Summary Broadly speaking the research topic is about the relationship between church and the society. During the socioeconomical situation caused by the depression in Finnish economics in 1990-1994 the bishops of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church have made many speeches in the field of social ethics and welfare politics. This study aims at discovering whether these speeches, other elements in Lutheran thought and the tradition of the Lutheran church mediate a welfare political doctrine of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church, that can be used as a mean of influence inside the church and in the relationship between the church and the society.

The aim of the study is to find out whether it is possible to construct such a welfare political doctrine of the evangelical-lutheran church.

The task is to find out of which elements such doctrine consists of and how it appears in comparison to the doctrines of Finnish society, the Catholic and the Orthodox Church.

Method used is a qualitative interpretation of literary material. The operations of the interpretation are ordinary combinations of reading, thinking and writing. All these operations are aimed to be critically used.

Maybe the most surprising result of the study is the discovering of the fact in what extent the welfare political thinking of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church is based upon old thinking of the times of the Reformation. According to that view the reality reflects the character of God, a love that donates itself. The 'natural' state of man however is exactly in opposite to the order of love. Man is selfish and seeks in everything his own good. According to the same view God masks himself behind the needs of the neighbour and proclaims His will by bringing the needs of the neighbour in to the daylight, which needs may be physical or mental. Consequently the Lutheran thought and practice place the needs of the neighbour here and now as the goal of socialpolitical activity.

There is a clear contradiction between the above described 'natural' state of man and the need of taken into consideration the neighbours needs. How is it possible that man seeking only his own good can take care of the neighbours needs? The Lutheran answer to this is a 'compulsory' neighbourcharity put into practice by the authorities. This tought is included already in the doctrine of the earthly regime from the time of the Reformation. Instead of waiting that the good will sometimes produces results which are considered as fully insufficient laws are to be prescribed and when required the coersive means of the authorities are to be used in order to lead man in another direction as he by nature is inclined to.

From this basis it's logical that the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church supports structural welfare arrangements, the nordic welfare state, as opposed to the Catholic Church which regards the family, the voluntary organizations and the church as the main welfare agents. In the study it has been observed that the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church is one of the strongest supporters of the idea of the welfare state and in so doing is also prepared to criticize the decision-makers and to oppose the expansion of the market mechanism.

The main sources The socioethical speeches of the bishops of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church in the 1990's Raunio, Antti 1997: Luterilainen ja katolinen käsitys sosiaalisesta vastuusta. (The Lutheran and Catholic view of social responsibility)