökta perioden som en politiskt stormig tid präglad av både revolutioner ute i Europa och förändringar inom den svenska arbetarrörelsen. I motsats till mycket av tidigare forskning är Jonssons avhandling dock organisationsöverskridande och bygger således på analyser av de mest inflytelserika tidningarna från såväl socialdemokrater och vänstersocialister som ungsocialister och syndikalister. Jonsson kritiserar hur forskning om arbetarrörelsen tenderar att förenkla och homogenera idéerna inom