



# HUMAN COMES FIRST

*The Christian  
Theology of*

# N.F.S. Grundtvig

Edward Broadbridge  
(translator and editor)

Aarhus University Press



# HUMAN COMES FIRST

*The Christian Theology of N.F.S. Grundtvig*

Edward Broadbridge  
Translator and Editor

Introduction: Niels Henrik Gregersen  
Contributions by Hans Raun Iversen, Brian Degn  
Mårtensson, Michael Schelde, Vanja Thaulow,  
Steen Tullberg, and Ole Vind

*“Human comes first, and Christian next,  
for that is life’s true order” (1837)*

Aarhus University Press | 

*Human Comes First. The Christian Theology of N.F.S. Grundtvig*

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af 8de Septbr. af Middag i efter D. 12 Trin: Kl. 3 + Aftre midtligg.  
 som var en Mandag i efter D. 12 Trin: Kl. 3 + Aftre midtligg.  
 Dens minne ejen jeg hvem Catharine Maria Bang lyckelig  
 forlod med en Søn, som den 10de dage blev also af mig  
 givne og kaldet Nicolaj Frideric Severin Grundtvig  
 fra vort bopæl og kaldet Nicolaj Frideric Severin Grundtvig  
 som Madame Carstensen bar ham da — Saligd. 8de Oct.  
 Indhod. 22 Oct. 1783. som var en Mandag den 8de dags  
 som var en Mandag den 8de dags  
 da jeg valget min Kære Samme kvarigud. Den Raben til Beltringe  
 var fæv, og frøven Hulman fra Ronnebæksholt ved Roskilde, en ondig  
 kaldet ham: S. J. H. Catharine Bang v. Raben til Beltringe og  
 Lejlende, jeg hæmmede mig og konsekvent holdt Benning født til  
 Ronnebæksholt, da jeg var i Helsingør ved Helsingørsgade. Jeg kom til Helsingør  
 i Sæby, jeg Reenbey i Brænde, jeg Skib i Mellem og  
 jeg kom til Hørby og Kunderup. Jeg kom til Dikkel først.  
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## Foreword

Grundtvig is primarily a theologian and pastor. He graduated from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1803, was ordained in 1811, and remained a priest until his death, though occasionally without a parish. From 1839-72 he was pastor of Vartov Church in the heart of Copenhagen, which is the building most closely associated with him.

‘Human comes first, and Christian next’ is a famous Grundtvig quotation, and aptly summarises the starting-point for his theology. For the first time in English *Human Comes First* presents his key theological ideas as articles, book chapters, sermons, and letters. From his extensive production a central selection has been undertaken by the translation committee comprising in alphabetical order: Edward Broadbridge, Niels Henrik Gregersen, Anders Holm, Hans Raun Iversen, Uffe Jonas, Ove Korsgaard, Kim Arne Pedersen, Michael Schelde, and Ole Vind.

This is the third book in the five-volume series ‘N.F.S Grundtvig. Works in English’, which seeks to give an insight into the time when Grundtvig was writing as well as to bring a present-day perspective to Grundtvig. His thinking belongs to a specific period and was written into a particular context, but at the same time many of his ideas have become historically significant, with an impact far beyond the 19th century – and far beyond the Danish border. Niels Henrik Gregersen’s introduction to *Human Comes First* draws a line right up to today’s theological debate. The individual introductions are written by Grundtvig scholars, who place the texts in their contexts. The conversation on current theological issues is firmly supported by the Grundtvig Study Centre through the publication of books on Grundtvig’s theological ideas and through regular conferences with contemporary relevance.

The Grundtvig Study Centre was established on 1st January 2009 to continue the work of the former Centre for Grundtvig Studies from 1988. It has taken the initiative for the present translations and is also responsible for an ongoing critical edition of Grundtvig’s Works (in Danish) as they were published in his lifetime, see [www.grundtvigsvaerker.dk](http://www.grundtvigsvaerker.dk). The Centre supports research focusing on all areas of interest in Grundtvig studies, including comparative research initiatives that offer new perspec-

tives on Grundtvig's ideas, supportive knowledge exchange, and the dissemination and understanding of his work.

A timeline, extensive footnotes, a bibliography of works in English, a few selected illustrations, and a comprehensive index provide readers with a scholarly basis on which to build.

Edward Broadbridge is the translator and editor of the volume, with John Nicholson and Hanna Broadbridge as language consultants. The main introduction has been written by Niels Henrik Gregersen and there are chapter contributions by Hans Raun Iversen, Brian Degn Mårtensson, Michael Schelde, Vanja Thaulow, Steen Tullberg, and Ole Vind.

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Michael Schelde, Director of the Grundtvig Study Centre, Aarhus University.

## Editor's/Translator's Note

*Edward Broadbridge*

### Sentence length

Whereas Grundtvig's hymns are immediately understandable except for a few archaic words, his theological writings, like all his prose, are by modern standards convoluted. With an *average* sentence length of 110 words, they are no longer read below university level, and even there only by theologians and aficionados. Take for instance the chapter 'On our Third Article of Faith'. This contains 4,012 words in a mere 33 sentences with only 28 paragraphs, so most sentences fill a whole paragraph. The average sentence length is thus 121 words! The longest sentence runs to 235 words and contains 27 commas. To make Grundtvig accessible to the modern reader, I have disentangled the complex syntax and rewritten a single paragraph of Danish as 7 or 8 sentences in English. However, in each of the five volumes in the series I have left (and noted) a single English sentence in its original Danish length and syntax – see footnote 76 in this volume.

### Specific editorial usage

To give a sense of the original power of Grundtvig's theological writing I have occasionally used italics for emphasis, and, hopefully, for easier reading.

Grundtvig consistently uses 'England' when referring to the United Kingdom, a usage which is still widespread and which I have retained for historical reasons.

I have capitalised the twin sacraments in the Danish Lutheran Church thus: 'Baptism' and 'Holy Communion'. Similarly 'Church' and 'State' are for the most part capitalised. The German language still uses capital letters for all nouns; this was also the custom in Denmark until 1948. So when Grundtvig writes about the truth of the word (*ordets sandhed*), he may in fact be speaking about the Truth of the Word (*Ordets Sandhed*)! Most likely he is referring to the latter. Following this usage, I have capitalised 'the Devil', 'Heaven' and 'Hell' as well as 'the Articles of Faith'.

Where Grundtvig always speaks of Man and Mankind, I have deliberately made these concepts gender-neutral, using ‘human beings’, ‘humankind’, or simply the first person plural – except in the case of ‘Natural Man’. However, since female pastors were not allowed in the Danish Lutheran Church before 1948, Grundtvig’s references are always to male pastors, so I have retained this usage. For historical, biblical (and psychological?) reasons we still envisage the Devil as male, which is in direct contradiction to what I have just written. Are not the snake in Paradise and the Tempter in the desert also gender-neutral?<sup>i</sup>

I have translated the Danish word *Alter-Bogen* with the English ‘Altar Book’, which is the US Episcopal translation, whereas the Church of England uses ‘Service Book’. The ‘Altar Book’ contains the liturgy for the services of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.

One idiosyncratic translation I have retained throughout: Grundtvig is fond of assuring his readers that “it is clear as sunlight” – where ‘daylight’ would be the obvious choice, but would miss his veneration of the sun as a favourite metaphor.

I follow Grundtvig’s paragraph demarcations for the most part, until by modern standards they seem overstretched, i.e. over a whole page.

Footnotes occupy roughly a seventh of the complete text, since Grundtvig himself makes so many references, and the modern reader needs a good deal of contextual information. On the assumption that readers may wish to pick and choose among the chapters, some important footnotes are repeated.

### *Folkekirken* in translation

Until 1849 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark – to give it its correct modern name – was the State Church of Denmark, regulated by the absolute monarch and his civil servants. With the new democratic constitution of 1849, this church was given absolute priority, since its membership included almost the entire Danish population. It was renamed The People’s Church (*Folkekirken*), a usage which Grundtvig employed and which I have retained. Other modern translations vary:

The Folk Church: E. D. Nielsen (1955)

The Danish Church: K. Stevenson (1993) M.S. Lausten (2002)

The Church of Denmark: G. Wainwright (1993) and A.A. Allchin (1997)

The National Church: S.A.J. Bradley (2008)

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i. The American scholar Judith Plaskow has written: “...feminists, although we continually confront human evil in the form of patriarchy and other destructive structures of hierarchical relation, have not yet fully addressed the theological question of evil as a feminist issue” (quoted in Arthur Roy Eckardt, *On the Way to Death*, Transaction Publishers 1996).

## *Folkekirken* in the Danish Constitution

The relevant paragraphs and sections, introduced in 1849 and last revised in 1953, read as follows:

§ 4 The Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be the Established Church of Denmark, and, as such, it shall be supported by the State.

§ 6 The King shall be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

§ 66 The constitution of the Established Church shall be laid down by Statute.

Section 67 [Right to Worship] The citizens shall be entitled to form congregations for the worship of God in a manner consistent with their convictions, provided that nothing at variance with good morals or public order shall be taught or done.

Section 68 [Church Contributions] No one shall be liable to make personal contributions to any denomination other than the one to which he adheres.

Section 69 [Regulation of Other Religious Bodies] Rules for religious bodies dissenting from the Established Church shall be laid down by Statute.

Section 70 [Freedom of Religion] No person shall for reasons of his creed or descent be deprived of access to complete enjoyment of his civic and political rights, nor shall he for such reasons evade compliance with any common civic duty.

## Biblical Quotations

All biblical quotations are from the *New International Bible* (UK), unless otherwise noted.

My thanks go to all the contributors listed below, as well as to Klaus Nielsen, Liselotte Larsen, and Else Riisager at the Grundtvig Centre for help with translation and bibliographical information.

## Notes on Contributors

### Translator and Editor

**Edward Broadbridge** (b.1944) BA London, MA Aarhus, taught English and Religious Studies at high schools in Denmark 1967-2008. Among his many theological translations are books on Ruth, Luke, Paul, and Titus of Bostra, as well as translations of 50 Danish hymns, *Hymns in English* (2009). He is also a librettist for Danish composers, a writer/director of children's musicals, and an official interpreter for the Danish legal system. His translations of Grundtvig began with *A Grundtvig Anthology* (1984) and include the first major appraisal of Grundtvig in English, *Tradition and Renewal* (1983), as well as *Grundtvig as a Political Thinker* by Ove Korsgaard (2014) and most of the essays in *Building the Nation. N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish National Identity* (2015).

His translation of *N.F.S. Grundtvig – A Primer* by Anders Holm is forthcoming.

He is the translator and editor of the 5-volume series, *N.F.S. Grundtvig. Works in English* (2008-20).

### Language Consultants

**Hanna Broadbridge** (b.1945) MA Aarhus English & Japanese, married Edward in 1967 and has been a teacher of English in Denmark 1971-2010 and lecturer in English at the Royal Academy of Education 1978-2003. She has been an external examiner in English at all the Danish universities 1998-2015. She is an official interpreter for the Danish legal system and represents the European Churches (minus the Roman Catholic Church) in the Education Committee of the Council of Europe.

**John Nicholson** (b.1938) MA Oxon, married his Danish wife in 1966 and moved to Denmark in 1977. In England he worked in probation and prison after-care, in Denmark in refugee resettlement. In both countries he has designed and facilitated programmes for adult learning, including applied theology and Christian spirituality. He was a committee member of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in

Europe. For over 30 years he was active in retreat conducting and retreat development in Denmark. He was a language consultant on the above-mentioned *Hymns in English* and on the two previous volumes in this series.

## Introductions

**Niels Henrik Gregersen** (b.1956) MA & PhD Copenhagen Theology, held various faculty positions at Aarhus University 1986-2004, and from 2000 to 2004 was Research Professor in Theology and Science. Since 2004 he has been Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Copenhagen. Among his edited or co-edited English publications are: *From Complexity to Life: On the Emergence of Life and Meaning* (Oxford University Press, 2003); *The Gift of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology* (Fortress Press, 2005); *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology* (Fortress Press, 2015) and *Reformation Theology for a Post-secular Age: Løgstrup, Prenter, Wingren, and the Future of Scandinavian Creation Theology* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

**Hans Raun Iversen** (b.1948) MTheol Aarhus (1976), Doctor of Divinity Uppsala (2016), was Associate Professor in Practical Theology at Aarhus 1974-82 and at Copenhagen 1982-2018. He has conducted over 20 courses on Grundtvig's theology and specialises in church research – emphasising relationships between church and people in Denmark and the influence and perspectives of Grundtvig. He has published extensively in Danish. Among his publications in English are *Church, Society and Mission. Twelve Danish Contributions to International Discussions* (Copenhagen, 2010) and *Spirit and Life-Form. The Home, the People and the Church in Grundtvig's Time and Today* (Montreal, 2013).

**Brian Degn Mårtensson** (b.1979) gained an MPhil Aarhus (2013) on the relation between sense and sensibility in N.F.S. Grundtvig's educational and political philosophy. He has given lectures in many countries and writes on Grundtvig, Kierkegaard, philosophy, and education (especially the German tradition of pedagogics), as well as on the new 'pedagogy of the competitive state'. He has been a member of the digitalization and annotation staff of 'Grundtvig's Works' at the Grundtvig Centre since 2017.

**Michael Schelde** (b.1954) MTheol, MA Aarhus, PhD Copenhagen in Adult Education *Religion, Church and Enlightenment*; has since 2009 been the Director of The Grundtvig Centre at Aarhus University & Vartov, overseeing the digitalization of Grundtvig's works and the first comprehensive English edition. He coordinates all activities at the Centre, including the bi-annual Grundtvig conferences, and has co-edited two books on Grundtvig. He is planning a French translation of Grundtvig's educational

writings, as well as a Chinese version of Grundtvig's theological works, translated by Wen Ge (PhD Aarhus).

**Vanja Thaulow** (b.1977) MTheol Copenhagen (2005), was Pastor of Majbølle-Vigsnæs parish on Lolland 2007-11. She has been a member of the digitalization and annotation staff of 'Grundtvig's Works' at the Grundtvig Centre since 2011, and is currently studying for a PhD in Theology at Aarhus University on Grundtvig's theological polemics in the period 1810-25, and polemics as a genre.

**Steen Tullberg** (b.1968) MTheol Copenhagen (1999), is a former head of the Philosophical Department at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, which produced the complete works of Kierkegaard in Danish (1997-2013). He has been a member of the digitalization staff of 'Grundtvig's Works' at the Grundtvig Centre since 2013. His publications are primarily on the Danish and German reception of Kierkegaard, including 'Denmark: The Permanent Reception – 150 Years of Reading Kierkegaard' in *Kierkegaard's International Reception, vol. 1, Northern and Western Europe* (Ashgate, 2009).

**Ole Vind** (b.1944) MSc (1972), DPhil Copenhagen on Grundtvig and the History of Ideas (1999), has been a teacher at Grundtvig's People's High School, north of Copenhagen, since 1976. He writes regularly about intellectual history, the history of ideas, and the People's (Folk) High Schools. He has also published extensively on Grundtvig, including the chapter 'The Gordian Knot: Grundtvig and British Liberalism', in *Building the Nation. N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish National Identity* (Montreal, 2015).

## Timeline – Grundtvig as a pastor

- 1800 7 November. Begins study of Theology at Copenhagen University
- 1802 26 December. Preaches for the first time in Udby-Ørslev parish
- 1803 25 October. Gains Theology degree
- 1806 26 October. Preaches in Bøstrup Church
- 1807 15 February. Preaches again in Bøstrup Church
- 1808 1 September to 28 November. Chaplain for Langeland Territorial Army
- 1810 17 March. Gives dimissory sermon in Trinity Church, passes with Honours
- 1811 13 January. Applies to become curate to his father, Johan Grundtvig
  - 24 March. Passes *Cathechet* exam with honours and becomes a ‘church teacher of faith’
  - 24 May. Passes Bishop’s exam (in audience with the bishop) and can now be ordained
  - 16 June. Ordained by his brother Otto as his father’s personal curate in Udby-Ørslev
- 1813 5 January. Father dies, and later his mother moves to Præstø
  - 27 October. Moves back to Copenhagen
- 1815 5-8 January. Preaches in Frederiksberg Church
  - 26 December. Preaches in Frederiksberg Church and then declares he is resigning from the priesthood, partly because of the lack of support for his ‘old-fashioned’ preaching
- 1821 2 February. Becomes by royal decree parish pastor of Præstø-Skibbinge
  - 15 April/Palm Sunday. Installed in Præstø-Skibbinge
- 1822 6 November. Becomes by royal decree curate at the Church of Our Saviour, Copenhagen
  - 1 December. Installed at the Church of Our Saviour
- 1826 8 May. Following an audience with the King, sends resignation from his curacy in protest against losing a libel case to Professor H.N. Clausen and his general lack of support
  - 26 May. The King accepts his resignation

- 1831 24 November. Applies to the King for permission to form a free congregation at Frederik's German Church (which in 1901 became Christian's Church), which originally served the German population in Copenhagen
- 1832 28 January. Application rejected by the government  
11 February. Application again rejected by the government  
1 March. Allowed by royal decree to hold evening service at Frederik's German Church  
4 March. Preaches for the first time at Frederik's German Church. Remains at this church until 1839 but without the right to perform public church ceremonies
- 1839 25 March. Applies to the King for the pastorate at Vartov,<sup>2</sup> which is not a parish church  
28 May. Application granted  
9 June. Installed as pastor at Vartov  
21 July. Preaches for the first time at Vartov
- 1854 7 May. P.O. Boisen (1815-62), his son-in-law by his daughter Meta (1827-87), becomes his curate at Vartov
- 1856 June. While Vartov is being rebuilt, services are held at Christiansborg Palace Church
- 1858 January. Worship at Vartov is resumed
- 1861 29 May. On the 50th anniversary of his becoming a pastor, he is awarded the honorary title of Bishop of Zealand and is celebrated at Vartov; a medal is minted in his name
- 1867 14 April. During the Palm Sunday service at Vartov, he suffers a major breakdown in front of his congregation of over 400. He manages to complete the service, and is subsequently taken into medical care. His letter of resignation the following day is ignored  
He resumes his pastoral role at Christmas
- 1872 1 September. Preaches his last sermon, and dies the following day

2. The Vartov complex, next to City Square, Copenhagen, was built in 1722-55 as a hospital for the poor, the orphaned, the sick, and the elderly, but ceased operation as such in 1934. It was then used by the municipality until 1947, when it was taken over by Kirkeligt Forum, now Grundtvig's Forum. The present buildings house among others: Vartov Church, the Grundtvig Centre, the Grundtvig Library, the Grundtvig Academy, and Grundtvig's Forum. Also situated here are the Søren Kierkegaard Centre, the Danish Cultural Institute, and offices for the Copenhagen People's High School Association, the Danish Library Association, and a museum and a music association. The complex also houses two youth centres, the Vartov Kindergarten, and Copenhagen's Philatelic Club.



## 2. Udby Church and vicarage today

The country church set in the South Zealand landscape dates from c. 1150 and has fine frescos from 5 different periods. To the left can be seen the vicarage where the Grundtvig family lived and where he was born and baptised. Among the items in the Grundtvig Memorial Museum here are his writing-desk, his armchair, and the bible in illustration 6. (see [www.oerslevkirke.dk](http://www.oerslevkirke.dk)). Photo: Michael Schelde.

# Church and Culture in Living Interaction – Grundtvig the Theologian

*Niels Henrik Gregersen*

In depicting the contours of N.F.S. Grundtvig's theological universe, we shall trace his progress from a sensitive Romantic poet and historian into a theologian of classic calibre and scope. In his own 19<sup>th</sup> century context, Grundtvig (1783-1872) developed a theological vision with two ellipses: the primacy of God as the source, medium, and goal of all reality, and the primacy of humanity for understanding and living the Christian faith. "Human comes first, and Christian next/for that is life's true order", as he argued in a poem.<sup>3</sup> All human beings are created in the image and likeness of God prior to becoming (or not becoming) Christian, and every Christian is called to become a full human person.

Grundtvig understood himself as a theologian *of* the Church – and so he was. Yet he was also a theologian *for* his contemporary culture. It is thus a special signature of Grundtvig's theology that he anticipates a cultural situation in which some are Christians, others Muslims, Jews, and believers of other faiths, and still others are Naturalists. In his lifetime, Danish society changed from being an absolute monarchy into a more democratic society, in which a number of religious and cultural forces were present. In *Nordic Mythology* (1832) Grundtvig explicitly addresses his potential reader as being "Christian or heathen, Turk<sup>4</sup> or Jew", or even "Naturalists of spirit", all of whom are aware of the deep mystery of humanity.<sup>5</sup>

Grundtvig's theological writings show him to be a champion of what he himself called an "old-fashioned Christian faith"; yet he moves effortlessly between unfolding the message and mission of the Church and engaging the wider public culture. For

3. The poem 'Human comes first, and Christian next' (1837) is no. 123 in *Living Wellsprings. The Hymns, Songs, and Poems of N.F.S. Grundtvig*, trans. & ed. Edward Broadbridge (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press 2015), 249-251.

4. i.e. Muslim.

5. See 'Nordic Mythology' (1832), in *The School for Life. N.F.S. Grundtvig on Education for the People*, trans. Edward Broadbridge, eds. Edward Broadbridge, Clay Warren, and Uffe Jonas (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011), 60-61.

Grundtvig, the Church is a part of the shared human realm, but only one among other voices in society; he himself was active in other areas of life than theology – as a historian and poet, a hymnwriter and translator, an educator and even as a politician. However, underlying these came his theological concerns, guiding him in his endeavours to create a more inclusive human society with greater individual freedom for all.

From 1811 to his death in 1872 (six days short of his 89th birthday), Grundtvig was a pastor in the Danish Evangelical-Lutheran Church, though with lengthy interruptions.<sup>6</sup> Programmatically, he preferred the spoken word to the written language, and he was known as a charismatic speaker also outside the pulpit. In articulating his theology he used poetry more fluently than his more dense prose, and his undisputed influence in Danish church and culture is therefore primarily due to the more than 1,500 hymns from 1810 onwards, in addition to his many popular songs and national poems.<sup>7</sup>

Alongside his published authorship of 37,000 pages (and numerous unpublished papers), Grundtvig was a public figure in Danish culture who debated many of the questions of the day – from the religious, educational, and political situation to the fundamental question of the role of ordinary people in the transition from elitist to democratic culture. In brief, Grundtvig was what we today would call a public intellectual.

In what follows, we shall briefly note facets of Grundtvig's influence in Golden Age Denmark (c. 1800-70). We shall then delineate certain important stages and turning-points in his theological biography, in order, finally, to discuss Grundtvig's relevance in the context of today's international theology. For his personal biography see the introductions to vols 1 and 2 in this series.

## 1. Grundtvig's intellectual context

Even though Grundtvig came to the capital as a pastor's son from the village of Udby in south Zealand, he soon became a household name in the Copenhagen establishment. Copenhagen was then the centre of what has been termed 'Golden Age Denmark'. On its streets or on private occasions, notabilities such as the writer Hans Christian Andersen, the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, the discoverer of electromagnetism H.C.

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6. See the Timeline, pp. 19-20.

7. In the current *Danish Hymnbook* (2003), 253 of the 791 hymns have Grundtvig's signature, some written by himself, others as Danish versions of hymns from the Greek, Latin, English, and German Church traditions. Also in the latest, and always popular, *People's High School Song-Book* (18th edition, 2006) Grundtvig has more hymns and songs than any other contributor.

Ørsted, and the theologian Grundtvig, came across one another, each with their likes and dislikes of their Copenhagen fellows.<sup>8</sup>

### Theological Debates

Until around 1830, Grundtvig was more infamous than famous. His difficulties began early on. In 1811 he received an official reprimand from the governing body of the University of Copenhagen for his dimissory sermon of 1810, *Why Has the Word of the Lord Disappeared from His House?* In this he harshly criticised the majority of the Danish pastors for being more interested in human affairs than in the Word of the Lord. Likewise, in *The Church's Retort to Dr. H.N. Clausen, Professor of Theology* from 1825 (Text 1), Grundtvig demanded that the university's leading Professor of Dogmatics, H.N. Clausen, should resign his office, since his theology was in conflict with the beliefs of the Church. In response, Clausen sued for libel; Grundtvig was fined, and his publications put under lifelong censorship. This requirement of a prior *imprimatur* of his writings was not lifted until 1837. By then Grundtvig had already gained a widespread and far more positive reputation, not only among his many followers in the countryside but also in Copenhagen circles, including the royal house.

Grundtvig spoke up also after 1825, though now in a more moderate tone. Since the 1820s, the Danish government (backed by church officials) had been persecuting the new revivalist groups, and from 1840 Baptists were even imprisoned for not baptising their children. Grundtvig publicly defended these 'godly assemblies' as well as the Baptists, even though he did not personally agree with all their theology (Texts 2 & 7). His argument was twofold: Theologically, freedom of conscience is essential in matters of religion; and politically, the revivalist groups do not impose a danger to the order of the state. Only with the Danish Constitution of 1849 was religious freedom given to all citizens, and the State Church was now transformed into a People's Church with voluntary membership, based on baptism.

In his arguments for religious freedom, Grundtvig was initially influenced by German Enlightenment philosophy, but later on he was persuaded by English liberalism. He read periodicals such as *The Westminster Review* (1824-27) and the *Edinburgh Review*

8. Bruce H. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1990) offers an excellent overview of the intellectual circles in Copenhagen at the time. On Kierkegaard's relation to Grundtvig, see Anders Holm, 'Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig: The Matchless Giant', in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries. Tome II: Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate 2009), 95-151. Holm shows how Kierkegaard was more concerned about Grundtvig than the other way round, also due to the painful fact that Kierkegaard's elder brother P.C. Kierkegaard became a leading Grundtvigian. Though Grundtvig clashed with Ørsted in 1815, he later became more friendly towards him, seeing him as a 'Naturalist of spirit'. The relation between Grundtvig and Hans Christian Andersen is difficult to pinpoint, and an understudied area.

(1820-27), and in 1829-31 he was able to make three trips to England, supported by the Danish King (Texts 44-46). The experiences in England convinced Grundtvig to trust the empirically-oriented common sense traditions in the vein of John Locke and John Stuart Mill rather than speculative philosophy. While Grundtvig set his own tone and made his own judgments in matters of theology, Grundtvig the politician sided with the English tradition, distancing himself in particular from the French variety of Enlightenment philosophy: “In all parliamentary matters [I] think of the English”, he said.<sup>9</sup>

### Grundtvig as a Politician

Grundtvig lived in a tumultuous but also highly creative epoch of European history. Politically, his life spanned the era of absolutist European kingdoms over revolutionary times up to the formation of modern democracy, instituted in Denmark by the 1849 Constitution. Grundtvig’s newly-awakened interest in politics saw him become not only a member of the Constitutional Assembly which drew up the new constitution, but also an actual Member of Parliament for most of the period 1849-58.

The Danish Constitution of 1849 established a parliamentary democracy, but formally it was still called a ‘constitutional monarchy’, that is, a monarchy framed by a parliamentary system. Grundtvig himself sought to retain a sense of ‘covenant’ or living bond between the King, the national father of Denmark, and Parliament, the living voice of the Danish people.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, he was fully aware that it meant the end of the older concept of the four estates: clergy, nobility, citizenry and peasantry. “The age of the estates is over, now it is time for the age of the people,” he said in a parliamentary session in 1849.<sup>11</sup> In 1866, at age 82, he allowed himself to be elected into the Upper House (*Landstinget*) in order to prevent a revision of the 1849 Constitution to the disadvantage of the peasants. Much to his dismay, Grundtvig did not succeed.

As a member of parliament, Grundtvig was active in furthering the freedom of faith also within the Danish Church. 99% of the Danish population were baptised members of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, now officially called The People’s Church (*Folkekirken*) in the Danish Constitution (§ 3, today § 4). Already in the 1830s, however, Grundtvig was concerned about the so-called parish-tie. In 1833 Grundtvig wrote to

9. N.F.S. Grundtvig, ‘Parliamentary Speech on Danish Church Freedom’ (*Tale til Folkeraadet om Dansk Kirkefrihed*. Copenhagen: Wahlske Boghandels Forlag 1939), 7, quoted in Ove Korsgaard, ‘How Grundtvig Became a Nation Builder’, in *Building the Nation. N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish National Identity*, eds. John A. Hall, Ove Korsgaard, and Ove K. Pedersen (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press 2015), 192-209 (193).
10. See Tine Damsholt, ‘Hand of the King and Voice of the People’: Grundtvig on Democracy and the Responsibility of the Self’, in *Building the Nation* (2015), 151-168.
11. N.F.S. Grundtvig, *Danskeren II (The Dane)* (Copenhagen: F.H. Eibe 1849), 81, quoted in Ove Korsgaard, *N.F.S. Grundtvig – as a Political Thinker* (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing 2014), 23.