



1. The People's March to the Royal Palace 1848.

In February 1848 the second democratic wave rolled out of Paris across the continent of Europe, reaching Copenhagen the following month. It culminated in the people's march to the royal palace on 21st March with a demand for representative government and a national border with Germany at the River Eider in Schleswig-Holstein. Frederik VII immediately conceded to the popular demand (which also contained a veiled threat), and revoked his absolute monarchy. The difficult process towards the Constitution of 5th June 1849 then got under way. In the later drawing from 1883, Grundtvig is pictured in the second-floor window top right – in the building which still exists on the corner of Vimmelskaftet and Knabrostræde.

Snapshot: The European Spring of 1848

In 1848 the second democratic wave rolled out across the European continent. It started in early February in Paris, and spread to Palermo, Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and many other European cities. People took to the streets, built barricades, and shouted slogans. During these struggles, kingdoms and principalities fell, new nation-states were formed, and free constitutions were drawn up. The European spring turned into a very bloody affair with tens of thousands killed. What followed in the wake of the ‘Arab spring’ in 2011, which spread from Tunis to a number of North African and Arab countries, was similar to developments in Europe in 1848-50.

In Copenhagen on 21st March 1848, a massive procession moved through the city centre to the royal palace with two demands on the King: a constitutional monarchy and a national border extending south to the River Eider, the boundary between Schleswig and Holstein. 10,000 people gathered in the square outside the palace and the National Liberal leader Orla Lehmann handed a resolution to Frederik VII which ended with the ominous words: “We implore Your Majesty not to drive the nation to take desperate measures”. On the very same day the King resigned his absolute monarchy, and the difficult process began which eventually led to the declaration of a new democratic constitution on 5th June 1849. This date has been celebrated as Constitution Day ever since.

The procession to the palace was regarded in widely differing ways. The famous story-teller Hans Christian Andersen wrote in his diary: “There were no excesses, but there was something rather menacing about meeting these almost foreign hordes, these faces unknown to me, as if a completely different kindred had made its appearance.”³ Andersen clearly did not identify with ‘the people’ who marched to the King to demand a new constitution; indeed he was frightened by them.

Even though there were no women in the march, 20-year-old Mathilde Fibiger began her debut novel *Clara Raphael* (1851) with a description of this mass demonstration: “On 21st March a new life began for me. I saw the Danish people whom I only knew from stories and songs; I heard words spoken that found a deep echo in my soul. My ideals came forward to meet me in real life, and my heart was beating with a proud self-awareness.” Her novel is regarded as the first call to arms for the emancipation of women; for her the demonstration also amounted to a promise of freedom.

Pastor Vilhelm Birkedal was visiting Copenhagen at the time and wrote in his memoirs:

3. Hans Christian Andersen, *Mit livs eventyr* (*The Tale of My Life*, 1855). Editor’s translation.



We were all transported by the ‘spirit of 1848’. I visited Grundtvig of course, but he was not happy; on the contrary he was singularly upset and feverish. He did not approve at all of the mass demonstration, which was aiming to replace the King’s absolute monarchy with a so-called constitution’. This conflicted far too much with his old political watchword: ‘The King’s hand, the people’s voice, both strong and both free.’⁴ In those days he was like a lion fuming in its cage.⁵

So Grundtvig took no part in the procession to the King on 21st March 1848 to demand democracy. According to a later drawing (p. 18) he watched from a second-floor window in his apartment on Strøget, the main street of Copenhagen. However, when democracy *was* indeed granted by the King, Grundtvig stood as a candidate for the Constitutional Assembly that would draw up the necessary constitutional documents. He lost the first election at Nyboder, Copenhagen, but won a by-election in Præstø, 60 km south-west of the capital, a town where he had once been pastor. As soon as he was actually *in* the Assembly, he made no effort to stand back from the proceedings; he was among the most eager speakers, addressing the house no fewer than 200 times on a wide range of subjects.

With a few breaks Grundtvig was a member of the Lower House (*Folketinget*) from 1849 to 1858. He did not retire until he was 75, but after the defeat to the Germans in 1864 he actually *resumed* his political career, this time to protest against proposed new restrictions to the 1849 Constitution. Again, he was elected, this time to represent an East Jutland constituency in the Upper House (*Landstinget*) – at the ripe old age of 82! In the event he voted *against* the proposals, but the new Constitution was nevertheless carried, and Grundtvig finally retired from Parliament.

This book is about Grundtvig as a politician, and not least about his views on political developments in Europe in general and Denmark in particular, especially in his own lifetime. The book consists of four sections, each based on a significant political event in Europe. 1) Grundtvig as a Contemporary Historian 1789-1830. 2) Grundtvig’s Political Views 1830-48. 3) Grundtvig’s Political Development 1848-64. 4) Grundtvig’s Political Views and Involvement 1864-66. Ove Korsgaard has written the introductions to the individual sections and sub-chapters, and Edward Broadbridge has provided the translations and footnotes. But first a brief introduction to Grundtvig’s life and work.

4. Poem by Grundtvig from 1839. Editor’s translation.

5. Vilhelm Birkedal, *Personlige Oplevelser (Personal Experiences, 1890-91)* II 46. Cf. Kaj Thaning, ‘Grundtvig og den grundlovgivende rigsforsamling’ (*Grundtvig and the Constitutional Assembly*) in *Grundtvig Studies 1949* (English summary pp. 100-04).



N. F. S. Grundtvig and his Time

Ove Korsgaard

Grundtvig's Life

The youngest of five children, Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig was born on 8th September 1783 in the village of Udby on South Zealand, 85 km south of Copenhagen. From 1776 his father, Johan, had been the village pastor, preaching a pietistic Lutheran Christianity until his death in 1813. His mother, Cathrine Marie, was a strong-willed, practical woman, who traced her family line back to the famous Danish warrior Skjalm Hvide (c.1040-1113), with the legendary Palnatoke as its progenitor.⁶

From 1789, the year of the French Revolution, Grundtvig was tutored privately in the home vicarage, but at the age of 9 he was sent away to Thyregod in Jutland to be educated and raised by Pastor Laurids Feld, a good friend of Grundtvig's father, who had already tutored two of Grundtvig's brothers in Udby. For the next six years Grundtvig only came home once a year. He called this period his "silver years" following his "golden years" at home on Zealand. At the age of 15, Grundtvig was confirmed by Pastor Feld in Thyregod Church, before he moved to Aarhus in 1798 to attend grammar school. In 1800 he moved back to Copenhagen to study Theology, gaining a first class degree in 1803.

From 1805-08 Grundtvig was house tutor at Egeløkke Manor on the island of Langeland, where he taught Carl Steensen-Leth (b. 1798) the son of Carl Frederik (1774-1825) and Constance Steensen-Leth (1777-1827). In a memoir the pupil recalled Grundtvig as being strict, awkward, and liable to lose his temper; a record book from 1806 testifies to Grundtvig teaching a stiff programme with much rote-learning. However, it was not little Carl who caused Grundtvig any worry; it was Carl's mother, with whom he fell hopelessly in love – at a distance. In an attempt to control his feelings, he studied Nordic mythology and contemporary German literature and aesthetics.

From Langeland Grundtvig returned to Copenhagen, where he became known in literary circles for his ground-breaking book, *Nordic Mythology* (1808). With a burgeoning writing career ahead of him Grundtvig was therefore far from enthusiastic when his

6. Palnatoke (pronounced with 4 syllables) was a legendary chieftain on Funen who refused to convert to Christianity when King Harald Bluetooth did so in c. 965 and famously "made the Danes Christian", according to the Jelling Stone. By tradition Harald was killed from behind by one of Palnatoke's arrows.



ailing father called him home to Udby to be his curate. So overwrought was Grundtvig that towards the end of 1810 he experienced a violent religious and existential crisis which ended with a nervous breakdown. On the way home with his friend Frederik Sibbern he spent a terrifying night at Vindbyholt Inn, where he hallucinated that he was fighting the Devil in the form of a snake.

Grundtvig's Self-understanding

During his recovery at home Grundtvig wrote his first hymn in gratitude to God, 'Lovely is the midnight sky'.⁷ He served as curate for two years, after which, on his father's death in 1813, he returned to Copenhagen, where he scraped a living as a preacher. But lacking support from his audience, who understandably accused him of fanaticism, he gave up preaching in 1815 and took to his pen. He remained a marginalised literary figure until his historical studies and philosophical thinking laid the ground for a new understanding of life, which resulted in a major poetical work, *New Year's Morning* (1824).⁸ Here he reflects on his life and reveals a powerful will to self-understanding and to grasping how societies develop. In 1821, by royal decree, he again became a parish pastor.

He now saw himself as a 'Little Luther', a prophet who would introduce a whole new era. In 1825 he published *The Church's Retort*, in which he vehemently criticised a new work on the history of the Church by Professor of Theology, Henrik Clausen. When Clausen successfully sued Grundtvig for libel, he was sentenced to lifelong censorship, whereupon he resigned his pastoral living.

In the summers of 1829, 1830, and 1831, and again in 1843, Grundtvig made 4 trips to England which transformed his view of life and society. At the outset, his task was to study the original manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, but it was his observations of the English *form* of society which made the greater impact. His cultural battle-cry was a revised edition of *Nordic Mythology* (1832), in which he sought to revitalise the Viking spirit that had survived in England and had found expression in what he called "fighting and steaming". The former refers to the fighting spirit of the English, the second to the steam-power that Grundtvig witnessed for himself in various building projects – and on his steam-train journeys in 1843.

Late in the summer of 1835 Grundtvig began the gigantic task of renewing the Danish hymnbook. The first part of *Song-Work for the Danish Church* was published in 1837 to coincide with the 300th anniversary of the Reformation. In all, Grundtvig wrote

7. No. 12 in volume 2 in this series: *Living Wellsprings* (2015).

8. The full poem has been published in a bilingual version: *New Year's Morning*, trans. & ed. K.S. Petersen. Copenhagen: Vartov 2009.



some 1,500 hymns, including ‘Welcome, New Year of our Lord’, ‘A child is born in Bethlehem’, ‘Hail, our reconciling Saviour’, ‘The sun now shines in all its splendour’, and ‘The autumn leaves are fading fast’.⁹

In 1837 a circle of his friends urged Grundtvig to hold a series of public lectures on contemporary history, but he refused to do so while under censorship. He nevertheless used the opportunity to ask the King to lift the ban, and with the aid of Prince Christian, later Christian VIII, he succeeded. Between Christmas and New Year his prayer was answered, and in his joy and relief he wrote a song to his mother-tongue: ‘Mother’s name is a heavenly sound’.¹⁰

The lectures were a major popular success, attracting increasingly large numbers as Grundtvig expounded on contemporary European history and gripped his audience with his personal assessment of events, his enthusiastic use of poetic language, and his prophetic view of the future. In the winter of 1843-44 he repeated his success at the same venue, this time lecturing on the Greek and Nordic myths.

Grundtvig was also invited to hold a series of lectures at the Royal Palace for the Queen and her friends. Her interest in social work included opening a Charity school in Copenhagen in 1841, for which Grundtvig became a ‘director’ and where his educational ideas were put into practice. Her husband, King Christian VIII, made the school independent of the authorities’ supervision and it was thus the first Grundtvigian Free School to open. When the King died in 1848, Grundtvig wrote two songs for the memorial services, at both the Palace and his own church, and spoke on both occasions.

Today, Grundtvig’s name is very much linked to the building complex near Copenhagen City Hall known as Vartov. Although he never lived at Vartov he was pastor there from 1839 to 1872. Over the years, Vartov Church became a focal point for a steadily growing support, despite – or perhaps because of – the fact that many things were different from the contemporary norms. The hymn-singing, for instance, was characterized by Grundtvig’s preference for faster tempos, while his own hymns were often written so that they could be sung to contemporary popular tunes.

A few days before Grundtvig’s death in 1872, the English writer Sir Edmund Gosse attended a service at Vartov Church. He described Grundtvig as an incredibly old man who resembled a Nordic troll – with a voice that seemed to issue from the basement beneath his feet. Having wandered down the aisle among the more or less ecstatic congregation, Grundtvig ascended the pulpit and preached slowly in the deepest voice, “like an ancient druid”.¹¹ Gosse considered Grundtvig the most extraordinary man in the North of his time.

9. Nos. 5, 9, 20, 35, and 73 respectively in *Living Wellsprings* (2015).

10. No. 87 in *Living Wellsprings* (2015).

11. 12 of Grundtvig’s sermons, including his last three, form part of volume 3 in this series, *Human Comes First* (2018).



Grundtvig's Family Life

Grundtvig's family life underwent great changes. He married Lise Blicher in 1818 and the couple had three children in the 1820s: Johan, Svend, and Meta. Following Lise's death in January 1851 he married Marie Toft that August, to the indignation of even his supporters. The couple had previously met in the 1840s, when Grundtvig was an established man of 60 and Marie was a young widow of 30. The story of Marie is one of great joy and sorrow, for six weeks after giving birth to a son, Frederik, she died. In 1858 Grundtvig married again, this time a wealthy widow, Countess Asta Reedtz, who was 43 years his junior. Two years later she gave birth to Grundtvig's fifth child and second daughter, Asta.

After Grundtvig married Asta Reedtz, she opened their home to friends, acquaintances, and those who sought contact with him. She was the driving-force behind the annual Friends' Meeting, which was first held in 1863, over the two days after Grundtvig's 80th birthday; it was attended by the dowager queen and some 700 others.¹² In 1868, at least 1,400 attended, and the 85-year-old Grundtvig was in his element! He ended his speech by telling his audience that he had planned to warn them not to 'swim with the tide', once he was gone, but that he was now convinced that the friends would walk together in peace, and would build on the freedom that was the only path the human heart could pursue.

In his long life Grundtvig managed to become an almost legendary figure. Everyone had of necessity to relate to him on subjects such as the people, the nation, the church, education, democracy, and freedom. There have been conflicting views on how he should be interpreted ever since his death.

Denmark at the Time Grundtvig was Born

Grundtvig called the period in which he lived "a time of transition".¹³ In his 88 years he lived to see the form of government change radically. He was born in 1783 into the multinational state of Denmark-Norway-Schleswig-Holstein, where 3 different languages were spoken. It was known as 'the United Monarchy' (Dan. *helstaten*), but the court language in Copenhagen was German, supplemented by French if one wished to demonstrate one's worldly knowledge. When Grundtvig died, in 1872, Denmark had lost Norway and Schleswig-Holstein, but had acquired a democratic constitution and a single language, Danish. He was born into a society divided by rank, but he died in a nation-state.

12. Grundtvig's speech at this meeting is included in volume 3 in this series, *Human Comes First* (2018).

13. See Grundtvig's article from 1849 on the subject: *A Time of Transition in Denmark* (Text 31 in the present book).



The difference between Danish society in 1783 and 1872 can be summarized in the following table:

1783	1872
King's sovereignty	People's sovereignty
United monarchy	Nation-state
Royal law	Democratic constitution
Religious duty	Religious freedom
Mono-religious society	Multi-religious society
Multi-lingual	Mono-lingual
'Time of the estates'	'Time of the people'

The major changes that Grundtvig experienced in his lifetime had implications for virtually every aspect of life – the State, the Church and the School (i.e. education); politics, religion and culture; and the Danish mentality, norms, and beliefs. Grundtvig worked practically in all these fields – as a hymn and songwriter, as a priest, historian, philologist, politician, and educator.

Until the introduction of the democratic constitution in 1849, Denmark was formally divided into four ranks or 'estates': the nobility, the clergy, the citizenry, and the peasantry. Each estate had its own laws and specific duties, along with its rights or 'privileges', as they were customarily called. Society was thus built on a social *inequality* that covered not only justice but also education, trade, and access to political participation.

Even before 1849 this structure was under pressure. One important move had been away from the absolute monarchy established in 1660 when the king, the clergy, and the citizenry, as well as certain court circles, managed to clip the wings of the nobility. To strengthen his *popular* legitimacy King Frederik III had drawn up a document which was signed by 2,000 people representing the various estates, all four of which pledged allegiance to him on 18th October 1660. The document is unique, in that it is the only written constitution that legitimizes absolute monarchy! In France, Spain, and several Italian principalities, sovereign rulers simply set aside the privileges which first and foremost the nobility had enjoyed from ancient times.

Grundtvig viewed the introduction of the absolute monarchy as a contract or covenant between the king and his people: it was not the king who had *seized* power, but the people who had *granted* him power. In order to understand why Grundtvig had been a champion of this unity for many years, we must realise that a landlord was not only a senior person, but also a public authority. The estate was almost a state within the state, and the peasants were in fact residents of the landlords before they were residents of the king's state.



Grundtvig regarded this covenant between the king and his people to be a safeguard against the power-lust of the privileged ranks: the nobility and the clergy. Nor is this alliance of the king and the people incompatible with freedom. Against those who claimed this to be the case Grundtvig argued that it is only “mere illusion for them to believe that one side’s gain is the other side’s loss, since it is always only some beast of prey or other – calling itself the nobility, the clergy or what you will – that wins what they both lose.”¹⁴ In other words, the people and the king must stand together. However, with the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution from 1789-99 the absolute monarchy as a form of government received a fatal blow.

The American and French Revolutions

In the history of ideas, the American revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789-99 are the two landmark events that form the gateway to a new political and educational epoch in the western world. Both revolutions produced declarations that assigned to all people certain inalienable natural rights, and both replaced a sovereign prince with a sovereign people as the basis for political order. Indeed, the dethronement and execution of Louis XVI in France in 1792-93 marked the end of the sovereign as father-figure and the introduction of a social order based on a constitution under the revolutionary watchwords: freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

In the French Revolution it was the citizenry, i.e. the third estate, *le tiers état*, who rebelled against the entire system of ‘estates’ and the privileges of the first two estates, the nobility and the clergy. Among those who set the new agenda and formulated the original premise for the revolution was the abbot, Emmanuel Sieyès, who in January 1789 published a famous anonymous pamphlet entitled ‘What is the Third Estate?’. On 17th June 1789 the citizens declared themselves for a national assembly, claiming that it represented the entire French people – the nation – and not just a single ‘estate’. On the 26th August that year the National Assembly passed into law the French declaration of human rights.

This political transformation from a sovereign prince to a sovereign people proved to be full of conflict and bloodshed. In France, the contrasts were sharpened not only between the supporters of the old and the new system, but also between a more moderate revolutionary right-wing, the Girondins, and a more radical revolutionary left-wing, the Jacobins, who sought to remove the monarchy and create a republic. In 1793-94 the revolution turned into a Reign of Terror led by the Jacobin, Maximilien Robespierre. From 1792 revolutionary France engaged in a series of wars that gradually involved the whole of Europe, leading to an increasing centralisation of power

14. See Text 3 in the present book, p. 72.



in the military and ending with the *coup d'état* of Napoleon Bonaparte, who declared himself emperor and transformed France from a republic into an empire. The wars continued and only ended with Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in 1815. At the subsequent Congress of Vienna the old monarchy system was restored, and the state structure of Europe was decided.

The Danish Evolution

There was no *revolution* in Denmark in the late 1700s, only an *evolution*. Reforms had already been passed that implemented the Enlightenment ideas of nationality, citizenship, press freedom, public participation, and personal freedom – all of them central to modern democracy.

Agricultural and educational reforms also saw the light of day in these years, promoted by a liberal group of aristocrats led by Andreas Bernstorff and Christian and Ludvig Reventlow. The reforms achieved determining status on 21st June 1788, a year *before* the French Revolution, when the abolition of adscription freed the peasant farmer from being tied to a particular manor.¹⁵ The absolute monarchy now looked like a guarantor of reforms and civil rights – which Grundtvig reflected in his repeated use of the word 'paternal' about the father-like king. Whole swathes of Danish citizens regarded themselves as part of a state which under the monarch's enlightened guidance was on the way to realising a number of revolutionary ideas – but without the revolution! Thus, in the periodical *Minerva* in 1791 the influential reformer Christen Pram wrote, "Can the answer be in doubt when I ask whether the first complete revolution in France has not already taken place and is no longer merely 'in the making'?"¹⁶

Grundtvig was of the same opinion. He regularly cited the abolition of adscription in 1788 and the prohibition against slavery in the Danish West Indies in 1792 as proof that absolute monarchy works *in the people's interest*; for they were now freer than in either England or France, for instance.

In the 1790s Denmark had managed to stay out of the wars raging in Europe following the French Revolution and Napoleon's expansionist policies, but in 1801 the country was faced with a dilemma when it joined Sweden, Russia, Prussia, and France in closing all European ports to the British. The British demanded that Denmark withdraw from the alliance. The Danes, fearing a consequent invasion from another great power, refused to back down, and war broke out. The British navy, led by Lord Nelson, narrowly defeated the Danes in the First Battle of Copenhagen – but a second

15. In 1838, on the 50th anniversary of the abolition of adscription Grundtvig wrote a poem, 'The Freedom of the Peasant Farmers', no. 135 in *Living Wellsprings* (2015).

16. Quoted from Thorkild Kjærgaard, *Danmark og den franske revolution (Denmark and the French Revolution)*, Museum Tusulanums Forlag/Det Kongelige Bibliotek 1989, p. 10. Editor's translation.



and more devastating battle was to follow in 1807. The consequences for Denmark were catastrophic: Copenhagen was bombarded and lost its cathedral; the navy was seized and sailed away to Britain; Denmark went bankrupt in 1813; and the following year it was forced to surrender Norway to Sweden.

Even though the country was thereby reduced to being a small state in Europe, it still contained two languages and cultures – Danish and German. German culture was represented by the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, whose population now constituted a third of the kingdom. Following pressure from the duchies the decision was taken in 1831 to set up four Provincial Advisory Assemblies, one in Holstein, one in Schleswig, one in Viborg for North Jutland, and one in Roskilde for the islands. In 1834-35 the Assemblies set to work as pre-democratic institutions to advise the king. The word ‘democracy’ was still not in use, but these first successful steps towards ‘people power’ had considerable influence on the development of Grundtvig’s political and educational thinking.

The interaction between Danish and German intellectual life in the 1830s was still intense, not least at university and educational levels. Many Danish writers wrote quite naturally in both Danish and German, while Danish scholars and educators also worked in both languages and both intellectual universes. Nevertheless, as nationalist ideas arose in both countries, there were increasing tensions between Danish and German which put the duchy of Schleswig in a dilemma, for roughly half its population spoke Danish and the other half German. The question was even raised as to whether Schleswig belonged with Holstein and by extension to the *German* Confederation, or was it part of the Kingdom of *Denmark*? The question exploded into action when the European Spring broke out in Denmark in March 1848.

A Lifelong Love of England

Grundtvig deserves to be considered a political philosopher of similar stature to his contemporary philosophers such as Rousseau, Kant, Herder, Fichte, Hegel, Burke, Tocqueville, and Stuart Mill. Together with these people he entered into a European conversation on the conditions of freedom in this new era of world history.

Yet Grundtvig is difficult to place in the history of ideas, for he was deeply inspired by both German idealism *and* British liberalism. Herder, Fichte, and Hegel are obvious influences, but so are John Locke, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and the liberal ideas of freedom which he gleaned from his reading of the British periodicals, the *Westminster Review* (1824-27) and the *Edinburgh Review* (1820-27). Grundtvig was particularly struck by the British attitude to the Church and to education.

Grundtvig’s trips to England had a great influence on his thinking. Time and again throughout his adult life he expressed his admiration for England and the English



people. The first example was in a letter to his father in 1810, in which he aired the idea of emigrating to England as the land of freedom – and this, despite England’s treatment of Denmark. Grundtvig reflected on these events in his lectures *Within Living Memory* (1838): “it was Denmark’s misfortunes in 1807 and 1814 which made me a patriot”.¹⁷ In the very same lecture he added, “if I were not a Dane, I would prefer most to be an Englishman.” In a later lecture he argued that “one does not need to be mad to have a strong historical preference for England among the Great Powers.”¹⁸ As for political ideas, Grundtvig openly admitted that England was his greatest source of inspiration: “In all parliamentary matters I think of the English,” he wrote in 1839.¹⁹ And from the rostrum in Parliament in 1855 he said, “In answer to the speech concerning my love of England I say that what has brought about the greater part of my disagreement with the other gentlemen in this House is that I did not acquire my political education in or from France but in and from England.”²⁰

In 1860, at the age of 80, Grundtvig gave a speech in which he agreed with Luther’s view of evangelical freedom, but disagreed with him on the concept of a ‘state church’. Freedom required a quite different dimension than Luther had envisaged, a dimension which Grundtvig had noted in England, “the only home of civil freedom in Europe”.²¹ His expectations of the English people culminated after Denmark’s catastrophic defeat to Prussia and Austria in 1864. The future, he said, would depend on whether “England, which in the two previous centuries has been the only truly free people in Europe, can and will place itself at the head of the Gothic and Scandinavian peoples as the last hope for humanity.”²² Grundtvig hereby links his hope of a golden future for Denmark and more broadly for Northern Europe to the English.

It is not hard to understand why Grundtvig never forgot his trips to England, for there was a world of difference between the country he departed from and the one he arrived in. England was in the midst of the industrial revolution, which only made its presence felt in Denmark after Grundtvig’s death in 1872. So, in crossing the North Sea he was in a sense taking a step into the future, into a social process which was to change the world.

In its tentative beginnings in the mid-18th century no one could imagine that the industrial revolution would define a whole new epoch, but by the time Grundtvig set foot in England the consequences were already well in evidence. Coal-driven steam-power had replaced human muscle-power in the production processes, and Grundtvig

17. See p. 85.

18. See p. 122.

19. See p. 13.

20. See p. 279.

21. From ‘Speech at the Friends’ Meeting’ 1863. The full speech is no. 50 in *Human Comes First* (2018).

22. *Rhymed Chronicle (Rim-Kronike)* 2nd edition 1866, pp. 34-35.

