



Educating for *ecclesia* – educating for the nation

Theological perspectives in Nils Egede Hertzberg's (1827–1911) understanding of schools

Merethe Roos

To cite this article: Merethe Roos (2020) Educating for *ecclesia* – educating for the nation, *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 74:1, 47-66, DOI: [10.1080/0039338X.2020.1744722](https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2020.1744722)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2020.1744722>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 22 Mar 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 263



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Educating for *ecclesia* – educating for the nation

Theological perspectives in Nils Egede Hertzberg's (1827–1911) understanding of schools

Merethe Roos

This article sheds light upon the Norwegian theologian, educator, and politician Nils Egede Hertzberg's (1827–1911) understanding of school, and traces the theological background of this understanding. Hertzberg played an important role in public debates on schools and education in the 1870s and 1880s in Norway, and he is commonly regarded to have been a conservative counter-voice, who strove to uphold the confessional character of schools. During his student days at the University of Christiania, Hertzberg studied under the prominent theological educator Gisle Johnson. This article provides an in-depth analysis of how Hertzberg's confessional background is reflected in his writings on school and education, and discusses how Hertzberg's understanding of school relies upon Johnson's ecclesiology, as well as Johnson's understanding of the nation. This understanding of school includes a definition of public-mindedness which is in opposition to Hertzberg's Grundtvigian adversaries; the "people" are limited to those who have received the Christian revelation. Belonging to "the people" is thus not a question of being educated, but it is a question of having received the grace of God, as humans born with original sin.

Scope

The aim of this article is to shed light upon the Norwegian theologian, politician, and educator Nils Egede Hertzberg's (1827–1911) understanding of school, and to trace the theological background of this understanding. Hertzberg's programme article in the first volume of the periodical *Norsk Skoletidende* (1869) will be an important focal point in this study. *Norsk Skoletidende* figured as the most significant journal for Norwegian

teachers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and Hertzberg served as the editor for this periodical from 1869 to 1872.

Besides being the editor of *Norsk Skoletidende*, Nils Hertzberg generally played an important role in public debates on school and education in the 1870s and 1880s in Norway.¹ He is commonly regarded as a conservative counter voice, in the sense that he was striving to uphold the religious and confessional character of schools.² His conservative attitude is also underlined in previous research. Ragnar Skottene, in his 1994 dissertation on religious education in Norway, drew a sharp distinction between a conservative fundamental view and a distinctive liberalism in school matters, and regarded Nils Hertzberg as the most outspoken and prominent representative of the conservative faction.³ Skottene saw the folk high school pioneer Viggo Ullmann as the most important spokesman of the opposite faction. According to Skottene, the differences between them can particularly be related to the institutional character of schools: While Hertzberg insisted upon an organic connection between school and church and saw school as the church's daughter, Ullmann called for a secular school without constraints to the institutional church.

Although Hertzberg was educated as a theologian, he never served as clergy. Instead, he was devoted to school and education throughout his professional life. Hertzberg served as an outspoken opponent of the folk high school, and fought against N. F. S. Grundtvig's ideas in general. The Danish theologian, writer, and educationist Grundtvig is known to be the founding father of folk high schools. After having worked as an administrator for teacher education at Asker Seminar from 1861, Hertzberg continued in the same position at Hamar Seminar from 1867. At that time, the folk high school Sagatun was well established in the same city, and Hamar became a hub for implementing Grundtvig's concepts. Consequently, public debates, in which Hertzberg also took part, contributed to a rigid standoff between the opposing factions, and the debates between sympathisers of the Hamar Seminar and sympathisers of Sagatun could be followed both in local and national press from the 1860s and 1870s. In 1882, Hertzberg became minister of church affairs in Christian Selmer's government, but resigned from the position when Selmer's government was dismissed in a court of impeachment two years later.

One of Hertzberg's most important political issues was to secure the church's managerial prerogative over schools. Moreover, he strove to prevent members of lay Christian movements from being employed as teachers in schools. To accomplish this, Hertzberg reinforced his position through alliances with important politicians and church leaders. An example of his alliances with political leaders is the well-known

manifesto from 1883, generally seen as the most important initiative from the conservative faction in the contemporary intellectual landscape. This manifesto, aiming to unite Christians against disbelief and contemporary freethinking, emanated from the government, and was thereby within Hertzberg's sphere of responsibility. Even though the character of the document is predominantly theological, previous research has underlined that contemporaries saw it as an attempt to prevent the parliamentary political system from gaining ground in Norway.⁴ Even if Hertzberg strove to maintain the confessional character of the school, he can be considered a pioneer with regards to other aspects of education. Not least as he initiated the subject of physical education in teacher training as well as in Norwegian schools.⁵ Still, a further investigation of this falls outside the scope of this article.

Background for this study

Few, if any, have done an in-depth analysis of how Hertzberg's theological background is reflected in his writings, even though he is of fundamental importance for understanding school and education in this time period, and had a significant position within contemporary politics. In this study, I will argue that Hertzberg's understanding of school relies upon the ecclesiology of Gisle Johnson – Hertzberg's teacher at the theological faculty in Oslo, an important revivalist, and one of the most influential theologians at that time. Johnson drew a sharp distinction between the visible and invisible church and defined the invisible church as the concrete congregation for believers. My thesis is that Hertzberg transferred this understanding of church onto school and education: the school's foremost aim was to raise children into becoming Lutheran believers. As Lutheran believers, they were inhabitants of a nation with two levels: They were members of a nation demarcated by national borders, as well as members of a nation consisting of believers. The influence of Johnson's ecclesiology is clearly expressed in Hertzberg's programme article in the first edition of *Norsk Skoletidende*, and these ecclesiological leanings are of fundamental importance – Hertzberg's adaption of Johnson's ecclesiology provides a systematic explanation of his argumentation for a strongly confessional school, and demonstrates that Hertzberg's political and educational strivings are deeply theologically founded. The strongly confessional school was a self-evident part of the Christian state; just as the Christian state organically was connected with the church. This paved the way for Hertzberg's statements

maintaining the importance of teachers' Lutheran faith in later texts. The teacher was responsible for raising children to become Lutheran citizens: The child should be raised to be a member of ecclesia, i.e. as a member of a nation with invisible ties between believers, as well as a member of a politically demarcated nation.

Hertzberg's view of the necessity of a Christian school permeated by a Lutheran and Christian spirit was representative for Norwegian teachers at that time.⁶ Much indicates that the same was true for Sweden.⁷ It can be argued that the view held by Hertzberg and his fellow partisans provides a historical background for understanding the curricular policy of religious teaching in Norwegian schools today. Even though the policies state that religious education should be taught according to academic standards, i.e. objective and non-confessional standards, Christianity still plays a decisive role in the culture and values of the nation. This is a common feature for RE (Religion & Ethics) education in all Scandinavian countries. In a very interesting article on RE development in the Scandinavian countries from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, the Danish church historian and educationalist Mette Buchardt has argued that Nordic cultural Protestantism in the early twentieth century contributed to a model of religious education that combined secularisation with sacralisation: the church was dissolved from the state, but at the same time, it was the nation's inner core.⁸ In a concluding section, I will argue that Hertzberg and his like-minded contemporaries, with their understanding of an innate relation between school and Christianity, can be seen as important predecessors of this sacralisation of culture. The church is a part of the Nordic nations' cultural DNA and cannot easily be dissolved, in spite of the secular character of the contemporary Nordic societies.

Herzberg's historical context

It is widely recognised that the mid-nineteenth century was characterised by a sharp distinction between distinctive liberal and conservative factions. Even if this characteristic pertained to society in general, it was crucial for school and education. Hertzberg's efforts must be seen against the backdrop of this contemporary polarised intellectual landscape. After the enactment of the first school act in Norway in 1739, the Lutheran church and schools became closely connected, and the foremost aim of schools was to educate children to become obedient Christian citizens. Consequently, Erik Pontoppidan's explanation of Martin Luther's catechism was a cornerstone in all education, and students were expected to learn the book by heart. During the nineteenth century, the societal

development at large challenged this institutional and dogmatic Christianity, and secular mindsets increasingly became factual alternatives to Christian ideologies. The 1845 dissenter act opened up for denominations outside the Lutheran church in Norway, and contributed to a diversity of congregations within delimited geographical areas.⁹ This continued the process initiated with the abolishment of the *konventikkelplakat* regulation, which was adopted three years ahead of the dissenter act, in 1842.

The challenges also pertained to the strongly confessional school. Contemporary educators and politicians alike seemed to be facing two distinct alternatives: either to accommodate the societal development, or to establish countercultures with the aim of protecting schools against any kind of secularising tendencies. These alternatives became wide-ranging societal trends, distinctly opposing each other.

On the one hand, politicians and schoolmen inspired by N. F. S. Grundtvig strove for a school that was governed by an independent and emancipated people. Their efforts bore fruit when the school act of 1860 introduced secular school subjects, such as geography, history, and natural science. The ratification of this law can be seen as a result of a synergy between policymakers and individuals, with members of the Society for the Promotion of Public Enlightenment, founded in Christiania in 1851, as driving forces. Some of the members of this society also took up political roles with high impact. With the subsequent school act, adopted in 1889, an elected school board replaced the previous ecclesiastical board.¹⁰ Consequently, this reduced clerical power over schools, while strengthening secular dominance.

On the other hand, conservative and dogmatically-oriented educators and politicians, like Nils Egede Hertzberg, tried their best to prevent modernising trends from gaining ground, well-aided by the growing revivalist movement. An increasing number of newspapers and periodicals consolidated the factions, and arguments frequently ran through a series of subsequent editions of both local and national publications. The public reactions following the publication of Peter Andreas Jensen's textbook in 1863 verify the climate of debate and illustrate the significance of the contemporary press.¹¹ Jensen's book followed the reformist ideas of the 1860 school act, and bore clear signs of Grundtvig's ideas. The book caused massive protests, not least within the lay Christian movements, and private schools, aiming to uphold the dogmatic character of education, soon became alternatives to those using Jensen's book.¹² The public debates played a crucial role in forming public opinion on the nature and meaning of school and education, thereby also securing their continuous progression.

Norsk skoletidende

Norsk skoletidende belonged to the second-mentioned faction. From the outset, the periodical counted as an important voice for teachers in Norway, and the conservative part of the public sphere did their best to promote this periodical. In connection with an advertisement in the newspaper *Fædrelandet* on 16 November 1870 aimed at increasing the number of subscribers, the editors of the newspaper wrote a recommendation of the periodical, emphasising its qualities: it contained a number of texts worthy of reading, and was edited in a Lutheran-Christian spirit. As schools and education were of fundamental importance for the church, it was likewise important to secure the direction of their development. According to the author, *Norsk Skoletidende* could fulfil this aim, and it was thereby important to subscribe to the periodical as well as to contribute as writers. However, even if *Norsk Skoletidende* soon came to hold the field, according to the 14 September 1882 edition of the newspaper *Verdens Gang*, its dissemination proved to be relatively limited.

Hertzberg and Gisle Johnson

At this time, it is also relevant to say something about the relation between Hertzberg and his teacher Gisle Johnson. In his retrospective book *Fra min barndoms- og ungdomstid* [From My Childhood and Youth], Hertzberg mentions the formative and fundamental importance of his student days under the lectern of Gisle Johnson.¹³ In particular, Hertzberg underscores Johnson's dogmatic lectures as especially captivating and informative.¹⁴ Johnson's logical and correct form had a persuasive effect on the students: they learned the lectures by heart from cover to cover, and it was not without reason that the theological students were referred to as "pocket editions" of Johnson, Hertzberg explains. Johnson had viewed the dogmatic historically, as refractions between different opinions tracing back to the old church. The Holy Writings had functioned as a touchstone, helping inappropriate opinions to be sorted out. The Augsburg confession and Martin Luther's catechism completed this process, and set the frame for Lutheran faith and confession. Thus, Hertzberg concludes, Johnson viewed the Lutheran church as that which most purely had acquired the content of revelation; revelation was the *raison d'être* of the church. Consequently, Johnson was strongly

confessional and with a steadfast firmness, he adhered to the binding character of the confession.

Hertzberg continues by underlining how he had followed Johnson closely up until Johnson's death: From Johnson's religious awakening in the mid-fifties, Hertzberg's presence at Johnson's biblical lectures and up to their fellow membership in the church committee of Christiania and the National Commission of Church meetings; a fellowship lasting up to Johnson's death. Also elsewhere Hertzberg underlined the considerable impact Johnson had on his own views. In his retrospective book covering the years between 1844 and 1873, Hertzberg explains the conflicts that arouse in the teacher environments at Hamar in the late sixties and early seventies with the contrast between his own views as a Johnson-disciple and the views held by the Grundtvigians at Sagatun.¹⁵

Thus, Johnson's influence over Hertzberg can clearly be traced back to his study days, and continued throughout his career. Johnson formed his view on church and society: Hertzberg had learned Johnson's lectures by heart and could develop his own views upon this background.

Nils Hertzberg's programme article in Norsk Skoletidende

Vistnok skal Skolen ligesom Hjemmet være et fredfyldt Sted, hvis Gjerning trives bedst i stilhed uden at forstyrres af det rastløse, larmende Liv udenfor; thi den Kilde, hvorfra Skolen øser sin rette Velsignelse, er dog til Syvende og Sidst den stille og bramfri Lærergjerning, hvor Læreren arbejder som for Guds og ikke som for Menneskers Ansigt, og hvor han røgter sine Lam, dreven dertil af den rette Hyrdes Kjærlighed.

Paa den anden Side er det ligesaavist en Livstrang for Skolen ikke at stænge sig ude fra et levende Vexelforhold med Livet; ligesom Hjemmet er dens moderlige Jordbund, hvor den har sine Hjerterødder, og hvorfra den suger sin ædleste Næring, saa trænger den foroven til Lys og Varme fra de store Samfund, hvortil den skal forberede og indvie – Skole og Fædreland.

Just like the home, the school should be a peaceful place, whose mission is most comfortable in silence, without being disturbed from the restless and noisy life outside; thus the source, from which the school poured its right blessings, is at the end the calm and modest work as a teacher, where the teacher works for the

face of God and not for humans, and where he look after his lambs, driven by the love of the right shepherd.

On the other side, it is also a duty of the school not to exclude itself from a living reciprocity with life, just as the home is the motherly soil, where the heart roots are planted, and from where it takes its most noble nourishment, it also needs light and warmth from the society, for which it should prepare and initiate: School and the fatherland. ("Utgiverens Forord," *Norsk Skoletidende*, 16 and 23 January 1868)

The lines above state the core of Hertzberg's understanding of school. School should prepare for a life in service of church and country, and be intrinsically tied to the church. This was a teacher's foremost task, and he should therefore do his works before the face of God and not before human beings. This preparation also included that the teaching and learning at school be relevant for the life itself.

During the years of Hertzberg's editorship of *Norsk Skoletidende*, he used the periodical to promulgate his views on school and education, both by means of texts he had written himself, and by means of texts written by other contributors. The programme article in the first edition of the periodical, from which the quotation above is taken, provides a theological reasoning for the sharply defined understanding of the confessional duty of schools. The article discusses the threefold basis upon which schools should be built. Firstly, Hertzberg underlines that the foundations of school should be evangelical, thus implying that school should be both evangelical and ecclesiastical. Hence, Hertzberg continued, it should be felt and realised that schools were holy places, in which holy prayer was the basis of all activity. The evangelical foundation of school implies that the teacher should teach the child how to pray, and that he or she should pray with the child, as well as for the child. In accordance with this emphasis on the importance of school's evangelical character, Christian studies took a prominent place among school subjects. This view of the importance of Christian studies is defended throughout Hertzberg's editorship of *Norsk Skoletidende*, and can also be found in several other articles in this periodical.

Secondly, school should be evangelical Lutheran. Hertzberg argued that school had grown out as the noblest fruit of the Reformation's seeds, as well as being a child of the Reformation itself. By virtue of their affinity to the Lutheran church, Hertzberg continues, schools are obligated to mediate the treasure inherited from Luther's Reformation. This precious inheritance should be used actively, rather than being

stowed away. Thus, Martin Luther takes a prominent place as an educator in this periodical, and his teaching is used as a normative ideal in a number of schools' activities.

Hertzberg's point of departure for viewing school as evangelical Lutheran is the confessional writings. These writings could, in his view, be seen as the culmination of God's word in the time that they were written. Hence, the confessional writings should not only be seen as the property of the church and the clergy, but of all Christians, as well as the congregation. The confessional writings demonstrate a progression, with *Confessio Augustana* as the most developed. This progression shown within the church should be viewed as a model: those who are moved by the gospel should not settle for a minimum of Christian truth, but should strive for a deeper understanding. Teachers working in an evangelical Lutheran school should love and share the faith of the evangelical Lutheran gospel, not just know and teach it intellectually. By virtue of the close relation between the church and the state, Norway could boast of a fortunate position, Hertzberg claimed. The teacher was not only a servant of the state and the local political authorities, but also a servant of the church and the local congregation.

The organic connection between the church and schools implied that schools should strive to have the dogmas as the starting point for all teaching. The schools should also keep a watchful eye over teachers' education, as well as how teachers live and how they learn. The vicar should have a central role in the surveillance of the school; he should preferably be both a member of the school commission and a superior with legal responsibilities. Thus, Hertzberg argues against those trying to replace the vicar with a secular and elected school administration. During the previous decade, there had been an ongoing political discussion of whether the vicar should have formal authority within the school commission.¹⁶ This discussion pointed toward the replacement of the ecclesiastical board effected by the school act of 1889. In Hertzberg's opinion, this possible replacement would represent an undermining of school's Christian identity. Rather than reducing the ecclesiastical dominance over schools, Hertzberg endeavoured to strengthen it by arguing that the church's administration should also be given an important role in supervising the schools, in addition to the vicar having the role as its superior. However, while Hertzberg admitted that schools should also strive to prepare students for a civic life, this aspect was nonetheless subordinated to the schools' ecclesiastical character.

Thirdly, Hertzberg pleaded for schools that should be people-oriented or public-minded. This expression clearly connects to contemporary discussions and outspoken ambitions to offer education to all social layers, and Hertzberg's argumentation must be seen against the backdrop of this present situation. The ambitions aiming to strengthen general education were not least seen within Grundtvigian circles, and pointed among other things back to the efforts of the Society for the Promotion of Public Enlightenment.¹⁷ The society, established in Christiania in 1851, played an important role in increasing the level of enlightenment at large, not least by virtue of publishing books with general interest. In addition, their periodical *Folkevennen*, which started in 1852, helped increase the general level of enlightenment. The Society for the Promotion of Public Enlightenment, in which Grundtvigians like Hartvig Nissen, Ole Vig, and Eilert Sundt were among prominent members, contributed substantially to the formation of an opinion on the meaning of the expression "the people" (*folket*). This can for example be seen in Ole Vig's introductory article in the first edition of *Folkevennen*.¹⁸ Here, "the people" included all social layers, instantiated with the poor fisherman at the desolate reef as well as high officials in the government. The background of including all layers of society in the enlightenment project was given through a common spirit and expressed through attributes with a distinguished national character – just as we had the same mother tongue and homeland, Vig underlined, we should also have enlightenment in common. Hence, for Ole Vig and his acquaintances, enlightenment was closely connected with inborn characteristics, with a potential to be awakened among the people at large.

A new understanding of public-mindedness

The national orientation promoted by the members of the Society for the Promotion of Public Enlightenment clearly draws on Grundtvig's ideas. In the introduction to his manifesto for the Folk High School, published in 1838, Grundtvig connected general education with oral language, and particularly the mother tongue.¹⁹ General education thus became a national attribute, sharply defined on the basis of national borders and the people. Each and every man had an imbued potential for education. This potential could be awakened through reading texts in the mother tongue, as the national spirit was deposited in the language. This emphasis on the esteem of the spoken mother tongue pointed forward to the

formation of a strengthened national identity, rapidly growing in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Hertzberg's approach to the topic is quite critical, and he clearly connects to the negative aspects of the formation of a national identity. Hertzberg underlines that public-mindedness often connects with national self-righteousness, self-worship, and people's attempts to praise and strengthen these improper habits. Thus, in his opinion, selfishness and egoism are not only characteristics of individuals, they may also be attributes of a society. From the outset, he seems to be in accordance with his adversaries, emphasising that the ultimate goal for both individuals and the Nation is to fulfil an inborn potential by growing into themselves. Nationality or public-mindedness reveals itself in a number of ways through people's habits, language, literature, or the arts. However, unlike his adversaries, he suggests a negative fulfilment of this imbued capability. According to Hertzberg, man can be seen as a vessel with a potential to be filled with either good or bad; it can either be imbued with divine meaning, or alternatively brought to spiritual decay. The latter alternative is often seen under the pretext of virtuous bourgeoisie. Thus, Hertzberg's understanding of man's inborn capacity includes a negative dimension, which is lacking among the Grundtvigians.

Hertzberg suggests an alternative definition of the expression, in which Christian revelation and Christian faith are central. He rhetorically asks whether or not the individual or the Nation themselves are able to bring their inborn potential to a positive fulfilment and to avoid damnation. The answer is negative – neither man nor the Nation was able to carry out their innate positive potential. In Hertzberg's view, the Christian gospel or revelation was decisive for attaining the correct form of public-mindedness.

Just as Man can come to himself or become a character in the right meaning of the word with and through Christianity exclusively, thus can the People at large also reach its final goal only through the Christian gospel. ("Udgiverens Forord," *Norsk Skoletidende*, 23 January 1869)

This capability was given through the nature of Christian religion. Christian revelation and Christianity had the potential to adapt to their actual surroundings, different languages, and ways of thinking, without abandoning their character. The Christian gospel can be compared with the sun, says Hertzberg, having the same ability to reflect all colours of the

rainbow. An example of Christianity's resiliency can be seen by using Martin Luther as an example: Luther complained about the difficulty in getting the Hebrew nightingale to sing like the German cuckoo. This points to the importance of portraying the word of God not only by means of German vocabulary, but in the spirit of the German mother tongue. The importance of its adaption to the local conditions can also be exemplified through church and mission history – the preaching of the Christian gospel has proved to be most successful where it was adapted to that already known among the people.

The most important precondition for reaching the highest goal for mankind is given through Man's longing for redemption: man's most significant characteristic was given through his worldly and sinful origin, and just as this is a result of the fall of man by virtue of his own nature, its only capacity is to lead humanity astray from truth. The civic life can be ascribed a preparatory role in attaining the Christian gospel, as it helped man understand that he was in a situation where he was in need of salvation – a salvation only obtainable through the Christian gospel. Primary education could be given a core function in this regard: the advantage of the schools was their capacity to deepen and strengthen domestic knowledge – by having home-oriented lessons as their point of departure, schools could pave their way to the children's love and understanding, and prepare them for adult life. In this way, schools are people-oriented or public-minded. This public-mindedness includes an understanding of the nature of society, in which the home has only a minor role. Schools have several means to awaken the predilection for the fatherland – they can provide pictures of life and of the child's native country, it can awaken the child's faculty for domestic writings as well as opening the childish eye and ear to the kingdom of poetry and song. Hertzberg uses a national hymn by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson to illustrate his overall point ("Vi Nordmænd vil synge for Norge en Sang"). The text in this hymn, written in 1859, has a double entendre – its meaning can refer to the nation as well as the school.

Consequently, by including a negative potential of humanity's inborn capability, and by so doing, defining public-mindedness in opposition to his Grundtvigian adversaries, Hertzberg limits the definition of the expression "the people" to those who have received the Christian revelation. What is important for the people is not a question of education, but rather a question of having received the grace of God, as humans born with original sin. Hertzberg thus defines public-mindedness within the frames of Lutheran theology as well as in light of the theological

inheritance mediated by Gisle Johnson.²⁰ Man is born with original sin and strives for redemption, which can only be given through the Christian gospel. A true public-mindedness can be reached through Christian revelation alone, and Christian revelation is thereby the prerequisite for the construction of a People or a Nation. By being an extended arm of the church and an important educator, school has a privileged position in helping children to attain Christian revelation, and school should thereby be conscious of both *what* it mediates and *how* its teachings and lessons are mediated. Moreover, school has a special function in awakening a child's love for the homeland demarcated by national borders. Nevertheless, within the limits of the politically defined nation, there are both inhabitants included in Hertzberg's understanding of "the people" and inhabitants not included in this defined group.

Gisle Johnson's ecclesiology as a model

It is in this definition of "the people" and of public-mindedness that Hertzberg seems explicitly to be drawing on Gisle Johnson's ecclesiology. In his programme article in the periodical *Luthersk Kirketidende*, founded by Johnson in 1863, Johnson defined the true nature of the church.²¹ In accordance with Confessio Augustana VII, he defines the church as the congregation of saints:

As we believe that in the midst of this sinful world, there are also so-called "Saints", Sinners who have been sanctified by God's grace through faith in Christ, we also believe in a congregation including and surrounding all these Saints, that we call the Church.²²

Johnson continues by distinguishing the church as both visible and invisible, thereby also continuing to draw on Lutheran theology. By virtue of being the carrier of the means by which God gives grace, the church is visible, and by virtue of being the concrete congregation for believers, it is invisible. These different aspects of the church do not necessarily coincide. In Johnson's view, it is possible to belong to the visible church without being a member of the invisible church. Conversely, it is not possible to be a member of the invisible church without being a member of the visible church. The members of the invisible church are only those who are "the limbs on the body of Christ". The real church is then a congregation of holy and true believers. By virtue of its visible appearance, it is a mixed congregation, where "holy" and "evil",

“believers” and “disbelievers” are merged together.²³ The Norwegian theologian Hallgeir Elstad has emphasised that this was the current situation for the church in Hertzberg’s own time – the real church is within the actual church, but does not coincide with it, nor are they identical.²⁴

It is this understanding of the church which can be transformed into Nils Hertzberg’s view about school’s obligation to be public-minded or people-oriented. School has an important role in mediating the Christian gospel, thereby laying the foundations for forming “the people”. This group of people, who have received Christian revelation, will always be part of a nation. School’s mandate as an educationalist in this regard is thereby twofold: it should strive to mediate the Christian gospel, as well as endeavouring to strengthen the love for the child’s native country. The first goal will always be superior to the second goal.

This also provides a deeper understanding of Hertzberg’s continuous efforts to keep a confessional school, as can be seen in texts and lectures written in the 1870s and 1880s. For historians, Hertzberg is perhaps most known for having published a critical reply to Johan Sverdrup’s suggestion for a public school reform in 1884. Sverdrup’s suggestion drew much attention by reason of being published in a newspaper immediately after Sverdrup took the position as a prime minister in Norway’s first parliamentary government, and must be seen in the continuation of his suggestion to replace the existing religious subject by secular political and democratic teaching.²⁵ In his reply, Hertzberg defended the old school system, and underlined the importance of schools’ Lutheran character. This can be seen in the context of Hertzberg’s theological inheritance: he builds upon a theological foundation in which man’s original sin and the longing for redemption is emphasised. Closely related to the Lutheran church, schools are ascribed a prominent role in mediating the gospel to the people, and all attempts to weaken the relation between the church and school counts for Hertzberg as being against the church’s true purpose.

Teacher’s communication and the need to protect school from contemporary dangers

In prolongation of this, the teacher’s communication is regarded to be of the highest importance in Hertzberg’s ideal school. This can for instance be seen in his text *Skolen og Kristendommen* (The School and Christianity),

originally given as a lecture at the Nordic School Meeting in Stockholm in 1880, with the text published two years later.²⁶ According to Hertzberg, the teacher was responsible for bringing life to what he taught as well as for realising school's Christian values. It is thereby important that his behaviour aimed at strengthening children's faith and religious understanding, rather than weakening the reverence of the Christian mysteries and morals. According to Hertzberg, one can find two different kinds of teachers. Firstly, there are those confessing the Christian faith and viewing the Christian gospel as an active force, and secondly, those sincerely rejecting Christianity. The former are those who actually belong in schools. Hertzberg can therefore quote the gospel of Matthew as the most important goal for the teacher's work: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt 12:30).

As the teachers can be regarded as the foundation of school's activity, it is of the utmost importance that members of lay Christian congregations have no opportunity to become teachers. If they do so, they will tear down the schools' Lutheran identity. Hertzberg claims that the purest version of the Christian religion is that which is found in the evangelical Lutheran church, and as the children are baptised into the bosom of this church, Hertzberg states that it is consequently important for them to be raised in the church's faith in schools. Nevertheless, Hertzberg never forces a religious uniformity or restraint on conscience upon the teachers, even if he claims that they should confess the Lutheran faith, as a forced confession would not serve the cause. Rather, the point of departure for all teaching should be the experiences of each individual teacher. This is the premise of a genuine and honest appearance. Hertzberg underlines that teaching should not only convey the knowledge of the holy truth, but also even be a witness of its salvation. The premise of its possibility to affect man's heart is that teaching is affected by the truth of Christianity.²⁷ This pertains not only to Christianity as a school subject, but its religious spirit should permeate all school subjects.²⁸

Thus, Hertzberg presupposes that the teacher's personal experience is in accordance with the teachings carried out by the evangelical Lutheran confession. However, he continues, in his own time this was secured through a strong relation between the church and the country's political system. According to the current situation, Norwegian schools had the necessary prerequisites to mediate a teaching permeated by a Christian spirit. On a central level, it was liable to ecclesiastical government, and on the local level, the clergy had power through its position

as chairman for the school commission. By underscoring the teacher's role in realising Christian values, he pursued prominent tendencies in eighteenth century pietistic schools: The 1739 school act emphasised how teachers continuously should work on strengthening pupils' Christian faith.

Hertzberg also underscores the need to protect schools from the dangers of his own time, as well as to warn against these dangers. In a text written in the mid-1880s, he stated that the nation's citizens would always be responsible for taking notice of how governmental authorities looked after people's most important interests.²⁹ In his own time, there were explicit dangers threatening schools, not least by virtue of the contemporary anti-religious movements: communism, nihilism, socialism, and anarchism. Some countries had also been devoured by disbelief, as could for instance be seen in France. France was known as a country where people had opposed Christian belief throughout the ages.³⁰ Recently, the French had introduced a new school act, in which the ultimate aim was to abandon Christian teachings in schools. Hertzberg argued that this infiltrated students' mindsets by means of a coaxing rhetoric – through handbooks or textbooks in "Morality", "Sociology", or "Profane Knowledge" (l'instruction morale, civique, manuel d'instruction laïque), disbelief systematically snaked its way in. These books were written with questions and replies, and were thus written in the same way as Erik Pontoppidan's explanation of Luther's catechism. One of these books had gained entry to Norway through references and positive reviews in the paper *Verdens Gang*. This book was written by Paul Bert, a French politician who had publicly derided the Scriptures, miracles, and grace.³¹ Moreover, radical domestic newspapers, similar to *Verdens Gang*, had published a number of texts casting a critical light upon Christian faith and practice. By virtue of getting public attention, they could also be regarded as a potential threat towards confessional schools. These papers were also supporting well-known left-wing leaders in Norway, and thus were also supporting people who had been scoffing at and ridiculing the church and gospel.

Consequently, the teachers were given a core role in securing the Lutheran character of society. On one side, the teachers were responsible for teaching Lutheran faith and thereby ensuring that the students would become citizens of both the visible and invisible nation, of the politically and geographically delimited nation as well as the nation consisting of believers; the members of the true *ecclesia*. On the other side, the teachers were responsible for ensuring that the students

were given knowledge enough to refrain from all kinds of contemporary dangers, as well as giving them knowledge that was relevant for life itself.

Epilogue: a historical context for the contemporary RE situation

Hertzberg's insistence on an organic connection between the Lutheran church and the school, in the sense that Lutheran teaching should permeate all teaching, can be said to be pointing forward to the contemporary RE situation in Norway, as well as the RE situation in all the Nordic countries. Even if the RE subject is composed of different aspects, Lutheran Christianity still plays a prominent place in the curriculum. Evangelical Lutheran Christianity is seen as a precondition of our cultural identity as well as the foundation of our values, and it is thus regarded as an explanation of our habits, our way of thinking and living.³² This transcends, obviously, the contemporary secular character of the Nordic countries.³³ Mette Buchardt has argued that this can be ascribed to the Nordic reception of German Cultural Protestantism in the first half of the twentieth century. Through analysis of writings by three transnationally acting theologians/religious historians in the first half of the twentieth century (Edvard Lehman, Denmark, Nathan Söderblom, Sweden and Eivind Berggrav, Norway), all of them occupied with education, she points to a shift in the relation between church and state: "The church becomes the nation's inner core, but is, as institution, dissolved and subordinated to the will of the state".³⁴ Thus, Buchardt continues, the construction of the contemporary RE subject in the Nordic countries, in which RE not only is something that should be *learned about*, but rather *be learned*, can be seen in light of this legacy from the Nordic interpretation of German cultural Protestantism. This points to an organic bond between the culture and the Lutheran church that can be seen independently from the secular character of the society. People like Hertzberg laid an important foundation for this, with their argumentation for an intrinsic bond between church, school, and society. This survived and transcended attempts to dissolve the relation between church and school done by Hertzberg's contemporaries, like for instance Viggo Ullmann, and it survived and transcended secularising tendencies seen in the school acts in Hertzberg's own lifetime (1860 and 1889). Much more work needs now to be done on this topic, and a comparative analysis between the Nordic countries in Hertzberg's period can shed a new light on the results carried out in the article by Buchardt.

Merethe Roos
IKRS
University of South-Eastern Norway
3600 Kongsberg
Norway
Merethe.Roos@usn.no

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes

1. Roos, *Tekstkulturer og modell-lesere*.
2. See for example Thorkildsen, *Grundtvigianisme og nasjonalisme*.
3. Skottene, *Den konfesjonelle skolen*, 47–8.
4. Elstad, "Vort Folks Velfærd," 639.
5. Slagstad, [*Sporten*], 314 ff.
6. Skottene, *Den konfesjonelle skolen*, 48.
7. In an excellent bachelor thesis delivered at Högskolan Dalarna, Sweden, Emma Hellström has argued against a common theory of secularisation with regards to religious education in Swedish schools. On the background of close readings of teacher periodicals from around 1880 and 1910, Hellström demonstrates that elementary school teachers in Sweden in the 1880s taught and promulgated an evangelical teaching in religion, closely connected to the Lutheran character of the Swedish school. This corresponds with Ragnar Skottene's explanation of the situation in Norway. See Hellström, *Kampen om kristendomsundervisningen i folkskolan*, cf. Skottene, *Den konfesjonelle skolen*, 47. The results from Hellström's thesis point to the necessity of broad comparative and analytical studies of the religious character of the Nordic schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
8. Buchardt, "Cultural Protestantism."
9. Oftestad, *Den norske statsreligionen*, 114.
10. Dokka, *Fra allmueskole*, 343 ff.
11. Skjelbred et al., *Norsk lærebokhistorie*, 77 ff.
12. Rønningen, *De bedrøvede menn*, 36.
13. Hertzberg, *Min barndoms- og ungdomstid*, 132 ff.
14. *Ibid.*, 134.
15. Hertzberg, *Min Skolemestertid: 1844–1873*, 135.
16. Dokka, *Fra allmueskole til folkeskole*.
17. Hylland, *Folkeopplysning*.
18. Vig, "Til tidsskriftets læsere," 8.
19. Grundtvig, "En norsk Høi-skole."
20. Elstad, *Dei såkalla 'johnsonske prestane'*, 66.
21. Johnson, "Hvad er Kirken?", 1–12, 33–38, 65–74, 401–412.
22. *Ibid.*, 6.

23. Ibid., 90.
24. Elstad, *Dei såkalla 'johnsonske prestane'*, 71.
25. Dokka, *Fra allmueskole til folkeskole*, 343 f; Roos, *Kraften i allmenn dannelse*.
26. Hertzberg, *Skolen og Kristendommen*, 6
27. Ibid., 31.
28. Ibid., 17–8.
29. Hertzberg, “De farer, der True.”
30. Ibid., 4.
31. Paul Bert was a leading spokesman for anticlericalism in France, and Minister of Education in Leon Gambetta’s government.
32. According to the World Values Survey, the Scandinavian countries are regarded to be the most secular corner of the world. See Lundby and Repstad, *Scandinavia*, 20.
33. Danish Curriculum: <https://emu.dk/grundskole/kristendomsundskab>, Swedish Curriculum: <https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/grundskolan/laroplan-och-kursplaner-for-grundskolan/laroplan-lgr11-for-grundskolan-samt-for-forskoleklassen-och-fritids-hemmet?url=1530314731%2Fcompulsorycw%2Fjsp%2Fsubject.htm%3FsubjectCode%3DGRGRREL01%26tos%3Dgr%26p%3Dp&sv.url=12.5dfce44715d35a5cdfa219f>, Norwegian Curriculum: <https://www.udir.no/kl06/RLE1-02/Hele/Formaal>. All web resources accessed 8 November 2019.
34. Buchardt, “Cultural Protestantism,” 147.

Bibliography

- Buchardt, Mette. “Cultural Protestantism and Nordic Religious Education: An Incision in the Historical Layers Behind the Nordic Welfare State Model.” *Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education*, no. 2 (2015): 131–165.
- Dokka, Hans-Jorgen. *Fra allmueskole til folkeskole: Studier i den norske folkeskoles historie i det 19. århundre*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967.
- Elstad, Hallgeir. ‘... en Kraft og et Salt i Menigheten ...’: Ein Studie av dei såkalla ‘johnsonske prestane’ i siste halvpart av 1800-talet i Noreg. Oslo: Unipub, 2000.
- Elstad, Hallgeir. “Det gjælder en Kamp for Vort Folks Velfærd: Til tolkinga av ‘Til Kristendommens venner i vort Land’.” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 4 (2008): 633–655.
- Grundtvig, N. F. S. “Til Nordmænd om en norsk Høi-skole.” [http://www.grundtvigsværker.dk/tekstvisning/728/0#{"0":0,"v0":0,"k":0}](http://www.grundtvigsværker.dk/tekstvisning/728/0#{).
- Hellström, Emma. “Kampen om kristendomsundervisningen i folkskolan: En studie av debatten om kristendomsundervisningen i Svensk Läraretidning under 1880- och 1910-talet.” Bachelor Thesis, Högskolan Dalarna, 2018.
- Hertzberg, Nils Egede. *De farer, der True den Kristelige Skole i vort Land: Foredrag ved Folkemødet [Lecture at the Popular Meeting] i Sarpsborg den 7de April 1885*. Christiania: E. C. Bjørnstad & cos Bogtrykkeri, 1885.
- Hertzberg, Nils Egede. *Fra min barndoms og ungdoms tid*. Christiania: Aschehoug, 1909.
- Hertzberg, Nils Egede. *Minder fra min Skolemestertid: 1844–1873*. Christiania: Aschehoug, 1910.
- Hertzberg, Nils Egede. *Skolen og kristendommen: To Foredrag*. Kristiania: Mallings Boghandels Forlag, 1882.

- Hertzberg, Nils Egede. *Statsminister Sverdrups Forslag til Reform i vort Folkeskolevæsen og forhv. Statsraad N. Hertzbergs bemærkninger til dette*. Kristiania: N. Hviids Enkes Bogtrykkeri, 1884.
- Hylland, Ole Marius. *Folkeopplysning som utopi: Tidsskriftet Folkevennen og forholdet mellom folk og elite*. Oslo: Novus forlag, 2010.
- Johnson, Gisle. "Hvad er Kirken?" *Luthersk Kirketidende?*, Vol 1, 1863, 1–12, 33–38, 65–74, 401–412.
- Lundby, Knut, and Pål Repstad. "Scandinavia: Traits, Trends, and Tensions." In *Contesting Religion: The Media Dynamics of Cultural Conflicts in Scandinavia*, edited by Knut Lundby, 13–32. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.
- Oftestad, Bernt T. *Den norske statsreligionen: Fra øvrighetskirke til demokratisk statskirke*. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 1998.
- Rønningen, John. *De bedrøvede menn: En beretning om den jarlsbergske frimenighet*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1972.
- Roos, Merethe. *Kraften i allmenn dannelse: Skolen som formidler av humaniora: Bidrag til en historisk tilnærming*. Kristiansand: Portal, 2016.
- Roos, Merethe. "Å velte en kjempe: Tekstkulturer og modell-lesere i Nils Egede Hertzberg's tekster." *Sakprosa* 8, no. 2 (2016). <https://journals.uio.no/sakprosa/article/view/2672>.
- Skjelbred, Dagrun, Norunn Askeland, Eva Maagerø, and Bente Aamotsbakken. *Norsk lærebokhistorie: Allmueskolen – folkeskolen – grunnskolen 1739–2013*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2017.
- Skottene, Ragnar. *Den konfesjonelle skole: Debatten om den konfesjonelle profil i kristendomsundervisningen og grunnskolen i Norge fra 1870-årene til 1990-årene*. Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolen, 1994.
- Slagstad, Rune. *[Sporten]: en idéhistorisk studie*. Oslo: Pax, 2000.
- Thorkildsen, Dag. *Grundtvigianisme og nasjonalisme i Norge i det 19. århundre*. Oslo: Norges forskningsråd, 1996.
- Vig, Ole. "Til tidsskriftets læsere." *Folkevennen*, Vol 1 (1852): 1–14.