

**THE DEEP COINHERENCE: A CHINESE APPRECIATION OF
N.F.S. GRUNDTVIG'S PUBLIC THEOLOGY**

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Abbreviations and Frequently Quoted Resources

1. *US* *Nik.Fred.Sev. Grundtvigs Udvalgte Skrifter* I-X. Edited by H. Begtrup. København: Gyldendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1904-09.
2. *VU* N.F.S. Grundtvig, *Værker i udvalg* I-X. Edited by G. Christensen and H. Koch. København: Gyldendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1940-49.
3. *HB* Ernst J. Borup og Frederik Schrøder, eds. *Haandbog i N.F.S. Grundtvigs Skrifter*. 3 vols. København: H. Hagerups Forlag, 1929-31.
4. *GSV* K. E. Bugge ed. *Grundtvigs Skoleverden i tekster og udkast*. 2 vols. København: G.E.C Gads Forlag, 1968.
5. *SL* N.F. S. Grundtvig, *The School for Life: N. F. S. Grundtvig on Education for the People*. Edited by Edward Broadbridge, Clay Warren and Uffe Jonas. Translated by Edward Broadbridge. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011.
6. *GDK* Holger Begtrup, *Grundtvigs Danske Kristendom*. 2 vols. København: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1936.

Glossary of Key Danish Phrases in the Works of N.F.S. Grundtvig

1. *Christelighed*: Christ-likeness or Christianness. In this study I choose the translation of Christ-likeness. According to Grundtvig, Christians and the living congregation follow and repeat Christ-life in the world.
2. *Den danske Folkekirke*: the Danish National Church or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
3. *Den dybe sammenhæng*: the deep coinherence
4. *Den kirkelige Anskuelse*: the ecclesial perspective
5. *Den Mageløse Opdagelse*: the matchless discovery
6. *Den Mosaik-Christelige Anskuelse*: the Mosaic-Christian anthropology
7. *Det borgerlige Selskab*: civil society
8. *Det levende Ord*: the living word
9. *Folkehøjskole*: people's high school
10. *Folkelige oplysning*: enlightenment of the people
11. *Folkelig Dannelse*: education that focuses on *folkelighed*
12. *Folkelighed*: with its plural form *fokeligheder* and its adjective or adverbial forms *folkelig(e)* or *folkeligt*, the word generally means the common people's communal way of life based on a common language, history, and life values. In this study, however, I tend to use the original Danish word due to the difficulty of the English translation to cover its diverse connotation.
13. *Folkelivet* or *Folke-Livet*: the people's life based on the concept of *folkelighed*
14. *Kristendommens Menneskelighed*: the humanity of Christianity
15. *Menneske først, Kristen så*: First a human being and then a Christian, or becoming a Christian as becoming a perfect human being and vice versa
16. *Oplysning*: enlightenment or education
17. *Skolen for livet*: the school for Life
18. *Vekselvirkning*: interaction

1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation

In recent years Denmark, a small country in northern Europe, has been accredited as the happiest,¹ the most cohesive,² and the “least corrupt” country³ in the world. It intrigues me to discover what social philosophy underlies such a prosperous and orderly reality in which Danes lead a “simple, cheerful and active life,”⁴ as defined by N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), the spiritual founder of modern Denmark. What kind of society does Grundtvig envisage for the Danish social reconstruction in 19th-century Denmark? Whether in the church or in the public debate today, people regularly hear the name of Grundtvig repeated to acknowledge his enduring influence on the Danish ecclesial and social reform since the 19th century. My intention is therefore to explore Grundtvig’s social philosophy⁵, his public theology, and finally his relevance for nation-building – also in my native China.

As far as I know, Grundtvig’s social theory has actually been touched upon by such Danish scholars as Hans Raun Iversen and Helge Grell in the 1980s.⁶ As early as 1982, Iversen points out the socialization issue of Christianity based on Grundtvig’s idea of faith, hope and love in people’s life.⁷ In continuity with his idea of the “life form” (*livs-formen*) defined as a communal way of daily life, Iversen proposes that *folkelighed* relies on people’s life (*folkelivet*) to express itself.⁸ Yet people, after all, is not as concrete as house and church to accommodate human life in an institutional sense.⁹ Meanwhile Grell has devoted a small section on “*Folkelighed* and Civil Society” (*Folkelighed og det borgerlige samfund*) to his book of 1988, focusing on the living interaction between State, Church and School.¹⁰ Yet I find out that Grell seems to use *det borgerlige samfund* and *det borgerlige selskab* interchangeably, for both phrases can mean civil society. But my question is whether these two similar phrases mean the same because *det borgerlige samfund* is generally used in the modern political science, which is in contrast to state and market. Then in 2008, Regner Birkelund takes up the topic again with his study of Grundtvig’s social thinking

¹ “Where Are the World’s Happiest Countries?” <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/04/06/where-are-the-worlds-happiest-countries/> (accessed August 2, 2013).

² “Scandinavians most cohesive,” <http://www.neurope.eu/article/scandinavians-most-cohesive> (accessed August 2, 2013).

³ “Map: The most- and least-corrupt countries in the world,” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2012/12/05/map-the-most-and-least-corrupt-countries-in-the-world/> (accessed August 2, 2013).

⁴ Grundtvig, “Aabent Brev til mine Børn (1839),” in vol. 8 of N.F.S. Grundtvig, *Udvalgte Skrifter* I-X, ed. Holger Begtrup (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1909), 188. (cited hereafter in footnotes as *US*).

⁵ In 1969, Elmo Nauman Jr. made a comparative study of Søren Kirkegaard and Grundtvig’s social philosophy in which he focuses on Grundtvig’s understanding of the spirit in the Church, Nation and School. See Elmo Nauman, Jr., “The Social Philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig,” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1969).

⁶ It should be noted here that the study of Grundtvig’s political thinking also starts at this time with Poul Dam’s book as a representative. See Poul Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig* (Århus: Forlaget Aros, 1983).

⁷ Hans Raun Iversen, *Tro Håb og Kærlighed: Sækularisering og socialisation grundtvigsk forstået* (Århus: FK-TRYK, 1982), 1. Prof. Iversen teaches practical theology at Copenhagen University.

⁸ Hans Raun Iversen, *Ånd og livsform: Husliv, folkeliv og kirkeliv hos Grundtvig og sidenhen* (Århus: Forlaget Anis, 1987), 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰ Helge Grell, *Skaberånd og folkeånd: En undersøgelse af Grundtvigs tanker om folk og folkelighed og deres forhold til hans kristendomssyn* (Frederiksberg:ANIS, 1988), 175-82. Dr. Grell (1915-2000), is a Danish pastor, theologian and Grundtvig researcher.

centered on the concepts of freedom and the common good.¹¹ To understand Grundtvig on these subjects we need to look back at one of his most important concepts, *folkelighed*, meaning what pertains to the collective popular life based on the people's common vernacular, history, fatherland, and life values, and bound by the public spirit. Based on the above description, I shall continue to ask what is the plausibility structure¹² of *folkelighed*? What kind of civil society as suggested by Grell can keep State, Church and School in a living interactive relationship? What kind of civil society can best embody Grundtvig's emphases on the principles of freedom and the common good?

I begin with the fact that Grundtvig is first and foremost a Lutheran pastor and a theologian, as well as being made an honorary bishop for his services to the Church. As a Chinese Christian, I wonder what Christian perspective has informed Grundtvig of his socio-political engagement. I learn that over the years Grundtvig scholarship has delved into the realms of his theology, hymnology, poetry, pedagogy, history, politics and social theory – which in effect fall into two spheres: the Christian and the human. Grundtvig intends a living interactive relationship between the Christian and the human, but in practice this regularly leads to a kind of tension or even a separation, not least among the Grundtvigians themselves. Some hold firm to Grundtvig's Christian legacy while others stress his humanist view of life. Contemporary Danish politicians even quote Grundtvig to support their party ideologies: the Social Democratic Party focuses on solidarity and fellowship (*fælleskab*); the Left or the Liberal Party promotes freedom; the Radical Left Party emphasizes education and human rights; and the People's Party highlights *folkelighed* to consolidate the nation state.¹³ Thus between 2001 and 2009 Grundtvig was quoted no fewer than 252 times in parliament by various MPs.¹⁴ I wonder how we can find any coherence among these different political appropriations of Grundtvig's thinking. Are these secular uses irrelevant to Grundtvig's theology? In Grundtvig's own thinking, is there a connection between his Christian ministry and his socio-political involvement?

This study intends primarily to answer the questions raised above. To do so I need first to examine Grundtvig's understanding of Christianity and to clarify Grundtvig's basic doctrinal framework. On the one hand, Grundtvig has to make apologetic efforts to defend Christianity from the challenges of the Enlightenment ethos, especially rationalism and German idealism; on the other, he tries to re-construe Christianity in a way that fits the Danish mind-set and social context. Throughout his theological career Grundtvig grapples with the question of how Christianity is related to actual human life. It is an important question that demands lasting theological reflections in different time and space.

Secondly, as Grundtvig is best known in Chinese educational circles as the founder of the Danish people's high schools,¹⁵ I want to re-introduce Grundtvig as a theologian whose educational thinking is not without a Christian foundation, i.e., his Mosaic-Christian anthropology. At the same time, I shall try to understand Grundtvig's theology on a Chinese cultural horizon.

¹¹ Regner Birkelund, *Frihed til fælles bedste: En oppositionel stemme fra fortiden* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2008), 32.

¹² Peter Berger points out that a world "is socially constructed and socially maintained." The plausibility structure refers to the "social 'base' for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings." Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 45

¹³ Birkelund, *Frihed til fælles bedste*, 16-21. For a survey of contemporary Danish politicians' application of Grundtvig's view, see Esben Lunde Larsen, *Frihed for Loke Saavelstom for Thor: N.F.S. Grundtvigs syn på åndelig frihed i historisk og aktuelt perspektiv* (København: Det Teologiske Fakultet, Københavns Universitet, 2012), 13-62.

¹⁴ Statistic provided by Member of Parliament Esben Lunde Larsen. I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge for this information.

¹⁵ Please see the appendix of this study.

1.2. Key Themes and Concepts

In this study I intend to interpret Grundtvig's Christian ministry and social philosophy through the lens of public theology, a term albeit anachronistic to Grundtvig. I submit that Grundtvig is not a civil theologian, but a public theologian who does not want Christianity to be domesticated as the civil bond of the State, but actively engages himself in ecclesial reform and social reconstruction in the spirit of freedom and the common good.

Besides, I will further develop Grell's proposal by defining Grundtvig's concept of civil society (*det borgerlige Selskab*, see ch.6.3., not *det borgerlige Samfund* in the modern sense) as the plausibility structure of *folkelighed* (see ch.6.2.). As the State restricts the free flow of the people's spirit expressed in living words, Grundtvig starts to reject the State as a foreign abstract term and to opt for a civil society in which the historically entangled State, Church, and School should be relocated in each of their own proper spheres. State power should be legally sanctioned to serve the common good; School should enlighten people as to the true nature of life (*folkelige oplysning*, see ch.6.3.6.3.); and Church should no longer impose its ecclesial form on State and School, but be transformed into a capacious civil space in which living congregations bear witness to the living Word in order to interact in a living way with human life.

I proceed to argue that Grundtvig's public involvement is based not only on his ecclesial perspective (*den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, see ch.5.2.2.) of 1825, which frees him from the State Church's imposition and the Church State's monopoly on faith issues, but also on his Mosaic-Christian anthropology (*Mosaisk-christelige Anskuelse*, see ch.6.1.), which enables him to cooperate with naturalists to revive the natural human life at creation. Thus I put forward the idea that Grundtvig's public theology consists in the promotion of the humanity of Christianity (*Kristendommens Menneskelighed*, see ch.7.3), and the enlightenment of the nature of human life in the light of the Christ-life and the living congregations' Christ-like life (*Christelighed*, see ch.5.2.2.3) of faith, hope and love. In order to carry out this mission, the living congregation also requires a *folkelig* enlightenment – to express faith in a natural *folkelig* life through the vernacular. In this way Christianity as a heavenly guest finds not only an earthly shelter but also fulfills itself in an earthly journey by transforming the *folkelig* life. In this view, I propose that the distinct but inseparable relationship between the Christian life and the *folkelig* life in Grundtvig's public theology presupposes not only a living interaction but also a deep coinherence (*den dybe sammenhæng*, see ch.5.2.2.3.) between the divine life and the human life as an eschatological reality. I seek to show that any one-sided appropriation of Grundtvig's thinking, either Christian or humanist, misses the point. It is precisely Grundtvig's *public theology* that distinguishes him from the liberal humanists of his time. The various secular or political uses of Grundtvig all point back to his *theology* and to the fact that it is *public*. It might be the time that Grundtvig's theology could re-provide an overarching meaning system to integrate various polities and policies for civil society in Denmark.

Moreover Grundtvig's public theology also provides a clue to understanding how he tries to contextualize Christianity: the spiritual identity of Christianity is shaped by the living Word heard at the baptismal font and the Communion table. This spiritual identity must be expressed in its earthly journey by a natural *folkelig* form. Only public theology can see to the faithful expression Christianity's spiritual identity in the *folkelig* life by restoring and fulfilling a natural human life. In search of the Word of truth, the living interaction of people's words facilitates heart-felt dialogues and public debates. This is the way public theology functions so that Christianity can be socialized.

Finally, I endeavor to interpret Grundtvig's concept of the deep coinherent divine-human relationship in the light of Chinese *Yin-Yang* philosophy (see ch.8.2.2.1.). While recognizing their difference in terms of God's aseity and human finiteness, I also find that the deep coinherence of the *Yin-Yang* paradigm is not effective in interpreting penultimate realities, as suggested by K.K. Yeo,¹⁶ but points to an ultimate eschatological reality. I therefore choose not the perspective of a substantivist ontology, but the perspective of a relational ontology (see ch.8.2.2.) to interpret Grundtvig's divine-human circulating relationship with human beings as the microcosmos to fuse spirit and nature as well as heaven and earth. This corresponds to the traditional Chinese triadic pattern of Heaven-Humanity-Earth. Furthermore, the divine-human circulation in God's love depends on the reciprocity of God's two hands, i.e., the Word and the Spirit, which I shall attempt to compare with Zhu Xi's concepts of *Li* and *Qi* (see ch.8.2.2.1.).

In order for readers from each of the two different contexts – especially non-Danish-language readers - to get a sense of what Grundtvig and Chinese philosophy are talking about, I keep some long quotations of each in this study. Meanwhile readers can also easily grasp a general structural comparison without going into the detailed analyses.

1.3. Methods, Structure and Language

1.3.1. Methods

In this study, I shall adopt the following three methods to approach Grundtvig's public theology. The first method is historical analysis, through which I can understand Grundtvig in the concrete life setting of 19th-century Denmark. Theology is always contemporary; theology is also context-conditioned. Grundtvig does not work on his theology in an ivory tower. He struggles through a difficult era with both suffering and courage to fight for ecclesial and social reforms. The historical trace of his cultural, economic, socio-political and ecclesial background can enlighten us as to how the external elements influence or even determine Grundtvig's theological development.

The second method is systematic analysis or conceptual analysis. While constructing his contextual theology, Grundtvig rediscovers true Christianity and true Church in his eyes. When he becomes involved in public life, he has his own vision of a civil society for *folkelighed* with the kingdom of God as the basic frame of reference. The relation between the Christian and the public aspects of his life is based on a deep divine-human coinherence. I therefore seek to provide systematic analyses of such key notions as true Christianity, civil society, the divine-human coinherence in Grundtvig's thinking. Furthermore, in summarizing different Danish scholars' interpretation of Grundtvig's theology in terms of the divine-human relationship, I shall also try to synthesize the important facets with the Chinese *Yin-Yang* paradigm.

My third method is an inter-cultural hermeneutic. As mentioned above, I suggest that the Chinese *Yin-Yang* diagram may be an inclusive framework to interpret the divine-human relationship in Grundtvig's theology. This entails some basic comparisons between the concept of the "Word" in Grundtvig's thought and that of *Tao* in Chinese philosophy, both Confucian and Taoist. I shall also introduce Zhu Xi's concept of *Li* (nature or the metaphysical *Tao*) and *Qi* in comparison with the Word and Spirit in Grundtvig's theology. Finally, I shall seek to discover how human beings serve

¹⁶ Khiok-Khng Yeo, *Xiawa, dadi yu shangdi [Eve, Gaia and God]* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2008), 215n2.

as the microcosmos to mediate spirit and nature as well as heaven and earth in both Grundtvig's theology and Chinese philosophy.

1.3.2. Structure

In this study I shall first clarify the notion of public theology in chapter 2 as an analytical tool, before providing a brief biographical sketch of Grundtvig in chapter 3. The political, economic, cultural, and ecclesial background will be introduced in chapter 4 so that we know what kind of concrete ecclesial and public issues Grundtvig is wrestling with. Next I shall follow Anders P. Thyssen¹⁷ and Theodor Jørgensen¹⁸'s approach to first distinguishing Grundtvig's understanding of authentic Christianity from his social philosophy and then elucidating their deep coinherence. I shall analyse Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective and his "matchless discovery" in chapter 5, and focus on Grundtvig's social philosophy in chapter 6. In chapter 7 I shall highlight the combination of his Christian ministry with his social involvement through the heuristic concept of public theology. Chapter 8 contains a Chinese appreciation of Grundtvig's contribution, a Chinese apperception of the deep coinherent divine-human relationship in the light of the *Yin-Yang* paradigm, and a Chinese appraisal of Grundtvig's public theology with reference to his vision of civil society in the contemporary Danish welfare state.

1.3.3. Language

As this study entails a cross-cultural hermeneutic, I shall generally put the original Danish phrases or sentences either in parentheses behind the English translation or in the footnotes. As to the Chinese language, I will mostly take the form of *pinyin*.

In this study, I shall adopt third-person masculine pronouns for the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit without excluding the possibility of understanding God in a feminine way. As to the "Word," I tend to use "it" in a neutral sense while confessing the identity of the Word with Christ.

¹⁷ Anders P. Thyssen (1921-2004) is former Professor of Church History at Aarhus University.

¹⁸ Theodor Jørgensen is Professor emeritus of Systematic Theology at Copenhagen University.

2. A Note on Public Theology

In this chapter I intend to clarify briefly the term “public theology” in comparison with civil religion, political theology, social ethics, and social theology. The term “public theology,” albeit anachronistic to Grundtvig in his theological landscape, will serve as a basic conceptual tool and methodological frame of reference to analyze Grundtvig’s unique contribution to social reconstruction and nation building in 19th-century Denmark, so that it can shed light on today’s world Christianity when it is called upon to respond actively to various social, cultural, and political crises in different countries of the global village, which is both fragmented and pluralistic.

2.1. The Origin and General Development of Public Theology

According to Max L. Stackhouse, it is Martin E. Marty who first coined the term “public theology” with the modification of “public religion” in 1974, by which Marty means that theology is not only concerned with a privatized faith or the communal identity of the Church, but also with public debate for ethical decisions through the interactions between Christian traditions and social sciences.¹⁹ The forerunners of public theology include theologians of the social gospel movement, and H. Richard Niebuhr and Reinhold Niebuhr etc.²⁰ After Marty, David Hollenbach picks up the term and challenges American theologians, Protestant and Catholic, to respond to the contemporary moral problems by further substantiating and enriching the contents of public theology.²¹ Soon public theology becomes so popular that relevant theological works by David Tracy,²² Ronald Thiemann²³ and others emerge.²⁴ Nowadays public theology plays a more and more important role in addressing various human crises in the contemporary world. In short, public theology provides a Christian interpretation of public life, aiming to explore the public relevance of Christianity and highlight Christians’ social responsibility for the common good.

¹⁹ Max L. Stackhouse, “Public Theology and Ethical Judgment,” *Theology Today* 54, no. 2 (July 1997): 165-79. Martin E. Marty used the term “public theology” to comment on Reinhold Niebuhr’s theological ethics. See his article “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” *Journal of Religion* 54 (October 1974): 332-59. James R. Kelly offers a similar interpretation of Marty’s term arguing that public theology, “closer to experienced religious identities, can challenge citizens in terms of their religious commitment in their specific churches and synagogues and now mosques.” “When the public church reflexively examines and critiques existing social practices and cultural understandings in the light of its deepest religious insights into justice and the good society, it does public theology.” See Kelly, “Sociology and Public Theology: A Case Study of Pro-Choice/Prolife Common Ground,” in *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 2 (1999): 102.

²⁰ Scott R. Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society: Public Theology and Social Theory in the Work of Jürgen Moltmann* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 68-76.

²¹ I am indebted to Kathryn Tanner for the discovery of David Hollenbach’s article “Public Theology in America: Some Questions for Catholicism after John Courtney Murray,” *Theological Studies* 37, no 2 (June 1976): 290-303. See Kathryn Tanner, “Public Theology and the Character of Public Debate,” in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1996): 79.

²² David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (NY: Crossroad, 1981). His article “Defending the Public Character of Theology” also appeared in the same year in *The Christian Century* 98 (April 1981): 350-56.

²³ See Ronald F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

²⁴ I am indebted to Paeth for this information. According to Harold Breitenberg, Jr., by 2003, seventeen books and more than a hundred essays had been published with the appearance of “public theology” or “public theologians” in the title. E. Harold Breitenberg Jr., “To tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?” *The Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no.2 (fall/winter, 2003): 70. See Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 3n1.

2.2. A Brief and *ad hoc* Definition of Public Theology

In this section I shall present a brief definition of public theology with the acknowledgement that people's understanding of public theology differs due to their different social locations, spiritual experiences, and theological approaches. The definition is *ad hoc* because I wish to provide a general description of the task of public theology in connection with Grundtvig's theological efforts for public engagement. So it is basically centered on four questions. What is "theological" in public theology? What is "public" in public theology?²⁵ How does the theological interact with the public? Where is the theological made public?

2.2.1. The Theological Dimension of Public Theology

Public theology, above all, is still a theological²⁶ enterprise. To put it simply, public theologies inform Christians why they should get involved in public issues and from what particular Christian perspectives they should approach the public realm. On the one hand, public theologians have to find legitimate theological justification for Christianity's social engagement. To the conservative Christians who hold a pessimistic view of human nature, and who care solely about an individualistic salvation into an other-worldly realm, public theology is indeed a challenge. Therefore, theological reasons must be given to convince these Christians that the social ministry of the church in the public sphere is important or even indispensable for the expression of the holistic faith, and for a balanced view between the spiritual and the social ministry of Christianity.

On the other hand, while joining the public discourse to deal with certain social problems and to strive for the common good, public theologians usually carry with them their particular Christian perspectives. Public theologians start from where their religious identities are shaped, and employ particular Christian insights to respond to the current social, political, or moral issues. As Kathryn Tanner notes, "Christian beliefs and symbols become the basis for the theologians' active engagement in debates outside the church about the shape and future directions of common life."²⁷ In other words, public theologians have to work out a theological interpretation of certain public issues so as to guide Christians to deal with them effectively. Without the Christian perspective, public theology may turn into another kind of humanist or political agenda.

At the same time, in order to prepare for the theological construal of social issues, public theologians also need to engage the social sciences in dialogue in order to understand the problems more thoroughly.²⁸ In this aspect, theology has to endorse the legitimacy of social sciences as the boundaries of theology, albeit not fully separated from them. Therefore, there is also a dialogical dimension of public theology.

²⁵ The first two questions are inspired by Andries van Aarde. See his article, "What is 'theology' in 'public theology' and what is 'public' about 'public theology?'" in *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2008): 1213-34. <http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/viewFile/81/77>. (accessed September 30, 2012).

²⁶ As Grundtvig is a church theologian, I use the term "theology" in the narrow sense, that is, the Christian God-talk.

²⁷ Tanner, "Public Theology and the Character of Public Debate," 79.

²⁸ According to Scott Paeth, public theology has three tasks: first of all, it needs to analyze the contemporary challenge and the social context while engaging social sciences in dialogue; then it needs to provide a Christian interpretation of the current social situations in light of the Christian faith and make an ethical judgment; finally, it formulates a constructive practical response to the social situation. See Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 61-7.

2.2.2. The Public Dimension of Public Theology

What then, is the “public” in public theology? First of all, the “public” constitutes the Christians themselves. Public theology aims to counteract the pietistic notion of individualistic salvation and the privatization of Christian faith as a result of secularization. Christian symbols and beliefs are concerned with all the aspects of life and hence do have “public dimensions.”²⁹ Modern liberalism tends to confine the public to the economic and political arenas in contrast to the private domestic life, but public theology tries to oppose this compartmentation that Christian faith and ethics are not private matters, but relevant to the competition of interests and power as well.³⁰ On the contrary, the Christian retreat from common life undermines the *raison d'être* of the church in the world. The Christian mission will no longer be holistic, but ends up solely winning souls in an escapist spirit. Therefore, public theology calls on Christians, clergy and lay, to actively engage in world affairs to bear witness to the gospel of Christ. In fact, the Christian church itself is already a small public sphere, encompassing Christians from different social backgrounds. To have the church live up to Christ’s teaching in a communal way is already a contribution to the public life.

Secondly, the “public” refers to people of a particular society and nation. The Christian dual citizenship means that Christians have to balance their religious allegiance to Christ and to their civil responsibility. Christians’ particular social location as earthly citizens determines that they cannot simply evade their duties to construct a harmonious society and prosperous nation to benefit their compatriots. However, the social and national “public” needs a third dimension without which it can easily lapse into an exclusive egoistic nationalism.

So, thirdly, the “public” points to the whole of humanity. On the one hand, Christianity seeks to serve all humanity in the light of God’s universal grace; on the other, the catholicity of Christianity also corresponds to the entire inhabited world, beyond any social and national boundaries. The public, in Stackhouse’s words, is also a global “new cross-cultural public,” which is more inclusive beyond the public life organized by national identities and moving toward a global civil society with an architectonic framework of morality and spirituality.³¹ This points to the ecumenical commitment of public theology, which also needs to address the common good of all humanity by providing a Christian perspective, especially a Christian ethic and a spiritual perspective in global social issues.

Last but not least, the “public”, according to Moe-Lobeda, should also include all the other creatures besides human beings and mother earth.³² James Lovelock’s concept of *Gaia* has sought to inform us how God’s creatures live on a living planet and interact with the physical world.³³ Yet the repeated ecological disasters stimulate critical theological reflection on the traditional misleading anthropocentrism above nature. The emergence of green theology in the 1960s has prompted theologians to discern the Triune God’s continuous creation and redemption in the world for a holistic salvation. What human beings need today is not only a spiritual and moral conversion, but also an “ecological conversion.”³⁴ Grundtvig’s public theology does not exclude nature, which

²⁹ Tanner, “Public Theology and the Character of Public Debate,” 79.

³⁰ Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church for the Life of the World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 7.

³¹ Max L. Stackhouse, “Public Theology,” in vol. 4 of *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch et al (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Leiden: Eerdmans /Brill, 2005), 443, 445.

³² Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church for the Life of the World*, 9.

³³ See James Lovelock, *The Age of Gaia: A Biography of our Loving Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8-13.

³⁴ John Paul II, “The Ecological Conversion,” http://conservation.catholic.org/john_paul_ii.htm. (accessed July 23, 2013).

is integral to the divine-human life. Influenced both by Romanticism and classical theological themes in the Middle Ages, Grundtvig's understanding of God's salvation has a cosmic dimension with human beings as the microcosmos to mediate spirit and nature. I shall say more about this later in this study (see ch.8.2.1.3.).

Therefore, the "public" in public theology includes Christians, people in a particular nation, the entire humankind at large and nature. Through public theology, Christian faith interacts with people's lives in different societies throughout the world, aiming to contribute to the common good.

2.2.3. The Interaction Between Theology and the Public

How does the theological interact with the public life outside the church or faith communities? Obviously language is an important issue. First of all, Christianity has to be conveyed by people's vernacular in a certain context. This is never a simple translation process, but is concerned with the analogical meaning transmission in a logical and understandable way to the new receivers of Christianity in a new epoch. To countries like Denmark where Christianity has been fully merged into their culture, a contemporary re-contextualization is obviously unavoidable, as Grundtvig himself understood and attempted to implement in the 19th century.³⁵ So a new creative description of Christianity in the vernacular is a basic preparation of Christianity for public theology.

Secondly, in joining the public discussions on certain social problems, public theologians have to maintain their Christian perspective while effectively engaging non-Christians. This will inevitably bring about another linguistic dilemma, in the light of Wittgenstein's language game theory that theology and the secular public are apparently languages of two different life-forms since the Enlightenment, each with their own rule or grammar.³⁶ On the one hand, this engagement has to avoid the pitfall of losing the particular Christian identity³⁷ by mixing the sacred and the secular language, or "God and Caesar,"³⁸ on the other hand, the two languages cannot remain purely incommensurable so that there is no possibility of communication. As Ronald F. Thiemann says,

Our challenge is to develop a public theology that remains based in the particularities of the Christian faith while genuinely addressing issues of public significance. Too often, theologies that seek to address a broad secular culture lose touch with the distinctive beliefs and practices of the Christian tradition. In their zeal to engage a public realm in which theological discourse is either unknown or viewed with suspicion, theologians tend to adopt concepts and forms of analysis foreign to the Christian faith. In the process, the distinctive substance and prophetic "bits" of the Christian witness are undermined. On the

³⁵ In fighting against the German-speaking population in Denmark (*hjemtyskerne*), Grundtvig wanted to "Danicize the church, school, law and public institutions" (*fordanske kirker, skoler, love og offentlige indretninger*.) See Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen, "Grundtvig og Danskhed," in *Dansk Identitetshistorie 3: Folkets Danmark*, ed. Ole Feldbaek (København: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1992), 150.

³⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), 65-6.

³⁷ The identity of the Church in public theology depends neither on its social engagement, nor on its radical identification with certain social movement. According to Paeth, Moltmann believes that the authentic identity of Church is solely embodied by its non-identity with any social movement. Through the cross, we learn how Christ became open and identified with the different and the marginalized, which broke the social community mechanism that Aristotle claimed. That is, a human community shaped by people with great similarities (Paeth, 27-9). The cross of Christ also shapes our identity and the transcendent referent to the cross event points to God's eschatological kingdom, which challenges the human limits of all the social movements. In short, the Christian identity is shaped by the biblical narratives of Christ, but it is never a static and finished reality. On the contrary, the dynamics of Christian identity requests that this identity should always be reclaimed by journeying through different aspects of the complex human life.

³⁸ The phrase is taken from Nick Spencer's book, *"Doing God: A Future for Faith in the Public Square"* (London: Theos, 2006), 32-3.

other hand, theologies that seek to preserve the characteristic language and patterns of Christian narrative and practice too often fail to engage the public realm in an effective and responsible fashion. Either they eschew public discourse altogether in order to preserve what they see as the uniqueness of Christian life, or they enter the public fray with single-minded ferocity, heedless of the pluralistic traditions of our democratic polity. If Christians are to find an authentic public voice in today's culture, we must find a middle way between these two equally unhappy alternatives.³⁹

In the contemporary world, secular and liberal humanism based on the Enlightenment ethos create the so-called "public reason" by which every rational human being can easily understand each other in terms of public issues and will unanimously agree on values of the common good. But Rowan Williams pinpoints the problem as follows:

[T]he ideal of secularity means that there is such a thing as 'public reason'. Argument that arises from specific commitments of a religious or ideological nature has to be ruled out of court. If arguments of that kind are admitted, there is a threat to freedom because assertions are being made which are supposed to be beyond challenge and critique. Behind all this lies the strong Enlightenment conviction that authority that depends on revelation must always be contested and denied any leverage in the public sphere.⁴⁰

Public reason actually is neither public nor rational enough in the light of the post-modern critique of epistemological foundationalism and the anthropological description of pluralistic value embraced by different human groups. As Nick Spencer says:

The foundational liberal idea that the state can be neutral is increasingly doubted, as is the idea that human reason alone can locate common conceptions of the good or that there are 'basic ideas' about human freedom and equality which can be worked up into a universally accepted conception of political justice. Whether this is due to the argument that human rationality is not universal but always historically placed, or that human values are ultimately plural and incommensurable, or that our modern ideas of universal values are little more than a kind of post-colonial imperialism, this particular pillar of liberal humanism looks decidedly shaky.⁴¹

Unless public reason is neutral, the enforced accommodation of the theological language to the public grammar makes no sense. At least the two should stand on an equal footing. But the questions remain: Are these two languages commensurable? How can theological language shaped in the Christian communal context communicate with the public? Grundtvig's notion of the living Word (*vox viva*) may help to solve this dilemma, as he insists that the divine Word of light and life should be fused with human words of truth and coinhere in a Christ-like life (see ch.5.2.2.3 and 7.4.2.1).

According to the way in which faith communities respond to, and relate themselves to, the public, and also in the light of Hans Frei's five types of Christian theology,⁴² five kinds of public theology, in my opinion, come to the surface. The first kind holds that public theology should not be monopolized by church pastors and theologians in a post-secular and post-theistic environment. Film directors, poets, and artists can embody a new kind of spirituality to experience the divine in the public sphere without winding up with a new institutionalized religion.⁴³ In this mode the

³⁹ Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology*, 19.

⁴⁰ Rowan Williams, "Secularism, Faith and Freedom," address at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in Rome, November 23, 2006. <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1175/rome-lecture-secularism-faith-and-freedom> (accessed May 1, 2011).

⁴¹ Nick Spencer, *"Doing God: A Future for Faith in the Public Square"* (London: Theos, 2006), 72.

⁴² See Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁴³ In a wide sense, theology can mean any reflections on the transcendent or the divine ever since Plato and his *Republic*. See, Andries van Aarde, "What is 'theology' in 'public theology' and what is 'public' about public theology?" In his

secular can easily become normative. The Danish Grundtvig scholar Kaj Thaning, for example, is criticized for sacrificing the Christian for the sake of human life, and hence may belong to this kind of secularizing theology despite his acknowledgement of Grundtvig's Christian anthropology. The second type is the "sectarian model" represented by Stanley Hauerwas' post-liberalism⁴⁴ and J. Milbank's radical orthodoxy. In Stackhouse's view, they believe that the churches, shaped by the biblical narratives and the Christian tradition, should stand as an alternative to the political world.⁴⁵ In contrast to the "sectarian model," there is also a revisionist model, which continues with David Tracy's method of mutually critical correlation in order to emphasize the church's reflective and reflexive attitude toward the unfinished identity of the church. Tracy's revisionist theology before his shift to emphasizing the infinite and incomprehensible God in 2002⁴⁶ and Michael S. Hogue's public theology may fall into this category, as the latter takes the pluralistic environment as a new starting-point for an "inter-traditional public theological mode" which "aims to address global moral challenges in ways that engage the proliferating forms and changing shapes of contemporary religion and religiosity after the secular."⁴⁷ The fourth model could be a simple repetition of biblical and traditional moral and social teachings that fundamentalist groups often adopt. Obviously it cannot catch up with the spirit of the times with their robust "Christ against culture" standpoint. The fifth type of public theology is based on the belief that, in a basic correlational manner and also beyond the existential sense, Christian tradition itself suffices to answer all social issues emerging in the public sphere. We see that Stackhouse rejects the sectarian mode and encourages the church to engage in the public discourse and debate with faith-based convictions. He also has the vision of a global civil society, but insists on its fulfillment through individual Christians and churches' public engagement. How he decides the normative faith-based convictions and handles the identity issue of the church remains unclear to me, however. Would he also be open to "mutual criticism" as Tracy's approach advocates?⁴⁸ In fact, Stackhouse does leave room for an open-ended public discourse, so his position may be somewhere in the middle of the sectarian and the revisionist model.

I shall propose in this study that Grundtvig's public theology does not fall in the categories mentioned above. This is because there is no dualistic gulf either between the private and the public,

essay, Aarde, a biblical scholar from University of Pretoria, responds to Dr. William Storrar, the director of the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton Seminary, and the first president of The Global Network for Public Theology, who, Aarde believes, still grounds public theology in a traditional Christian perspective informed by the Church. The public theology Aarde espouses aims to "include the public in the practicing of theology". He believes that, as institutional religions are dying, the spirituality brought about by secular people does not necessarily end up in a religious institution. People experience this kind of spirituality which expresses "the inarticulate longing without belonging." In this way public theology engages theology and contemporary culture in a dialogue. (Ibid., 1214-1220).

⁴⁴ "We argue that the political task of Christians is to be the church rather than transform the world." Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 38. What Hauerwas has in mind is that Constantinianism should not set the agenda that the church can only be assessed by its contribution to the common good, in the American context with the "politics of unbelief." (Ibid., 36-37). He is afraid that in the slogans of peace and justice to transform the world, faith in God is no longer necessary and hence has become privatized. (Ibid., 37.) He also denies the accusation of tribalism by pointing out that Constantinianism, and the present-day omnipotent state, "always demanded one, unified state religion in order to keep the Empire together" while the "church is the one political entity in our culture that is global, transnational, transcultural." (Ibid., 42).

⁴⁵ Stackhouse, "Public Theology," 257.

⁴⁶ See Lois Malcolm, "An Interview with David Tracy," *The Christian Century* (February 13-20, 2002): 24-30.

⁴⁷ Michael S. Hogue, "After the Secular: Toward a Pragmatic Public Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (June 2010): 346, 350.

⁴⁸ Moltmann, according to Paeth, insists on a dialectic approach, that is, a theological critique of the social context together with a transformative engagement. See Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 17.

or between the religious and the secular in Grundtvig's thinking, for he believes that the Christian and the non-Christian life is the same life that people need to go through, which is subsumed in the cosmic dynamic of divine-human interaction.

Grundtvig is challenged by the prevailing language of public reason of his time, such as rationalism, romanticism, and the National Liberals' democracy in the political agenda. In the 1810s he tries to defend the Christian faith via his natural theology in the light of the epistemological triadic parallel of *imago dei* between God and human beings.⁴⁹ From 1825 onwards, however, Grundtvig goes beyond the historical and scientific criticism of the Bible as the foundation of faith by taking recourse to the Apostles' Creed as *regula fidei* with some of his corrections from his own theological understanding.⁵⁰ This is later called his "matchless discovery" (*mageløse opdagelse*) to highlight the original historical truth of Christian faith. This provides a secure foundation for his Christian faith so that he can courageously join the public discourse without worrying about the loss of his Christian identity.

2.2.4. Civil Society and Public Theology

In this study I shall take civil society as the field for the application of public theology.⁵¹ The ideal is a society constituted by free, enlightened, and responsible citizens gathering together for the common good. This is different from the "state", which Grundtvig regards as a foreign, abstract concept. In terms of the relationship between citizens and government in civil society, Stackhouse claims that public opinion should be "distinct from government;" for it is based on the "conviction that the public is prior to the republic, that the fabric of civil society is over time, prior to and determinative of, governmental policy."⁵² This is similar to Ove Kaj Petersen's understanding of Grundtvig's social philosophy that requires the society building as the condition for nation formation and then state building.⁵³

The idea of civil society can actually be traced back to Aristotle's concept of *politike koinonia* (political community) with *polis* as the community of communities. Later it is translated as *societas civilis* in Roman philosophy within a Stoic framework. During the period of Enlightenment, the term civil society is picked up to address the "institutional pluralism" and diversity in a given

⁴⁹ See Kim Arne Pedersen, "Metafysik og Åbenbaring. Om de triadiske, respektive trinitariske strukturer i N.F.S. Grundtvigs tænkning 1812-1815," in *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Gustav Albeck et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 1995), 75-101. Dr. Pedersen is a Grundtvig scholar and a pastor in a Danish electoral church.

⁵⁰ Grundtvig, "Concerning our Third Article of Faith [Om vor tredje Tros-Artikel 1855]," in N. F. S. Grundtvig, *A Grundtvig Anthology: Selections from the Writings of N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872)*, ed. Niles Lyhne Jensen, trans. Edward Broadbridge and Niels Lyhne Jensen (Cambridge/Denmark: James Clark/Centrum, 1984), 142. Grundtvig points out some linguistic or theological mistakes, both old and new, of the Danish version of the Apostles' Creed, which he believes was directly taught by the Lord out of His own mouth. The mistakes include the substitution of Catholic Church by Christian Church, the substitution of congregation by the foreign term of church, the substitution of the flesh by the body, the substitution of fellowship by community, and the addition of the phrase "after death" between resurrection and eternal life. See Holger Begtrup, vol. 2 of *Grundtvigs Danske Kristendom*, 2 vol. (København: G.E.C.Gads Forlag, 1936), 156-58, (cited hereafter in footnotes as *GDK*); see also Grundtvig, "Den apostelige Trosbekjendelse i den kristelige Daabspagt (1856)," in *Den Christelige Børnelærdom* (Kjøbenhavn : Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1868), *US IX*, 357-66.

⁵¹ Grundtvig realizes after his English study visits that the English public spirit is the Nordic spirit of *folkelighed*, whose plausibility structure should be civil society in a concrete form, or a nation in an imaginative sense. I shall expand this point later in this thesis.

⁵² Stackhouse, "Public Theology," 443-44.

⁵³ Ove K. Pedersen, "Tre teser om en legend, Grundtvig som samfundsbygger – et project I process, " in *Samfundsbyggeren, Artikler om Grundtvigs samfundstænkning*, ed. Ove Korsgaard og Michael Schelde (København: ANIS, 2013), 24-6.

society.⁵⁴ However, modern conceptualizations of civil society, according to Paeth, have the following five characteristics: 1. Civil society is a “mediating sphere between the individual or family unit and the state;” 2. “the sphere of civil society is the realm of association and participation;” 3. “civil society has an integrative role insofar as it creates a place within society where individuals can feel affiliated within a larger meaning system, while at the same time not being overwhelmed by or coerced by the size and scope of state power;” 4. “civil society is of necessity pluralistic, that is, as the sphere of institutions and free association, it necessarily becomes a realm that is resistant to attempts to unify it under a single ideological or political point of view;” 5. “civil society is voluntaristic.”⁵⁵ By voluntaristic is meant that people are free to take the initiative to associate themselves in order to participate responsibly in social life for the common good. In this light, Grundtvig’s concept of civil society (*borgerlige selskab*) is very similar to the modern model except that Grundtvig’s is more a historical kinship-oriented all-encompassing community with a spiritually organic unity (see ch.6.2.).

In the broadest sense, the concerns of contemporary public theology have gone beyond the national identity and socio-political challenges into a framework of global civil society, a concept that needs a brief clarification. According to John Keane, the neologism of global civil society emerged in the 1990s as a “response to rising concerns about the need for a new social and economic and political deal at the global level.”⁵⁶ It is used variously by scholars to refer to either “a normative ideal” or to serve “as a guide to formulating a political strategy” from a practical perspective, or as “a way of analyzing the empirical contours of the past, present or emergent social relationships at the world level.”⁵⁷ It will be anachronistic to relate Grundtvig to the new pattern of a global civil society, but in this study, I tend to use the term that corresponds to Grundtvig’s extended understanding of the civil society into the whole of humanity in the world. Just as Grundtvig’s civil society serves as his vision for Danish social reconstruction, so the global civil society may similarly point to a normative ideal that mirrors the kingdom of God. After all, according to Keane, the deep root of the global civil society comes from a “monotheistic belief” in a Creator “implied universalism.”⁵⁸ It also, to some extent, concurs with Keane’s exposition that the global civil society “champions the political vision of a world founded on non-violent, legally sanctioned power-sharing arrangements among many different governmental institutions.”⁵⁹

In Grundtvig’s time, Christian faith is not a free matter of conscience, and Christian sacraments carry civil consequences. Therefore, Grundtvig tries to envisage a civil society to reconstruct Denmark from his Christian perspective. Only such a civil society can, on the one hand, liberate Christians from the Danish State Church and the Church State, and on the other, grant them full freedom to participate responsibly in the public discourse for the common good of all people. Therefore, Grundtvig’s public theology is closely related to his vision of a civil society.

2.3. The Distinction of Public Theology from Political Theology, Civil Religion, Social Ethics, and Social Theology

Although the term “public theology” appeared only some thirty years ago, its content is more or less related to the concepts of political theology, civil religion, social ethics, and social theology, which

⁵⁴ Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 114-125.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 127-31.

⁵⁶ John Keane, *Global Civil Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

all deal with the church-society relationship. In order to understand this, I shall first adopt theories of social science to explain the interrelation among society, theology (in a broad sense) and ethics. According to Paul Clarke, religion offers a “mythopoetical”⁶⁰ account of the world whose expressed theology provides “architectonic meaning structures within which life can be understood and born,” and theology can question the social form in which this exists “reflectively and reflexively” for the construction of meaning systems, while ethics mainly function to provide “a justification for the normative practices of a society,” and question these practices when needed.⁶¹ Ethics are always shaped and realized in a society, and they can, in return, challenge the social base on its ethical foundation.⁶² Stackhouse notes that, according to Cicero, politics as *res publica* was often threatened by tyranny and chaos, so that forming “political structure (polity) by the use of political means (power) in order to accomplish political ends (purpose) by coordinated political actions (policy)” is needed in order to keep society in order.⁶³ That is why politics function in close interaction with society, ethics, and theology.

In the light of this socio-scientific analysis, such key theological terms as civil religion, political theology, social ethics, and social theology, which are closely related to public theology, should be briefly clarified and distinguished here although they have overlapping areas.

Civil religion⁶⁴ refers to religious symbols and beliefs being employed by the state to justify its legitimacy and various political purposes.⁶⁵ It usually subordinates the church to the state, and public theology tends to criticize this kind of idolatry from a top-down revelatory perspective. But the movement of political theology⁶⁶, according to Stackhouse, emerges mainly as a critique both of the civil religion that manipulates faith for political purposes, and of the religious pietism that consolidates the individualistic and private notion of faith in an escapist spirit.⁶⁷ Political theology

⁶⁰ Forrest McDonald says, “The first function of the founders of nations, after the founding itself, is to devise a set of true falsehoods about origins- a mythology- that will make it desirable for nationals to continue to live under common authority, and indeed, make it impossible for them to entertain contrary thoughts.” I am indebted to Bolt for this passage in his book John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper’s American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2001), 4.

⁶¹ Paul Barry Clarke, “Society,” in *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*, ed. Paul A. B. Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London/NY: Routledge, 1996), 776-77.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Max Stackhouse, “Politics,” in vol. 4 of *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. E. Fahlbusch et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Leiden: Eerdmans/Brill, 2005), 258.

⁶⁴ By civil religion, Rousseau meant the “General Will” for social cohesion while Durkheim referred to the religious “symbolic representation of society’s self-worship.” See Paeth, 53. Robert Bellah also talked about civil religion in the U.S in his 1967 essay of “Civil Religion in America.” According to him, the concept of civil religion could help people understand the church-state relationship in America. His essay was later on included in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (NY: Harper & Row, 1967), 168-87. Moltmann is critical of the form of civil religion that offers theological justification of *civitas teranna*. See Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 54.

According to Paeth, Moltmann delineates five points concerning how civil religions function in the modern world. See Jürgen Moltmann, “Christian Theology and Political Religion,” in *Civil Religion and Political Theology*, ed. Leroy Rouner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 41-7. Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 53.

⁶⁵ Richard V. Pierard, “Civil Religion,” in vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. E. Fahlbusch et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Leiden: Eerdmans/ Brill, 1999), 583.

⁶⁶ This so-called new political theology associated with Moltmann and Matz is different from the political theology developed by Carl Schmitt in the 1930s which was related to the German National Socialism, suspicious of “democracy and the open character of liberal society.” Schmitt claims that violence was indispensable in the political sphere and that political authority, the state, was created by human society as the only guardian of social order. It is also a theological mistake as Schmitt believed that human sovereignty was based on God’s sovereignty, which human beings attempted to imitate. See Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 18-19.

⁶⁷ Stackhouse, “Politics,” 260.

has gained wide currency since the 1960s, and is closely associated with the works of Jürgen Moltmann and Johannes B. Matz, and the later liberation theology in Latin America. It is not simply an issue of social theology regarding Christian social responsibility, but becomes political and radical when dealing with the structural evil and institutionalized forms of social injustice.⁶⁸ Contextual analysis is a very important point of departure for political theology, which is *de facto* not value-neutral.⁶⁹ The relationship between political theology and public theology can be described in the following three aspects. Firstly, the concerns of public theology are, generally speaking, broader than those of political theology. Secondly, political theology criticizes civil religion, but it sets up a new political order and social vision too quickly, whereas public theology believes that the revelation from above should not be directly appropriated to the political order, but to the Christian individuals and faith communities who in turn can influence the public sphere through their witness. Public theology should not be carried out in a centralized static way.⁷⁰ Thirdly, although not all social issues can be confined to the political dimension, public theology actually cannot go without political theology, as this will also entail a problem of power.⁷¹ Furthermore, Stackhouse points out that public theology as one of the new directions for the development of political theology means “to evaluate, critique, and embrace valid elements not only of political philosophy and practical wisdom but also of the historical religious traditions, the world’s civil religions, and the concerns of modern political theology” so that a long-enduring global civil society can be established with a religious vision at its core.⁷² Therefore, although there are some nuances between public theology and political theology, both are critical of different forms of civil religion by emphasizing the importance of active social involvement.

Social ethics is also closely associated with public theology. The term social ethics⁷³ in distinction but not separation from the moral teachings of individuals, emerged in the 19th century and has been further developed in the 20th century. The claim that “all ethics is social ethics” presupposes the close interrelationship between individuals and society.⁷⁴ Social ethics has a hermeneutic function, a directing function, an interdisciplinary function, and a public function, among which public

⁶⁸ See Alistair Kee, “Political Theology,” in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. A. Richardson and J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), 451-53.

⁶⁹ Demus Turner, “Political Theology,” in *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*, ed. P.B. Clarke and A. Linzey (London/NY: Routledge, 1996), 655-56.

⁷⁰ Stackhouse, “Public Theology,” 446.

⁷¹ Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 15.

⁷² Stackhouse, “Politics,” 259-260. Meanwhile John Bolt in his book noted that he was reminded by Max Stackhouse of the difference between public theology and political theology in the American context. In Bolt’s evangelical point of view, political theology is much identified with “various forms of Marxist theory politically, with advocacy of democratic socialism,” which is “rooted in a universalist kind of ecclesiology” that church becomes the agent of God’s transformation of the world while public theology goes along the American tradition of public philosophy. Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation*, xvi-xvii, n21.

⁷³ According to Harold H. Titus, Christian ethics differ from philosophical ethics in three aspects: first of all, the moral ideal and *summum bonum* in Christian ethics is personalized and identified with Jesus Christ; second, human merits that can only be achieved through Christ can only be understood as loyalty to Jesus; thirdly, philosophical ethics becomes very “formal and ‘intellectualistic’” due to its recourse to reason and common welfare, while Christian ethics also highlight the cultivation of personal morality, which cannot be separated from the Christian fellowship. See Titus, “Christian Ethics and Contemporary Social Issues,” in *American Academy of Religion* (1947) XV (4), 216.

(Downloaded from jaar.oxfordjournals.org at Aarhus Universitets Biblioteker / Aarhus University Libraries on December 15, 2010). I think the second point a great challenge in today’s pluralistic world. Theologically speaking, it is too Christocentric instead of Trinitarian. But the objectives of public theology are similar to that of Christian ethics suggested by Titus, that is, to promote a democratic way of life, to encourage human cooperation with “social mindedness,” and to transcend nationalism for global human peace. (Ibid., 218-19).

⁷⁴ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Social Ethics,” in vol. 5 of *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. E. Fahlbusch et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Leiden: William Eerdmans/Brill, 2008), 47.

theology resembles most the public function of social ethics, which mainly “serves to further public discourse in the church and society in the conditions of a meaningful and fulfilling social life.”⁷⁵ Or in Paeth’s words, public theology is the “discursive practice” which should be transformed into concrete ethical response to the particular social situation by the church, the translating community which makes Christian normative interpretation of human life understood in the public sphere.⁷⁶ In this light, public theology becomes the theoretical foundation of Christian social ethics.⁷⁷

Furthermore, although there are scholars using public theology or social theology interchangeably,⁷⁸ Wendy Dackson points out that “‘public theology’ [that concerns itself with the common good for all] is the goal of social theology in the pluralistic societies of the early twenty-first century.”⁷⁹ By social theology, Dackson refers to three aspects: (1) “a theology *of* society” that deals with God’s purpose for a society; (2) “a theology *for* society” that is concerned with the Christian contribution to a society; (3) “a theology of church *in* society” that has something to do with the church’s social position to influence a non-Christian culture.⁸⁰ In this light, social theology usually has a coherent social vision shaped by the Christian perspective, and the task of social theology is more to work out a social structure in which public theology implemented especially by institutional churches can function to contribute to the common good while claiming the churches’ proper social niche. In the case of Grundtvig, however, I tend to employ the lens of public theology instead of social theology. Grundtvig does have his vision for social reform which social theology directly addresses, but there is also a strong theological dimension in his public ministry. That is, Grundtvig’s public theology also includes an intra-ecclesial theological adjustment when confronted by either the revivalist groups or the Christian rationalists. In this light, public theology can better combine Grundtvig’s social and theological thinking.

Finally, another kind of public theology, named Public Practical Theology,⁸¹ also emerges to underscore the public dimension of practical theology. According to Yolanda Dreyer, practical theology can no longer simply address the Christian audience and the academic audience, but has a very important public dimension in today’s global pluralistic world. Martin Marty’s notion of a public church, to some extent, paves the way for the understanding of the church’s focus on the common good. Thus the merge of public theology and practical theology produces the threefold tasks of public practical theology: that is, addressing the public including both Christians and academics, engaging in daily life, and facilitating “a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture.”⁸² In short, practical theology nowadays can no longer ignore the public sphere, but needs to engage the contemporary culture and social sciences in dialogue and hence exert its Christian influence in public debates on various social and moral crises.

⁷⁵ Bedford-Strohm, “Social Ethics,” 47.

⁷⁶ Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society*, 156-57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁸ For example, see Clive Beed and Cara Beed, “Theology as a Challenge to Social Science,” *AEJT* 16 (August 2010):2. Here Francis McHugh is cited by the two Australian scholars. See McHugh, “Christian Social Theory,” in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought*, eds. W. Outhwaite and T. Bottomore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 70-3.

⁷⁹ See Wendy Dackson, “Anglicanism and Social Theology,” *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 4 (September 2012): 617.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 616-17.

⁸¹ Yolanda Dreyer, “A Public Practical Theological Theory for Religious Education of Secularized Youth,” <http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/615/517> (accessed July 6, 2013).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 919-20.

After clarifying the term “public theology”, I wish to point out that, according to Clarke, a comparatively stable society depends on an “ethico-politico-theological moment.”⁸³ Social anomie points to the necessity of reconstructing a new meaning-system for social life with a certain ethical order, while the political institutions need to be adjusted as well to ensure the social order and the common good. The contemporary pluralist ethos, however, challenges the stable moment in its great diversities. What we need to do is to reconstruct the once “closed” theology and ethical order with faith-based convictions so that it can adapt to the new social situations and empower Christians to participate in the public discourse in the light of the Christian meaning-system of life. Thus public theology in a transitional society inevitably touches upon such tasks as social reconstruction and national regeneration.

2.4. Summary

Based on what has been delineated above, the lens of public theology which I use to analyze Grundtvig’s theological deliberations is clarified. In terms of civil religion, Grundtvig criticizes the Danish State Church and the later Danish National Church, which is controlled by the State to serve as the civil bond of the nation. In terms of the scope, Grundtvig goes beyond political theology by also involving himself in the cultural and spiritual spheres of human life. Lastly, Grundtvig engages in social reconstruction on the basis of his vision of the civil society from his Christian perspective, and joins in the public discourse for the common good in living words. It is based on these three aspects above that I regard Grundtvig as a public theologian.

⁸³ Paul Barry Clarke, “Ethics,” in *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*, ed. P. B. Clarke and A. Linzey (London/NY: Routledge, 1996), 314-15.

3. Grundtvig's Life and Work

What contributions has Grundtvig made to Denmark and the world? I think S. A. J. Bradley's enumeration of his titles can best summarize Grundtvig's theological and public achievements:

Grundtvig the politician, the advocate of Folkelighed, the educationist and teacher, the mythologist, the poet, the preacher, the hymn-writer, the prophet, the philologist, the antiquarian, the ecclesiologist, the polemicist and controversialist, the nationalist, the historian and the theologian, was guided by a comprehensive vision for the material and spiritual wellbeing and destiny of the Danish folk.⁸⁴

Grundtvig is indeed both versatile and prolific. Yet internationally, he is more known as the "father of Western adult education" due to his innovative writings to establish the people's high school for the enlightenment of life.⁸⁵ All he has done cannot be separated from his own life struggles.

What kind of life has Grundtvig been through, then? On September 8, 1783 Grundtvig was born in Udby on south Zealand where his father Johann Ottosen Grundtvig was a traditional Lutheran parish pastor. Grundtvig's paternal grandfather had also been a Lutheran pastor. A sister of Grundtvig's father, Fredrikke Severine, married Nikolaj E. Balle, a conservative theological professor and later bishop, whose biblical view and supernaturalism the teenage Grundtvig tried to defend in his fight against the theological rationalists. Grundtvig's mother was Catherine Marie Bang, who was married to Johann in 1768. Catherine's father was a Councilor who took care of the royal estates in Odsherred.⁸⁶ Catherine's younger sister later became mother of Henrich Steffens, who introduced Romanticism to Denmark through his lectures in 1802-03. Catherine's elder brother Frederik L. Bang was the stepfather of Jacob Peter Mynster, the popular priest with the intellectuals and upper class, and later Bishop of Zealand.⁸⁷ Grundtvig had three elder brothers in the family, two of whom, Jacob and Niels, later died as chaplains in the Danish colony of Guinea in West Africa.⁸⁸ Grundtvig's childhood education benefited a lot from his mother. He liked history books from his father's study and read Ludvig Holberg's *Church History* (1738) in which he came across the great church reformer Martin Luther.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the pastorage also adopted the "elderly handicapped single nanny" Malene, whose old hymns and vivid stories exerted a life-long influence on Grundtvig, especially in terms of imaginative language.⁹⁰ In 1792 Grundtvig was sent to Thyregod in Jutland to receive education from Pastor Laurids Feld, who was also the teacher of Grundtvig's brothers. Each summer, Grundtvig paid a visit home from Jutland to Zealand. On his way, the beautiful landscape, the different dialects that people spoke, and the farmers' life impressed him so much that he later wanted to fight for the farmers' miserable life through both enlightenment in the people's high schools and his speeches in the later parliament. In 1798-1800, Grundtvig attended Aarhus Cathedral Latin School, which he later described as "the black school" (*den sorte skole*) or "the school for death" (*skolen for døden*) with its spiritless teaching by rote. Grundtvig nevertheless did very well in Latin and enrolled at Copenhagen University to study theology, graduating in 1803 *cum laude*. In 1805-1808, Grundtvig became a house teacher on the island of Langeland, and fell in

⁸⁴ S.A.J. Bradley, ed. and trans. *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2008), 31.

⁸⁵ Max Lawson, "N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872)," *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* vol. 23, no.3/4 (1993): 613.

⁸⁶ Frederik Nielsen, *N.F.S. Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling: Et Mindeskraft* (København: Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1890), 3-4.

⁸⁷ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 3-4.

⁸⁸ A. M. Allchin, *N.F.S. Grundtvig: An Introduction to his Life and Work* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1997), 31.

⁸⁹ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 9-11.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

love with his student's mother Constance Leth; during this period he tried to counteract his secret passion by studying such German philosophers as Schelling, Fichte, and Schiller. Consequently rationalism gave way to Romanticism in his thought. He also continued his interest in the old Nordic culture, and in 1808 he published his first book *Nordic Mythology*. In the same year, Grundtvig returned to Copenhagen to continue with his literary career, living in Valkendorfs Kollegium where he made some young good friends. At the same time, he taught history for a living from 1808-10 at the private school of Schouboe Institute.

3.1. Love of Christianity

Due to his father and his family's influence on his upbringing, Grundtvig clung to the traditional Lutheran faith until he went to university. The Faculty of Theology at the time was impacted by Enlightenment thinking, and Grundtvig thus became very liberal in his Christian faith rejecting traditional dogmas like the Trinity, while still retaining a bourgeois morality.⁹¹ Once removed from Copenhagen and back in a real church life at home and in his brother's church, he gradually came to take his faith seriously again. Even as a house tutor in Langeland, he was also involved in preaching and tried to defend religion and the old liturgy, culminating in some early theological reflections in his published essay "On Religion and Liturgy" in 1807.⁹²

In the spring of 1810, he sought ordination in order to be the pastoral assistant to his aged father in Udby parish during a financially difficult time in Denmark. His trial sermon entitled "Why has the Word of God disappeared from His House" on March 17, 1810 was praised by Professor Peter Müller, the later bishop (1830-34), but Grundtvig's vehement attack on the theological rationalists' disbelief seriously offended the Copenhagen rationalist clergy after the sermon's publication on May 29.⁹³ As a result, he received a reprimand from the university authorities on January 12, 1811. Most clergy at Copenhagen also excluded him from any opportunity to preach in their churches.

A spiritual breakthrough came during this period when on October 9, 1810 he was reading A. von Kotzebue's *History of Prussia* (1808). The phrase "the withered cross of Christ" greatly irritated him, and lit a spark that led to his decision to be a church reformer in the footsteps of Martin Luther. He first experienced a spiritual *crisis* (*anfægtelser* or *Anfechtung*) shortly before Christmas that year, questioning whether he himself was a real Christian, especially after he suffered a nervous breakdown in an inn on his way home.⁹⁴ During his recovery he repented his rationalist leanings,⁹⁵ and returned to the Lutheran orthodox biblical faith. He was ordained on May 29, 1811 in Trinity Church and served in Udby until his father's death in 1813, when circumstances led him back to Copenhagen, where he was still largely alienated by the clergy. After preaching in Frederiksberg church at Christmas 1815, he decided to suspend his church work for the time being until he was offered a formal pastorate. Instead he devoted himself to historical studies and translations of ancient literature.

In 1821, however, he was surprisingly appointed pastor of Præstø, and in 1822, he was transferred back to Copenhagen as the chaplain of Our Savior's Church. In the following years, Grundtvig did not give up finding a solid foundation of Christian faith for fighting against the rationalists. In 1825,

⁹¹ Hal Koch, *Grundtvig*, trans. Llewellyn Jones (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1952), 11-2.

⁹² Grundtvig, "Om Religion og Liturgie (1807)," *Theologisk Maanedsskrift for Fædrelandets Religionslærere* (Februar II Maaned 1807), in *US I*, 136-73.

⁹³ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 100-01, 104-05.

⁹⁴ See Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 34.

⁹⁵ Johannes Knudsen, *Danish Rebel: The Life of N.F.S. Grundtvig* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), 16.

through his reading of Irenaeus, he gained new illumination by focusing on the living word heard at baptism with the Apostle's Creed as his *regula fidei*. This is known as Grundtvig's "matchless discovery". His ongoing criticism of rationalist theology culminated in his polemical *Church's Retort* to respond sharply and bitterly to the publication of the young and talented professor of theology H. N. Clausen's book, *The Constitution, Doctrine and Rituals of Catholicism and Protestantism* (*Katholicismens og Protestantismens Kirkeforfatning, Lære og Ritus*). Clausen charged him with libel, he was found guilty, and placed under lifelong censorship (though this was rescinded in 1837). The Church authorities then refused to use the hymns Grundtvig had especially composed for the commemoration of the 1000-year anniversary of Christianity in Denmark in 1826. All this finally led to Grundtvig's resignation of his office in the official Church. According to Grundtvig's own explanation, "the resignation was neither because of his fear of his enemies of faith, nor because of his despair of the disbelievers' power;" but rather he took the opportunity to release himself from the restriction of being a civil-servant pastor so that he, with his God-given priesthood, could continue to propagate his understanding of the true gospel as a further protest.⁹⁶ His aim to reform the State Church could not be withdrawn.

As Grundtvig began his struggle for church freedom and in opposition to the rationalists, he ran into the speculative theology of H. L. Martensen, who was greatly influenced by Hegelian philosophy in aiming to synthesize the two opposing positions.⁹⁷ It is at this juncture that Grundtvig spelled out his warning against the influence of false enlightenment upon the Church:

What had dimly concerned me was nevertheless the possibility that the King and the politicians, realizing that the disbelieving and ungodly enlightenment led in every way to the dissolution of human society, would raise the Lutheran State Church again as a dam against the stream of depravity, just as Napoleon had tried to raise the Catholics in France; for I could see that such a move would make neither the way of thinking more spiritual nor Christianity more living.⁹⁸

For Grundtvig, rationalism not only challenged traditional faith, it also led to the dominance of the clergy and the theologians in faith issues. A laity subjected to these authorities could never freely express their faith and experiences.

While depreciating their self-righteousness, Grundtvig was also sympathetic towards the godly assemblies, the pietistic movements emerging on Funen and in other parts of Denmark yet being persecuted under the church discipline of 1741. In 1831 he and his followers from Our Savior's Church tried to send a petition to the king allowing them to establish an independent congregation at Frederiks Church, but they were rejected by the Church authorities. Grundtvig had to join Jacob Lindberg's pietistic groups and preach to them at their illegal meetings. Despite his criticism of the godly assemblies Grundtvig championed their right to freedom of faith and conscience and

⁹⁶ Grundtvig, "Brev fra Grundtvig on 10. Sept. 1826," in D. Thrap, "Til Oplysning om Grundtvigs Nedlæggelse af Embedet 1826," bind 3, 5 række of *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, ed. Holger Fr. Rørdam (København: G.E.C. Gad, 1905-07), 432.

⁹⁷ John Stewart, "Kierkegaard's Enigmatic Reference to Martensen in the *Concept of Irony*," in *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, ed. Jon Stewart (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2012), 224. Bishop Mynster tried to safeguard the orthodox supernaturalism to oppose rationalism. (Ibid.)

⁹⁸ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl eller Udsigt over den christne Menigheds Levnetsløb. Efter mundtligt Foredrag 1861-63*, (Kjøbenhavn: Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1871), in *US X*, 344. "Hvad der dunkelt havde foresvævet mig, var imidlertid den Mulighed, at Kongen og Statsmændene kunde blive opmærksomme paa, at den vantro og ugudelige Oplysning førte i alle Maader til Opløsning af det menneskelige Samfund, saa de vilde rejse den lutherske Statskirke igjen til en Dæmning mod Fordærvsens Strøm, ligesom Napoleon havde stræbt at oprejse den katolske i Frankrig; thi vel saae jeg godt, at derved blev hverken Tænkemaaden aandeligere eller Kristendommen mere levende."

criticized the rationalist clergy for abandoning the dogma of Trinity and making new unauthorized liturgies.⁹⁹ He thought that freedom of belief was a conscience issue and the godly assemblies a “mediocre substitute for church life” (*maadelige Surrogater*). He was eventually allowed to hold vespers at Frederik’s Church but without sacraments, which carried civil effects at the time. In 1838 he again applied for a full pastoral office, partly to confirm his two sons, but again he was rejected. Finally, with royal help, he was appointed pastor at Vartov Hospital Church on the assumption that he would create less trouble inside than outside the State Church. Grundtvig went on to fight for the abolition of the parish-tie, which restricted Christians to a particular parish and pastor. He was ultimately successful in achieving this freedom, but his attempt to obtain freedom of doctrine and liturgy for the clergy was not granted for fear of church disunity.

Grundtvig regretted that in Denmark the Christian faith was not a free issue, but had been imposed on the Danes by Knud the Holy, for this had harmed both the Christian and the Danish life in their natural development.¹⁰⁰ He would prefer that the Church should no longer “impose on the state or school an ecclesial form” (*at paanøde enten Stat eller Skole en kirkelig Skikkelse*), but separate itself from the State and the School.¹⁰¹ He would like the Danish State Church, or the National Church after 1849, simply to be a civil institution not at public cost, but to accommodate different Christian groups for a living interaction between what is Christian and what is *folkelig*. In order to reach these goals, Grundtvig not only wrote many articles and books, but also spoke out in parliament. Religious freedom was conferred in 1849; the parish-tie was loosened in 1855, and free congregations were allowed to be established in 1868.

Grundtvig also made a great contribution to indigenizing or Danicizing Christianity. He tried to understand Christianity in the light of *Nordic Mythology*, first as a “cosmological drama,” and since 1832 as the historical Nordic “world view.”¹⁰² In 1808 he had tried to revive the old national spirit and awaken Christianity with an interesting juxtaposition of Odin and Christ. As his verse reads,

High Odin, white Christ!
Settled is your dispute,
Both sons of the all-father.
With our cross and with our sword
Is your pyre here consecrated,
Both of you loved our Father.¹⁰³

Furthermore, with his friend Gunni Busck’s encouragement, Grundtvig took up the task of renewing the Danish Hymnal. He not only translated and transcribed traditional hymns from the ecumenical churches, but also composed his own. As a result, his *Song-Works*, collections of his poems, had been published since 1837. Grundtvig’s hymns are full of biblical images and old “churchly idioms” in creative connection with the Nordic spiritual inheritance. Fighting against death, Christ took over the heroic spirit of the Nordic gods and Christ’s life became a “knightly

⁹⁹ Ludvig Schrøder, *N.F.S. Grundtvig* (København: Lehmann & Stages Forlag, 1901), 80-1.

¹⁰⁰ Grundtvig, “The Danish Four-Leaf Clover or A Partiality for Danishness (1836),” in *The School for Life: N.F.S. Grundtvig on Education for the People*, ed. Edward Broadbridge et al, trans. Edward Broadbridge (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011), 134, 164-65. (cited hereafter in footnotes as *SL*).

¹⁰¹ Grundtvig, “Fortale,” vol. 1 of *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien*, 3 vols. (Kjøbenhavn: den Wahlske Boghandels Forlag, 1833), in *US* VI, 12.

¹⁰² Johannes Knudsen, “Grundtvig and Mythology,” *The Lutheran Quarterly* VI, no. 4 (November 1954): 307.

¹⁰³ Grundtvig, *Maskeradballet i Danmark* (Kjøbenhavn: Sælges hos Hofboghandler J.H. Schubothe, 1808), in *US* I, 233. The English translation here is quoted in Hal Koch, *Grundtvig*, Llewellyn Jones trans. (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1952), 33.

deed,” which made him king of the world.¹⁰⁴ Another vivid image was Christ’s descent into hell when He conquered death, saved Eve, mother of all humanity, and brought all his people to ascend unto heaven.¹⁰⁵ Finally, Grundtvig’s best hymns are about the Holy Spirit. As Hal Koch observed, “Grundtvig of Pentecost,” by his hymns of the Spirit, went both beyond the Enlightenment belief in a deistic God of creation and Providence and beyond the revived pietistic focus on Christology.¹⁰⁶ This is only a glimpse of how Grundtvig tried to inculturate Christianity in Denmark, which is itself also a Christian contribution to the Danish cultural revitalization.

3.2. Love of Family

Family life was especially important for Grundtvig, as he believed that true love of heart is first and foremost expressed in family. Family life should also be understood according to the divine parenthood of God who takes care of His creatures with the same love of heart. Grundtvig’s family life, however, saw some difficult years.

After his spiritual *Anfechtung* of 1810, Grundtvig fought for Danish church reform and the revival of the national spirit from his heart, but he led a difficult life without financial security. In 1818, with a modest grant from the King to acknowledge his historical research, Grundtvig could finally afford to marry Elizabeth (Lise) Blicher after a 7-year engagement. In 1826, although now the parents of 3 children Lise supported his decision to resign his office in protest, well-knowing the financial difficulty that was to follow.¹⁰⁷ Lise died in 1851, and already in the same year Grundtvig married Marie Toft Carlsen, a rich and knowledgeable widow who was also one of the spiritual leaders of the revival movement. In contrast to his first wife, Marie was Grundtvig’s intellectual equal, as well as being the object of his deepest romantic love. With her support he deepened his understanding of the godly assemblies, and tried to establish a fellowship between the various social classes. As a result, the Danish Association (*den Dansk Forening*) was established in 1853. Unfortunately Marie died in the summer of 1854 shortly after giving birth to a son named Frederik.

Grundtvig then led a painful and lonely life until his third marriage in 1858 with Asta Reedtz, a rich aristocratic widow, who was a follower of Grundtvig’s spiritual guidance and accompanied him until his last day on Sept. 2, 1872. They had a daughter in 1860 named after her mother. Both Marie and Asta were far younger than Grundtvig when they were married, with an age gap of 43 years with his last wife, but Grundtvig himself admitted that he was easily susceptible to female influence. Perhaps due to his preoccupation with writing day and night and his unsteady temperament, he could appear indifferent or even difficult to cope with at home, he still found comfort and encouragement from his wives.¹⁰⁸ His emphasis on authentic human love in the family life is still of values. Later he wrote a beautiful poem devoted to his three beloved wives whom he described as “sisterly, motherly and daughterly”¹⁰⁹ respectively. Without the support of his three wives in the family, it would be hard to imagine that Grundtvig could still have led such a prolific and influential life.

¹⁰⁴ E. L. Allen, *Bishop Grundtvig: A Prophet of the North* (London: James Clarke, n.d.), 43.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, *Bishop Grundtvig*, 43.

¹⁰⁶ Koch, *Grundtvig*, 196.

¹⁰⁷ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 278.

¹⁰⁸ Johan Borup, *N.F.S. Grundtvig* (København: C.A.Reitzels Forlag, 1943), 209.

¹⁰⁹ Grundtvig, “Til min Asta (1858),” *Mindeblade om Fru Asta Grundtvig* (Kjøbenhavn: Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1891), US X, 486.

3.3. Love of People

Denmark had experienced significant losses since the beginning of the 19th century (see ch.4.1.), and Grundtvig was deeply concerned with the national fate of a country confronted by many socio-political, cultural, and economic challenges. As a patriotic Dane, he tried to awaken the Danes and to revive the old Nordic national spirit. In 1801, Grundtvig joined a student corps to defend Copenhagen against the British, but did not see any action.¹¹⁰ When war with the Britain broke out again in 1807, Grundtvig was very patriotic, serving “as the chaplain to the Langeland militia” and encouraging people “to stand and fall in the battle;”¹¹¹ in his poem “The Masquerade Ball in Denmark” of 1808, he criticized his fellow Danes’ indifference to the national fate.¹¹² When Denmark was threatened by Sweden in Holstein and Schleswig during the Napoleonic war in which Denmark sided with France, Grundtvig organized a group of students at Elers Kollegium; they appealed to King Frederik VI to defend the nation, but the King declined who did not think that they could make a difference.¹¹³ By then Grundtvig had already showed his heart for the Danish nation.

From 1815 to 1821, Grundtvig worked in Copenhagen as a freelance writer, without a church post. He translated *Beowulf* alongside such old historical books as *Saxo* and *Snorro*. Especially since 1816 when Grundtvig started his own magazine *Danne-Virke* (1816-1819), his vision was to “awaken the Danes for true Christianity and national self-consciousness.”¹¹⁴ He wished to revive the national spirit through his historical and cultural work and called 1815-1824 his historical period.

From 1826 to 1839 Grundtvig was again without an official pastorate in the State Church, and he took up his pen to write about the Danish socio-political and ecclesial reforms. In 1829-1831 Grundtvig paid three study trips to England with the King’s special grant to research the old Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Inspired by British liberal society with its free, active life and a living interactive study life between professors and students, Grundtvig returned home determined to reform Danish society through his pen and to employ the past to enlighten the present. In 1831, he published his first political writing, “Political Considerations with an Eye to Denmark and Holstein” (*Politiske Betragtninger med Blik paa Danmark and Holstein*), in which for the first time he mentioned the possible establishment of a people’s high school. When the King decided to open the Provincial Advisory Council in 1831, Grundtvig realized the urgency of educating the peasant farmers to empower them to speak in the Council meetings.¹¹⁵ Consequently from 1832-1847 Grundtvig produced his major educational writings with the first people’s high school established at Rødding in 1844 by Christian Flor.

After his revision and publication of *Nordic Mythology* in 1832, Grundtvig was engaged in the three volumes of *Handbook of World History*. In 1838 (and with women in attendance for the first time), he gave a series of lectures on European history with sharp and prophetic comments on the

¹¹⁰ Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 4.

¹¹¹ Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig and Romanticism,” in *N.F.S. Grundtvig: Tradition and Renewal*, ed. Christian Thodberg and Anders Pontoppidan Thyssen, trans. Edward Broadbridge (Copenhagen: Det Danske Selskab, 1983), 25.

¹¹² Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 10.

¹¹³ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 192-95.

¹¹⁴ Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig og Danskhed,” 22.

¹¹⁵ Actually Grundtvig had a deep affection for the Danish farmers from his childhood experience of their lives while he was studying in Jutland. He was also moved by Scholtz’s *Dorfleins Traubenheim*, a book depicting the peasants’ miserable life that inspired him to enlighten the peasants against “superstition, vices, and poverty.” See Koch, *Grundtvig*, 12.

contemporary European situation. The lectures were a great success and were later published as *Within the Living Memory (Mands Minde)* by his son, Prof. Svend Grundtvig in 1877. On July 4, 1844, Grundtvig gave a speech at a large gathering of Scandinavian students at Skamlingsbanken which again was hugely successful and made him popular with the students in the North. In 1848 he was elected member of the constituent national assembly, and later a member of the lower house of parliament, speaking for freedom, equality, and the common good. In order to safeguard freedom for all and to fight against the privilege of the upper house, Grundtvig allowed himself to be elected once again to parliament at the age of 83. He now argued for equality and universal suffrage, but did not identify himself with any political party, insisting on the universal value of life inspired by his Christian faith.

Grundtvig had a long, diligent and prolific life. He wrote day and night in his study with only a few hours' rest in his armchair at night. Sometimes he put his feet in a basin of cold water in winter to keep him awake. He had an unusual command of the Danish vocabulary, so that he himself became almost a living dictionary, which enabled him to address people in their proper professional jargons, such as the sailors' words.¹¹⁶ As a result, he produced more than 1500 hymns; of the 791 hymns in the current *Danish Hymnal* (2003) 163 are Grundtvig originals and 90 Grundtvig adaptations. His bibliography runs to 1,471 titles with over 35,000 pages.¹¹⁷ According to K. E. Bugge, even 150 large volumes of 600-700 pages could not contain all he wrote.¹¹⁸

Grundtvig's prophetic voice for freedom in both church and society, his advocacy of *folkelighed* for building up the nation, as well as his innovative theories of the people's high school finally brought him popularity and honor in Denmark. In 1861, the King conferred the rank of honorary bishop upon him, and the so-called friends' meetings (*Venne-Møder*) of more than a thousand people from Denmark and other countries gathered on his birthday to celebrate his contribution and discuss church and social issues and the progress of people's high schools (50 were opened in the period 1865-72). On September 1, 1872, he still managed to preach at Vartov Church at the age of 89 but the day after he died in his armchair in his study.

On September 11 his funeral service was held in Our Savior's Church, where he had formally started his pastoral ministry in Copenhagen in 1822. Representatives from various walks of life all came to pay homage to him, including people from the royal family and the government. Bishop Martensen and Professor H. N. Clausen and many young students also attended. During the funeral procession from the church to the train station, thousands of people joined in. They stopped at Vartov Church as the organ was playing and people singing his hymn of resurrection: "Christ is risen from the dead."¹¹⁹ Later hundreds of people followed his coffin to Køge, where he was buried beside his second wife. Such is the life journey of the charismatic prophet of the North.

¹¹⁶ Kaj Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld: Grundtvigs opgør med sig selv* (Denmark: Gyldendal, 1971), 102. Thaning (1904-1994), was a pastor in the Danish National Church, and was well-known for his controversial doctoral work on Grundtvig.

¹¹⁷ Edward Broadbridge, "Translator's note," *SL*, 8; "Who is Grundtvig?" pamphlet from Grundtvigsk Forum.

¹¹⁸ Clay Warren, ed. *Democracy is Born in Conversations: Recreating N.F.S. Grundtvig for Lifelong Learners Around the World* (Northampton, MA: Circumstantial Productions Publishing & Folk Education Association of America, 1998), 49.

¹¹⁹ Steen Johansen and Henning Høirup, eds. *Grundtvigs Erindringer og Erindringer om Grundtvig*, 2nd ed. (København: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1983), 268.

3.4. Summary

Throughout his life, Grundtvig committed himself to the revival of Christianity and the awakening of the Danish people through his engagement in theology, philosophy, history, education, poetry, and politics. He was both a faithful Christian, and a patriotic Dane, as well as an advocate for the well-being of all humanity. His own life experience can already show us why he should be called a public theologian.

4. The Background of the Nineteen-Century Denmark

4.1. Politics

19th-century Denmark goes through many upheavals in terms of politics, economy, culture, education, and not least religion. At the beginning of the century Denmark is a middle-sized kingdom, including Denmark, Norway, Greenland, the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, and a few overseas colonies. However, in a series of wars with England until 1814, Denmark suffers the bombardment of Copenhagen, the destruction of its fleet, and the ceding of Norway to Sweden. With these national humiliations Danish territory is greatly reduced. At the Vienna Congress in 1815 to discuss the political reorganization of Europe after the Napoleonic wars, Danes begin to worry whether their country can still exist as an independent nation.

Meanwhile the newly arisen urban middle class wants more freedom and power under the absolute monarchy. Except for a short period of freedom of the press (1770-1799), Denmark's social and ecclesial control is comparatively moderate. Yet Grundtvig was still put under censorship in the period 1826-37.¹²⁰ Influenced by the European Revolution of 1830, Denmark is also threatened by violent reforms with the radical ethos of individual rights, freedom, and equality. People are afraid of the social anomie resulting from the potential dismantling of the Church and civil institutions.¹²¹ But a peaceful revolution takes place in March 1848 when almost 15,000 people march to Christianborg Palace and demand that King Frederik VII (1848-63) should agree to give up his absolute power.¹²² When he does so, Denmark changes from being an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.

The duchies of Schleswig and Holstein are both Danish-speaking and German-speaking. After a 3-year war (1848-50) Denmark gains the victory with Russia and Prussia's diplomatic intervention. Later Denmark imposes the Danish language on the German-speaking population of Schleswig, and then increases the pressure in 1863 by incorporating the whole of Schleswig into Denmark and ignoring the German-speaking people in Mid- and South Schleswig. As a result, Prussia and Austria start a new war with Denmark, whose army is swiftly defeated in 1864, resulting in the loss of both duchies, almost a third of the national territory, to Bismarck's Prussia.

By the middle of the 19th century Denmark can no longer compete with other powerful colonial countries such as England and France, and consequently some of its overseas colonies in South India, in the Caribbean, and in West Africa are also lost. These are either sold to England or liberated by setting the slaves free.¹²³ Overseas Danish colonial power has dwindled considerably by mid-century.

Grundtvig himself lives through all these difficult moments. His public theology needs to deal with the precipitous political situation for the sake of the common good in Denmark.

¹²⁰ Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 239.

¹²¹ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes* (1830) ? *Maanedsskrift for Christendom og Historie* I, 1831, (imprimatur Novbr. 1830), in *US V*, 279-80. "[O]g den ny Retning har derfor været saa revolutionær i Menneske-Livet, at nu næsten Alt, hvad Fædrene bygde, er sunket i Gruus, og alle de dunkle men stærke Baand, der skabde saavel hvad vi kalde de naturlige Forhold, som det borgerlige og det kirkelige Samfund, ere, om ei brustne alt, saa dog nær ved at briste."

¹²² Knud J.V. Jespersen, *A History of Denmark*, trans. Ivan Hill (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 59.

¹²³ See Bradley, *A Life Recalled*, 51.

4.2. Economics

By 1800, Denmark, due to its domestic peace and foreign policy of neutrality, has done very well in its economic development, especially from its overseas trade with its colonies.¹²⁴ However, the military defeats to England lead to the country going bankrupt in 1813. Rescued only through a huge currency devaluation, the Danish economy remains stagnant, and is only partially restored by the 1830s. The great agricultural reform of 1788, which marked the beginning of the dissolution of the feudal system, has emancipated the peasant farmers in principle but has also brought about further social stratification including the landed farmers (*bønder*) and the landless farmers (*husmænd*) while the latter can be further divided into those with a permanent contract (*fæsthusmænd*), the new class of leasers (*lejehusmænd*) and servants (*tyendehusmænd*).¹²⁵ During the war of the duchies (1848-50) the Danish army is mainly constituted by the landless farmers with imposed military service.¹²⁶ Moreover the social gap between the urban middle-class and the farmers has been growing. Copenhagen, comparatively speaking, is better developed, whereas Jutland remains quite backward, and Denmark is still a class society. After his three trips to England (1829-31) Grundtvig feels the social inertia of Denmark and sets out to free society from its outdated traditions and social control. But it is an uphill struggle, and the growth that industrialization can bring comes late to Denmark.

After the war of 1864, the Danish farmers' livelihood worsens. The loss of the two duchies and some of the best agricultural land rubs salt into the wounds. The technological development of railway and sea transportation and the arrival of agricultural products easily imported from North America and Russia into Europe, provides stiff competition for Denmark in the agricultural market,¹²⁷ and many peasant farmers choose to emigrate, mainly to North America, but also to Siberia and Argentina.

At a personal level Grundtvig himself has constant financial difficulties until he marries two rich widows in succession. Although greatly concerned with the life of the Danes, and especially of the uneducated farmers, he does not directly address the economic challenge, preferring to concentrate more on the revival of the national spirit to meet the contemporary need.

4.3. Culture

In the first half of the 19th century ideas from the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Hegel's German idealism underlie the Danish cultural reconfigurations.¹²⁸ Despite the political turmoil and socio-economic crisis, the period 1800-50 is called the "Danish Golden Age" by Valdemar Vedel and

¹²⁴ P.G. Lindhardt, *Grundtvig: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 1951), 5; see also Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 236.

¹²⁵ Steven M. Borish, *The Land of the Living: The Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's Non-Violent path to Modernization* (California: Blue Dolphin, 1991), 153-54.

¹²⁶ Benedikte Brincker, "A 'Small Great National State': An Analysis of the Cultural and Political Factors that shaped Danish Nationalism 1760-1870," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 16, no. 4 (December 2003): 420.

¹²⁷ Knud J. V. Jespersen, *A History of Denmark*, trans. Ivan Hill and Christofer Wade, 2nd ed. (Hapshire:Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 148.

¹²⁸ Curtis. L. Thompson, "Embracing Philosophical Speculation: H. L. Martensen's Speculative Theology and Its Impact," in Jon Stewart, ed. *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2012), 99.

Vilhelm Andersen in the 1890s.¹²⁹ Grundtvig, however, does not think so from his national cultural perspective.

4.3.1. Cultural Crisis as Perceived by Grundtvig

After the wars in the first 15 years of the 19th century, Grundtvig witnesses the decline of Denmark as a sovereign state. Together with the political humiliation comes the decay of the Danish national economy as well as of the national culture. As Anders P. Thyssen sums up,

Through the disasters of war he [Grundtvig] had also become a committed Danish-Norwegian patriot: his personal fear of final destruction, the impression of cultural decline and the threat to the fatherland fused into one; now more than ever the Old Norse spirit needed to be reawakened in the fight against rationalism's giant-cleverness, materialism and the enemies of the fatherland.¹³⁰

In 1832 when he writes the introduction to his new edition of *Nordic Mythology*, Grundtvig realizes that the Danish crisis has not come from the decline of faith, but from a "cultural derailment" caused by the dominance of rationalism and the spiritless teaching of the Roman style.¹³¹ Consequently Grundtvig's remedy is a new "cultural renaissance" through the revival of the Nordic spirit. The renewal of education, for instance, should not be controlled by the state clergy as in the old days, but be implemented through the people's high school that he envisages.¹³² Here he prophetically pinpoints the root cause of the national decay in the cultural decline that has led to people's spiritual dormancy and to social inertia. With the overwhelming impact of the Enlightenment ethos and the wide use of foreign languages, the Danish people have become spiritually rootless in Grundtvig's time. Without the human spirit of freedom and creativity, there cannot be any new cultural reconstruction. In hindsight, culture, life values, and people's spiritual ideals constitute what Joseph Nye calls the "soft power" for the survival and prosperity of a country.¹³³ Yet Grundtvig, the prophet of the North, had already pointed this out in the 19th century. If we take seriously Paul Tillich's axiom that "religion is the substance of culture,"¹³⁴ it further proves Grundtvig's point of view in 1812; as Thyssen puts it, "every nation stands and falls with its religion."¹³⁵ Therefore, Grundtvig's enterprise of cultural reconstruction cannot be separated from his understanding of religion (Christianity), either. Let us now turn to Denmark and to the national cultural crisis of the 19th century seen through Grundtvig's eyes.

4.3.2. The Dominance of Enlightenment Ethos

According to Grundtvig, there are many different and dangerous strands of thinking in his time that are destroying people's spiritual lives. Especially materialism and rationalism are challenging the

¹²⁹ "Indledning: Steffens' plads i den dansk litteraturs historie,"

http://www.adl.dk/adl_pub/fportraet/cv/ShowFpItem.aspx?ff_id=64&p_fpkat_id=indl&nnoc=#a1.3. (accessed November 9, 2012).

¹³⁰ Anders Pontoppidan Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824," *Tradition and Renewal*, 99.

¹³¹ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1825-47," *Tradition and Renewal*, 262-63.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 267.

¹³³ The concept was first coined by Nye in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), xv, 32. Nye later clarifies soft power as a kind of non-coercive, cooperative power which has three resources: foreign policies, political values and not least culture. See Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 11.

¹³⁴ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 42.

¹³⁵ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1825-47," in *Tradition and Renewal*, 267.

traditional Christian faith which is consequently deemed supernaturalism.¹³⁶ His first and major criticism is directed against materialism as “the anti-spirit’s anti-historical course,”¹³⁷ overtly manifested in the French Enlightenment philosophy.¹³⁸ A French-style violent revolution, coming partly out of this enlightenment, is also what Grundtvig tries to prevent from happening in Denmark. This is an important cultural and spiritual battle for him as people cannot live without spirit. Furthermore, in Grundtvig’s time the German Enlightenment is still exerting a powerful influence in Denmark. According to Uffe Jonas, “rationalism, Copernicanism and Kantianism, from their more transcendental philosophical outlook,” lead to a “reductionist systems - logic approach” to the world, which is not only alienated and disenchanted, but also becomes spiritually dead.¹³⁹ Jonas further points out that Grundtvig is against “German rationalism with its idealistic, formalistic, and systematic emphasis” which leads to a false enlightenment for people to deviate from the “most basic laws and incentives of human nature” in concrete life, but to appreciate an abstract objective “totalitarian” systemization of thinking.¹⁴⁰ As Grundtvig says,

For I have tried to make it clear that when the so-called scientific spirit and its so-called great light, which in the 18th century either derided all divine or human things or set them aside in order to throw itself into studying the tangible world and building castles-in-the-air, then this was a sign not only of an ungodly way of thinking but that all spirituality was now singing its swansong and would soon, as in Greece and Rome, lose itself in bestiality and barbarism, and that naturally this was something that could be quarreled over until Judgment Day.¹⁴¹

In Grundtvig’s view the Germans have imposed a false and lifeless enlightenment on the Danish people with their abstract and speculative way of thinking. Yet Grundtvig does not become a German-hater.¹⁴² Especially since 1815, he has tried to fight against home-Germanness (*Hjemtyskeriet*) through his writings in *Danne-Virke*¹⁴³ and the translation of old Nordic historical writings to revive the Nordic spirit (*Oplivelsen af nordisk Folkelighed*).¹⁴⁴ As he claims:

¹³⁶ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 20, 28.

¹³⁷ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People 1825-47,” in *Tradition and Renewal*, 259.

¹³⁸ Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig and Romanticism,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 32.

¹³⁹ Uffe Jonas, “Introduction to ‘Enlightenment (1839),’” *SL*, 254-55. In reconstructing a new living world of life, however, it is interesting to know that both Grundtvig and Martensen were influenced by Jacob Boehme in the Danish Romantic period. See George Pattison, “Martensen, Speculation and the Task of Modern Theology,” in Jon Stewart, ed. *Hans Lassen Martensen*, 38.

¹⁴⁰ Uffe Jonas, “Introduction to ‘A Congratulation to Denmark on the Danish Dimwit and the Danish High School (1847),’” *SL*, 302.

¹⁴¹ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, US X, 344. “Jeg havde nemlig stræbt at gjøre gjældende, at naar den saa-kaldte Videnskabelighed og dens saakaldte store Lys, som i det attende Aarhundrede, enten spottede med alle guddommelige og menneskelige Ting, eller satte dem dog til Side, for at kaste sig over Ransagelsen af den haandgribelige Verden og Bygningen af Kasteller i Luften, da var det ikke blot Tegn paa en ugudelig Tænkemaade, men da sang ogsaa al Aandelighed paa sit sidste Vers og vilde snart, ligesom fordum i Grækenland og Rom, tabe sig i Dyriskhed og Barbari, og det var naturligvis noget, man kunde trættes om til Dommedag.”

¹⁴² Grundtvig’s rejection of Germanness is mainly from the spiritual and cultural perspective. Yet the early, less influential Danish anti-German movement since the 18th century is mainly from the socio-economic perspective, targeting the upper-class German immigrants in Denmark. See Brincker, “A ‘Small Great National State,’” 409.

¹⁴³ “*Dannevirke* is a rampart in Slesvig that was, and still is, a central national symbol in Denmark. The myth of *Dannevirke* is that Queen Thyra, the wife of ‘Gorm the old’ (considered to be the ancestor to the Danish royal family) built it around 850 AD as a defence against tribes from the South. Thus, *Dannevirke* is believed to constitute the first Danish border and consequently the first expression of Denmark as a unit. This symbolic border was part of Danish territory until the night of 6 February 1864, when the Danish army had to give up its defense and flee the united Prussian and Austrian army. The loss of *Dannevirke* constituted a major cultural as well as military defeat.” See Brincker, “A ‘Small Great National State,’” 423. By *Danne-Virke*, Grundtvig means a spiritually and culturally national

With regard to our imitation of the so-called *classical* enlightenment, education and learning as the only thing that the Germans with any grain of truth can plead when they call us dimwits who spoil what we imitate with our own foolish ideas, it serves our enlightenment that like the papistry and the Black Death this ‘bookish art’ or paper-enlightenment, this education and learning, actually originated in Italy, from where it descended upon the whole of Europe.¹⁴⁵

He is also very satirical of the Germans’ systematizing way of thinking which pretends to encapsulate all the aspects of the concrete human life:

For it never failed to be the case that once the idea of universal knowledge had become a fixture and, largely through German books, had acquired power over all manners of thought, then either we became our Lord himself, or we became at least as wise as Him. And consequently we could create the whole world and transform the whole world of experience according to our own heads, whenever we wished.¹⁴⁶

In short, Grundtvig believes that the rationalism of German enlightenment is inimical to an integrative understanding of life. Abstract mathematical logic objectifies people, and deprives them of their spiritual dimension of upward longing for eternity. It is Romanticism that becomes Grundtvig’s important instrument to tackle rationalism.

4.3.3. The Influence of Romanticism

In 1802-03 Henrich Steffens’ speeches in Copenhagen introduce German Romanticism into Denmark, which marks a cultural renewal¹⁴⁷ in contrast to the dominating rationalism. To a great extent, Romanticism brings about the cultural prosperity of Denmark in the first half of the 19th century in terms of art, poetry, literature, sculpture, drama, and so on.¹⁴⁸ It is, however, mainly the culture of the bourgeois class, not of the commoners in Denmark, let alone the farmers.

Although Grundtvig abandons Romanticism in the period 1810-32 as a result of his returning to the traditional orthodox Lutheran theology,¹⁴⁹ Romanticism becomes an important source of Grundtvig’s thinking all his life. He attends the lectures of Steffens (who is his cousin), but does not understand much in the very beginning, even though he later recalls that Steffens’ talk about poetry as well as his Romantic view of history left a deep impression on him through the “power of the living exciting word.”¹⁵⁰ Grundtvig claims that it is through reading the poems of Adam Gottlob

fortress to defend the Danish Identity. Grundtvig also wrote a poem in 1868, underscoring the importance of the Danish spiritual *Danne-Virke*:

Dane! Your people is but small
therefore we must protect the border
both in school and in church
both against the South and the North
both in the words of God and the people
we must raise a Danne-Virke.

See *Folk High School Song Book* (1957) with no title given by Brincker, quoted in Brincker, “A ‘Small Great National State,’” 425.

¹⁴⁴ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, US X, 349.

¹⁴⁵ Grundtvig, “A Congratulation to Denmark on the Danish Dimwit and the Danish High School (1847),” *SL*, 310.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 312-13.

¹⁴⁷ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 89.

¹⁴⁸ See “Danish Golden Age,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish_Golden_Age. (accessed November 9, 2012).

¹⁴⁹ Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig and Romanticism,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 42.

¹⁵⁰ Nielsen, *Grundtvigs Religiøse Udvikling*, 37.

Oehlenschläger (1779-1850) and Danish historical books that he discovers the power of the spirit. As he says, “Now I became new-born in the spirit in the eyes of myself and of the world.”¹⁵¹ Meanwhile through his readings of Herder, Schiller and Goethe, Shakespeare as well as such German Romantic philosophers as Fichte and Schelling¹⁵² since 1805, Grundtvig comes to realize how poetry and religion that “belongs to poetry” are important for life with an upward longing for a spiritual reality of eternity.¹⁵³ According to Allen, Schelling tried to “restore the lost sense of the unity of man and nature and gave a poetic interpretation of the latter to supersede the scientific.”¹⁵⁴ The most helpful element of Romanticism for Grundtvig is that it insists on the invisible higher spiritual power above nature and the world.¹⁵⁵ Hal Koch interprets Romanticism as follows:

The myth of Romanticism might roughly be phrased as: The world is its essence life and spirit, fire and power, and the human soul is a spark of the eternal fire. Therefore, the demand life lays on man is that he unconditionally says yes to the life-instinct, the divine within himself, that he commend his life and longings to it, follow his impulse forth toward that great unity which alone can give life fullness.¹⁵⁶

Despite his Christian critique of Romanticism’s individualism and its emphasis on human art replacing God the Creator and Schelling’s monism of the spiritual and the material,¹⁵⁷ Romanticism provides for Grundtvig an important spiritual tool to counteract the rationalist objectification of human life. People need, above all, to be spiritually awakened from materialism and rationalism so that they can further interact with Christianity. It is Romanticism that “became a life-pattern” for Grundtvig when coping with the existential question of life and death through poetry and history.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, German Romanticism also inspires Grundtvig’s understanding of the Danish people and nation.

4.3.4. The Widespread Use of Foreign Languages

The Romantic concept of nation, especially in Herder, draws Grundtvig’s attention to the importance of the vernacular, which expresses the national character of the people.¹⁵⁹ Denmark was originally a multi-national and hence multi-lingual state with Latin used at school, German and French in court, and German and Danish in church by Latin-minded clergy.¹⁶⁰ Generally speaking, Danish was mostly used by the lower class of the society.

Grundtvig regards Latin as the “school bully” (*Skole-Tyrannen*), which should be overthrown just as the Goths opposed the “state bully” (*Stats-Tyrannen*), and the Reformers opposed the “church

¹⁵¹ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, US X, 338. “Nu blev jeg da for mine egne og for Verdens Øjne nyfødt i Aanden.”

¹⁵² Concerning Romanticism and these philosophers’ influence on Grundtvig, see Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 229-35.

¹⁵³ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 91-2.

¹⁵⁴ Allen, *Bishop Grundtvig*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig and Romanticism,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 40.

¹⁵⁶ Koch, *Grundtvig*, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Helge Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet: Studier over Grundtvigs teologi om ord* (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 1980), 170; Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig and Romanticism,” *Tradition and Renewal* 25, 38-42. Dr. Grell (1915-2000), is a Danish pastor, theologian and Grundtvig researcher.

¹⁵⁸ Koch, *Grundtvig*, 25-32.

¹⁵⁹ Brincker, “A ‘Small Great National State,’” 414. According to Brincker, three factors influenced Grundtvig’s understanding of Danishness. The other two are his inspirations from the English study trips and his understanding of Christianity which is presupposed by Folkelighed. (Ibid., 415-16). Concerning Herder’s influence upon Grundtvig, see also Johannes Adamsen, “Herder og Grundtvig-sonderinger,” *Grundtvig Studier* ed. FL. Lundgreen-Nielsen et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2001), 166-90; Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 228-29.

¹⁶⁰ Brincker, “A ‘Small Great National State,’” 407-08.

bully” (*Kirke-Tyrannen*).¹⁶¹ According to Grundtvig, one of the greatest achievements of the Reformation was the promotion of the Danish mother-tongue in the churches, but the priests were still trained in Latin, which was not congruent with people’s Christian life and hence indirectly suppressed their nature.¹⁶² Grundtvig even warns the Danish civil servants of the danger of Latin:

For unless this change occurs, we shall become more unsuitable as Royal Danish civil servants the more we learn to write and speak Latin, and the more completely we have grasped and assimilated the Roman outlook, thought-mode, and speech pattern. These are not just totally alien to the Danes’ nature, mother-tongue, and circumstances, they are actually inimical to them.¹⁶³

It is because of the Latin-mentality shaped in the spiritless Latin school¹⁶⁴ that Grundtvig bitterly criticizes it as a “school for death.” As his poem reads,

The Latin-School’s Work
Like the sly snake and the strong death,
Like hell without end,
It captures like an old fox,
Spirit-Flies in its cobwebs,
Who don’t know its lies. (my translation)¹⁶⁵

In the same vein, the German orientation in the Danish academic world, especially towards rationalism and the use of the German language, also worries Grundtvig. In his lectures, Grundtvig claims that both the Romans and the Germans are his bitter enemies.¹⁶⁶ The ideas of German literature and philosophy dominate Danish scholarship, causing Grundtvig to think that they will ultimately diminish the Danish sense of active human life, and hence Germanize the Danes. In the 1850s when Grundtvig advocated the Danish cause (*den Dansk Sag*) for Danishness, including the mother tongue and the popular arts, he clearly criticized the German prejudice against the Danes as a dumb (*umælende*) people whose language was not suitable to express “higher human views” (*høiere menneskelige Anskuelser*), so that the Danes should “become people enlightened in German” (*tyskoplyste Mennesker*).¹⁶⁷ This greatly challenged the Danishness which consists of the fatherland,

¹⁶¹ Grundtvig, “Det Latinske Stil,” *Den nordiske Kirke-Tidende*, Nr. 28-9 (1834), in *US VIII*, 34.

¹⁶² Grundtvig, “The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838),” *SL*, 211-13.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁶⁴ At that time, there also existed a kind of School for Civil Virtues (*Borgerdyd*) in Copenhagen, but it was mainly intended for the “upper bourgeoisie” as “a more practical-oriented alternative to the School of Our Lady, the Latin grammar School better known as the Metropolitan School.” Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 17-8.

¹⁶⁵ Grundtvig, *Budstikke i Høinorden* (Kjøbenhavn: Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1864), *US X*, 520.

“Det er Latiner-Skolens Værk,
Som Slangen træsk, som Døden stærk,
Som Helved uden Ende,
Den fanger, som en gammel Ræv,
Aands-Fluer i sin Spindelvæv,
Som ei dens Løndom kiende.”

¹⁶⁶ Grundtvig, “Selections from Within Living Memory,” in *A Grundtvig Anthology: Selections from the Writings of N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872)* edited, annotated and introduced by Niels Lyhne Jensen et al., trans. Edward Broadbridge and Niels Lyhne Jensen (Cambridge/Denmark: James Clark/ Centrum), 99.

¹⁶⁷ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag II,” *Dannebrog* (27 Januar 1855), *US X*, 48.

the mother-tongue and the Danish people so that the world, according to Grundtvig, risks losing “something of the noblest, the best, and the loveliest that God has created on earth.”¹⁶⁸

Because both Latin and German as well as other foreign languages like French are unsuitable for common people to express their feelings and describe their behavior from their hearts in a natural way, they should give way to the national language of the people so that the living word can convey the national spirit and hence bring about the revival of the nation. The loss of the living word through the mother-tongue leads to people’s spiritual death, which is “not simply sin, but foolishness and spiritual suicide” (*[D]et ikke blot var Synd, men Daarskab og aandeligt Selvmord*).¹⁶⁹ As Grundtvig’s poem goes,

“To heart never goes what from heartlessness came,”
We find that with Rome this is always the case,
with classical Latin and popery’s name,
with power and cunning and tricks in our face.
Tormented and troubled and crushed to the bone
Is the heart that must under the Roman yoke groan.
And so with our fathers
we pray: Dear God save us
and free us from Rome!¹⁷⁰

Therefore, this form of the Roman yoke, the rod of the Latin teachers at school, still needs breaking up, together with the imperialist chains of the Roman emperors and the papist crozier.¹⁷¹ The same is true of the influence of the German language. But we need to keep in mind that Grundtvig by no means excludes a reconciliation between Latin and Danish on the condition that the linguistic priority for children is Danish at school.¹⁷² He himself, of course, spoke German and was greatly influenced by German Romanticism. What Grundtvig really strives for is the priority of the Danish language and the Danish cultural consciousness embedded in it.

Thus the Danish language spoken mainly by the farmers should not be marginalized and abandoned by the politicians, civil servants, and other social elites. Despite the policy of general education for children from 1814, the peasants remained unenlightened,¹⁷³ so the new Danish cultural identity for the elite as well as for the peasantry needs reshaping through the living word:

[T]he living word has no home in the people’s mouth but belongs solely in the educated man’s pen; that for spiritual use the mother-tongue is not worth mentioning beside Latin; and finally, that it is not through contemplation of actual human life in oneself and others but through reading – especially Latin books – that one acquires the proper human knowledge and worldly wisdom that are equally useful under every clime.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Grundtvig, “A Congratulation to Denmark (1847),” in *SL*, 317-18.

¹⁶⁹ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1863,” *US* X, 541. Grundtvig said that the same spiritual death also happened to “the Jews, the Greeks and our own Nordic forefathers” due to the loss of the living word, which is the expression of the invisible folk spirit. (*Ibid.*)

¹⁷⁰ Grundtvig, “A Roman Song (1837),” *SL*, 167.

¹⁷¹ Grundtvig, *Nordic Mythology*-extract (1832), *SL*, 58.

¹⁷² Grundtvig, “The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838),” *SL*, 210.

¹⁷³ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 88.

¹⁷⁴ Grundtvig, “To the Norwegians concerning a Norwegian High School (1837),” *SL*, 176.

Culturally speaking, what worries Grundtvig is the “death of Danish *folkelighed*”, which is “the spiritual death of the Danish people” (*Folkets aandelige Død*)¹⁷⁵ on account of the prevalence of Latin and the rationalist ethos of the Enlightenment. He claims that in the 18th century “rational and enlightened” people wanted to be “true world citizens” (*sande Verdens-Borgere*) with “the high-flying German ideas of ‘Man as he should be’ (*Mann, wie er sein sollte*)” as the model, which made “*folkelighed* almost equally as dead and powerless as Christianity,” but the national self-consciousness was awakened in the 19th century.¹⁷⁶ Thus Grundtvig describes his vision as follows:

So long as a nation has not died out, but still has the three things which make up natinal life: the land of the forefathers, the mother-tongue, and community friendships, then it can expect a Golden Year in the old age of its national-spirit as good as its own Golden Age. So while in Denmark and our North there still exists a nation with a famous Golden Age in its early history, there has been and continues to be in Denmark and throughout the North a national-spirit that has created the Golden Age with the power and will to create in the Age of Paper and the Age of Iron a similar Golden Age.¹⁷⁷

Although the first half of the 19th century in Denmark is called the Golden Age (*Guld-Alder*), Grundtvig considers it very distant from the common people. He is very critical of the urban bourgeois elite culture that has alienated the Danish peasants and simultaneously threatened traditional Danish national culture. Flemming Lundgreen-Nilesen points out that, Grundtvig never identifies himself with this middle-class and elite culture of the Golden Age, but expects the Golden Year (*Gylden-Aar*) according to his own understanding that brings about “happiness for all the people through enlightenment about life” with “a harmony between nature and history, reality and dream, simplicity and majesty, people and royalty.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, the real Golden Year that Grundtvig envisages should be preoccupied not with foreign languages and un-Danish philosophical and cultural trends, but by a real revival of the people’s own ancient traditions. In other words, the priority of the Danish cultural agenda should be given to a Danish spiritual legacy.

4.3.5. Summary

All in all, Grundtvig prophetically identifies that the various Danish crises in his time result from the decline of traditional national culture. The Danish urban culture, especially in the 1840s has been characterized as the “banal, everyday optimism of the bourgeoisie” and “the Protestant cultural self-understanding of the clergy,” which was also targeted by Søren Kierkegaard.¹⁷⁹ Grundtvig is very critical of this kind of cultural popularity when the Nordic culture and traditional spirituality of the peasants is being forgotten. Grundtvig’s new Golden Year has a more obvious national focus with respect to the happiness of Denmark.¹⁸⁰ What he intends, together with the naturalists, is to

¹⁷⁵ Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Christendom,” *Dansk Kirketidende*, Nr. 107 (October 1847), in *US IX*, 87.

¹⁷⁶ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US X*, 348.

¹⁷⁷ Grundtvig, “Guld-Alderen og Grotte-Sangen i Danmark,” *Danskeren* Nr. 8 (Marts 1850), in *US IX*, 233. “[O]g saalænge et Folk ikke er uddødt, men har endnu de tre Ting, der udgjør Folke-Livet, som er Fæderneland, Modersmaal og Vennelag, saa længe kan det i sin egen og Folke-Aandens Alderdoms-Tid godt vente et Gyldenaar, som svarer til dets egen Guldalder. Saavist derfor som her endnu i Danmark og vort Norden findes et virkeligt Folk med en kiendelig Guldalder i Levnetsløbets Begyndelse, saavist har der været og er der endnu i Danmark og hele vort Norden en Folke-Aand, som har skabt Guldalderen og har baade Magt og Villie til midt i Papirs-Tiden og Jern-Alderen at skabe et tilsvarende Gyldenaar.”

¹⁷⁸ Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen, “Grundtvig og guldalderens København,” *Grundtvig Studier* 1995: 107-139; English Summaries by Børge Bendtsen, *Ibid.*, 317-18,

¹⁷⁹ Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 734.

¹⁸⁰ Grundtvig, “Guld-Alderen og Grotte-Sangen i Danmark (1850),” *US IX*, 239. In the poem “Gylden-Aaret,” Grundtvig seems to describe a golden year with an overlapping time-span with the Danish golden age in the first half of the 19th century, but it seems to be more a praise of King Frederik VI’s 50-year rule with Grundtvig’s vision of

revive the historical Nordic spirit common to both the Danish elite and the peasantry in order to bridge the cultural gap between them and dismiss the spiritless rationalism. This calls for a new cultural configuration, and one of the means for reshaping Danish cultural identity is Grundtvig's people's high school, which is his great contribution to the Danish cultural reconstruction.

4.4. Church

Finally, the Danish State Church is also greatly influenced and challenged by the economic, socio-political, and cultural situation.

4.4.1. The Challenge of Rationalism

First of all, the emergence of the so-called "new-modern" rationalist theologians and clergy, regarded by Grundtvig as a kind of theological "papacy,"¹⁸¹ has made great changes to the traditional Lutheran Church by the time Grundtvig comes on the scene. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, rationalist priests and theologians have enjoyed the academic freedom to interpret Christian faith in a "scientific" spirit. While Grundtvig is studying theology at Copenhagen University, his teachers such as Hornemann, named the "mockers" by Grundtvig, often make satirical remarks on the Bible from a rationalist perspective.¹⁸² With the challenge of rationalist thinking,¹⁸³ especially the so-called rationalist critical studies of the Bible¹⁸⁴ at the time, such traditional doctrines as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ are doubted and set aside. Grundtvig believes that the Germans focus too much on dead letters and the scientific study of the Bible, which becomes a yoke for Danish Christianity, so that the Germans ignore the true and free Christian life once served in Denmark.¹⁸⁵ As P.G. Lindhardt says, "The Rationalists practiced an extreme freedom in their preaching, far from the Lutheran confession, and many took liberties with the liturgy which violated both the spirit and the letter of faith and ritual."¹⁸⁶ Obviously, ordinary Christians who are used to the traditional Lutheran faith cannot easily accommodate to the new theology and liturgy, and hence become unsatisfied with the State Church.

4.4.2. Declining Church Life

Partly because of the rigid Lutheran orthodoxy and the rationalist theological influence, church life is also in decline. In the villages where the peasants have been set free from their landlords, the once church-centered communal life dissolves and the almost-empty churches can no longer serve as the spiritual and cultural centers while pastors are busy with "schools and philanthropy, potato

Denmark being a land of love, peace and life, and a free civil society (For Borger-Selskab frit) in the light of the glorious past (i gamle Faders Dage). See Grundtvig, "Gylden-Aaret," *Den Nordiske Kirke-Tidende* Nr. 4 (1834), in *US* VIII, 18, 14-5, 24. See also Grundtvig, "Den Danske Guld-Alder," *Brage-Snak om Græske og Nordiske Myther og Oldsagn for Damer og Herrer* (Kjøbenhavn: C.A. Reitzel, 1844), in *US* VIII, 736, 742-43.

¹⁸¹ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes?* (1830), *US* V, 311-13.

¹⁸² Edv. Lehmann, *Grundtvig* (København: Jespersen og Pios Forlag, 1929), 29-30.

¹⁸³ For example, Grundtvig criticizes the rationalist theologian Heinrich Gottlieb Tzschirner's claim for "only the rationalist conception of religion and those sound, moral principles which neither stand nor fall with Jesus Christ and the Christian revelation;" such a rationalistic view made the church an empty shell. See N.F.S. Grundtvig, *What Constitutes Authentic Christianity*, trans. Ernest D. Nielsen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 87.

¹⁸⁴ In 1817 of the three hundred year anniversary of the Reformation, Danish bishops published the pastoral letter to affirm the interpretation of the Bible according to "the law of reason" (Den hellige Skrift forklaret efter Fornuftens Love), which Grundtvig strongly opposed and continued to fight against. See Bradley, *A Life Recalled*, 44.

¹⁸⁵ Grundtvig, "Den danske og den tyske Theologi," *Danskeren* Nr.8 (Mai, 1848): 124-25, quoted in *GDK* II, 84-5.

¹⁸⁶ Lindhardt, *Grundtvig*, 29.

planting and vaccination.”¹⁸⁷ With the clergy teaching in school to benefit the nation by emphasizing industry and morality for the common good and to be rewarded in the afterlife Christianity has been reduced to common sense reasoning and moral admonition.¹⁸⁸ “Church practice under the enlightenment was no better” with lullaby-like sermons, rigid dogmatic teaching, morality without religious sense, boring rituals, dull congregational life without energetic singing and poetic imagination, and church buildings ignored.¹⁸⁹ The decline of church life in part led to the appearance of revival movements to meet people’s spiritual needs.

4.4.3. The Emergence of Pietistic Groups

In order to revive Christianity again in Denmark, the pietistic groups or godly assemblies outside the State Church start their own religious gatherings, looking to their spiritual salvation. Their tension with the State Church seems to cause an unavoidable schism despite the State-imposed unity. To counteract the dominant theological rationalism, the Moravian Congregation outside the State Church absorbs over 600 people to worship with them in the 1810s, but risks being persecuted by the State and the clergy.¹⁹⁰ In the first half of the 19th century, there is still no freedom for the small non-conformist Christian groups. According to the 1741 law the godly assemblies cannot legally gather for worship without the presence of the State Church clergy, and the State also takes measures to punish these pietistic groups, even by imprisoning them.¹⁹¹ The Grundtvig-influenced Jacob Christian Lindberg, who organizes house-worship at his residence, almost becomes the leader of this awakening movement, which includes “[p]ietists, old-fashioned Lutherans, members of the Jutland revival movement, followers of the Norwegian revivalist Hauge, and members of many other lay religious movements”; it becomes the object of ridicule by the urban middle-class and of persecution by the government.¹⁹² In order finally to dismiss the “irregularities” (*Uregelmæssighederne*) of the non-conformists Bishop Mynster and the chancellor go so far as to force the children of the Baptists to be baptized within the State Church in 1840.¹⁹³ When the peaceful Danish revolution of 1848 puts an end to the absolute monarchy, hope for real religious change is stirred until freedom of religion is granted by the Constitution of 1849 with the State Church renamed the National Church (*folkekirken*).¹⁹⁴ But there remain such issues as the parish-tie to both congregations and pastors, enforced baptism, confirmation and marriage, and the church law in general. Grundtvig is very much concerned with the church situation and believes that the Danish State Church badly needs a new reformation.

In fact, the rise of the godly assemblies is not without socio-political causes. As Joakim Garff analyses it:

[The godly awakening moments] were in turn connected with phenomena as various as the Danish peasant reforms, the ideals of equality and freedom that stemmed from the French Revolution, and the romantic era’s notion of a person’s inalienable right of self-determination. Composed of roughly equal

¹⁸⁷ Koch, *Grundtvig*, 10. Koch also mentions that at the time personal morality was still highly regarded despite the decline of old-fashioned Christianity. (Ibid.)

¹⁸⁸ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 88.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁹⁰ Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 11.

¹⁹¹ Grundtvig, “Om Gudelige Forsamlinger (1825),” *US IV*, 365-66; see also Schrøder, *Grundtvig*, 79-80. For example, S. A. Bradley notes that, in 1821, the lay preacher Christen Madsen was imprisoned because of his illegal religious activity at unauthorized godly assemblies. See Bradley, *A Life Recalled*, 45.

¹⁹² Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 32-4.

¹⁹³ *GDK II*, 117.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 117-18.

portions of reaction (back to true Lutheranism) and revolution (down with the power of the clergy as a ruling class in society), the godly awakenings were a threat to the State Church. So attempts were made to stifle the movement by imposing fines and imprisonment, but this only served to strengthen its solidarity. Viewed politically, the godly awakenings were thus not unimportant in the development of modern democracy.¹⁹⁵

Garff reminds us not only to view the revivalist movement from a socio-political perspective, but also to realize how the State Church system hinders the free development of Christianity in Denmark. This ushers in my next point concerning the Church-State relationship.

4.4.4. The Danish Church-State Relationship

The Danish State Church was formed as a result of the 1536 Reformation. In Grundtvig's day the State Church serves as the civil bond of the country in which priests as civil servants, are the mediators between State and the people.¹⁹⁶ The Church also carries out such civil responsibilities as the registration of infants and holding of marriage rituals, which troubles Grundtvig spiritually to administer the sacraments even for non-believing Danes until he resigns his pastoral office in 1826. In the Danish State Church up to 1849, baptism, confirmation, and Holy Communion are "civil duties" (*Borgerpligt*) with the church being used in the civil sense regardless of people's real faith and with the clergy simply performing their civil duties in the Church.¹⁹⁷ Besides the parish-tie, the State imposes uniform doctrines and rituals on the clergy and congregation so that the State Church can continue to help maintain social cohesion. The social stratification also influences the State Church, as the intellectuals and the wealthy prefer listening to Bishop Mynster and other eminent pastors.¹⁹⁸ Like Grundtvig, Søren Kierkegaard criticizes the State-ruled Church structure, the nominal Christian faith of the State, and the privileges of the clergy as civil servants.¹⁹⁹ Even the later Bishop Martensen admits that the State Church has serious problems in difficult situations:

I have had many insights into the very miserable conditions and circumstances that characterize the ecclesiastical situation. There are certainly things in the State Church that neither can be nor ought to be retained. And the clergy includes a good many members for whose sake it would not be worth supporting any ecclesiastical Establishment whatever.²⁰⁰

Martensen indicates that the State Church needs to improve its external circumstances, to sublimate some internal traditions, and to discipline some of the state clergy. From the above we can understand why Grundtvig tries to reform the Danish State Church in order to revive people's spirituality at a time of national crisis. This remains a life-long fight for Grundtvig, as we shall see.

Generally speaking, the Danish State Church is challenged by rationalism, declining church life, the emergence of the schismatic godly assemblies, and the tight control of the Church by the State. Grundtvig's affection for both Christianity and the Danish nation drives him to seek to meet the people's spiritual thirst on the one hand, and to avoid national disintegration on the other.

¹⁹⁵ Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 32.

¹⁹⁶ Jespersen, *A History of Denmark*, 2nd ed., 99-103.

¹⁹⁷ Grundtvig, "De syv Sakramenter (1856)," in *Den Kristelige Børnelærdom*, US IX, 399, 404. See also Lindhardt, *Grundtvig*, 29.

¹⁹⁸ Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 759, 789, 795.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 746.

4.5. Summary

In brief, Grundtvig experiences all the difficult situations of Danish politics, economics, culture, and church in the 19th century. As a faithful Christian and a patriotic Dane, he has to respond to the radical circumstances from his Christian perspective. It is his active and fearless interaction with these contemporary challenges that make him a public theologian. He chooses to start his campaign with the revival of Christianity.

5. Grundtvig's Ecclesial Perspective

5.1. The Christian Point of Departure

This study will follow Theodor Jørgensen's interpretation of "separation and interaction" (*Adskillelse og vekselvirkning*) as a suitable approach to analyzing Grundtvig's thought on Christianity and human life respectively with the acknowledgment that the two aspects are never separated but in a living interactive relationship.²⁰¹ Anders Pontoppidan Thyssen shares the same view when criticizing Thaning's emphasis on Grundtvig's turning to the stark human life after 1832. As Thyssen says, "Separation only finds its correct meaning when we insist that Grundtvig simultaneously holds the two factors [the Christian and the human] closely together, so that he can also hold that there is the closest coherence in between them."²⁰² In Chapter 7 of this study, I shall further argue for a deep coinherence between the Christian and the *folkelig* life in Grundtvig's public theology.

As a faithful Christian and a patriotic Dane, Grundtvig spends all his life on the flowering of the Christian faith and the national spirit. The two are never entirely separated, although at some stages Grundtvig appears to focus more on the one than the other due to the ups and downs of his clerical life and the changing situations of Denmark. But in order to explore the role of Christianity in social reconstruction and national regeneration, he first has to disentangle the historical relationship between the Christian and the *folkelig* in preparation for the task of a public theology. For a living interaction between the Christian and the *folkelig* is the way that public theology functions. On the one hand, Grundtvig regrets that the living faith of Christianity has been eclipsed by either the rigid Lutheran orthodoxy imposed by the State or the new modern theological rationalism popular in Denmark since the Enlightenment. As mentioned in ch.4.4., Grundtvig's debate with the theological rationalists over a "correct" biblical interpretation, together with the emergence of the sectarian godly assemblies, prompts him to explore the very nature of authentic Christianity. As early as 1824 he distinguishes two questions: "What is true Christianity (what has Jesus taught?), and is Christianity true (or is Christ trustworthy?)" According to Grundtvig, the former is a historical question while the latter is a matter of conscience.²⁰³

Simultaneously Grundtvig wants the life of the Danish people, with its historically enforced Christian form, to be de-Christianized before he can revive the true natural human life in the spirit of the old North. Grundtvig regrets this imposition, seeing Christianity, above all, as a matter of conscience. As he claims,

First then, when we realize that the Christian surface is a benefit neither to the people nor to Christianity, but the biggest damage to both, we will try again, first, to set Christianity and people in a free relationship

²⁰¹ Theodor Jørgensen, "Adskillelse og vekselvirkning. Om Grundtvigs syn på Folkelighed og kristendom," *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Gustav Albeck og William Michelsen (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 1986), 71-83. I shall discuss different patterns of understanding the divine-human relation later in this thesis.

²⁰² Thyssen, "Menneske Først –": Om Kaj Thanings Grundtvig-disputats," in Thyssen, *Grundtvig og den grundtvigske arv*, ed. Jakob Balling et al (Frederiksberg: ANIS, 1991), 180. "Adskillelsen får først sin rette betydning, når man fastholder, at Grundtvig samtidig holder de to faktorer tæt sammen, så at han også kan hævde, at der er 'den allernøjeste sammenhæng' imellem dem (s. 652, V.U. VI, 420)." Jacob Balling is Professor of Practical Theology at Aarhus University.

²⁰³ Grundtvig, "Var Morten Luther en Christen, Eller var han en Kjætter?" *Nyeste Skilderie* (den 4. Maj 1824), in *US IV*, 226.

to each other, as was with us originally, which we must admit it should have been everywhere where Christianity came up.²⁰⁴

In the unpublished original manuscript of “The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836),” Grundtvig expresses himself more clearly and more strongly:

Nevertheless, I regard the attempt in the Middle Ages to Christianize the whole world as monstrous interference, not only because it happened so often with the hand’s sword rather than the spirit’s, but also because it forced upon the ancient people of the North, who had their own noble life, a Christian façade that did harm to both the Nordic and the Christian life, with the result that they were both in a mortal danger that has still not quite passed. However, I know that both these lives [the Nordic life and the Christian life] still exist and can easily be reconciled, since I myself live them, albeit on a weak and small scale. Yet they are so real for me that they try to propagate themselves, not as they did in days of old as merged or missed, but separate, each under its own name. In consequence I want the Danish people’s life to be just as little Christian as I want it to be French or German, since a real life can be neither more nor less than what it is but can only act and show itself as it is.²⁰⁵

Only with the first attempt to de-Christianize the imposed Christian form can the natural Nordic human life be restored and resumed.

As public theology relies on a living interaction and deep coinherence between the free Christian life and the free *folkelig* life, I shall follow Grundtvig in distinguishing but not separating them. I shall first try to relocate these two aspects of ‘entangled’ life into their own proper spheres, my theological purpose being to clear the stage for the ministry of the Word both in Christian life with its incarnational effect in the church, and in human life with His continuous creation effect on society and nation. This procedure resembles what Regin Prenter calls “a Christology on two lines” (*en kristologi på to linier*).²⁰⁶ I choose to take Christianity as the starting-point following Thyssen’s phenomenological observation that Grundtvig’s development of the idea of *folkelighed* “actually presupposes his ecclesial perspective” (*kirkelige anskuelse*). When Grundtvig comes to realize the importance of the living word and the necessary differentiation of Church on the one hand, and School and State on the other, he can start emphasizing the role of the *folkelig* enlightenment for a civil society.²⁰⁷ In short, I will distinguish the Christian and the human life in the Danish context, and then explore their coinherence through the lens of public theology.

5.2. True Christianity in Response to Modernity

Grundtvig sets Martin Luther as his example to reform the Danish Church. Despite his prophetic criticism of people’s indifference to the theological rationalists’ disbelief in traditional faith, Grundtvig needs to find out what his understanding of true Christianity is. In this exploring process Grundtvig’s theology shifts from a biblicist preacher to an ecumenical theologian as he rediscovers the apostles’ witness to the living Word passed down through church history.

²⁰⁴ Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Christendom (1847),” *US* IX, 83. “Først da, naar vi indseer, at dette christelige Skin er hverken til Gavn for Folket eller for Christendommen, men til største Skade for Begge, først da kan vi stræbe paany at sætte Christendommen og Folket i det fri Forhold til hinanden, som hos os var det oprindelige, og som vi maae tilstaae burde været det allevegne, hvor Christendommen kom hen.”

²⁰⁵ Grundtvig, “The Danish Four-leaf Clover or a Partiality for Danishness (1836),” *SL*, 164-65.

²⁰⁶ Regin Prenter, “Grundtvigs treenighedslære,” i *N.F.S. Grundtvig: theolog og kirkelære: prædikener og foredrag fra 200-året* (Sabro, 1983), 63. Dr. Prenter (1907-1990) was a well-known Danish Professor of Dogmatics, and pastor.

²⁰⁷ Anders Pontoppidan Thyssen, “Det bibelsk-folkehistoriske helhedssyn,” in *Menneske først, kristen så*, ed. Jens Holger Schjørring (Århus: ANIS, 1988), 47-8.

5.2.1. Grundtvig's Biblicist Christianity (1810-1824)

Roughly in the period of 1810-24, Grundtvig remains generally a pious biblicist preacher.²⁰⁸ This has something to do with his childhood upbringing in a conservative pious Christian family. After his spiritual conversion in 1810, Grundtvig seeks to be a reformer of the Danish Church by beginning again to “read the Bible, especially the Prophets, and Luther and Kingo’s hymns since his childhood.”²⁰⁹ Grundtvig claims that since his publication of “Religion and Liturgy” (1807), he has concentrated on his task to “disarm the enemies of the church” and “awaken the Nordic people from their deep sleep of the souls on the edges of the abyss” in an “anti-Christian” age by turning from mythology to the Bible and Church with a firm faith in Christ alone.²¹⁰ Grundtvig now holds the Bible as the unshakable foundation of his faith, in light of which he writes *World Chronicles* (1812) in order to understand the relationship between Christianity and the people.²¹¹ He sees himself as “the guardian of biblical faith: with hasty judgments on nations and Churches, with an attack on rationalism and the German idealistic philosophy.”²¹² From his diaries of 1813, we learn that he reads the New Testament five times, and in his letters he simply persuades his friends, including Pastor Holm and Hersleb, to believe simply in God’s Word in a literalist way.²¹³ In the same year on All Saints Day, Grundtvig preaches a bold sermon in Garrison Church about a new Church Reformation in Denmark, and on Martin Luther’s birthday (November 10), he determines to devote himself to a “renewal of His [God’s] Church and a rebirth of the Word.”²¹⁴ He shares with the pietistic groups the concerns about people’s inner spiritual life and traditional orthodox doctrines, and he sets out to restore and revive the Church in light of the biblical revelation. He urges a spiritual rebaptism of both the Church and nation. Even in 1822 when he is asked to preach in the “Queen’s apartment,” his message is still fighting against disbelief and demanding repentance.²¹⁵ This conservative standpoint soon gives way to a new understanding of faith, however.

Later Grundtvig realizes that the conflict in biblical interpretation between the old-fashioned Christians and rationalists has resulted in different understandings of Christianity. Both the so-called scientific studies of the Bible, or the “exegetical papacy,” and the traditional orthodox biblicism can no longer serve as the solid foundation of Christian faith.²¹⁶ In hindsight, Grundtvig reflects that, thanks to the rationalists’ critique of the Bible, he has reached a clearer understanding of the Bible than before and comes to the following conclusions: (1) Church cannot be built on the basis of the Bible; (2) biblical criticism makes it hard to defend the traditional canon; (3) it is impossible to support Lutheran theologians’ teaching about the Bible’s inspiration theory; (4) it is impossible to publish the biblical texts as prophets and apostles’ own basic writings; (5) we can no

²⁰⁸ Concerning Grundtvig’s view of the Bible, see Christian Thodberg, “Grundtvig’s View of the Bible,” in *Grundtvig in International Perspective: Studies in the Creativity of Interaction*, ed. A. M. Allchin et al. (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), 115-34.

²⁰⁹ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, US X, 341.

²¹⁰ Grundtvig, *Nytaars-Morgen: Et Rim* (Kjøbenhavn: Trykt hos Directeur Jens Hostrup Schultz, Kongelig og Universitets-Bogtrykker, 1824), US IV, 240.

²¹¹ Grundtvig, “Af Brevveksling Mellem Nørrejylland og Christianshavn (1824),” US IV, 232-34.

²¹² Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 103.

²¹³ Gustav Albeck, ed., vol. 1 of *N.F.S. Grundtvig: Dag-og Udtogsbøger* (København: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, 1979), 414.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 417.

²¹⁵ Kaj Thaning, *N.F.S. Grundtvig*, trans. David Hohnen (Denmark: Det Danske Selskab, 1972), 41-2.

²¹⁶ Lindhardt, *Grundtvig*, 30, 35. The phrase “exegetical papacy” (Det exegetiske Pavedømme) first appeared in Grundtvig’s *Kirkens Genmæle mod Professor Theologiae Dr. H. N. Clausen* (Kjøbenhavn: den Wahlske Boghandlings Forlag, 1825), US IV, 420. Just as Luther was against the clergy’s papacy, so does Grundtvig oppose the rationalists’ biblical hegemony. See Schrøder, *Grundtvig*, 204.

longer endorse the rationalist theologians' infallibility and make their interpretations articles of faith.²¹⁷ This is Grundtvig's great breakthrough beyond the Lutheran orthodoxy. The Bible can no longer be considered the solely adequate source and living standard of Christian faith; it has fallen into the hands of the modern theologians and under the dominance of their professional and scientific interpretations. Again from the vantage of hindsight, Grundtvig later realizes that "humanity is not for the sake of the Bible, but the Bible for the sake of humanity."²¹⁸ *Life* becomes his central concern in *all* his theological development, and his source for understanding God's living Word, which *includes* the Bible, but also much historical experience.²¹⁹ Here, Grundtvig may also be influenced by Lessing, who some 50 years earlier had pointed to a mediating way beyond the conflict between the "Bible and reason", namely that the Church's *tradition* was an indispensable source for understanding the Christian faith.²²⁰ But back to the 1820s, what tradition can Grundtvig specify as his rule of faith?

5.2.2. The Matchless Discovery

5.2.2.1. The Discovery of the Apostles' Creed

Grundtvig's long search for true Christianity is finally answered through his so-called "matchless discovery" of 1825. Although people later refer to this polemically as "Grundtvigianism or ecclesial perspective, discovery or invention, revelation or fabrication,"²²¹ Grundtvig prefers not to have his own name propagated, but to speak of "Lutheran-Christian Enlightenment" (*Luthersk-Christelige Oplysning*).²²² In a sermon dated July 31 1825, Grundtvig makes this striking declaration: "... For whatever the Bible says, it is equally certain and undeniable that the Apostles' Creed which has been confessed by Christians in all ages and in all congregations, that and nothing else is the Christians' Creed."²²³ According to Prenter, it is in *The Church's Retort (Kirkens Gienmæle)* that this matchless discovery is clearly unfolded.²²⁴ As Grundtvig says,

By what possible means can anyone dispute the basic tenet that the means of grace, with the corresponding creed of faith – which is the only one that all Christians, in all situations, in all congregations, and for all ages have had in common, which has made the church recognizable to friends and enemies, and linked congregations together, and which therefore was undeniably the mark of recognition for both – has to this day corresponded to the charge that the Lord placed on the rock which

²¹⁷ Grundtvig, "Om det ny Testament i Grundtsproget eller om Skole og Bibelkritiken Eller om Alcala-Texten og Bibel-Kritiken," in *Nordisk Kirke-Tidende*, Nr. 52-5(1837), quoted in vol. 3 of *Haandbog i N. F. S. Grundtvigs Skrifter*, ed. Ernst J. Borup og Frederik Schrøder, 3 vols. (København: H. Hagerups Forlag, 1930), 81-82 (cited hereafter in footnotes as *HB*). See also J. P. Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 2den Udgave (København: Kirkeligt Samfunds Forlag, 1930), 173-74.

²¹⁸ Grundtvig, "Kirkelige Oplysninger især for Lutherske Christne," *Nordisk Tidsskrift for christelig Theologi* (1840-42), in *US* VIII, 452.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 438.

²²⁰ Lehmann, *Grundtvig*, 11.

²²¹ Grundtvig, "Efterskrift 1865 [af Om den sande Christendom og om Christendommens Sandhed 1826-27]," in *US* IV, 726. "[E]n man kalder den Grundtvigianisme eller kirkelig anskuelse, Opdagelse eller Opfindelse, Aabenbaring eller Opdigtelse."

²²² See Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemøderne 1863," *US* X, 534.

²²³ Grundtvig, "Prædiken, Den 31. Juli 1825," *US* IV, 393. "... thi hvad der end staaer i bibelen, saa er det jo lige vist og lige unægteligt, at den Troes-bekiendelse, de Christne til alle Tider, i alle Menigheder har aflagt, den og ingen anden er de Christnes Troesbekiendelse." See also Bradley, *A Life Recalled*, 125-27; Grundtvig, *What Constitutes Authentic Christianity*, 57-62, 77.

²²⁴ Regin Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse: En indførelse i N.F.S. Grundtvigs folkelige og kristelige grundtanker* (Christiansfeld: Forlaget Savanne 1983), 19.

despite the portals of hell and the power of death should bear His church through all ages until the end of the world.²²⁵

At this juncture, Irenaeus' influence on Grundtvig must be mentioned. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, was a disciple of Polycarp who inherited the Johannine tradition of the Christian faith. Since the winter of 1823, Grundtvig has been reading Irenaeus and translating some of his work *Against Heresies* (later to be published in 1827). According to Kaj Thaning, Grundtvig is greatly influenced by Irenaeus in the following two aspects. First of all, Grundtvig's anthropology gradually shifts from the depraved human nature of the "penitential Lutheran Christianity" (*bodskristendom*) to the emphasis on the natural human growth of the Christian life in light of the second Adam.²²⁶ Thus, Grundtvig turns away from what Thaning describes as the Lutheran orthodox tendency of Gnosticism,²²⁷ i.e., the negligence of the meaning of this-worldly life by highlighting too much the spiritual dimension. The second is the "oral tradition" of the Christian faith as the *regula fidei* for the universal Church.²²⁸ Grundtvig realizes that the apostles' words and writings constitute the authentic Christianity (*det Apostoliske Ord og den Apostoliske Skrift som den ægte Kristendoms eneste Hjemmel*), which results in him paying greater attention to the *Symbolum Apostolicum*.²²⁹ It is the apostles' witness in the early congregational life that can become the rule of faith and foundation of true Christianity. What the primordial churches preached and believed – the *Symbolum Apostolicum* – has been passed on in a living way to this day.²³⁰ Thus the apostles' kerygma of the living "word of faith" is the true yardstick for biblical interpretation, and the standard for all historical universal Christianity.²³¹

It should be noted that, according to Regin Prenter, not until his later book *The Seven Stars of Christendom* (*Christenhedens Syvstjerne*) of 1860, did Grundtvig claim that the Apostles' Creed comes directly from the mouth of the Lord.²³² This fact is a "spiritual enlightenment" to express the Church's original and unchanged "common faith," which is also the "Christian conditions for salvation" "from the beginning till the end."²³³ Furthermore, the Word from the Lord's mouth can be heard alive and active in the institutional words of sacraments in the Lord's name, together with the "baptismal pact, the Lords' prayer, the peace, the real institutional words at the occasions of the two Christian sacraments." These should be experienced not as "articles of faith or the object of faith," but as the "agent of Christian light and the source of life."²³⁴ In short, it is the ongoing

²²⁵ Grundtvig, *Kirkens Gienmæle* (1825), *US IV*, 417. "Man betænke dog engang, hvormed man vil bestride den Grund-Sætning, at Naade-Midlerne, med den dertil svarende Troes-Bekiendelse, som er det Eneste, alle Christne, i alle Stillinger, i alle Menigheder, til alle Tider have havt tilfælles, det, der baade har gjort Kirken kiendelig for Venner og Fiender, og forbundet Menighed, Det, der altsaa unægtelig var baade Kiende-Mærket hidtil har svaret til den Priis, Herren lagde paa Klippen, som, til Trods for Helvedes Porte og Dødens Magt, skulde bære Hans Kirke alle Dage til Verdens Ende!"

²²⁶ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 36-37, 49, 51-2.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42-4.

²²⁹ *GDK I*, 27, 32.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 49. Grundtvig draws his conclusion from his reflections in the text of "On True Christianity." (*Ibid.*)

²³¹ Kaj Thaning, "Grundtvigs Møde med Irenæus -- hans Vej til 'Dagningen' og 'De Levendes Land,'" in *Grundtvig-Studier*, ed. Gustav Albeck (København: Nordisk Forlag, 1953), 11.

²³² Prenter, *Den kirkelige anskuelse*, 21. Yet Begtrup Holger pointed out that it was not P.C. Kierkegaard, but Grundtvig himself who first claimed that the Apostles' Creed was taught by Jesus Christ himself in Grundtvig's *Søndagsbogen III*, 345, see *GDK I*, 137.

²³³ Grundtvig, "Efterskrift 1865," *US IV*, 726.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 727. "[O]g der til Herrens Munds-Ord ved hans egne Indstiftelser slet ikke regnes Andet end den fælles Tiltale i Herrens navn, som finder Sted fra Arildstid med Daabs-Pagten, Fadervor, Fredlysningen og de egenlige Indstiftelses-

presence of the living Word itself in the historical universal congregations that ensures the truth of the Christian faith.

In his old age Grundtvig described this moment of “matchless discovery”:

Then, however, it struck me like lightning, and I searched hard to find where the matchlessly clear and valid witness of the only true unchangeable Christianity was to be found? Where was the witness to what is now indispensable to the church and cannot be missing when Jesus Christ is God the Father’s only begotten Son with all the power in heaven and on the earth? Ah, then I discovered the witness testifying from the very earliest days and being heard and celebrated with the response of “Amen, Amen.” Those who seek shall find; and in baptism according to our Lord’s own words of institution, I found the matchless witness to the true, original Christian faith, as one divine and human witness of Christ and the whole of his church, integrated in the Word of faith. This Word expresses for one and all the Lord’s hearts of all believers. Just as the Apostles’ Creed at baptism is the true foundation of the gospel, about which it can rightly be said that it is in God’s power to save all who believe, so is that same creed the true living history of the church. It is testified by the three heavenly witnesses and the earthly church as the true unchanged Christianity from generation to generation, from the first baptism at Pentecost to our own baptism and to the last, which we perform in the light of the Lord’s own institution.²³⁵

Thus Grundtvig claims that the Apostles’ Creed is the valid and trustworthy witness to the historical catholic Christian faith. Even more, it creates faith and thereby saves people.

5.2.2.2. The Apologetic and Didactic Function of the Ecclesial Perspective

According to Prenter, Grundtvig’s new ecclesial perspective has both an apologetic and a didactic function. It is apologetic²³⁶ because Grundtvig’s recourse to the ecumenical Apostles’ Creed at baptism becomes an unshakeable foundation of Christian faith beyond the Bible. This invalidates both the so-called exegetical papacy of the rationalists²³⁷ and the almost literalist reading of the Bible by the orthodox Lutheran Christians. Grundtvig is at last finding a way through “the systematic unbelief and the undisciplined piety.”²³⁸ The Bible is no longer to be considered the sole standard of Christian faith, for it can easily fall into the hands of rationalist theologians. Grundtvig even goes so far as to say that the Bible, being a *written* book, is “a grave for the [living] Word.”²³⁹ But it is still of course a great source book for the enlightenment of Christian life. Therefore, the

Ord ved begge de christelige Naademidler, saa er her aabenbar ikke det mindste Nyt enten som Troes-Artikel eller som Troes-Gienstand, men kun et Fingerpeg paa den christelige Lys-Beholder og Livs-Kilde.”

²³⁵ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, US X, 85. “Da imidlertid dette slog mig som Lyn, og jeg omhyggelig efterspurgte: hvor da det mageløs klare og gyldige Vidnesbyrd om den eneste ægte, uforanderlige Kristendom var at finde, det Vidnesbyrd, som nu aabenbar var Menigheden uundværligt, og som, naar Jesus Kristus er Gud Faders enbaarne Søn med al Magt i Himlen og paa Jorden, umulig kan fattes, -- se, da fandt jeg ogsaa Vidnesbyrdet der, hvor det fra Arilds Tid lydelig og højtidelig er vidnet, med ‘Amen, Amen,’ at hvem der leder han finder; thi ved Daaben efter vor Herres egen Indstiftelse fandt jeg det mageløse Vidnesbyrd om den ægte, oprindelige Kristen-Tro, som et guddommeligt og menneskeligt, Kristi og hele hans Menigheds Vidnesbyrd, sammensmeltet i det Troens Ord, som paa een Gang udtrykker Herrens Tros-Begreb og Menighedens Tros-Bekjendelse, og afhjemles følgelig ved sig selv af Herrens og Menighedens Aand i alle troende Hjærter. Ligesom derfor den apostoliske Tros-Bekjendelse ved Daaben er det ægte Grund-Evangelium, hvorom det med rette kan siges, at det er en Guds Kraft til Frelse for hver den som tror, saaledes er den ogsaa den ægte, levende Kirke-Historie, som de tre himmelske Vidners og den jordiske Menigheds Vidnesbyrd om den ægte, uforanderlige Kristendoms Forplantelse fra Slægt til Slægt, fra den først Daab paa Pinsedagen til vor egen Daab og til den sidste, som vi forretter efter Herrens egen Indstiftelse.”

²³⁶ Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, 21-3.

²³⁷ See also Grundtvig, *What Constitutes Authentic Christianity*, 92-4.

²³⁸ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1825-1847,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 244.

²³⁹ Grundtvig, “Den Hellige Grav,” in vol. 2 of *Christelige Prædikener eller Søndags-Bog*, 3 vols (1827-31), 367-68, quoted in *HB III*, 55.

living Word also needs to be set free from the Bible and to manifest itself freely in the *spoken* Creed at baptism, and the *spoken* words at the institution of the Eucharist. This ecclesial perspective liberates Grundtvig from a “biblicist Christianity” (*Bibelkristendommen*) into an “ecclesial Christianity” (*den kirkelige Kristendom*),²⁴⁰ and marks his shift from the primacy of the Bible to the primacy of the Church, the living congregation.²⁴¹ He has now acquired a new weapon to fight against the rationalists just as Irenaeus had fought against the Gnostics.²⁴² He insists that priests should abandon the literalist inspiration theory of the Bible, and “hold firm to ‘the Lord as the head’ and to the witness of the congregation as our Lord Jesus Christ’s own divine and human witness with the divine power of the Creator,” so that priests can develop a “free relation both to the Bible and to the congregation” in the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁴³ This relation is based on the new understanding of Christianity and the Bible and Grundtvig makes relentless efforts to defend the historical authentic faith against rationalist theologians’ monopoly of doctrinal interpretations.

Moreover, the Creed also has a didactic function. The oral confession of the Creed is the unchanging apostolic witness of faith heard at baptism. Thus the common people who confess the Creed at baptism are already Christians, as the unchanging Creed passes down through the ages from the apostles upholding the tenets of Christian faith. This, according to Prenter, is another important apostolic dimension of the Creed, i.e., the didactic function which serves as the Word of light to enlighten people in their basic Christian beliefs.²⁴⁴ Prenter goes on to claim that the word of Faith which is “internally connected together with the word of prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, and with the Word of communion” is also the Word of light, which serves as the “witness of the congregation” to the “whole contents of Christian faith and the Christian life.”²⁴⁵ This Word of light is also the Word of divine life through which the Lord is present with us, giving “his own eternal life to his people.”²⁴⁶ So the Word of faith is also the Word of light and life, creating what it names.

5.2.2.3. The Deep Coinherence of the Divine and the Human in the Word

In his writings Grundtvig uses such a central phrase as “*den dybe Sammenhæng*,”²⁴⁷ which we have and shall come across continuously in the thesis. According to the *Dansk-Engelsk Ordbog* (1995), “*sammenhæng*” literally means “connection,” “coherence” or “context.”²⁴⁸ Allchin prefers “coherence”²⁴⁹ to explain the organic connection and integration of all God’s creatures but I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge and John Nicholson for their translation with the verb “coinhere.”²⁵⁰ Actually the word “co-inherence” is said to be coined by the British writer and theologian Charles Williams (1886-1945) to depict the “universal spiritual principle” that “[t]hings exist in essential relationship with another, as innate components of the other,” as in the cases of the

²⁴⁰ GDK I, 43, 45.

²⁴¹ Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 51.

²⁴² Thaning, “Grundtvigs Møde med Irenæus,” 24-5.

²⁴³ Grundtvig, “Efterskrift 1865,” US IV, 731-32. “[D]e holder fast ’ved Herren som ved Hovedet’ og ved Menighedens Vidnesbyrd som Vorherres Jesu Christi eget baade guddommelige og menneskelige Vidnesbyrd med guddommelig Skaber-Kraft.”

²⁴⁴ Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, 21.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 21-2.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 22 “[M]en det er et guddommeligt livsord, et ord, hvori Herren er lyslevende til stede som den, der skænker sit folk livet, sit eget evige liv.”

²⁴⁷ For example, see Grundtvig, “Hil dig, frelser og forsoner!” in *Den Danske Salmebog* (Det Kgl. Vajsenhus’ Forlag, 2003), 218.

²⁴⁸ *Dansk-Engelsk Ordbog* (1995), 707.

²⁴⁹ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 187.

²⁵⁰ See *Hymns in English: A Selection of Hymns from the Danish Hymnbook* (København: Det Kgl. Vajsenhus’ Forlag, 2009), 34. “May my heart for You alone beat, so my thoughts alone in You meet, in whom all things coinhere.”

relationship between “unity of humankind” and “unity of God,” St. Mary’s conception of Christ, Paul’s description of a converted Christian’s participation in Christ, the relationship between “the natural and spiritual” and “the two natures of Christ (human and divine).”²⁵¹ Niels H. Gregersen also uses “coinherence” to describe the mutual in-dwelling of Christ and Christians.²⁵² When he refers to the mutual participation of “God and the world,” Gregersen adopts the phrase “mutual inherence.”²⁵³ In this study I employ “coinherence”, since it incorporates the meanings of both “coherence” and “inherence.” By coinherence, I intend not only a coherent connection, but also a mutual participation, coupled with a divine in-dwelling in the human.

According to Grundtvig, the Lord’s own living Word heard at baptism is enlivened by the Holy Spirit who communicates Christ’s life and light²⁵⁴ to us so that we are spiritually reborn and renewed with the baptismal covenant. Grundtvig says that “the new human being is born and grows up in us in the same degree as God’s living Word becomes quickened and clarified in our innermost being.”²⁵⁵ This is the deep coinherence between the divine and the human within the Christian, as in Christ. Baptism marks the beginning of the Christian life, which continues to grow like Jesus Christ’s earthly life. This life, according to Grundtvig, is “a divine life in the order of human nature” (*Kristi Levned er et guddommeligt Liv i Menneskenaturens Orden.*)²⁵⁶ Our confession of faith at baptism, our hope from praying the Lord’s Prayer, and our love bestowed in the Holy Communion correspond to God’s living Word to express this new life of faith.²⁵⁷ The Word of life and light, who “imparts and communicates a spirit and a life” (*Vorherres Munds-Ord til os kan meddele os en Aand og et Liv,*) “is spiritually present with His congregation and works with and confirms our human word about Him with God’s power.”²⁵⁸ With the Spirit’s work, Christians are born in faith at

²⁵¹ See *The Inklings*, <http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/inklings/coinheretance.htm>. (accessed January 3, 2013).

²⁵² See Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Pantheism,” in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 27. Dr. Gregersen is Professor of Systematic Theology at Copenhagen University.

²⁵³ See Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Radical Generosity and the Flow of Grace,” in *Word-Gift-Being: Justification-Economy-Ontology*, ed. Bo Kristian Holm and Peter Widmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck GmbH, 2009), 144.

²⁵⁴ Grundtvig claims that the institutional Word is also the Word of life and light as “our Lord Jesus Christ is both life and light in God’s Kingdom, [who] is God the Father’s only begotten Son and even a true Son of Man, and so certain as he is spiritually present with his congregation and works with and confirms our human word about Him with divine power” (‘Jeg talte igaar om Pagtens og Troens og i det hele om Indstiftelsens Ord ved Daaben og Nadveren som det, der ligesaa vist er og maa være det christelige Lys-Ord og det evige Livs-Ord, som Vorherre Jesus Christus er baade Livet og Lyset i Guds Rige, er Gud-Faders eenbaarne Søn og dog en sand Menneske-Søn, og saavist som han er aandelig nærværende hos sin Menighed og arbejder med og stadfæster vort Menneske-Ord om ham med Guddoms-Kraft.’) See Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1863,” *US X*, 540. “The Lord’s Word out of His mouth to us can communicate a life and a spirit to us,” which we can only accept by faith, for “faith asks about what is true, trustworthy and salvific (saliggjørende), not about why it must be so, or how God’s act is possible.” (Ibid.) see also Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US X*, 85-6.

²⁵⁵ Grundtvig, *Søndags Bogen III* (1830), 612-13, quoted in *GDK I*, 132. “[A]t det ny Menneske fødes og vokser i os, netop i samme Grad, som dette Guds Ord bliver levende og klart i vort Inderste.”

²⁵⁶ See Grundtvig, “Præken paa Jule-Søndag 1835,” in *Grundtvigs Præken i Frederiks Kirke*, quoted in *GDK I*, 186, 188.

²⁵⁷ Grundtvig, “The Christian, the Spiritual, and the Eternal Life [Det kristelige, aanderlige og evig liv] (1857),” *Basic Christian Teachings, N.F.S. Grundtvig: Selected Writings*, ed. and with an introduction by Johannes Knudsen, trans. Johannes Knudsen, Enok Mortensen and Ernest D. Nielsen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 67.

²⁵⁸ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1863,” *US X*, 540. Grundtvig described the effect of the living Word on us as follows, “Og kunde der endnu være en Skygge af Mistanke om, at dette Ord ikke havde Livet og Kraften i sig selv, men laante dem af den arme Synder, der udtaler det, af det skrøbelige Lerkar, hvori Skatten frembæres, saa maa dog ogsaa denne Skygge forsvinde, naar Ordet, som vi har hørt og annammet det, bliver en Livskilde i vort Hjerter, saa det opstiger i vor Mund med samme Kraft og Liflighed, saa ogsaa vi faar Mod og Kraft til at bekende dette foragtede Ord for Verden som vort Hjertes Klippe og vor Del evindeligt; ogsaa paa vore Læber virker det med samme Overtalelses Kraft og liflig Velsignelse paa deres Hjerter, som er af Sandhed. Thi da er det fuldstændig bevist, at den overvættes Kraft er ikke af os,

baptism, and gradually grow in hope and love. Based on the sacraments, the common life of faith, hope, and love shapes a living congregation with Christian confession, proclamation and songs of praise as its external signs, which are important in three directions²⁵⁹: Outwardly, it assures us of faith, hope, and love in action by referring to the invisible spiritual power in action expressed by the invisible Word which is heard by people; inwardly, without exploring the mystery of sacramental nurture, we can learn of the progress of our Christian life through faith, hope, and love each day; upwardly, we do not need to worry about our distance to the stage of Christ's "fullness and purity," for our new human life is also the journey for our spiritual growth, striving for consummation and deification. Thus a Christian can start with his or her symbiotic and coinherent life of the divine and the human, and "Christianity shall penetrate and sanctify every aspect of our human nature in order to sanctify the whole of our life" (*Kristendommen skal gennembrænge alle Sider af vor menneskelige Natur for at helliggøre hele vort Liv*).²⁶⁰ In short, "a Christian is the one created in the image of God, purified by faith, reborn in baptism, strengthened by prayer, sublimated by the Eucharist, who walks with God in the holiness of righteousness and truth."²⁶¹ The deep coinherence between the human and divine is thus achieved.

Accordingly, the life of the congregation also takes on a new look. It does not lead its own life, but the "Christian life" with the human "Christ-life" as the archetype.²⁶² "The secret growth of the complete humanity of Christian life" is conceived by the "quiet listening to the gospel where God's Spirit guides the Word," born of "water and Spirit in baptism according to the Lord's institution," and grows "to perfection at the Lord's table, with the expression of faith, hope, and love making a corresponding living impression on it, so Christian life in us begins with faith, grows with hope, and fulfilled in love."²⁶³ Despite the identification of the "Christian life" as "Christ-life" which, as a "spiritual reality" (*åndelig virkelighed*), is a "life of faith,"²⁶⁴ Grundtvig is obviously humanizing the Christian life at the same time through accentuating its development in the human form.

Christianity is about a Christian human life that the human can "fuse together with the divine."²⁶⁵ As in Christ Jesus, "the human and divine nature are reconciled and united, and the humanity of Christ grows up into the fullness of divinity in the Spirit of God."²⁶⁶ Christ's life is the prototype of human life, which can be divided into the hidden internal spiritual life and the revealed external

men af Gud, som gav sin Hellig Aand i os, saa vi blev dygtige til at være den ny Pagts Tjenere, ikke Bogstavens, som slaar ihjel, men Aandens, som gør levende." See Grundtvig, "Præken paa Trefoldigheds Søndag 1838," quoted in *GDK* I, 192-93.

²⁵⁹ Grundtvig, "The Christian, the Spiritual and the Eternal Life (1857)," *Selected Writings*, 67-8.

²⁶⁰ *GDK* I, 193.

²⁶¹ Grundtvig, "Præken paa 22 Søndag efter Trinitatis 1834," quoted in *GDK* I, 193. "[S]aa et kristent Menneske er det i Guds Billede skabte, ved Troen rensede, i Daaben genfødt, ved Bønnen styrkede, ved Nadveren ophøjede Menneske, som vandrer med Gud i Retfærdighed og Sandheds Hellighed."

²⁶² Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, 22. Grundtvig regards "Christian life" as "Christ-life" so that Christians can have "real participation in Jesus Christ's own life." (Ibid.) See also Grundtvig, "*Kirkelige oplysninger* (1840-42)," *US* VIII, 436. "Det Christelige Liv som et Christus-Liv." This also expresses the co-inherent relationship between Christ and Christians in the life characterized by faith, hope and love. (Ibid.)

²⁶³ Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, 22. "[D]et [kristenlivets fuldstændige menneskelighed] har sin hemmelige avling i evangeliets godvillige hørelse, hvor Guds Ånd fører ordet, sin fødsel af vand, og Ånd i dåben efter Herrens indstiftelse og sin opvækst til fuldkommenhed ved Herrens bord, idet udtrykket af troen og håbet og kærlighed gør et tilsvarende levende indtryk, så kristenlivet begynder hos os med troen, vokser med håbet og fuldkommes af og i kærlighed. (Udv. Skr. IX, s. 466)."

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag V (1855)," *Dannebrog* (Juli 1855), *US* X, 63.

²⁶⁶ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US* X, 97. "[S]aa den guddommelige og menneskelige Natur forligtes og forenedes i ham, og opvoxte menneskelig med Guds Aand til Guddoms-Fylden."

historical life: the internal spiritual life including the “the propagation of the Holy Spirit, the faith of the heart, the rebirth, growth and the glorification of the Christian human life is the sole reality of God’s Word whose fruit leads to eternal life,” but individual Christians can only know a small part concerning his own internal spiritual journey; the external life is marked by “free proclamation, free confession of the Creed out of one’s mouth and the equivalent songs of praise,” which is not “life itself, but the necessary utterance of the Spirit, faith and rebirth” in light of which we can always find life.²⁶⁷ Thus the Word itself creates an invisible spiritual world in the middle of the visible historical world.²⁶⁸ Grundtvig declares this profound mystery in the following:

The fusion of the divine and the human nature in Jesus Christ, and his mediator-role [Midler-Stilling], by which the perspective of all believers in Him is broadened to become as He is ...*that* is the great secret by which any others in comparison become small, the one that only in a mysterious way can become effective, of course, so that even with the most sober Christians its presence must never be questioned. For it is a valid, trustworthy warrant, as so much light in the darkness by which we guard ourselves against danger, and finally a blessed experience of the truth of the Gospel.²⁶⁹

To sum up, the Christ-Life shows us clearly how the divine and the human life coinhere perfectly in the living Word through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the created human beings are intended by God to lead such a Christ-like life into perfection. This process of *theosis* is redemption for the fallen human beings who should be enlightened by the living Word and resume their original human life course to fulfill their divine destinies.

5.2.3. In Continuity with Martin Luther

Grundtvig’s denominational background is Danish Lutheranism in a State Church. He is of course very familiar with Luther’s Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. His aspiration is to follow Martin Luther in being a new church reformer with Luther as a major source of strength. This is in part for the sake of a contextual legitimacy so that traditional Lutheran Christians in Denmark can recognize and espouse Grundtvig’s reform. Furthermore, Grundtvig’s strategy to criticize the fossilized and stagnant Lutheran orthodoxy also requires his tracing back to Luther, as he did in *Should the Lutheran Reformation Really Be Continued? (Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes?* 1830), and not least *Ecclesial Enlightenment Especially for Lutheran Christians (Kirkelige Oplysninger især for Lutherske Christne* 1840).

This is not the place to discuss the relationship between Grundtvig and Luther, but the gist of it can be gained in a speech by Grundtvig in his old age to illustrate Luther’s importance for Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective:

Thus was the light turned on for me and the die cast; for that “bath in the Word,” the baptismal-Word, is the Christian life source is what Luther had there and then taught me; and that He, who by Himself instituted baptism for a bath of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit, also by Himself had decided by what kind of faith people should be baptized when they are to know “faith and baptism” to be sure of their salvation. I saw what is so obvious and undeniable, that whoever does not accept the Word of faith

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 97-8.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 99.

²⁶⁹ Grundtvig, “*Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42)*,” *US* VIII, 449. “Sammensmeltingen af den guddommelige og menneskelige Natur i Jesus Christus, og Hans Midler-Stilling, hvorved der aabnes alle Hans Troende Udsigt til at blive som Han er, det er den store Himmelhed, hvorimod enhver anden i Sammenligning bliver lille, og at den kun paa en hemmelighedsfuld Maade kan træde i Kraft, det følger af sig selv, saa der selv hos de ædrueste Christne aldrig maa være Spørgsmaal om det, men kun om gyldig, troværdig Hjemmel, om saameget Lys i Dunkelheden, at man kan vogte sig for Vildfarelse, og endelig om en salig Erfaring af Evangeliets Sandhed.”

applied at baptism as one Word from the Lord's own mouth to us, must either negate the Lord as the founder of baptism, or negate baptism as the source of life, and therefore remains outside the Christian congregation.²⁷⁰

Grundtvig insists that his ecclesial perspective should be called "Lutheran Christian Enlightenment" as he is in full agreement with Luther in the following aspects: (1) In terms of salvation, they both believe that the living institutional Word from the mouth of the Lord at baptism and Communion brings light and life to fallen humanity for the redemption and renewal of human life; (2) In terms of the Bible, they both contend that eternal life does not come from Bible reading, but from faith in Christ Jesus, God's only begotten Son in the Spirit, when people listen to the living Word, which is different from the rationalist theologians' (*skriftkloge*) interpretation of the Bible.²⁷¹ These important observations empower Grundtvig to carry on his church reform.

On the basis of Luther, together with Irenaeus, Grundtvig gives a sharp critique of the Danish Lutheran orthodoxy, which renders Christianity "spiritually dead and powerless" (*aandelig dødt og magtesløst*) and hinders the development of the living historical congregation.²⁷² His criticism includes the following three key targets, as Ove Korsgaard sums up: (1) the Bible as the sole foundation of faith; (2) the gloomy view of humanity informed by the doctrinal teaching of total depravity; (3) the enforcement of the State Church and the Church State in Denmark.²⁷³ I have discussed the Bible issue in this study (ch.5.2.1.). Later I shall talk about Grundtvig's anthropology (ch.6.1.) and Church-State relationship (ch.6.2.5.2).

In brief, Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective aims to transform the Lutheran Orthodoxy in Denmark into a living Christianity, but it does not deviate from the basic teachings of Luther. That is why Grundtvig prefers to name his ecclesial perspective the "Lutheran-Christian Enlightenment."

5.2.4. Some Criticism of the Ecclesial Perspective

However, Grundtvig's matchless discovery is not without critics. I simply choose two authoritative bishops' voices as examples without engaging his contemporary Søren Kierkegaard in the present discussion.²⁷⁴ In his book *Concept of Dogmatics (Dogmatikens Begreb)* Bishop Mynster raises five points to oppose Grundtvig: (1) "there is lack of proof that the Apostles' Creed is formed independently of the Bible;" (2) "it includes nothing that is not found in the Bible" (*For det andet indeholder det intet, som jo ogsaa findes i den hellige Skrift*); (3) both the Bible and the Creed have hermeneutical challenges to unite faith; (4) the Creed does not mention the important reconciliatory ministry of Christ; (5) how can people only refer to one particular ancient text to solve various

²⁷⁰ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, US X, 353-54. "Hermed var for mig Lyset tændt og Lodden kastet; thi at 'Vand-Badet i Ordet,' altsaa Daabs-Ordet, er den kristelige Livs-Kilde, det havde Luther jo strax lært mig; og at han, som selv havde indstiftet Daaben til et Gjenfødselsens og Fornøyselsens Bad i den Helligaand, ogsaa selv havde bestemt, paa hvilken Tro der maatte døbes, naar man ved 'Tro og Daab' vilde være sin Salighed vis, det saae jeg strax, er saa aabenbar og unægteligt, at hvem der ikke vil lade Tros-ordet ved Daaben gjælde som et Ord til os af Herrens egen Mund, maa enten fornægte Herren som Daabens Indstifter, eller fornægte Daaben som Livs-Kilden, og derved stille sig selv udenfor den kristne Menighed."

²⁷¹ Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1863," US X, 534-35.

²⁷² Ibid., 536-37.

²⁷³ Ove Korsgaard, *The Struggle for the People: Five Hundred Years of Danish History in Short* (Copenhagen: Danish School of Education Press, 2008), 37-38. Dr. Korsgaard is Professor of Education at Aarhus University.

²⁷⁴ Concerning Kierkegaard's critique of Grundtvig's matchless discovery, see, for example, Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, ed. and trans. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32-40; for a thorough examination of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig's mutual critique, see Anders Holm, *To samtidige, Kierkegaards og Grundtvigs kritik af hinanden* (København: Forlaget ANIS, 2009).

challenges in the whole of Christendom?²⁷⁵ In short, Mynster thought that Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective is simply an idolatry of the Creed.²⁷⁶

H. L. Martensen also criticizes Grundtvig's view of the Apostles' Creed. In his memoir about Grundtvig, he recalls his interaction with Grundtvig on the role of the Creed in the Church. First of all, Martensen points out that the *Symbolum Apostolicum* could not be taught by Christ directly to his apostles after His resurrection.²⁷⁷ Grundtvig's idea is but an "*a priori* construction," according to Martensen, who believes that it could lead to "dogmatic and practical-theological" problems.²⁷⁸ Secondly, there is a lack of historical evidence that the "Creed was bound up with the institution of baptism", while some churches in the world administer baptism without confessing the Creed.²⁷⁹ Finally, an adherence to Grundtvig's understanding can easily lead to the emergence of sectarian movements in world Christianity.²⁸⁰

In 1863, Grundtvig responds with three poems: "Life and Dogmatics" (*Livet og Dogmatiken*), "God's 'What' and 'How'" (*Guds 'Hvad' og 'Hvorledes'*), and "The Word of Life from Jesus' Mouth to Us" (*Livs-Ordet til os af Jesu Mund*).²⁸¹ In the first poem, Grundtvig simply points out that the mouth is above the pen, the living Word above dead letters, and life above dogmatics, and hence Christianity centered on life is solely concerned with "dogmatics for life."²⁸² In the second poem, Grundtvig contends that blinded, self-conceited people like Nicodemus cannot really know the nature of God and how the rebirth of life happens except through a simple faith in Christ the living Word.²⁸³ In the last poem, Grundtvig repeats that the same living Word from the Lord's mouth continues to exist in the Lord's historical universal congregation, imparting Spirit and life to all believers; the truth of Christianity is a matter of fact throughout history.²⁸⁴ To put it simply, Grundtvig appeals to the self-referential spiritual fact concerning the lasting effects of the living Word on Christians' lives. The advantage of Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective lies in its existential and spiritual connection of the living Word between God and human beings in a sacrament-centered congregation. The Christian faith created by the Holy Spirit exists and is witnessed by a renewed human life of faith, hope, and love, which can be empirically tested through the lives of true Christians.

Furthermore, based on his matchless discovery, Grundtvig claims that he can differentiate faith from theology, and church from school.²⁸⁵ Faith is a matter of conscience, while the church is God's living congregation centered on the living Word heard through the Creed at baptism and the institutional words of Holy Communion. The life of faith, hope, and love constitutes the living congregation, which exists as a historical reality. In contrast, theology belongs not to the church but to school, where rationalist theologians should enjoy full freedom in dealing with various or even competing interpretations of the Christian faith in interaction with different philosophies, in

²⁷⁵ See *GDK I*, 173-74.

²⁷⁶ See Garff, *Kierkegaard*, 616.

²⁷⁷ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 183.

²⁷⁸ See Gerhard Schreiber, "'Like a Voice in the Wilderness': Magnús Eiríksson's Tenacious Critique of Martensen – and Martensen's 'Lofty Silence,'" in *Hans Lassen Martensen*, ed. Jon Stewart, 181-82.

²⁷⁹ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 83-4.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁸¹ Schreiber, "'Like a Voice in the Wilderness,'" 182n1.

²⁸² Grundtvig, "Livet og Dogmatiken (1863)," in vol. 5 of *Sang-Værk: Salmer og kristelige digte 1855? – 1872*, 6 vols. (København: Det Danske Forlag, 1951), 445-47.

²⁸³ Grundtvig, "Guds 'Hvad' og 'Hvorledes' (1863)," in *Sang-Værk V*, 451-53.

²⁸⁴ Grundtvig, "Livs-Ordet til os af Jesu Mund (1863)," in *Sang-Værk V*, 453-55.

²⁸⁵ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1825-47," *Tradition and Renewal*, 245.

particular contexts.²⁸⁶ Thus Grundtvig thinks that he can really help traditional Christians out of the historical “confusion of faith and theology,” which leads to so many church disputes and schisms.²⁸⁷

However, does Grundtvig really answer the questions of the two bishops? Can his matchless discovery defend itself adequately? Has he really identified the core of the Christian faith once and for all?

In the Christian preaching, or evangelism, the Christian talk of God in interaction with different contextual needs naturally goes beyond the comparatively narrow contents of the Creed, and the institutional words of the sacraments. Theodor Jørgensen has pointed out that the sacramental objectivity of Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective has neglected the experiential dimension of the individual’s freedom to allow the divine-human interaction to take place in the human heart.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, the Creed itself as a pre-reflexive first-order language of faith cannot suffice to absorb the diverse and complex life experiences in the external world, and still serve as a yardstick to judge all human talk of Christian truth. Because of the human fall and human sin, the human discourse about God always needs the confirmation of the divine Word. On the other hand, the Word Creator and the Spirit Creator still work in non-Christians, who can also produce some truths about life which cannot be ecclesialized. Human talk about God always needs testing, while the simple resort to the Creed or the institutional words of the sacraments are epistemologically inadequate for covering all aspects of life. A simple recourse to a life of faith, hope, and love risks eschewing the concrete ambivalent decisions in various ethical dilemmas. These questions necessarily bring in a dialogical dimension of confirming the truth claimed by people, Christian or non-Christian. Thus, there must be other frames of reference than the mere ecclesial perspective in order to examine a particular truth for the concrete life. In this light, I think Mynster and Martensen’s suspicion of Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective in terms of its scope is fair. For although Grundtvig tries to emphasize the role of the Creed as the trustworthy witness to the original Christian faith, there is indeed no strong historical proof of this, let alone of the divine origin of the Creed direct from the mouth of the Lord. Despite the fact that history cannot be written without any subjective pre-understandings, it at least informs human beings of some basic historical facts, not least the minimalist historical truth out of a careful scrutiny of various traditions.

Furthermore, I contend that Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective itself is also a kind of theological construct, especially when the origin and function of the Creed is easily questioned by historians and creedless Churches like the Disciples of Christ emerging in the 19th century in North America. Any definition of the core of the Christian faith cannot be undertaken independent both of the historical entanglement between early Christianity and the context it was situated in, and of the contemporary perspective that the theologian brings in. The affirmation of the central contents of the Christian faith from a particular Christian group naturally reflects its social locations and basic concerns. Any conceptual grasp of the core of Christian faith risks a certain reduction of the Gospel with its rich spiritual surplus from the Triune God. Grundtvig’s anti-dogmatic (Poul Borum’s phrase) discourse especially in the *Basic Christian Teachings* (*Den kristelige Børnelærdom*) has ironically turned into Grundtvigian dogmatics – a school matter! In light of the “Protestant principle”

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 248.

²⁸⁸ Theodor Jørgensen, “Grundtvigs ‘Kirkens Gienmæle’ - læst i et nutidigt perspektiv,” in *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Gustav Albeck et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 1992), 51-2.

rendered by Paul Tillich,²⁸⁹ the “matchlessness” or the absoluteness of Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective can also be relativized.

On the other hand, I wonder whether faith and theology, as well as church and school, can really be sharply differentiated. A holistic faith is not rendered complete only by the first-order language related to Creed and liturgy. The truth and efficacy of faith always require creative re-descriptions and re-interpretations in various contexts. In today’s pluralistic world, the expressions of faith in the secular milieu, not least in intellectual circles, cannot avoid dialogical interactions in the spiritual and intellectual senses. In a broad sense, Grundtvig’s differentiation of faith from theology can be compared with the contemporary version of ecclesial theology in relationship to Christian academic theology in secular universities. Generally speaking, academic theology aims at scientific interpretations of faith, while ecclesial theology aims to serve people for a holistic life alongside the intellectual search for truth. There must be living integration between the two for the development of Christianity.

Based on his ecclesial perspective, Grundtvig abstracts the core of faith with a kind of sacramental objectivity which enables him to relocate faith and theology in each of its own sphere, i.e. church and school. However, Grundtvig himself has not given up the second-order talk of faith in interaction with rationalists, naturalists, and politicians in his public ministry by either writing for the public or speaking in parliament. For Grundtvig, faith is always dynamic. So simply resting on Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective as the secure foundation of Christian faith once and for all will lead to the theological stagnancy of Grundtvigianism. This weakness of contemporary Grundtvigians is precisely identified by Niels Henrik Gregersen as a kind of “theological inertia” (*teologiske dovenskab*).²⁹⁰

In short, Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective constructed in 19th-century Denmark is also a contextual effort to emancipate the Christian faith from the confinement of traditional orthodox Lutherans and to defend the Christian faith from the rationalists’ criticism in order to revive Christianity. It seems to be an unapologetic proclamation of a historically self-evident fact, but it actually presupposes a fideistic belief in the intra-systematic spiritual truth of the living Word, which is heard in church liturgy and continues its ministry of creation outside the church. That is to say, it is Grundtvig’s *a priori* spiritual belief in the living Word that gives birth to his ecclesial perspective. The living Word, however, cannot be without a body on earth, i.e., the Church or the living congregation. It is actually the living Word that constitutes the true Church.

5.3. The True Church as the Living Congregation

The authentic Christianity testified by the Apostles’ Creed is mediated by the living congregation. Holger Begtrup also points out that Ireneaus did not think that the Apostles’ message (*den apostoliske Meddelelse*) could be separated from the “congregations’ legacy” (*Menighedens Arv*)

²⁸⁹ The Protestant principle is “concerned with what theology calls ‘faith’, namely, the state of mind in which we are grasped by the power of something unconditional which manifests itself to us as the ground and judge of our existence.... it is a quality of all beings and objects, the quality of pointing beyond themselves and their finite existence to the infinite, inexhaustible, and unapproachable depth of their being and meaning. The Protestant principle is the expression of this relationship. It is the guardian against the attempts of the finite and conditioned to usurp the place of the unconditional in thinking and acting.” Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 163.

²⁹⁰ Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Den generøse ortodoksi,” in *Folkelighed År 2000: Konference afholdt på Vartov den 28. og 29 april 2000*, Vartovs Konferencserie nr.1, 26-7.

with magic power (*Magisk Kraft*).²⁹¹ Apostolic Christianity relies on the living congregation of Christ for its historical development. It is also in the true dynamic Church that Grundtvig makes his matchless discovery. As Ernest Nielsen sums up,

The Church's unbroken, living testimony by which the Spirit, through the vehicle of a spoken, i.e. living word, reveals the way of redemption and communicates life and light to the believer. Thus it is really *at* and *in* the Church, as a worshipping congregation, that Grundtvig made his discovery. It is in the Church that that illumination by the Spirit takes place which enabled him to move from the contemporary indefinite conception of the Church to a conception in which the dynamic, spiritual, soteriological and historical character of the Church expresses itself in a testimony or witness of the Church whose source gives it a primacy and an autonomy that for him truly makes the voice of the Church trustworthy.²⁹²

Nielsen points out that the plausibility structure of Grundtvig's theological discovery is the Church. The Church relies on the Spirit to render and bear witness to the original apostolic Christian faith. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, however, the Danish institutionalized Church lost its original spiritual dynamic. Besides, Grundtvig thought that the term "church" was "a foreign and exceedingly misused term" (*fremmede og saare misbrugte Ord*).²⁹³ What then is the *ecclesia Christiana* which Grundtvig refers to? What is the spiritual identity of the true Church?

5.3.1. A Community of the Living Word

The living Word heard in a worshipping community constitutes a true Church. As Grundtvig says, "Christianity is one invisible and yet recognizable community of the Word" (*Kristendommen er et usynligt og dog kendeligt Ordets Samfund*).²⁹⁴ He declares that the free congregation, built solely upon the living Word from the Lord's own mouth at Baptism with the Apostles' Creed confessed in the mother tongue, is the core of the faith community. It is built on people's active response to the living Word²⁹⁵ in light of which the Church becomes "a living, dynamic, creative continuation of the revelation of Christ."²⁹⁶ The true Church is the living congregation. As Grundtvig's poem reads,

Church is neither more nor less
Than God's congregation,
Sanctified by heavenly peace
On the earth where God's will is done

²⁹¹ GDK I, 32.

²⁹² Ernest D. Nielsen, *N.F.S. Grundtvig: An American Study* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1955), 52.

²⁹³ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* III, 292.

²⁹⁴ See Borup and Schøder's summary of part of Grundtvig's articles "Om Religions-Frihed I-II," *Theologisk Maanedsskrift* (Januar og Februar 1827), and *Om Religions-Frihed (Tredie og sidste Stykke): Slutningen af en afhandling i Theologisk Maanedsskrift, 8de Bind* (Kjøbenhavn: trykt 1827; Undertrykt samme Aar, Løsladt 1866), *HB* III, 214.

²⁹⁵ Grundtvig believes that the living Word from the very beginning of creation "expresses and reveals in a living way what there is in God and His depth." It communicates life and light to us through "church and school" respectively as it is "Spirit and Life" for human beings. Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1868," *US* X, 559. He further claims that the living Word "from above" in "human mouths" must be "divided for both sides of the Church and School, for the eternal life here from above (*heroven fra*) and for the temporal light, which shall reveal it and bear witness to it. (Ordet, som kommer fra oven, maa i vor Mund deles til begge Sider, til Kirken og til Skolen, til det evige Liv heroven fra og til de timelige Lys, som skal aabenbare det for Verden og give det Vidnesbyrd.)" (*Ibid.*, 560.) Gradually the light "shines through human life and over the world" (*gjennemskine Livet og overskinne Verden*), as it is manifested "in human life and Kold's life with whom the Word's big school reality began" when the living word is repeatedly heard and incessantly creates life anew in different aspects. (*Ibid.*, 560) When "something new both in [the people's] talk and song" about Denmark's history and the gospel continues to come out of people's mouths, it marks the "blessed hope" of God's continuing Providence and salvation upon the Danish nation. (*Ibid.*, 560)

²⁹⁶ Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 177-78.

where the fellowship of saints
rises as the Sun of the sea
the body of light, the luster of life. (my translation)²⁹⁷

It is Christians who confess the common faith in accordance with the apostles throughout history that constitute the true Church. As another hymn of Grundtvig says,

We are God's house and church today,
as living stones He will site us
under the cross, where free from guile
baptismal faith will unite us
were we no more than two to pray,
He would still build His Church and stay
with us in all His dominion.

Grace comes at our baptismal font
and when we kneel at His altar;
here is God's Word of faith and hope,
love that we know will not falter,
houses for Him whose word will last,
Christ is today as in the past,
ever God's son, our Redeemer. ²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Grundtvig, "Kirken er Guds-Menighed (1860-62)," vol. 5 of *Sang-Værk*, 365. I am indebted to J. P. Bang to find this hymn. See Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 50.

Kirken er Guds-Menigheden,
hverken mindre eller mer,
helliget med Himmelsfreden,
Jorden, hvor Guds vilje sker,
og hvor Helgen-Fællesskabet
rinder op som Sol af Havet,
Lysets Legem, Livets Glans.

²⁹⁸ See Grundtvig, "Kirken den er et gammelt hus (1836 og 1853)," in *Den Danske Samlebog* (København: Det kgl. Vajsenhus' Forlag, 2003), 345-46. I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge for his English translation.

Vi er Guds hus og kirke nu,
bygget af levende stene,
som under kors med ærlig hu
troen og dåben forene;
var vi på jord ej mer end to,
bygge dog ville han og bo
hos os i hele sin vælde

Fonten os minder om vor dåb,
altret om nadverens nåde,
alt med Guds ord om tro og håb
og om Guds kærligheds gåde,
huset om ham, hvis ord består,
Kristus, i dag alt som i går,

Because the living congregation carries on the apostolic witness of Christian faith with the living Word, it also has salvific meaning.²⁹⁹ According to Prenter, individual faith and salvation is not subsumed by the historical-universal framework of creation and salvation, and the forgiveness of sin is still a central theme in Grundtvig's preaching.³⁰⁰ Grell also claims that Grundtvig believes that human "self-love" gives birth to either non-believers (*vanthro*) who "look on truth as falsehood" or the superstitious (*overtro*) who "look on falsehood as truth."³⁰¹ On the one hand, Grundtvig strongly opposes materialism, and rationalism which cause people's spiritual death; on the other, he does not agree with the revivalists in their self-righteousness without a real meaningful human life on the earth. In order to understand and fulfill the destiny of one's life, one has to be enlightened by the Word and the Spirit who clearly manifest themselves in the living congregation. It is also in the living congregation that one can find the clearly revealed Word.

5.3.2. A Non-Institutional Community Established by the Spirit

If the true Church is a congregation of the Word, it is obviously also a congregation of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit expresses Himself through the Word. For Grundtvig, the Church refers not to the concrete institutions, but to the living and worshiping fellowship in the power of the Spirit, which is composed by people who confess the Apostles' Creed and participate in the sacraments. Grundtvig prefers to call the Church a congregation, an assembly or a fellowship to underscore the interactive dynamic between the Church and the Holy Spirit.

In his reflections on the third article of the Apostles' Creed, Grundtvig points out the linguistic and theological mistakes of the Creed in the old Danish version; this sheds light on his understanding of the Church. He believes that 'Church' is a foreign term, which should be replaced by "congregation" which has a less institutional sense. The real author of the Church is the Spirit, so there is no need of a "Pope, and all those who, like the masters of the faith" need to be the "intermediaries."³⁰² No papist clergy or rationalist scribes with their scientific interpretations of the Bible and Christianity can be a substitute for the Spirit.³⁰³

Grundtvig is strongly against the clergy's and the rationalist theologians' dominance of faith issues by resorting to the pre-reflective worship life of Christian congregations. That is why he finally gives up his interest in the Oxford Movement, which still held episcopacy as the important sign of apostolic succession.³⁰⁴ For Grundtvig, it is only the Holy Spirit that creates people's faith through the living Word and hence establishes the living congregation.

5.3.3. Not an Castle in the Air, but a Historical Reality

After his theological battle with H. N. Clausen in 1825, Grundtvig clearly rejects the unhistorical, abstract, and objective notion of the Church, because such a notion is shaped not by the concrete life of worship, but by reason. Grundtvig contends that the true Christian Church is not a castle in

evig Guds søn, vor genløser.

²⁹⁹ See Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 178-79.

³⁰⁰ Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, 99. See also Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 120; Thyssen, "Det bibelske-folkehistoriske helhedssyn," in Schjørring, *Menneske først*, 42.

³⁰¹ See Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 114.

³⁰² Grundtvig, "Concerning our Third Article of Faith [Om vor tredie Tros-Artikel](1855)," *Den kristelige Børnelærdom, Anthology*, 142-43.

³⁰³ Ibid., 142; see also *GDK II*, 156-58.

³⁰⁴ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1825-1847," *Tradition and Renewal*, 284-85.

the air (*Luft-Castel*) produced by speculative thinking, but a faith-community (*Troes-Samfund*).³⁰⁵
As Grundtvig's poem reads,

I am the house on the rock,
Which cannot be hidden by fog
Neither is it shaken by whirlwind
Nor moved by waves.

I am not built of black on white
Neither of the shadow of thinking
As spiritless man for spirit too often
Build his house in air now.

But I am built so high and wide
As the arching bow of heaven
Of faith and hope and love
As the angles clearly see. (my translation)³⁰⁶

Johannes Knudsen points out that Grundtvig's conception of the Church is historical, which points to the continuity of the living Word in all churches through the Creed and sacraments as a historical fact;³⁰⁷ it is also a reality from the apostles' time, which is not visible, but can be recognized through the congregational life of faith, hope, and love.³⁰⁸ That is to say, the Church is a continued historical spiritual reality, invisible but recognizable through the marks of the congregational life.

5.3.4. Not Being Sectarian, but Ecumenical

Grundtvig worries that his ecclesial perspective will simply be misunderstood by others as a new invention of his own, outside the mainstream orthodox Church traditions. He therefore insists on the catholic nature of his ecclesial perspective. He believes that the historical apostolic congregation based on the Apostles' Creed and baptism has carried on the living witness to Christian truth

³⁰⁵ Grundtvig, *Kirkens Genmæle* (1825), *US IV*, 406-07.

³⁰⁶ Grundtvig, "Den hellige, almindelige Kirke (1843?)," in vol. 4 of *Sang-Værk: Samler og Kristelige Digte 1844-1855; med Efterslægt fra 1836-43*, 6 vols. (København: Det Danske Forlag, 1949), 33.

Jeg er det hus paa Klippetind,
Som ingen Taage dølger,
Som ryster ej for Hvirvelvind
Og rokkes ej af Bølger

Jeg er ej bygt af sort paa hvidt
Og ej af Tanke-Skygger,
Som aandløs man for Aand saa tit
Nu Hus i Luften bygger.

Men jeg er bygt saa høj og bred
som Himlens hvalvte Bue,
af Tro og Haab og Kærlighed,
for Engle klart til Skue.

³⁰⁷ Knudsen, *Danish Rebel*, 181-82.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 180-81.

throughout history in all places. He also says “that the Christians’ confession of faith at baptism is the holy chain which connects all generations of the Lord’s people.”³⁰⁹ The true Church must be universal:

The Church of Christ is universal,
a house of prayer for all who wait,
and only there the Holy Spirit
His love and truth can mediate;
it changes with the times as little
as God Himself in His committal
to His baptismal promises.³¹⁰

Furthermore, in his “Open Letter to an English priest” of 1839, Grundtvig repeatedly claims that his view of the Church is not sectarian, but ecumenical and catholic. As he claims,

It is therefore obvious that I come not from a particular sect in a spiritual or Christian sense; for I come directly from the holy Catholic Church, which is for all time until the end of the world, with one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and the Father of all.³¹¹

It is the historical common faith conveyed by the Apostles’ Creed at baptism “that constitutes ‘the Universal Church.’”³¹² Grundtvig regards the confession of the Creed at baptism as the core and universal standard of the Christian faith, and it is in this light that he criticizes the old Danish version of the Apostles’ Creed for its use of the “Christian Church” rather than the Universal Church, for the former downplays the ecumenical dimension of the Church, instead of being genuinely catholic and universal.³¹³ The Word-centered historical apostolic Christianity has developed throughout the whole world wherever the living congregation repeats the same confession of the Creed at baptism. Therefore, the true Church is not sectarian, but ecumenical.

5.3.5. A Fellowship of Corporate Christ-like Life

What kind of life should this historical ecumenical Word-centered Church lead? First of all, the Church is not a building or institution, but a fellowship. Grundtvig argues that unless we distinguish the Church from the fellowship, we shall “never get a living grasp of the growth (*væxt*) of Christian life and its gradual development.”³¹⁴ He argues that the phrase “holy society” (*Hellige Samfund*) in the Danish version of the Apostles’ Creed should be replaced by “holy fellowship,” as the Holy Spirit always works in the communal setting of the congregation and brings people into a living spiritual fellowship, not a community or society in the ordinary sense, so that all Christian individuals are fellowship-conditioned.³¹⁵ He contends that “life can only be learned and possessed

³⁰⁹ Grundtvig, *Søndagsbogen II* (1827), 276, quoted in *GDK I*, 120. “... at de Kristnes Trosbekendelse ved Daaben er den hellige Kæde, som forbinder alle Slægterne af Herrens Folk, og hvortil vi lige saa lidt maa føje et eneste Led som tage det mindste fra.)

³¹⁰ Grundtvig, “Almindelig er Kristi kirke (1837, 1853),” in *Den Danske Salmebog* (København: Det kgl. Vajsenhus’ Forlag, 2003), 356. I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge for his English translation.

³¹¹ Grundtvig, *Aabent Vennebrev til en engelsk Præst* (Kjøbenhavn: forlagt af den Wahlske Boghandel, 1839, in *US VIII*, 203. “Det være derfor alle vitterligt; jeg kommer ikke fra nogen Sekt i aandelig og kristelig Forstand; thi jeg kommer netop fra den hellige, almindelige Kirke, som varer alle Dage til Verdens Ende, med een Herre, een Tro, een Daab, een Gud og alles Fader.”

³¹² Thodberg, “Grundtvig the Hymnwriter,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 182.

³¹³ See *GDK II*, 156-58; Grundtvig, “Concerning our Third Article of Faith (1855),” *Anthology*, 142.

³¹⁴ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US VIII*, 421.

³¹⁵ See *GDK II*, 156-58; Grundtvig, “Concerning our Third Article of Faith (1855),” *Anthology*, 142.

in fellowship” in “one Spirit and one Lord.”³¹⁶ Thus, the collective term “fellowship” carries more communal as well as spiritual overtones than “society”.

Grundtvig also takes the congregational life of the living fellowship to be the “spiritual life of the people” (*aandelige Folke-Liv*), based on the “common faith, common baptism with the Holy Spirit,” and marked and “crowned by love” to “show their divine power and truth through a Christian common life.”³¹⁷ Grundtvig holds that God’s spiritual people and God’s kingdom as well as God’s Word itself are invisible in the world, but Christian congregations can still be recognized by such unfailing external visible marks as the “free renunciation of the Devil and confession of the Creed.”³¹⁸ As Grundtvig claims,

Wherever we find such free Christian congregations, they can be regarded as ‘holy’ in the spiritual sense, for they are animated by the Holy Spirit even though they do not enforce any church discipline other than disengaging from those who by openly breaking the “baptismal pact” separate themselves from the Lord and His Congregation.³¹⁹

But in the confused forms of “the papist Church State and the Caesaropapist State Church” (*pavelige Kirke-Stat or kejserlige Stats-Kirke*),³²⁰ with the Protestant rationalists’ castles in the air or their papist institution (“fossilized as the great stone before Christ’s grave,”³²¹ “the most so-called Christians lacking faith and Spirit cannot know the real Christian congregation” of a common spiritual life.³²² So all the congregational life must be both communal and spiritual.

Furthermore, this spiritual life of the individual congregation also has a human form in its very people. As mentioned earlier, this congregation is centered on the living Word incarnated in a perfect spiritual-human life. Thus the life of the Word-centered fellowship established by “Christ’s Spirit” should also manifest Christ’s life in a corporate way.³²³ As Grundtvig notes,

The secret of the Christian life is unchangeable, in that believers do not live a life of their own, but of Him [Christ] who has died and risen for us, who stand firm in the same faith, walks in the same hope, and grow in the same mutual love to His glory, without whom we can do nothing, for He accomplishes all in all.³²⁴

Christian fellowship bears the name of Christ and is intended to participate in the “divine human life” of Christ.³²⁵ As is claimed by Holger Begtrup, Grundtvig discovers that as “the invisible God revealed himself” in the Old Testament, so “Christ’s life continues” in the living congregation as it

³¹⁶ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US* VIII, 452.

³¹⁷ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US* X, 130.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 312.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.* “Hvor som helst en saadan kristelig Frimenighed findes, vil den ogsaa kunne bære Tilnavnet ’hellig’, i aandelig Forstand, da den besjæles af Helligaanden, skjønt den ikke kjendelig øver anden Kirketugt, end at afbryde Fællesskabet med dem, der, ved aabenbar at bryde Daabs-pagten, selv skiller sig fra Herren og hans Menighed.”

³²⁰ Grundtvig, “Præste-Frihed i Folke- Kirken (1859),” in *Den Kristelige Børnelærdom*, *US* IX, 491.

³²¹ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US* X, 135-36.

³²² *Ibid.*, 130-31. Grundtvig criticized the confusion of Church-State relationship before Reformation that the Pope and Emperors became the “spiritual and the physical (clerical and worldly)” guardians of the Church respectively through force, which made the Church no longer Christian. (*ibid.*, 241-42).

³²³ *Ibid.*, 93.

³²⁴ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US* VIII, 442. “[D]et kristelige Livs Hemmelighed er uforanderlig den, at de Troende ikke lever deres eget, men Hans Liv, som er død og opstanden for os, staar fast paa den samme Tro, vandrer i det samme Haab og vosker i den samme indbyrdes Kærlighed til Hans Ære, uden Hvem vi kan slet Intet gjøre, og som derfor udretter Alt i Alle.”

³²⁵ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US* X, 100. “[D]en kristne Menighed med rette skal bære Navn efter ham og vente Delagtighed i hans guddommelige Menneske-Liv.”

is “pictured” (*Forbilleder*) in the New Testament narratives.³²⁶ In this light, Begtrup points out that Grundtvig understands the Christian congregational life as the “repetition of the Lord’s earthly life in all aspects” (*Gentagelse af Herrens Jordeliv i alle Dele*).³²⁷ The congregation thus becomes the fellowship of a Christ-like life. Begtrup says that the Christian life with “faith and baptism as its core” (*Troen og Daaben som Kristenlivets Kærne*) is not static, but continues to grow in order to “achieve the fullness that is found in our Lord’s own life” (*som stiler paa at naa hele den Fylde, som findes i Vorherres eget Liv*).³²⁸ Furthermore, the living congregation can also conquer death and the Devil (*Sejer over Død og Djævel*) through the sacraments, through growing in faith, hope, and love, and through being “lifted into the heavenly congregation,” (*være optagne i dette himmelske Samfund*), the “spiritual body” of Christ.³²⁹ In brief, the congregation established by Christ’s Spirit is naturally intended to follow Christ’s human life.

According to his own later reflection on what he has striven for all his life, Grundtvig expresses his wish as follows,

[F]or it must necessarily lie in my heart before my death to do all that I can for the renewal, enlightenment, and strengthening of the Christian congregational life, which is awakened among us and which shall, with God’s help, blossom and bear fruit until the end of the world.³³⁰

Grundtvig regards this revival of congregational life as a “spiritual movement of the heart” (*aandelige og hjertelige Bevægelse*) as a consequence of his ecclesial perspective. It is the Holy Spirit that creates such a living Christ-like congregational life and guides its spiritual development. As he says in 1863,

[T]here has indeed established itself the kernel of a Danish Christian free congregation [*Frimenighed*] which, since it adheres exclusively to the Apostolic Creed and the Lord’s own institutions, can surely least among all the now so-called Christian Church-societies [*Kristne Kirke-Samfund*] justifiably be called a sect (an off-cut) and given a nickname after one of the Lord’s and its own servants, but which yet, right enough, but has this churchly singularity - that of demanding consensus only over what has been common to all who have believed and been baptized, and of seeking only a new life of the spirit within The Word given to us from the Lord’s own mouth, through his own institutions.³³¹

To Grundtvig, the Vartov Church’s congregational life in part fulfills his vision, and hence becomes a great spiritual solace for him.

From above we learn that by the ‘true Church’, Grundtvig means a historical ecumenical reality, a living congregation with the confession of the Apostles’ Creed at baptism as the core of the universal Christian faith, and a spiritual fellowship leading a Christ-like life.

5.4. Summary

In Grundtvig’s ecclesial perspective, true Christianity and true Church do not need to defend themselves from the rationalists’ distorted interpretations, since Christianity from the very

³²⁶ GDK I, 123-24.

³²⁷ Ibid., 124.

³²⁸ Ibid., 185.

³²⁹ Ibid., 189-90.

³³⁰ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1863,” *US X*, 533. “[T]hi det maa nødvendig ligge mig paa Hjerte før min Bortgang at gjøre alt hvad jeg kan til Fornyselsen, Oplysningen og Bestyrkelsen af det christne Menigheds-Liv, som er vaagnet midt ibandt os og skal nu med Guds Hjælp blomstre og bære Frugt til Verdens Ende.”

³³¹ Bradley, *A Life Recalled*, 176.

beginning has constituted the ecumenical Church of living congregations. Grundtvig believes that through “His divine words and deeds on earth,” Jesus Christ “established a real kingdom” (*et virkeligt Rige*), “a spiritual city where the children of humanity can live” (*en aandelig Stad, som Menneskenes Børn kan bo udi*), and “has established or consolidated a living congregation on earth” (*har grundfæstet et levende Samfund paa Jorden*).³³² The historical reality of the Church is sustained by the continuity of Christ’s living Word in the spiritual fellowship of God manifested by the confession of the Creed at baptism in the power of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to both the Danish State Church and the later National Church (*folkekirke*), the active church life of the free congregation is marked by the confession of the Creed, by the proclamation, and by songs of praise. Niels H. Gregersen designates the living congregational worship life as the collective dimension of Christianity related to its public identity.³³³ In light of his ecclesial perspective, Grundtvig does not construct a new sectarian church, but rediscovers the historical apostolic Church.

³³² Grundtvig, “Præken paa 24. Søndag efter Trinitatis 1836,” quoted in *GDK I*, 189.

³³³ Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Når der bliver mere ud af mindre: Grundtvigs menneskesyn,” in *Grundtvig-Kierkegaard: En samtale op høje tid*, ed. Henrik Wigh-Poulsen et al. (København:Forlaget Vartov, 2002), 25.

6. Grundtvig's Social Philosophy

After rediscovering true Christianity and the true Church, Grundtvig can gradually distinguish faith from theology, church from school, as well as the Christian life from Danish people's life. To establish a living interaction between Christian life and human life, I shall briefly trace Grundtvig's thoughts on the latter and see how he tries to revive it in his plan for social reconstruction and national salvation in 19th-century Denmark. The key question to be answered first is: When and how does he realize that natural human life is valuable and conducive to the Danish social transformation?

6.1. The Anthropological Presupposition for Grundtvig's Social Philosophy³³⁴

While continuing with his church fight after his resignation in 1826, Grundtvig gradually acknowledges that it is unrealistic to re-Christianize all his fellow-Danes, especially the rationalists in the Church. On the other hand, Irenaeus' emphasis on human growth or *theosis* also inspires him to recognize that what the fallen people need is a re-orientation of human life. After his three trips to England (1829-31), Grundtvig becomes more pragmatic and concentrates on the free life of the present, as he has experienced it in English society. All this underlies his second theological breakthrough, that is, his Mosaic-Christian anthropology³³⁵ emerging in the introduction to his second edition of *Nordic Mythology* in 1832.

Throughout his career so far, Grundtvig has actually tried to understand human life on the existential antithesis of life and death as his major frame of reference. In 1825, he says that "human beings come into the world as the great wonderful dimness, which gradually clarifies or transfigures itself."³³⁶ Yet it is through his Mosaic-Christian anthropology that he finally solves the riddle of human life. As he argues,

For man is not an ape, destined first to ape the other animals and then himself until the world's end. Rather is he a glorious, incomparable creature, in whom divine powers through thousands of generations proclaim, develop and enlighten themselves as a divine experiment, in order to show how spirit and dust can permeate [or interpenetrate, *giennemtrænge*] one another and be transfigured [or clarified] into a

³³⁴ According to Donald Palmer, there is no fixed distinction between social philosophy and political philosophy, but he tends to distinguish them by arguing that political philosophy focuses on the issue of the legitimacy of the government according to the law while social philosophy presupposes a state with a legitimate government and centers on the question of social justice. See Donald Palmer, *Does the Center Hold? An Introduction to Western Philosophy*, 3rd ed., trans. Yang Yang and Cao Hongyang into Chinese (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 2011), 325. Political philosophy deals with freedom, democracy, the natural human rights, law and the legitimacy of state while social philosophy is concerned with such social patterns as communism (Marx), minimalist government (Robert Nozick) and liberalism (John Rawls), with the state's central totalitarianism and anarchy as the two extremes. (Ibid., 326-61). Grundtvig's public thinking includes both social and political philosophy. In this study, however, I choose the phrase of social philosophy to analyze Grundtvig's public involvement without ignoring his political philosophy.

³³⁵ The phrase "*Mosaik-Christelige Anskuelse*" is translated in various ways, such as "Jewish-Christian perception" (in *SL*, 66) and "Mosaic-Christian view." By "*Mosaik-Christelige*," is meant the understanding of humanity according to God's creation in Genesis of the Hebrew Bible, which is called the First Book of Moses in the Danish Bible. Christianity also endorses the narrative of the Old Testament concerning the origin of human life created by God. "*Anskuelse*" literally means view or opinion. Knudsen points out that Grundtvig learned of the term "*anskuelse*" from Schelling, which is similar to the German word "*Anschauung*" being "the attitude toward and the explanation of the world in which the faith lives," *anskuelse* "is a derivative from the faith and it can be altered and adjusted to changing circumstances without jeopardy to the faith." See Knudsen, *Selected Writings*, 21n5. In this study, I shall refer to it as the Mosaic-Christian anthropology. The original Danish text is in K. E. Bugge, vol. 1 of *Grundtvigs Skoleverden i tekster og udkast* (København: G.E.C Gads Forlag, 1968), 239. (cited hereafter in footnotes as GSV).

³³⁶ Grundtvig, "Om Natur og Aabenbaring," *Theologisk Maanedsskrift* II, (1825), quoted in *HB* III, 65. "[S]aa Mennesket kommer til Verden som en stor, forunderlig Dunkelhed, der efterhaanden klarer sig."

common divine consciousness. That is how man must be regarded if there is to be a spiritual learning on earth; and that is how man is regarded wherever the Jewish-Christian perception has been an inspiration.³³⁷

This short paragraph affirms that, first of all, human beings have the creativity of self-transcendence especially manifested by the human word, which distinguishes them from animals; secondly, human beings consist of dust and spirit, and the spiritual dimension is of great importance in connecting them to the divine or the eternal; finally, the designer and author of this experiment is God, which indicates the close relationship between God and human beings.

It is also in this important introduction to *Nordic Mythology* of 1832 that Grundtvig clearly spells out his objection to the traditional Lutheran orthodox anthropology of total depravity, which makes divine-human communication impossible. For Grundtvig, the divine-human relationship still continues after the human fall, for unlike dumb or imitating animals all human beings are created in *imago dei* with living words and spirit given by God to grow into the fullness of being His children.³³⁸ Despite the fall, “God’s given image is still alive,”³³⁹ as people can still respond to God through words on the lips, just as Abraham and the prophets in the Old Testament could still interact with God. Grundtvig does not believe that “there is nothing left of the created glory or the relation to God” after the human fall, for human words in our mouths and hearts can still be the instruments to express God’s spiritual truths.³⁴⁰ The divine Word and Spirit require the cooperation of human words and spirit to complete God’s creation and redemption.

Furthermore, the human life of faith, hope, and love that God intended for creation can be found not only in the life of Christians, but also in the life of non-Christians, including both the Jews and the Gentiles. The word of faith, hope, and love is not confined to the Christian congregational life. For example, according to Schrøder, in the Jewish tradition, Abraham, John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary (*Maria-Mø*) are examples of faith, hope, and love respectively.³⁴¹ Furthermore, even among the heathens we can find such examples, including the centurion of Capernaum, the Canaanite woman, and the woman with an issue of blood who touched Jesus’ garment.³⁴² So the divine-human interaction has not been suspended since the human fall.

Then how does Grundtvig understand the human fall or sin from a Christian perspective? He defines it basically as a deviation from the original human life course of growth to the destiny of becoming God’s children.³⁴³ As a result, human beings become indulged in this-worldly life and refuse to believe in Christ as God’s Word incarnated. In a sermon of 1836, Grundtvig argues that it is not our natural sins that separate God from us, for Jesus came precisely to *stay* with sinners; on the contrary, it is the fault of our blindness and our “unnatural obstinacy” that causes us to “refuse to open our eyes and see him standing amongst us and to open our ears and our heart to the good Word he speaks to us.”³⁴⁴ Thus a chasm appears between the human word and God’s living Word, for the human word can also tell lies after the fall. The original sin that Grundtvig would

³³⁷ Grundtvig, “Nordic Mythology- Extract (1832),” in *SL*, 66; see also Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 145.

³³⁸ Grundtvig, “Introduction to Nordic Mythology (1832),” in *Selected Writings*, 23.

³³⁹ Knudsen’s translation of Grundtvig’s hymn (Danish title not given), *Selected Writings*, 142.

³⁴⁰ Grundtvig, “The Innate and the Reborn Humanity [Det medfødte og det gjenfødte Menneskeliv] (1857),” *Den kristelige Børnelærdom, Selected Writings*, 76.

³⁴¹ Schrøder, *N.F.S. Grundtvig*, 206.

³⁴² *Ibid.* According to the church historian Eusebius, the woman erected a statue of a man who stretches his hand to a woman at his feet at Caesarea Phillippi.

³⁴³ Grundtvig, *Nordic Mythology*, in *SL*, 61.

³⁴⁴ Grundtvig, “Sermon on the 16th Sunday in Trinity 1836,” *Anthology*, 180.

acknowledge is that human beings lost the lofty aim of the created life for “the divine resemblance and the upward ascent”³⁴⁵ via the “spiritual ladder,” and focus only on this-worldly life.³⁴⁶ Next, Grundtvig’s understanding of sin also points to the fact that human beings do not believe in Christ who is truth, light, and life, but make idols according to the inner divinity of humankind, which leads to the “corruption of life” with “perdition of death” as its sign.³⁴⁷ In this light, human beings lead a life of “self-love, self-will, and self-conceit [*Egenkiærlighed, Selvraadighed og Selvklogskab*]” which has not only “separated us from the old human life in the image of God, but also denies incessantly the new life in Christ Jesus.”³⁴⁸ Grundtvig argues that this self-love is “the source of all our sin and misery” (*synd og elendighed*).³⁴⁹ In short, the human fall results in “a divorce between heaven and earth as between spirit and flesh.”³⁵⁰ The human spirit is preoccupied with and blinded by the fleshly and this-worldly life without the upward longing for eternal life, and hence human beings also fail to be mediators between heaven and earth in the light of Christ’s human life. The original human holistic life thereby disintegrates.

In contrast to the Christian perspective, the naturalists, according to Grundtvig, would rather call the Christian fall or sin an “‘error’ or an ‘aberration.’”³⁵¹ In other words, the naturalists, together with the Christians, would also acknowledge that there is a certain dilemma or breakdown in human life. But how can this human problem be solved?

Despite the fall, Grundtvig believes that human beings still contain the image of God. They can still connect to God through their spiritual upward longing for eternity, through a natural life of faith, hope, and love, and not least through the interaction or even fusion of the truthful human words with the creating and incarnate divine Word of light and life. While affirming the continuity between the divine and human and hence acknowledging the value of the created natural human life, Grundtvig strives to restore and revive that original life in the belief that the human is never without the divine and vice versa. Spiritually dead people without the upward longing for eternity cannot of course respond to the living Word and the Holy Spirit, so Grundtvig now devotes himself to the awakening of people’s spirit and the promotion of the created natural life.

For Grundtvig, a natural human life is a kind of heathen life, understood as “what has been with people since ancient time and heathens consequently pertain to old, natural, pre-Christian human beings at each place” who can receive some “Christian blood in their veins” (*Christenblod i deres Aarer*) through baptism.³⁵² Furthermore, according to Grundtvig, human life always takes a

³⁴⁵ Grundtvig, “Introduction to Nordic Mythology (1832),” *Selected Writings*, 35.

³⁴⁶ Grundtvig, “The Four-leaf Clover (1836),” *SL*, 164.

³⁴⁷ Grundtvig, “The Innate and the Reborn Humanity (1857),” *Selected Writings*, 78.

³⁴⁸ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US* VIII, 443. Grundtvig continues, “[O]g naar vi betænke, hvad der hører til at finde sig i Herrens Anordninger og følge dem, da see vi let, at Livets Vei er smal og Porten trang; thi den rette Forbindelse af det Udvortes og Indvortes, det Legemelige og Aandelige, det Timelige og Evige, det Menneskelige og Guddommelige, det Enkelte og det Almindelige, falder os Alle, selv naa den er os utvivlsom, forunderlig fremmed.” (*Ibid.*)

³⁴⁹ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag V (1855),” *US* X, 63.

³⁵⁰ Grundtvig, “Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity 1862,” *Grundtvigs Sidste Prædiken*, vol. 1, 208, quoted in Allchin, *N.F.S. Grundtvig*, 155.

³⁵¹ Grundtvig, “North Mythology,” in *SL*, 61.

³⁵² Grundtvig, “Folket, Folke-Kirken, og Folke-Troen i Danmark (II),” *Danskeren* Nr. 3 (Januar 1851), in vol. 5 of *N.F.S. Grundtvig: Værker i Udvalg*, ed. Georg Christensen og Hal Koch, 10 vols. (København: Nordisk Forlag, 1948), 393. (cited hereafter in footnotes as *VU*). “[D]a Hedenskab kun betyder hvad der har været hos Folket fra Arildstid (hedenifra) og Hedning følgelig paa hvert Sted det gamle, naturlige, forchristelige Menneske.”

concrete particular national form.³⁵³ A national life cannot be separated from the vernacular language, people's temperaments, and the particular cultural peculiarity. Because of the negative influence of the coercive Danish Church and School upon the Danes, threatening their natural national life, Grundtvig actually encourages people to dare to become the original "heathens" again: "[L]et people grow up as heathens and let them fall back to heathenism" (*at lade Folk voxte op „Hedninger“ og at falde tilbage til „Hedenskabet“*).³⁵⁴ Grundtvig is confident that the creating Word and the Spirit as Life-Giver will continue to work even in the non-Christians' life setting, though this is not easy to recognize due to the human fall. This anthropological view enables him to bring forward his well-known axiom of "Man first, and then a Christian:"

Man first and then Christian
This is the order of life;
Even if we are called sheep we must not think
Of adding animals to the flock [of God]!
Even the Almighty cannot remake
Devils into Christians;
Therefore, do not throw pearls to swine.

The baptizer was the greatest man
Among all the peers of David,
But greater yet than he
Is the smallest in the kingdom of God:
I.e., everyone who believes and is baptized,
Who is given the swaddling clothes of Christ,
In other words, every Christian.

Man first and then Christian,
This is a main article,
Christianity is given free,
It is purely our good fortune,
But a good fortune which only comes to him,
Who already is the friend of God
By being of the noble tribe [body] of truth.

Therefore every man on this earth
Must strive to be a true person,
To open his ears for the word of truth,
And to give God glory!
As Christianity is the truth,
Even if he is not a Christian today,
He will be one tomorrow.³⁵⁵

Grundtvig's Mosaic-Christian anthropology paves the way for his suggestion to restore and promote the national form of the original natural human life. Here is ushered in Grundtvig's unique

³⁵³ Grundtvig, "Folkelighed og Christendom (1847)," *US* IX, 86. "[P]aa Jorden finder man aldrig Menneskelighed uden Folkelighed."

³⁵⁴ Grundtvig, "Folket, Folke-Kirken, og Folke-Troen i Danmark II (1851)," *VU* V, 393.

³⁵⁵ Grundtvig, "Man First and then Christian [Menneske først, kristen så] (1837)," trans. Johannes Knudsen, *Selected Writings*, 140-41. According to Hal Koch, it is Henning Hoirup who claims that Grundtvig may be inspired by "the dramatist Holberg" who wrote that "[c]hildren must be made human beings before they can become Christians." See Koch, *Grundtvig*, 221.

concept of *folkelighed*, which is of central importance in his social involvement to reconstruct society, to build up the nation, and to empower the Danish peasants to actively join public life.

6.2. Grundtvig's Concept of *Folkelighed*

As mentioned earlier, what worries Grundtvig at his time is the “death of Danish *folkelighed*” or the “spiritual death of the Danish people.” Then the question naturally arises: What on earth is this *folkelighed* which the Danes are so proud of? “What and where are the people (*folk*)?”³⁵⁶ What is the national spirit (*folkeånd*) that Grundtvig tries to awaken or revive? When Danes moved from an estate society to a people's society in the 19th century, Grundtvig asks these hard questions in order to prepare people for a new social structure and nation state. In the following section I shall focus further on Grundtvig's concept of *folkelighed*.

6.2.1. *Folkelighed* in Relationship to People and the National Spirit

People (*folk*), national spirit (*folkeånd*), and *folkelighed* are closely linked concepts in Grundtvig's thought. Generally speaking, people (*folk*), according to Danish dictionary, means “a human group that shares in common culture, history, language and so on.”³⁵⁷ Its meaning is different from that in “folk songs and folk dances,” but close to the English word “people.”³⁵⁸ Similarly, national spirit (*folkeånd*) is the invisible common cohesive spiritual bond that unites people. As Grundtvig says, “The national spirit (*folkeånd*) is really a common life power, which links and shapes much better and more truly than the entire political and constitutional barrel bond.”³⁵⁹ As to *folkelighed*, according to E. F. Fain, Grundtvig learns it from Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778 - 1852), the German nationalist, who first used the word *Volkstümlichkeit*.³⁶⁰ Grundtvig translates the German word as *folkelighed*, whose adjectival form is *folkelig*. According to Ernest Borup, Grundtvig, around 1817, often used the word *folkelighed* in *Danne-virke* with a clear understanding of its connotation, which points to “a people's conscious fellowship about their historical and spiritual values.”³⁶¹ *Folkelighed* in Danish literally means commonality, something of “general understanding” (*almen forståelighed*), to some extent, something being “national,” but certainly something “non-elitist,” designating the “popular” culture from below, which is in contrast to high-brow culture.³⁶² At the same time, according to Knudsen, *folkelighed* also has a collective dimension, pointing to “the totality of a country's population.”³⁶³ As a collective form of human life, *folkelighed* is also related to nation, “education and democracy.”³⁶⁴ So the terms of “national spirit” (*folkeånd*) and “*folkelighed*” are both developed on the basis of people (*folk*).

³⁵⁶ Grundtvig, “Overgangs-Tiden i Danmark (II),” *Danskeren*, Nr. 6 (Februar 1849), in *US IX*, 188.

³⁵⁷ See *Ordbog over det Dansk Sprog*, quoted in Kim A. Pedersen, “Hvad er Folkelighed? - glimt af Folkelighedsbegrebets historie,” in *Folkelighed År 2000 2.Del, Konference afholdt på Vartov den 16. og 17. marts 2001*, Vartovs Konferenciserie nr. 2, 26.

³⁵⁸ See *Selected Writings*, 37n11.

³⁵⁹ Grundtvig, “De historiske minders betydning, nærmest for Nordens folkeliv: Tale d. 17 de Januar 1845 i ‘Det skandinaviske Selskab,’” København, 1845, quoted in *HB I*, 141. “Folke-Aanden er virkelig en fælles Livskraft, der forbinder og former meget bedre og virkeligere end alle de politiske og constitutionelle Tøndebaand.”

³⁶⁰ E.F. Fain, “Nationalist Origins of the Folk High School: The Romantic Visions of N.F.S. Grundtvig,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 19, no. 1 (February. 1971): 82.

³⁶¹ Ernest J. Borup, “Indledning,” *HB II*, x. “Det betyder et Folks bevidste Fælleskab om sine historiske og aandelige Værdier.”

³⁶² Kim Pedersen, “Hvad er Folkelighed?” 26.

³⁶³ See *Selected Writings*, 37n11. Knudsen translates *folkelighed* as “folk-life,” referring to “the life of a people in a country.” (Ibid.)

³⁶⁴ Pedersen, “Hvad er Folkelighed?” 26.

In his poem of “Folkeligt should all things be (1848),” Grundtvig depicts what people, *folkelighed*, and national spirit are respectively:

1. ‘Of the people’ is our watchword
through the land from top to toe!
Something new is in the making,
even simpletons must know!
But are flaws healed in a nation
by a yet unknown creation?
Who knows what the purpose is
more than ‘bread and circuses’?

2. People! What defines a ‘people’?
What does ‘of the people’ mean?
Does the nose or mouth distinguish
how a ‘people’ can be seen?
Does a buried people’s marrow
lie concealed in some long barrow,
or behind each plough and horse,

3. There were ‘peoples’ long before us,
great or small with that name blessed,
whether there is still a ‘people’,
we must now put to the test:
Peoples’ spirits, when once woken,
whether sturdy, whether broken,
what they all must undertake
is to put their lives at stake.

4. Of a ‘people’ all are members
who regard themselves as such,
those whose mother-tongue sounds sweetest
and their fatherland love much;
All the rest like goblins evil
turn their backs upon the people,
bar themselves from kindred tie
and their rights of birth deny.

5. Should th’ assemblies³⁶⁵ choose secession
from the common people’s heart,
off come head and feet and so on,
laughably they fall apart!
Then the kingdom is in tatters
and the past no longer matters,
then the people fade away,
hard to wake another day.

6. If we get true Danish statutes,
Danish schools in which to learn,

³⁶⁵ In 1831 the government of Frederik VI introduced Provincial Advisory Assemblies in Holstein, Schleswig, Jutland, and the islands.

Danish concepts, Danish farming,
then our old fame will return:
“Gifted Danes live by the ocean
peace and joy their heart’s devotion”;
then in deed and poetry
‘of the people’ all will be.

7. In our land among its people,
always free and one at heart,
‘of the people’ are our love-songs,
truly Danish in their art!
Whether low or high connected,
children, women are respected:
down below or up above,
Danish is for ever love!³⁶⁶

³⁶⁶ See Grundtvig, “Folkelighed,” *Danskeren* Nr. 24 (August 1848), in *US IX*, 139-42. I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge for his English translation in which *folkelig* is translated with “of a/the people.”

Folkeligt skal alt nu være
trindt om land fra tå til top,
noget nyt der er i gære,
det selv tosser kan forstå;
men kan alt, hvad brister, bødes
med det ny, som først skal fødes?
Ved man også, hvad man vil,
mer end "brød og skuespil"?

Folk! hvad er vel folk i grunden?
hvad betyder "folkeligt"?
er det næsen eller munden,
hvorpå man opdager sligt?
findes, skjult for hvermands øje,
folket kun i kæmpehøje
eller bag hver busk og plov,
i hver kødklump før og grov?

Folk der var i gamle dage,
både store folk og små,
om der end er folk tilbage,
gøres nu her prøver på:
Folkeånden alle vågne,
som de vævre, så de dovne,
hvad de alle kan og vil
er at sætte alt på spil.

Til et folk de alle høre,
som sig regne selv dertil,
har for modersmålet øre,
har for fædrelandet ild;
resten selv som dragedukker
sig fra folket udelukker,
lyse selv sig ud af æt,
nægte selv sig indfødsret.

Based on this important poem, I will sketch the concept of *folkelighed* in detail.

6.2.2. *Folkelighed* as a Historical Cultural-Ethnic Reality

First of all, Grundtvig claims that *folkelighed* is a historical, cultural-ethnic reality. It refers to people of “the old days” who have been through shared historical life journeys. They communicate in their common mother tongue, and share a common territory of the fatherland like a family. People’s heroic deeds, their poems about nature, and their temperament of love in their hearts shape an “imagined community.” According to Grundtvig, the Danes are a people of the heart, with the national spirit as the “common life force,” “heart-warmth” (*Hjertelighed*) as the “internal bond of souls” (*Sjælebaand*), and the common mother-tongue as the expression of the human heart.³⁶⁷ Grundtvig’s simple definition of ‘people’ is as follows: Whoever speaks the same national language with the land’s homogeneous population belongs to the people, and the language “was, is and will be the people’s bond.”³⁶⁸ “Those who do not belong to the people cannot be called *folkelig*, but at most be called nationals (*Nationale*).”³⁶⁹ In short, by this national-Romantic concept Grundtvig

Rive løs sig rigets stænder
fra den fælles folkeånd,
da går hoved, fødder, hænder
latterlig på egen hånd,
da er riget sønderrevet,
fortidsalderen udlevet,
folket mødig sover hen,
vågner vanskelig igen.

Får vi ægte danske love,
danske skoler splinterny,
danske tanker, danske plove,
rinder op vort gamle ry:
"Dansken, lykkelig begavet,
bor med fred og fryd på havet";
da er folkets dåd og digt,
da er alting folkeligt.

Folkeligt er her i vangen
endnu eet af hjertens grund,
folkelig er elskovssangen,
ægte dansk i allen stund,
ej på val og ej på tinge
agtes børn og kvinder ringe,
hvad der end går op og ned,
dansk er immer kærlighed!

³⁶⁷ Grundtvig, “Menneske-Livet i Danmark (I),” in *Danskeren* Nr. 38(September 1851), quoted in *HB* II, 253.

³⁶⁸ Grundtvig, “I Landstinget 1866,” *HB* II, 316. “Det er nu min simple Tanke derom, at forsaavidt vi Alle ere valgte af Folket, have vi ogsaa Alle Ret til paa vort eget Ansvar at tale i Folkets Navn. Forøvrigt i ethvert Land, altsaa ogsaa i Danmark, i ethvert Land, som er eensartet befolket, der er Folket alle de, som tale Landets Sprog, og som ville blive ved at tale det og blive ved at høre til Folket baade, som det har været, som det er, og som det bliver.”

³⁶⁹ Ibid. “Det følger af sig selv, at hvem der ikke vil høre til Folket, hvem der ikke vil hedde Folkelige, men som i det Høieste vil hedde Nationale, de kunne vist heller ikke gjøre Fordring paa, at de skulle være Visere hos Folket, eller at de skulle ansees for at udtale Folkets Mening.” It should also be noted here that Grundtvig sometimes uses “Folk” and “National” and “State” interchangeably. For example, as he noted, “[S]aa enhver Folke-Sag (National-Sag) er, some saadan, en slet Sag....” See Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag II (1855),” *US* X, 46. Sometimes he seems to distinguish “folk” and “national” when he emphasized folk as a homogenous people speaking the same language, but those *non-folkelige*

refers to a group of people with the same mother tongue, shaped by the same historical traditions and sharing common cultural values.³⁷⁰ This historical cultural-ethnic entity continues to exist wherever *folkelighed* is found.

6.2.3. *Folkelighed* Associated with Equality and Freedom

Secondly, *folkelighed* as a social entity also has civic connotations, pointing to the equality and freedom of all human beings. The national form of human life is best manifested by the principle of *folkelighed*. Grundtvig coins this Danish word to express “a concern with the welfare and freedom of all of the groups living in society” as he believes that “[f]olkelighed will be our watchword in the North, and gently solve the riddles of equality” (*Folkelighed være vort Løsen i Nord, lemteligt løser den Lighedens Gaade*).³⁷¹ Since 1817 Grundtvig has come to a clear definition of *folkelighed*: “It means not simply the popular, but the democratic, the national or the Danish; but it means first and foremost the people’s conscious commonality on their historical, practical, human and spiritual values.”³⁷² Here Grundtvig affirms not only the cultural-ethnic sense of *folkelighed*, but also the democratic and civic sense, to which he gives form in the above poem from 1848. When Denmark was in a transitional stage from the hierarchical absolutist monarchy to a modern state, the estates or class differences became a hindrance for social harmony. Inequality is against the national spirit, and will inevitably lead to social conflict and social dissolution. Besides, if all people’s spirits are awakened and set to function, there must be sufficient freedom for the spirits to express themselves through the living word from their loving hearts. Only with freedom can *folkelighed* appear both human and natural.

Steven Borish summarizes different scholars’ understandings that *folkelighed* means “popular, simple and unassuming” (Kaj Thaning), but actually has more to do with such core values as the equality of people (*folke-ighed*), and the “quality of being of the people” like freedom (Vagn Skovgaard-Petersen), so that people can be enlightened for a responsible and democratic society in which power is well guarded (Uffe Østergaard).³⁷³ In the name of *folkelighed*, people can struggle with any structural evil and institutional inequality for social justice centered on the common good and human rights. In short, the civic and democratic part of *folkelighed* is also very conducive to the social reconstruction of Denmark.

6.2.4. *Folkelighed* as a Communal Reality

Thirdly, *folkelighed* is also communal, in contrast to individualism.³⁷⁴ Grundtvig claims in his poem of 1848 that radical individualistic freedom is “ridiculous” if people are all “on their own.” Without

can be called nationals. See Grundtvig, “I Landstinget 1866,” in *HB II*, 316. He also used “State Church” and “National Church” interchangeably as in *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes* (1830)? *US V*, 302-03.

³⁷⁰ Bradley, *A Life Recalled*, 419.

³⁷¹ Borish, *The Land of the Living*, 307.

³⁷² Stræde, Et folkeligt alternativ, s.77f, quoted in Bernd Henningensen, *Politik eller Kaos?* (København: Berlingske Forlag, 1980), 251. (Det betyder ikke blot det populære, men det demokratiske, det nationale eller danske, men det betyder først og fremmest folkets bevidste fælleskab om sine historiske, praktiske, menneskelige og åndelige værdier.) Similar sentences also appear in Borup, “Indledning,” in *HB II*, x.

³⁷³ Borish, *The Land of the Living*, 306-07.

³⁷⁴ Steve Bruce distinguishes three kinds of individualism: the individualism of the Reformation focuses on the responsibility of the Christian individual to be faithful to God; the individualism of the “second half of the nineteenth century” expresses “the right to do what we wanted provided it did not harm others;” and in the later modern period, by contrast, individualism means that, as the “sovereign consuming individual,” “[w]e claim not only the right to do what

a common sense of belonging, one is like a stringless kite or a homeless person. Not only will people become rootless, they will also be severed from the communal tie of the national spirit, which will lead to social fragmentation and dissolution. In 1848, Grundtvig still holds that the king's hand and the people's voice can work in good cooperation so long as both are strong and free. Although he later gives up his preference for royal government, his conception of *folkelighed* never changes. As A. M. Allchin interprets it, "Folkelighed implies a conscious sense of solidarity and interdependence, of mutual responsibility and accountability between the different groups which make up a people or a nation."³⁷⁵ This is indeed a unique perception of Grundtvig – to view the individual from the communal perspective, counteracting the liberal individualism popular since the Enlightenment.

6.2.5. *Folkelighed* as a Dynamic Unfinished Reality

Finally, *folkelighed* should be understood as a dynamic and developing reality, not a static concept pointing to a finished identity. Grundtvig understands *folkelighed* in the light of the universal historical development as well as the living interaction with other *folkeligheder*. As K.E. Bugge claims,

The conclusion is, therefore, that the concepts of people and *folkelighed* are not static, defined once and for all. A people is at one and the same time a historically developed reality and a coherence, which some choose to leave and others choose to join. Correspondingly the word *folkelighed* emphasizes at the same time a given life condition and a living, dynamic process. *Folkelighed* is both something that it is, and something that is to be. As such, *folkelighed* is an enriching and constantly challenging reality.³⁷⁶

So *folkelighed* cannot be abused as an ideological standard to exclude or despise other would-be-*folkelige* people in the nation. Hal Koch also indicates this dynamic process: "The national, as distinct from the nationalistic, always ends in the inter-popular, not in the international, the cosmopolitan, which is a form of unrealism."³⁷⁷ He points to a living interaction between different *folkeligheder*, because "[t]he national brings us to frontiers where we meet the rest [nationalities in the world]" so that "[a] person who has understood what national life is in his own land will approach other nationalities with a deference for life and reality."³⁷⁸ Bugge emphasizes that "[t]he flowering of national life needs a free and fruitful interaction between people from different circles and estates while humanity desires a similar interaction between the peoples."³⁷⁹ It is in this dynamic interaction and interchanges that *folkeligheder* are enriched and hence constantly reshaped.

The cultural and national identity shaped by the particular national language and history should not be static and self-enclosed. As Jørgen Bukdahl claims, "It is the *folkelig* in a nation that is sighted towards one's fellow-human beings and fellow-peoples; it is the *folkelig* in a nation that breaks the

is right in our own eyes but to assert that the world is as we variously see it." See Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5, 232.

³⁷⁵ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 44.

³⁷⁶ K.E. Bugge, "Folkelighed, folkekultur, og nationalstat," in *Folkelighed År 2000: Konferencen afholdt på Vartov den 28. og 29 april 2000*, Vartovs Konferenciserie nr.1, 9. "Konklusionen er altså, at begreberne folk og Folkelighed ikke er statiske, en gang for alle definerede begreber. Et folk er på en gang en historisk tilblivet realitet og en sammenhæng, som nogle vælger at forlade, og andre vælger at melde sig ind i. Tilsvarende betegner ordet Folkelighed på en og samme gang et givet livsvilkår og en levende, dynamisk proces. Folkeligheden er både noget, som er, og noget, der bliver til. Som sådan er Folkeligheden en berigende og bestandigt udfordrende realitet."

³⁷⁷ Koch, *Grundtvig*, 131.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ See Borup, "Indeledning," *HB* II, X. "Folkelivets Blomstring kræver en fri og frugtbar Vekselvirkning mellem Folkets forskellige Kredse og Stænder, og Menneskelighed kræver en tilsvarende Vekselvirkning mellem Folkeslagene."

self-adequacy of the national into pieces and creates the growing condition for world-citizens' and universal ideas."³⁸⁰ Even Grundtvig's romanticist definition of Danish *folkelighed* has benefited from the interaction with such German philosophers as Herder and Fichte. In other words, the *folkelig* keeps the door open to universal humanity as long as the foreign does not become a threat to destroying one's own *folkelighed*. The *folkelig* is the point of departure for a living interaction with the other, so that it will not become tribal or parochial.

6.2.6. *Folkelighed* and People's High School

How then can *folkelighed* be reborn again in the Danish context? In his poem of 1848, Grundtvig also mentions a new kind of school that can educate and re-socialize the Danes: a social education in a people's high school. In order to be *folkelig* or to be Danish, one needs to "stick one's beautiful finger into the earth and smell where one is from," to exercise the power of the mother tongue, and to "educate people about themselves" and their peculiarities.³⁸¹ The education at people's high school covers the people's mother tongue, shared history, literature, love of fatherland, and the Danish cultural temperament of heart. Grundtvig has been advocating this new people's high school since 1831, believing it to be the way to revive the national spirit, to reconstruct society, and to build up the nation in an evolutionary way. Only when people's hearts and mindsets are reoriented to the unique Danish way, can a real social transformation become possible. I shall return to this later in this chapter (6.3.6.).

6.2.7. Summary

Generally speaking, Grundtvig's concept of *folkelighed* includes both the cultural-ethnic and the civic-democratic sense. As Niels Jensen says,

"*Folkelig*" refers to a cultural and social life which draws from the traditions and values shared by all the people, and in which they actively participate. The term might also be opposed to 'academic' in the sense that Grundtvig wanted to give an education to the people based on Danish language, literature, and history which would enrich the personal life of the individual, but also enable him/her to engage in public life with self-reliance and dignity.³⁸²

Grundtvig's advocacy and promotion of Danish *folkelighed* does not exclude the international dimension of human existence. J. P. Bang observes that there are two opposing feelings in regard to *folkelighed*: "On the one hand, indifference to the whole of humanity, and on the other, hatred and unfairness and injustice towards foreign people."³⁸³ Thus, says Bang, patriotism sometimes also risks "chauvinism", as manifested in Germany, and in Denmark too, albeit to a much less extent, and it is why Danishness should not be promoted "at the price of other people's *folkelighed*."³⁸⁴ According to Grundtvig, the Danish people's high school in which the Danish *folkelighed* is nurtured should not be a kind of "chauvinistic and super-Danish school" (*chauvinistisk eller hyperdansk Skole*).³⁸⁵ Therefore, *folkelighed* points to a particular social and national life, not only

³⁸⁰ Bukdahl, Brændpunkterne, s.7, quoted in Henningsen, *Politik eller Kaos?* 251. "Det folkelige i en Nation er det, der har medmenneskeligt og mellem folkeligt sigte; det folkelige i en Nation er det, der sønderbryder det nationale i dets Selvtillstrækkelighed og gir det Vækstvilkår for verdensborgerlige og universale Ideer."

³⁸¹ Grundtvig, "Folket, Folke-Kirken, og Folke-Troen i Danmark II (1851)," *VU V*, 392.

³⁸² Niels L. Jensen, "Introduction," *Anthology*, 29.

³⁸³ Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 96. "[D]els Ligegyldighed for Menneskeligheden i det hele og dels Hadskhed og Ubillighed og Uretfærdighed mod de fremmede."

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Poul Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig* (Århus: Forlaget Aros, 1983), 54.

independent of, but also interdependent upon, other *folkeligheder* in the whole human life in the world.

Through Grundtvig's advocacy of *folkelighed*, his vision that the Danes "belong to one people, and as such have one mother, one destiny, and one purpose"³⁸⁶ has to some extent been realized. The cultural, social, and even political Danishness of people was gradually established by this concept when Denmark was in a turbulent period. Yet even today, the Danish concept of *folkelighed* is not without challenge. In a globalized world, the former small and homogenous nation state of Denmark is also challenged by ethnic, cultural, and religious pluralism.³⁸⁷ Ove Korsgaard argues for a distinction of ethnic-cultural perspective (*ethnos*) from the civic perspective (*demos*) of *folkelighed* in a globalized society so that "political democracy" can be the new power of social cohesion.³⁸⁸ It is a pragmatic solution to pluralism in a modern state which leaves public space for other ethnic-cultural *folkeligheder* to surface, and to interact with the Danish *folkelighed* in a living way. At the same time, this cross-fertilization will also become a new incentive for the Danish *folkelighed* to further develop and realize itself. If so, the Evangelical Lutheranism should no longer be the civilbond of the State, as suggested by Grundtvig (see ch.6.3.5.).

6.3. Civil Society as the Plausibility Structure of *Folkelighed*

6.3.1. Civil Society and *Folkelighed*

Now that he has defined *folkelighed* as the basic form of human life (a presupposition for the development of living Christianity), Grundtvig needs to further promote and materialize *folkelighed* in society. For him, *folkelighed* has become not only the principle to reform society by, but also the cohesive power to replace the State Church. In trying to remove all the visible and invisible obstacles to the fulfillment of *folkelighed*, Grundtvig brings forward his vision of civil society (*det borgerlige selskab*). As Helge Grell says,

The demand of *folkelighed* for civil society [*det borgerlige selskab*] works together with what for Grundtvig is the actual foundation of society [*samfund*], namely, the assertion and development of the Mosaic-Christian view of human beings. His perception becomes more understandable when one is aware, as he himself points to, that this society represents both a spiritual and a tangible dimension with functions in both spheres (cf. p.176). This view corresponds to his definition of human beings as dust and spirit. Precisely because civil society is present where the spiritual comes to manifest itself in a tangible relationship, it must work out in a *folkelig* way the basic view of humanity [and] also apply it in this relation. It also shows itself when Grundtvig, out of his perception of *folkelighed*, takes his stand on a series of problems that are fundamental for the tasks and functions of civil society.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Grundtvig, "The Speech before the Constitutional Assembly 1848," *Selected Writings*, 168.

³⁸⁷ Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 23, 27, 31.

³⁸⁸ Kim A. Pedersen refers to Ove Korsgaard's book *Kampen om Lyset*, Kbh. 1997, 472 ff., See Pedersen, "Hvad er Folkelighed?" 27-8. See also Ove Korsgaard, "A European *Demos*? The Nordic adult education tradition-*folkeoplysning* – faces a challenge," trans. Seán Martin, *Comparative Education* 38, no. 1(2002): 7-16.

³⁸⁹ Helge Grell, *Skabeånd og folkeånd: En undersøgelse af Grundtvigs tanker om folk og Folkelighed og deres forhold til hans kristendomssyn* (Denmark: Anis, 1988), 177. "Folkelighedens krav til det borgerlige selskab falder sammen med, hvad der for Grundtvig er selve fundamentet for dette samfund, nemlig hævdelser og udviklingen af det mosaik-kristelige menneskesyn. Hans opfattelse bliver mere forståelig, når man er opmærksom på, hvad han selv påpeger, at dette samfund for ham både repræsenterer en åndelig og en håndgribelig størrelse med funktioner på begge områder (cf. her s. 176). Synspunktet svarer ganske til hans bestemmelse af mennesket som støv og ånd. Just fordi det borgerlige selskab er stedet, hvor det åndelige kommer til at manifestere sig i håndgribelige forhold, må den folkeligt udformede grundanskuelser af det menneskelige også gøre sig gældende i disse forhold. Det viser sig da også, når Grundtvig ud fra

Here Grell points out that civil society is the concrete life form of the national spirit, so that this national spirit can be manifested for the enlightenment and development of humanity from the Mosaic-Christian anthropological view. It is the basic context or plausibility structure for the meaning system of *folkelighed*. This has been a historical fact proved by the later Grundtvigian practices. As Ove Korsgaard says,

In contrast to the National Liberals, the Grundtvigians did not link the concept of the people to the ‘state’ but to ‘civil society.’ In the Danish context this meant that what belonged to the *people* became more or less synonymous with what did *not* belong to the state in the liberal tradition.³⁹⁰

Grundtvigians opt for civil society instead of state. Therefore, Grundtvig’s concept of civil society is of great importance for the Grundtvigians’ engagement in social reform and reconstruction.

6.3.2. Civil Despair in Terms of State, Church and School

Generally speaking, both the Danish nation and the Church in a transitional stage are confronted by immense challenges in Grundtvig’s time. Grundtvig describes the difficult situations of the North as a “civil despair,” which is a “fatal disease” to the public:

We see this civil despair breaking out not only in revolts and in monstrous, irrational misdeeds, but also in people shying away from making any useful *effort*. They hide behind airy speculations and an increasing desire for emigration – or for certain forms of ‘livelihood’, even when these must be sought after in prison. And who can doubt that we in the North are at present standing on the edge of bottomless abyss?³⁹¹

People at that time either tend to support violent revolution, or refuse to shoulder the civil responsibility for social reconstruction by engaging in speculative thinking or emigration. What is the reason for this civil despair, then? Grundtvig depicts the social situation of Denmark 1848 in the following way:

We have to fight and defeat a State Church, a compulsory School system, a guild system and a poor law relief, an overstaffed and favored civil service, an ultimately intolerable war footing, and in general an empty and dead concept of the State that has almost swallowed up the concept of the people, before we can introduce a free and equal, a people’s and therefore a Danish order. The people’s victory will not be won by election campaigns, or party battles in parliament, or by universal suffrage or by the noblest exchanges of views and votes in parliament, or by the excessive writings and most accurate calculations in “the Department.”³⁹²

sin opfattelse af Folkelighed tager stilling til en række problemer, som er fundamentale for det borgerlige samfunds opgaver og funktioner.”

³⁹⁰ Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvig’s Ideal of a People’s High School – and its Historical Influence,” (paper presented at the conference of “Grundtvig’s view of individualization and the formation of state and society,” at Center for European Studies, Harvard University, December 2012), 5-6.

³⁹¹ Grundtvig, “To the Norwegians Concerning a Norwegian High School (1837),” in *SL*, 175-76. Uffe Jonas in his introduction to this article notes that, in order to avoid the censor, Grundtvig published this article in Norway, addressing Norway, but also pointing back to Denmark, (*Ibid.*, 173.) Concerning the Norwegian-disputed reception of the article, see Henrik Yde, “Til Nordmænd om en Norsk Høi-Skole, En indledning,” *Grundtvig Studier* ed. Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen and Anders Holm (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2012), 64-88. See also Bugge, *GSV* II, 64.

³⁹² Grundtvig, “Folke-Vindingen i Danmark ved Omsvinget 1848,” *Danskeren* Nr. 21 (Juni 1850), *VU* V, 376. “Vi har nemlig en Stats-Kirke, et tvungent Skolevæsen, Laugsvæsen og Fattigvæsen, en meget for talrig og begundstiget Embedsstand, en i Længden utaalelig Krigsstand, og i det hele et tomt og dødt Stats-Begreb, der næsten har opslugt det levende Folke-Begreb, at bekæmpe og overvinde, førend en fri og ligelig, en folkelig, altsaa en dansk Tingenes Orden kan blive indført, og Folke-Seieren vindes aabenbar hverken ved Valg-Kampene, eller ved Parti-Kampene paa

The Danish State exercised social control by means of the enforced Church, School and people's association in 1848. Even the Danish transition from absolutism to constitutional monarchy did not solve all the internal crises. In 1851, Grundtvig continues to criticize especially the Church and State situation, as Borup and Schrøder sum up:

The so-called Church in Denmark is in great confusion. Although it is called a National Church, it is not spiritual in order to be for the sake of human beings and people, but means that people are spiritual only in order to obey the Church. State in Denmark is most like "fallen scaffolding, built by German artisans in half-Jewish and half-Roman imperial style."³⁹³

The State can no longer suppress the people as before; the Church still did not meet people's spiritual needs. Both institutions had lost their former legitimacy. In short, Grundtvig's analysis of the social problem can be summarized as follows,

The Church in Denmark is a confused remnant of the papacy; the State resembles fallen scaffolding; and School is non-Danish and non-*folkelig*. That is why the Danish people like neither Church nor State nor School; but when a true Danish enlightenment is introduced, human life in all aspects will flourish and be joyfully appreciated among us.³⁹⁴

Grundtvig is against the enforced State, School and Church with "the worldly authority's guardianship in spiritual issues" for all the people. He notes in 1851 that in the civil sector there is a bureaucracy ("the civil servants' domination") which is leading to the "domination of the mob or the warmongers" (*Vrimlens elle Krigsstandens Herredømme*); among the people the "pedantic exam-system" (*det pedantiske Examens-Væsen*) and the "bookish stick-in-the-muds" (*det boglige Dødbideri*) are bringing about "ignorance and brutality;" and in spiritual matters the "ruling Church" has become the State's agent, resulting in "ungodliness and bestiality in spiritual things."³⁹⁵ Thus the people would rather forsake such civil establishments as Church, State and School because there is no room for the free development of *folkelighed*. Grundtvig not only opposes the use of such foreign terms as 'bureaucracy' or 'state' to address the Danish situation, he also points to the need for a true *folkelig* enlightenment for life. While people are still celebrating the transition from the age of the estates to the age of the people, Grundtvig advises them to explore the true meaning of being in 'the age of the people.'³⁹⁶ Otherwise, parliament will become a place where the unenlightened majority advocates their ignorant and brutish ideas while the power of responsible government falls into the hands of "unrestricted civil servants" (*uindskrænkede Embedsmænd*).³⁹⁷ Against this, Grundtvig holds firm to the "supremacy of the national spirit, the progressive enlightenment of life, and the freedom of the heart" (*det Folkeaaendens Herredømme, Livets fremskridende Oplysning og Hjertets Frihed*).³⁹⁸ He tries to reconstruct Danish society in a Danish way,

Rigsdagen, hverken ved den almindelige Stemme-ret eller ved de allerordenligste Ordsifter og Afstemninger i Thingene, eller ved de allervidtløftigste Skrivelser og allernøiagtigste Beregninger i 'Departementerne.'"

³⁹³ Borup and Schrøder's summary of part of Grundtvig's "Menneske-Livet i Danmark III (1851)," in *HB* II, 263. "Den saakaldte Kirke i Danmark er et stort Virvar. Skønt den kaldes Folke-kirke, er den ikke aandelig til for Menneskets og Folkets Skyld, men mener, at Folket kun er aandeligt til for at lyde Kirken. Staten i Danmark ligner mest 'et nedfaldet Stillads, som har været opført af tyske Handværksfolk, halv i jødisk og halv i romerskeiserlig Stil.'"

³⁹⁴ Borup and Schrøder's introduction of Grundtvig's "Menneske-Livet i Danmark (1851)," in *HB* II, 251. "Kirken i Danmark er en forstyrret Levning af Papismen, Staten ligner et nedfaldet Stillads, og Skolen er udansk og ufolkelig. Derfor bryder det danske Folk sig hverken om Kirke, Stat eller Skole; men naar en ægte dansk Oplysning indføres, vil Menneskelivet til alle Sider blomstre og med Glæde nydes iblandt os."

³⁹⁵ Grundtvig, "Overgangs-Tiden i Danmark (I)," *Danskeren* Nr. 4 (Februar 1849), in *HB* II, 212-13.

³⁹⁶ Grundtvig, "Overgangs-Tiden i Danmark (II, 1849)," *US* IX, 185.

³⁹⁷ Grundtvig, "Overgangs-Tiden i Danmark (I, 1849)," *HB* II, 213.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

starting with the employment of the Danish language. Grundtvig insists that only a free and general enlightenment of the Danish people through the people's high school can really make the people's spiritual cohesion natural, the parliament effective, and the government responsible.³⁹⁹

6.3.3. Grundtvig's Vision of Civil Society

Although Grundtvig lives through the peaceful shift of Denmark from absolutism to constitutional monarchy in 1848-49 (changing his own position from royalist to democrat, while still differing from the national liberals), his view of civil society remains almost the same. It is centered on the three key relationships between Church, School, and State, corresponding to a human spiritual relationship "to God, the human soul, and fellow human beings"⁴⁰⁰ respectively. Therefore in this section I will concentrate on his vision of civil society as his aspiration for a responsible social reformation that aims to achieve the free development of *folkelighed*.

6.3.3.1. Grundtvig's Concept of Society

In 1848, Grundtvig also starts to focus on society building so that the people can lead a more stable and cohesive life. One paragraph of his writings tenders a clue to his definition of society:

I saw immediately that the best that could be made, and if heaven added a blessing, could contribute greatly to the rescue of Denmark and Danishness in every way was a call to all Danish men and women in the kingdom again to unite into a society [*Selskab*] bearing the Danish name. They should openly set themselves the one, *folkelig*, peaceful, and honest goal to awaken, strengthen, and enlighten in every reasonable way the Danish love of the fatherland and national consciousness. For as soon as this call came from men who had the people's confidence, I was sure that the fundamental Danish feeling would immediately motivate men and women by the thousand into Danish society ...⁴⁰¹

According to the *Dansk-Engelsk Ordbog* (1995), *selskab* generally means "society, company, association" or an inclusive "corporation."⁴⁰² What Grundtvig emphasizes here is a reorganization of the Danish people, focusing on the Danish identity and the love of the fatherland. This newly formed society in the light of the national spirit will be a natural and living reality in the Danish kingdom – the material form of *folkelighed* or Danishness. It should no longer be organized by the State from above, but by the people from below. This will usher in Grundtvig's civil society.

6.3.3.2. Semantic Analyses of Grundtvig's Use of "Civil Society"

What then constitutes Grundtvig's civil society? In his writings there are regular appearances of such phrases as *borgerlige selskab*, *Borger-Samfund*, *Borger-Selskabet*, and *borgerlige Samfund* – which can all be translated as "civil society." Grundtvig uses them interchangeably even with State. This is because under the feudal absolutist monarchy, civil society was fully subsumed by the State. For example, in his writing of 1830, he can simply refer to a "worldly state" (*verdslig Stat*) as

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Grell, *Skaberånd og folkeånd*, 175-76.

⁴⁰¹ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Konge og de Tydske Forrædere," *Danskeren*, Nr. 5 (April 1848), *US IX*, 122. "Jeg saae nemlig strax, at det Bedste, der kunde gøres, og, naar Himlen vilde føie, kunde bidrage uberegnelig til Danmarks og Danskehedenens Redning i alle Maader, det var et Opraab til alle Danske Mænd og Kvinder i hele Riget om at forene sig til et Selskab, der bar det Danske Navn, og satte sig aabenlyst det eneste, folkelige, fredelige, og uskyldige Øiemed, paa alle skikkelige Maader at vække, styrke, og klare den Danske Fædernelands-Kiærlighed og folkelige Bevidsthed. Saasnart nemlig et saadant Opraab skedte fra Mænd, der havde Folkets Tillid, da var jeg sikker paa, at den Danske Grundfølelse vilde strax drive Mænd og Kvinder i Tusindtal ind i det Danske Selskab.

⁴⁰² *Dansk-Engelsk Ordbog* (1995), 716.

Borger-Samfundet in contrast to the “clerical State” (*geistelig Stat*), which he equates with *Kirke-Samfundet*.⁴⁰³ They are also parallel with his expressions of *det borgerlige* and *kirkelige Samfund* as “natural relations” of human life.⁴⁰⁴ Grundtvig claims that in *Borger-Selskabet*, there have existed such different hierarchies as the clergy and aristocracy.⁴⁰⁵ In his article “Civil Education” (*Borgerlig Dannelse*) dated around 1834,⁴⁰⁶ Grundtvig use the phrase *det borgerlige Selskab* in the traditional sense and states that there are three significant conditions for the development of human life: “the church community, civil society and the educational system, or Church, State and School” (*det Kirkelig Samfund, det Borgerlig Selskab og det Lærde Væsen, eller Kirke, Stat og Skole*) in living interaction with each other.⁴⁰⁷ Here *borgerlige selskab* seems to be equated with the State, which also shares the same meaning with *Borger-Samfundet*. In 1836 Grundtvig writes that a civil confirmation for Danish youngsters after their schooling⁴⁰⁸ could prepare them for admission into civil society (*Borger-Samfund*).⁴⁰⁹ Here *Borger-Samfundet* means the same as *borgerlige selskab*, that is, civil society. Generally speaking, although *Borger-Samfundet*, *det borgerlige Samfund* and *det borgerlige selskab* appear in different literary contexts at different times, they seem to mean more or less the same.⁴¹⁰ His use of such terms as *Borger-Samfundet*⁴¹¹ and *Borger-Selskab*,⁴¹² together with *det borgerlige Selskab*,⁴¹³ continues into the 1850s. In this study, however, I shall concentrate on *det borgerlige Selskab*⁴¹⁴ as an analytical tool. It is only in the light of its changing relationship with the State that Grundtvig’s civil society becomes more specified as his decisive vision for Danish social reconstruction.

6.3.3.3. Grundtvig’s Distinction of Civil Society from State

So the next question is concerned with the relationship between State and civil society. Before he clearly rejects “state” as a foreign abstract term in 1836, Grundtvig sees State and civil society as always connected or even overlapping, with king and people in a free and friendly relationship to each other. It is only based on the way that State power is exploited to deal with the national spirit that Grundtvig gradually opts for “civil society”. In 1833 he begins to spell out the difference between civil society and the State:

⁴⁰³ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes* (1830)? *US* V, 351.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 279-80.

⁴⁰⁵ Grundtvig, *Mands-Minde* (1838), 561.

⁴⁰⁶ K.E. Bugge og Vilhelm Nielsen, “Indledning,” in N.F.S. Grundtvig, *Statsmæssig Oplysning-et udkast om samfund og skole* (Herning: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1983), 19.

⁴⁰⁷ Grundtvig, “Om Borgerlig Dannelse (1834?),” in Bugge, *GSV* I, 256.

⁴⁰⁸ Edward Broadbridge notes that *borgerlig* can be translated as either “civil” or “civic,” but they are very hard to distinguish. See *SL*, 386n11.

⁴⁰⁹ Grundtvig, “Is Faith Truly a School Matter? (1836)” in *SL*, 125; see also Bugge, *GSV* I, 272.

⁴¹⁰ For example, Bugge believes that “*borgerlige selskab*” means the same as *samfund*. See Bugge, “Folkelighed, folkekultur, og nationalstat,” in *Folkelighed År 2000*, 9.

⁴¹¹ For example, see Grundtvig, “Folke-Thinget og Troes-Friheden i Danmark,” *Danskeren*, Nr. 7 (Februar 1851), *US* IX, 277.

⁴¹² For example, see Grundtvig, “Guld-Alderen og Grotte-Sangen i Danmark (1850),” *US* IX, 239.

⁴¹³ For example, see Grundtvig, “Nytårs-Ny i den Danske Forening,” *Danskeren*, Nr. 2 (Januar 1849), *US* IX, 182.

⁴¹⁴ Literally *det borgerlige selskab* can be translated as “civic community,” a concept closely related to Robert Putnam which, according to Mark Jensen, pertains to “a people with a significant amount of social capital.” See Mark Jensen, *Civil Society in Liberal Democracy* (NY/London: Routledge, 2011), 137. But civic community, comparatively speaking, is narrower than Grundtvig’s civil society which can be expanded to the whole global civil society. Besides civic community cannot cover the spiritual dimension of Grundtvig’s *borgerlige selskab*, as I shall explain later on. Meanwhile Jensen also proposes an idea of “national society” with overlapping meanings with *det borgerlige selskab* (*Ibid.*, 14-5). Yet it is mainly situated in a nation state while Grundtvig’s discussion of *det borgerlige selskab* could be dated much earlier in his world history. In this view, I prefer to translate *det borgerlige selskab* as civil society.

[H]owever in any so-called State where the hand refuses to be the vice-regent of the spirit but wishes to be its regent, so that the sword no longer rests in the hand of justice but justice rests in the spear-stand, then this is not civil society, but at most a robber-band camped on an anthill. On the other hand, wherever the State truly rests on law and justice, there we find a civil society that will gradually evolve with all the freedom and equality that can be united with justice and the common good. There the School will be protected in order to promote general education and enlightenment, which, being the State's ultimate goal, can only confirm it with each genuine advance. Since freedom is the Church's natural element and education the School's, then by pursuing the true State we cannot help but have the true Church and the proper School into the bargain, continually tracing their beneficial effects.⁴¹⁵

So the State's way of dealing with the national spirit decides whether there can be a civil society. The State should not be the lord, but a serving agent of the national spirit. If the State follows the law to do justice and to ensure the common good, *folkelighed* can develop freely both in the Church and School. In 1834, Grundtvig continues to emphasize this by articulating that the condition for the existence of civil society is that "power is both possessed in *accordance* with law and keeps the law in view."⁴¹⁶ In his famous writing, "The Danish Four-Leaf Clover or a Partiality for Danishness (1836)," he sharply criticizes the State's mere concern with power regardless of the well-being of civil society:

For the word 'state' is, as we know, a foreign word, and in itself means only a particular 'arrangement', no matter what, between the authorities and the king's subjects, and among the subjects themselves. As such it can be used in regard to the Turkish Sultanate and to the Mexican Anarchy just as well as to the Kingdom of Denmark, and it is this confusion of languages that is partly to blame for the distressing and ridiculous dispute and quarrel currently being pursued on 'state constitutions'. It is as if the main issue is not *how* power is employed but who *has* it, not which *laws* must be obeyed but who has *made* them. In short, it is as if the question is not how well or how badly civil society is doing but who in the name of the state has the power to order and command as he pleases.⁴¹⁷

Here Grundtvig has a much clearer understanding of the State, which can more easily be distinguished from civil society. It is simply an arrangement between the Danish king and people and between human beings; however, if the State has no clear and concrete reference to the king or the common good, it would be a misfortune for civil society.⁴¹⁸ In other words, State, "a foreign word,"⁴¹⁹ can represent nobody, but serves as the agency to handle concrete relationships of human

⁴¹⁵ Grundtvig, *Haandbog I Verdens-Historien I* (1833), *US* VI, 28. "[M]en at enhver saa-kaldet Stat, hvor Haanden ei vil være Aandens Stat-Holder men Herre, saa Sværdet sidder ei meer i Rettens Haand men Retten i Spyd-Stagen, der er intet Borgerligt Selskab, men i det Høieste en ordenlig Røver-Bande leiret paa en Myre-Tue. Hvor derimod Staten virkelig er bygget paa Lov og Ret, der er et Borgerligt Selskab, som efterhaanden vil udklække al den Frihed og Lighed [Ligelighed], der lader sig forene med Retten og det Almindeliges Tarv, og der vil blive fredet om Skolen for at fremme almindelig Oplysning, der, som den ægte Stats sidste Øiemed, nødvendig ved hvert virkeligt Fremskridt vil befæste den. Da nu frihed er Kirkens Element, og Oplysningen Skolens, saa kan det aldrig feile at vi, ved at følge med den ægte Stat, jo bestandig vil have den sande Kirke og den rette Skole ved Siden og idelig spore deres velgiørende Virkninger."

⁴¹⁶ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," in *SL*, 105-06; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 60. "Hvor der altsaa *virkelig* endnu er et Borgerligt Selskab, hvor Magten baade besides med Retten og har Retten for Øie, der bliver Oplysningen nødvendig det største indvortes Stats-Anliggende, og deraf kan Man forstaae, hvi den alt længe har været det i Danmark, skjøndt Man tvistes om, enten der, efter *Papirerne*, er noget Borgerligt Selskab eller ikke, thi at der *virkelig* er et, det veed vi, og det gaaer med Stater som med Penge af Papir, at de kan være meget gode, naar Man er vis paa *Indløsningen*, men unden den ei det mindste værd, og let undværilige, naar Man har 'Valuta.'"

⁴¹⁷ Grundtvig, "The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836)," *SL* 131-32.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131; see also Bugge, *GSV* II, 12.

⁴¹⁹ Grundtvig, "The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836)," *SL* 131.

life⁴²⁰ with the proper use of power. Thus ‘State’ as such will not hinder the development of civil society in Denmark.

With this distinction between the State and civil society, Grundtvig now concentrates on the retrieval and revival of civil society in Denmark with the people’s high school as the agency to carry out *folkelig* education for the Danes. Civil society has been his key focus “as it has been, as it is now, and as it will be when it will exist, be formed and made possible.”⁴²¹ From now on, civil society is one of his most important themes both in his writings and in his speeches in parliament.

After having delineated the broad lines of Grundtvig’s concept of civil society, we need to explore what are the major characteristics of this society.

6.3.3.4. Civil Society as a Natural Human Ideal

Grundtvig believes that civil society before the human fall is a corollary of the original natural human life intended by God. Civil society (*det borgerlige Selskab*) is a natural ideal (*det naturlige Ideal*).⁴²² In the Danish hierarchical State, the ruler and the people could not easily reach a social consensus on an equal footing, but required too much from each other.⁴²³ Christianity, however, can become a “new life principle” (*et nyt Livsprincip*) for the ruler and people to change their old relationship, because it has brought human beings a “far higher human ideal” (*et langt højere Menneske-Ideal*) which is to be “realized under all celestial bodies (*under alle Himmelleger*),” i.e., civil society.⁴²⁴ In accordance with his guideline to develop the human first, Grundtvig devotes himself to the free development of *folkelighed* in the light of God’s original creation of natural human life. The realization of such a life naturally shapes a civil society. That is to say, the formation of civil society is actually based on his Christian view of human life on the earth. Yet true Christianity must first be liberated from the government’s control in order to let civil society grow in the light of “human nature” (*den Menneske-Natur*), so that both rulers and subjects do not make any “misuse of power and freedom” (*Misbrug af Magt og Frihed*).⁴²⁵ On the one hand, Christianity as a transcendent referent can freely challenge any secular social structure with this higher ideal it brings into the world; on the other hand, Christianity can freely enlighten human nature to strive for the realization of civil society in “mutual freedom and good order” (*gjensidig Frihed og den gode Orden*), the so-called “basic law of civil society” (*det borgerlige Selskabs Grundlov*).⁴²⁶ In this light, “the social relationship can truly be reborn and gain stability” (*de borgerlige Forhold i Sandhed skal gjenfødes og vinde Fasthed*).⁴²⁷ In short, the establishment of such a civil society relies on the enlightenment and development of human nature by Christianity, and hence it can be called the people’s natural ideal.

⁴²⁰ I shall come back with more detailed explanation in the later section on State.

⁴²¹ Grundtvig, “Om Borgerlig Dannelse (1834?),” Bugge, *GSV I*, 257. “Ikke engang det *Borgerlige Selskab* vil jeg her søge at beskrive, som det har været, er og maa herefter, naar det skal bestaae, dannes og vorde.”

⁴²² Grundtvig, *Mands-Minde*, 126.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 127.

6.3.3.5. Civil Society as a Historical Reality

Grundtvig also claims that civil society was a historical reality, existing as the basic condition of human life. It is the constant theme in his history of the fates and fortunes of the states.⁴²⁸ As he says:

Recalling that in the history of states it is the civil societies, in the history of the church it is the different faith communities, and in the history of education it is the great writings that are the major facts... I have overlooked in my *Handbook* all those who did not have great or recognizable influence on civil society...⁴²⁹

In his works on history, Grundtvig also includes examples of ancient civil societies, such as the Hebrew people, whom he sees to some extent as a model for human life and later civil societies:

Many will doubtless argue that I have given the Hebrew people too much attention, but I must not refute that, for one thing is certain: that through Christianity they have had enormous influence on the whole of human life, and thus also on civil society in the new world. Moreover their history takes us back to a time which we can only learn to know about through them.⁴³⁰

Grundtvig's words indirectly prove Adrian Hasting's view that the biblical Israel has become a key model for Europe to establish the nation-state after the Reformation.⁴³¹ Grundtvig also draws on the experience of civil society in Ancient Greece (*Græsk borgerligt Selskab*) as follows: "[S]o it is absolutely certain that over 900 years before Christ there was a Greek civil society with a freedom and a radiance that must have been the afterglow of such a glorious heroic time as the poets sing of."⁴³² As praised by poets such as Homer, Greece is another outstanding *borgerlige Selskab* with freedom and glory for its people.

Although Grundtvig calls Rome a "robber-state", it is nevertheless "one of the old-time *Borger-Samfund*" under the Roman tyrants.⁴³³ It resembles a civil society (*borgerligt Selskab*) defined as a

⁴²⁸ Grundtvig says, "Civil society moves itself on the borders of the visible and invisible, and of the hand's world and the spirit's world. Therefore it is the only subject for universal history." Grundtvig, *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* I (1833), US VI, 28. "[D]et Borgerlige Selskab bevæger sig paa Grændserne af den synlige og usynlige, Haandens og Aandens Verden, netop derfor er det den egenlige Gienstand for Universal-Historien."

⁴²⁹ Grundtvig, *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* I (1833), US VI, 12-3. "Erindre vi nu, at i Stats-Historien er de Borgerlige Selskaber, i Kirke-Historien de forskiellige Troes-Samfund og i Skole-Historien de berømte Skrifter de store Kiends-Giærninger..., jeg i Haand-Bogen har forbigaaet Alt hvad der ikke havde stor og kiendelig Indflydelse paa det Borgerlige Selskab."

⁴³⁰ Grundtvig, *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* I (1833), US VI, 13. "Mange vil sagtens finde, at jeg har skiænket Ebræerne formegen Opmærksomhed, men det maa jeg ikke andse, da det ei alene er vist, at De giennem Christendommen har havt uberegnelig Indflydelse paa hele Menneske-Livet, følgelig ogsaa paa det Borgerlige Selskab, i den ny Verden, men ogsaa, at Deres Historie sætter os tilbage i en Tid, vi kun derigiennem kan lære at kiende."

⁴³¹ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4. As Hasting notes, "The Bible provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation. Without it and its Christian interpretation and implementation, it is arguable that nations and nationalism, as we know them, could never have existed. Moreover, religion has produced the dominant character of some state-shaped nations and of some nationalisms. Biblical Christianity both undergirds the cultural and political world out of which the phenomena of nationhood and nationalism as a whole developed and in a number of important cases provided a crucial ingredient for the particular history of both nations and nationalisms."

⁴³² Grundtvig, *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* I (1833), US VI, 274. "[S]aa det er ganske sikkert, at der over 900 f.Ch. var et Græsk Borgerligt Selskab, med en Frihed og Glands, der maatte være Efterskinnet af en saadan straalende Helte Tid, som [den] Digtene besyngte."

⁴³³ Grundtvig, *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* II (1836), US VI, 554.

traditional invention, which continued to exist in the Roman State because of the national spirit and people's common effort to submit themselves.⁴³⁴

Grundtvig especially affirms the existence of civil society in Denmark. As early as 1832, he writes:

For the sake of justice and equity, or at least for the sake of their forefathers, within the bond that from time immemorial civil society, both king and people there [i.e. Denmark] embraced more handsomely than anywhere else, they will actively remember that traditional Christians also have a conscience.⁴³⁵

So this civil society existed even in heathen times, and at least in Denmark included both the king and the people. However, this ideal and idyllic relationship is now at risk due to the emergence of a privileged social class, the imposition of the "Roman-Latin" mentality on the Danish people, and the negative influence of the French revolution. Grundtvig therefore contends that civil society in Denmark also needs restoring. When he hears about the first provincial council held in 1835-36, he is greatly excited by the same Danish people's voice as in ancient times, so "decent, free, and natural."⁴³⁶ He notes:

The people and civil society [*det borgerlige selskab*] of Denmark had to recover their position before they could settle into their furrow again, and now they have done so, the rest will be a matter of course. So it is only a question of the new way of living the old-fashioned way again, which of course means using the new mouth given to the old people's voice from the king's hand.⁴³⁷

Grundtvig here identifies Danish civil society with the traditional natural way of national life, i.e., the proper relationship between the king and his subjects in terms of freedom and friendship. In order for a social reconstruction to take place in Denmark, Grundtvig still wishes to return to the former social pattern of the 'voice of the people' in a free, living, and equal interaction with the 'hand of the king'. The mutuality in this relationship requires that people be properly educated in order to voice their views.

Furthermore, Grundtvig argues that outside the North, civil societies are being threatened in the rest of Europe because they have not been constructed and maintained properly:

[W]ith the exception of the primeval kingdoms in the North, the situation is very difficult everywhere, because civil societies [*borgerlige Selskaber*] are either outdated works of art from the Middle Ages or new trial set pieces, constructed in schoolmasterly fashion. Even in 'new year's time' the need for a reformation was felt, although it was next to impossible to carry out without a better understanding of the history of the nations and the laws of human nature [*Menneske-Naturens Love*] than they had at the time.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 554-55.

⁴³⁵ See Grundtvig, *Om Daabs-Pagten i Anledning af S.T. Hr. Stiftprovst Clausens Barne-Daab og offentlige Erklæring* (Kjøbenhavn: den Wahlske Boghandels Forlag, 1832), US V, 372. ([F]or Rets og Billigheds Skyld, eller dog for Fædrelandets, for det Baands Skyld, eller dog der fra Hedenold vel yndigere end nogen anden steds omslyngede det borgerlige Selskab, baade Konge og Folk, at de vil levende mindes, at gammeldags Christne har ogsaa en Samvittighed).

⁴³⁶ Grundtvig, "The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836)," in *SL*, 139; *GSV* II, 24.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Grundtvig, "The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836)," in *SL*, 132; see *GSV* II, 13. "The laws of human nature" can be understood in the light of natural law, which usually pertains to "a set of moral norms, or evaluative principles, grounded in some way in nature or reason, and therefore accessible to all;" and at scholastic time, the "natural law thus understood lies at the intersection of two distinct yet complementary points of access to God's creative wisdom and Providential care: nature understood as comprising the fundamental principles of order and causality structuring created existence; and SCRIPTURE, which attests to the existence of a natural law and draws out its practical implications."

Here civil society is concerned with concrete national history and human nature taught in a sound pedagogical way. As always throughout history, civil society cannot be constructed all of sudden by a radical revolution, but should be nurtured through gradual *folkelig* education about the human nature from a historical perspective.

6.3.3.6. Civil Society as a Spiritual Organic Unity

As mentioned above, Grundtvig underscores civil society as the spirit form, or the plausibility structure to mediate *folkelighed*. He claims that “civil society [*det Borgerligt Selskab*] moves itself on the borders of the visible and invisible, and of the hand’s world and the spirit’s world.”⁴³⁹ The relationship between the State and civil society is measured in terms of power and justice, but also sheds light on the spiritual nature of civil society. Civil society is not a spiritless machine but a mediating space between the spiritual and the physical, and between the visible and the invisible. Allchin’s summary is inspiring here:

Grundtvig’s view both of society and education, is as he constantly says, both historic and poetic. It allows for the importance of objective factors, geographical, historical and economic, but it also allows for the importance of subjective factors, knowing that the understanding and appreciation of what history and geography mean cannot be achieved without awakening the imagination.⁴⁴⁰

It is the combination of the visible and invisible, as well as the historic and poetic that makes Grundtvig’s view of civil society a spiritual organic whole. Helge Grell claims that when all spiritual life meets and interacts “with the highest freedom,” civil society [*det borgerlige Samfund*] also assumes a concrete form to manifest the free play of these powers.⁴⁴¹ Civil society is the indispensable context where the national spirit functions. In other words, what is crucial for this civil society is “the assertion and development of the Mosaic-Christian view of human beings” in the light of which the national spirit manifests itself through the physical not only in the individual’s life, but also in the “civil society” where the spirit needs to be motivated to address different social problems for a reordering of social life.⁴⁴² Grundtvig describes how the national spirit creates a living people through words:

For the nation [*“Normænd”* in the original text] is---but a large civil society [*Borgerligt Selskab*] of living people who need free and living interaction with the best-experienced as guides in order first to discover, and then to become ever more aware of, what is truly the common good for Norwegians. This free and living interaction is also needed in order to practice the mother-tongue as the natural living expression of their thoughts and feelings, so that they may gradually become in practice as powerful in using it in every regards as they at present are in its everyday use in the narrowest circles.⁴⁴³

According to Grundtvig, it is people that constitute civil society. The national spirit expressed in the mother tongue leads to a dynamic national life through an active and free interaction.

See Jean Porter, “Natural Law,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 332.

⁴³⁹ Grundtvig, *Haandbog I Verdens-Historien I* (1833), *US* VI, 28. “Slutningen bliver da, at netop fordi det Borgerlige Selskab bevæger sig paa Grændserne af den synlige og usynlige, Haandens og Aandens Verden.

⁴⁴⁰ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 163.

⁴⁴¹ Grell, *Skaberånd og Folkeånd*, 159. “I samspillet mellem de tre store ånder består det græske folks og græsk folkeånds betydning i, at de formår at blive centrum for oldtidens liv, hvor alt åndeligt liv mødtes og ’vexelvirkede i højeste Frihed,’ og hvor et borgerligt samfund tager en form, som inspirerer til udfoldelse af kræfternes frie spil.”

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴⁴³ Grundtvig, “To the Norwegians Concerning a Norwegian High School (1837),” *SL*, 179-80; see *GSV* II, 70.

Furthermore, a society cannot manage without a unifying spirit. It is invisible, but exists in people's mind:

A human society, without having any visible unity, nonetheless makes known its reality in a million common consciousnesses and their corresponding industry over the centuries, which can be understood as a delusion. But a state or civil society [*det borgerlige Selskab*] is like this.⁴⁴⁴

The unifying spiritual element in a particular people is the national spirit, which shapes people's common consciousness. According to Grundtvig, it is indispensable for the social cohesion: "Like a heart in the plant or consciousness in human beings" (*som Hjertet i Planten, og som Bevidstheden i Mennesket*), the national spirit decides whether a society can "stand or fall" because people's disconnection with the common spirit will result in the abuse of power and the dissolution of the society, causing "either anarchy or tyranny" (*Anarchie og Tyrannie*).⁴⁴⁵

Civil society is a living spiritual fellowship, not like a machine or a body to be examined in a rational and mathematical way. According to Grundtvig, the false enlightenment of rationalism will lead to the fragmentation of society. As he claims:

If such a so-called 'enlightenment' is allowed to govern itself, it will destroy civil society [*det borgelige Selskab*] under the guise of wishing to explain it – like the anatomist who has to cut the body up first and part it limb from limb before he can explain the connection himself and others. When the state realizes this, and feels such a natural disgust with this argument as to protest against the operation with all its available powers – and for that reason wishes through civic education [*Borgerlig Dannelse*] to create for itself a bodyguard against even the most ingenious and famous 'surgeons' – it will of course send neither of these to the drillmasters. Nor will the state tolerate into this circle even a hint that it is decrepit and outdated and it would be best served if Our Lord were to redeem it!⁴⁴⁶

Grundtvig's understanding of civil society is thus not a mechanical construct to be ruled by physical power or analyzed piece by piece, but an organic whole with the indispensable spiritual link that integrates every single part. Once the spiritual dimension is ignored or forsaken, society will lose its organic connections, which will result in either anarchy or tyranny. It is the experimental field where the living interaction between the visible and the invisible, and between the spiritual and the physical takes place. To be concrete, in the Danish context, Grundtvig expects the interaction of the Christian and the *folkelig* to occur in civil society. It should take place freely not only in the Danish State or National Church, but also in public life.

6.3.3.7. Civil Society as an Expansion of Family Life

A society is composed of basic units among which family is one of the most important in Grundtvig's vision of civil society. Such a society must "be both an expansion of an original human family life and constantly supported thereby."⁴⁴⁷ In other words, civil society comes into being through the expansion of family life in the same spirit of authentic humanity. What makes Grundtvig think like this?

⁴⁴⁴ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," in *SL*, 104; Grundtvig, *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 58.

⁴⁴⁵ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes* (1830)? *US V*, 280-81.

⁴⁴⁶ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," in *SL*, 96-7; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 48.

⁴⁴⁷ Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark I (1851)," *HB II*, 256. "[A]t det borgerlige Selskab, naar det skal være menneskeligt, baade maa oprindeligt være en Udvidelse af et menneskeligt Husliv og maa bestandig bæres deraf, da selv de allermenneskeligste Love og Indretninger vil være døde og magtesløse, naar den Menneskelighed i Folkets Hjerte og Tankegang, som de forudsætte, er forsvundet."

As early as 1817 Grundtvig promotes the family as an important category for social order because of the natural bond of authentic human love between parents and children.⁴⁴⁸ But I would not agree with Ove Korsgaard when he says that Grundtvig led many people out of the household relationship to “join the ‘national body’”, for Grundtvig continuously regards civil society and nation as the expansion of family life despite the shift “from people as kin or household to people as a political and culturally sovereign body.”⁴⁴⁹ In 1851 Grundtvig writes that in each people or each individual, there lie “three aspects of the same life in the triangle of heart”: “family life, civil life, and religious life” (*det huslige, det borgerlige og det gudelige Liv*).⁴⁵⁰ There is a living coinherence (*levende Sammenhæng*) between the three which is indissoluble (*uopløselig*).⁴⁵¹ However, each individual and people always favors a particular aspect of life, “which tries to absorb the whole attention” (*der stræber at fængsle hele Opmærksomheden*).⁴⁵² The Danes, according to Grundtvig, incline to an emphasis on family life, which is regarded as the “matrix and crib of human life” (*Menneske-Livets Moderskiød og Vugge*) because family life manifests the best natural heart-love.⁴⁵³ Authentic human love from the heart is expressed above all in the family. For Grundtvig, human love of oneself is naturally extended into the family life by loving “parents, children and brothers and sisters.”⁴⁵⁴ He affirms people’s natural predilection to “father and mother, children and brothers and sisters” as “the best among the people” that “is fused with all real human love (*Menneske-Kierlighed*).”⁴⁵⁵ There is a spiritual bond of human love and kinship in family love.

Grundtvig promotes and expands this kinship-oriented love into the public sphere of civil society. What he equally concentrates on in civil society is the same bond of authentic human love. Without the same living spiritual link of love in civil society, the human laws and institutions to regulate civil life can only be “dead and powerless.”⁴⁵⁶ Without the organic link of human mutual love, society would be like a spiritless machine. Only by taking civil society as an enlarged family in which human relationships are maintained by the organic bond can human and *folkelig* life truly flourish.

However, the family life of love can also become self-enclosed as can the individual’s self-love. If everyone only cares about their own family, there would be no civil society either. In this aspect, Grundtvig takes his recourse to Christianity. He believes that family life is equally the foundation of Christian spirituality and he applies family life to interpret the relationship between God and human beings. God’s “fatherly or motherly” love for all the children on the earth, and the children’s response to God are the “necessary presupposition for true religiosity” (*sande Gudeligheds nødvendige Forudsætning*).⁴⁵⁷ He further points out that only those who love

fathers and mothers, wives and children and brothers and sisters as much as possible can have room in their hearts for Christ’s love, which is even greater, and can never be cherished or won where there is a

⁴⁴⁸ Grundtvig, “On Mankind in the World (1817),” *Danne-Virke*, bind II, 179, quoted in Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvig as Nation-Builder,” (paper presented at the conference of “Grundtvig’s view of individualisation and the formation of state and society,” at Center for European Studies, Harvard University, December 2012), 1.

⁴⁴⁹ Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvig as Nation-Builder,” 1.

⁴⁵⁰ Grundtvig, “Menneske-Livet i Danmark I (1851),” in *HB* II, 254.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 255-56.

⁴⁵⁴ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag II (1855),” *US* X, 46.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁵⁶ Grundtvig, “Menneske-Livet i Danmark I (1851),” in *HB* II, 256.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

lack of love, and which, in order to be cherished, continues and must be compared with in order to become appreciable or recognizable.⁴⁵⁸

Therefore, it is the human kinship with God that prompts human beings to cross the boundary of the self-love of family life in order to love other fellow countrymen in an enlarged family, that is, a civil society. As Grundtvig says:

From this we can and must learn that if the Christian idea of God's relationship to us as fatherly and motherly and our relationship to Him as childly, is simply true, then human family life is not simply the necessary precondition of true godliness, but is also suitable for the internal to be fused with the true godliness and where this happens, there would be the human family life in covenant with God's life, which undoubtedly gains power to overcome the dead godliness and to transform civil society in its own light.⁴⁵⁹

According to Grundtvig, on the one hand, Christianity always works through living humanity, and on the other, Christianity also adds a spiritual dimension to family life. Human family life is "internally fused with this true godliness" and the covenantal relationship between family life and God's life is the frame of reference for building civil society. At the same time, this family life with natural bonds of love from people's hearts can equally be extended into the entirety of humanity in a global civil society through the living interaction between altruistic expressions of civil or national life. This global family life corresponds to the kingdom of God on earth. Indeed Christianity has to interact with people's hearts in their family life so as to broaden the perspective of human life into "the national, the civil and universal human relationships" (*de folkelige, borgerlige og almindelig menneskelige Forhold*), because Christianity always works to "create the basic relationship between God and us and among human beings, certainly in light of the heavenly order and with eternal effect, but with the same kind of resorting to heart and love" (*fremstiller Grund-Forholdet baade mellem Gud og os og mellem os selv indbyrdes, vist nok i en himmelhøi orden og med en evig Virkning, men dog gansk af samme Hjertelige og kiærlige Art*).⁴⁶⁰ With the firm loving family life in their heart, people are prepared to enter civil life without fearing either to become foreign to others or to "forget the eternity for the moment," because "Christianity is not less powerful to create a heavenly civil life than a heavenly family on earth."⁴⁶¹ If God's kingdom is both in heaven and on earth, people can lead a "healthy, powerful and active civil life" by believing and longing for the "heavenly family life."⁴⁶² In order to achieve this, Christianity must be set free in the Danish context. Religious freedom must be a "Christian necessity" (*christelig Nødvendighed*).⁴⁶³ Only a free Christianity can challenge people's self-love, encourage people to extend their family life into

⁴⁵⁸ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag V (1855)," *US* X, 66. "[M]en kun der, hvor man elsker dem [Fader og Moder, Hustru og Børn og Søsken] saa høit som mueligt, at Hjertet kan faae Rum til den Christi Kiærlighed, som er endnu større, og kan aldrig skattes eller vindes, hvor den Kiærlighed fattes, som den, for at kunne skattes, forudsætter og maa sammenlignes med for at blive kiendelig."

⁴⁵⁹ Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark I (1851)," *HB* II, 257. "Heraf kan og skal vi da lære, at dersom den christelige Forestilling af Guds Forhold til os som et faderligt og moderligt og vort Forhold til Ham som et barnligt Forhold, kun er sand, da er det menneskelige Husliv ei blot den sande Gudeligheds nødvendige Forudsætning, men er tillige skikket til inderlig at sammensmelte med den sande Gudelighed og hvor det skedte, der vilde det menneskelige Husliv i Pagt med Gudslivet unægtelig vinde Kraft til baade at overvinde den døde Gudelighed og til at omdanne det borgerlige Selskab efter sig."

⁴⁶⁰ Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark II (1851)," *Danskeren*, Nr. 39 (September 1851), in *HB* II, 258.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

civil society, and set the vision of a global civil society in accordance with its catholicity as well as God's kingdom on the earth.

The consummation of people's life is also the fulfillment of the aim of Christianity. The interaction between Christianity and people's life points to God's spiritual kingdom on earth, but not *of* the earth.⁴⁶⁴ People's understanding of Christ's spiritual kingdom cannot be independent of a "living notion about civil society whose purpose is [the] expansion and assertion of 'righteousness, peace and joy' among all its members."⁴⁶⁵ This living notion of civil society corresponds to Christ's spiritual kingdom on earth, which has its national identity but goes beyond national boundaries. Accordingly, the national civil society must also be expanded into a global civil society to include all the "world citizens" (*Verdens-Borgere*) and to "eclipse all the earthly kingdoms by all the world's citizens' 'righteousness, peace and joy' in the Spirit" (*overstraalle alle Verdens Rigerne ved alle dets Borgeres 'Retfærdighed, Fred og Glæde' i Aanden.*)⁴⁶⁶

Thus it is clear how Grundtvig takes the family life as the matrix and foundation of Christian life and civil life, both of which shape civil society in the light of the natural bond of human love from people's hearts. This kinship-oriented human relationship can also be expanded to the global civil society.

6.3.3.8. The Common Good as the Foundation of Civil Society

Grundtvig understands civil society as a living organism which brings the spiritual and the physical into interaction. Its spiritual referent not only points to the limits of an absolutist State which will lead to the people's spiritual death when uniformity is imposed upon them, but also seeks a concrete life form in order to unite the people in an enlarged social family. Here Grundtvig's idea of the common good will be introduced.

First of all, living in a common enlarged family of civil society requires a basic social consensus on the common good. As Grundtvig says:

For however incomprehensible civil society [*det borgerlige Selskab*] actually seems to us, we soon realize that it rests on a certain fundamental agreement about the common good with regard both to its character and to the best means to achieve it.⁴⁶⁷

Therefore, the common good is the foundation of civil society. Where no common good is reached, there will be no civil society. It is also a concrete denominator for social cohesion, for it is the common good that links people together in a civil society. In 1838 Grundtvig further argues for the necessity of the common good for civil society:

To this belongs undoubtedly a living idea of a civil society [*det Borgerlige Selskab*] existing for the common good, a living feeling of the people's distinctive character, an inner affection for the king and fatherland, an ability in the mother tongue to express oneself in words with life and lightness, freedom

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 260.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid. As Grundtvig says, "Nu spørger jeg, hvordan Christendommen skal kunne gjøre sig forstaaelig om dette Christi aandelige Rige og om dets Borgeres Pligter og Rettigheder, med mindre vedkommende har en levende Forestilling om et borgerligt Selskab, hvis Øiemed er Udbredelsen og Hævdelsen af 'Retfærdighed, Fred og Glæde' hos alle dets Medlemmer."

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 104; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 58.

and propriety, and finally, a clear overview of what we have and what we lack based on reliable information about the state of the country.⁴⁶⁸

Here Grundtvig offers a thorough-going description of civil society in a state. The common good here is also an indispensable element of civil society. Moreover, only in a *folkelig* context can the common good be envisaged and realized. Such a context is characterized by Grundtvig as one in which people share in common the peculiarities of their culture and temperament, their natural patriotism, the mother tongue, and a knowledge of their country. These indeed become the basic subjects that the people's high school should encompass. The people's sense of the common good can only be nurtured this way, and achieving the common good is necessary for the sustenance and development of such a civil society.

Secondly, this common good also presupposes a common commitment and mutual responsibility. As Grundtvig says:

Only when the infatuation in some of us goes so far astray that we become dead set on destroying something that other people have a share in and benefit from – without giving a satisfactory guarantee, or even being able to, that we not only will but also can put something better in every sense in its place – only then do we bear a strict responsibility for our fellow human-beings.⁴⁶⁹

As mentioned previously, the authentic human bond of love from people's hearts is so important not only for family, but also for civil society. Such a natural spiritual bond of love is directly manifested by people's interdependence in civil society. The common good is not only a privilege for each to share in, but also a duty for each to contribute to. Any deviation from this common good and mutual responsibility leads to civil death. This ushers in my next point: Grundtvig's living civil society is contradictory to the idea of liberal individualism. For Grundtvig, the understanding of the individual's role is always community-conditioned, as in the old days of Denmark.

6.3.3.9. Civil Society versus Liberal Individualism

In the 1830s a number of leading Danes (especially the urban middle class who later formed the National Liberal Party) under the influence of the Enlightenment ethos and European revolutions sought to become "free rational beings". They regarded this as an absolute right residing in the *individuum*⁴⁷⁰ and encouraged individualism gradually to take the place of the traditional communal way of social life:

World history teaches us that all nations, when they reach a certain age, come to a similar insight, whereby the *individual*, young or old, distinguishes himself and all that he calls his own much more sharply than the ancient people did from everything else in heaven and earth, and he demands that which he calls his 'right' as a free rational being, whatever the cost...

This form of enlightenment always begins with the interests of the *individual* and places him in such a light that no laws are allowed except those that he *himself* approves, no sacrifices except those he *himself* offers, no authority except that which he *himself* chooses, and no virtues in others that give them the least advantage over *himself*. Such an enlightenment, we must admit, is far from being foreign to us, but it is actually far closer to being dominant throughout the whole of Christendom.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Grundtvig, "The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838)," *SL*, 217; Bugge, *GSV* II, 116-17.

⁴⁶⁹ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 104; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 58.

⁴⁷⁰ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 80; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 27.

⁴⁷¹ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 80-1; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 27.

Obviously Grundtvig is very critical of the people's so-called "historical maturity" at this stage, which highlights the individual while ignoring the collective social relations. Liberal individualism is a great enemy of his civil society:

Clearly this demand is a danger to all the social relations that count on respect for a *higher* right than the individual's, as well as for a multitude of sacrifices by individuals for the sake of the whole. This demand for individual rights is a serious danger to civil society [*det borgerlige Selskab*] in all ages and under all skies, so it is a shame to demand of any state that it should either extend or favour an enlightenment whose implementation inevitably ensures the *destruction* of that state.⁴⁷²

That is to say, radical liberal individualism can do no good to the communal cohesion, and hence will eventually destroy civil society. A false enlightenment that teaches and promotes individualism above other factors will result in the dissolution of the whole of society, with the State turning to tyranny or anarchy:

Over the centuries, we have seen it [false enlightenment leading to individualism] survive the dissolution of the state and all the tyrants triumphing over the ruins of the state. Yet we can at least serve our age with the insight that the individual and the whole human race benefit equally little from the disintegration of civil society [*det borgerlige Selskab*]. They suffer the torments of hell both under the storms of anarchy and under the becalmed state of the tyrant without having the faintest chance of thereby reaching the peaceful condition resembling the vision that infatuated the knights of enlightenment.⁴⁷³

Grundtvig insists on a genuine and comprehensive enlightenment, setting the human spirit free with the balance between feeling and imagination, and sense and reason to rescue civil society from "self-conceit, "self-will, and the whole greed for self-dependence," that encompasses the whole life, and showing "the deep coinherence (*den dybe Sammenhæng*) between the life of the individual, the nation, and the whole human race, and developing a way of thinking that is desirable for all social relations."⁴⁷⁴

In short, the National Liberals "considered the individual person's freedom as an absolute goal in itself," but Grundtvig contends that the same freedom should also be extended to one's neighbor at the same time.⁴⁷⁵ That is to say, Grundtvig's understanding of freedom is relational and reciprocal, which is a "freedom of concurrence" in personal conscience as well as in political, ecclesial, and pedagogical life.⁴⁷⁶ For Grundtvig there is a good balance to be sought between "socialization and individuation",⁴⁷⁷ where human beings try to develop themselves in civil society. Liberal individualism does not fit in with the traditional life style of the people and will destroy the integrity

⁴⁷² Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 81; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 27.

⁴⁷³ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," in *SL*, 81; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 28.

⁴⁷⁴ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," in *SL*, 83-4; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 31-2. "Men en saadan Oplysning, der ved at udstrække sig til hele *Menneske-Livet* og opvise den dybe Sammenhæng mellem enkelt-Mandens, Folkets og hele Slægtens Liv, udvikler en for alle de selskabelige Forhold ønskelig Tanke-Gang."

⁴⁷⁵ Henningsen, *Politik eller Kaos?* 239.

⁴⁷⁶ Kaj Baagø, "Grundtvig og den engelske liberalisme," s.8, quoted in Henningsen, *Politik eller Kaos?* 239.

⁴⁷⁷ The phrase "socialization and individuation" is borrowed from Zehua Liu and Quan Ge who point out that "[t]he former means that the development of the individual is impossible unless there is a process of social adaptation; the latter indicates that the individual is the entity in which the process of socialization is to be incarnated --- otherwise, there would be no meaning to 'socialization.'" See Zehua Liu and Quan Ge, "On the 'Human' in Confucianism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (Spring 1989): 319. I am indebted to Yeo Khiok-Khng for finding this article. See Yeo, *What Has Jerusalem to do with Beijing? Biblical Interpretation from a Chinese Perspective* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1998), 159.

of the people and the state. Thus, civil society is badly needed to mediate between the individual and the state.

6.3.3.10. Civil Society as a *Folkelig* Society in Denmark

According to the well-known Chinese political scholar Deng Zhenglai, it is Hegel (1770-1831) who first defines civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) in a modern sense different from political society, i.e. the state.⁴⁷⁸ Before Hegel, civil society and political society meant the same, as in Rousseau's works, which are in contrast to "state of nature."⁴⁷⁹ Furthermore, although Hegel believes that "civil society stands in between family and state," which should no longer be "arranged according to the political structure" of the state, but is based on the market and thereby engenders a covenantal relationship among people, he is also aware of the hidden risk of the disintegration of civil society due to the citizens' free competition in the market. He therefore proposes that the state should exist as the "highest public institution" to "represent the common good" and manage any social anomie.⁴⁸⁰ In this light, Hegel's pattern puts state in a higher position than civil society. In contrast, Deng points out that John Locke brings forward another pattern that civil society is prior to or outside state.⁴⁸¹ According to Deng's interpretation, Locke holds that in the primordial natural social life, the rational human beings have such "three inborn rights as life, freedom and property," which should be protected by individuals themselves according to the natural law.⁴⁸² Despite its potential chaos, the original society, according to Locke, is no worse than the absolutist monarchy, so that the establishment of a state is necessary as important means to see to the common good and to balance the relationship between different social groups.⁴⁸³ Deng claims that Locke's idea of civil society, one the one hand, is not essentially based on reflections on state or political power, but on the legal sanction of state's power which often menaces individuals' right, and on the other, uncovers his suspicion of "state and political power."⁴⁸⁴ Locke's pattern, according to Deng, produces not only an "apolitical" tendency with civil society as an autonomous sphere and hence risking anarchy, but also an anti-authoritarian tendency to protect individuals' rights as implemented in the French revolution.⁴⁸⁵ Finally, Deng summarizes Locke's pattern as follows: "civil society creates and regulates state which only plays an instrumental role to see to the common good and balance different relationships with its legally sanctioned power."⁴⁸⁶ In the light of these two state-civil society patterns, how do we understand Grundtvig's standpoint?

Before 1833, Grundtvig did not distinguish state and civil society, so that he can use both terms interchangeably. Yet his reflection on state's power to deal with the national spirit causes him to see the difference between state as a divine tyrant and civil society a free *folkelig* space. Grundtvig, however, did not concur with Hegel that state should be positioned above the society. As Uffe Østergård reminds us, it is Grundtvig's combination of British liberalism and freedom tradition with

⁴⁷⁸ Deng Zhenglai, *Guojia yu shehui: zhongguo shiminshenhui yanjiu* [State and society: Research on Chinese Civil Society] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2008), 31. According to Deng, Hegel learned the term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* from the German translation of Adam Ferguson's work *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* in 1768 (Ibid., 30n25).

⁴⁷⁹ Deng, *Guojia yu shehui*, 110-11.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 31-4.

⁴⁸¹ Deng, *Guojia yu shehui*, 35.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 35.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 37-38.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 39, 111-12.

Herder's concept of people that makes Grundtvig abandon the Hegelian pattern of civil society.⁴⁸⁷ Following English liberalism, Grundtvig joins Locke to emphasize that civil society is prior to the state, which starts with the Hebrew in his world history. Yet in this civil society, what Grundtvig has in mind is a living interaction between the absolutist king and people before his shift from a royalist to a liberal democrat in 1848. This civil society is identified with state as a well-governed civilized society in the light of the natural law as the manifestation of God's law.⁴⁸⁸ Meanwhile, from his Mosaic-Christian anthropology, Grundtvig, to some extent, also idealizes this primordial civil society as a higher human ideal, a spiritual organic unity, and a natural extension of family life. His civil society still has a mediating role between family and state, as claimed by Hegel. With his failure to restore the living interaction between the king's hand and people's voice by means of the people's high school, i.e., his "integrated theory of the socio-political ideal," Grundtvig cannot go on with the "top-down approach" to civil society.⁴⁸⁹ When Grundtvig realizes that people's time has finally come in 1848, he becomes a democrat, but his vision of civil society remains almost the same despite the substitution of state for the king's hand. This is because Grundtvig also goes beyond Locke to have a thorough investigation on the nature of state and political power. Consequently his vision of civil society also becomes clearer and clearer since the 1830s in terms of the relationship between State and Constitution, between State and freehold rights, between State and freedom of trade, between State and charity, between State and Church as well as between State and School.⁴⁹⁰ In order to warn his people against the new tyrant of State or a stage of anarchy based on liberal individualism, Grundtvig continues to promote *folkelighed* among the Danes. Civil society becomes the plausibility structure of this *folkelighed*. But what is unique in Grundtvig is that his civil society also goes beyond the modern notion circumscribed merely as the third sector outside State and market. As Eyðun Andreassen reminds us, the national spirit corresponds to a "*folkelig* public" (*offentlighed*) which combines the private domestic life with the public political economic life,⁴⁹¹ as separated by modern liberalism. This "*folkelig* public" presupposes people's full *folkelig* engagement through the free and living words in a more holistic civil society, which may as well be called a *folkelig* society (*folkelig samfund*). It is an ideal, human but spiritual fellowship (*fælleskab*) which Grundtvig's public theology continuously calls forth. It may be rendered as the human and civil form of Christianity in Denmark. So Grundtvig's civil society is indeed a *folkelig* society.

In brief, Grundtvig points out that the free development of *folkelighed* needs a civil society, which is a historical reality, an organic unity of people with a common national spirit, an enlarged family life based on the natural human bond of love from people's hearts, and a cohesive community to

⁴⁸⁷ Uffe Østergård, "Grundtvig som politisk tænker," *Folkevirke* nr. 1/13 (februar, marts, april 2013): 12.

⁴⁸⁸ Michael W. Foley and Virginia A. Hodgkinson, "Introduction," in *The Civil Society Reader* (Hanover/London: University Press of New England, 2003), xii.

⁴⁸⁹ Concerning the top-down approach, see Jensen, *Civil Society in Liberal Democracy*, 45.

⁴⁹⁰ I shall analyze these relationships in the following sections.

⁴⁹¹ Eyðun Andreassen, *Folkelig offentlighed - En undersøgelse af kulturelle former på Færøerne i 100 år* (København: Museum tusculanums Forlag, 1992), 142. According to Andreassen, the *folkelig* public refers first to "a local form for the public whose fora are organized for the democracy of local society and the local culture in contrast to state's governance and culture." (Ibid., 117). "The social power and social governance exist in the primary fora of the public, and the cultural public in the civil society (*borgerlige samfund*) is also generally expected to be worked out in it;" but the *folkelig* public "unfolds itself outside the primary fora," whose own fora are "associations and the non-organized local fora where people regularly take issues to debate and exchange experiences." (Ibid., 117). It is an "informal connections" (*uformel sammenhæng*) of people while political institutions are organized more in terms of its functions, and serve to strengthen "state's coherence" (*statslig sammenhæng*). (Ibid., 118). Compared with the political society, this *folkelig* public appears more organic rather than mechanic.

contribute to the common good while rejecting liberal individualism. Civil society has become Grundtvig's vision for social reconstruction in Denmark, so that State, Church, and School can be reformed through a new functional differentiation while keeping a living interactive relationship between one another. I shall now turn to the interaction of civil society with State, Church and School respectively.

6.3.4. Civil Society and the State

6.3.4.1. The Transformation of the State in the light of Civil Society

In this study (ch. 6.3.3.3.), I have discussed Grundtvig's gradual distinction of civil society from the State regarding both the State's use of power and Grundtvig's new understanding of 'state' as a foreign and abstract term. When Denmark gradually shifts from an absolutist monarchy to democracy in 1848-49, he has to re-define the role of the State in the light of his vision of civil society begun in the 1830s.

First of all, Grundtvig made a further three-fold critique of the Danish absolutist State in order to provide space for the free and natural development of *folkelighed* in civil society. His critiques target such aspects as State and class difference, State and bureaucracy, and the divinization of the State.

Grundtvig's first critique addresses social inequality in the State. As early as 1834 he points out that in civil society, the State should no longer uphold class differences, but keep a living *folkelighed* with the spirit of freedom, equality, and justice and a vision of the common good. As Grundtvig argues:

Wherever such a fundamental agreement [on the common good] cannot be detected, no civil society [*et Borgerligt Selskab*] has ever been formed. There is only a master-class and a slave-class in sharp contrast, which taken together may be called a state but which is not what we are speaking of, since in such a circle the rights of the strongest become indisputably the constitution of the country, from which all relations have flowed and derive their validity. Such a state can therefore seemingly be dissolved a thousand times without this making the least recognizable difference to life or the situation---such heathen states we would therefore exclude completely from our consideration, just as they exclude themselves from the history of the human spirit...power---tyranny---They therefore assume that a civil society [*et frit Borgerlige Selskab*] is only formed in proportion to the distribution of power, and that the goal is not achieved until power is equally shared between every individual.⁴⁹²

This paragraph clearly shows Grundtvig's rejection of the State when constituted as a master-class and a slave-class in terms of wealth and power. The masters' exploitation of the slaves in the State contradicts the national spirit. Civil society cannot coexist with such a State. Instead, slaves must be set free, and people in the State should be made equal, striving together for the basic social consensus of the common good.

Grundtvig's second critique of the State points to the corrupted bureaucracy, with special reference to the civil servants' privileges. In an absolutist State, power is monopolized by the privileged class. At the same time, the State tries to extend its control to all social spheres with civil servants as the State's agents. According to Grundtvig, anyone who rules people in the name of the State "is no other than a ghost of the Roman world empire," which is just like the pope and clergy ruling people

⁴⁹² Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 104-05; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 58-9.

spiritually in the name of the Church.⁴⁹³ As Grundtvig warns, the State should neither be equated with the “civil servants’ estate,” nor take care merely of the interests of a few privileged groups “at the expense of the people”, for this leads to corruption; the State should serve the people according to the common good.⁴⁹⁴ An absolutist State with a corrupt bureaucracy will leave no room for the free development of *folkelighed* in a civil society. So Grundtvig fights courageously against “absolutism and bureaucracy,” and strives for “the most *freedom, equality and independence* in the real life” for the people.⁴⁹⁵

Grundtvig’s last critique is concerned with the human deification of the State. Under the influence of the European revolutions, Grundtvig questions the foreign and abstract term “state”, for its meaning is actually quite uncertain:

Where people used to say: ‘the King’ or ‘the Authorities’ or ‘the Interests of the Kingdom’ or ‘the Common Good’, they now tend to say ‘the State’ is, or has, or demands this or that. But this is a mistake, and even if it is just a linguistic error, it is not a trivial matter. For not only does it mean that the words become obscured, it often spoils the meaning, and after a while it can easily confuse our whole way of civic thinking. When we mention the King, or the Public Authorities, we know who they are and what it is appropriate to say about them, and when we speak of the Interests of the Kingdom or the Common Good, we are thinking of something specific. But who can tell us what is in fact ‘the State’ and what it has ‘a Right’ to demand?⁴⁹⁶

If the State has no clear reference-points, it is a great misfortune that people should be subjected to its absolutist claims. Grundtvig questions the nature of the State that is “neither a government nor people, and neither a human arrangement for the common good, nor a divine arrangement for the development of the spirit and the victory of truth.”⁴⁹⁷ Without any concrete reference-point, it cannot demand that people sacrifice their lives for an imposed uniformity.⁴⁹⁸

Grundtvig adds that in Denmark people mistake the State as a “divine tyrant,” which is “to people a foreign inflexible, strict personality whom the whole people should sacrifice themselves for.”⁴⁹⁹ This kind of State, according to Grundtvig, has not existed in Denmark before because even the absolute power of the king is but the gift of the people.⁵⁰⁰ So he keeps urging people to explore “what the State really is” especially when it seems to have been deified and assumes the absolute power that the Danish king used to have.⁵⁰¹ Such a State with its false divine legitimacy can easily suppress and exploit the people.

On the contrary, as early as in 1834, Grundtvig claims that the State is only “a personification, not a ‘real person,’” so that even a State religion makes no sense at all; it can neither believe in a certain religion nor be believed in.⁵⁰² Consequently the State should not be worshiped as it is not personal.

⁴⁹³ Grundtvig, “Folket og Staten i Danmark,” *Danskeren*, Nr. 40 (October 1850), quoted in *HB II*, 242.

⁴⁹⁴ Grundtvig, “Almeen-Pensjoneringen og Daarekisten i Danmark,” *Danskeren* Nr. 22 (Juni 1850), *HB II*, 234.

⁴⁹⁵ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Rigsdags Historie,” *Danskeren* 1849:564, quoted in Kaj Baagø, “Grundtvig og den engelske liberalisme,” in *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Gustav Albeck (København: Nordisk Forlag, 1955), 8.

⁴⁹⁶ Grundtvig, “The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836),” *SL*, 131.

⁴⁹⁷ Grundtvig, “Om Religions-Forfølgelse, en Stemme fra Nik. Fred. Sev. Grimdtvig, Præst ved Vartou (1842),” *US VIII*, 466. “Stat” er “hverken ... Regiering eller Folk, hverken en menneskelig Indretning til fælles Bedste, eller en guddommelig Indretning til Aandens Udvikling og Sandheds Seirer.”

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 464-65.

⁴⁹⁹ Grundtvig, “Almeen-Pensjoneringen og Daarekisten i Danmark (1850),” *HB II*, 234-35.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁵⁰¹ Grundtvig, “Folket og Staten i Danmark (1850),” *HB II*, 240-41.

⁵⁰² Grundtvig, *Den Danske Stats-Kirke upartisk betragtet* (Kjøbenhavn: den Wahlske Boghandels Forlag, 1834), in *US VIII*, 91.

It also risks not being “of the people” (*ufolkelig*) and being turned into “an infallible divine concept” (*ufeilbart, guddommeligt Begreb*).⁵⁰³ The real legitimacy of the State is to serve the common good. Furthermore, the power of the State must be bound by law so that it does not threaten the people and hamper the free development of *folkelighed* in civil society. In short, Grundtvig’s purpose is simply to demythologize the State.⁵⁰⁴

Secondly, after setting the limits of the State, Grundtvig hesitates to adopt the modern liberal democratic view. Challenged by the Europe revolution in 1830, he realizes that the Danish socio-political structure has to be reshaped with the people gradually moving to the center-stage. At first he tries to find a golden middle way, between the conservative and the liberal: supporting neither the privileged classes nor the liberals blindly, he looks for a mediating position between “king’s power and people’s voice” in an attempt to find “a bridge instead of a mess” to balance the two sides for a gradual peaceful reform “according to people’s hearts,” so that civil society for the common good will be maintained with “firmness and calmness” and “without being confused and gradually disturbed” (*uden at forvirre og efterhaanden forstyrre det borgerlige Selskab*).⁵⁰⁵ Grundtvig identifies his own position as follows:

Such a bridge over what experience teaches can neither be waded across or jumped over; that is what I suggest and advise as the golden middle way. And I listen quite calmly to those who call me a conservative because I believe in a bridge, and others who call me a revolutionary because I really do want to cross that bridge to a brand-new kind of civil society (*det borgerlige Selskab*). In this society the unalienable human rights really are implemented, the people really are considered the owners of the country and the kingdom, and liberty, equality, and brotherhood are set as goals that according to the nature of time and the people, with rising enlightenment and increasing education, will have the least reason to let it wait!⁵⁰⁶

However, when the people do achieve democracy in 1849, Grundtvig has to be realistic about the new civil society being inseparable from basic human rights and he becomes more of a liberal-oriented reformer who now needs a careful and objective definition of the ‘state’ in the new dispensation. As early as 1842 he has pointed out that “the state is only a form within which human life with all its great forces should develop as completely and freely as possible into a beautiful harmony.”⁵⁰⁷ So the State should only provide a political framework for *folkelighed* to develop freely. This paves the way for an active citizen-life in civil society. As Ove Korsgaard argues,

⁵⁰³ Grundtvig, “Folket og Staten i Danmark (1850),” *HB* II, 242.

⁵⁰⁴ As also the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has pointed out, states can no longer have ultimate religious claims on their citizens. See Rowan Williams, “Religion, Culture, Diversity and Tolerance – Shaping the new Europe,” address at the European Policy Centre, Brussels, 7 November 2005. <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1179/religion-culture-diversity-and-tolerance-shaping-the-new-europe-address-at-the-european-policy-centr> (accessed July 16, 2013). I am indebted to Spencer to Williams’ article. See Spencer, “*Doing God*,” 39.

⁵⁰⁵ Grundtvig, *Mands-Minde*, 562. Grundtvig repeats his standpoint in 1848. See Grundtvig, “Den Danske, Den Tydske og Den Franske Sag V,” *Danskeren* Nr.11 (Mai 1848), quoted in *HB* II, 171-72.

⁵⁰⁶ See Grundtvig, “Den Danske, Den Tydske og Den Franske Sag V (1848),” *HB* II, 172. “En saadan Bro over hvad Erfaring lærer hverken lader sig giennemvade eller overspringe, det er hvad jeg foreslaaer og tilraader, som den gyldne Middelvei, og hører ganske rolig paa, at Somme kalder mig konservativ, fordi jeg holder paa Broen, og Andre kalder mig revolutionær, fordi jeg virkelig vil over Broen til en splinterny Tilstand af det Borgerlige Selskab, hvori de utabelige Menneske-Rettigheder virkelig gøres giældende, hvori Folket virkelig betragtes, som Landets og Rigets Besiddere, og hvori der virkelig stiles paa al den Frihed og Lighed og alt det Broderskab, der, efter Tidens og Folkets Beskaffenhed, under stigende Oplysning og voxende Dannelse, med mindste Rimelighed lader sig vente!”

⁵⁰⁷ Grundtvig, “Om Religions-Forfølgelse (1842),” *US* VIII, 465. “Staten kun er en Form, hvorunder Menneske-Livet med alle sine store kræfter skal, saa fuldstændig og saa frit som mueligt, udvikle sig til en skøn Harmoni.”

Where Hegel sees the state as the instance which must ultimately ensure morality, Grundtvig regards the state as a form under which human life in all its powers should grow as wholly and as freely as possible. To ensure a free engagement in this struggle, the state should be neither church nor school; what the state should take care of is the creation of a serviceable framework for a spiritual battle, not a power battle. Grundtvig maintains his liberal view of the state's function for the rest of his life.⁵⁰⁸

So the State is simply the scaffolding of civil society. Here Grundtvig is obviously inspired by British liberalism, which provides the broadest limits to the State while granting the most freedom to the people – so that the State “should in general have the least possible effect.”⁵⁰⁹ This brings us to the second function of the State.

According to Grundtvig, the State's task is to ensure good relations among its citizens and towards its neighbors.⁵¹⁰ Domestically, the State is a civil establishment serving the common good and keeping social order. The way that Grundtvig understands the foreign term “state” in the Danish context is no other than the “common good and general welfare” (*Fælles Bedste og almindelige Velgaaende*).⁵¹¹ Although he has been a royalist before 1848-49, afterwards, as Tine Damsholt points out, he does not change his advocacy of the freedom of the people and the common good for all, no matter whether the country is governed by an oligarchic king or a Constitution.⁵¹² The common good thus becomes the yardstick of legitimacy for the State as a civil arrangement. For Grundtvig this means that “political self-understanding finds its linguistic symbol in the word ‘*folkelighed*’” and that tradition can also transform the politics (*omsætte det politiske*) of the State.⁵¹³

Internationally, the “State” is also a demarcating denominator. Although Grundtvig would rather substitute the traditional term “kingdom” for the State, it nevertheless marks a kind of boundary so that people can tell the difference between countries and hence the Danish people's peculiar cultural and linguistic identity cannot be lost.⁵¹⁴

In short, Grundtvig believes that the State, as a political construct, exists for the sake of human beings, not the other way round.⁵¹⁵ It has no self-claimed power to demand people's obedience let alone sacrifice unless it is for the common good. On the other hand, can the limiting of the State's power actually lead to a kind of anarchy? Although Grundtvig is suspicious of the claim that State is also committed to “social order,”⁵¹⁶ is the power of the State not necessary to deal with the latent disorder and inimical evil in civil society?

In the general reference to Grundtvig's emphasis on freedom for both Thor the ruler and Loki the shape-shifter both are deemed necessary for the living interaction in the mythological world as well as in civil society, Ove Korsgaard insightfully points to the existence of Loki's son, Fenrir, a huge wolf with destructive powers who if thwarted demands the sacrifice of the righteous. Korsgaard's question is: In a specific context or civil society, who is Loki? Who is Thor? Who is Fenrir? And

⁵⁰⁸ Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvig's Philosophy of Enlightenment and Education,” in *SL*, 16.

⁵⁰⁹ Kaj Baagø, “Grundtvig og den engelske liberalisme,” *Grundtvig Studier* (1955): 8. The State “skulle i det hele taget gøre sig mindst mulig gældende.”

⁵¹⁰ Grell, *Skaberånd og folkeånd*, 175.

⁵¹¹ Grundtvig, “Folket og Staten i Danmark (1850),” *HB II*, 242-43.

⁵¹² Børge Bendtsen, English Summary of Tine Damsholt, “‘Jeg er en gammel Royalist, det ved De nok’: Elementer i Grundtvigs politiske tænkning,” *Grundtvig Studier* (1995): 318-19.

⁵¹³ Henningsen, *Politik eller Kaos?* 265.

⁵¹⁴ Grundtvig, “Forord om *Danskeren*,” *Danskern*, Nr. 1 (Marts 1848), in *HB II*, 157-58.

⁵¹⁵ Grundtvig, “Folket og Staten i Danmark (1850),” *HB II*, 242.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 241-42.

who is going to be sacrificed?⁵¹⁷ He notes the predicament between liberalism and patriotism, for liberalism is based on “ethical individualism” while patriotism requires “the individual’s sacrifice” for the collective community.⁵¹⁸ Korsgaard discusses the complexity of social issues in understanding democracy and freedom. In the social life, there is inevitably the “paradox of democracy” that the individual’s conscience may reject what the majority vote for, which in turn may lead to civil disobedience and a hidden danger to social cohesion.⁵¹⁹ Besides, as Isaiah Berlin argues, people’s longing for positive freedom, the complete autonomy of the individual, can pose threats to others when misused.⁵²⁰ If promoting human freedom always demands unmerited sacrifice as a side effect, this ethical *chorah* gives space to God for the ultimate justice. In this light, The absolute freedom Grundtvig advocates is practically unfeasible in a society with only proximate justice. Here let me repeat Stackhouse’s view: in order to avoid both tyranny as well as anarchy, it is still necessary to form a “political structure (polity) by the use of political means (power) in order to accomplish political ends (purpose) by coordinated political actions (policy)” so that society can be kept in order.⁵²¹ Grundtvig’s approach to the ethical dilemma is to allow for the free, dynamic, and living interaction of people’s different views in the light of the common good, the highest non-institutionalized basic law of civil society. The State’s power must be legally sanctioned and the people’s voice maximized in civil life. In the following I shall list Grundtvig’s four basic aspects of the role of the State in civil society.

6.3.4.2. The State and the Constitution

The main function of a constitution is to guard against the State’s power so as to secure people’s civil liberties. Grundtvig has the following four suggestions: Firstly, it has to include the Danish forefathers’ insistence on the common good, which belongs to the best of the Danish people’s legacy. Secondly, it has to emphasize such characteristics of the law as “honesty, *folkelighed*, usefulness, gentleness, equality and clarity” (*Ærlighed, Folkelighed, Gavnlighed, Læmpelighed, Ligelighed og Tydelighed*). Thirdly, the constitution has to ensure the freedom of belief, personal physical freedom, equal access to each position and occupation (*lige Adgang til enhver Stilling og Syssel*), and this freedom always comes with both “advantage and duty” for the common good without creating any unbounded privilege. As the constitution may not envisage all possible situations in continuously changing contexts and may not be able to cope with every concrete case, the final decision should be up to the people “who feed and clothe the authority,” not the other way round. Fourthly, in August 1848 Grundtvig still maintains that the Constitution should continue with the friendly covenant with equal freedom extended to both the king’s hand and the people’s voice.⁵²² All in all, the new Danish Constitution should, according to Grundtvig, draw on both head and heart in order to be truly Danish, truly *folkelig*, and truly for the common good with equal freedom for all to enjoy a secure and happy life.⁵²³

In practice, however, Grundtvig gives a vote of abstention to the new constitution. He will not reject it because he wants more civil freedom and equality for the people; yet he cannot support it because it does not take into account the Danes’ natural “naïve, peaceful, and easygoing” attitude, and hence

⁵¹⁷ See Ove Korsgaard, *N.F.S. Grundtvig* (København: Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, 2012), 65-6, 37-8.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵¹⁹ Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), 79-80, 87-8.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 80-82.

⁵²¹ Stackhouse, “Politics,” 258.

⁵²² The four proposals are cited from Grundtvig, “Om Constitution og Statsforfatning i Danmark,” *Danskeren* Nr. 24 (August 1848), *HB* II, 189-91.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 191.

will soon bring harm, instead of benefit to the people.⁵²⁴ According to H. Brun's memoir, Grundtvig wants a constitution "according to God's kingdom and His righteousness," one that is suitable for the Danish people "of heart" to develop a flourishing inner and outer life as exemplified by Christ.⁵²⁵ Again, a living national life cannot be confined to a rigid law within the State machinery in which people need to fight for their rights. On the other hand, Grundtvig believes that through their enlightenment the people can be thoroughly prepared for a happy life and a responsibility for the kingdom.⁵²⁶ The living national spirit, in living interaction with Christianity, will connect the people and the State in a stable civil society. These are his hopes, but Grundtvig remains cautious about the future, fearing that the voice of the majority will also become a tyranny to suppress other people's freedom which can lead to a "mob riot" (*Pøbeloprør*).⁵²⁷

Grundtvig realizes that both the constitution and parliament are merely means to "give a free-born people all the public openness, freedom, and equality which are the conditions for a fruitful and happy life course."⁵²⁸ He especially emphasizes the balance between the government and the people's voice. According to Grundtvig, the best way to create a good government is as follows: on the one hand, Parliament has the "right to bring about and question the king's public advisors; and on the other hand, all speakers' and writers' freedom [is allowed] to utter their voice both about the advisors' maxims that they have acknowledged, and about their procedure that is a fact."⁵²⁹ He continues by saying that the "future strength of the people and the development of people's life" (*en fremtidig folkelig Styrelse og Folkelivets Udvikling*) rely on "a responsible government and the right influence of the people's voice in the development of the whole" (*en ansvarlig Regjering og om Folkestemmens rette Betydning i det Heles Udvikling*).⁵³⁰ Later he says that "experience teaches that no government can succeed or thrive without having the people's voice for itself especially in our day."⁵³¹

We can see how much the people's free voice matters to Grundtvig in the governing of the country – amounting to a new covenantal relationship between government and people. Grundtvig also tries to limit the power of the police,⁵³² and to cancel enforced military service and a standing army⁵³³ so that they will not threaten the common people. At the same time he emphasizes the people's freedom of speech,⁵³⁴ the need for universal suffrage especially against the privileged upper house of parliament (in 1866),⁵³⁵ and the importance of the people's voice in the public debate on national affairs;⁵³⁶ all of these serve as the most important frames of reference for the State to take public

⁵²⁴ Grundtvig, "Danmarks Riges Grundlov," *Danskeren*, Nr. 21 (Juni 1849), *HB* II, 219.

⁵²⁵ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 215.

⁵²⁶ Grundtvig, "Danmarks Riges Grundlov (1849)," *HB* II, 220.

⁵²⁷ Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig*, 16, 26.

⁵²⁸ Grundtvig, "Folke-Vindingen i Danmark ved Omsvinget 1848 (1850)," *VU* V, 374. "Midler til at skaffe et fribaarent Folk al den Offenlighed, Frihed, og Ligelighed, som er Vilkaarene for et daadfuldt og lykkeligt Levnetsløb."

⁵²⁹ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 283. "Det eneste, som efter min Overbeviisning kan give en Borgen... er paa den ene Side Rigsdagens Ret til at fremkalde og udspørge Kongens offentlige Raadgivere og paa den anden Side alle Taleres og Skrivers Frihed til at ytre deres Stemme baade om Raadgivers Grundsætninger, som de have vedkjendt sig, og om deres Fremgangsmaade, som er Kjendsgjerninger."

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁵³¹ Grundtvig, "I Landstinget 1866," *HB* II, 313. "[O]g fordi Erfaringen lærer, at ingen Regjering kan især i vore Dage lykkes og trives uden at have Folkestemmen for sig."

⁵³² Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 287.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, *HB* II, 267-68, 270.

⁵³⁴ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 288-89.

⁵³⁵ Grundtvig, "I Landstinget 1866," *HB* II, 310-12; Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 282.

⁵³⁶ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 281.

measures. The people are the real owners of the fatherland and government is but the civil arrangement to serve the common good of people. Civil society with the people's free voice flourishes best in the State under such a constitution.

6.3.4.3. The State and Freehold Rights

The State must take a stance on the issue of freehold rights. Practically speaking, Grundtvig holds firm to such a right for the people. On the one hand, he sees in other countries that people can become more "self-interested and hardhearted" in the economic competition, which is quite devastating to people's relationships in civil society; on the other hand, with the growth of capital, there emerge a large number of "proletariats" who rely on their inheritance for life.⁵³⁷ Therefore, it is both beneficial for the rich to keep their property, and necessary to let poor people hold their own property for their basic life security. Even the land of the State should be divided so that a poor man can live on it with his family.⁵³⁸ Grundtvig strongly believes that it is the people, not the king or the landlords (*Herremænd*), who own the land. So it is unrighteous for the law to allow the king and the landlords to sell the land to people at their disposal. However, the farmers (*Gaardmænd*), the so-called "conservative element," must have their own land as the necessary "self-defense" (*Nødværge*) against the human "boundless greed" (*grændseløse Begjærlighed*).⁵³⁹ All in all, Grundtvig's public efforts aim at the common good of all by opposing the concentration of wealth in the hands of only a few.

At the same time, Grundtvig believes that in order for society to develop dynamically but smoothly, property rights must be guaranteed, which should take the middle class into serious account. As he says:

Property must be secured to a high degree if the majority who own something are to try to put people to work and into trade, for otherwise they either hoard their money or look to run away. However, capital must never be so free that the wealthy can destroy those we call the not-needy [middle class], who are neither poor nor rich but have a livelihood, and can and should be the majority in every country.⁵⁴⁰

The middle class is the major constituent of civil society. To ensure their existence as the balance between the rich and the poor is also conducive to social stability. Moreover, the middle class with their secure livelihood can also confidently voice their opinions on public issues in civil society. They should be the main representatives of *folkelighed*.

6.3.4.4. The State and Freedom of Trade

Furthermore, Grundtvig proposes that freedom of trade is essential to civil society:

Trade must also be conducted and kept free as far as possible, so that it is not bound by professional unions (*Laugstvang*), licensing problems, or customs prohibitions, nor burdened by trade-tax and poverty-tax, nor undermined by large-scale manufacture. On the other hand nothing should be done to secure any breaks for the traders, for that only gives rise to laziness and all manner of evils, offending property and

⁵³⁷ Grundtvig, "Danmarks Riges Grundlov (1849)," *HB* II, 221.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 222-23.

⁵⁴⁰ Grundtvig, "Den Danske, den Tydske og den Franske Sag VII," *Danskeren*, Nr. 15 (Juni 1848), *HB* II, 178. "Eiendommen maa nemlig være i høi Grad sikker, naar de Fleste, som har noget, dermed skal stræbe at sætte Folk i Virksomhed og Næringsvei, da de ellers enten lægger Pengene paa Kistebunden eller seer til at slippe bort, men Kapitalerne maae ingenlunde være saaledes frie, at de Rige dermed kan ødelægge hvad vi kalder de Utrængte, som hverken er fattige eller rige, men har ders Udkomme, og kan og bør i ethvert Land være de talrigeste."

stopping free trade, which like the free flow of blood in our body is the condition for the healthy state of civil society.⁵⁴¹

Through this law, Grundtvig tries to stir and mobilize the stagnant Danish society, in comparison with England where industrialization started much earlier than Denmark. Grundtvig himself has spent nearly a year of his life in England during his trips in 1829, 1830, and 1831, so he has personal experience of the British way. Already by 1838, he is arguing the necessary freedom of people's skillful hands so that hardworking people can support themselves and protect themselves from "external enemies and internal robbers."⁵⁴² He further claims that "property right is not simply the basic law, but also the foundation of civil society."⁵⁴³ Then in the Constitutional Assemblies prior to the introduction of democracy, Grundtvig emphasizes freedom of trade⁵⁴⁴ so that people's own property produced by their free and skillful hands can be exchanged freely in a market to support their living. This is the necessary economic mobility in civil society. In hindsight, Grundtvig is preparing people for the modern free market, which, together with the State, is in constant interaction with civil society. In other words, Grundtvig's understanding of civil society is gradually approaching the modern concept of civil society with inchoate functional differentiation of State and market. But his civil society is not confined to the sphere of the so-called "third sector," but points to a *folkelig* public including people's holistic life.

6.3.4.5. The State and Charity

Finally, Grundtvig does not support an almighty and all-embracing government to take care of each aspect of social life. He does not believe that such a State can manage to solve all the social problems like poverty relief. He believes that, according to all historical experience, if the State takes this over as a "civil duty" (*borgerlig Pligt*), it would lead to the general poverty of the country because people without property rights may become lazy while the hardworking people would become starved.⁵⁴⁵ The State cannot afford to feed all its people equally in civil society. In this respect, the State should especially give way to civil society.

Only the love-bond (*kiærligheds-Baandet*) between people, and between the people and the kingdom, can cope with the poverty issue.⁵⁴⁶ Learning from the English and Irish experiences where the government failed to feed all the poor (which led to sluggishness), Grundtvig suggests that public shelters should be established for the old, the sick, and the orphans as an effective public support.⁵⁴⁷ From this case we can infer that Grundtvig does not envisage an all-powerful State to deal effectively with all the social difficulties. This leaves room for the civil or voluntary sector of non-governmental organizations to actively exert their influence in civil society. This is also something that he learned from his trips to England. As he notes,

⁵⁴¹ Ibid. "Nærings-Veiene maae altsaa i høi Grad gøres og holdes frie, saa de hverken bindes ved Laugstvang, Bevillings-Klemme og Toldforbud, eller bebyrdes med Nærings-Skat og Fattig-Skat, eller undergraves af store Fabriker, men man maa slet ikke lægge an paa at sikkre de Næringsdrivende deres Ophold, da man derved kun føder Dovenskab og alt Ondt, forgriber sig paa Eiendommen og standser den fri Omsætning, der, ligesom Blodets fri Omløb i vort Legeme, er Vilkaaret for det Borgerlige Selskabs sunde Tilstand."

⁵⁴² Grundtvig, *Mands-Minde*, 561-62.

⁵⁴³ Grundtvig, "Den Danske, den Tydske og den Franske Sag VII (1848)," *HB* II, 177. "Eiendoms-Retten er ikke blot det Borgerlige Selskabs Grundlov, men ogsaa dets Grundvold."

⁵⁴⁴ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 290-91.

⁵⁴⁵ Grundtvig, "Om Constitution og Statsforfatning i Danmark (1848)," *HB* II, 191.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 292-93.

Every wise and philanthropic authority will...seriously strive, through the greatest possible freedom of trade and security of property, to encourage the general wealth and the desired balance, while as far as possible through the charitable organizations taking care of the children and the aged, the sick and the lame, who are found helpless in their closest circles.⁵⁴⁸

An active social and people's life cannot be replaced by a State with its comprehensive programs. It will leave no room for the subjective dynamic of citizens. A strong and all-powerful State can only spawn a small society with little voluntary participation of citizens at their own initiatives.

To sum up, taking civil society as the vision of social reconstruction requires not only a constitutional assurance but also the State's adjustment to the natural life of the people. Through his England trips Grundtvig gains a clearer understanding of the State as a civil establishment in covenantal relationship with the people's voice. He is inspired by the English liberal mentality as the Victorian (1837-1901) Englishmen understand the State that way. They encourage the citizens' responsibility for civil society between "rulers and ruled."⁵⁴⁹ The State should come into being out of civil society, though from our contemporary point of view, it is very hard for the State to be neutral.⁵⁵⁰ In order to counteract the negative influence of the State, the best way is to enlighten people about the *folkelig* life in the light of human nature. Without the necessary enlightenment, Grundtvig says:

The very fact that the youth at the common level [*til Jævnshold*] are limited, powerless and indifferent to the public and the universal welfare makes this moment more dangerous than it has been for a long time. For within them sleeps or slumbers the life-power and the generosity, which alone – in a loving relationship with the "other gender" such as mother, sister, and girl-friend, accompanied by the wisdom of experience, and relying on the divine Providence that aims for the best and controls all happiness – can transform the muddles and dilapidated state-machinery into a free and natural circle of friends [*Vennelag*] and a civil society [*Borger-Selskab*] with the wealth, character and direction of the people.⁵⁵¹

The right to private property, the establishment of free trade, the founding of charitable organizations, and the proper use of capital are the liberal social ideals that Grundtvig gleans from the prosperous and free England in the 1830s. At the same time, as is manifested by the later peasants' cooperative movement, the social reconstruction also starts from below with the enlightened people's freedom of speech and association.⁵⁵² As Ove Korsgaard puts it:

⁵⁴⁸ Grundtvig, "Den Danske, den Tydske og den Franske Sag VII (1848)," *HB* II, 178. "Enhver klog og menneskekierlig Øvrighed vil...alvorlig stræbe, ved den størst muelige Nærings-Frihed og Eiendoms-Sikkerhed, at fremme den jævne Velstand og ønskelige Ligevægt, mens den, saavidt mueligt, ved velgjørende Indretninger sørger for de Børn og Gamle, Syge og Vanføre, som findes hjælpeløse i deres nærmeste Kreds."

⁵⁴⁹ Spencer, "Doing God," 41.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 72. Spencer says, "The foundational liberal idea that the state can be neutral is increasingly doubted, as is the idea that human reason alone can locate common conceptions of the good or that there are 'basic ideas' about human freedom and equality which can be worked up into a universally accepted conception of political justice. Whether this is due to the argument that human rationality is not universal but always historically placed, or that human values are ultimately plural and incommensurable, or that our modern ideas of universal values are little more than a kind of post-colonial imperialism, his particular pillar of liberal humanism looks decidedly shaky." (Ibid.)

⁵⁵¹ Grundtvig, "Vor Tids Ungdom II," *Danskeren* Nr.26 (Juli 1850), *HB* II, 236. "At denne Ungdom til Jævnshold er indskrænket, magelig og ligegyldig ved det Offenlige og Almindelige, det alene gjør Øieblikket farligere end det har længe været, thi hos denne Ungdom sover eller slumrer den Livskraft og Ædelmodighed, der, i kiærlig Forbindelse med det 'andet Kiøn' som Moder, Syster, og Kiæreste, i Ledtog med Erfarings-Viisdommen, og i Tillid til det guddommelige Forsyn, som stiler paa, det Bedste og raader for Lykken, ene kan forvandle det sammenkludrede og brøstfældige Stats-Maskineri til et frit og naturligt Vennelag og Borger-Selskab med folkelig Fylde, Præg og Retning."

⁵⁵² See Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig*, 30.

In the power vacuum that appeared in the wake of the National Liberals' demise, and before the workers' movement had emerged, popular Grundtvigianism was the only movement with any general appeal. In contrast to the National Liberals, the Grundtvigians regarded civil society, not the state, as the complement of the people; "popular," in the Danish context, became almost synonymous with what is understood as external to the state in the liberal tradition. This move from state to civil society was more than just an ideological shift; it was a shift dictated by the fact that, up until 1901, landowners and the king had the power to block access to the government.⁵⁵³

Grundtvig deems the state an "organization of society which shall take care of people's interests," while emphasizing the community-conditioned freedom of the individual in the "political, economic and spiritual spheres."⁵⁵⁴ The major transition from state to civil society between 1848 and 1864 largely follows Grundtvig's intention to prepare the economic and physical capital (ownership of means of production) for the renewal of Danish civil society. As to the cultural, human and social capital⁵⁵⁵ of civil society, this will be the task of the people's high school. In brief, the reconstruction of Danish society in Grundtvig's vision results from the free flow and application of the Danish national spirit.

6.3.5. Civil Society and the Church

6.3.5.1. The Civil Aspect of Christianity

Grundtvig prophetically points out that the Church is not only concerned with the faith of the historical ecumenical Christianity, but also has an institutional effect on a society. "Religion has a civil aspect," says Grundtvig, "which history teaches us to learn and which, judging from effects, is so important that no wise or thoughtful politicians can lose sight of it."⁵⁵⁶ Religion can play the role of social integration. Grundtvig fully realizes that the Danish forefathers' faith is at once the source and the uniting bond of Denmark, just as in such ancient civilizations as Greece and Rome where "civil society shall be externally powerful and internally calm."⁵⁵⁷ But now the forefathers' faith in Denmark, that is, the Evangelical Lutheran faith is being challenged by both the sectarian godly assemblies and the theological rationalists, and by the social stratification with privileged priests in a "papist Church State and a Caesaropapist State Church,"⁵⁵⁸ which is pushing traditional Danish civil society to the edge of disintegration.

In order to revive civil society in Denmark, Grundtvig believes that the Danish Church should undergo a reformation of its position and power in the existing social, cultural, and political structure. Grundtvig says that the "Christian Church" should no longer "impose a Christian form

⁵⁵³ See Ove Korsgaard, "The Danish Way to Establish the Nation in the Hearts of the People," in *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism: The Danish Experience*, ed. John L. Campbell, John A. Hall and Ove K. Pedersen (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2008), 157.

⁵⁵⁴ Johannes Jørgensen, *Grundtvig: Hans Syn paa Individ og Samfund* (København: Udgivet af Økoteknisk Højskole, 1939), 4.

⁵⁵⁵ Nick Spencer, "Doing God," 51n20. "Social capital is commonly defined as 'networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups.' Closely linked with the idea of civil society, it is regarded as 'expression of the social cohesive power.' The American sociologist Robert Putnam is well-known for this concept. See Ove Korsgaard, *N.F.S. Grundtvig*, 74.

⁵⁵⁶ Grundtvig, *Den Dansk Kirke upartiske betragtet* (1834), *US VIII*, 62. "[M]en Religjonen har en Borgerlig Side, som Historien lærer os at kiende og som, efter Dens Vidnesbyrd, er saa vigtig, at ingen klog eller veltænkende Stats-Mand kan tabe den af Sigte."

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 62-3. "[N]aar det Borgerlige Selskab skal være udvortes kraftigt og indvortes roligt."

⁵⁵⁸ Grundtvig, "Præste-Frihed i Folke- Kirken (1859)," in *Den Kristelige Børnelærdom*, *US IX*, 491.

upon State and School,” and that Church must be distinguished from the School.⁵⁵⁹ As Allen comments, “[C]ivil society needs the Church to free it and the school to train it.”⁵⁶⁰ The question then is in what way the Danish State Church has hindered the development of civil society? How can the State Church free it?

By now Grundtvig is able to view the Church also from the social perspective, which enables him to have an impartial and realistic attitude toward the Church issue. Kaj Thaning argues that Grundtvig’s impartial perspective comes in “the State’s interests, not the Church’s,” for now Grundtvig is turning his focus to the present reality of human life.⁵⁶¹ I think Thaning’s explanation only offers a half truth because Grundtvig is in no way giving up the interests of the Church at all. In the following years, he continues to preach and to write about church issues, such as in “Church and School (1837)” and “The Christian Church and German Theology (1837).” I would rather say that Grundtvig’s impartiality comes from a balanced view between the secular and the sacred, and between the Church as a faith community and the Church as a civil institution which coinheres in a holistic understanding of concrete human life. By clarifying the civil aspect of the State Church, Grundtvig is actually fighting for more free space for his living congregations. In this sense, the question can be asked in another way from the Christian perspective: How has the State Church lost its spiritual vitality? How is historical ecumenical Christianity limited by the cultural socio-political system of his time? How can his ideal of a living congregation be re-socialized in freedom in the Danish context?

I think the following three aspects are of great importance as Grundtvig’s measure of Church reform.

6.3.5.2. The Rejection of both the State Church and the Church State

First of all, Grundtvig rejects both the Caesaropapist State Church and papist Church State (or ecclesiocracy⁵⁶²). With the Danish Reformation of 1536, King Christian III became head of the secular regiment and the *membrum praecipuum* of the State Church, empowered to support and govern the Church instead of the pope.⁵⁶³ Danish Lutheran Christianity, according to Steven Borish, was called “the king’s religion” (*kongens religion*) especially after the “establishment of the absolutist monarchy in 1660.”⁵⁶⁴ The confessionalization of Christian faith as Evangelical Lutheranism in Denmark became the civil bond for the Danish State, bringing the Danish State Church into being. In order to keep the social cohesion, the State imposed uniform Christian doctrines upon the Church by means of the Danish Law of 1683 and a uniform liturgy of 1685,⁵⁶⁵ which conveyed civil effects against those who disobeyed. The clergy were appointed and approved by the State, became civil servants of the State working as mediators between the State and the

⁵⁵⁹ Grundtvig, “Fortale,” *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien I* (1833), US VI, 12.

⁵⁶⁰ Allen, *Bishop Grundtvig*, 76.

⁵⁶¹ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 212.

⁵⁶² “Ecclesiocracy usually means rule by an institutional religious hierarchy, as in Iran today. While this may sometimes work out reasonably well, ecclesiocracy in general presents a question regarding the consent of the governed. Sometimes, ecclesiocracy is welcomed (as in the Vatican), but ecclesiocracy is usually resisted (even resented) by its subjects.” See “Theocracy vs. Ecclesiocracy: There is a Difference,” <http://americanvision.org/1946/theocracy-vs-ecclesiocracy-there-difference/> (accessed July 8, 2013).

⁵⁶³ Knud Ottosen, *A Short History of Churches of Scandinavia* (Aarhus: Department of Church History, 1986), 38.

⁵⁶⁴ Steven Borish, *Danish Social Movements in a Time of Global Destabilization: Essays on the Heritage of Rev. N. F. S. Grundtvig, the Efterskole, the Postmodern* (Vejle: Kroghs Forlag A/S, 1996), 95.

⁵⁶⁵ Ottosen, *A Short History*, 48.

common people.⁵⁶⁶ Faith was not a free issue. In this light, it could be understood why the godly assemblies in Grundtvig's time were punished according to the law of 1741. It also sheds light on Grundtvig's public dispute with H. N. Clausen over the publication of *The Church's Retort*, which is not only a faith issue, but also a civil issue, ending up with him being placed under censorship in the absolutist monarchy of Denmark. In 1834, Grundtvig points to the very problem that has led to the crisis of the Danish State Church:

So as soon as we awaken to the Nordic spirit [of honesty and fighting courage,] we shall see that the error in our state churches is in no way their limitations but their comprehensiveness, or rather their vain and equally tiresome longing to reconcile the irreconcilable and subjugate the free-born. True religious freedom – the freedom to have whatever religion one pleases as well as to have none at all – will be the blessed fruits of this insight. I have often discoursed on how the state churches can be retained to some advantages when, as is the case with the Danish government, one allows the clergy to preach as they like and the people to pick and choose their preferred pastor (a system which we lack at present). The main thing is that religion, which is every man's private matter in one way or another, becomes truly free, for without such freedom there will neither be any religion worth mentioning in our countries except for the one being persecuted, nor will any attempt at promoting the people's life, a civil community [*borgerlige Virksomhed* in original Danish text], or true academic learning succeed and thrive. Civil life [*Civil society (det borgerlige Selskab)* in original Danish text] will have all the strong natures against it, partly in the shape of local dictators and partly as individuals championing their own freedom of conscience.⁵⁶⁷

Here Grundtvig pinpoints the problem of the Danish State Church: its social comprehensiveness far beyond faith and spirituality set the State Church to exert an all-embracing influence on almost every aspect of social life. By coercion, Christianity is imposed to rule almost all spheres of human life. Grundtvig wants freedom for both the clergy and the laity. Religion should be one's free choice. Without such freedom, the Church can only remain politically and socially domesticated; nor will a true natural people's life be possible. To achieve real freedom for civil society, the people need to fight against both absolutism and individualism.

How does Grundtvig grapple with the State Church, then? Before 1834, Grundtvig always viewed the State Church in the light of the traditional Lutheran faith, so that the State Church should be a real faith community in which non-believers should either be converted or driven out. He himself even threatens to leave the State Church in 1831 when he is refused by the government to hold a service for the old-fashioned Christians.⁵⁶⁸ Grundtvig argues that the State, for the sake of national unity, should not impose uniformity upon the Church with natural theological and liturgical disagreements, and "the Christian Church must completely lose any semblance of being a State organization".⁵⁶⁹ But in 1834, he realizes that to abolish the State Church in the contemporary Danish context would neither please the people, nor bring any benefit to the State.⁵⁷⁰ This is because culturally speaking, people are used to the kind of social life shaped by Christian faith, such as baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals which have become cultural customs. What is more important is that the form of Christianity that the Danish forefathers held firm to has played the role of civil religion for the sake of state integration. Any schism or the abolition of the State Church would do no good to a state being threatened by powerful neighboring countries, by the revolutionary ethos in Europe, and by the domestic democratization movement of the National

⁵⁶⁶ Jespersen, *A History of Denmark*, 89-94.

⁵⁶⁷ Grundtvig, "On the Union of Learning in the North (1839)", in *SL*, 228; Bugge *GSV* II, 129.

⁵⁶⁸ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 211-13.

⁵⁶⁹ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes* (1830)? *US* V, 309. "[D]a den Christne Kirke aldeles maa tabe sit Udseende af en Stats-Indretning."

⁵⁷⁰ Grundtvig, *Den Dansk Kirke upartiske betragtet* (1834), *US* VIII, 61.

Liberals. The intra-ecclesial disputes on doctrine and liturgy between the rationalists and traditional Christians risk just such a schism. What then is the way forward? At this point Grundtvig sees a breakthrough in his understanding of the nature of the State Church:

The State Church is on the contrary, not a Church State, but simply a State establishment which the government has the right to dissolve or change according to its own decision, and no bishop, pastor or professor has any right to murmur as long as there is no infringement of the freedom of conscience which is both fundamental to all religion and every non-disqualified citizen's inalienable right.⁵⁷¹

If the State Church becomes no longer an ecclesial body, but a civil establishment, Grundtvig, on the one hand, will not impose his Christian conversion of it, and on the other, can continue with his ecclesial project to develop the living congregations within it because the State cannot interfere in doctrinal and liturgical disputes by enforcing uniformity. This measure of reform aims to sort out the historically entangled relationship between Church and State while maintaining the social function of the State Church, i.e., the civil bond of the State. Thus we can see that between the radical separation of Church from State or a re-conversion of the State Church proposed by the godly assemblies and the pietists, and the maintenance of the State Church by Bishop Mynster and later Bishop Martensen, Grundtvig chooses a middle way.

At the same time, Grundtvig also has to cope with the papist Church State. As mentioned above, the well-educated clergy appointed by the State serve not only the Church, but also the State. As civil servants, they enjoy privileged social positions as mediators between the State and the people, which has led to a kind of "pastoral aristocracy" (*pastorale aristokratisme*).⁵⁷² Grundtvig argues that the State clergy is merely "a creation of the Danish government," and hence the government "has the right to suspend or transform our State Church" through the clergy.⁵⁷³ With Christian sacraments conveying civil effects in the State Church, the clergy also possesses a great power to monopolize faith issues for the sake of state-imposed uniformity. This underlies a kind of hierarchical exegetical or "theological papacy" and thereby a papist "Church State,"⁵⁷⁴ which becomes a powerful challenge or even threat to the traditional Christians and the revival groups. Grundtvig opposes the kind of Church State with clergy as its soul, government as its "world arm" and "lawyers [*juristerne*] as its fingers," for this leads to a "Church State in a citizen-State [*Borger-Staten*]."⁵⁷⁵ As Grundtvig describes in the following:

The Christians' position in the State Church has thus become extremely embarrassing under the theologians' unchristian hand, mainly in north Germany and among us, where individual teachers have given themselves the liberty to preach, to educate the youth and even baptize and administer Communion according to their own heads. No one asks what is basically Christian here, or what is written in the Prayer Book and the Book of Symbolics.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 57. English translation is partly taken from Nielsen, *An American Study*, 141-42.

⁵⁷² Lehmann, *Grundtvig*, 233.

⁵⁷³ Grundtvig, "Tale til Folkeraadet om Dansk Kirkefrihed (1839)," in *HB* III, 277.

⁵⁷⁴ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation Virkelig Fortsættes* (1830)? *US* V, 311.

⁵⁷⁵ Grundtvig, *Den Danske Stats-Kirke Upartisk betragtet* (1834), *US* VIII, 57.

⁵⁷⁶ Grundtvig, "Efter-Skrift om Theologisk Maanedsskrift (1828)," quoted in *GDK* I, 116. "De Kristnes Stilling i Statskirken er derved, under Theologiens ukristelige Sving, blevet yderst pinlig, fornemmelig i Nordtyskland og hos os, hvor de enkelte Lærere har selv taget sig den Frihed at præke, at undervise Ungdommen og selv at døbe og uddele Nadveren efter deres eget Hovet, ved hvilken Lejlighed der sædvanlig spurgtes lige saa lidt om, hvad der var det Grundkristelige, som om hvad der stod i Alterbogen og i de symbolske Bøger!"

According to Grundtvig, the unclear Bible (*mørke Bibel*) like the paper pope, the clergy, and the theologians' exegetical and theological dominance, have put the Holy Spirit under thralldom.⁵⁷⁷ He heavily criticizes the papists and the Church hierarchies that hamper the living life of the Church:

But early on this fundamental Christian enlightenment was obscured particularly by the fact that contrary to the Lord's strict injunction those who should have been Christ's servants and ministers of the Church after the Apostles set themselves up as rulers of the Church and its faith, as if some of them were what the Spirit of the Lord alone is, namely, the all-powerful Governor in the kingdom of our ascended King on earth – or at least as if it was only bishops and priests and not the whole Church of believers and baptized that our Lord Jesus Christ can and wants to enlighten, strengthen, govern and sanctify with His Father's Spirit.⁵⁷⁸

Based on his matchless discovery of 1825, Grundtvig's new rule of faith is not the Bible, but the Lord's Word at baptism with the Apostles' Creed, the living witness of the Church. Thus the rationalist theologians cannot monopolize the faith issue via their scientific interpretation of the Bible. Consequently, the Church should not be based on the Bible, but on a living fellowship established through the baptismal covenant by the living Word and the Spirit.⁵⁷⁹ The living congregations with confessions of the Creed at baptism together with Holy Communion constitute the historical ecumenical Church. Grundtvig again seeks to emulate Luther by removing the privileges of the State clergy, the "official-brother" (*Embeds-Broder*).⁵⁸⁰ They should not be allowed to monopolize the interpretations of faith and the administration of sacraments at their disposal. It is the Holy Spirit through the living Word that creates and sustains the true Church, not the clergy.

In short, Grundtvig criticizes both the State Church and Church State in relation to civil society as follows:

When one asks about State church's use for civil society, it is no use searching for it in the purely edifying, for this can only be an appearance with a touch of hypocrisy when spread to the whole people -- "The State has never had any religion and will never get one, for the State is only a personification and not a 'real person,' which is what one must be in order to believe anything at all, let alone be believed by the people. State religion is therefore a made-up word, whose emptiness the State's clergy have only overlooked because they always confuse the State with themselves."⁵⁸¹

The first step that Grundtvig the Church reformer takes is to overthrow the old oppressive forms of both the State Church and the Church State. That is to say, he wants a complete distinction of Church from State. But how can he continue to find the socio-structural niche for his living Christianity and his living congregation? This brings us to the next important aspect of his church form.

⁵⁷⁷ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation Virkelig Fortsættes?* (1830)? US V, 312.

⁵⁷⁸ Grundtvig, "Concerning our Third Article of Faith (1855)," trans. Edward Broadbridge, *Anthology*, 141.

⁵⁷⁹ Grundtvig, "Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42)," US VIII, 387, 389.

⁵⁸⁰ Grundtvig, "Om Religions-Forfølgelse (1842)," US VIII, 473.

⁵⁸¹ See Begtrup, *GDK I*, 233. "Naar man spørger om Statskirkens Nytte for det borgerlige-Samfund, gaar det ikke an at søge denne i det rent opbyggelige, som kun kan blive et Skin med Smage af Hyklery, naar det skal udbredes over hele Folket. -- "Staten har aldrig haft nogen Religion og faar heller ingen, fordi Staten kun er en Personifikation og ingen "virkelig Person", som man dog allerførst maa være for at tro noget, end sige for at tros af Folket. Statsreligion er altsaa et Kunstord, hvis Tomhed Stats Gejstligheden kun har overset, fordi den i kirkelig Henseende altid konfunderer Staten med sig selv." In the paragraph Begtrup quotes Grundtvig from *Den Danske Statskirke* (1834), US VIII, 91.

6.3.5.3. Creating a Free and Spacious National Church

In order for living Christianity and congregations to be properly embedded in the social structure and continue to grow, Grundtvig envisages the kind of State Church or the later National Church free and spacious enough to include different Christian groups for a living interaction. If it is no longer to be viewed as an ecclesial body, the State Church should stop being the agency of the State to interfere in church disputes by imposing uniformity. In other words, “the Church should be emancipated” from the State.⁵⁸² At the same time, Grundtvig contends that the covenantal Church-State relationship should be understood in the light of the Augsburg Confession that the “worldly princes or authorities” should not coerce the free Church against its conscience in terms of the “gospel and sacrament” and judge the disobedient sinful, which only creates a hypocrisy of faith.⁵⁸³ Grundtvig, goes on to say that despite the fact that the merciful King of Denmark has already followed the Augsburg Confession when alleviating the coercion upon the Church, a real Lutheran State Church could be born if “priestly freedom and the loosening of the parish-tie” were also implemented.⁵⁸⁴ “The State Church is but a human or civil establishment for people’s enlightenment and edification, which can never succeed or thrive without freedom on both sides [the Christian and the civil].”⁵⁸⁵ This means that the State should confer religious freedom on all citizens, Lutherans and non-Lutherans, and Christians as well as non-Christians. Wherever spiritual and theological disputes happen within the Church, according to Grundtvig, the government should not intervene with civil power, but maintain sufficient freedom for the living interaction between traditional Christians and the rationalist priests in “a free State Church with a free congregation.”⁵⁸⁶ Thus the protest of such sectarian groups as the godly assemblies against the Danish State Church with the potential schismatic crisis, as understood in the light of Marx Weber’s church-sect dynamic which is further developed by Ernest Troeltsch,⁵⁸⁷ can be gradually mitigated and defused.

In 1837 Bishop Mynster tries to propose a new version of the prayer book and liturgy, while Grundtvig believes that only with full Church freedom can the Christians’ spirituality be revived, so that the State Church does not become a “national plague” (*en Landeplage*).⁵⁸⁸ If the State Church remains a civil arrangement and functions as “a worldly police-institution” (*en verdslig Politianstalt*)⁵⁸⁹, the new liturgical reform will be unable to solve the structural problems of the Church and hence cannot bring about a real Church reform.

As to the Church State, Grundtvig suggests that freedom be extended equally to both clergy and congregations. Clergy should enjoy their full priestly freedom in terms of teaching and liturgy, and congregations can also choose pastors that suit their Christian temperament or theological options. The priests should no longer be privileged civil servants, but remain equal to their fellow countrymen. In order to achieve this goal, Grundtvig, as early as 1832, calls for the abolition of the parish-tie.⁵⁹⁰ In 1834 he proposes that “the government either produces a revolution in the Church

⁵⁸² Grundtvig, *Den Danske Stats-Kirke Upartisk Detragt* (1834), *US* VIII, 57.

⁵⁸³ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US* VIII, 387-88.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 388-89.

⁵⁸⁵ Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 182.

⁵⁸⁶ Grundtvig, *Den Danske Stats-Kirke Upartisk betragt* (1834), *US* VIII, 76, 60.

⁵⁸⁷ Roberto Cipriani, *Sociology of Religion: An Historical Introduction*, trans. Gao Shining into Chinese (Beijing: Chinese People’s University Press, 2005), 92-4, 133-36. See also Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 71-3, 78-81.

⁵⁸⁸ Grundtvig, *Frisprog mod H.H.Hr.Biskop Mynsters Forslag til en ny Forordnet Alterbog* (Kjøbenhavn: Forlagt af den Wahlske Boghandel, 1839), *US* VIII, 225.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁵⁹⁰ Grundtvig, “Om Daabs-Pagten (1832),” *US* V, 372.

State, or easily maintains it, but loosens the parish-tie in time so that the followers of the traditional forefathers' faith in the midst of the confusion can find the freedom of conscience in the State Church, or be forced to search for it outside the State Church."⁵⁹¹ Thus parish pastors can no longer hold ecclesial and civil power over the people in the parish and congregations are no longer so dependent on, and legally bound to, the parish pastors. This harmonizes with Grundtvig's liberating matchless discovery that he can set clergy and laity on an equal footing, thereby greatly promoting democracy in the Church.⁵⁹² Thus, the old social structure with parish Church as its center, which corresponds to the peasants' confinement to their tenure manors in feudal times, is also dissolved. The Church is to be liberated from its civil responsibilities, and allowed to focus on its spiritual ministry. Yet in the civil aspect, Grundtvig and the traditional Christians will still pray for "happiness and good fortune" (*Lykke og Held*) from heaven to bless Denmark with a "fatherly governance, civil unity, spiritual freedom, and historical advance, that is, human enlightenment," which can be "a not unworthy sacrifice on the altar of the fatherland."⁵⁹³

In 1849 the new Danish Constitution endorses religious freedom for all and the Danish State Church is changed into the Danish National Church with Evangelical Lutheranism as its continuous confessional mark. Grundtvig, however, continues to advocate and fight for Church freedom both as a pastor and as a parliamentary member.

While the Danes are drawing up their new Constitution in 1848-49, Grundtvig puts forward his ideas on the Church-State relationship. First of all, he insists that religious freedom be implemented all over Denmark.⁵⁹⁴ Baptists and Jews should enjoy the same civil freedom as Lutheran Christians. Faith is invisible to the worldly authority which itself does not confess any belief, and hence it should not "touch or even rule faith matters,"⁵⁹⁵ but safeguard equal freedom for all religious believers. Despite his criticism of the godly assemblies, Grundtvig emphasizes that full civil freedom should be extended to them as well. For freedom of belief, after all, is a conscience issue. "Coercion in faith issues" can only "bring shame to the children of light."⁵⁹⁶ How then can people evaluate this civil freedom? Grundtvig argues that this depends on the continuous free flow of the people's spirit with God's Providence.⁵⁹⁷

Secondly, he does not want the nature of the new National Church to be determined by Parliament as "the Evangelical Lutheran Church."⁵⁹⁸ Grundtvig here repeats his position that the term "church" is a foreign and misleading word in contrast to the living congregation with the apostolic faith. The "Evangelical Lutheran Church" is simply "an empty title" except for the understanding of Christian faith in the light of Luther's teaching.⁵⁹⁹ He believes that "'National Church' should be understood

⁵⁹¹ Grundtvig, *Den danske Statskirke* (1834), *US* VIII, 95. "Øvrigheden enten frembringer en Revolution i Kirke-Staten eller snildt vedligeholder den, men løser Sognebaandet i Tide, for at Fæderne Troens Tilhængere midt i Forvirringen kan finde den Samvittighedsfrihed i Statskirken, de ellers nødes til at søge udenfor den."

⁵⁹² Lehmann, *Grundtvig*, 161.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 98. "[O]g skønt jeg ingenlunde, som de gamle Hedninger, anser Lykke og Held for egne Guddomme, tror jeg dog bestemt, med gammeldags kristne, at de kommer fra oven, og jeg nedbeder dem trøstig over disse Blade, som, helligede en faderlig Regering, Borger-Enighed, aandelige Frihed og historisk fremskridende, d.v.s. menneskelig Oplysning, er et vel saare ringe, men dog ej uværdigt Offer paa Fædernelandets Alter."

⁵⁹⁴ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsformsamling (1848-49)," *HB* III, 292-93.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁵⁹⁶ Grundtvig, "Om Religions-Frihed I (1827)," *US* V, 48.

⁵⁹⁷ Grundtvig, "Folke-Vindingen i Danmark ved Omsvinget 1848 (1850)," *VU* V, 377-78.

⁵⁹⁸ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsformsamling (1848-49)," *HB* III, 293.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 295, 306.

as what most people have selected freely as their worship of God.”⁶⁰⁰ However, this new National Church is not yet a “faith community” (*Trossamfund*), but remains “a fragment of the old papist Church State, and has only broken away in order to become a royal State Church” (*er kun revet løs til en kongelig Stats-Kirke*).⁶⁰¹ If people have no choice but are obliged to join the National Church, they will naturally “hate and despise all ecclesial institutions” and become “indifferent to all religions,” and the National Church will become “the womb [*Moderskiødet*] for all ecclesial disbelief.”⁶⁰² The solution for Grundtvig is to ensure “civil freedom” in the National Church for both believers and non-believers, so that such sacraments as “infant baptism, confirmation, wedding” will not be a “case of civil imposition” (*en Borgerlige Tvangs-Sag*), but be held only for believers according to the traditional Christian way.⁶⁰³ In other words, the National Church is not a “confessional Church,” but a free and large “civil space” holding together different groups with different understandings of faith.⁶⁰⁴

Thirdly, the government should not maintain such an institution for a particular religion at “the public expense”. This will upset the majority and result in “people’s objection to the government.”⁶⁰⁵ On the contrary, people should take care of their own spiritual needs in such a National Church and contribute to its sustenance.⁶⁰⁶ In other words, the National Church should no longer be supported and managed by the government. After all, “Church is for the sake of the people; the people are not for the sake of the Church.”⁶⁰⁷ This means that the Church has to move from being a “ruling State Church” to a “serving National Church” whose message shall “in general appeal and satisfy people’s hearts,” if the National Church is not to become “the emptiest of all titles.”⁶⁰⁸ Grundtvig’s critique on the National Church points to the root cause of the Danish Church’s spiritual predicament in his time.

What then would be the proper Church-State relationship in the new constitutional monarchy? Grundtvig sets up three options.⁶⁰⁹ The first is the North American model, i.e., separating Church from State by making civil institutions independent of Church, whereby religious belief is a matter of choice; the second is to “create a new ecclesial institution which gives a space so free for the individual’s faith to think as much about the divine, heaven and earth, time and eternity, the visible and the invisible as one can hope for, and thereby the whole people will feel satisfied;”⁶¹⁰ the last model is also a “middle way,” reestablishing a State Church with an imposed uniformity and growing sectarian disputes, which is subject to worldly authority and cannot have an effective “living interaction with the people’s school” as “the condition for the people’s enlightenment.” Grundtvig’s option is the second model. He wishes to change the old State Church into a civil space

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 293.

⁶⁰¹ Grundtvig, “Brudevielsen og Det Borgerlige Ægteskab i Danmark,” *Danskeren* Nr. 47 (November 1850), quoted in *HB* III, 311.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., , 312; Grundtvig, “Folket, Folke-Kirken og Folke-Tro i Danmark (1851),” *VU* V, 387.

⁶⁰⁴ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 45.

⁶⁰⁵ Grundtvig, “Den Grundlovgivende Rigsformsamling (1848-49),” in *HB* III, 293.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Grundtvig, “Folket, Folke-Kirken og Folke-Tro i Danmark (1851),” *VU* 379.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 389.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ This new church institution can bear witness to Christianity by simply being there. Grundtvig, “Folket, Folke-Kirken og Folke-Tro i Danmark (1851),” *VU* V, 389. “[E]ller man maa see til at hitte paa en ny kirkelig Indretning, der giver Enkeltmandens Tro og Tanker om det Guddommelige, og i det hele om Forholdet mellem Himmelfald og Jord, Tid og Evighed, det Synlige og det Usynlige, saa frit et Spillerum, at man kan haabe, omtrent hele Folket vil derved føle sig fyldestgjort.”

capacious enough to include both the Christian and the national life with complete freedom for both the clergy (teaching and liturgical freedom) and the laity.⁶¹¹ Without this indispensable freedom, Grundtvig and his followers will threaten to leave the National Church because the living Word and the Spirit cannot live and work in a National Church without freedom. In the free National Church, the clergy will also keep their double identity: they are still civil servants “from the worldly perspective” (*i verdslig Henseende*), but “they will now be restricted by the church-goers inside and outside the parish from the ecclesial perspective” (*i kirkelig Henseende var indskrænket til de indensogns og udensogns Kirkegængere*).⁶¹² Thus the clergy’s privilege is reduced to equality with the congregation while the clergy still contributes to civil unity by maintaining its civil status. Meanwhile the Church should withdraw from imposing its Christian form on civil life, but let that civil life be truly free so that Christianity in Denmark can be revived “with a new life in Spirit and truth.”⁶¹³ On the other hand, despite the fact that the faith of the National Church is no longer controlled by the State, the National Church as a civil institution still has its civil aspect or social ministry, i.e., “to keep nearly all the people with their good will” (*at beholde hardtad hele Folket med ders gode Villie*) in terms of morality.⁶¹⁴ As there is “the indissoluble coinherence between the Christian life and the people’s life” (*den uopløselige Sammenhæng mellem Kristen-Livet og Folke-Livet*),⁶¹⁵ so the National Church can be the place where the living interaction between the spiritual and the civil takes place, not only for the individual’s, but also for the nation’s well-being. Overemphasis on either side will destroy the dynamic balance between the Christian life and the national life.

Grundtvig thus claims that the freedom of the National Church must be assured so that it can really be the people’s Church.⁶¹⁶ The parish-tie must be loosened and congregational and priestly freedom allowed.⁶¹⁷ Both are of key importance for the establishment and sustenance of the living congregation whose head is the Holy Spirit. The living congregation is not a sect but a member of the historical ecumenical Church marked by the common faith at baptism which produces the “new spiritual life.”⁶¹⁸ Grundtvig says that “the holy Catholic Church” is “other than the Church State or State Church” because the former, as a living congregation, exists from the 1st century as manifested by the living witness of baptism, the Creed, and Holy Communion through the apostles and post-apostolic Church Fathers and until today.⁶¹⁹ N. H. Gregersen designates the living congregational worship as the collective dimension of Christianity related to its public identity.⁶²⁰

As to the question whether the free congregation can remain peacefully in the National Church, there is surely a tension between the Lord’s free congregation⁶²¹ and the National Church, as the latter, in Grundtvig’s eyes, should not be simply a change of name from the former imposing State Church, but should allow for unbridled freedom (*tøilesløvs frihed*) for both the priest and the

⁶¹¹ Grundtvig, “Folket, Folke-Kirken og Folke-Tro i Danmark (1851),” *VU V*, 392; see also Grundtvig, “Mit Forhold til Folke-Kirken,” *Dansk Kirketidende*, Nr. 10 (Marts 1856), *HB III*, 337-38.

⁶¹² Grundtvig, “Folket, Folke-Kirken og Folke-Tro i Danmark (1851),” *VU V*, 391.

⁶¹³ Grundtvig, “Folke-Thinget og Troes-Friheden i Danmark (1851),” *US IX*, 279.

⁶¹⁴ Grundtvig, “Præste-Frihed i den Danske Folkekirke,” *Dansk Kirketidende*, Nr. 14 (1854), *HB III*, 327.

⁶¹⁵ Grundtvig, “Præste-frihed i Folke-Kirken (1859),” in *Den Danske Børnlærdom*, *US IX*, 496.

⁶¹⁶ Grundtvig, “Folke-Thinget og Tro-Friheden i Danmark (1851),” *US IX*, 278-79.

⁶¹⁷ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemøderne 1863,” *US X*, 537-38.

⁶¹⁸ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US X*, 358-61.

⁶¹⁹ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US VIII*, 375.

⁶²⁰ Gregersen, “Når der bliver mere ud af mindre,” 25.

⁶²¹ Grundtvig also calls it “the Lord’s free church” (*Herrens Frie Kirke*). See Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1866,” *US X*, 547.

congregation so that the living congregation itself can develop freely.⁶²² The free Christian congregation will be in conflict with a non-free National Church transformed out of the old State Church if the National Church is neither ruled by the Spirit, nor “appeals most to people who use the mouth and the mother-tongue best in the light of the law of human nature.”⁶²³ Grundtvig claims full freedom for the living congregation which is “not bound to any State Church, but flourishes outside eternally, both in heaven and on earth” (*ei er bundet til nogen Statskirke, men blomstrer evig der udenfor, baade i Himlen og paa Jorden*).⁶²⁴ So Grundtvig threatens that one day he may very well leave the National Church “no matter how free and careful one makes it for the Lord’s congregation in the National Church.”⁶²⁵ But for the moment he does not want to lead the present-day living congregations into any difficulties:

But before I leave the stage, I must make it as clear as I can for my Danish fellow-Christians and co-workers, that north of the Eider and above all in Denmark, where we have managed to get the parish-tie dissolved, the trial is neither so testing, nor the good luck so unreasonable, that except in the last resort we should give the congregation an embarrassing (for Danish men and women) and unfruitful (at home) position outside the National Church.⁶²⁶

The little Danish free congregation, according to Grundtvig, has been chosen by the Lord to be the foster parents of His congregation and congregational life (*hans Menigheds og Menighedslivets Fosterfædre og Fostermodre*), through which God builds his house in the High North.⁶²⁷

Grundtvig employs three ancient church cities to prove why the Danish free congregation should be the sixth congregation according to John’s *Revelation 2-3* in the New Testament. Jerusalem represented the earthly home fused with the spiritual kingdom of God, but disappeared when it was captured and the Hebrew language silenced; Antioch tried to maintain the spiritual peace and unity through the two sacraments; and finally Nicaea symbolized the State Church with an imposed Creed according to the Bible.⁶²⁸ Grundtvig believes that it is high time that the High North shouldered the responsibility to manifest the living apostolic congregational life again, as the Nordic people have a special heart for the living Word.⁶²⁹ He also quotes Revelation 3:8-12 to describe the characteristics

⁶²² Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1866,” *US X*, 553.

⁶²³ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US X*, 362.

⁶²⁴ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1866,” *US X*, 547.

⁶²⁵ Ibid. “[T]hi jeg for min Person, maa jo tænke og sige, at hvor frit og hvor hyggeligt man end vilde gjøre det for Herrens Frimenighed i Folkekirken, saa nødes jeg dog til en af Dagene uigjenkaldelig at træde ud af den.”

⁶²⁶ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US X*, 362. “[M]en jeg maa, før jeg forlader Skuepladsen, gjøre det saa klart, som jeg kan, for mine danske Medkristne og Medarbejdere, at norden for Ejderen og fremfor alt i Danmark, hvor vi har faaet Sognebaandet løst, er hverken Prøven saa vovelig, eller Lykketræffet saa urimeligt, at vi derfor, uden i yderste Nødsfald, skulde give Menigheden en især for Dannemænd og Dannekvinder pinlig og i Hjemmet hartad ufrugtbar Stilling uden for Folke-Kirken.”

⁶²⁷ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1866,” *US X*, 548.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 549-50.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 551. As Grundtvig claims,

“The sixth congregation is called under the flag of the cross
to follow the track of the ‘Word’,
in its fight for life and peace,
[it] clarifies the Lord’s way on the earth.
From his crib-room to the North,
and the new Jerusalem”

(...Kaldet, under Korsets Fane,
Er den sjette Menighed

of the little Danish congregation as “Philadelphia” (brotherly and sisterly love), for it loves and abides by the Word of God which is first and last.⁶³⁰ Because of the special role that Grundtvig assigns to the High North, he is confident of God’s Providence on the free congregation and the Danish nation⁶³¹ despite the difficult national situation after the 1864 war against Prussia.

Grundtvig sometimes uses the State Church and the National Church interchangeably when the National Church existed solely as “a remnant of the coercive State Church” (*en Levning af den tvungne Statskirke*) with no freedom for either the congregation or the priest, which leads to “people’s unhappiness.”⁶³² In contrast, Grundtvig believes that the only way for the State Church to continue to exist meaningfully is to “understand itself as an institution for people, by which people (or the people) can feel their urge for the highest, their urge for the divine.”⁶³³ According to Grundtvig, if the State Church can have full freedom extended to its clergy and congregations, it “will be a little heaven on earth, which will certainly never be without thistles and thorns, but will become a mirror of the world of the spirit.”⁶³⁴

Grundtvig realizes that to abolish the State Church in the contemporary Danish context would neither please the people, nor bring benefits to the State.⁶³⁵ The traditional Christians try to safeguard the orthodox faith of their Danish forefathers. Grundtvig also knows that the faith of the forefathers is very important for the civil unity of Denmark, but it is of a “historical nature” (*af historisk natur*); this requires a “historical enlightenment” of the people to learn about its “historical effects” by “collecting all witnesses for its authenticity and heavenly ancestry.”⁶³⁶ Maintaining the traditional forefathers’ faith also undergirds the traditional civil society.⁶³⁷ Simply imposing the forefathers’ faith on people will go against their conscience.

With Grundtvig and others’ relentless efforts, the State Church, together with the country’s transformation into a constitutional monarchy, is also transformed into the newly-named “Danish National Church”. According to the constitution, religious freedom is granted to small free churches like the Baptists. In 1855 the parish-tie is dissolved, and in 1868 people are allowed to establish

Til at følger >>Ordets<< Bane
 I Sin Kamp for Liv og Fred,
 Klare Herrens Vej paa Jorden,
 Fra hans Krybberum til Norden
 Og det ny Jerusalem.)

See N. F.S. Grundtvig, *Kristenhedens Syvstjerne* (1860), udgivet med Oplysning ved Th. Balslev (København: Kirkeligt Samfunds Forlag, 1955), 194. The six congregations are the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the English and the High Nordic, though Grundtvig mainly refers to them as a “language society” (*Sprog-Samfund*) rather than a nation in the civic sense. (Ibid., 32).

⁶³⁰ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1871,” *US* X, 565.

⁶³¹ Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemødet 1866,” *US* X, 551-52.

⁶³² Ibid., 554.

⁶³³ Ibid. ([D]en [Statskirke] forstaaer sig selv som en Indretning for Folket, hvorved det kan føle sin Trang til det Høieste, sin Trang til det Guddommelige.)

⁶³⁴ Grundtvig, *Den Danske Statskirke* (1834), *US* VIII, 97. “[O]g for dygtige, virkesomme og folkelige Præster vil en saadan fri Statskirke aabenbart være et lille Himmerig paa Jorden, der vistnok aldrig bliver uden Tidsler og Torne, men bliver dog et Spejl af Aandens Verden.”

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 92. “Fæderne-Troen er nemlig, som man veed, af historisk Natur og maa af sine historiske virkninger hente alle Vidnesbyrd for sin Ægthed og himmelske Herkomst, saa historisk Oplysning er i Forstandstiden lige saa vel dens som det borgerlige Selskabs Alderdomsstøtte.”

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

their electoral congregations.⁶³⁸ Yet, Grundtvig's vision is still not fully realized. Although he is successful in preventing the establishment of a bishops' council and Church synod with a Church constitution, Grundtvig does not want to see the National Church remain confessional and continue to serve as the national bond; he still strives for priestly freedom and does not want the "legislative authority" to intervene in intra-ecclesial matters.⁶³⁹ The internal dispute between the new-modern and the traditional Christians cannot be solved...

...so long as the coercion law is still in practice, and the Christian and unchristian both have to have their children baptized and take Communion, and if Communion is still a civil necessity, and if the godly assemblies cannot meet without the relevant priest's permission.⁶⁴⁰

Grundtvig continues to fight for more freedom within the new National Church, which should not inherit more secular power from the State Church over the Danish people, but be transformed into a serving Church.⁶⁴¹ Grundtvig realizes that neither the Church State nor the State Church really benefits the free Christian people's life,⁶⁴² let alone people's life in civil society.

When Allen says that the Church must set civil society free,⁶⁴³ it also means that the Church should re-establish itself in the Danish context. There must be a social transformation in terms of the State Church relationship so that the Church can re-discover its proper identity through a functional differentiation. As Ove Korsgaard interprets it:

Christianity should no longer be the norm for the establishment of society. In order for Christianity, and by extension, religion to work fruitfully on social life, there must be a free relationship. If the relation is not free, society is crippled, as is religion.⁶⁴⁴

This means that Christianity in Denmark should no longer remain the religious scaffolding of the contemporary socio-political construct to legitimize the absolutist State. Being a citizen in a society does not require baptism and confirmation with the sacraments carrying civil effects.⁶⁴⁵ The Church as a faith community must withdraw from the feudal ecclesio-political conglomerate in order to find its own selfhood, and then voice its opinions in the public issues related to the social reconstruction. Freedom should be extended to Loki as well as to Thor, both inside and outside the National Church.

6.3.5.4. The Non-Intervention of the Church in School Education

Finally, Grundtvig does not want the Church to intervene in *folkelig* enlightenment at school. After rejecting both the State Church and the Church State, Grundtvig envisages a truly free National Church as a civil establishment, spacious enough to include different Christian groups, but also capable of maintaining the Danish forefathers' faith as the national bond. Thus the National Church

⁶³⁸ Martin Schwarz Lausten, *A Church History of Denmark* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 231-32.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 230.

⁶⁴⁰ Grundtvig, "Om Religions-Frihed I (1827)," *US V*, 64. "Saalænge nemlig Tvangslovene bliver i Kraft, saa længe Ukristne med Kristne skal lade deres Børn døbe og gaa til Alters, saa længe Altergangen ogsaa for de Voksne er en borgerlig Nødvendighed, og saa længe der ikke maa holdes gudelige Forsamlinger uden vedkommende Præsts Tilladelse."

⁶⁴¹ Grundtvig, "Folket, Folke-Kirken, og Folke-Troen i Danmark I," *Danskeren* Nr. 1 (Januar 1851), *VU V*, 380, 383.

⁶⁴² Grundtvig, "Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42)," *US VIII*, 444-46.

⁶⁴³ Allen, *Bishop Grundtvig*, 76.

⁶⁴⁴ Ove Korsgaard, *Grundtvig*, 33-4. "Kristendommen bør ikke (længere) være norm for indretningen af samfundet. For at kristendommen og i videre forstand religion kan virke frugtbar ind på samfunds-livet, må der være tale om et frit forhold. Hvis ikke forholdet er frit, forkrober såvel samfundet som religionen."

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

becomes a place to preserve the historical and cultural identity of Denmark, and to encourage a living interaction between the Christian and the human life. Furthermore, if religious freedom is affirmed, Christianity and the forefathers' faith can no longer be imposed on students at school. Grundtvig makes the following assertion in 1836:

Faith is not a matter of schooling at all – thank God! All that teaching of religion in school with which we have plagued ourselves and our children over the centuries was a great error, and we should be happy that the prevailing confusion has finally forced us to realize it.⁶⁴⁶

According to Grundtvig, there are the following four reasons why Christianity should not be taught in school. First of all, with the influence of the Enlightenment, most teachers at school do not have a living Christian faith, so that their teaching can only disorient the children in a rationalistic or moralistic way.⁶⁴⁷ Secondly, according to the historical experience of Germany and Denmark over three centuries, religious education in school produces rebellion, unbelief, or even atheism.⁶⁴⁸ Thirdly, faith starts with the heart, which cannot be taught in a dogmatic and mechanical way, for that hampers the development of human nature with a “stone-dead” Gospel message.⁶⁴⁹ Finally, in order to be fair to both believing and non-believing parents who send their children to public school with different intentions, religion should not be taught in school.⁶⁵⁰ Faith should not be imposed upon children. In the light of Grundtvig's Mosaic-Christian anthropology, the enlightenment of human nature for life at school is itself an important preparation for children to meet with Christianity later in their life.

Moreover, even if civil society were to assume a Church State form, coercive religious education cannot lead people to a true faith in God, but would hinder the normal development of true learning:

Furthermore, were we to regard learning from the level of civil society [*Borgerlige Stade* in original Danish text] which also demands its own rights, we should soon discover, as with the Hebrews, that where civil society took the form of a church-state with priestly legislation, and was only calculated to last for a limited period until the church's purpose had been achieved, learning had a hard time placing the relationships of a civil society [*borgerlige Forhold* in original Danish text] in their proper, natural light; it could hardly do *otherwise* than overlook or fail to appreciate them. So even if, as I believe, Hebrew learning showed us the only right way to understand and illuminate as far as possible man's relationship to the church and God, nevertheless, by employing this model in its entirety we should be distorting civil society's relationship to the church in a vain attempt to force it into a form that suited God's people only at a certain time and under absolutely unparalleled circumstances.⁶⁵¹

Grundtvig is thus critical of the education carried out by Church schools which care too much about their religious purpose, so that civil society cannot benefit from this distorted teaching about natural human life. As he claims:

And so long as we do not delude ourselves that the Church School can create a religious and Christian life where it does not exist, we must conclude that we have enough church schools just as we have enough churches, for wherever life does not exist, its enlightenment is completely superfluous.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁶ Grundtvig, “Is Faith Truly a School Matter? (1836),” *SL*, 122.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 124-25.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶⁵¹ Grundtvig, “On the Union of Learning in the North (1839),” *SL*, 237; *GSV II*, 142.

⁶⁵² Grundtvig, “The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838),” *SL*, 199; *GSV II*, 92.

In contrast, only “people’s enlightenment or natural education” is needed to prepare people for the realization of civil society in the light of human nature, which is the natural human ideal that Christianity as a “new life principle” has brought to the world. Grundtvig therefore draws the following conclusion:

In general, however, we must remember that, as everything keeps reminding us, the age of the church in its civil sense is as good as over. It is clearly the age of school we are living in, and it is therefore the school that any civil society must look to for its greatest support.⁶⁵³

This means that on the one hand the Church as a faith-community must give up its traditional civil responsibilities and focus on its own spiritual ministry of Christian enlightenment; and on the other hand the people’s enlightenment of natural human life, the Danish national life in this case, depends on the people’s high school. This functional differentiation will not only set Christianity free, but also make School really flourish in educating people for true natural life. Grundtvig acknowledges that in the context of the Church, he will focus more on the eternal than the temporal, but in the State and School, he will concentrate more on the temporal.⁶⁵⁴ The two aspects are distinguished, but not separated.

6.3.5.5. Summary

In rejecting both the State Church and the Church State, Grundtvig does not want Christianity to be exploited as the State ideology to integrate the whole country except in a historical cultural sense. In this respect, Christianity must give way to *folkelighed*. Meanwhile, Grundtvig realizes that the reform of the Church-State relationship is not simply an issue of Christian faith. The civil aspect of the Church should also be re-defined accordingly, so that the social structure can be reformed. As he claims in the *Church News*:

Far from wishing that such a *Church News* should only appear instead of a *Church Journal*, I hope that especially among pastors and theological candidates it will contribute to an awakening and a demand for such a paper. For in it they will find that the whole church issue in relation to both school and civil society will gradually find the free and basic discussion that it surely both deserves and needs. The Church State is fully dissolved, all the State Churches are tottering, all school boards in their support or their abolition [of the Church State or State Churches] have proved immature.⁶⁵⁵

Grundtvig hopes that theologians and pastors can take the social challenges of the State Church into serious consideration. He suggests that on the one hand the Church must be liberated from the State; on the other, the State Church should no longer impose its ecclesial forms on both State and School. The imposed civil responsibilities of the Church for both School and State should be suspended. In other words, both State and School should be freed from the imposed form of Christianity. Let the Church be the Church, while the Church as a faith-community should no longer remain a civil religion. It is the National Church that should maintain the historical, cultural, and uniting identity of Denmark. Although the Church would seem to retreat from civil society through this functional differentiation, Nick Spenser contends the opposite: “The secular was Christianity’s gift to the

⁶⁵³ Grundtvig, “The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836),” *SL*, 143.

⁶⁵⁴ Grundtvig, *Nordic Mythology* (1832), *SL*, 68.

⁶⁵⁵ Grundtvig, “Kirke-Sag og Kirke-Tidende,” *Dansk Kirketidende*, Nr. 1 (October 1845), *US IX*, 52. “Langfra at en saadan Kirke-Tidende skulde kunne træde istedetfor et Kirkeligt Tidsskrift, haaber jeg, den tvertimod vil bidrage til, isaer hos Præster og theologiske Candidater at vækker og nære Trangen til et Saadant, hvor hele Kirke-Sagen i Forhold saavel til Skolen som til det Borgerlige Selskab efterhaanden kunde finde den fri og grundige Drøftelse, den visselig baade fortjener og behøver. Kirke-Statens er i fuld Opløsning, alle Stats-Kirker rave, alle Skole-Raad til deres Understøttelse eller Afløsning har viist sig umodne.”

world, denoting a public space in which authorities should be respected but could legitimately be challenged and could never accord to themselves absolute or ultimate significance.”⁶⁵⁶ This liberates the West from absolutism, “either in the form of religious theocracy or state totalitarianism, in such a way as dehumanises its own people.”⁶⁵⁷ Thus the proper relationship between Church and civil society can be restored. Grundtvig’s critique of the State Church as a civil religion for a reconfiguration of a Church-State relationship shows that he is really a public theologian.

6.3.6. Civil Society and School

6.3.6.1. The Necessity of the People’s High School

Grundtvig’s idea of a people’s high school is not purely an educational matter, but is embedded in the “concrete political background” before the Danish transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in 1849.⁶⁵⁸ As to the development of civil society, the State’s power and role has been limited according to the law to provide enough space for civil society; the Church as a faith community should withdraw its traditional civil function, and hence free civil society by not imposing religious education at School. The “heart” issue for the formation of civil society can best be solved by the people’s high school preparing people to lead a living national life through enlightenment (*oplysning*). *Oplysning* can mean “information, illumination, education, or enlightenment.”⁶⁵⁹ Grundtvig’s *folkelige oplysning* can be generally understood as the enlightenment of the people. The major component of civil society is the people, who need basic equipment for a “simple, cheerful and active life” in Denmark with a basic understanding of human nature and the history of their fatherland. Grundtvig’s people’s high school aims not to train scholars, but educate citizens to form a civil society. His civil society presupposes the necessary *folkelig* education to revive the national spirit for life.

6.3.6.2. The School Situation in Grundtvig’s Time

In Grundtvig’s eyes, the Danish education system does not reach its proper goal concerning life. Actually in his day the State had already embarked on educational reforms. Both the University reform in 1787, and the Latin school reform in 1809 aimed to train social elites and civil servants with classical content while the parish school reform in 1814 focused on basic knowledge, but was spoiled by rote learning and imposed catechism teaching.⁶⁶⁰ In 1830, Grundtvig claims that School should have cherished the church community and civil society as the basic conditions of human life, but has failed to appreciate the necessity of a *society*, and in the meantime is driven by and indulges in self-love.⁶⁶¹

Grundtvig argues that there is a great wall of “Latinity” between the learned and the common people, and between the teachers and students which is hindering the formation of civil society; it is through what he learned from England where civil life was strong that Grundtvig realized that life should be the central focus of *folkelig* education and popular learning.⁶⁶² That is why he calls those schools that do not orient people to the living reality of life “black schools” or “schools for death.”

⁶⁵⁶ Spencer, “*Doing God*,” 38.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁵⁸ Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig*, 51.

⁶⁵⁹ *Dansk-Engelsk Ordbog* (1995), 585.

⁶⁶⁰ See Lindhart, *Grundtvig*, 103.

⁶⁶¹ Grundtvig, *Skal den Lutherske Reformation virkelig fortsættes?* (1830), *US V*, 281.

⁶⁶² Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL 93; Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 44.

Grundtvig declares that School has two basic, wrong principles. The first is to inculcate a general denationalizing humanity regardless of the particular characteristics of a certain people.⁶⁶³ This kind of education is “unfruitful for the civil human life” because it ignores people’s “natural aptitude” and undermines people’s national roots; they will wind up “mimicking a human life foreign to them.”⁶⁶⁴ Without first being themselves, people will get lost in the concept of an abstract universal general humanity. As Grundtvig says:

Therefore, just as we can never become true Christians or achieve a living likeness with the “Son of Man” who is also “Son of God” unless we already have a living feeling of what it means to be a “Child of Man” with a desire to be a “Child of God,” so can we never become a humane people however constantly we observe the most human of all people, unless we already have a living feeling of what it means to be a humane people. Even when we *have* this feeling of humanity both in the individual and in the collective, even then what is foreign appears cold and dead until a living link opens between that and ourselves, so that our own humanity either absorbs the foreign if it is stronger, or is absorbed by it, if it is weaker.⁶⁶⁵

Here Grundtvig posits the natural order to develop human life. That is, one has to be truly national before one understands the human; one has to be truly human before one understands the full human nature of Christ and then becomes united with Him. Grundtvig rejects the popular idea that only by becoming a German with a rational mindset can one achieve “true humanity” (*ægte Menneskelighed*).⁶⁶⁶ This kind of denationalizing education ignores the fact that the Danes are the people of the heart, and the imposition of a foreign mindset or an abstract universal humanity, and “a false uniformity” (*den falske Eenshed, Eensformighed*)⁶⁶⁷ hinders the natural development of the specifically Danish people’s life.

The second wrong principle of school which Grundtvig points out is to ignore the necessary growing process of humanity. Grundtvig sharply criticizes the kind of wrong education that tries in a rush to prepare children with all that is necessary both for “a virtuous and happy and even godly human life,” and for “a knowledgeable life” which enables them to “clarify all the secrets [of human life and the world].”⁶⁶⁸ It is like trying to help the shoots grow by pulling them upward. He is strongly against the kind of school that becomes a “backward world,” asking children to examine and reflect on things they have never seen, thought or done, which “hinders a blossoming youth and a fruitful adulthood,” and imposes a senior stage of life on the children.⁶⁶⁹ Because it is obviously against the “law of human nature” (*de menneskelige Naturlove*),⁶⁷⁰ it truncates children’s imagination and leads to their early spiritual death.

⁶⁶³ Grundtvig, “Vor Tids Ungdom II (1850),” in *HB* II, 238.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 237. “Ligesaalidt derfor, som vi nogensinde kunde blive sande Christne eller vinde levende Lighed med den ’Menneskens Søn’ som tillige er ’Guds Søn’, med mindre vi forud har en levende Følelse af hvad det er at være et ’Menneske Barn’ med lyst til at blive et ’Guds Barn,’ ligesaalidt kan vi blive et menneskeligt Folk, om vi end nok saa stadigt havde det menneskeligste af alle Folk for Øie, med mindre vi forud har en levende Følelse af, hvad det er at være et menneskeligt Folk. Selv naar vi har denne Forudfølelse af Menneskelighed baade i det enkelte og i det samlede, selv da er det fremmede os koldt og dødt, til der aabner sig en levende Forbindelse mellem det og vort eget, saa vor egen Menneskelighed enten, om den er større end den fremmede, optager den i sig, eller, om den er mindre, optages deri.”

⁶⁶⁶ Grundtvig, “Menneske-Livet i Danmark II (1851),” *HB* II, 253.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁸ Grundtvig, “Vor Tids Ungdom II (1850),” *HB* II, 238-39.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

Grundtvig believes that all the socio-political problems result from the failure of school education to enlighten students about life. He blames the “black school” as “the source and foundation for the whole confusion” of life.⁶⁷¹ The school has become so un-Danish (*ufolkelig*) with the dominance of such foreign languages as Latin, French and German, so that people’s language and thinking patterns have moved so far apart from the natural Danish life. Without the national spirit for communal cohesion, people relate neither to the State which is like a dead civil establishment dealing with tax and social orders, nor to the Church because of its lack of living Christian life.⁶⁷² This is why Grundtvig desperately wants to establish the people’s high school in Denmark:

Therefore it is my highest civil desire that there must soon, either today or tomorrow, be a Danish High School to be opened available for the youth of the whole country, where the aptest students have permission and opportunity to become better acquainted with human nature and human life in general and with themselves in particular, and where they can become properly knowledgeable about all the social relationships, properly familiar with the conditions of our forefathers in every way while people’s life and love of the land of our forefathers is nourished by natural talk and historical enlightenment, by youthful interaction, and by sweet songs in choir.⁶⁷³

Grundtvig intends to educate people as enlightened citizens for a new life as a fundamental premise for the social transformation of Denmark. Looking back from the present, Grundtvig’s vision of such a people’s high school has had lasting efficacy in solving various social problems and strengthening social cohesion.

6.3.6.3. People’s High School and Civil Society

As we have seen, Grundtvig mentions the people’s high school for the first time in 1831. Building on what Grundtvig learned from England, and particularly on his stay in Cambridge in 1831, this people’s high school aims to promote “national knowledge and civic education” (*folkelig Videnskabelighed og borgerlig Uddannelse*).⁶⁷⁴ Pragmatically speaking, the people’s high schools also aim to meet the requirements of the Provincial Advisory Council of 1835-36 to equip the peasant representatives with the ability to express themselves clearly in the meeting. Grundtvig is not seeking revolutionary change in Denmark. With the negative influence of the French Revolution in mind, he is worried about the outcome of the people asking for a constitution that will deprive the king of his power without really knowing what will replace the former friendly covenantal relationship between the monarch and the people.⁶⁷⁵ In order to avoid both extreme individualism and “revolutionary populism,”⁶⁷⁶ together with the monopoly of political and social elites, Grundtvig therefore believes that people need to be enlightened by a *folkelig* education. Only the people’s high school that he envisages can bring about the mutual understanding between the king

⁶⁷¹ Grundtvig, “Menneske-Livet i Danmark III (1851),” *HB* II, 263.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 264.

⁶⁷³ Grundtvig, *Skjalde-Blik Paa Danmarks Stjerne i Sølvbryllups- og Kroningsaaet 1840* (Kjøbenhavn: Wahlske Boghandels Forlag, 1840), in *HB* I, 120. “Derfor er det ogsaa mit høieste borgerlige Ønske, at der snart, heller i Dag end i Morgen, maa aabnes en Dansk Høiskole, tilgiængelig for hele Landets Ungdom, hvor de letnemme fik baade Lov og Leilighed til at blive bedre bekendt saavel med Menneske-Naturen og Menneske-Livet i Almindelighed, som med dem selv i Særdeleshed, og hvor de kunde blive ret vendt i alle borgerlige Forhold, ret kiendt med Fædrenelandets Tarv i alle Retninger, medens Folkelivet og Fædrenelands-Kiærligheden næredes ved naturlig Tale og historisk Oplysning, ved ungdommelig Vexelvirkning, og ved det liflige Sang-Chor.”

⁶⁷⁴ Grundtvig, *Politiske Betragtninger med blik paa Danmark og Holsteen*, Kjøbenhavn: Wahlske Boghandels Forlag, 1831, quoted in *HB* I, 1-2.

⁶⁷⁵ Grundtvig, “A Congratulation to Denmark on the Danish Dimwit and the Danish High School (1847),” *SL*, 336-38.

⁶⁷⁶ The phrase is borrowed from Stephen Backhouse in his “State and Nation in the Theology of Hans Lassen Martensen,” in Jon Stewart ed., *Hans Lassen Martensen*, 311.

and the people for the common good of Denmark by setting the people's voice free.⁶⁷⁷ He argues that the State should not impose anything other than what can be conducive for the free development of Danish human nature.⁶⁷⁸ For Grundtvig, the people's high school is the "only means to expand the [national] spirit and regenerate life [in the North]."⁶⁷⁹

Grundtvig believes that at the proposed people's high school, "natural life is strengthened, ennobled and enlightened," and "then the freedom of the Church and that of scholarship that must derive from it will bear the most blessed fruits for the pursuit of religion and learning."⁶⁸⁰ This important development of natural human life presupposes a suspension of the orthodox Lutheran teaching about human depravity. The Lutheran orthodoxy in Grundtvig's time emphasized the separation of soul from body, and hence indirectly legitimized the school for death to thwart the natural development of human life.⁶⁸¹ As mentioned earlier, Grundtvig solves this problem by his Mosaic-Christian anthropology in 1832.

In Grundtvig's time, "the inevitable clash of old and new" in the socio-political system is pressing hard, and he strives to find a solution to social disorder:

The danger with all precipitate and comprehensive changes is not just the first unavoidable clash between old and new, but much more the risk that one does not discover in time what the new order of things requires and carry it into effect immediately – or rather, what can save the new situation from the disorder that inevitably arises in all the older relations and arrangements... For although the free voice of the people has no temporal power at all, it has much more than that. It is a power of the spirit and the heart, which can in no way be satisfied by a change of names and external signs but demands a thoroughly new, popular order of things... The first giant stride towards this will be taken as soon as the true Danish High School is built, and the second giant stride will be taken most easily if, together with the school, we create a nursery for all the actual administrative civil servants in the kingdom.⁶⁸²

Here Grundtvig proposes the *folkelig* way to underscore the power of the people's heart and spirit. Civil society must first be built up from within, and this is among other things the task of the people's high school. This is the crucial concern in Grundtvig's educational writings.

6.3.6.3.1. *Folkelig* Education in the People's High School

First of all, civil society relies on its schools for the proper *folkelig* education of the people with a civil conversion and a civil confirmation (see below). In 1840 Grundtvig wishes the government to support such a project, believing that if it cannot establish a school "in the spirit of the state and of the people" to inform the Danes of the "true nature of civil society" [*virkelige Beskaffenhed af det Borgerlige Selskab*], much "unrest and unreasonable demands" would follow.⁶⁸³ To Grundtvig's great dismay, his proposed transformation of Sorø Academy into a people's high school has to be aborted. Most people's high schools founded in Denmark, and later on in other parts of the world, have remained self-administrative and independent of government. This has reduced the tenacious link between the State and the people and has allowed the people's high school more room for flexible development. As Ove Korsgaard observes the situation after 1864:

⁶⁷⁷ Grundtvig, "A Congratulation to Denmark (1847)," *SL*, 338.

⁶⁷⁸ Grundtvig, "Den Grundlovgivende Rigsforsamling (1848-49)," *HB* II, 289-90.

⁶⁷⁹ See Grundtvig, "Den Danske Guld-Alder (1844)," in *Brage-Snak*, *US* VIII, 745.

⁶⁸⁰ Grundtvig, "To the Norwegians (1837)," in *SL*, 184.

⁶⁸¹ Grundtvig, "The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838)," in *SL*, 195-96.

⁶⁸² Grundtvig, "A Congratulation to Denmark (1847)," *SL*, 342.

⁶⁸³ Grundtvig, "Appeal for, and Concept of, a Danish High School in Sorø (1840)," *SL*, 274; *GSV* II, 180.

According to Grundtvigianism, the public school could not, due to its ties to the state, be regarded as truly ‘popular’ [*folkelig*]. Only the ‘free’ school could be popular. By virtue of its liberal vein, the notion of the ‘popular’ had become almost synonymous with what was outside the state. And in this manner, the notion of ‘popular’ in Denmark came to be equivalent to the liberal notion of voluntariness. Freedom and the volunteer-spirit are, in both traditions, two sides of the same coin. Freedom cannot ultimately be guaranteed by the state; only the people can secure freedom. And that can happen only with a foundation in ‘popular’ and ‘civil’ society. Open associations were seen as a sign of voluntary social solidarity, which in turn was seen as the ideal for a grander popular and national society.⁶⁸⁴

The pivotal goal of people’s high school is to equip students with the power from the unbridled flow of the national spirit. Thus, the school must be independent of the State, which often threatens people’s freedom, and it must opt for a civil society that belongs to the people. With the “voluntary social solidarity” nurtured in the people’s high school, Danish civil society can start to surface again. Let me quote again Grundtvig’s claim:

In general, however, we must remember that, as everything keeps reminding us, the age of the church in its civil sense is as good as over. It is clearly the age of the school we are living in, and it is therefore the school that any civil society [*Borgerligt Selskab*] must look to for its greatest support.⁶⁸⁵

In other words, it should no longer be the State Church, but the people’s high school that fulfills the role of *folkelig* education. Grundtvig realizes the functional differentiation of Church from School. Faith is no longer a school matter. Being a good citizen does not need to start from being a good Christian confirmed by the State Church. *Folkelig* education means promoting the human upward growth in the light of the human nature created by God and manifested by Christ’s humanity.

When students receive a *folkelig* education in a people’s high school, Grundtvig believes that they need a civil conversion and a civil confirmation into civil society.⁶⁸⁶ In contrast to a religious conversion, the civil conversion which Grundtvig espouses means the following:

Clearly this is not a religious conversion I am referring to, but a civil and human one, not a conversion for the next life but a conversion for the sake of this one, not a change of heart but a change of mind, not a surrender of education, but a conversion [fruit, *frugt* in original text] of education as to what serves us best!

It is my belief that such a civil conversion, both of ‘the children to the fathers’ and of self-conceit to healthy human good sense, will not be a success in any land where a religious conversion of a number of people does not pave the way, develop the insight and strengthen the resolve to this end.⁶⁸⁷

In short, a civil conversion focuses on this-worldly life without an imposed religious indoctrinization such as catechism teaching. As a fruitful result of *folkelig* education, the natural human life created by God is promoted to seek the best way for the common good. This, to some extent, corresponds to Grundtvig’s precept: Human being first, and then Christian, but it does not fully disregard the Christian aspect of social life. As Grundtvig clearly states, the civil conversion

⁶⁸⁴ Korsgaard, “Grundtvig’s Ideal of a People’s High School,” 7-8.

⁶⁸⁵ Grundtvig, “The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836),” *SL*, 143; *GSV* II, 29-30.

⁶⁸⁶ In light of Ove Korsgaard’s distinction of “civic enlightenment” from the “popular-national enlightenment,” I think Grundtvig’s *folkelig* education also has civic meaning (albeit not enforced by State) that individuals after a *folkelig* enlightenment are supposed to learn about civil society, to become eligible to be admitted into social life through a civil confirmation, and are prepared to join the civil life, for example, to voice their views on public issues. See Ove Korsgaard, “Learning and the Changing Concept of Enlightenment: Danish Adult Education over Five Centuries,” *International Review of Education* 46, no. ¾ (July 2000): 311-17.

⁶⁸⁷ Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL*, 96; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 47.

presupposes the religious conversion of many Christians to keep this perspective and the insightful coinherence between the Christian and the human.

After the civil conversion, a civil confirmation ensues. According to Ove Korsgaard, civil confirmation was first proposed by Grundtvig in his writings of “On the Freedom of Religion” in 1827.⁶⁸⁸ Confirmation hitherto had been conducted by the Church and enforced by the State, and determined whether one was qualified to join not only Church life, but also social life.⁶⁸⁹ Grundtvig argues that Christian confirmation should be a mere issue of faith. To nurture one’s *folkelig* heart and to guarantee one’s civil virtue require a corresponding civil confirmation. To this end the people’s high school should be free of religious education, but concern itself with *folkelig* education to promote the human upward development of natural life. Regardless of their religious faith, children are prepared by the necessary *folkelig* education at school to enter civil society as responsible and loving citizens. To celebrate the natural human value bestowed by God and nurtured through *folkelig* education, a civil ceremony should also be introduced. As Grundtvig writes:

But I shall only add the comment that if faith were taken out of school and if the children’s assent to their baptismal covenant were a private matter between the old-fashioned Christians and their pastors, then Confirmation, as being solely a matter of education and knowledge, could be conducted parish by parish without the least regard for the faith of the person in question, and thus a beautiful national ceremony would be linked to an acceptance into civil society (*Borger-Samfundet*).⁶⁹⁰

Again, civil confirmation should be held without religious teachings because faith is considered a private choice. Confirmands should be admitted into civil society through a civil ritual, not a religious ritual. By emphasizing this, Grundtvig asserts the freedom of religion. Yet from Grundtvig’s Mosaic-Christian anthropology, this civil conversion and confirmation still interact with, and correspond to, the religious conversion and confirmation, and find their deep coinherence in the life-giving Spirit expressed by the living Word.

6.3.6.3.2. *Folkelighed* as the Educational Focus

Secondly, *folkelighed* is the major focus for *folkelig* education at the people’s high school in order to shape people’s cultural and national identity. Although at first a royalist Grundtvig clearly sees the signs of democracy approaching in Denmark. He knows that “the time for commoners and the majority of people’s government is at hand, so we must hurry with what we can to bring up and enlighten them in order to become wise and gracious lords in general.”⁶⁹¹ He transfers his allegiance from an oligarchic king to “all the little kings around me” (*lutter små-Konger rundt omkring mig*) to become free and responsible citizens in the social life.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸ Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvigs bidrag til opbygning af en ny symbolsk orden,” in *Samfundsbyggeren, Artikler om Grundtvigs samfundstænkning*, ed. Ove Korsgaard and Michael Schelde (København: ANIS, 2013), 89.

⁶⁸⁹ Ove Korsgaard, “Learning and the Changing Concept of Enlightenment,” *International Review of Education* 46: 310-11.

⁶⁹⁰ Grundtvig, “Is Faith Truly a School Matter? (1836)” *SL*, 125; *GSV* I, 272. See also Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvig’s Philosophy of Education,” *SL*, 23.

⁶⁹¹ Grundtvig, vol. 2 of *Brev fra og til N.F.S. Grundtvig*, udgivne af Georg Christensen og Stener Grundtvig (København: Nordisk Forlag, 1926), 461. “[S]aa staaer Almuens og Folkemængdens Regieringstid for Døren, saa vi maa skynde os alt hvad vi kan at opdrage og oplyse dem til at blive i det Hele kloge og naadige Herrer.”

⁶⁹² Grundtvig, “Tale i den Slesvigske Hjelpeforening,” *Danskeren*, Nr. 6 (April 1848): 86-7.

Grundtvig aims to enlighten and educate the vast number of Danish peasants into the new category of “people.”⁶⁹³ In order to achieve this, knowledge of the fatherland, the mother-tongue, history and even Nordic mythology all become very important to awaken the sleeping Nordic spirit. A “historical enlightenment” in the mother-tongue is necessary in order “[t]o reorganize civil society in the national spirit” (*at reorganisere det borgerlige selskab i folkets ånd*).⁶⁹⁴ The history of the fatherland as the “living narrative from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation”⁶⁹⁵ shapes people’s cultural-ethnic identity. Historical narratives help people to retrieve where they are from, and what their peculiar temperament is. At the same time, they find their sense of belonging to a Danish nation. By focusing on shared memories, the mother-tongue, and the integrity of life, Grundtvig aims to foster and nurture the people for “the public.” As he claims:

Nowhere in the earth’s circle can a civic education disseminated to civil society ever bear such beautiful and joyful fruits both for the people’s life and for the comprehensive learning, sourced from life and transported to life, as in Denmark. The State there has done far more than in any other country both for historical learning and popular education.⁶⁹⁶

But this kind of education, according to Anders P. Thyssen, should be distinguished from the liberal model which aims to promote “the sense of ‘the common good’ through educating people in the nature, the institutions and the condition of the State.”⁶⁹⁷ Grundtvig champions *folkelig* education to unite the people, and insists on the “historical and national perspective” so that neither will the common good be imposed from without, nor will education fall prey to individualist wishes.⁶⁹⁸

Grundtvig believes that the people’s high schools should primarily aim to promote a civil life centered on “the continuation of the life of the people and the service of the State.”⁶⁹⁹ Such a civil life also entails a natural patriotism:

...the living fatherland must be the great axle around which everything turns at the People’s High School, so that the individuals and knowledge are worth not a jot more than whatever they contribute to the benefit of their fatherland tomorrow, and above all today.⁷⁰⁰

Both the individual and the State will benefit from this *folkelig* education and consequently civil life can truly flourish. If not, social life will risk disintegration:

If we add that only a minority of people act according to what they themselves admit common sense and experience *counsel* them, while people in general act on the impulses of the moment or for instant advantage, it seems a desperate task to seek with education to heal the prevalent delusion that civil society [*det Borgerlige Selskab*] will become freer and happier to the degree that the individual gains the right to

⁶⁹³ Ove Korsgaard, *Grundtvig*, 27.

⁶⁹⁴ Grundtvig, *Mands-Minde*, 356. I am indebted to Ove Korsgaard for this quote, See Korsgaard, *Grundtvig*, 30.

⁶⁹⁵ Grundtvig, “A Congratulation to Denmark (1847),” *SL*, 329.

⁶⁹⁶ Grundtvig, “Om Borgerlig Dannelse (1834?),” *GSV I*, 266. “Ingensteds paa hele Jordens Kreds kan da efter alle Mærker en Folkelig Dannelse udbredt i det Borgerlige Selskab, bære saa skønne og glædelige Frugter baade for Folke-Livet og for en af Livet udspringende og til Livet henført, altomfattende Videnskabelighed, som netop i *Danmark*, hvor der jo ogsaa fra Statens Side er gjort langt meer end i noget andet Land baade for historisk Videnskabelighed og for Almeen-Oplysning.”

⁶⁹⁷ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People 1825-47,” *Tradition and Renewal*, 270.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁹⁹ Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL*, 96; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 48. In Allen’s words, the people’s high school basically provided the male student with “a spiritual view of life, an attachment to his fellows and his country, and a new understanding of his daily work as the means of serving them.” See Allen, *Bishop Grundtvig*, 79.

⁷⁰⁰ Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL*, 96; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 48.

counsel himself; that is, to the degree that society collapses and the rights of the strongest are asserted. The state, however, has no other serviceable means against this frightening delusion than education. For although it can use its power as long as it has any – and will often need to use it, if it sets physical force against anything but physical force, it will dissolve itself. In other words, it turns itself into a tyranny. It loses the right to hold power, and only continues to maintain it as a tyrant, against whom rebellion is justifiable, because the tyrant rules only by virtue of the rights of the strongest. And such rights fall to his opponent when fortune turns his way.⁷⁰¹

In the light of the threat of anarchy or tyranny, Grundtvig suggests that the constitution be taught at the people's high school so that people could be enlightened about freedom, rights and duties, and the common good:

However, it is also high time that a Danish High School set our constitution in its proper light, since both sides (the so-called 'conservative' as well as the so-called 'liberal') are daily endeavouring to obscure it. Without education for the people concerning the proper and desired context of the matter, the end must be that either the king or the people take their presents back, and in both cases Denmark would be lost. This is so much more certainly the case in that without a People's High School neither the king nor the people in our day can learn to regard their rights in the proper light or use them in the proper way, which is solely for the common good...

The people must also understand that the freedoms and rights of the king and the people, at least in Denmark, can not only be reconciled with, but can also honour, ennoble, grace, support and safeguard each other. Even if a truly Danish High School were therefore otherwise unnecessary, or even if we could expect little or no benefit from it, it would still be just an indispensable for the sake of peace and unity between the king and the people.⁷⁰²

This constitution could see that the power of the State is properly used. People need to understand their relationship to the king, to the State, and to their fellow human beings, while always taking the law into consideration. True enlightenment concerning various forms of life-relationship can prepare people to establish a civil society. Education has previously been used by the State for social control, says Benjamin about the Danish situation, but now it must be used by the vast number of enlightened people to ensure the freedom of the individual and public democracy.⁷⁰³ Furthermore, the *folkelig* education at the people's high school for a civil society should not be regarded as a tentative attempt to solve the present-day social crisis. On the contrary, *folkelig* education should be a constant and enduring project to shape and reshape the dynamic concept of *folkelighed* as related to the whole of humanity – a global civil society. Talking about a united Nordic University at Gothenborg, Grundtvig puts forward the following idea:

So if we endeavour to gain an understanding of ourselves both as members of the great human race and as particular branches of the great family tree, we cannot be satisfied with looking after the immediate needs of the people and civil society [*Borgerlige Selskab*] as best we can. We must also do our utmost to ensure that those who have the desire and ability can acquire a thorough knowledge and a deeper insight into all areas of human learning, in the assurance that where they are successful, the fruits for the people's education and for the whole of civil society [*Borgerlige Selskab*] will in the course of time become visible and beneficial many times over.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰¹ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 105; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 60.

⁷⁰² Grundtvig, "A Congratulation to Denmark (1847)," in *SL*, 338.

⁷⁰³ Harold Benjamin, "Education and National Recovery in Denmark," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 182 (1935): 180.

⁷⁰⁴ Grundtvig, "On the Union of Learning in the North (1839)," *SL*, 232-33; *GSV II*, 136.

In contrast to the disastrous outcome caused by the lack of proper *folkelig* education, Grundtvig hopes that the younger generation who are educated at the people's high school will make a difference:

What is almost equally dear to me by any name is that young people there can get to know and love heir fatherland and their mother tongue and be educated about civil society [*Borgerlige Selskab*] to which they belong. For civil society is a glorious creation [*en herlig Skabning*] for the common good, in which all occupations can be equally honest and gratifying, if only we become aware of their mutual indispensability and learn from experience that true human education and spiritual pleasure can be combined with all occupations – and be lacking in all of them too.⁷⁰⁵

Based on the training of young people for a proper life development in civil society, Grundtvig believes that the people's high school can also contribute to social reconstruction and nation-building when the students embark on their new life after graduation:

The task of the High School is to ensure that each one of them can return to his job with an increased interest, a clearer view of the human and civil conditions, especially in his fatherland, and a reinvigorated joy in the people's spirit of community that gives him a share in all the great and good that has been achieved, and will be achieved, by the people to whom he belongs to.

This should happen everywhere, and since in our day the danger of internal dissolution, growing discord, and increasing dissatisfaction with one's lot in life is patent, People's High Schools, aimed above all at enlivening and strengthening what ennobles, uplifts, and reassures the people's sense of community and love of the fatherland, are both essential and lay the foundation of benefit for all. Nowhere is this more true than in Denmark, where the age-old community spirit and the overwhelming love of the fatherland are the people's only source of life.⁷⁰⁶

In short, people regain their cultural-ethnic identity at the people's high school, get enlightened by the *folkelig* education, and start their life anew in the *folkelig* spirit, which is manifested in civil society. As Ove Korsgaard says,

Historians continue to debate the significance of the People's High Schools for political developments in the last three decades of the 19th century. Most of them nevertheless agree that the schools were a precondition for what has been called the Grundtvigian cultural revolution in Denmark. This had an enormous effect on the growth of civil society and also exerted an influence on the capitalist market economy in Denmark.⁷⁰⁷

With *folkelighed* as the core of the people's enlightenment, students at the people's high school will be equipped to contribute to the restoration and revival of the Danish civil society.

6.3.6.3.3. The Abolition of Class Difference in the People's High School

Finally, the free living interaction (*levende Vexelvirkning*) through the living word between students and teachers, and between students themselves becomes the key working principle in the people's high school, which is conducive to removing the former hierarchical barriers and class difference among people of various walks of life.

Instead of the traditional way of lecturing, Grundtvig highlights the interaction between teachers and students through the living word. The resurrection power of the living word at the Roskilde

⁷⁰⁵ Grundtvig, "On the Establishment of Sorø Academy as a People's High School (1843)," *SL*, 294; *GSV* II, 202.

⁷⁰⁶ Grundtvig, "A Congratulation to Denmark (1847)," *SL*, 323.

⁷⁰⁷ Ove Korsgaard, "Grundtvig's Ideal of a People's High School," 9.

Advisory meeting (1835-36) and his lectures at Borchs Kollegium (1838) consolidate his supposition of the “great natural law for the work and propagation of the spirit.”⁷⁰⁸ As Kristen Kold succinctly summarizes it in a wordplay, the people’s high school does not follow the traditional way of talking to students (*tale til*), but appeals to them (*tiltale*).⁷⁰⁹ Steven Borish provides a summary as to the understanding of the living word, which means primarily to *oplive*, “to fill with life, to make glad, to imbue with self-confidence, [and] to encourage;” secondly, the living word means to *oplyse*, “to teach to aspire to true enlightenment, [and] to want to serve the cause of life;” finally, the living word is to *vække*, “to awaken” the sleeping spirit, the life force in human beings or in a nation.⁷¹⁰ This third connotation of the living word also has religious implications especially in the Danish revival movements, where Borish suggests that it may even resemble “a sacrament” when heard in baptism and Holy Communion.⁷¹¹

At the same time, the free and living interaction between teachers and students, and between students themselves enables people to come closer to each other, and hence breaks down the hierarchical barriers in the State. Grundtvig describes his people’s high school thus:

That is, an educational establishment by which the people gradually awaken to self-awareness and where the leaders learn just as much from the young people as *they* from *them*. Such a living interaction and reciprocal teaching would build a bridge across the gaping chasm that hierarchy, aristocracy, Latinism and social ambition have fortified between almost all the people on the one hand and their leaders and teachers, together with a handful of so-called educated and enlightened people, on the other. Into this gaping chasm almost our entire civil society [*Borgerlige Selskab*] and all steady, historical, progressive development will otherwise soon disappear and perish.⁷¹²

Thus the Danish people’s high school for Grundtvig is a social laboratory with the national spirit as its catalyst for civil formation, bringing the educated and uneducated, the commoners and the civil servants together in a living interactive relationship.

This new people’s high school will avoid the negative aspect of social stratification, and promote social mobility through an active and peaceful interaction. An economy-oriented society will intensify competition. The hardening of social class always leads to social inequality and unrest. All this is not good for an open and dynamic social development. Grundtvig would like to see the free flow of the creative spirit in society, and the people’s high school can be the platform for this spiritual interaction and integration among the people. We might say that through the people’s high school, Grundtvig tries to equip people with the necessary social capital (helping people to network), cultural capital (improving peasants’ educational level and offering spiritual and national cultural resources for people’s networking),⁷¹³ and human capital (consolidating people’s spiritual, social, and professional competence, confidence and labor effort) for a free social mobility. The attempt at an equal transmission of the cultural capital can break the structural boundary between the rich and the poor and provide civil society with citizens of a common national culture temperament and spiritual aspiration. Meanwhile, “[s]ocial capital ‘lubricates’ civic society,” and “[t]he outcome is a voluntary provision of collective goods, such as common norms, predictability in human exchanges,

⁷⁰⁸ Schrøder, *Grundtvig*, 123.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Steven Borish, “The Concepts of ‘Folkelighed’ and the ‘folkelig,’” in *Folkevirke* 51, no. 3 (1996): 13.

⁷¹¹ Borish, *Danish Social Movements in a Time of Global Destabilization*, 122.

⁷¹² Grundtvig, “Appeal for, and Concept of, a Danish High School in Sorø (1840)” *SL*, 276; *GSV* II, 183.

⁷¹³ See Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 242-58.

and trust.”⁷¹⁴

It is in this dynamic process of social development that Grundtvig aims to seek a kind of living balance and equality. The long-standing gap between Copenhagen and the rest of Denmark, and between the *petit bourgeois* and the vast peasant population is above all what Grundtvig intends to bridge. The social differentiation between them is based not only on economy and social system, but on education and culture, so that the two groups cannot have effective interaction. However, a living interaction in the people's high school will greatly enhance all Danes' civil engagement in the common good. This social capital exerts its major influence within civil society, and in return, civil society spawns more social capital. In this light, it is easy to understand how Grundtvig chooses a middle way between conservatives and liberals by preparing the necessary social capital for a dynamic social reconstruction. At the people's high school, students will be re-united by the common *folkelig* consciousness and the common good. The people's high school will thereby become the cradle and matrix of Danish civil society.

6.3.6.4. Summary

To sum up, Grundtvig's civil society aims to embrace the king, the fatherland, the State, and the people. He believes that the realization of a people's high school can be of great help to revive the Danish people:

For such a school will truly make the church much more alive and fruitful for the Danish people, it will spread much more love of Denmark and an understanding of its interests, and it will become the cradle of a historical learning that does not forge chains to imprison its disciples with dead language and their graves and grammar-books, but links them to past generations, first and foremost to our Nordic ancestor.
⁷¹⁵

The proper enlightenment of civil life at school with free, equal, and living interaction in the mother-tongue avoids both a radical individualistic society and an anarchical or tyrannical State, and prepares people to strive for the common good to the benefit of the nation. People's national self-awareness is also raised, but not in a negative sense. As Uffe Jonas writes:

In his application to the king Grundtvig reasserts his desire for a patriotic education and the awakening of a new national consciousness to release the cultural bonds and tensions of an older social awareness linked to differences of station. Grundtvig's nationalism is clearly not of a militaristic or imperialist kind. Except for the recurring conflicts with Germany over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, which led to wars in 1848 and 1864 and agitated Grundtvig's concern for the nation, his nationalism is directed solely inwards toward nation-building and civil society.

The focus is to be on 'the voice of the people' – their language, history, narrative tales, and current needs --- in order to promote a civil society of self-motivated, self-organized, and self-learning citizens.⁷¹⁶

All in all, Grundtvig's proposal for such a people's high school not only meets the needs of the Danish nation at a difficult transitional stage of society, but also enlightens people to be responsible participants in the socio-political life. In this way Grundtvig hopes that Danish civil society will be formed anew.

⁷¹⁴ Gunnar Lind Haase Svendsen and Gert Tinggaard Svendsen, "On the Wealth of Nations: Bourdieueconomics and Social Capital," *Theory and Society* 32, no. 5/6, Special Issue on The Sociology of Symbolic Power: A Special Issue in Memory of Pierre Bourdieu. (December 2003): 615.

⁷¹⁵ Grundtvig, "The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838)," *SL*, 194.

⁷¹⁶ Uffe Jonas, "Introduction to the 'On the Establishment of Sorø Academy as a People's High School,'" in *SL*, 292.

6.4. *Folkelighed* and National Salvation

6.4.1. *Folkelighed* and Territory

The visible and concrete life form that *folkelighed* assumes is civil society, but there is also an invisible form of *folkelighed* in the cultural-ethnic sense, which is “the imagined community” of nation “beyond objective description.”⁷¹⁷ Nation, however, also has a civic dimension. Adrian Hastings expands Benedict Andersen’s concept of “horizontal comradeship” in his book *Imagined Communities* and defines a nation as follows,

What we have to look for in nation-spotting is a historic-cultural community with a territory it regards as its own and over which it claims some sort of sovereignty so that the cultural community sees itself with a measure of self-awareness as also a territorial and political community, held together horizontally by its shared character rather than vertically by reason of the authority of the state.

Even when it is the state which has created the nation, it is not a nation until it senses its primacy over and against the state. What its shared character is felt chiefly to consist in is quite another matter and open to vast diversity: the territory itself may provide the basic criterion in one case, language in another reflecting the myth of pure ethnic origin, religion may be effectively decisive in a third. These different criteria do produce very different types of nation and different types of nationalism as well... In reality every nation is a unique socio-historical construct.⁷¹⁸

In the section on *folkelighed* and civil society in this study, I have already discussed such national elements as culture, history, mother-tongue, mythology, religion, and state. The Danish *folkelighed* as an ethnic-cultural community shapes Danes’ national identity with joint efforts for the common good. Grundtvig also investigates the concept of the modern state, whose power should be limited for the development of civil society. At the same time he is strongly against a Christian confessionalization of Evangelical Lutheranism as the uniting bond of the Danish nation, for Christianity must never again fall prey to a form of civil religion.

Yet more important in this context is the relationship between nation and territory in the light of the new political sovereignty. The border problem poses a pragmatic challenge to Grundtvig’s romantic notion of ‘nation’. This typical issue emerges when different *folkeligheder* meet head-on. Without a comparatively stable territory, the preservation and development of *folkelighed* will also be hindered. When Denmark is threatened by historical external invaders and enemies, such as England, Sweden, Germany and Austria, Grundtvig also believes that there is a close link between *folkelighed* and national independence or salvation. As he argues, “When a kingdom is dissolved, then the people’s life also stops.”⁷¹⁹ The people’s life, according to Grundtvig, is constituted by “fatherland, mother-tongue and friendship.”⁷²⁰ Without the fatherland, the people’s life cannot exist

⁷¹⁷ Ove Korsgaard, *N.F.S. Grundtvig*, 25; see also Ove Korsgaard, “Centrale dimensioner i Grundtvigs samfundsbyggeri,” (paper presented at the Vartov Conference on “Grundtvig som Samfundsbygger,” København, January 24-5, 2011), http://grundtvigcenteret.au.dk/fileadmin/www.grundtvigcenteret.au.dk/nyheder_og_arrangementer/arrangementsarkiv/Grundtvig_som_samfundsbygger/Ove_Korsgaard.pdf (accessed November 23, 2012.). Moreover, Korsgaard also points out that the “state-nationalism” (a “top-down nationalism”) corresponds to the “symbolic center” of the state while “popular-nationalism” (a “bottom-up nationalism,”) still corresponds to civil society. See Ove Korsgaard, “The Danish Way to Establish the Nation in the Hearts of the People,” in *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, 141.

⁷¹⁸ Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 25.

⁷¹⁹ Grundtvig, “Overgangs-tiden i Danmark (1849),” *HB* II, 216. I am indebted to Kim A. Pedersen’s article for this quotation. See Pedersen, “Hvad er Folkelighed?” 32.

⁷²⁰ Grundtvig, “Guld-Alderen og Grotte-Sangen i Danmark (1850),” *US* IX, 233.

either. Therefore, *folkelighed* also presupposes national independence. As a patriotic Dane and a faithful pastor, Grundtvig cannot evade the challenge of national salvation in his time.

6.4.1.1. The Two Stages of Grundtvig's Plan for National Salvation

Grundtvig's plan for national salvation has been through two stages in terms of its relationship to Christianity. The year 1832 may well be the turning-point when he reaches a new understanding of the people's life in the light of historical ecumenical Christianity and his Mosaic-Christian anthropology.

Generally speaking, before 1832 Grundtvig tends to identify the Christian revival with the national awakening in Denmark. That is, in order to achieve national salvation Denmark has to be re-baptized according to traditional Lutheran orthodoxy. Since his own conversion to the traditional Christian faith in 1810, Grundtvig believes that only Christianity can save Denmark by reviving the dead national spirit.⁷²¹

Grundtvig's national consciousness is actually nurtured by his reading of Danish history in his childhood. Since 1807 he has adhered to his civil calling (*borgerlige kald*) of reviving the old Nordic legacy with "spiritual independence, the richness of the heart, the natural thinking and beautiful mother-tongue" for the enlightenment of the people in Denmark.⁷²² According to K.E. Bugge, however, Grundtvig first develops his national consciousness around 1815 when he reads the *Den danske Rimkrønike* after Denmark's loss of Norway, which was regarded as a great national humiliation and frustration.⁷²³ At that time, an "unreasonable hope" (*urimeligt Haab*) arises in his heart that Christianity can help to awaken and regenerate the spiritually dead national life so that Denmark could become a special nation, with God's grace.⁷²⁴ While praising the Danish language in *Danne-Virke*, he underscores Danishness from a historical perspective.⁷²⁵ According to Begtrup, Grundtvig closely combines patriotism with Christian faith, and the two can even be "fused together" (*smelter sammen*) as demonstrated in *New Year's Morning* (*Nyaars-morgen*) in 1824.⁷²⁶ Grundtvig's fight against the State Church and the rationalist theologians for a revival of living Christian life also aims at national salvation. He attempts to revive the State Church which the "King and the people should build on" so that disbelief would not lead to the disintegration of the Danish kingdom.⁷²⁷ "Christian and national rebirth are fused together; the rebuilding of the old *Danne-virke* will turn Denmark into 'a fenced Church field'" as Denmark is not suppressed by the Romans and has preserved the "people's heart" for the revival of Christianity as the sixth congregation.⁷²⁸ Yet Grundtvig fails in his efforts and is rejected by and isolated from the Copenhagen clerical, cultural and social elites.

With his gradual distinction of theology from faith, and of School from Church, especially in the early 1830s, Grundtvig realizes that he can no longer impose a re-Christianization of Denmark based on the traditional Lutheran faith. Instead he comes to believe that the people's high school is

⁷²¹ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824," 104-07, 110.

⁷²² Grundtvig, *Mands Mindes*, 281, I am indebted to Henningensen for this quotation. See Henningensen, *Politik eller Kaos?* 236-37.

⁷²³ Bugge, "Indledning," in *GSV I*, 19. *Den danske Rimkrønike*, a collection of poems related to the Danish kings in history, was the first book published in Danish in 1495.

⁷²⁴ *GDK II*, 73.

⁷²⁵ Grundtvig, *Danne-Virke*, I, s. 18f., in Henningensen, *Politik eller Kaos?*, 237.

⁷²⁶ *GDK II*, 74.

⁷²⁷ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824," *Tradition and Renewal*, 106.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 110, 106.

the best means for the Danes' spiritual revival and national salvation. He acknowledges that spiritually dead people cannot respond to living Christianity at all. Even in 1855, he still believes that the real hindrance for the Danish national revival is the people's "spiritlessness and ungodliness" (*Aandløshed og Ugudelighed*).⁷²⁹ Grundtvig's vision, similar to King Frederik VI's, is "the rebirth of Denmark to a new life in the old spirit in a form that suits the changed times."⁷³⁰

With regard to this "old spirit" Grundtvig writes: "...what people call people's spirit is not an empty illusion, but is a glorious life force, which shows itself each time through mouth or spirit to reveal its power, express its direction, and describe its goal."⁷³¹ Furthermore, the particular temperament of the Danes also decides their national spirit. Grundtvig claims that the Danes are a people of the heart with a national spirit as their "common life force," with a heart-warmth (*Hjertelighed*) as the "bond of souls" (*Sjælebaand*), and with the common mother-tongue as their expression of the human heart.⁷³² The Danes are of a feminine character that reflects the heart of the gentler human nature. The living word conveys honest communication. Meanwhile, the Danes also have the fighting spirit to conquer all the difficulties ahead and believe in the victory of justice. At a transitional stage in the Danish nation, however, this national spirit unfortunately seems dormant under the overwhelming influence of elements foreign to Denmark.

It is through his English study trips that Grundtvig rediscovers the Nordic spirit. He believes that "at that time, England was the only home of civil freedom in Europe" (*dengang var den borgerlige Friheds eneste Hjemstavn i Europa*), and that freedom is of great importance for the "development of the whole human life."⁷³³ In England, Grundtvig learns about the "public spirit" and he puts it into Danish as "*Almen-aand*" (the general, common or public spirit), which must be awakened to fight in the Danish spiritual world in the mother-tongue.⁷³⁴

For if it is true that "public spirit" means neither more nor less than an invisible life-force, on a greater or smaller scale common to all those who share a mother-tongue, a life-force whose element is free activity, and whose breath is the mother-tongue, then it is clear why people become spiritless when they lose their freedom and practically forget their mother-tongue. And then it has also become obvious which path they must take – to be rejuvenated in their old age and regain their power to be like themselves in their best moments; for that is the greatest achievement on earth both for a people and for an individual.⁷³⁵

According to Grundtvig, this public spirit is but the old sleeping Nordic fighting spirit in Denmark.⁷³⁶ After his return to Denmark, he hopes to stimulate the dreaming Danish people and the stagnant Danish society with the same Nordic spirit.

⁷²⁹ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag III (1855)," *US* X, 50.

⁷³⁰ Grundtvig, "The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838)," *SL*, 193.

⁷³¹ Grundtvig, *Brage-snak*, *US* VIII, 611. "[H]vad man kalder Folke-Aand er intet tomt Hjernesvind, men en herlig Livs-Kraft, der beviser sig selv, hvergang den med Mund eller Aand aabenbarer sin Kraft, udtrykker sin Retning og betegner sit Maal."

⁷³² Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark I (1851)," *HB* II, 253.

⁷³³ Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1863," *US* X, 537.

⁷³⁴ Henningsen, *Politik eller Kaos?* 247.

⁷³⁵ Grundtvig, *Mands-Minde*, 454. "Er det nemlig sandt, at ved Almen-Aand skal forstaas hverken mer eller mindre end en usynlig Livskraft, fælles, kun i større og mindre Grad, for alle dem, der har Modersmaal til fælles, en Livskraft, hvis Element er fri Virksomhed, og hvis Aandedræt er Modersmaalet, da er det dermed forklaret, hvi Folkene blev aandløse, da de tabte deres Frihed og saa godt som glemte deres Modermaal, og vist, hvad Vej de maa gaa, om de vil forynges paa de gamle Dage, vinde Magt til at ligne sig selv i deres bedste Øjeblikke: det højeste, et Folk saa vel som Enkeltmand kan naa her neden."

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*

How then can this Danish national spirit be revived? Holger Begtrup points out that with his faith in the living Word of Christianity Grundtvig discovers the significance of the corresponding living word of the human mouth for national life after his trips to England.⁷³⁷ The Christian life and the national life both need to grow from childhood to maturity, as is exemplified in Christ's earthly life.⁷³⁸ Grundtvig believes that Danish national life has experienced a spiritual death and must be awakened and kept growing through the Danish living word, the agent of the Danish national spirit. This living word needs a "secular resurrection" in Denmark,⁷³⁹ which begins with the people's free voice in the Provincial Advisory Council in 1835-36. The discovery of this living human word is the "honor of Providence and the salvation of the spirit of mankind" (*til Forsynets Ære og Menneske-Aandens Frelse*):

Why cannot a pen which has at heart the great joy of being in covenant with the greatest mouth in every land – as the living people's mouth indisputably is – persist in pointing to the one people's mouth after another until it eventually meets one that has both the desire and the good fortune to record its own and its mother-tongue's inalienable rights? This would be to the honor of Providence and the salvation of the spirit of mankind!⁷⁴⁰

Grundtvig's way of fighting for national salvation relies on the continuous revival of the Danish *folkelighed* in people's hearts. He believes that a real enlightenment of the people starts with the living word of the mother-tongue, which brings the national spirit back to life.⁷⁴¹ According to him, the heathen legacy of the North also focuses on the "living word of the mother tongue for the popular songs and for all that is of life and heart" (*det levende Ord paa Modersmaalet, for folkelig Sang og for alt det Livlige og Hjertelige*).⁷⁴² He sets out therefore to educate the "heart-like" (*hjertelige*) and childlike (*barnagtige*) but "sleeping" and despairing Danes in the Danish cause with reference to the small and weak Danish kingdom, to Danishness as such, and to the Danish language.⁷⁴³

Grundtvig underlines the use of the Danish vernacular so much in order to replace such dominant foreign languages as Latin, German and French. Meanwhile national literature and national education should also be taken seriously to turn against foreign invaders,⁷⁴⁴ especially from Germany, which even makes Grundtvig known as the German hater.⁷⁴⁵ Grundtvig becomes very upset when Danish people distrust their own cultural legacy and power while admiring and appreciating all foreign things, which he regards as a "great national flaw."⁷⁴⁶ Instead, he makes the following suggestion:

So I have tried to tell the Northerners to take to heart how much they need a People's High School, each in their own kingdom, where everything in the mother-tongue has to do with the fatherland, including its natural, civil conditions, its national memorials and songs, its interests and prospects, together with everything that can make intelligent and thoughtful men skilled

⁷³⁷ GDK II, 74.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ Bugge, "Indledning," GSV I, 23.

⁷⁴⁰ Grundtvig, "To the Norwegians (1837)," SL, 176.

⁷⁴¹ Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1863," US X, 541.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag I (1855)," *Dannebrog* (13. Januar 1855), US X, 39-44.

⁷⁴⁴ Grundtvig, "Om Borgerlig Dannelse (1834?)," in GSV I, 260-61.

⁷⁴⁵ Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 92-3.

⁷⁴⁶ Grundtvig, "The School for Life and the Academy in Sorø (1838)," in SL, 218.

enough to raise and support the lawful voice of the people that in every kingdom is now present in the government's national council.⁷⁴⁷

Through helping Danes become reacquainted with Nordic mythology, history, and the fatherland in the mother-tongue, Grundtvig believes that the heroic Danish fighting spirit of the forefathers can be re-awakened. In the 1860s, the revival of the Nordic spiritual legacy is made manifest in a wide area with popular songs being sung, history being studied, and mythological stories related, all of which also influence the pulpit.⁷⁴⁸ Grundtvig would call them the "Danish part of his public life" to enlighten people's Danishness.⁷⁴⁹ Consequently a new national confidence arises among the enlightened people to reclaim faith in the national regeneration out of the disillusion of 1864.

6.4.1.2. The Relationship of National Salvation to the North and the Whole of Humanity

Grundtvig does not view Danish national salvation as an isolated event, but connects it to the North and the whole of humanity. In 1855 he argues that the Danish cause is also the cause of "the High North, of Humanity, of Christianity, and consequently of Providence, and of God the Almighty."⁷⁵⁰ Let us look a little closer at this claim.

First we need to find out *how* the Danish cause becomes the cause of the High North. Grundtvig explains that the common spiritual and historical legacy of the High North in Nordic Mythology and a common history brings the Northern people together as they pass through the phases of life in a characteristic fighting spirit.⁷⁵¹ Their common national life is the "living description of the fight" (*en levende Beskrivelse af denne Kamp*).⁷⁵² Thus the Nordic legacy spiritualizes the world history of all human beings (*en aandrig Verdens-Historie, hvori hele Menneske-Slægtens Levnetsløb*) and makes Nordic peoples "agents of divine Providence" (*det guddommelige Forsyns Styrelse*).⁷⁵³ He argues that just as the Nordic peoples' internal spirituality, a spirituality first discovered by the Danes, is sharply different from that of the Germans, so the Nordic peoples should make the Danish cause "a common cause" to "maintain or assert their external freedom and independence against the Germans and Russians" with the Danes' victory in the Jutland War (*Jydske Krig*) as an example of God's legitimate Providence and help.⁷⁵⁴ Since both Sweden and Denmark face similar internal and external challenges, it is necessary, according to Grundtvig, to resort to the common fighting spirit for the people's enlightenment of national consciousness (*Folke-Bevidsthed*).⁷⁵⁵ It is clear here that when Grundtvig tries to make the Danish cause Nordic, it remains more of a spiritual than a physical connection, for the Nordic spirit common to the Nordic *folkelighed* necessarily needs a common spirit form, however loose and non-political.

Then Grundtvig goes one step further, claiming that the Danish cause is also the cause of the whole of humanity. He contends that the Nordic people's enlightenment is also related to the world history of the whole of humanity marching toward a certain ultimate *telos* of history under God's

⁷⁴⁷ Grundtvig, "On the Union of Learning in the North (1839)," in *SL*, 231.

⁷⁴⁸ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1848-72," in *Tradition and Renewal*, 376.

⁷⁴⁹ Grundtvig, *Nytaars-Ønske i Danske Samfund* (Kjøbenhavn: 1843), in *HB I*, 124. "Spildt maatte jeg kalde den danske Del af mit offentlige Liv, dersom det ikke bidrager til, at Danskheden kendelig oplives hos høje og lave."

⁷⁵⁰ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag II (1855)," *US X*, 45.

⁷⁵¹ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag III (1855)," *US X*, 50.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

divine Providence (*guddommeligt Forsyn*).⁷⁵⁶ Grundtvig has assigned to the North a particular mission for the whole world in his own philosophy of history. On the one hand, it is owing to his religious perspective that the North is seen as the sixth congregation; on the other, it is decided by the peculiar Danish national mindset. Grundtvig makes the Danish nation assume a unique role in the enlightenment of the whole of human life for two reasons. First of all, he believes that the Danish understanding of human life with the Nordic fighting spirit “coincides with the human” (*saa den folkelige Betragtning af Menneske-Livet, der i Danmark falder sammen med den menneskelige*), which inspires other nations to seek their liberation from foreign rulers and to enlighten their own life by reclaiming their particular mother-tongues and following the natural predilections of their hearts.⁷⁵⁷ The second reason is that Grundtvig characterizes the Danes as people of a feminine nature, which, in light of the historical order, can bring enlightenment to the whole human race as the womanly peaceful nature is “never so artificial or so cruel” (*aldrig enten saa konstig eller saa grusomt*), but “keeps its own mind” beyond the “wise male” (*kloge Mandfolk*).⁷⁵⁸ It is the particular Nordic heart that Grundtvig thinks it is important to revive as an example to other nations in the world:

[O]n the one hand, in order to achieve its goal, the whole of humanity badly needs the enlightenment of world history, which must have its seed in the High North; and on the other hand, none can gain any benefit from the enlightenment of world history without first taking possession of their own either unknown or misunderstood enlightenment of the people. In Denmark this enlightenment is breaking new ground and needs good fortune in order, with regard to the people, simultaneously to serve as a model and example and to prepare for the enlightenment of all world history.⁷⁵⁹

Grundtvig believes that the enlightenment of humankind starts with the High North, and at the same time, the Danish national enlightenment is also contributing to the enlightenment of all world history. The potential danger for humanity, however, lies in negating and eradicating all the natural differences between peoples, nations, and mother-tongues by imposing uniformity on the whole of human life often through international wars.⁷⁶⁰ According to Grundtvig, this is the result of the false enlightenment of understand human beings as uniform machines, and regarding the “human spirit and human heart whereof human life springs as the embryo of an old superstition, which should be abandoned.”⁷⁶¹ In contrast, true human enlightenment only begins in Denmark, “which aims to overcome the inhuman, and to strengthen human life into the consummation of its great journey until the end of the world.”⁷⁶² In order to be an example for the whole of humanity, Danes have to guard well their relationship with other *folkeligheder* or nations.

6.4.1.3. Inter-Folkeligt and Inter-National Relationship

It is especially after 1848, when the war of the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein begins, that Grundtvig’s writings reflect this inter-*folkelige* or inter-national relationship. Thyssen points out

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., 54-5.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., 52. “[D]eels fordi hele Menneske-Slægten, for at naae sit Maal, trænger høilig til den verdenshistoriske Oplysning, som maa have sit Sæde i Høinorden, og deels fordi Ingen kan faae Gavn af den verdenshistoriske Oplysning, uden først at have tilegnet sig den hidtil ukiendte eller miskiendte folkelige Oplysning, som i Danmark er ifærd med at bryde sin Bane og maa dertil have Lykken med sig, for paa een Gang i folkelig Henseende at tjene til Mønster og Eftersyn og at forberede den verdenshistoriske Oplysning.”

⁷⁶⁰ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag III (1855),” *US X*, 53.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 53-4.

⁷⁶² Ibid., 54. “[S]aa er det dog kun i Danmark, man har opdaget den menneskelige Oplysning, der ene formaaer at overvinde den umenneskelige og at styrke Menneske-Livet til Fuldførelsen af sin store Løbebane til Verdens Ende.”

that in *Danskeren* Grundtvig moves from addressing either the peasants only, or the Copenhagen intellectuals only, to addressing the whole nation.⁷⁶³ Grundtvig's understanding of "a people" is actually closer to the modern concept of nation. According to Hastings, a nation is alive only when it is based on the "collective and individual" imagination for a common consciousness among people of various walks of life which leads to national confidence to take in people of other ethnic origins.⁷⁶⁴ With faith in the peculiar Nordic spiritual legacy out of God's creation, Grundtvig also has the Danish national confidence to encourage his fellow-Danes. As his verses of 1820 read:

Far higher are mountains elsewhere on the earth
than here where a hill is called heaven!
Although in our North all is plains and green knolls,
we Danes accept what we are given.
With storm-battered summits we have not been blessed;
we stay down to earth, and that serves us the best.

Far more of the ore that is white or is red
have others from digging or selling.
But Danes never lack for their own daily bread,
no less in the poor peasant's dwelling.
In this lies our wealth, on this tenet we draw:
that few are too rich, and still fewer too poor.⁷⁶⁵

With this national confidence, Grundtvig can face other nations on an equal footing. Grundtvig's guiding principle to deal with national issues is that different *folkeligheder* created by God should be equally respected and should have a living interactive relationship between each other. The cultural-ethnic, especially the linguistic, difference marks the natural boundary between two nations. However, this romantic and harmonious picture of inter-national relationship is challenged by the self-exaltation of a particular nation, which inevitably results in wars.

According to Grundtvig, each nation naturally appreciates its own excellence, but its national excellence should not be considered "much better than it actually is" out of its own enclosed "self-love" (*Egenkiærlighed*).⁷⁶⁶ Grundtvig criticizes the existence of this self-love in the individual, in the family, and in the nation, which is "the source of all our sin and misery" (*synd og elendighed*), which "gradually becomes like a dried lake."⁷⁶⁷ Only with the sign of God's love in our hearts through Christ can human love be changed into the source of eternal life.⁷⁶⁸ Thus, Grundtvig contends that just as human self-love should naturally extend to "parents, children, and siblings" and hence not be enclosed, so the Danes, despite their powerlessness and weakness, should not give up their natural love of their fatherland just because of this "narrow-hearted" (*sneverhjertet*) tendency self-love.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶³ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1848-72," *Tradition and Renewal*, 346.

⁷⁶⁴ Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 26-7.

⁷⁶⁵ Grundtvig, "Langt højere bjerge (1820)," in *Folkehøjskolens Sangbog* (Odense: Forenignens Forlag, 1974), 304-05. I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge for his English translation. The more popular translation of the last sentence is: "when few have too much, and fewer too little."

⁷⁶⁶ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag II (1855)," *US X*, 46.

⁷⁶⁷ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag V (1855)," *US X*, 63.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid. [T]hi det er det store Guds Kiærligheds-Tegn, naar i et syndigt Menneske-Hjerte, Egen-Kiærligheden, som er kilden til al vor Synd og Elendighed, efterhaanden bliver som en udtørret Sø, og Menneske-Kiærligheden, der er her som en udtørret Brønd, bliver en Kilde i os, som springer til et evigt Liv."

⁷⁶⁹ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag II (1855)," *US X*, 46.

[T]hat all the good which applies to the partiality for father and mother, children and siblings, which also has its flaws and weaknesses, applies even more to the partiality for fatherland, mother-tongue and original people from generation to generation. Flaws here can never be so great that this partiality should not be best for a people and fuse with all the true human love that exists, so it cannot grow ice-cold unless the people's heart in general becomes so ice-cold that no one cares about the common good, but each individual only feathers their own nest.⁷⁷⁰

In the same vein, if a nation holds a self-enclosed love, it will lead to blind self-exaltation, an unfortunate separation from the whole of humanity, and even violent wars to promote one's own super-nationalist value.

Although Grundtvig endorses a people's natural partiality for their *folkelighed*, he warns that "the flaw of a people's love of their fatherland is indifference to the whole of humanity, which can degenerate into hatred, injustice, and unrighteousness towards foreigners, and especially neighbors."⁷⁷¹ He overcomes this by referring to the necessary human love of the transcendent God "over all things"⁷⁷² and to the catholicity of Christianity. Besides the legitimate defense of one's *folkelighed*, the global common good is always the goal that people should pursue and promote. Here Grundtvig pursues a kind of universal thinking according to which one *folkelighed* is not isolated from other nations' *folkeligheder* in the human race, but is engaged in a living interaction with different *folkeligheder* in a spirit of mutual respect and appreciation.

Steven M. Borish, through his own study experience at people's high schools in the 1980s, draws the following interesting and precise conclusion:

This is the true meaning of *folkelighed*: it teaches a form of patriotism that steadfastly refuses to devalue other cultures. Unlike most forms of nationalism, which build up self at the cost of other, the principle of *folkelighed* that Grundtvig taught in his poems, hymns, and histories repeatedly emphasized that 'the others are just as worthy as we are.' *folkelighed* thus stands adamantly opposed to the strident demands of nationalism... This is ...the principle of *folkelighed*, functioning as an alternative to nationalism, aided the peaceful transformation of self and society.⁷⁷³

To conclude, Grundtvig strives for the Danish national salvation in a *folkelig* approach, educating people with the spiritual roots of their national life. Because of the Danish common spiritual connection with the North and the particular historical role that Grundtvig assigns to Denmark, he could argue that the Danish cause is also the cause of the High North, and of the whole of humanity. Furthermore, although the people's enlightenment in Denmark also runs into many hindrances, Grundtvig believes that they will be overcome by the rule of divine Providence which leads human life from the "deepest ambiguity" (*dybeste Dunkelhed*) to the "highest clarity" (*høieste Klarhed*).⁷⁷⁴ He eventually claims that the Danish cause is also the cause of Christianity, and indeed of God. To

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 47. "[A]lt hvad Godt der giælder om Forkiærlighed til Fader og Moder, Børn og Sødskende, som ogsaa har sine Lyder og Svagheder, det giælder endnu i langt høiere Grad om Forkiærligheden til Fæderneland, Modersmaal og Folke-Stammen fra Slægt til Slægt, saa Lyderne derved kan aldrig være saa store, at jo denne Forkiærlighed er det Bedste hos Folket, og udgiøre een smeltning med al den virkelige Menneske-Kiærlighed, der findes, saa den Forkiærlighed kan ikke blive kold uden at Folke-Hjertet i det hele bliver saa iiskoldt, at ingen bryder sig om fælles Bedste, men hver Enkelt rager kun Ild til sin egen Kage."

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., 47. "Lyderne ved et Folks Fædernelands-Kiærlighed er nemlig den Ligeegyldighed for Menneskelighed i det hele, og den Hadskhed, Ubillighed og Uretfærdighed mod de Fremmede og især mod Naboerne, som Fædernelands-Kiærligheden kan udarte til."

⁷⁷² Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark III (1851)," in HB II, 262.

⁷⁷³ Borish, *The Land of the Living*, 415.

⁷⁷⁴ Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag III (1855)," US X, 54.

many people, this will lead to a great misunderstanding of the relationship between Christianity and the nation. Is it indeed an idolatrous form of nationalism? Or is it a kind of “egoistic nationalism”, which is what R. G. Rudelbach accuses Grundtvig of?⁷⁷⁵ Grundtvig needs to clarify what he means.

6.4.2. Grundtvig's Theology for the Nation

Grundtvig claims that the Danish cause is also the cause of Christianity. This point of view is easily unappreciated and misunderstood, as if “the Danes were the most Christian people” (*Danskerne var det aller christeligste Folk.*)⁷⁷⁶ But from what perspective does Grundtvig connect the Danish cause with Christianity?

Grundtvig begins the revival of both Christianity and the nation with a heart from which love springs and flows. Love is the most important aspect of Grundtvig's faith. As love “makes almost no evil”, despite our weak love, Christianity comes to the world in order to manifest God's boundless and true love of human beings as a great sign to overcome “self-love,” so that God's love becomes a new source of love within us.⁷⁷⁷ Love fulfills the law and leads to perfection (*er baade Lovens Fylde og Fuldkommenheds Baand*), and the role of Christianity is to redeem and save fallen humanity for a renewal which presupposes the awakening of human love.⁷⁷⁸ At the same time, Grundtvig distinguishes the humanist love of the 18th century based on “enlightenment and sound reason” from Christian love, which cannot be separated from “Word and Faith.”⁷⁷⁹ Our sins, according to Grundtvig, are against love itself.⁷⁸⁰ But the Word is the incarnate God's love of humanity on account of whom God's love pours over us in the Holy Spirit, and it is by faith that our hearts are charged with God's love.⁷⁸¹ The incarnate yet incessantly creating and resurrected Word is the concretization of the mutual divine-human love. As St. Paul acclaims with great joy and certainty, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8: 35, ESV). In this light, Grundtvig regards Christianity “not simply as the result of God's love of humanity at the consummation of time, but also as the act of God's love of man in the course of life.”⁷⁸²

Based on this understanding of Christianity, which, according to Grundtvig, is “the only right, and therefore also the only blessed and fruitful one for the human heart and for human life in all its directions and relations,” a true and dynamic Christian congregation can be formed by faith.⁷⁸³ Faith in the Word of God fulfills Grundtvig's vision that God's love “extends to the whole of humanity” and renews all human life.⁷⁸⁴ Therefore, we need to believe in Christianity as “such an act of God's love of human beings,” enlightens people about God's love, so that people can take God's love into their hearts.⁷⁸⁵ The living congregation shaped by the act of God's love, through people's faith and in the same Holy Spirit with Christ, is the sign of God's love in the world.⁷⁸⁶ This living congregation is not at all institutional, but the embodiment of the divine-human dynamic of love.

⁷⁷⁵ Grundtvig, “Om Folkelighed og Dr. Rudelbach,” *Dansk Kirketidende* Nr. 124 (Januar 1848), *US* IX, 89.

⁷⁷⁶ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag V (1855),” *US* X, 62.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

Thus, both God and humanity are locked into the “Creator-Creature”⁷⁸⁷ relationship through the dynamic of the divine-human love embodied and exemplified by the incarnate Word.

It is especially because of the importance of the Danish “childlike” hearts through which God’s love of humanity is first manifested in the Danes and finds its earthly home in the North, that the Danish cause is also the cause of Christianity, and of God. “Heart-warmth” is the remnant image of God in humanity, and what Grundtvig tries to encourage in his compatriots is to restore and revive this inner spiritual dimension of the peaceful heart for the national life in almost every respect. In the case of both the general suffrage for the new democratic parliament of 1849 and the war of the two duchies, Grundtvig prays and preaches for the “victory of heart-warmth (*Hjerteligheden*)” through which God could save Denmark.⁷⁸⁸ Denmark, the little boat that is close to the boat of the Church, will be at the hand of the Lord who pacifies the storm,⁷⁸⁹ and with God’s Providence, she will fight for “victory, freedom, and enlightenment.”⁷⁹⁰ Along with the liberation of people from class difference, Grundtvig believes that the breaking of the “external bond” between “ruler and the ruled” should give way to the “internal bond of love between king and people, and between fellow citizens.”⁷⁹¹ Here Grundtvig is still concerned with the spiritual link of loving hearts for social cohesion to cope with social breakdown.

Grundtvig believes that the original natural relationship between Christianity and *folkelighed* is like a “heavenly guest” who stays at an “earthly home,” with Christianity serving the *folkelighed*.⁷⁹² In his response to A.G. Rudelbach’s accusation of an “egoistic *folkelighed*” in the name of Christianity, Grundtvig distinguishes between Christianity and *folkelighed* but does not find them incompatible.⁷⁹³ He does not believe that “Danishness can make us either omniscient or blessed.”⁷⁹⁴ The revival of the national spirit can neither replace Christianity in terms of salvation, nor “make a people entitled to Christianity’s blessing,”⁷⁹⁵ but Grundtvig does not leave the enterprise fully up to secular initiatives:

I am, however, crediting myself with the readiness to fight as boldly and to suffer as much as I could for living Christianity and living Danishness. For in me, and as far as I can see, in most people in Denmark, the two have grown inseparable- and for good reason. On the one hand, a living Danishness is always aware of the omnipotence of Christianity and its own impotence; on the other hand, the spirit of Christianity always borrows its mother-tongue from the people among whom it dwells and whom it

⁷⁸⁷ Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 80. “The self-understanding that Grundtvig now imagines himself among the humanity, has become necessary, because the whole situation of understanding between God and human beings is another one when the crucial in the Creator-creature relationship becomes God’s deed of love and human love to God in it.” “Den selvforståelse, Grundtvig nu forestiller sig hos mennesket, er blevet nødvendig, fordi hele forståelsessituationen mellem Gud og menneske er en anden, når det afgørende i skaber-skabningforholdet bliver Guds kærlighedsgerning og menneskets kærlighed til Gud i den.”

⁷⁸⁸ Quoted in *GDK* II, 92.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ Grundtvig, “Præken paa Nytaarsdag 1849,” quoted in *GDK* II, 93.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Christendom (1847),” *US* IX, 81.

⁷⁹³ Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Christendom (1847),” *US* IX, 81. “[S]aa jeg stræber stedse tydeligere at holde Danskhed og Christendom ud fra hinanden, vist nok ingenlunde som uforligelige.”

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., 88. “Danskheden kan enten gjøre os alvidende eller salige.”

⁷⁹⁵ Grundtvig, “Om Folkelighed og Dr. Rudelbach (1848),” *US* IX, 90. “At jeg nu ved den Folkelighed, Christendommen forudsætter, hverken forstaaer noget, der skulde kunne træde isteden for Chrstiendom eller gjøre et Folk berettiget til Christendommens Velsignelse.”

enlightens and enlivens, just as Christ Himself borrowed the womb he would dwell in from the people in whose midst he wished to live and work as a human being!⁷⁹⁶

In his own mind Grundtvig never confuses *folkelighed* with Christianity, but keeps them distinguished and interactive. In 1849 he provides a summary of the relationship between Christianity and *folkelighed*, noting the following three features: (a) the “Christian humanity” is above all the national humanities, such as the Danishness, and the Christian kingdom does not belong to this world; (b) Christianity simply borrows different national languages in order that people with the awakened spiritual life can believe in Christianity, and thus there will be a living interaction between Christianity and *folkelighed*; (c) Christianity will not replace the nationalities in the world, but “serve” and refresh them to develop freely.⁷⁹⁷ Concerning the living interaction between Christianity and *folkelighed*, on the one hand, Christianity enlightens different national life to reach a higher goal of spiritual reality in each of their own mother-tongues; on the other, the different national life also “strengthens Christianity to continue and fulfill its own life journey.”⁷⁹⁸ Grundtvig insists that “Christian life considered as a spiritual national life” be “in a living interaction with all the chief peoples’ characteristic or peculiar development and mother tongue,” and “this interaction is Christian people’s peculiar complicated life course.”⁷⁹⁹

The natural free “original relationship” between Christianity and national life, however, can be dampened or even annihilated by the hierarchical rule of clergy (*Præste-Herskabets, (Hierarkiets) Dage*) in the enforcing Church State and State Church.⁸⁰⁰ The uniform papist Church State denationalizes people’s *folkelighed* by imposing Latin as the common language.⁸⁰¹ Therefore, a reform of the Danish State Church is of great necessity. In order to set the true Christian faith free from the domestication of both the State Church and Church State, Grundtvig tries to reconfigure the Danish Church in order to re-host the ecumenical Christianity, the heavenly guest, to stay in the Danish nation with living interactions with the Danish people’s national peculiarities. Thus it will be conducive not only to reclaim an authentic Danish Christianity, but also to challenge any secular construct with Christianity’s ecumenical and transcendent referent so that there cannot appear any religious nationalism, i.e., a deification of any nation in the name of Christianity.

After he has a clear understanding of the relationship between Christianity and *folkelighed* especially in 1847, Grundtvig even regrets his early emphasis on “Christian first,” and that his translation of the Danish history fails to awaken the Danish people, let alone convert the non-believing Danes to true Christianity.⁸⁰² Christianity must grow the same as the development of human and national nature.

⁷⁹⁶ Grundtvig, “Response from Grundtvig to On His High School and the ‘Danish Society’ [Forening] (1854),” *SL* 350-51; Bugge, *GSV* II, 281.

⁷⁹⁷ Grundtvig, “Menneskehed og Folkefærd Betragtede med Nordiske Øine II,” *Danskeren* Nr. 44, (October og November 1849), *HB* II, 225.

⁷⁹⁸ Grundtvig, “Menneskehed og Folkefærd Betragtede med Nordiske Øine II (1849),” *HB* II, 227. “[D]a maae vi deraf slutte, at Christendommen, fordi den er grundfolkelig, baade er den bedste Læremester for alle Folk, og at den, i samme Grad, som Folkelivet lader sig lære af den, ogsaa styrker det til at fortsætte og fuldende sit eget Levnedsløb.”

⁷⁹⁹ Grundtvig, *Kristenhedens Syvstjerne*, 33. “[M]en at Kristenlivet helt igennem betragtes som et aandeligt Folkeliv, der har staaet i levende Vekselvirkning med alle de Hovedfolks ejendommelige Udvikling og Modersmaal, hos hvem kristenlivets har aabenbaret sig i Kristelig Bekendelse, Forkyndelse og Lovsang, og at denne Vekselvirkning baade er Grunden til Kristenfolkets sært indviklede Levnedsløb.”

⁸⁰⁰ Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Kristendom (1847),” *US* IX, 81.

⁸⁰¹ Grundtvig, “Menneskehed og Folkefærd Betragtede med Nordiske Øine I (1849),” *HB* II, 224-25.

⁸⁰² Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Kristendom (1847),” *US* IX, 81.

Therefore, only when the national life is awakened and becomes living again, can it be prepared to interact with the living Christianity. “As human beings differ from animals in terms of speeches,”⁸⁰³ the way to help a nation to reclaim their self-consciousness is also through the living word out of their mouths, i.e., the national vernacular. Therefore, the main task for the people’s high schools is to resurrect the living voice of people so as to train real free and living Danes.⁸⁰⁴ But this is exactly the task of Christianity to create the free *folkelighed* first and then interact with itself.⁸⁰⁵ It is very important to restore people’s living voice, as it is the basic condition for the public discourse about social issues.

6.5. Summary

Grundtvig’s promotion of *folkelighed* through the people’s high school has a great impact upon almost every aspect of social, national, and international life. Therefore, we can say that the people’s high school, as is claimed by Peter Manniche, is rooted in the nation in a *folkelig* way,⁸⁰⁶ but manifests its sociological significance in civil society. In hindsight, the people’s high school engenders such revitalizing social movements as “the free congregations, the gymnastic associations and rifle clubs, the local-meeting-house movement, the credit associations and savings banks, local agricultural schools, consumer co-operatives, co-operative dairies, export co-operatives, and co-operative insurance societies,” which, according to Borish, is presupposed by a prior “cultural revitalization --- that is, renewal, purification, a finding of lost cultural roots” on the basis of a “mythologized past” in order to conjure up a better vision for the future.⁸⁰⁷ Without the necessary enlightenment of the common people, Grundtvig’s blueprint for the Danish social reconstruction and the national salvation could not be fulfilled. As Grundtvig says:

However, a *genuine* enlightenment extends itself to the *whole* of human life, shows the deep coinherence [*den dybe Sammenhæng*] between the life of the individual, the nation, and the whole human race, and develops a way of thinking that is desirable for all social relations... This *genuine* enlightenment the authorities must take a fatherly responsibility for at all levels of education, from the common people to the erudite scholars, if the state is to be rescued and to blossom instead of *perishing* from ‘enlightenment.’⁸⁰⁸

At the crucial transitional stage of modern Denmark, the concept of *folkelighed* is conducive not only to the social reconstruction for a civil society, but also to the national salvation when challenged by external threats. Thus Grundtvigianism is not only “a movement within the church,” but also “a political people’s movement” and “a cultural battle.”⁸⁰⁹ The interactive relationship between Church, State, and School for the common good results in the democratization of Denmark. The heavenly guest of Christianity helps to create a free Danish *folkelighed* in the High North, and in return is manifested in concrete Danish life. What is most important in Grundtvig’s spiritual

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 88.

⁸⁰⁵ As Grundtvig says, “The freedom of spirit and *folkelighed* are what Christianity must find, or create if missing so that Christianity can work in it Spirit.” Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Christendom,” *US IX*, 85. “[M]en især fordi Aands-Frihed og Folkelighed er hvad Christendommen, for at virke i sin Aand, enten maa forefinde eller, hvis de fattes, skabe dem.”

⁸⁰⁶ Peter Manniche, *Denmark: A Social Laboratory* (Copenhagen/Humphrey Milford: G.E.C. Gad Publisher/Oxford University Press, 1939), 86.

⁸⁰⁷ Steven Borish, “N.F.S. Grundtvig as a Charismatic Prophet: an analysis of his life and work in the light of revitalization-movement theory,” *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 42, no.3 (1998): 238.

⁸⁰⁸ Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL*, 83; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 31.

⁸⁰⁹ Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People 1848-72,” in *Tradition and Renewal*, 379.

legacy is, as Manniche succinctly summarizes, “his [Grundtvig’s] vision of a Christianity which was not unworldly and a world that was not unchristian.”⁸¹⁰ There is a deep coinherence between Grundtvig’s Christian perspective and his public involvement.

⁸¹⁰ Manniche, *Denmark: A Social Laboratory*, 75n1.

7. Grundtvig's Public Theology

7.1. The Uniqueness of Grundtvig's Public Theology

Public theology generally means voicing the particular Christian perspective in the public discourse on socio-cultural and politico-economic issues. With the challenge of modernity, however, Grundtvig has to redefine Christianity by rediscovering the original apostolic faith. Then he needs a careful and serious scrutiny of the current socio-political challenges so that he can endeavor to offer a Christian contribution to the issue. What is unique about Grundtvig's public theology is that there is actually no such dualistic gap between the sacred and the secular, between the Christian and the *folkelig*, and thus between the divine and the human. As mentioned earlier, with Thyssen and Jørgensen, there is indeed a certain distinction of the divine from the human, but the two are always coexisting in a living interaction (*Vexel-Virkning*). Along this line, I have already delineated Grundtvig's theological understanding of Christianity, and especially the living Word through the Apostles' Creed and the sacraments in the living congregation, and his public engagement to contribute to the construction of civil society and national salvation through the advocacy and promotion of *folkelighed* manifested typically in the vernacular. The question remains: what is the relationship between Grundtvig's Christian engagement and his public involvement? The question can also be asked in another more essential way: how does Grundtvig link the divine and the human? How can we find a deep coinherence between the two? According to Kaj Thaning, this is also Grundtvig's life-long question to clarify "Christianity's relationship to human life."⁸¹¹ I shall try to explore Grundtvig's answer to this question as follows.

7.2. The Deep Divine-Human Coinherence in Grundtvig's Public Theology

Generally speaking, Grundtvig's engagement in the Christian and the human life coinhere in the same living Word, incarnate yet continuously creating, and the Christian and the human are fused in the same life, spiritual and human. This is a profound but intimate mystery revealed by Christ Jesus. Grundtvig works in two tracks of human life, the Christian and the naturalist (heathen),⁸¹² but both converge in the same spiritual human life. Grundtvig believes that, with God's creation through the Word, human beings are fully equipped with all that is necessary for their life to grow into God's children.⁸¹³ At the same time, the living Word is also incarnate and clearly manifests itself in the living congregation. In the light of this continuous divine-human relationship, Grundtvig suggests that the way to restore the original natural course of human life is the same for both Christians and naturalists, that is, through the same Word, incarnate yet continuously creating, no matter whether it is a human absorption into Christ the incarnate Word for Christians or a spiritual absorption of Christ --- the continuously creating Word into naturalists.⁸¹⁴ To take the life of faith, hope, and love as example, Niels H. Gregersen believes that these three are the "internal Christlikeness" (*indvortes Christelighed*) within both Christians and non-Christians as the image of God, which corresponds in a living interactive way to the true human life of the incarnate Word.⁸¹⁵ Hans Raun Iversen emphasizes the divine-human correspondence in terms of faith, hope, and love by quoting Grundtvig: "Faith, hope and love, ascent from below and descent from above, are met in the Word

⁸¹¹ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 10.

⁸¹² Grundtvig, *Nordic Mythology* (1832), *SL*, 59.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-2.

⁸¹⁵ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 25-7.

of God” (*Tro og Håb og Kærlighed, nedenfra og ovenned, mødes i Gudsordet*).⁸¹⁶ Grundtvig draws the conclusion that the true human life of Christ is a life of faith, hope, and love. He regards the Christian life as a Christ-Life (“*Det Christelige Liv som et Christus-Liv*”).⁸¹⁷ For Grundtvig, the core of Christianity is neither the theologians’ “dogmatization on the symbolics” (*Dogmatiseringen efter de symboliske Bøger*) nor the “pietism of the godly assemblies” (*Pietismen i det gudelige Forsamlinger*), but “life in Christ” (*Livet i Kristus*).⁸¹⁸ This kind of life in Christ also more or less remains in the naturalists’ life, albeit unrecognized by them. After all, both Christians and naturalists lead the same life that follows the laws of human nature to grow from childhood to maturity, and from children of humankind to children of God.

Grundtvig has a good balanced anthropological view. “We are never tempted to underrate the corruption of life in the sign and the perdition of death,” he says, “but neither are we tempted to underrate the value of the Word as the unifying and continuing factor of life.”⁸¹⁹ In this light, Grundtvig carries out both his pastoral and his social ministry after 1832. On the one hand, he tries to set the “heathens” free from the enforcements of School and State to restore their natural free human life by promoting his concept of *folkelighed*; on the other, he tries to reform the Danish State Church to restore the historical ecumenical Christianity in the living congregations. With his confidence in the continuous divine-human relationship, he believes optimistically that the naturalists can also become Christians one day because of their inner Christ-likeness. In one of his sermons, Grundtvig says the following, “Yes, although the heathens do not know what they become by following only the ambiguous voice of the heart, they can become Christians.”⁸²⁰ This is out of the work of the Holy Spirit, as the heathens still have hearts longing for eternity.⁸²¹ Let me quote again his poem of 1837 in which he claims that:

Therefore every man on this earth
Must strive to be a true person,
To open his ears for the word of truth
And to give God glory
As Christianity is the truth
Even if he is not a Christian today,
He will be one tomorrow.⁸²²

Grundtvig’s discussion with his friend, Frederik Barfod, can also illustrate this point of view. Grundtvig worries not about Barfod’s earthly conversion here below, but about his love of truth, for Grundtvig believes that conversion can happen “either here or beyond” because the merit of Christ’s descent into hell has conquered all sin and death, and “made conversion after death possible.”⁸²³

⁸¹⁶ See Hans Raun Iversen, “Folkelighed og kristendom,” in *Menneske først, kristen så: Helge Grells Grundtvig-disputats til debat*, ed. Jens Holger Schjørring (Århus: ANIS, 1988), 81, 84n10. Prof. Iversen teaches Practical Theology at Copenhagen University.

⁸¹⁷ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US* VIII, 436.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁸¹⁹ Grundtvig, “Det medfødt og det gjenfødte Menneske-Liv (1857),” in *Den Kristelige Børnelærdom*, *US* IX, 434. The English translation is taken from *Selected Writings*, 78.

⁸²⁰ Grundtvig, 5.s.e.h.3.k, 24, quoted in Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 114. “Ya, derfor kan Hedninger blive Christne, skjønt de ikke vide, hvad de derved bliver, men følge kun Hjertets dunkle Stemme.”

⁸²¹ Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 114.

⁸²² Grundtvig, “Man First and then Christian (1837),” trans. Johannes Knudsen, *Selected Writings*, 141

⁸²³ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 162. I am indebted to Allchin’s reference to Barfod’s memory of Grundtvig. See Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 87.

At the same time, Grundtvig does not believe that, (let me quote again), “Danishness [*folkelighed*] can make us either omniscient or blessed [saved].”⁸²⁴ From the Christian perspective, he criticizes people’s disbelief and tries to build up the living congregations to bear witness to the living incarnate Word. A living *folkelighed* is but the presupposition of the living Christianity.

The seeming conflicts or tensions in Grundtvig’s expressions of the deeply coinherent relationship between the Christian and the human have prompted various debates among Danish theologians. Can there be a different diagram to explain Grundtvig’s deep coinherence between the Christian and the human? With a Chinese perspective of a *Yin-Yang* paradigm, I shall return to this question later on in this study (see ch.8.2.).

7.3. The Feature of Grundtvig’s Public Theology: The Humanity of Christianity

I shall now turn to Grundtvig’s public theology. Once he has established his Christian perspective, Grundtvig is ready to address the life-setting of his time. Grundtvig emphasizes the public dimension of Christian faith. As Kaj Thaning points out, the Christian faith could not be possible at all without a “profound participation in natural human life.”⁸²⁵ But the question that matters, says Backhouse, is “[t]he extent and nature of Christian participation in the life of the state”⁸²⁶ in Grundtvig’s time. The pietistic groups are demanding true Christian faith to separate themselves from the nominal Christians while Bishop Martensen argues for the continuation of a Christian State as a “humanistic state” despite Søren Kierkegaard’s vehement attack.⁸²⁷ Here we need to explore what kind of significance Grundtvig envisions for Christianity in Danish public life in civil society.

Grundtvig’s public theology starts with his church reform, and carries with it important cultural and political implications for Danish civil society and national salvation. Although his influence on culture and society has no enforced ecclesial or institutional form, it is not independent of his Christian perspective of the deep coinherence between the divine and the human. What he tries to do in the public sphere is to reawaken and revive the national spirit to be interacted with the Holy Spirit in a living way, so that the human word and the Christian Word can be fused again for a true Christ-like life of faith, hope, and love. It is with such reflections on the possible function of Christianity in a holistic human life that Grundtvig turns to highlight “the humanity of Christianity”:

Only when we dare to say and show that the Lord and his congregations’ goal is the same as that of all human beings, who become self-conscious in a living way, in their enlightenment, clarification, and perpetuation of human life, which alone is possible by victory over darkness, sin and death, only then is Christian church history justified by the whole of humanity’s participation, and is sure of the whole Christian congregation’s tense attention, like the star over God’s path on earth to redeem all heathens. ... This is namely the *humanity of Christianity* (my italics) in its highest and deepest position.⁸²⁸

⁸²⁴ Grundtvig, “Folkelighed og Christendom (1847),” *US* IX, 88. “Danskheden kan enten gjøre os alvidende eller salige.”

⁸²⁵ Thaning, *Grundtvig*, 134.

⁸²⁶ Backhouse, “State and Nation in the Theology of Hans Lassen Martensen,” *Hans Lassen Martensen*, 308.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, 308, 315.

⁸²⁸ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Speil*, *US* X, 194. “Kun derfor, naar vi tør sige og vise, at Herrens og hans Menigheds Maal er det samme som Menneske-Slægtens, den Menneske-Slægts, der er sig selv levende bevidst: altsaa Menneske-Livets Oplysning, Forklaring og Forevigelse, som kun er mulig ved Sejer over Mørke, Synd og Død, kun da er den kristelige Kirkehistorie berettiget til hele Menneske-Slægtens Deltagelse, og er sikker paa hele den kristne Menigheds spændte

Grundtvig is arguing here that the divine and the human have a common goal, and that the task of Christianity is to serve life, to “enlighten, clarify, and perpetuate human life.” By turning to the humanity of Christianity, Grundtvig makes his public theology sociologically realistic. Let me quote the following important passage:

[M]y conception of Christianity is first and foremost *human*, fusing together with the divine. So I believe, according to our Lord’s way of thinking, that human beings are not created for the sake of Christianity, but Christianity is created for the sake of human beings. Among all that is good for human life, Christianity is in my view not simply the best, but the only blessing that gets us anywhere, because Christianity picks up all things, good or evil, by their roots and has the power to overcome evil with good.⁸²⁹

So Christianity is for the sake of human life, not the other way round. Meanwhile, Grundtvig also opens up the history of the Christian Church, the historical universal apostolic congregation down through history, to involve all humanity’s participation. The living congregation bears witness to the mystery of human life in the light of the living incarnate Word in church liturgy, and serves to recognize and specify the innate Christ-likeness in each heathen. By encouraging heathens to be truly human in terms of the continuous creation of the living Word manifested through the incarnation and appropriated in the liturgy, redemption is also achieved. Thus the living Word has found and become united with the invisible Holy Spirit in the Spirit’s continuous ministry. What then, are the basic contents of Grundtvig’s public theology from the Christian perspective?

7.4. The Contents of Grundtvig’s Public Theology

Public theology is a two-edged sword, which engages the divine and the human, and the Christian and the people for a living interaction between the two in the public life. It usually brings about reflections upon or even mutual criticism of each side for the sake of the common good in the historical development of human life. So Grundtvig’s public theology, first of all, involves the continuous internal renewal of true Christianity and the living congregation. Then Christianity can better exert its external influence on the public.

7.4.1. Internal Renewal of Christianity

7.4.1.1. The Rediscovery of the Free Christianity

First of all, in order for a true living interaction between Christianity and the public to take place, Grundtvig repeatedly emphasizes the *freedom* of both Christianity and the living congregation. If enslaved by a papist Church State and a Caesaropapist State Church, Christianity can neither freely express its prophetic view to challenge the limits of any secular institution or state on earth, nor motivate free Christians to bear effective witness to the transformative work of the “heavenly guest.” Freedom is the absolute prerequisite for Christianity’s free movement. The Christian faith cannot be

Opmærksomhed, som Stjæren over Guds Vej paa Jorden til Frelse blandt alle Hedninger. ... Dette er nemlig Kristendommens Menneskelighed i højest og dybeste Forstand.”

⁸²⁹ Grundtvig, “Den Danske Sag V (1855),” *US X*, 62-3. “[M]in Betragtning af Christendommen er først og sidst den menneskelige, der smelter sammen med den Guddommelige, saa vist, som efter Vorherres Tankegang, Mennesket ikke er skabt for Christendommens Skyld, men Christendommen er skabt for Menneskets Skyld. Blandt alt hvad der er godt for Menneske-Livet, er da Christendommen i mine Øine ikke blot det Bedste, men det eneste Gode, der kan batte, fordi Christendommen tager alting, baade Godt og Ondt, op fra Roden af, og har Magt til at overvinde det Onde med det Gode.”

imposed upon people with sacraments carrying civil consequences.⁸³⁰ It is a matter of freedom and conscience. So even in his old age, Grundtvig is still preaching:

Yes, my friends, just as I, precisely because this little, but true [God's] tenderness was with me, have always done my best to win it [tenderness] with the good, without giving up a jot of the essential freedom for the spirit and the heart, freedom for all that is good, so am I also certain that the congregation in future will feel itself driven to pursue the essential freedom without which God's grace can never become our, or bear their, great fruits to perfection... Neither courage nor energy must be lacking, but they must accompany us and have the light before them, since the Lord has said that he will never let his [disciples] walk in darkness when they follow Him, for they shall see the light of life; the light leads the way, because He is the life, the light, and the way.⁸³¹

So Grundtvig claims that, "in order to achieve its human task," Christianity needs human beings the same as human beings need Christianity for a "free interaction with people," and thus "freedom in the National Church" must be won.⁸³² Therefore, the freedom of Christianity and the living congregation is the condition of Grundtvig's public theology. The former institutional State Church should stop its civil functions such as school education, and the living congregation should concentrate on its spiritual ministry. The reclamation of the true identity of the historical ecumenical Christianity means for Grundtvig withdrawing from the historical State-Church entanglement in Denmark. With his strong emphasis on freedom, however, Grundtvig's Christianity and congregations have taken a diffused form⁸³³, existing loosely within the civil arrangement of the Danish National Church and in human life. Thus Grundtvig's public theology appears rather weak in the collective ecclesial sense. It has to rely on Christian individuals' active social involvement in the light of the life principle revealed by Christianity.

7.4.1.2. The *Folkelig* Enlightenment of the Living Congregation

Secondly, in order to achieve the human task of Christianity, the living congregation must be humanly enlightened. In other words, Christianity and the living congregation need a national

⁸³⁰ As Grundtvig notes, "There are a full two hundred years between the arrival of Ansgar and the death of Knud the Great, and still it is not until half a century later, under Knud the Holy, that Christianity can be said to have been imposed upon the people of Denmark." Grundtvig, "The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836)," *SL*, 134.

⁸³¹ Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1871," *US* X, 564. "Ja, mine Venner, ligesom jeg, netop fordi denne lille, men ægte Ømhed var hos mig, altid har, saavidt det stod i min Magt, stræbt at vinde det med det Gode, uden at opgive det mindste af den nødvendige Frihed for Aand og Hjerter, Frihed for alt Godt, saaledes er jeg ogsaa vis paa, at Menigheden fremdeles vil føle sig dreven til at stræbe efter den nødvendige Frihed, uden hvilken Guds Naadegaver aldrig fuldkommen kan blive vore eller bære deres store Frugter til Fuldkommenhed... Da skal hverken Modet eller Kræfterne fattes, men de skal følge med og have Lyset foran sig, eftersom Herren har sagt, at han aldrig vil lade Sine vandre i Mørke, naar de kun vil følge ham, thi da skal de se Livets Lys; det gaaer foran, fordi han jo er baade Livet, Lyset og Veien."

⁸³² Grundtvig, "Folkelighed og Christendom (1847)," *US* IX, 513. "Efter at det imidlertid er gaaet up for mig, at Kristendommen, for at løse sin menneskelige Opgave, trænger lige saa meget til Mennesket, som Mennesket til Kristendommen, saa bliver det mig daglig klarere, at Kristi Evangelium kun paa een af to Maader kan paa ny indtræde i fri Vexelvirkning med Folket: enten ved at vinde Friheden inden i Folke-Kirken, eller ved at søge Friheden der udenfor."

⁸³³ The term is borrowed from C. K. Yang, who coined it to describe the traditional feature of Chinese religion. As Yang says, "[D]iffused religion is conceived of as a religion having its theology, cultus, and personnel so intimately diffused into one or more secular social institutions that they become a part of the concept, rituals, and structure of the latter, thus having no significant independent existence... Institutional religions functions independently as a separate system, while diffused religion functions as part of the secular social institutions... it may be very important as an undergirding force for secular institutions and the general social order as a whole." See C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 294-95.

enlightenment for Christian life for the following three reasons. First of all, the Lutheran orthodoxy can only provide a castle-in-the-air for Christians without leaving any meaning for this worldly life. This has caused many Christians simply to lead their lives with a futuristic eschatology. Secondly, the enforced Church uniformity through the widespread use of Latin de-nationalizes Christianity which has become so foreign to Danish people's life. Finally, as the salvation of the life of individuals, all nations and the whole of humanity need to follow the "unchanged ground law of human life and the uniform development of human life" (*Menneske-Livets uforanderlige Grundlove og Menneske-Livets ensartede Udvikling*), which is best manifested by Christ --- the second Adam's life at baptism when His human life develops fully to "fulfill His righteousness" as "Israel's national spirit" and hence is "spiritually crowned by the glory of the divinity."⁸³⁴ Thus the living congregation must be enlightened in a *folkelig* way⁸³⁵ so that the glorification of human life which is also the goal of "the Spirit of the Lord and His congregations," can be achieved by "the divine means in a natural human way."⁸³⁶ That is, human salvation is fulfilled in the same human life, and hence must follow the same law of human nature, and in this context the *folkelig* enlightenment of the congregation is indispensable.

It is with these three reasons in mind that Grundtvig voices the following idea:

For just as the Christian congregation, resting for now and hereafter confidently on its faith in the Holy Spirit and God's Word from the Lord's own mouth, very much needs to be enlightened about the human spirit and the human word in their power and reality, so does it also need, for the sake of its Christ-like human life, to be enlightened about the human national life, its condition and purpose, as it is obviously a national life of a higher order than the Christian congregation, as the spiritual people of God with God's Spirit shall accomplish until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the congregation's life, together moreover with the mother-tongues, is set in living interaction with all the human life of all peoples, in which the gospel of Christ is a guest and lends shelter.⁸³⁷

Grundtvig insists that the enlightenment of the people is indispensable for the living congregation. This is because after their conversion Christians, after all, lead the same human life as before. As Thodberg says, "Christianity as life is first and foremost a renewal of the original, natural life which was allotted to everyone."⁸³⁸ When we are united with Christ, says Grundtvig, we will have a new life which points to "the natural, purely human and heartfelt life of Christ and in the whole Christian

⁸³⁴ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Speje*, US X, 194-95.

⁸³⁵ According to Grundtvig, "It [The Enlightenment] is solely truly human, because it enlightens human beings about what they are, not as a mammal, but as a creation in God's image with Spirit and heart, which is the only view that can become universal because it enlightens the real life as it is found, and it follows step by step in this way as it develops and clarifies itself." See Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemøderne 1866," US X, 555. (The Lord is like a sun whose "divine and universal" light must "shine in" people with a living enlightenment.) "[D]og er den eneste sande menneskelige, fordi den oplyser Mennesket om, hvad det er, ikke som et Pattedyr, men som en Skabning i Guds Billede med Aand og med Hjerte, og den eneste, der kan blive almindelig, fordi den oplyser det virkelige Liv saaledes som det findes, og følger det Skridt for Skridt saaledes som det udvikler og klarer sig."

⁸³⁶ Grundtvig, *Kirke-Speje*, US X, 196.

⁸³⁷ Grundtvig, "Det evige Livs-Ord af Vorherres egen Mund til Menigheden (1860-61)," in *Den Kristelige Børnelærdom*, US IX, 586. "Ligesom nemlig den kristne Menighed, for nu og herefter at hvile trygt i Troen paa den Helligaand og paa Guds-Ordet af Herrens egen Mund, trænger højt til at oplyses om Menneske-Aanden og Menneske-Ordet i deres kraft og Virksomhed, saaledes trænger den ogsaa for sit kristelige Menneskelivs Skyld højlig til at oplyses om det menneskelige Folkeliv, dets Vilkaar og Øjemed, da det aabenbar er et Folkeliv i enhøjere Orden, den kristne Menighed, som det aandelige Guds-Folk med Guds Aand, skal fuldføre til Vorherres Jesu Kristi Dag, og Menighedslivet desuden ved Modersmaalene er sat i levende vevsvirkning med alle de Folks Menneskeliv, som Kristi Evangelium aandelig gjæster og laaner Herberg hos."

⁸³⁸ Thodberg, "Grundtvig the Hymnwriter," in *Tradition and Renewal*, 174.

life.”⁸³⁹ Again Thodberg points out that it is in his sermon for Epiphany of 1821 that Grundtvig, perhaps, for the first time, puts forward the idea of the unity between Christians and the infant Jesus:

Christ is at hand in the weak, unsure faith. It is a question of becoming a child with the infant Jesus. Or in other words, it is a child-like expectation and faith that can seize hold of Christ. The child has such a living memory of paradise that it comes closest to God’s likeness and can therefore be fused together with Christ. Thus in nature and in biblical imagery the child looks more directly at God himself.⁸⁴⁰

The life of the living congregation, according to Begtrup’s interpretation of Grundtvig, is the “repetition of the Lord’s earthly life in all aspects” (*Gentagelse af Herrens Jordeliv i alle Dele*),⁸⁴¹ which needs continuous growth. Thus the congregation becomes the community with a Christ-like life. Holger Begtrup also claims that the Christian life with “faith and baptism as its core” (*Troen og Daaben som Kristenlivets Kærne*) is not static, but continues to grow in order to “achieve the fullness that is found in our Lord’s own life” (*som stiler paa at naa hele den Fylde, som findes I Vorherres eget Liv*).⁸⁴² Only by understanding the human and the national life can Christianity not only better interact with it, but also bear its Christian witness of Christ-like life more effectively. As Grundtvig claims:

The more kindly and more inwardly we can link the divine and the human, the heavenly and the earthly, the temporal and the eternal, the spiritual and the corporal, the better it is and the more we are like our Lord Jesus Christ who was one with His heavenly father and yet a human being like us in very way, though without sin (1841).⁸⁴³

To put it simply, Christianity must be not only human but also *folkelig*. That is, Christianity, as a “heavenly guest,” always needs to assume a concrete national form to manifest itself. By composing hymns with Nordic cultural features, fighting for the emancipation of true Christianity from the secular institutions, understanding the Christian gospel and history in terms of the Nordic fighting spirit⁸⁴⁴ and assigning the High North the role of the sixth congregation, Grundtvig contextualizes and Danicizes Christianity, so that not only can the Danes better understand and accept the gospel, but can also embody a wonderful example of the living interaction between Christianity and *folkelighed*, and between the ecumenical and the local. Thus Grundtvig’s contextual efforts prepare for Christianity an earthly home in Denmark.

7.4.2. External Influence upon the People and the Public Life

After mentioning the necessary internal preparation of Christianity, I shall now try to analyze the possible influence of Grundtvig’s Christianity on Danish public life.

7.4.2.1. Creating a Free *Folkelighed* for the Public Discourse

In order for Christianity to exert its influence on public life, it must have a living interactive dialogue partner, i.e., a free and *folkelig* human life. Holger Betrup claims that, pragmatically speaking, it is from his study trips to England that Grundtvig learns that the development of real

⁸³⁹ Quoted in *GDK*, 21.

⁸⁴⁰ Thodberg, “Grundtvig the Preacher: the Poet in the Pulpit,” in *Traditional and Renewal*, 137.

⁸⁴¹ *GDK* I, 124.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, 185.

⁸⁴³ Quoted in Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People 1848-72,” 359.

⁸⁴⁴ Niels Lyhne Jensen, “Grundtvig and Mythology,” in *Grundtvig’s Ideas in North America*, ed. The Danish Institute, (Holte: Scandinavian Seminar College, 1983), 95-6.

human life here and now, either personal or collective, cannot do without freedom.⁸⁴⁵ As Grundtvig recalls in 1862-63:

For in England I learned first with regard to *freedom* and all that is human to lay the whole emphasis on *reality* with deep contempt for the empty appearance and penpushing in every aspect; for although I found that the English were by no means free for all this, I did find in them life and death next to each other: Life everywhere where one strives freely to use life forces, and death everywhere where they torment the living by honoring the dead.⁸⁴⁶

So freedom stimulates people's creativity to promote social development. Theologically speaking, Grundtvig understands the activities of human beings with *imago dei* through heart, mouth, and hand.⁸⁴⁷ The love of heart must be put into practice by hand, and the two are connected by the word of mouth. Therefore, the holistic development of human life cannot be achieved without full freedom. Only with the freedom of the human spirit and words is it possible to meet the free Spirit and Word who are engaged in a continuous creation among human beings despite the human fall.

In short, human beings must also be free, and at least the "human mouth must be allowed to express itself, both in secret and in the open, to a far greater degree than is the case at present,"⁸⁴⁸ so that human life can be truly set free to interact with the Christian. As Grundtvig says, "The freedom of spirit and *folkelighed* are what Christianity must find, or create if missing, so that Christianity can work in its Spirit."⁸⁴⁹ Grundtvig defines his public task to illuminate human life in 19th century Denmark as being to "enlighten the national spirit and *folkelighed*, people's rights, people's freedom and people's tongues in their living motion and reality."⁸⁵⁰ To be concrete, Grundtvig's understanding of *folkelighed* is closely related to the individual, family life, civil society, national independence and even the whole of humanity. The human life of faith, hope, and love is expressed by hand, mouth and heart, and is dependent on the free and natural flow of the human spirit and the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵¹ The socialized human life of faith, hope, and love expressed through the mother-tongue in the fatherland is the ideal civil society that Grundtvig conjures up, civil society being the basic plausibility structure of *folkelighed*. Yet one thing needs repeating here: the promotion of *folkelighed* cannot lead to the Christian salvation of the nation without the living Word and the gospel. When addressing the future development of Norway in 1851, Grundtvig clearly describes the redemption of *folkelighed*:

The one happy sign for Norway's immediate future is the open sense for the living word, both in Church and outside, for it is the spiritual lever, with which one can move mountains... I found the cause of the Church-Word doing so well that it will soon reach the point where tongues glow and the crowds are astonished at hearing God's great and wonderful things in their mother-tongue. And once the spirit and

⁸⁴⁵ GDK I, 143.

⁸⁴⁶ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 107. "I Engelland lærte jeg nemlig først i Henseende til *Frihed* som til alt menneskeligt at lægge hele Vægten paa *Virkeligheden*, med dyb Foragt for det tomme Skin og for Penneslikkeriet og Bogorme-Væsenet i alle Retninger; thi vel fandt jeg ingenlunde Engelskmændene fri for alt dette, men jeg fandt hos dem Livet og Døden ved Siden ad hinanden: Livet overalt, hvor man stræbte frit at benytte Livs-Kræfterne, og Døden overalt, hvor man pinte det levende til Ære for det døde."

⁸⁴⁷ See Grundtvig, "Den guddommelige Treenighed (1858)," in *Den kristelige Børnelærdom*, US IX, 475.

⁸⁴⁸ Grundtvig, "Education for the State (1834)," *SL*, 79.

⁸⁴⁹ Grundtvig, "Folkelighed og Christendom (1847)," *US IX*, 85.

⁸⁵⁰ Grundtvig, "Det evige Livs-Ord af Vorherres egen Mund til Menigheden (1860-61)," in *Den Kristelige Børnelærdom*, US IX, 586.

⁸⁵¹ Iversen, "N.F.S. Grundtvigs trinitariske folkekirkeekklesiologi i nordisk kontekst," in *Grundtvig-Studier*, ed. Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen og Anders Holm (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2012), 98; see Iversen's schematic summary of Grundtvig's trichotomic understanding of people (*Ibid.*, 100).

the mother-tongue embrace each other, then the *folkelig* enlightenment is conceived and doubtless born within the year and then will grow, since it is God's blessing that enables growth, and that blessing will never be lacking, where there is trust in the Word, which was in the beginning, was with God and was God, and had life in Himself, who became the light of humanity!⁸⁵²

It is by trusting in the Word that the human word that expresses *folkelighed* can be fused with that Word. We cannot find salvation in *folkelighed* without the living Word.

It is here appropriate to recall the emergence of Grundtvig's understanding of the living word. Bugge notes that Grundtvig mentions the notion of living word for the first time in his article "On Education in Village Schools" (*Om Undervisning i Landsbyskoler*) around 1807 concerning pedagogy where Grundtvig says that the pupil learns "by living expositions from his teacher's mouth" (*ved livlige Fremstillinger af hans Lærers Mund*).⁸⁵³ Later on, Grundtvig remembers how the living word of H. Steffens' lectures on Romanticism in 1802-03 had such a great impact on him. When the Provincial Advisory Meeting at Roskilde is held in 1835-36, Grundtvig is very happy not only about the restoration of the original social pattern with the cooperation between the king and the Danish people, but also about the "worldly resurrection" of the living word.⁸⁵⁴ Finally, through his own Borchs Kollegium lectures in 1838, he becomes fully convinced that it is the living word that brings about power for life. Grundtvig's promotion of the wide use of the Danish language among the Danes not only paves the way for public discourse, but also shapes people's common thinking.⁸⁵⁵ As a result, the national identity is also naturally formed.

According to Grundtvig, the word is physical as well as spiritual because it is "the spirit's natural vehicle for expression."⁸⁵⁶ So is the human word with human spirit, derived from God's Word and Spirit with great creativity. Human words express the invisible power of the spirit and human life that "clearly separates us from dumb animals" (*klarlig skiller os fra de Umælede*).⁸⁵⁷ This is what *imago dei* means, according to Grundtvig. Human words about spiritual truth correspond to God's living Word, and the human life of faith, hope, and love corresponds to the faith, hope, and love bestowed by God from heaven, which shapes a living divine-human interaction.⁸⁵⁸ Therefore, the solution to the human fall is to awaken the created human spirits, to restore the human spiritual upward longing for the eternal, and to resume the natural human development through living words. Only when people are spiritually awakened or enlivened can Christianity have a living interaction with them.

⁸⁵² Grundtvig, "Kiøbenhavn og Tanberg-Moen paa Ringerige (II)," *Danskeren* Nr. 26 (Juni 1851), in *US IX*, 308. "Det ene lykkelige Varsel for Norges nærmeste Fremtid er den aabne Sands for det levende Ord, baade i Kirken og der underfor, thi det er den aandelige Løftestang, hvormed man ene flytte Bjerge... fandt jeg Kirke-Ordets Sag paa saa gode Veie, at den vil snart naae did, hvor Tungerne gløde og Skarerne forbauses ved at høre Guds store og underlige Ting paa deres Modersmaal. Og naar kun Aanden og Modersmaalet tager hinanden i Favn, da er den folkelige Oplysning undfanget og fødes, sikkerlig i Aarets Løb og voxer nok, da det er Guds Velsignelse, som giver Vext, og den Velsignelse vil aldrig fattes, hvor man stoler paa Ordet, som var i Begyndelsen, var hos Gud og var Gud og havde Liv i sig, som blev Menneskets Lys!"

⁸⁵³ Bugge, "Indledning," *GSV I*, 14.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁵⁵ John Bolt points out that words are so powerful to create a nation by referring to the Greek orator Isocrates in the 4th century BC who emphasized that public discourse was indispensable for "a functioning political society", as human language manifests people's "social capacity." See Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation*, 20-2.

⁸⁵⁶ Grundtvig, *What Constitutes Authentic Christianity*, 50.

⁸⁵⁷ Grundtvig, "Livs-Fyrsten og Morderen, Faste-Prædiken med Forord og Tillæg af Nik. Fred. Sev. Grundtvig (1864)," *US X*, 500. So the mother tongue is the expression of a particular folk spirit and folk life. (*Ibid.*)

⁸⁵⁸ Hans Raun Iversen, *Church Society and Mission: Twelve Danish Contributions to International Discussions* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen University Press, 2010), 106-07.

Grundtvig argues that the “human and people’s enlightenment” is the sole means to “really serve human life”, because human self-knowledge is the “necessary beginning for all real knowledge about the spiritual and the heartfelt, the heavenly and eternal things” so that the living “Word of God first and last” through the Spirit and the heart can communicate light and life to human beings.⁸⁵⁹ It is also through the living word that human beings can communicate with each other about the enlightenment of life, which is an indispensable preparation both for “the world with dead and dark ideas about Christianity” and for the spoiled Christians in the State Church who believe that Christianity has nothing to do with “the whole of human freedom and enlightenment,” so that they can learn that Christianity is “a brand new teaching which comes from heaven,” and is taught by our fully “divine and human teacher Jesus Christ”, who is both life and light from above.⁸⁶⁰

In order to achieve this, there must be a living integration between the human word and the divine Word. The human freedom of the word leads to active dialogue between human beings. This results in active public discourse on social issues. Because of the human fall, the human word can also express lies, which must be tested, distinguished from truth, and eradicated by free public discourse through which the Word and the Spirit work. A clear Word with a Christ-like life from the church liturgy, however, can serve as a frame of reference to recognize, re-identify, and confirm the human word of truth. Thus the human word and the divine Word can be fused again in truth. Grundtvig further explicates this as follows:

It becomes a good illumination when we think that the Word in our mouth and heart, the Word of grace and truth, by which human beings are created, has become by no means lost from human beings, but only became mixed with the words of lies and falsehood, which have created disbelief and sin among us. As a result God could talk with us and we could understand and hide his Word in our heart, and only thus was salvation possible and could become real. Then the eternal God’s Word, which expresses God’s whole fatherly love, not simply became a man, as one of us, but became spiritually the second Adam in us. So the many who believe in Him can sow his seed like true wheat, which can ripen in us and be collected in God’s barn.⁸⁶¹

One more thing needs our attention here: the public discourse, in a modern context, is not based on the Word alone, but also on the public reason. I have mentioned the linguistic dilemma between the Christian living Word and the human public discourse in the second part of the study (ch. 2.2.3.). Public reason is obviously an imagination out of the Enlightenment era which assumes the homogeneity and universality of reason inside each rational interlocutor, so that there can easily be a consensus on a particular public issue if the reason within each person functions normally. Furthermore, public reason often indicates the reasonableness of a solution or conclusion supported by an imagined majority of the public. History does tell us, however, that public reason also produces lies about life. In his public activities, Grundtvig especially opposes the dominance of the majority, which can lead to a kind of mob politics. In contrast he keeps on speaking about everyone’s freedom of speech in order for a living interaction to take place. What Grundtvig really

⁸⁵⁹ See Grundtvig, “Fra Vennemøderne 1866,” *US* X, 556-57.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁸⁶¹ Grundtvig, “Femte Helligtrekonger-Søndag 1867,” in vol. 2 of *N. F.S. Grundtvigs Sidste Prædikener*, 2 vols., ed. C. J. Brandt, 26-8, quoted in *HB* III, 176. “Dette lader sig da nu ogsaa godt oplyse, naar vi betænker, at Ordet i vor Mund og i vort Hjærte, det Naadens og Sandhedens Ord, hvorved Mennesket er skabt, det blev jo ingenlunde taget fra Mennesket, men blev kun blandet med det Løgnens og Falskhedens Ord, som skabte Vantroen og Synden hos os, saa at baade kunde Gud blive ved at tale til os og vi kunde forstaa og gemme hans Ord i vort Hjærte. Derved alene var Frelsen mulig, og den blev virkelig, da det evige Guds-Ord, som udtrykker hele Guds faderlige Kjærlighed, ikke blot blev et Menneske, som een af os, men blev aandelig den anden Adam i os, saa mange, som tror paa ham, saa hans Sæd, som den ægte Hvede, kan modnes i os og samles i Guds Lade.”

cares about is the real life of the Danish people whom “he had a deep entrenched faith in.”⁸⁶² When Grundtvig joins the public discourse on the wellbeing of people’s life, he always argues from the Christian perspective by underlining the following principles:⁸⁶³ (1) the free living word that can be heard (*Ordet i Sin Frihed og Ørenlyd*), which he regards as the secular resurrection of the word; (2) the freedom and equality of people, including “freedom of choice, speech, the press, and association” (*Valg-Frihed, Tale-Frihed, Trykke-Frihed og Forenings-Frihed*)⁸⁶⁴; (3) the common good (*fælles, almindelige Bedste*) of the people; (4) *Folkelighed* with reference to the mother-tongue and the fatherland. Grundtvig believes that the real “publicness” is not what the National Liberals mean by leaving “the ministries in peace” (*lade Ministrene I Fred*) as if they represent democracy, but points to “free debate” on public issues by either “criticizing or putting forward suggestions” in a democratic society, of which Grundtvig was a great pioneer.⁸⁶⁵ These are the *folkelige* presuppositions for Grundtvig’s public theology.

So it is only in the free verbal public discourse that the creating-incarnate Word freely works through human words. It is also the incarnate Word heard in the church liturgy that can be the true frame of reference to recognize and re-identify the truth of life expressed by the human word. Thus the creating and incarnate Word can be fused with the human word in terms of truth for life. It is in this way, I think, that Grundtvig’s concept of the living word crosses the incommensurable boundaries of Wittgenstein’s different language games for the sake of life.

7.4.2.2. A Christian Enlightenment of Human Life

As mentioned earlier, Thaning notes that Grundtvig’s life-long question is the relationship between Christianity and human life. According to Grundtvig, human life remains a mystery or a riddle, which needs elucidation. It is not until 1832 that Grundtvig finally finds an answer, i.e., the Mosaic-Christian anthropology in the historical-universal framework. This is also the unique Christian perspective on human life which Christians and the living congregation must keep and bear witness to for the world. This is the presupposition for Christianity’s encouragement of the free and fully-fledged development of *folkelighed*.

For example, when Grundtvig insists that faith should not be a matter of schooling in order to promote a civil conversion and confirmation, he nevertheless emphasizes the importance of the Christian premise. Let me quote again his argument:

It is my belief that such a civil conversion, both of ‘the children to the fathers’ and of self-conceit to healthy human good sense,’ will not be a success in any land where a religious conversion of a number of people does not pave the way, develop the insight, and strengthen the resolve to this end.⁸⁶⁶

So the civil conversion to life presupposes the Christian conversion and confirmation of people who maintain this important Mosaic-Christian anthropology. This is because, after all, these Christians understand the deeper meaning of the civil conversion in terms of the relationship between Christianity and *folkelighed*, and between the divine and the human.

Furthermore, it is Christianity that can provide meaning for a holistic life. With the challenge of the Enlightenment, the world and human life was understood in a more rationalist and materialist way.

⁸⁶² Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig*, 45.

⁸⁶³ Grundtvig, “Rigsdagstaler 1866,” *US X*, 569, 571-72, 574.

⁸⁶⁴ Grundtvig, “Valgdagen i Kjerteminde (1855. Juni 21),” *Dannebrog* (Juli 1855), *US X*, 72.

⁸⁶⁵ Dam, *Politikeren Grundtvig*, 23.

⁸⁶⁶ Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL*, 96; see *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 47.

This kind of reductionist approach⁸⁶⁷ not only led to the fragmentation and disenchantment of the world, but also de-spiritualized the living human life to the animal level. In contrast, Grundtvig contends that the world and human life badly need a Christian enlightenment:

Christian enlightenment proceeds from the proposition that the entire creation and temporal existence has its origin in the eternal “Word of God,” which was with God and was God and which is the light of man. Similarly, the Christian enlightenment as well as the Christian life and history proceeds from the spiritual fact that the “Word of God” became flesh in the fullness of time in order to gather a faithful congregation which lives in a hearty fellowship with him. This congregation derives its spirit from His spirit, its flesh from His flesh, and it must therefore be the aim of all Christian enlightenment to show all temporal things have their original co[*in*]herence [*Sammenhæng*] in the Word of God from eternity, and to show how, in the course of time, all things have cohered [*er samlet*] in Christ Jesus and how they live and move in his congregation.⁸⁶⁸

The Christian enlightenment tries to inform people that the world is an organic whole within which all things are connected with each other. But particularly from the Christian perspective of creation and redemption, all things are consummated in history by a deep coinherence in the creating and incarnate Word. According to Grundtvig, (let me quote again), there is a “deep coinherence between the life of the individual, the nation [*folkets*] and the whole human race [*hele slægtens Liv*],” which can only be revealed by a genuine spiritual enlightenment.⁸⁶⁹ Meanwhile by emphasizing the divine origin and destiny of human beings, Grundtvig tries to demonstrate how Christianity aims to “lift and improve human nature in general (which contains all that is noble in the natures of the world’s peoples),”⁸⁷⁰ and to “give the people clear expressions for God or Spirit, ideas and words which can be bearers for the people,” which, according to Bang, is the mission of Christianity.⁸⁷¹ This important enlightenment is still of great importance today when the spiritless techno-rationality has gained its dominion over the world.

Besides the deep coinherence of all life in Christ, Christianity also keeps its spiritual kingdom of God as a transcendent referent to inform and transform social life, and to challenge the structural evil and systematic injustice of any civil establishments as well as of liberal humanism.

In *Danskeren*, Grundtvig further clarifies the role of Christianity in the public sphere:

⁸⁶⁷ Ove Korsgaard, “Om Grundtvigs kosmologi og psykologi,” in *En Orm – En Gud: Om mennesket i verden*, ed. Ove Korsgaard (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1997), 18-9.

⁸⁶⁸ Grundtvig, “Det evige Livs-Ord af Vorherres egen Mund til Menigheden (1860-61),” in *Den kristelige Børnelærdom*, *US IX*, 581: English translation from *Selected Writings*, 81.

⁸⁶⁹ Grundtvig, “Education for the State (1834),” *SL*, 83; *Statsmæssig Oplysning*, 31. In his *Kirke-Spejl*, Grundtvig also emphasized “the human life in all its forms”: international life, folk life and individual’s life (*menneskeligt Slægt-Liv*, *Folke-Liv* og *Enkeltheds-Liv*), which all go through the four stages of development: childhood, youth, adult and old age. See Grundtvig, *Kirke-Spejl*, *US X*, 279.

⁸⁷⁰ Grundtvig, “The Danish Four-Leaf Clover (1836),” *SL* 143.

⁸⁷¹ Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 129. “Det samme maa gælde Folkene og Kristendommens Forhold til dem, altsaa *Missionen*. Det Folk, der endnu staar paa Barnestadet, trænger dog til Kristendom og *kan* modtage den. Det har Missionen selv bevist. Selvfølgelig har Grundtvig Ret i, at der maa være en menneskelig Tilknytning. Men Kristendommen kan her ogsaa løse den menneskelige Opgave, som den altsaa maa paatage sig, at give det Folk, der maaske endnu fattes tydelige Udtryk for Gud eller Aand, Forestillinger og Ord, som saa kan blive Bærere for de Tanker, som det endnu fattes.”

In my eyes, Christianity is the heavenly wisdom that describes God's Kingdom or heaven on earth as justice, peace, and joy ... in a higher unity and in a better taste than the Danes or some heathen people can obtain them.⁸⁷²

Here Grundtvig further elaborates the content of Christian enlightenment for human life in terms of the Kingdom of God. This heavenly life on earth is concerned with the common good, local or global, which "always becomes love according to the *folkelig* concept of civil society [*Borger-Selskabet*]."⁸⁷³ This Kingdom of God is marked by justice, peace and joy to be realized. This kingdom of God is a spiritual reality in the world, but not of the world. It is out of the work of the invisible Spirit, but can be recognized by its external signs of justice, peace and joy. The living Christian congregations bear witness to the spiritual reality of the Kingdom:

1. In our midst we find God's kingdom
in the church He makes His own,
in God's word, and with His spirit
altar-guests His grace are shown.

2. Though not visible, God's presence
with His justice and His love,
with His peace and joy eternal
comes upon us from above.

3. When each one God's voice is calling
with His spirit from on high,
then our heart can sense the feeling
that God's kingdom is close by.

4. We receive His word and spirit
as to us our Lord lays claim;
then the kingdom's fruits we taste in
our dear Saviour's sweetest name.

7. Then shall God's own kingdom flourish
in our midst and in our sight,
bearing fruits of Word and Spirit
to our Father's great delight.

8. Faith and hope and love among us
all this good soil he will bless:
God Himself will purify us
for a heav'nly fruitfulness.

⁸⁷² Grundtvig, "Guld-Alderen og Grotte-Sangen i Danmark (1850)," *US* IX, 239. "[A]t Christendommen, der i mine Øine er himmelsk Viisdom, beskriver Guds-Riget eller Himmerig paa Jorden som 'Retfærdighed, Fred og Glæde,' kun naturligviis i en høiere Forening og i en bedre Smag end Danskerne eller noget Hedning-Folk har mægtet at skaffe sig dem." As early as 1825, Grundtvig referred to God's Kingdom characterized by justice, peace and joy. See Grundtvig, *Den Christelige Kamp --- Prædiken paa eenogtyvende Trinitatis-Søndag 1825*, (Kjøbenhavn: Forlagt af den Wahlske Boghandling, 1825), *US* IV, 440. "[H]vor Guds Rige kommer, der er Guds Fred, thi Guds Rige er Retfærdighed, Fred og Glæde i den Hellig-Aand!"

⁸⁷³ Grundtvig, "Guld-Alderen og Grotte-Sangen i Danmark (1850)," *US* IX, 239.

9. When with Him we are transfigured,
first reborn on earth and healed,
we shall see with God in heaven,
His own kingdom be revealed.⁸⁷⁴

In this hymn Grundtvig clearly depicts how the kingdom of God as a spiritual reality is with the living congregation in Word and Spirit, and continues to grow among us. It becomes a vision and calls on Christians strive for it. Here Rowan Williams provides a good description of the relationship between the kingdom of God and human life:

The realm, the *basileia*, of God, to which Jesus' acts and words point is not a region within human society any more than it is a region within human geography; it is that condition of human relationships, public and private, where the purpose of God is determinative for men and women and so becomes visible in our

⁸⁷⁴ Grundtvig, "Midt iblandt os er Guds rige (1853)," in *Den Danske Salmebog* (København: Det kgl. Vajsenhus' Forlag, 2003), 341-42. I am indebted to Edward Broadbridge for his English translation.

Midt iblandt os er Guds rige
med Guds Ånd og i Guds ord,
i Guds menighed tillige:
gæster ved hans nådebord.

Synligt ej er her til stede
det med Guds retfærdighed,
med Guds fred og Herrens glæde,
kommet til os ovenned.

Men når os med Herrens stemme
Ånden kalder hver især,
kan vort hjerte dog fornemme,
at Guds rige kom os nær.

Og når vi med tro modtage
ord og Ånd i Jesu navn,
rigets frugt vi forud smage
i det søde frelsersnavn.

Blomstre op da skal Guds rige
midt iblandt os dag for dag,
bære Åndens frugt tillige,
Fader vor til velbehag.

Thi den gode jord hernede:
tro og håb og kærlighed
rense vil Gud selv og frede
til en himmelsk frugtbarhed.

Og når vi med ham forklares,
som os fødte her på ny,
skal Guds rige åbenbares,
synlig som han selv i sky.

history - a condition that can be partially realised in the life of the community around Jesus but waits for its full embodiment in a future only God knows.⁸⁷⁵

This kingdom of God has a higher requirement for various human relationships whose core value, according to Grundtvig, is faith, hope, and love. The living congregations' life of faith, hope, and love, purified and preserved by God as the manifestation of the internal Christ-like signs, not only bears witness to the Kingdom, but also corresponds to its external "social plan," i.e., to realize the spiritual presence of God's kingdom as justice, peace, and joy in human life.⁸⁷⁶ It is a spiritual reality initiated by the incarnation of the Word, which continues to grow toward its consummation as testified by the congregation's human life which repeats Christ's own human life. Christianity mediates such a vision of people's life to the human world because Christianity always functions to "create the basic relationship between God and us and between humans mutually, certainly in light of the heavenly order and with eternal effect, but with the same art of resorting to heart and love." (*fremstiller Grund-Forholdet baade mellem Gud og os og mellem os selv indbyrdes, vist nok i en himmelhøi orden og med en evig Virkning, men dog gansk af samme Hjertelige og kiærlige Art.*)⁸⁷⁷ This kingdom of God is in a living interaction with civil society. "Christianity is not less powerful to create a heavenly civil life than a heavenly family on earth."⁸⁷⁸ According to Grundtvig, if God's kingdom is both in heaven and on earth, people can lead a "healthy, powerful, and active civil life" by believing and longing for the "heavenly family life."⁸⁷⁹ It underlies people's faith in the vision of a civil society for the common good and consolidates people's mutual "responsibility and trustworthiness" in their voluntary association and cooperation for a just, peaceful, and joyful life.⁸⁸⁰ This kingdom of God always prompts civil society to develop into a higher and wider reality.

With the transcendent vision of the kingdom of God on earth, both the living congregation and people's life should be set equally free. Thus, such civil institutions as the State Church, Church State and the absolute monarchy should be abolished or transformed to allow for a living interaction between the Christian and the human. In 19th century Denmark Grundtvig becomes a great prophet in this aspect to advocate both a church reform and a social reform. These two are closely connected in his public theology.

Concerning the implementation of reforms, however, where Grundtvig differs from the Danish National Liberals is again in his Christian perspective. The essential difference between the reforms of Grundtvig and those of the National Liberals is the understanding that Christianity moves beyond liberal humanism, which only has a deified civil belief in freedom based on individualism. This is another key aspect of the Christian enlightenment of the human life, as we shall see now.

For secular people, liberal humanism can also become a kind of ideology or even a secular religion:

Broadly speaking, however, it [liberal humanism] is premised on a combination of the beliefs (i) that human beings are qualitatively different from other animals and thus merit particular respect; (ii) that they possess free will and are, therefore, moral agents; (iii) that they value freedom as an ultimate good; (iv)

⁸⁷⁵ Rowan Williams, "Faith Communities in a Civil Society - Christian Perspectives," lecture given to the Christian Muslim Forum Conference in King's College Chapel, Cambridge on September 10, 2007. <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1151/faith-communities-in-a-civil-society> (accessed on July 25, 2013).

⁸⁷⁶ Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 28.

⁸⁷⁷ Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark II (1851)," *HB* II, 258.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁰ Williams, "Faith Communities in a Civil Society."

that the state can be neutral, concerning its citizens' different conceptions of the good life; (v) that there are "basic ideas" about which an accepted conception of political justice can be based; (vi) and that a better future both can and will be built. By no means everyone who calls themselves a liberal humanist will countersign all these statements, but between them they capture the essence of the ideology.⁸⁸¹

But I will argue that Grundtvig's insistence on the living interaction between the Christian and the human puts him outside the category of liberal humanists. As we have seen, if the dynamic interaction between the Christian and the human is neglected altogether, Grundtvig's public theology will risk being degraded into a purely secularized project. As J. P. Bang points out, there are three easy mistakes in understanding Grundtvig's motto of "a human being first, and then a Christian": (1) it describes a purely chronological order in which becoming a Christian only comes after becoming a perfect human being so that Christianity is but "an external appendix" (*et udvortes Tillæg*) to the natural human life; (2) the human should not be separated sharply from "the worldly and the sinful (*det verdslige og det syndige*);" (3) to pursue a life without Christianity becomes people's dream so that the real ideal for a "harmonious unity of the Christian and the human" is abandoned as though Christianity is not commensurate with human life, not least a heathen life.⁸⁸² In this light, "a human being first" should not be the point of departure to secularize Grundtvig's public theology. To return to the pure natural human life created by God cannot be achieved without the Christian enlightenment; on the other hand, Christianity can only work through living human beings who are awakened for the spiritual upward aspiration through the people's high school. Even the people's high school cannot be fully severed from Christianity in the spiritual dimension. In his poem for the inauguration of *Skole in Sjolte*, Grundtvig writes,

What sunshine is to the darkened mould,
is true enlightenment to the sons of the soil;
Far more valuable than the lustrous gold,
it is one's God and one's self to know.⁸⁸³

So even the true enlightenment at a people's high school is still intended to help students to search for not only a true self-understanding, but also for God outside the Church. Its purpose is to guide students to reach the divine from the human. Thus, it is especially Grundtvig's theological dimension that distances him from being a liberal humanist, and being instead a theocentric humanist.⁸⁸⁴ This can be demonstrated by his rejection of liberal individualistic freedom and his avoidance of using the foreign term of 'state', preferring the term 'civil society'. He insists that freedom can only be guaranteed by the people, not by the constitution, let alone by the government. The government cannot remain neutral and maintain equality and freedom all the time. The most important thing for Grundtvig is that the Trinitarian framework underlies all human life. The people's life as a living organic unity should resort more to the human heart of love, the natural bond of the vernacular, and the foundation of common good. Grundtvig realizes that focusing solely on the divine dimension will render Christian faith inhuman, or even hypocritical, whereas too great an identification with liberal humanist values would disable the transcendence of Christian faith to challenge the limits of any human construct. Grundtvig, therefore, tries to bring about the unity of the Christian and human dimension of faith in a concrete life through his public theology.

⁸⁸¹ Spencer, "Doing God," 71.

⁸⁸² Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 125-29.

⁸⁸³ Grundtvig, "Ved Indvielsen af Skole i Sjolte (1856)," *US X*, 78. The English translation is taken from Holger Begtrup, Hans Lund and Peter Manniche, *The Folk High-Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community*, 3rd ed. (London/Copenhagen: Oxford University Press/Nyt Nordisk Forlag. Arnold Busck, 1936), 107.

⁸⁸⁴ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 166, 173.

Practically, this explains why Grundtvig refuses to be identified with any political parties when speaking in the public or the parliament; he remains an independent prophet arguing for the common good of all people from the Christian perspective.

In brief, the life of the people needs a Christian enlightenment. The promotion of *folkelighed* and the projects of the liberal humanists will not result in a real national regeneration. In terms of the enlightenment of the majority of people, Grundtvig can cooperate with the naturalists, but he always retains his Christian perspective to implement social reform as the enterprise of his public theology.

7.5. Summary

What is unique in Grundtvig's public theology is that there is neither a complete separation between the Christian and the human, nor a dualistic gap between the sacred and the secular. A deep coinherence between them is established by means of living words. Christianity can first of all find or create a *free folkelighed* to interact with itself. Then it can also inform human life of its wholeness in terms of the combination of the spiritual and the physical. Moreover, the kingdom of God in Christianity can not only challenge the limits of any secular constructs, but can also encourage people to a higher spiritual reality. In order to carry out its mission, or public function, properly Christianity itself must also be set free from such institutional domestications as the State Church or the Church State. Moreover, Christianity also needs a *folkelig* enlightenment in order to understand the law of human nature. After all, the Christian life can only manifest itself and reach consummation in the *folkelig* life. It is through his public theology that Grundtvig sketches out a proper Christian relationship *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*.

8. A Chinese Appreciation of Grundtvig's Public Theology

8.1. A General Chinese Appreciation

Grundtvig the public theologian has made a great contribution to the Danish ecclesial, cultural, and social reconstruction when Denmark was undergoing serious domestic and international crises in the 19th century. As a Chinese, I am quite fascinated by his relentless efforts to reform the Church by setting true Christianity free and by promoting the public function of Christianity in the upbuilding of civil society and in national revitalization. In order to achieve this, Grundtvig needs first to sort out the historical Church-State entanglement. Grundtvig strives to explicate the nature of both Church and State, which are the two traditional authoritarian institutions under the Danish feudal absolutism. His matchless discovery of apostolic ecumenical Christianity based on the Creed at baptism enables him to propose a sacramental objectivity of faith beyond the doctrinal monopoly of both the theological rationalists' and State's imposition. It sets both Christianity and the laity free to shape a living congregation with a Christ-like life of faith, hope, and love. Neither the papist Church State nor the Caesaropapist State Church can continue to exercise institutional confinement to this living universal apostolic congregation. This marks a great progress in church democracy.

At the same time, Grundtvig is not only rediscovering true Christianity, but also re-contextualizing Christianity in 19th century Denmark, which consists of both indigenization (Danicization) and socialization. As mentioned earlier, Grundtvig makes good use of the Nordic spiritual legacies, including Nordic Mythology, the courageous fighting spirit against hardship, the feminine, hearty and honest temperament of the Danes to inculturate the Christian faith, so that Christianity the heavenly guest can find a *folkelig* shelter via the Danish vernacular. As Grundtvig says, his "new Church approach" (*ny Kirkevej*) is to promote "*folkelighed*, freedom, and historical enlightenment."⁸⁸⁵ Besides, the beautiful and popular hymns composed by Grundtvig can still testify his indigenous achievement. In terms of socialization, Grundtvig tries to reclaim a proper social niche for his living congregation by relocating Church, State, and School in his civil society. By redefining the Danish State Church, or the later National Church as a civil establishment, he creates a capacious civil room for the living interaction between various Christian groups, and between the Christian and the Danish people's life. He tries to maintain the traditional historico-religious bond of the nation by reducing it from the civic sense to the socio-cultural sense. Yet despite his fight against the old confessionalization of Denmark, Evangelical Lutheranism is still the official Constitution-sanctioned civil religion until today. As a result, the living congregations Grundtvig espouses have taken a rather diffused form, bearing witness to the sacramental faith with its Christ-like life and informing people of the nature of human life in the light of Grundtvig's Mosaic-Christian anthropology.

At the same time, Grundtvig's functional differentiation of the three civil establishments or institutions facilitates a better development of Danish *folkelighed* for the common good. In this process, his insistence on the freedom of the spirit, his proposal to limit the State's power through the Constitution, and his promotion of citizenship training in the people's high school underlie the democratization of Denmark into a modern state. Yet his focus on the loving bond of heart to transcend the rigidity of the law, his claim of the community-conditioned individual's freedom, and his idea of a kinship-oriented civil society pave the way for an organic spiritually-unified national entity. The combination of the democratic or the civic with the spiritual dimensions of nation-building prepares a solid foundation for the modern Danish welfare state. Grundtvig, however, does

⁸⁸⁵ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 87.

not belong to any political party. From his Christian perspective, he intends not to form a concrete political framework for modern Denmark, but to cultivate an active *folkelig* and democratic culture. This is not a pure secular cause, however, as Grundtvig conceives of all this with the kingdom of God as its concrete frame of reference. The kingdom of God is the ultimate *telos* of Grundtvig's public theology.

Grundtvig's public theology also sheds light on today's Chinese context in which church and society are also undergoing reconstructions. Politically speaking, China is still a socialist country under the Communist Party, aiming to care about the common good for the maximum majority by following Marxist guidelines. With the radical social changes in the recent three decades, political reform has been put on the State agenda. Economically speaking, China, a large agricultural country, used to be colonized by western imperialist countries and remained poor. With the establishment of a new China in 1949, the planned economy was adopted, but it remains ineffective for China's economic development, and hence has given way to the market economy in the early 1990s, albeit with Chinese characteristics. As a result, China's economy has made great progress in improving people's living standards, but such problems as migrant workers and ethical degradation have become concomitant with the fast modernization and urbanization process.

Culturally speaking, with the influence of the New Cultural Movement in the 1910s-20s, the disastrous Great Cultural Revolution (1966-76), as well as the overwhelming influx of western culture together with globalization, the Chinese traditional culture becomes almost homeless, which makes people somewhat spiritually rootless. Ecclesially speaking, the Protestant Church in China, from a postcolonial perspective, carries its historical burden out of the confusion of western mission and colonialism. Under the harsh nationalist criticism since 1949, the Church has to gain its national and political legitimacy first by severing its ties with the western churches. Consequently the committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Chinese Christians was established in order to identify the Church with the majority of the Chinese people. With various difficulties, especially financial difficulties when foreign missionaries all left China in the 1950s, Chinese Christians of various former denominations had to cooperate first in the spirit of equality and mutual respect. This has produced the unique Chinese post-denominational Church, a uniting Church with its inner diversities, but organized under Church Councils at different administrative levels with all former denominational structures removed. This uniting Church is registered with the government according to the law, but for various reasons there are also non-registered Christian groups outside the uniting Church, creating a kind of schism in the contemporary Chinese Christian scenario. In the light of this situation, how can Grundtvig's public theology provide inspiration for the Chinese churches and society despite the basic difference between Denmark as a comparatively small homogeneous nation-state and China as a large multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country?

Grundtvig's public theology aims at a living interaction between the Christian life and the people's life in a civil society. In order to achieve this in China, the ecclesial issue has to be tackled first. In terms of the indigenization of Christianity in China, Grundtvig's approach is still inspiring to promote a living free interaction between Christianity and *folkelighed* while the latter needs to be revived by making people re-acquainted with their national history, mythology, culture and life values. Today Grundtvig's popular hymns with creative combination of Nordic spiritual legacy can still attest to his indigenous achievements. In this light, the Chinese Christians and clergy should also let go the dominating western theological mindset, fundamentalist or liberal, and dare to interpret Christian faith based on Chinese people's temperament. It is interesting to know that, since the beginning of 2012, there has emerged a small-scale Christian movement in China calling on

Chinese Christians to read Confucius' *Analects*.⁸⁸⁶ It is one of the good examples of the free living interaction between Christianity and Chinese culture now.

In terms of the socialization of Christianity in China, the rich diversity in the post-denominational Church should be appreciated as the work of the Holy Spirit, but it also threatens the fragile unity of the Church without a formal and binding theological interpretation of faith and church polity. Meanwhile the non-registered groups also challenge the uniting registered Church from either theological or political perspectives, and hence refuse to worship in the same churches. Grundtvig creatively points out that the Danish State or National Church should be a civil space free and broad enough to include Christians of various groups, and Christians and non-Christians alike, in a living interaction "for the sake of life." Bishop K. H. Ting offers a similar insight. The National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement established in 1954 deals with the Church's relationship with the State concerning Church-related public affairs or social issues while ensuring the Chinese Church's independence and self-control. It provides a political legitimacy for Christianity in China in a post-colonial nationalist context in the spirit of self-administration, self-propagation and self-support. The China Christian Council formed in 1980 is mainly responsible for intra-ecclesial affairs while the Council is not a united Church by itself. These two national bodies usually consist of the same church personnel, but play different roles. They are widely regarded as the representatives of the Chinese-registered "Three-Self" Churches, but are targeted by different critics from the perspectives of either theological fundamentalism or political liberalism. However, Bishop Ting claims that the Three-Self Committees and the Church Councils at different administrative levels in China are but temporary scaffoldings, serving the upbuilding of the true Church; they would be naturally removed when the true Church is established.⁸⁸⁷ In the light of Grundtvig's ecclesiological thinking, if the registered churches are regarded for the time being as the necessary civil space for the development of free and living congregations, many unnecessary misunderstandings of, and prejudices against, the nature of the registered churches can easily be removed. What really matters is Christianity's sociological significance to enlighten the nature of human life and create free *folkeligheder* in China despite the fact that Grundtvig's understanding of *folkelighed* cannot be directly applied to a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country like China. Thus the socialization of Christianity itself is already a contribution to social transformation in contemporary China.

In hindsight, however, Grundtvig's reform remains a transitional solution because his true Church, the free living congregation in the light of his matchless discovery should also have a civil aspect too, which needs to be further institutionalized in order to voice their particular ecclesial views on public issues. In order to build up the true Church of Christ in China, Ting holds that the urgent task of the two national Christian organizations is also to strengthen their ecclesiality in order to answer the question "where the true Church in China is:" here Ting turns to his Anglican background and resorts to the ecumenical tradition of episcopacy – wherever the bishop is, there is the church⁸⁸⁸ – in

⁸⁸⁶ Shi Tanheng, "Zhongguo jidutu weishenme yaodu lunyu?" [Why do Chinese Christians Need to Read the *Analects of Confucius*?] http://www.gospeltimes.cn/news/2012_01_17/18099.htm (accessed August 14, 2013).

⁸⁸⁷ K. H. Ting, "Another Look at Three Self," in *Love Never Ends: Papers by K. H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2000), 106. See also Ting, *God is Love* (Colorado, Springs: Cook, 2005), 425.

⁸⁸⁸ "Sandai jiaohui lingxiu tan jiaohuixing ji nianqinghua de wenti" [Three-generation Church leaders on the Church issues of Ecclesiality and Juvenilization] (November 24, 2004). <http://www.ccctspm.org/News/hot/200411-5.htm> (accessed July 29, 2013). Ting hopes that future bishops in China can voice the ecclesial perspective on public issues on behalf of the Chinese church. (Ibid). Cao Shengjie, former president of China Christian Council adds that new bishops will deal mainly with pastoral responsibilities, not with administrative authorities. (Ibid.) But so far this plan has not been realized before Bishop Ting, the last Protestant Bishop in Mainland China, passed away in November 2012.

a pastoral and non-administrative sense. In contrast, Grundtvig clearly refuses the episcopal solution after his visits to England. As no one can represent the true Church in Denmark, Grundtvig's public theology has to rely on individual Christians. But how can Grundtvig's public theology be done at an ecclesial level? The question remains until today: how will the Danish National Church deal with expressing the ecclesial standpoint on public issues? At least I have found out that Hans R. Iversen has been working on the promotion of the very churchness of the Danish National Church,⁸⁸⁹ a similar direction that the Chinese Church Councils tend to move in.

While trying to reform the Church, Grundtvig also devotes himself to the revitalization of the Danish nation, especially under the threat of foreign invasion in the 1860s. To reach this goal, Grundtvig adopts a *folkelig* approach, i.e., he promotes the Danish people's life by emphasizing such aspects as the mother-tongue, Danish history, Nordic mythology and the Constitution taught in his people's high school. In a word, Grundtvig is actually reviving the Danish national culture that informs the Danes of their spirit-root and life-values which are the indispensable resources of Danish soft power. This soft power has been exhibited by the Danish cooperative movements to respond to the national financial crises since 1870s, and by the Danish spiritual solidarity during the German occupation in the Second War. It continues to contribute to the tenacious Danish social cohesion today with the people's consensus on the common good. Grundtvig has grasped the root cause of the various 19th century Danish crises, i.e., "cultural derailments," as Thyssen puts it. Such Chinese modern neo-Confucian philosophers as Liang Shuming (1893-1988) and He Lin (1902-1992) also point out in 1930-40s that the Chinese "cultural crisis" has led to various socio-political disasters in the previous hundred years.⁸⁹⁰ Similarly, what China needs today is also a cultural reconstruction but with the purpose to encourage people to lead a free, natural, human life in a united country. It will be conducive not only to people's spiritual awakening out of the dominance of materialism and technocratic rationality, but also to the communal cohesion of the Chinese society.

For Grundtvig, the real Danish national cultural revival (which differs from the so-called Golden Age of Danish highbrow culture in Copenhagen in the first half of the 19th century) starts with his people's high school to enlighten people on the true nature of human life, and to bridge the cultural gap between the urban elites and the many rural peasants. Although he no longer wants faith to become a school issue, his enlightenment of human life is not without a Christian perspective in the shape of his Mosaic-Christian anthropology. After all, the restoration of the people's original natural life is still the ministry of God the Creator, especially that of the living Word. Only when people are spiritually awakened with their living words, can they be ready to meet God the Redeemer through the incarnate Word heard at the baptismal font and the Holy Communion table. Therefore, there is still an invisible religious dimension in the enlightenment of true human life. This echoes traditional Chinese humanism, which aims to promote people's spiritual transcendence in order to be united with heaven not out there, but in the world right now. As Andrew Chih summarizes:

⁸⁸⁹ Hans Raun Iversen, "Staten, folkekirken og religionspolitikken i Danmark," in *Grundtvig, folkekirke og mission: praktisk teologiske vekselvirkninger* (København: ANIS, 2008), 168 -70.

⁸⁹⁰ Liang Shuming contends that all the Chinese national, political, economic problems can be summarized as the cultural problem, while the people's education is but the way to "nurture, complement and construct [the Chinese] culture." See Liang, Shuming, "Minzhong jiaoyu heyi nengjiu zhongguo (1934)?" [How can People's Education Save China?] in vol.5 of *Liang Shuming quanji* [Works of Liang Shuming] (Jinan: Shangdong renmin chubanshe, 2005), 486. See also He, Lin, "Rujia sixiang de xinkaizhan (1941)" [The New Development of Confucian Thinking], in *Rujia Sixiang de xin kaizhan: He Lin xinruxue zhexue jiyao* [The New Development of Confucian Thinking: The Summary of He Lin's Neo-Confucian Philosophy], ed. Song Zhiming (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1995), 86.

There is no Chinese word that corresponds exactly to the connotation of the word “religion.” To the Chinese, there is no difference between religion and education. They use the word ‘teaching’ (chiao) to include all religions. Education or religion guides the people to live a good life. Both ‘teaching’ and learning have the purpose of bringing enlightenment. The Chinese notion of ‘teaching’ does not indicate any belief in God. Religion or ‘teaching’ simply means guidance to live a good life. To understand the great principle of life and of the universe, to reach the good and the beautiful is considered to be “religion”.⁸⁹¹

In my opinion, Chih’s words above provide a precise interpretation of what is written in the beginning of *The Doctrine of the Mean*:

What Heaven (*T’ien*, Nature) imparts to man is called human nature.
To follow our nature is called the Way (*Tao*).
Cultivating the Way is called education.⁸⁹²

Heaven and human nature are originally one and the same. If human beings wish to achieve the lofty humanity-heaven unity in this world, they must be educated to follow the *Tao* that enlightens life. The people’s high school and traditional Chinese humanist teaching share the same purpose: to enlighten human life and its relationship to the cosmos.⁸⁹³ What Grundtvig can add to Chinese humanism is his Mosaic-Christian anthropology. This also enables him to cooperate with naturalists to enlighten true human life and serve the common good. In China, however, the believing and non-believing issue, to some extent, still draws a boundary between Christians and non-Christians, which is good neither for the Christian public witness nor for social cohesion. Therefore, Grundtvig’s appreciation and acknowledgement of the advantages of naturalists’ life in the light of his anthropology parallels the traditional Chinese optimistic understanding of human nature. Both call on the growth of natural human life with an upward aspiration of transcendence. To solve the same relationship problem between Christians and naturalists, K. H. Ting makes use of Justin Martyr’s concept of *logos spermatikos* in every human being and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s concept of the Cosmic Christ, whose continuous creation and redemption ministry engenders all the truth, goodness, and beauty within or without the Church, so that Ting can also freely cooperate with true Marxist humanists.⁸⁹⁴ Although different in their theological approaches to naturalists, both Grundtvig and Ting try to engage the naturalists and humanists for the common good as well as for the enlightenment of human life.

Furthermore, Grundtvig’s Mosaic-Christian anthropology centered on the Word and Christ-likeness can also be compared with the Chinese theologian’s insight in terms of the ethical reconstruction in China. China’s shift from the former planned economy to the market economy and today’s rapid economic growth in the last three decades result in a certain social anomie in the spirit of individualism, pragmatism, utilitarianism and consumerism. Chinese scholars have already realized the necessity of ethical reconstruction. Traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, asks

⁸⁹¹ Andrew Chih, *Chinese Humanism: A Religion Beyond Religion* (Taipei: Fu Jen Catholic University, 1981), 13.

⁸⁹² Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 98.

⁸⁹³ K. E. Bugge has done an interesting examination on Grundtvig’s criticism of the Chinese exam system, which is only based on what Grundtvig read from the experience of the Portugese in Canton (the present-day Guangzhou city) in early 16th century, and Grundtvig’s knowledge of Chinese education is hence limited. See K. E. Bugge, “Det Chinesiske Examens-Væsen,” in *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Jens Holger Schjørring et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2007), 91-7.

⁸⁹⁴ K. H. Ting, “A Chinese Christian’s Appreciation of the Atheist (1979),” in K.H. Ting, *Love Never Ends: Papers by K. H. Ting*, ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yilin, 2000), 41.

people to follow the cosmic moral order of nature (*Tao*) into a unity of heaven and humankind. Yet *Tao* remains invisible to the Chinese, and no one seems really to achieve such a perfection of heaven-humanity unity. Here can be introduced the Christian concept of incarnation of the Word (*Tao*), which manifests and exemplifies perfectly the natural human life God intends at the time of creation, and hence can lead people to salvation. Grundtvig's emphasis on the Christ-like life of faith, hope, and love, divine and human at the same time, becomes a good example. As Allchin summarizes Grundtvig's view:

Grundtvig's work centers on an amazed and amazing affirmation of the potential of every human life to become God-bearing, pregnant with a meaning and a joy which are fully and entirely human, and yet have their origins beyond what is merely human. This affirmation involves a wonderful exchange, a reciprocity, an interaction, *vekselvirkning*, of what is human and what is divine.⁸⁹⁵

This corresponds to the well-known Chinese theologian T. C. Chao's view. Chao believes that the Christ-like life results from Christians' reception of and identification with Christ's life in faith, which is his soteriological theory with salvation understood as a complete identification with Christ.⁸⁹⁶ This Christ-like life not only fits in with the new Chinese Confucian notion of "immanent transcendence" espoused by Mou Zongsan, Tu Weiming and Liu Shuxian,⁸⁹⁷ but also testifies its viability through both Christ's own exemplification and God's Providential love here and now.⁸⁹⁸ The transcendent heavenly divine nature becomes immanent in human beings out of God's creation, and is clearly manifested by the incarnation of the Word. The Word Creator and the incarnate Word, the same Word as the true image of God, are carried by all human beings, who are supposed to realize and develop fully their nature, the image of God, through an imitation of Christ's earthly life. By transcending their human nature through fulfilling it, they correspond to Grundtvig's emphasis on the growth of the Christ-like life, which resembles the Confucian pattern of immanent transcendence.

Finally, together with the necessity of cultural and ethical reconstruction, the Chinese social structure is also undergoing transformation. How can Chinese Christianity acquire a structural niche while keeping its spiritual identity in contemporary society?

Grundtvig does not intend to develop a concrete structural framework for Danish civil society, but his basic principle is to let the human living words freely express their spiritual power in the *folkelig* life so that people can be prepared to meet with the free living Word in the Church. Concerning the position of the Danish Church in future Denmark, Grundtvig only gives a vague answer in 1848: pointing not only to "God's kingdom and righteousness" but also to the "Danish heart."⁸⁹⁹ Accordingly, Grundtvig's functional differentiation of Church, State, and School in his ideal civil society is the starting-point for the social reconstruction when Denmark shifts from an absolutist monarchy to a modern democratic nation state. To avoid his free and living congregation being identified with any institutions, Grundtvig creatively establishes a capacious civil space transformed

⁸⁹⁵ A. M. Allchin, "Grundtvig: An English Appreciation," *Worship* 58 (1984):428-29.

⁸⁹⁶ See T. C. Chao, *Yesu zhuan* [Life of Jesus], in vol. 2 of *Zhao Zichen wenji* [Works of T.C. Chao] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2004), 447-48, 460-61. Chao (1888-1979), is one of the leading theologians of the Chinese churches in the first half of the twentieth century, who devotes all his life to construct an indigenous Chinese Christianity.

⁸⁹⁷ Yong Huang, "Confucian Theology: Three Models," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 4 (July 2007): 462-68.

⁸⁹⁸ As Yeo notes, "*Jen* ['love'], the way to being human, is neither theocentric nor anthropocentric; it is a mutuality of the human and the heavenly. As such, human responsibility has its transcendent anchorage and, at the same time, that transcendent anchorage always seeks its expression in the immanent reality of human affairs." Yeo, *What has Jerusalem?* 160.

⁸⁹⁹ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 215.

from the State Church, in which the national life and the Christian life, conveyed by both Christian individuals and living congregations, converge in the same human life and exert a living interaction on each other. The public function of this civil space makes both the traditional Christian culture continuously conducive to national cohesion, and true Christianity independent of any secular confinement. Through freely carrying on its public function to create a free *folkelighed* and enlightening people about true human life, Christianity in Denmark finds its earthly home whose life not only relies on, but also, to a great extent, promotes the national life.

In a similar vein, Chinese Christianity also requires civil society in which it can develop itself and perform its public function. Yet due to the radical difference of the Danish and Chinese contexts, at the very outset we need to find out what kind of civil society suits the Chinese Church and China best. A simple appropriation of the western theories of civil society cannot benefit the complex Chinese societal situations. Moreover, in a multi-religious context with a centralized government it will be difficult and unrealistic to bring forward a concrete political framework based solely on Christianity. This may lead to the historical mistakes of theocracy and ecclesiocracy. But Grundtvig's principle is still relevant: to revive the natural and free human life based on the people's heart or conscience, and to promote people's very Chineseness. (Traditional Chinese humanism will be very helpful here). The cultural and civic connotations of Chineseness will be gradually unfolded through the people's free living words. The State, School, Market, and various religious institutions including the Church must all adjust to the free Chinese *folkelig* reality for a civil society with Chinese characteristics to emerge.

On the one hand, Chinese scholars like Deng Zhenglai have begun the discussions of civil society in China since the 1990s. For example, Jia Xijin, associate professor in the school of Public Policy and Management of Qinghua University, has recently pointed out the necessity of establishing civil society in China for the successful transformation of the Chinese society and State.⁹⁰⁰ On the other hand, as Grundtvig also worries about, the social transformation should avoid both violence and anarchy. Deng Zhenglai proposes a theory of "positive interaction" between the Chinese State and Chinese civil society: on the side of the State, it should "acknowledge the independence of civil society" based on its own covenantal relationships among different social groups. It can intervene in civil society "through not political means, but legal or economic means" in order to balance the relationships of the different social groups as well as to promote the common good; on the side of civil society it can safeguard the citizens' freedom and rights to counteract excessive State power with a tyrannical tendency, and become the matrix of a modern political democracy.⁹⁰¹ The formation of civil society in China demands the promotion of governing the country by law, and the proper "citizenization"⁹⁰² of the people. Deng's "positive interaction" model underscores the combination of both top-down reform and bottom-up efforts. It also brings us back to Grundtvig's principle of "living interaction" in two lines: the state's power should be sanctioned by law, and the peasants should be educated to be citizens via the people's high schools.

Grundtvig's vision of civil society has its uniqueness compared with modern notions of civil society. It encourages freedom of trade for a future market, but is always concerned with the common good; it protects individuals' freedom and rights, but opposes liberal individualism; it promotes freedom of association, but focuses on the collective dimension of *folkelighed*; it shapes public space for the

⁹⁰⁰ Jia Xijin, "Zhuanxing chengong yilai gongmin shehui chengzhang" [The Successful Transformation Relies on the Growth of Civil Society], http://blog.caijing.com.cn/expert_article-151535-53461.shtml (accessed on July 29, 2013).

⁹⁰¹ Deng, *Guojia yu shehui*, 12-3.

⁹⁰² Deng, , "Shehui zhixu de jiangou jiqi zhengdangxing - Zixu" [The Construction of Social Order and its Legitimacy: Preface], in *Guojia yu shehui: zhongguo shiminshehui yanjiu*, 2.

people's mouth to voice diverse public opinions, but emphasizes the loving heart as the source of these opinions; it does not mechanically separate the public from the private spheres as demarcated by political liberalism, but sees itself as the extension of family life. This unique vision can shed light on today's global context. Yet his vision is forged with God's kingdom as its frame of reference, and implemented through his public theology.

In the uniqueness of Grundtvig's civil society, I shall simply pick up the feature of its kinship-orientation, which, I think, is especially relevant to the Chinese context, where public theology may play an important role to establish a civil society. Traditional Chinese society is based on families and clans with filial piety as the basic ethical norm in families, in extended families, and ultimately in "all space under heaven." Thus it is very hard to imagine a public realm independent of the family influence. Such a state based on family-tie, on the one hand, has the advantage of keeping the spiritual and loving ties between people, yet it is also susceptible to nepotism and corruption on the other. As mentioned earlier, Grundtvig points out that family love can be enclosed and hence egoistic, hindering the development of a civil life. This problem in China has already been identified, and the proposed solution is civic education. This, however, poses further questions. Will the civic education centered on law be effective to counteract individualism and egoism in families and societies? Is the civil life more important than family life, which should then be *replaced* by civil life? The two are not mutually exclusive, says Grundtvig. As mentioned earlier, he regards family life as the matrix of human life where true love can be found. He is aware that egoistic family love can be inimical to a healthy civil life in the spirit of freedom and equality, but he believes a true family life of love mirrors the heavenly Father's love toward all His children, in the light of which both family life and civil life should be in a living interaction with the inclusive heavenly family life and civil life.⁹⁰³ A "mechanic" law can protect the marginalized, but cannot lubricate people's relationship of love. Grundtvig's wisdom is exhibited here to keep a good balance between the nurturing of true human love in family as the foundation of civil society and transforming peasants into citizens in civil life through *folkelig* education. Traditional Chinese culture is no stranger to the heavenly paternal or patriarchal spiritualities, although heaven may appear impersonal. What is needed now is not only the maintenance of people's natural spiritual bond, the revival of natural family life to be extended into the civil life in the light of God's kingdom, but also citizenship-training to pave the way for a free and democratic life in civil society. People's high schools serve this purpose best.

To sum up, Grundtvig's public theology aims at both the awakening of Christianity and the social transformation for the common good. So does the Chinese Church. The difficulties that once challenged the Danish Church and society are more or less repeated in China although the basic national situations of the two countries differ a lot. Not only is Grundtvig's creative employment of the Nordic spiritual legacy inspiring, but his affirmation of the humanity of Christianity also resembles traditional Chinese humanism.⁹⁰⁴ It endorses on the one hand the meaning of natural human life, and on the other, complements Chinese humanism with the sense of divine transcendence and the necessary *theosis* process. To keep Christian groups of different theological and political standpoints in a capacious social space for a living interaction with the natural human life is Grundtvig's ecclesial wisdom. Cultural construction is the key to shaping people's common life value and strengthening communal cohesion. Public theology demands a spiritual organic civil society to alleviate the tension between individuals and the State, to assist in creating a free and

⁹⁰³ Grundtvig, "Menneske-Livet i Danmark II (1851)," *HB* II, 259.

⁹⁰⁴ For a general introduction to Chinese humanism, see Chih, *Chinese Humanism*.

democratic culture, and to serve the common good. A deep divine-human coinherence underlies Grundtvig's Christian reform and public involvement.

8.2. A Chinese Apperception of the Deep Coinherent Divine-Human Relationship in the light of the *Yin-Yang* Paradigm

After a general appreciation of Grundtvig's public theology from a Chinese perspective, I am particularly interested in the deep structure of Grundtvig's public theology, i.e., the deep coinherence of the divine and human life exemplified by Christ. It is especially linked to the well-debated issue of understanding the Christianity-*folkelighed* relationship in the light of Danish theologians' various interpretative patterns. The key questions are as follows: despite the human fall, how does the *human-divine* relationship continue among the heathens? Is the divine-human continuity based on a philosophical and psychological understanding, or on symbolic languages such as poetry and mythology, or on a human experience of faith, hope, and love? Moreover, what role do the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ the Word play in the continuous *divine-human* relationship? Finally, what is the relationship between human beings and nature? Undoubtedly the same Spirit and Word continue to be at work both in creation and redemption, dealing with the same human life in the light of God the Father's love and Providence. In brief, can there be an all-encompassing paradigm to interpret Grundtvig's notion of the deep divine-human coinherence?

8.2.1. Different Expositions of Grundtvig's Divine-Human Dynamic in the Danish Grundtvig Scholarship

In this section, I shall try to find answers to the questions above as given by various Danish Grundtvig scholars. The choice of these scholars is based on the one hand on my limited reading experience, and on their direct or indirect response to Kaj Thaning's alleged secularizing interpretation of Grundtvig since the 1960s on the other. First of all, I shall explore whether there is still a natural continuity between God and humanity which enables humanity to learn about God despite the human fall. Kim A. Pedersen and Ove Korsgaard have talked about this issue in terms of the human internal triadic structure of body, soul, and spirit; Kaj Thaning and Helge Grell have touched upon this question in terms of poetic symbolic languages; yet most Danish Grundtvig scholars, such as Regin Prenter, Helge Grell, Ove Korsgaard and Hans Iversen, have dealt with this question in terms of the life experiences of faith, hope, and love. I shall simply choose Thaning as a representative.

My tentative conclusion is that, epistemologically speaking, neither the human inner triadic cognitive structure, nor poetry, nor human experience of love can be sufficient for humanity to talk about God clearly. Secondly, I intend to explore how the debate over Thaning's understanding of Grundtvig is solved. Such Danish theologians as Thyssen, Grell, Iversen, Prenter and Gregersen have contributed directly or indirectly to this debate. Almost all of them reject Thaning's seemingly one-sided emphasis on the human subsumption of Christianity by highlighting the living interactive pattern between the divine and the human. Furthermore, Iversen and Gregersen also suggest the deep co-inherence of the divine and human in Grundtvig's theology. Then inspired by Prenter's deliberations, I also find an implicit circulation in terms of a life of faith, hope, and love, but Gregersen further develops a circulation theory, involving not only the divine and the human, but also spirit and nature with human beings as a mediating microcosmos. In brief, by calling on these theologians, I intend to offer a brief survey of the Grundtvig scholarship in recent years in terms of Grundtvig's divine-human relationship while recognizing that the ideas of these scholars surely deserve more detailed studies. Finally, based on Danish theologians' deliberations, I attempt to

propose that the deep coinherent divine-human relationship may be understood in the light of the Chinese *Yin-Yang* paradigm although Grundtvig himself does not like any speculative systematization.

8.2.1.1. A Possible Natural Theology?

“Natural theology,” as defined by John Macquarrie, “is the knowledge of God...accessible to all rational human beings without recourse to any special or supposedly supernatural revelation.”⁹⁰⁵ That is, people can know about God not through the special revelation of the incarnate Word, but simply through general revelation. The following Danish scholars try to explore the possibility of a natural theology in Grundtvig’s early thought: to know about God through reason, cosmology, psychology, poetry and human experience of love.

8.2.1.1.1. The Inner Human Cognitive Triadic Structure

Kim A. Pedersen and Ove Korsgaard have explored the possibility of a natural continuity between the divine-human relationship from the metaphysical and psychological perspectives. Pedersen has tracked the correspondence between the inner human Triadic structure and the Triune God in Grundtvig’s thought in 1812-15.⁹⁰⁶ Basically, Pedersen explains the trichotomic cognitive functions in human beings as follows: feeling is the function of the body through external senses, and through the spirit’s power of imagination what the body feels can be grasped by the soul and expressed in words by means of reason.⁹⁰⁷ The capacity of body, spirit, and soul as the image of God in humanity to recognize God depends on its correspondence to the three persons in the Trinity of whom the Father is the source of love and expresses Himself in the truth of the Word through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰⁸ In Genesis, God’s creation through Logos, the image of God, is “in and through human imagination” and also connected with the feeling of the body, and thus the spirit works in humanity as the “imaginative ideas” [*forstillingerne*] of the invisible.⁹⁰⁹ In this way, the development of human life corresponds to God’s natural revelation through creation. This means that in the 1810s Grundtvig tried to establish a kind of epistemological continuity between God and human beings independent of the special revelation of the incarnate Word. Pedersen also quotes Helge Grell to show that when Grundtvig works on his *Danne-Virke*, Grundtvig does distinguish “natural theology” from “revelation theology,”⁹¹⁰ and hence distinguishes recognition from faith. Although the human natural metaphorical recognition of God becomes ambiguous due to the human fall, it in part accounts for the continuous creation ministry of the Word that is the same as the incarnate Word, who brings together creation and redemption.⁹¹¹ Moreover, it is only through the incarnation of Logos, the image of the invisible God, that the human faculties of body, soul, and spirit can be restored to their original cooperation in order to receive the natural revelation of God as the “source of life” in His continuous creation.⁹¹² Based on this, Pedersen criticizes Regin

⁹⁰⁵ See John Macquarrie, “Natural theology,” in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 402.

⁹⁰⁶ Pedersen, “Metafysik og Åbenbaring,” in *Grundtvig Studier* 1995, 75-101.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁹⁰⁸ Pedersen quotes Grundtvig’s Letter (Breve 259) to demonstrate the intra-trinitarian link. See Pedersen, “Metafysik og Åbenbaring,” 94-5.

⁹⁰⁹ Pedersen, “Metafysik og Åbenbaring,” 87.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., 77-8.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., 99, 97.

⁹¹² Pedersen, “Metafysik og Åbenbaring,” 97.

Prenter's seemingly all-embracing Trinitarian framework that focuses merely on the redemption of the incarnate Word, but neglects the human natural recognition of God in the process of God's creation.⁹¹³

Ove Korsgaard also makes use of the human triadic structure, albeit differently from Pedersen, to prove unviable the scientific reductionist approach to understanding human life, let alone the divine-human relationship. He points to the key connection between cosmology and psychology in Grundtvig's thinking. According to him, the trichotomic body, mind (soul or self-consciousness in concrete time and space), and spirit correspond to sense, language, and intuition, which together shape people's horizons for understanding the world.⁹¹⁴ In the same vein, Korsgaard claims that sense corresponds to the "empirical-analytic method" to study "technical art;" mind corresponds to the "hermeneutic, phenomenological, rational or historical" methods to explore "practical or moral art;" and finally, spirit corresponds to the "poetic, intuitive, or paradoxical" methods to describe the "spiritual domain."⁹¹⁵ All three form a holistic understanding of the world in opposition to the reductionist approach, materialistic or ontological.⁹¹⁶ Korsgaard further argues that when people try to understand human life through the reductionist method of science, there are such "ontological discontinuities" as between dead molecules or electrons and living life.⁹¹⁷ The philosophical approach to exploring the divine-human relationship remains difficult and ambiguous, and Korsgaard suggests that a life of faith, hope, and love in the moral sphere of the soul can be a better way to explore the natural divine-human continuity.⁹¹⁸

Thus both Pedersen and Korsgaard have tried the inner human triadic structure in Grundtvig's thinking of the 1810s, but both conclude that the metaphysical approach to exploring the natural divine-human relationship is not feasible.

8.2.1.1.2. The Poetic Symbolic Language

Both Thaning and Grell have studied Grundtvig's understanding of poetry as symbolic language to bridge the gap between time and eternity in the attempt to explore the natural divine-human connection. According to Thaning's interpretation of Grundtvig, "the invisible" can be linked with the "visible" through the human word of figurative language or imagery (*Billedsprog*), especially in poetry and mythology, to express the human spiritual upward longing for eternity and harmony, whose "truth is even guaranteed by God."⁹¹⁹ The young Grundtvig believes that mythology is the "witness of human nature to God,"⁹²⁰ which can be regarded as a kind of natural God-consciousness. Besides, Grell also finds out Grundtvig's employment of symbols to connect the "creation Word and human word" from 1810-1819.⁹²¹ As Grell says, poetic imagination relies on symbolic languages to express what cannot be literally described and rationally grasped.⁹²² Grell thus claims that as a result of the human fall, the idyllic human understanding of God through symbolic

⁹¹³ Ibid., 99. I shall further introduce Regin Prenter's theology in the following section.

⁹¹⁴ Ove Korsgaard, "Om Grundtvigs kosmologi og psykologi," in *En Orm- En Gud*, 25-6.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., 14-5.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁹¹⁹ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 39.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁹²¹ Grell, *Skabeånd og folkeånd*, 65.

⁹²² Ibid.

languages becomes obscure and vague, so that Grundtvig turns to the language of love in the years 1821-25.⁹²³

8.2.1.1.3. The Human Experience of Love

As is more obvious in Grundtvig's writings, the human life of faith, hope, and love also among non-Christians can be regarded as the expression of the natural continuity of the divine-human relationship. Such Danish Grundtvig scholars as Ove Korsgaard, Hans Iversen, Helge Grell, Regin Prenter and Niels Gregersen acknowledge this fact. Here I simply choose Kaj Thaning as an example because his thinking at this point can, to some extent, contrast his alleged separation of the Christian from the human.

Thaning believes that God and human beings can meet through love. He claims that in 1824 Grundtvig already realized that God's descending (*nedadstigende*) love and human ascending (*opadstigende*) love became the point of contact between the divine and human in the "beautiful land," and that, according to Grundtvig, the human feeling that experiences the divine-human connection in love is the "unfathomable depth in humanity beyond human understanding...the source of life...home for the heavenly longings, mother of faith and the hope of eternal life" (*det umaadelige Dyb i Mennesket, som han ei kan begribe ... Livets Kilde... Hjemmet for de himmelske Længsler, Moder til Troen og det evige Livs Haab*).⁹²⁴ Human life, however, is also inclined to, and bound by, self-love, which is a sin that hampers the relationship between God and human beings and between human beings. Therefore, the natural human love itself can be flawed and fail to meet God's love.

8.2.1.1.4. Summary

Thus in the very end, the natural connections between the divine and the human through either philosophy or poetry or love, remain obscure and inadequate in part due to the human fall. This view is well summarized by Thyssen:

The creation of man in God's image made him not only a picture of God, but also involved a task: his idea of God was to be illuminated in the course of time by "seeing through a glass" (using Paul's expression in Corinthians) until in the end it fused together with God. At the fall the image of God in man is corrupted, but not completely; man still has the same destiny, which is also the goal of history. The words of primitive languages were images of the creative word, which was forgotten after the fall. However, remnants of this image-language stayed alive for a time among the ancient peoples and religions, particularly in Israel, and this can still be "glimpsed" by an inspired poet. For in fact everything reflects its first pattern in Paradise, we are surrounded by mist, which makes it hard to see.⁹²⁵

In this view, the incarnation of the Word becomes necessary in order to enlighten the true human life in living interaction with the divine. In the 1960s, however, Thaning's interpretation of Grundtvig's divine-human relationship received sharp criticism from other Danish scholars.

8.2.1.2. The Objection of Kaj Thaning's Secularizing Reading of Grundtvig

Thaning represents typical Grundtvig scholarship of the 1960s when secular theology became popular together with the civil rights movements in the world, not least in Denmark. He insists that,

⁹²³ Grell, *Skabeånd og folkeånd*, 74, 77.

⁹²⁴ Thaning, *For Menneske-Livets Skyld*, 39, 41.

⁹²⁵ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People up to 1824," in *Tradition and Renewal*, 109-110.

after 1832, Grundtvig turns his focus on the present life from a pragmatic perspective whose Mosaic-Christian anthropology enables him to cooperate with naturalists. Thaning emphasizes that Grundtvig gradually shifts from his early adherence to a penitential and pietistic variety of Lutheranism (*bodskristendommen*) to a secular understanding of Christianity based on *folkeligheden*, the kind of Christianity understood no longer as norm or law to challenge human sins and regulate other scientific studies, but as gospel to affirm human potentials for the *folkelig* development.⁹²⁶ As a result, Grundtvig's Christianity, according to Thaning, tends to be fully merged in the one-sided emphasis on *folkelig* life.

Later, Danish Grundtvig scholars have questioned Thaning's tendency to subsume Christianity under the concept of human *folkelighed*. Instead of following Thaning's unilateral emphasis on the human, they insist on the living interaction between the divine and the human, and between Christianity and *folkelighed*. Furthermore, there may be also a deep coinherent relationship between them, as suggested by Iversen and Gregersen. Indeed, I am also inspired by Prenter to discover an implicit circulation pattern in Grundtvig's theology. Yet Gregersen spells out more explicitly his overarching circulation paradigm. Below I shall introduce these theologians' points of view respectively while acknowledging that their views also have overlaps. But first let us turn to other Danish theologians of the past half-century.

8.2.1.2.1. Anders P. Thyssen

From a historical perspective, Thyssen points out that Grundtvig's development of the concept of *folkelighed* actually presupposes his "ecclesial perspective" (*den kristelige anskuelse*) once he comes to realize the importance of the living word and the necessary differentiation of Church from School and State. Thus Grundtvig can start to clarify and strengthen the people's enlightenment for the reconstruction of a civil society.⁹²⁷ Thyssen criticizes Thaning's emphasis on Grundtvig's turning to the stark human life after 1832. Let me repeat Thyssen's standpoint here: "Separation only finds its correct meaning when we insist that Grundtvig simultaneously holds the two factors [the Christian and the human] closely together, so that he can also hold that there is the closest coherence in between them."⁹²⁸ Here Thyssen articulates not only the ecclesial presupposition of Grundtvig's shift in 1832, but also the Christian-*folkelig* interaction on the basis of the divine-human coinherence. In this way he disagrees with Thaning's exclusive focus on *folkelighed* as the precondition for Christianity.

8.2.1.2.2. Theodor Jørgensen

Theodor Jørgensen affirms the necessary "mutual presupposition" between Christianity and *folkelighed*. Jørgensen underscores that it is through concrete *folkelig* life that Christianity can grow and flourish while creating and restoring a true human national life in the spirit of freedom.⁹²⁹ For Jørgensen, Christianity's influence on *folkelighed* is often downplayed, and he insists on the "separation and living interaction" between Christianity and *folkelighed*.⁹³⁰ He even points out Grundtvig's own confusion of Christianity and *folkelighed*, when Grundtvig "made the Danish cause God's cause."⁹³¹ As a result of the human fall, Jørgensen also declares that "there is no

⁹²⁶ Thaning, *Grundtvig*, 69-70.

⁹²⁷ Thyssen, "Det bibelsk-folkehistoriske helhedssyn," in Schjørring, *Menneske først*, 47-8.

⁹²⁸ Thyssen, "Menneske Først," in *Grundtvig og den grundtvigske arv*, 180.

⁹²⁹ Theodor Jørgensen, "Treenighedsteologi og Folkelighed," in *Menneske først, kristen så: Helge Grells Grundtvig-disputats til debat*, ed. Jens Holger Schjørring (Århus: ANIS, 1988), 24-5.

⁹³⁰ Jørgensen, "Adskillelse og vekselvirkning," in *Grundtvig Studier* 1986, 79-81, 103.

⁹³¹ Jørgensen, "Treenighedsteologi og Folkelighed," in Schjørring, *Menneske først*, 25.

salvation in *folkelighed*.”⁹³² The emergence and flourishing of a free *folkelighed* cannot come about without Christianity. In my opinion, it is true that *folkelighed* will not lead us into salvation, but to discuss *folkelighed* without Christianity or vice versa tends to ignore Grundtvig’s emphasis on the same life shared by both Christianity and *folkelighed* as in the case of the inseparable relationship between spirit and body.

8.2.1.2.3. Helge Grell

Similarly, Grell also holds firm to the living interaction pattern between the divine and the human. In his two books, *Skaberånd og folkeånd* (1988), and *Skaberord og billedord* (1980), Grell also analyses Grundtvig’s idea of the living interaction (*vekselvirkning*) between the Christian and the *folkelig* life. He provides a parallel delineation between the Christian and the *folkelig* in the light of the living interaction between the Creating Word and human words, and between the Holy Spirit and human spirits. According to him, there is still continuity in the divine-human relationship despite the human fall, which renders ambiguous the human recognition of God through symbols.⁹³³ As Grell says, “God creates in love, [and] the deed of creation itself is the deed of love, which also, in His work, creates love for the Creator and for [Creation] itself as His ministry.”⁹³⁴ Both God and human beings are thus locked⁹³⁵ in the “Creator-creature” (*Skaber-skabningforholdet*) dynamic of love in a corresponding way.⁹³⁶ In this aspect, it is precisely through the incarnation that the connection between the Christian and the human is manifested. With the human condition of creatureliness (*skabtheden*), incarnation becomes possible, and incarnation brings to reality what human life is made for.⁹³⁷ It is through the incarnation that the unity or “fusion of God’s Word and human word” becomes a complete reality.⁹³⁸ By emphasizing the parallels as well as the living interaction between the Word Creator and the human words (and between the Holy Spirit Creator and human spirit) Grell affirms the divine-human continuity in Grundtvig’s theology.

8.2.1.2.4. Hans Raun Iversen

Iversen argues against Thaning’s secular interpretation of Grundtvig’s divine-human relationship by emphasizing the deeply coinherent relationship in the Trinitarian framework. Iversen asserts the continuous divine-human relationship through his understanding of Grundtvig’s theology of the Holy Spirit in which human beings receive their spirits from God by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and these are expressed in human words. He claims that “this respiration is, in the most literalist

⁹³² *ibid.* “Der er ingen frelse i Folkelighed.”

⁹³³ Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 75.

⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 77. “Gud skaber i kærlighed. Skabergerningen er i sig selv en kærlighedsgerning, som også skaber kærlighed i sit værk til skaberen og til dette selv som hans værk.”

⁹³⁵ Grell says, “Even in denial and self-conceit human beings can never break totally with their creator.” Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 106. (Selv i fornægtelse og selvrådighed kan mennesket aldrig bryde totalt med sin skaber.)

⁹³⁶ Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 80. Hans Raun Iversen also emphasizes the divine-human correspondence in terms of faith, hope, and love, as he quotes Grundtvig: “Tro og Håb og Kærlighed, nedenfra og ovenned, modes i Gudsordet.” See Iversen, “Folkelighed og kristendom,” 81, 84n20. In Chinese philosophy, “There are two different aspects in the doctrine of love. One is the descent of the divine love upon man as a continuous incarnation. Love in this aspect is the heavenly-bestowed pure nature of man. The divine love in man is the power to love, and the spring of life. The other aspect of love is the ascent of man elevated by divine love to the position of coordinator with Heaven. The success of man’s ascent depends on his nurturing and expanding the divine love to the outside world. The ascent of man depends on the practice of the humanist religion. The very nature of love is self-communication. This communicating love compels man to open his inner self to other peoples and to all creatures. In communion with all creation, man forms a cosmic union.” Chih, *Chinese Humanism*, 125.

⁹³⁷ Grell, *Skaberordet og billedordet*, 164-65.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

sense, God's breath, [i.e.], God's Spirit who now lives in humanity and keeps humanity alive."⁹³⁹ Iversen can thereby track the continuous work of the Spirit in all human life, including the heathens' life. Furthermore, he highlights the following three aspects: (1) The human-*folkelig* life and Christian life originate from the same creating and incarnate Word, which is their "common source and goal;" (2) the incarnate Word manifests that "true Christian life is true human life," and vice versa, which makes "a theology for human life" possible in the light of "coinherence of God's life and human life" through the Spirit; (3) finally, both Christians and non-Christians share in common the concrete forms as family life, *folkelig* life, and the Christian life assumed by the human spirits in living interaction with the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴⁰ This finally leads him to Trinitarian theology, which includes both the first creation and the second creation with the first creation being the presupposition of the second.⁹⁴¹ Despite the fall, human beings still need to possess "spirit, word, and the triadic faith, hope, and love" to be a living human being so as to be created a second time through the creating and incarnate Word, which is the same Word that comes from the Lord's own mouth at the Creed and the two sacraments.⁹⁴² The new creation starts with the Holy Spirit who enables human beings to receive the Word in their hearts, and hence creates human faith and a new Christ-like fellowship of faith, hope, and love.⁹⁴³ While explaining first and second creation respectively, Iversen argues for the legitimacy of the "chronological and epistemological" order in terms of the divine-human relationship coinhering in the creating and incarnate Word through the Spirit's work. Iversen quotes Grell as follows: the Spirit is to "create both true human self-understanding and Christian faith among human beings."⁹⁴⁴

According to Iversen, it is thus the Spirit that connects the first creation and the second creation – or redemption. Another of his contributions is to point out that, the life of faith, hope, and love in the human spirit also needs to assume the concrete spirit form in family life, *folkelig* life and Christian life in the Danish context,⁹⁴⁵ so that the human life of faith, hope, and love can be recognized and nurtured. The corresponding locations of the human spiritual life are "house, people (folk), and church."⁹⁴⁶ It is a pity that people (folk) are not as concrete as house and church as social space. Whereas Iversen seems to use *folkeliv* and *borgerliv* or *borgerlige liv* interchangeably,⁹⁴⁷ I think that civil society is a more concrete spirit form than people. Although Iversen also mentions life in society (*samfundsliv*) in his book, he does not expand on it.⁹⁴⁸ Instead, he emphasizes "Danishness as the world of life,"⁹⁴⁹ which is still not as concrete as house and church, nor as civil society in an institutional sense. Moreover Iversen seems also to use *gudeligt liv*, *Christenliv*, *kristeligt liv* and *kirkeliv* interchangeably,⁹⁵⁰ which correspond to church or congregation (*menighed*). According to Iversen's three concentric circles (see figure 1), the inside circle refers to family life, the second to people's life, and the outside circle to Christian life (*kristenlivet*). Iversen's contribution is to follow Grundtvig in making a spatial differentiation of human life, divided into house, people (folk), and

⁹³⁹ Iversen, "Aand er i Mennesket, hvad Pengene er i Verden. Om Grundtvigs Helligåndsteologi," in *Grundtvig, Folkekirke og Mission* (København: ANIS, 2008), 83. "Og dette åndedræt er i bogstaveligste forstand Guds ånde, Guds ånd, som nu lever i mennesket og holder mennesket i live."

⁹⁴⁰ Iversen, "Folkelighed og kristendom," 69-80.

⁹⁴¹ Iversen, "N.F.S. Grundtvigs trinitariske folkekirkeekklesiologi," *Grundtvig-Studier* 2012, 98.

⁹⁴² Ibid., 98-9.

⁹⁴³ Ibid., 99.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁹⁴⁵ Iversen, *Ånd og livsform*, 9.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁴⁷ E.g., see Iversen, *Ånd og livsform*, 37-9.

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁹⁵⁰ E.g., see Iversen, *Ånd og livsform*, 33, 37, 39.

church. He also quotes Grundtvig to contend that the Christian life is the “superior perspective” from which to understand the individual’s life, family life, and people’s life.⁹⁵¹ Yet it is difficult for the diagram below to demonstrate the interaction between the Christian life on the one hand, and the individual’s life, family life, and people’s life on the other. In the diagram, the outside circle of Christian life seems to correspond more to the life of the whole of humanity whose divine destiny is to be fulfilled. But when Grundtvig himself juxtaposes family life, people’s life (*borgerlige liv*), and church life (*kirkeliv*), he is addressing the Danish context in which the Church life precisely needs reforming to set true Christianity and true Christian life free.⁹⁵² Thus the Christian life that Grundtvig refers to should not lie in the outside circle to encompass both family life and *folkelig* life.

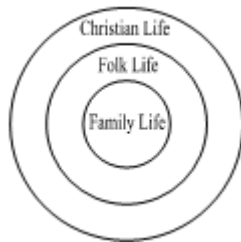


Figure 1



figure 2

In contrast, Ove Korsgaard, drawing on Grundtvig’s view of human relationships, presents a different model of three concentric circles (see figure 2) with human individuals in the inner circle, then the people or State in the middle circle, and finally the whole of humanity in the outside circle.⁹⁵³ Grundtvig himself talks about the living interaction between the individual’s life, the people’s life, and human life. There is nothing wrong with the diagram itself as it takes a path of extension from the individual to the whole of humanity. Regarding the reflections on the meaning of human beings in themselves, in the State, and in the world, Korsgaard’s diagram, however, cannot project in this piece of his work the enlightenment of family life, one of the most important stages of education in Grundtvig’s thinking, as illustrated in Iversen’s diagram. Korsgaard indicates that the individual gains his or her self-consciousness at school, which may lead to the danger of individualism and the dissolution of society.⁹⁵⁴ But the question as to what kind of positive meaning system an individual can have remains.

On the other hand, Iversen contributes to the exploration and recognition of lived expressions of faith, hope, and love taking place in the world of creation, which prepares human beings to meet the incarnate living Word through the Holy Spirit. But the necessity of the second creation remains a little ambiguous in his interpretation. Through the exploration of faith, hope, and love in human life from below, Grundtvig’s affirmation of the restant *imago dei* in human beings as well as the continuity of the divine-human relationship is demonstrated and ascertained despite the human fall. The Christian perspective interacts with the individual’s life, family life, and people’s life, and hence shapes the spiritual ladder of human upward longing for the eternal life of love, manifested in

⁹⁵¹ Iversen, *Ånd og livsform*, 33.

⁹⁵² Grundtvig, “Menneskeliv i Danmark I (1851),” *HB II*, 254-57.

⁹⁵³ Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvigs oplysningstanker- om at knytte bånd og løse knuder,” in *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Fl. Lundgreen-Nielsen et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2000), 159.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 160-61. As Korsgaard also says, “Grundtvig’s social philosophy builds on the liberal view that only through freedom can the individual *voluntarily* impose restraints upon himself. He is not advocating a total individual freedom, for in the long run this would lead to the dissolution of society. For the *social* citizen unlimited freedom has no place. Absolute individualism is incompatible with the idea of a society, since every society depends on the ties between itself the collective and the individual.” See Ove Korsgaard, “Grundtvig as Nation-Builder.”

the incarnate Word who brings into the world the kingdom of God characterized by justice, peace, and joy. To return to the question of the divine-human relationship, how can the original creation be renewed in the light of Iversen's interpretation? In other words, how can fallen human beings be united with the divine? He points to the living Word from the Lord's mouth through the same Spirit Creator in an "existential" and pneumatological way.⁹⁵⁵ But to continue with Iversen's thought on the divine-human continuity based on faith, hope, and love, I am inspired by Regin Prenter to discover an implicit circulation as we shall see in the following section.

8.2.1.2.5. Regin Prenter

In his 1983 article on "Grundtvig's Trinitarian Teaching" Prenter starts with Grundtvig's description of the immanent or essential Trinity as a fellowship (*fælleskab*), which, according to the Danish term *Treenighed* (literally translated as three in unity), means three persons sharing in common a concrete divine nature.⁹⁵⁶ The concrete living divinity makes the three persons not only united, but also a fellowship, for "divinity is not a *characteristic* of "the gods" that separates them from "non-gods" but a *being* that only the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is entitled to."⁹⁵⁷ How then can human beings know the divine Trinity? Prenter argues that for Grundtvig, "it is impossible for human beings to recognize God's essence when the divine surpasses human concepts in themselves."⁹⁵⁸ Then Prenter first reminds us that only through our participation in God's life can we understand the secret of the Trinity through God's self-revelation at our baptism.⁹⁵⁹ Otherwise, our apprehension of God through the image and likeness of God bestowed on us at creation can only lead to "pantheism" and "idolatry."⁹⁶⁰ We have to go back to *imago dei* in human beings to link the divine and the human. Grundtvig distinguishes the image (*Billed* - *Lighed*) of God – represented by heart, mouth, and hand to express the divine-human relationship in a physical sense – from the likeness (*Skygge* - *Billede*) of God, the inner spiritual link between God and human beings in terms of love, truth, and life-power.⁹⁶¹ Both the physical image and the spiritual likeness correspond to God's being, which points to the Father's love, the Son's truth, and the Spirit's life-power expressed by God's heart, mouth, and truth.⁹⁶² This becomes a kind of *vestigia trinitatis* between God and human beings. But the most important thing here is that the spiritual and the physical as well as the inner likeness and the external image can never be separated in order for "love, truth, and life-power" to remain "real or 'living.'"⁹⁶³ According to Grundtvig, the "human expression-form of the image of God" is the living word whose "nerve" is the inseparable "love, truth, and life."⁹⁶⁴ When living human talk is conveyed with love, truth, and life-power, according to Prenter's interpretation, the divine Trinity is with us in the created world, which can be called the "economic Trinity."⁹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Prenter claims that human beings can only discern the "living personal reality" of the "divine Trinity's revelation" through Christ's life marked by

⁹⁵⁵ Iversen, "N.F.S. Grundtvigs trinitariske folkekirkeekklesiologi," 98.

⁹⁵⁶ Prenter, "Grundtvigs treenighedslære," 54-5.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., 56. "guddommelighed er ikke en *egenskab* ved 'guder,' som adskiller dem alle fra 'ikke-guder,' men en *væren*, som kun tilkommer den ene, sande Gud, Fader, Søn og Helligånd."

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., 58. "det er umuligt for mennesker at erkende Guds væsen, dad et guddommelige overgår menneskebegrebet i sig selv."

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

⁹⁶² Ibid., 60.

⁹⁶³ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid., 61. "Denne enhed af kærlighed, sandhed og livskraft er nerven i Grundtvigs opfattelse af 'det levende ord,' som er den menneskelige gudbilledligheds ytringsform."

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid., 61.

faith, hope, and love, which pertains to both Christ's historical human life and the reborn human life as the "Christian spiritual eternal life."⁹⁶⁶ Because of the fall, according to Prenter, the redemption of human beings has to start with the Christian life of faith, hope, and love, beginning with the Spirit's ministry at the baptismal pact, continuing with the Word's Ministry through the baptismal word and the Lord's prayer, and consummating these in the Father's love as manifested in Holy Communion.⁹⁶⁷ Meanwhile Prenter also points out another line of Grundtvig's Christology, which claims that, despite the fall, human beings still possess words in order to maintain the "essential equality with God" (*væsentielle Lighed*) so that both God's "continuous revelation for human beings" (*vedvarende guddommelighed Aabenbaring for Mennesket*) and the incarnation of the Son as a "real human being" become possible.⁹⁶⁸ Thus the original fusion of God's Word and the human word is expected to be restored again.⁹⁶⁹ Finally, Prenter's article draws such conclusions as: (1) the triadic connections between God and human beings are not logical in a Hegelian sense. The *folkelig* life and the congregational life as well as the Christian and human life cannot be separated, but work in a living interactive relationship in creation and the redemption process of the economic Trinity; (2) only from God's own self-revelation through the Creed and the two sacraments can human beings gain real knowledge of the Triune God.⁹⁷⁰

Based on his first conclusion, Prenter would surely disagree with Thaning's secularizing reading of Grundtvig to give complete priority to the human life. Prenter claims that the Christian and the human are mutually presupposed. He follows the historical or chronological development of Grundtvig's thinking, claiming that the "historical-poetic view" is the "presupposition of the ecclesial view,"⁹⁷¹ and that "Grundtvig's understanding of general human life (*det almindelige menneskeliv*) in a crucial way is a presupposition of his view of Christianity."⁹⁷² This, however, does not mean that Prenter agrees with Thaning to make the *folkelig* prior to the Christian. On the contrary, Prenter continues with his argument:

What is primary, the view of Christianity or the general perception of life? This question seems not to be able to be applied to Grundtvig. Grundtvig's basic Christian and *folkelig* thinking cannot be pressed into the logic of either-or, which emerges out of this century's secularizing problem, one which Grundtvig did not know. For Grundtvig, the *folkelig* and the Christian are not two separated life realms, which one can evaluate or compare with each other, and whose mutual priority-relationship one can define. Is the Christian or the *folkelig* primary to Grundtvig? This question presupposes a separation of the two dimensions, which was a major error for Grundtvig to fight against, both when he talked about the *folkelig* (the human), and when he talked about Christianity.⁹⁷³

According to Prenter, it is in the light of this coinherence of the human and the Christian demonstrated by the life of the incarnate Word that Grundtvig's phrase "a human first, and then a

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., 63, 71.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid., 71-2.

⁹⁷¹ Prenter, *Den Kirkelige Anskuelse*, 9.

⁹⁷² Ibid., 84.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., 84-5. "Denne problemstilling: Hvad er det primære, kristendomssynet eller den almene livsopfattelse? synes ikke at kunne anvendes på Grundtvig. Grundtvigs kristelige og folkelige grundtanker kan ikke presses ind i *dette* enten-eller, som er udsprunget af dette århundredes sækulariserings-problematik, som Grundtvig ikke kendte. For Grundtvig er det folkelige og det kristelige ikke to adskilte livsområder, som man kan vurdere og sammenligne i forhold til hverandre, og hvis indbyrdes prioritetsforhold man kan fastlægge. Spørgsmålet: Er det kristelige eller det folkelige det primære for Grundtvig? forudsætter en adskillelse af de to størrelser, som det var en hovedsag for Grundtvig at bekæmpe, både når han talte om det folkelige (menneskelige), og når han talte om kristendom."

Christian” should be interpreted. On the one hand, it criticizes the Lutheran orthodoxy which leaves no meaning with human life in this world; on the other, it should be viewed from God’s perspective of “first God’s creature in grace, [and then] God’s redeemed creature in grace” which unites creation and redemption through Christ, by grace and for human joy.⁹⁷⁴ The motivating power of the divine-human union is God’s grace from the beginning to the end.

At the same time, I find that Prenter’s reading of Grundtvig in his 1983 article may imply an implicit divine-human circulation in the light of the Christ-life as faith, hope, and love. When he mentions that the human grasp of a living and personal reality of the Trinity’s presence in the world relies on the revelation of the Christ-life of faith, hope, and love through the Creed and liturgy, Prenter makes the following remark:

When it is so that our faith, hope, and love – in the *Christian* sense – as a Christ-life imparted to us, (the whole “internal Christ-likeness” of ours), by the Holy Spirit is derived from “the concept of Christianity in the Creed in the words of baptism and the Communion,” then Christian faith, hope, and love obtain their special content of the Word, which at baptism and in the Communion Christ gives us Christ to believe in, to hope for, and to love. And so it begins to clarify itself, in which sense “the divine Trinity’s revelation in a living personal reality” can be enlightened by Christ-life as the true Christ-likeness. For this “Christ-likeness” (faith, hope, and love in a Christian sense), corresponds on the one hand to the love, hope, and faith – notice the inverted order of the terms! – which in *all* true human talk – also outside the context of Christian faith – is a “shadow-likeness” of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit as respectively the divine love, truth and life power. On the other hand, Christ-likeness has a *special* content, namely, what the living God’s Word at baptism and in the Communion gives Christian faith to believe in, Christian hope to long for, Christian love to love. In brief, the Christ-life is communicated to us by God at baptism and in the Communion of God.⁹⁷⁵

It is clear from this paragraph that the Christ-life as faith, hope, and love in a Christian sense starts with the Spirit, continues with the Word, and is consummated in the Father’s love. Interestingly Prenter points out that love, hope and faith exist in human life prior to Christian faith with an inverted order. Two points should be further explained here. First of all, as mentioned earlier, the Christ-likeness of love, faith, and hope in natural human life should be affirmed because Prenter has pointed out that they are expressed in all true human talk prior to Christian faith. This is related to Grundtvig’s other explication of his Christology that focuses on the human “essential equality with God” despite the fall, and is related to the “original uniformity or homogeneity” (*oprindelig ensartede*) of God’s Word and the human word. In this view, the divine-human connection is not severed by the human fall. The Christian revelation through the life of the incarnate Word, i.e., *faith*,

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid., 102, 104.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid., 62. “Når det er sådan, at vor tro, håb og kærlighed – i *kristen* forstand – som et os meddelt Kristus-liv, hele vor ‘indvortes kristelighed,’ af Helligånden *udledes* af ‘kristendomsbegrebet i trosbekendelsen med dåbens og nadverens ord,’ får kristen tro, håb og kærlighed deres særlig indhold af det ord, der ved dåben og nadveren skænker os Kristus at tro og håbe på og at elske. Og så begynder det at klare sig, i hvilken forstand ‘den guddommelige treenigheds åbenbarelse i en levende personlig virksomhed’ kan oplyses af Kristus-Livet som den sande kristelighed. Thi denne ‘kristelighed,’ tro, håb og kærlighed i kristen forstand, svarer på den ene side til den kærlighed, det håb og den tro – bemærk ordenes omvendte række-følge! – der i *al* ægte menneskelig tale – også uden for den kristne tros sammenhæng – er det ‘skyggebillede’ af Faderen, Sønnen og Helligånden som henholdsvis den guddommelige kærlighed, sandhed og livskraft. Kristeligheden har på den anden side et *særligt* indhold, nemlig det, som det levende gudsord ved dåben og nadveren giver kristen tro at tro på, kristent håb at længes efter, og kristen kærlighed at elske, kort sagt det i dåb og nadver af Gud selv meddelte Kristus-liv.”

hope, and love, functions to add particular content for human beings to believe in, to hope for, and to love.

Secondly, Prenter reminds the reader of the fact that the Christian life of faith, hope, and love corresponds to love, hope and faith in the natural human life. Why is there such an inversion of order? Prenter does not provide a clear answer in his 1983 article. This, I propose, may be connected with the Trinitarian movement from the Spirit to the Son, and to the Father in redemption, and the Trinitarian movement from the Father to the Son and to the Spirit in creation. The latter movement can be inferred from the fact that the aseitic or independent (*uafhængig*) God the Father as the source of love in which the Son is born, creates all things by the Word and Spirit with the Spirit proceeding from both the Father and the Son.⁹⁷⁶

Furthermore, Prenter has indicated that “[i]t is the *one* God’s three-fold name, Father, Son and Spirit, which shall be *enlightened* through the equally one ‘Christ-likeness’ of faith, hope, and love.”⁹⁷⁷ Thus, there seems to be a divine impression of love, hope, and faith in the natural human life which corresponds to the Trinitarian movement in God’s creation. After all, according to Iversen, faith, hope, and love are the “life expressions” of both the Triune God and human beings, which are clearly exhibited by Christ-life.⁹⁷⁸ I therefore propose that there seems a possible divine-human circulation, expressed by the inverted order of love, faith and hope, and motivated by the inverted Trinitarian movements in creation and redemption.⁹⁷⁹ See the following diagram (figure 3):



The Human life (creation)

The Christian life (redemption)

The natural human life of love, hope, and faith, albeit fragmentary and vague, reflects the continuous ministries of the Word Creator and the Spirit Creator; the Christian life of faith, hope, and love results from the work of the Holy Spirit Redeemer and the Word Redeemer. With the human fall, the Christian life can help to enlighten, recognize, and enrich the remnant Christ-like life in the naturalists. God’s creation and redemption thereby coinhere in the ministry of the Word and the Spirit as both Creator and Redeemer. Such a circulation pattern, on the one hand, further develops Iversen’s description of the living interaction between the Christian faith, hope, and love

⁹⁷⁶ Gregersen, personal e-mail, January 10, 2013.

⁹⁷⁷ Prenter, “Grundtvigs treenighedslære,” 65. “Det er den *ene* Guds trefoldige navn, Fader, Søn og Helligånd, der skal oplyses gennem den ligeledes ene ’kristelighed,’ tro, håb og kærlighed.”

⁹⁷⁸ Iversen, “N.F.S. Grundtvigs trinitariske folkekirkeekkesiologi,” 100.

⁹⁷⁹ The inverted order love, hope, and faith results from the inverted ministerial order of the Son and the Spirit. It may be compared with von Balthasar’s “Trinitarian inversion”, which refers to “the procedure in which the Spirit precedes the Son in economic activity in the New Testament.” Balthasar also says, “Earlier we spoke of a ‘trinitarian inversion’ during the earthly span of Jesus earthly ministry: if he is to be obedient to the Father, he must allow the Father’s Spirit to take an active, leading role, while at the same time letting the Spirit who proceeds from him, the Son, be in complete harmony with the Father’s will.” See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ*, 521-22. The logic of Spirit Christology will also happen to the awakened human beings as in the human Jesus in order to become God’s children.

from above and the human faith, hope, and love from below, and on the other, depicts both the original divine-human interaction before the human fall and the eschatological reality of the divine-human coinherence with the restored fusion of God's Word and human words.

Although his article on the divine Trinity implies a circulation in terms of an inverted order of faith, hope, and love with their corresponding Trinitarian movements, Prenter emphasizes more the necessity of the special revelation due to the human fall, while seeming to downplay people's natural connection with God in terms of faith, hope, and love. On the contrary, God the Creator's real personal presence among the non-Christians also needs to be confirmed, which can be traced in the light of the true human life of the incarnate Word, and Christians' Christ-like life. Concerning the circulation pattern, I note that Niels Henrik Gregersen has a much broader elaboration.

8.2.1.2.6. Niels Henrik Gregersen

Gregersen believes that the divine-human circulation involves not only God and human beings but also nature. That is, there is also a circulation from spirit to nature with human beings as a microcosmos. In this circulation, the eternal God, out of His surplus of love, extends His divine life and grace to all His creatures via the Word and Spirit so that the Father can dwell in human beings.⁹⁸⁰ As he argues,

The task today is to articulate a doctrine of grace that is generous in a graceful manner... yet still maintaining the principal theological motif that grace is not merely a divine reaction to the sinfulness of man, but essentially emanates from the excess of divine nature itself, rooted in God's eternal love. Expressed in Trinitarian language, the Son and the Holy Spirit can be seen as the agents by which God, out of the overflowing divine Love, is continually embodied (*inhabitation*) by flowing into the world of creation. Out of this radical divine grace, a flow of generosity is generated among human beings.⁹⁸¹

For Gregersen, God's surplus grace becomes the motivating power of the divine-human circulation. Besides, he further points out that the presupposition of the circulation is that "[f]or Grundtvig, there is not only an infinite qualitative difference between the God and human beings, but also a deep coinherence [*en dyb sammenhæng*]."⁹⁸² Moreover, in the light of the non-zero-sum pattern of circulation, Gregersen argues that the circulation does not end up with a simple restoration of the original balance, but paradoxically with a further enrichment of both God's and human beings' life.⁹⁸³ He claims that human beings are created by God, and to God (*til Gud*) as well.⁹⁸⁴ In other words, human beings have not only a "divine origin," but also a "divine destiny," which brings creation and redemption together.⁹⁸⁵ As the "internal Christ-likeness" (*indvortes Christelighed*), faith, hope, and love in both Christians and non-Christians corresponds in a living interactive way with the true human life of the incarnate Word, so that the children of human beings can become the children of God.⁹⁸⁶ It should be mentioned here that, according to Gregersen, Grundtvig's anthropology is based on his Christology,⁹⁸⁷ and that the faith, hope, and love as signs of the remnant *imago dei* of the non-Christians do exist, but need to be *specified*, "*re-identified or*

⁹⁸⁰ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 11, 14.

⁹⁸¹ Gregersen, "Radical Generosity and the Flow of Grace," 140.

⁹⁸² Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 11; see also Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 30-1. Here he quotes Grundtvig to claim that the continuity between the divine and the human makes both incarnation and redemption possible and closely connected while the legalistic ("mahomedanske") theologians deny this (VU 6, 102).

⁹⁸³ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 12-3.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹⁸⁵ See Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 30.

⁹⁸⁶ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 25-7.

⁹⁸⁷ Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 31.

recognized," (*re-identificare eller genkende*) by the particular Christian faith, hope, and love.⁹⁸⁸ The identity of Christian faith is shaped by the Creed at baptism in the congregation, (the so-called first order or primary theology), and this identity is also manifested publicly in daily life.⁹⁸⁹ The basic human Christ-likeness is realized through the congregational life, which shapes the public identity of Christianity in a context of Christendom as the social-cultural outcome of Christianity, marking another dynamic divine-human circulation⁹⁹⁰ that moves from the Christian to the human. However, Gregersen also points out that Grundtvig's vision of the interaction between Christ-likeness, Christianity, and Christendom has been challenged by today's socio-cultural pluralism, the phenomenon of globalization.⁹⁹¹ The inner driving force of the divine in human circulation is from God's Word meeting God's Spirit,⁹⁹² both within the intra-Trinitarian communion and in the Word's earthly journey in the Spirit. According to Gregersen's Hegelian tendency,⁹⁹³ the divine-human circulation relies on the "twofold movement" of the Holy Spirit, who "proceeds from God and returns to God."⁹⁹⁴ Because of the Word's incarnation, there exists a space between the Spirit and Word to be filled in. This space will be covered by the renewal of the original creation. The circulation continues until the economic trinity and essential trinity are mutually subsumed, to use Karl Rahner's phrases.⁹⁹⁵ Then the recapitulation as proposed by Irenaeus is achieved.

There are two more important points to mention. First of all, when Gregersen claims that the human life of faith, hope, and love needs to be recognized or re-identified or specified in the light of faith, hope, and life in the true human life of the incarnate Word, there is obviously space for the interaction between God's Word and human word. It is not simply the Word's confirmation of human words in terms of authentic faith, hope, and love in a heathen's life. There is also a necessity to test whether human words of faith, hope, and love are true. This combines with a similar idea in Ove Korsgaard's employment of the concepts of Logos and Dia-logos (dialogue)⁹⁹⁶ to express the link between the Christian Word and human words. Korsgaard claims that "dialogue is the appearance form of the spirit," through which human words about the Word are tested although they have no direct access to the Word.⁹⁹⁷ Thus a true human life of faith, hope, and love comes from encountering the Word, being in dialogue with the Word, and accepting the Word which makes human talk of self-understanding true. It is obviously the Spirit's work which creates both true human talk and human faith when people accept the Word. Moreover, this opens a public dimension for the interaction between the human word and the Word, i.e., a testing discourse in the public on the true human life in a particular life setting. With their social consciousness, the Christian individuals of the living congregations can join the public discourse by bearing witness to the incarnate Word which they receive in the Church, and contributing to the tracking of the continuous creation ministry of the Word, and to the testing of whether human talk is true on the basis of its fusion with the creating Word – the aim of the people's high school when promoting the true human life. This public testing function is very important for the living congregations to carry on; otherwise, the living interaction between the Christian and the human will lead either to the self-

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁹⁰ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 25-26. See also Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 27.

⁹⁹¹ Gregersen, "Den generøse ortodoksi," 24-5, 27, 31.

⁹⁹² Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 30.

⁹⁹³ Gregersen, personal E-mail. January 10, 2013.

⁹⁹⁴ Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," 33, 30.

⁹⁹⁵ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 22.

⁹⁹⁶ Ove Korsgaard, "Grundtvig's Philosophy of Enlightenment and Education," in *SL*, 23-5; see also Ove Korsgaard, *Grundtvig*, 44-5.

⁹⁹⁷ See Ove Korsgaard, *Grundtvig*, 44-5 .

assertion of true Christianity and the self-isolation of the living congregation, or to the confinement to an implicit interaction between the human word and the Word Creator outside the Church, which risks a kind of naturalist humanism or deism. Therefore, Gregersen's emphasis on the recognition, re-specification, or testing of the human word through the Word is indispensable for Grundtvig's public theology.

8.2.1.3. Human Beings as Microcosmos to Mediate Spirit and Nature

The second point is that within his circulation pattern, Gregersen involves not only the divine and the human, but also spirit and nature with humanity as the microcosmos that mediates the two.⁹⁹⁸ In Iversen's diagram, the human individual is invisible, but always community-conditioned in family life, *folkelig* life, and Christian life. In Ove Korsgaard's interpretive diagram of the individual, the people or the State, and the whole of humanity, the individual is visible, but is provided with no meaning except for a criticism of radical individualization. But Gregersen points out that a human being in him/herself is also a microcosmos to link nature with spirit, and the visible with the invisible. It is an important attempt to explain the divine-human interactive rationale in the process of continuous creation. It informs us how Grundtvig's public theology addresses the fourth public, i.e., nature.

According to Gregersen, Grundtvig understands human beings in the traditional trichotomic way, i.e., "the soul as the truthful consciousness is to combine the spirit as the essence with body as the image."⁹⁹⁹ The spirit expresses itself through the body, and the body seeks meaning from the spirit, so that via human senses of the material, the world of nature is brought to seek meaning in the world of spirit by the human spirit in the mediating field of the soul.¹⁰⁰⁰ Then the human senses bring back to the world of nature the meaning that the spirit gets from the spiritual world for the material, and thereby transforms the world. Thus, according to Gregersen's understanding of Grundtvig's anthropology, "a person is therefore a microcosmos not only of the physical world, but also of the spiritual world."¹⁰⁰¹ Consequently in human beings converge the world of nature and the world of spirit. Human beings become the microcosmos of the universe, which is the macrocosmos.

While elaborating how human beings mediate spirit and nature, Gregersen further claims that Grundtvig does not fall prey to naturalism, but remains a "pre-Darwinist" theologian.¹⁰⁰² According to Gregersen, Grundtvig rejects "subjective 'transcendental' idealism in the shape of Kant and Fichte" by means of the concept of the human person as a microcosmos; what underlies life is not simply the spiritual, but also nature, which is a source of human experience and knowledge.¹⁰⁰³ At the same time, Gregersen argues that this microcosmos concept is also used by Grundtvig to oppose the "objective realism in the shape of Friedrich Schelling" as there cannot be a simple total harmonization of all things between spirit and nature, as if evil can also be taken into

⁹⁹⁸ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 16.

⁹⁹⁹ Grundtvig, *DanneVirke* II, 160, quoted in Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 14-5. "Aanden som Væsenet, Legemet som den Billede, og Sjælen som den i Sandhed *forbundne* af begge."

¹⁰⁰⁰ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 15.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁰² Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 16-7; see also Ole Nyborg's detailed examination of Grundtvig's attitude toward naturalism in Ole Nyborg, "N.F.S. Grundtvig og naturalismen," in *Grundtvig Studier*, edited by Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen og Anders Holm (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2012), 109-44.

¹⁰⁰³ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 15, 18.

eternity.¹⁰⁰⁴ Grundtvig still believes in a personal God the Creator. What is more important, however, is that, as Gregersen points out, the true mediating microcosmos is the incarnate Word as the true image of God who manifests itself in the world.¹⁰⁰⁵ The English summary of Gregersen's article translated by Børge Bendtsen renders this point as follows: "Christ is the archetypical microcosm, [and] humanity is the ectypical microcosm who, ideally at least, combines nature and spirit."¹⁰⁰⁶ It is through human beings who follow Christ that the whole of nature will be restored and transformed.

With Gregersen's addition of the nature-spirit circulation to the divine-human circulation, Grundtvig's public theology can address not only a church, a nation, and the whole of humanity, but also nature. Human beings themselves are divine experiments of spirit and dust. Without nature, human salvation is not holistic but is degraded into a spiritual escape from the world, as the Gnostics claim. Without taking human sin against nature seriously, human beings have not treasured the costly grace manifested by the incarnate and crucified Word and extended to God's whole creation. Therefore, the transformation of Christian life through the creating and incarnate Word does not exclude nature, but takes nature as an indispensable constituent of God's salvation plan that the Holy Spirit will bring all God's creation back to the Trinitarian fellowship of love. This equips Grundtvig's public theology with an ecological significance.

In this section, I have made a brief survey of the Grundtvig scholarship in terms of the divine-human relationship. Generally speaking, the relationship between the divine and the human continues after the human fall. The natural theological effort based on the epistemological continuity does not guarantee any knowledge of God because of the human fall. This makes incarnation necessary. Yet the life of faith, hope, and love in the natural human life corresponds to that in the Christian life, which presupposes the unceasing ministries of the Word in both creation and redemption. In the light of the living interactive pattern between the divine and the human, the secularizing interpretation of Grundtvig risks subsuming the divine *in* the human. It is counteracted by the emphasis of mutual presupposition of Grundtvig's ecclesial view and the Mosaic-Christian anthropology. Furthermore, such scholars as Iversen and Gregersen claim that, besides the living interaction, there is also a deep coinherence between the human and the Christian within the Trinitarian framework, involving not only God and human beings, but also spirit and nature in a circulating pattern. How can this all-embracing reality be demonstrated?

8.2.2. The Divine-Human Relationship in the light of Yin-Yang Philosophy

In the following section I shall take the traditional Chinese *Yin-Yang* paradigm¹⁰⁰⁷ as a heuristic lens to illustrate the divine-human relationship in Grundtvig's theology while acknowledging the difference between the two. As described above, the deep coinherence of the divine and human nature, and of the Christian and *folkelig* life is perfectly manifested in the incarnate Word, who is also the archetypical microcosmos for human beings to combine spirit and dust (as well as nature). Before proceeding to the *Yin-Yang* diagram, I shall join K. K. Yeo to clarify that, although adopting the *Yin-Yang* paradigm is intended to put forward an alternative to the dualistic

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 18. According to Ove Korsgaard, Grundtvig opposes Schelling's monistic harmonization of spirit and nature because Schelling "confuses spirit and soul" while soul refers to human self-consciousness to mediate the spirit and nature. See Ove Korsgaard, "Om Grundtvigs kosmologi og psykologi," 17-8.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Mennesket som Mikrokosmos: Grundtvigs store digt om 'Menneske-Livet,'" *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. FL. Lundgreen-Nielsen et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2000), 85-9, 99.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Børge Bendtsen, "English summary of 'Mennesket som Mikrokosmos,'" *Grundtvig Studier* (2000): 218.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Actually such scholars as Jung Young Lee and Yeo Khiok-Khng have already tried to adopt the *Yin-Yang* philosophy to construct Christian theology from a Chinese perspective. See Yeo, *What has Jerusalem?* 18-21, 18n13.

understanding of the divine-human relationship, it does not necessarily assert the superiority of the *Yin-Yang* paradigm over western traditions; actually the *Yin-Yang* paradigm, as Yeo points out, may be useful to account for the deep divine-human coinherence as an ultimate eschatological reality, but not to describe the penultimate questions, such as the historical process of the living interaction between the economic Trinity and human life at a certain stage.¹⁰⁰⁸ Gregersen, who is well-informed by the modern scientific view of the world, has also expressed a similar concern that Grundtvig's linear view of history apprises us of the fact that the deep divine-human coinherence cannot exist as actualized before God's creation of the world in and with time, but points to an ultimately fulfilled eschatology.¹⁰⁰⁹ Furthermore, even the sufferings in this world may prove contrary to the divine-human coherence and mutual inherence in each individual or human group, let alone the ecological disasters as a sequence of human exploitation of nature. Last but not least, I also realize that the *Yin-Yang* principle tends to eclipse the finite human beings' subordination to the eternal aseitic God. With these important warnings in mind, I intend to discuss the divine-human relationship in the light of the *Yin-Yang* paradigm not so much from the perspective of a substantivist ontology, but more from the perspective of a relational ontology.¹⁰¹⁰ I shall now proceed to introduce the *Yin-Yang* philosophy.

8.2.2.1. Explication of the *Yin-Yang* Paradigm

According to the Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-lan, the *Yin-Yang* cosmological speculation appeared as early as the 8th century B.C., and can be defined as follows:

The word Yang originally meant sunshine, or what pertains to sunshine and light; that of Yin meant the absence of sunshine, i.e., shadow or darkness. In later development, the Yang and Yin came to be regarded as two cosmic principles or forces, respectively representing masculinity, activity, heat, brightness, dryness, hardness, etc., for the Yang, and femininity, passivity, cold, darkness, wetness, softness, etc., for the Yin. Through the interaction of these two primary principles, all phenomena of the universe are produced.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁸ Yeo, *Xiawa, dadi yu shangdi*, 215n2.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Gregersen, personal e-mail. (June 4, 2013). So far I have not found out whether Grundtvig would join Karl Barth to claim that the humanity of Christ is hidden in the Trinity even before the creation. However, Grundtvig does speak of an "election of Grace" (Naadevalget) before the foundation of the world (*US* II, 309), and in Grundtvig's hymn, "Naaden, hun er af Kongeblood" ("Grace is of Royal Blood") he argues that "Love itself is the root of grace, has its roots in Heaven" ("Kjerlighed selv er Naadens Rod, Roden i Himmerig inde", in vol. 4 of Grundtvig's *Sang-Værk*, 402), see Gregersen, "Nådespagten og menneskets frihed: N.F.S. Grundtvigs tilføjelse til den augustinsk-reformatoriske nådelære," in *Nåden og den frie vilje*, ed. Bo Kristian Holm og Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen (København: ANIS, 2006), 272-78. I am indebted to Gregersen for this interesting comparison between Barth and Grundtvig on God's eternal election of humanity.

¹⁰¹⁰ According to Wesley J. Wildman, substantivist ontology generally emphasizes the ontological priority of entities themselves while relational ontology highlights that "relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves." See Wesley J. Wildman, "An Introduction to Relational Ontology."

[http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/images/docs/\(72\)%202010%20-%20Wildman%20-%20Introduction%20to%20Relational%20Ontology%20\(final%20author%20version\)%20-%20Polkinghorne%20ed.pdf](http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/images/docs/(72)%202010%20-%20Wildman%20-%20Introduction%20to%20Relational%20Ontology%20(final%20author%20version)%20-%20Polkinghorne%20ed.pdf). (accessed August 13, 2013). In this study, I take substantivist and relational ontology as heuristic tools while acknowledging that "both relationships and entities," as suggested by Wildman, should be

equally supported. (Ibid.)

¹⁰¹¹ Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (1948), bilingual ed. (Nanjing: Jiangsu Literature and Art, 2012), 471-72.

Later on, the *Yin-Yang* theory was combined with the *Book of Changes* to interpret the origin and development of all things that “[t]he Yang is the principle that ‘gives beginning’ to things; the Yin is that which ‘completes’ them.”¹⁰¹²

In the Confucian understanding: “One Yang and one Yin: this is called the Tao. That which ensues from this is goodness, and that which is completed thereby is the nature [of man and things.]”¹⁰¹³ This *Tao* is equal to the supreme ultimate in the *Yi* (meaning simplicity, change and non-change), and the two forms of the supreme ultimate are *Yin* and *Yang*.¹⁰¹⁴ This *Tao* can account for the origin and transformation of all things.

Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) makes use of a Taoist diagram to illustrate his cosmology, which is called “Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate.” As he claims,

The Ultimateless [*Wu Chi*]! And yet the Supreme Ultimate [*T'ai Chi*]! The Supreme Ultimate through Movement produces the *Yang*. This Movement, having reached its limit, is followed by Quiescence, and by this Quiescence, it produces the *Yin*. When Quiescence has reached its limit, there is a return to Movement. Thus Movement and Quiescence, in alternation, become each the source of the other. The distinction between the *Yin* and *Yang* is determined and the Two Forms [i.e., the *Yin* and *Yang*] stand revealed.¹⁰¹⁵

This terse paragraph explains the *Taiji*, the origin, distinction, and development of *Yin* and *Yang*, which encompasses the rationale of all things. Through Zhang Zai (1020-1077), Shao Yong (1011-1077), Cheng Hao (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi (1033-1108), the cosmological discussions continue. Along with their philosophical thinking, Zhu Xi (Chutze 1130-1200), provides a new definition of the Supreme Ultimate: “Everything has an ultimate, which is the ultimate *Li*. That which unites and embraces the *Li* of heaven, earth, and all things is the Supreme Ultimate (*Recorded Sayings, Chüan* 94).”¹⁰¹⁶ Here *Li* means the “particular nature” and “ultimate standard” of each thing which “makes it what it ought to be.”¹⁰¹⁷ *Li* is the metaphysical *Tao*.¹⁰¹⁸ The Supreme Ultimate of the universe “embraces the multitude of *Li* for all things and is the highest summation of all of them” as a moon in the sky is reflected in thousands of rivers.¹⁰¹⁹ For Zhu Xi, “reality consists of two worlds, the one abstract, the other concrete.”¹⁰²⁰ But for his philosophical opponent Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193) who represents the “School of the Universal Mind,” reality corresponds to the only one world of Mind.¹⁰²¹ It is added by Wang Shouren (1472-1528) that “the universe is a spiritual whole, in which there is only one world, the concrete actual world that we ourselves experience. Thus there is no place for that other world of abstract *Li*, which Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi] so much emphasized.”¹⁰²² Nonetheless, Zhu Xi seems to maintain the living interaction between the metaphysical world of the *Li* and the concrete world shaped by *Qi* which is “the means whereby things are produced” so as to receive “their bodily form[s]” in the light of *Li* or *Tao*.¹⁰²³ *Li* and *Qi* are distinguished, but

¹⁰¹² Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 472, 475.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid., 503.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid., 504.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid., 603-04.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., 631.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., 633.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid., 631-32.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., 642.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., 641-42.

¹⁰²² Ibid., 643.

¹⁰²³ Ibid., 633.

inseparable, and it is hard to tell which one is prior to the other.¹⁰²⁴ So much for the Confucian cosmology related to the *Taiji* diagram.

In the light of the Taoist tradition, however, *Tao* is nameless and unnamable, which is the opposite of the Confucian *Tao*, the only namable *Tao*.¹⁰²⁵ Furthermore, in contrast to the Confucian *Tao* which “are multiple, and are the principles which govern each separate category of things in the universe,” the Taoist *Tao* “is the unitary first ‘that’ from which all things in the universe come to be.”¹⁰²⁶ This *Tao* is the preexistent integrate whole of all.¹⁰²⁷ The *Tao* as the most fundamental entity is the mother of heaven and earth: “The Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things.”¹⁰²⁸ It means that the unique *Tao* expressed as the only One produces *Yin* and *Yang* (two), and the *Yin-Yang* interaction produces a third entity; and their further interaction produces all things in the world. This *Tao* generates all things, and achieves its greatness not by self-exaltation to rule over,¹⁰²⁹ but by humbling itself in order to serve all things.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid., 501; see also Lao-tzu, chapter 1 of *Tao Te Ching*, vol. 39 of *Sacred Books of the East* [1891], trans. J. Legge. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm> (accessed July 10, 2013).

“The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.

(Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things...”

¹⁰²⁶ Fung, *A Short History*, 618.

¹⁰²⁷ Lao-Tzu, chapter 25 of *Tao Te Ching*.

“There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things...”

Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is its being what it is.”

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid., chapter 42.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid., chapter 34.

“All-pervading is the Great Tao! It may be found on the left hand and on the right.

All things depend on it for their production, which it gives to them, not one refusing obedience to it. When its work is accomplished, it does not claim the name of having done it. It clothes all things as with a garment, and makes no assumption of being their lord;--it may be named in the smallest things. All things return (to their root and disappear), and do not know that it is it which presides over their doing so;--it may be named in the greatest things...”

This ineffable and kenotic *Tao* can be traced within creation by its “semblance” to them.¹⁰³⁰ The Taoist *Tao* whose manifestation is virtue is actually “non-doing,” “a philosophical abstraction,” and finally “disappears in Laotze’s mystical non-being,” says Zia, but the Confucian *Tao* is “to love and to pursue the rightful path,” which refers to “love and righteousness,” and is connected with “virtue.”¹⁰³¹ As in Confucianism, the *Taoist Yin* and *Yang* are also regarded as two equal opposite forces, distinguished but inter-dependent and complementary to each other, which can be reconciled and balanced in an actual harmonious unity.¹⁰³² The points that exist in the sphere of the opposite color mean that “there is no being which does not contain within itself the germ of its opposite.”¹⁰³³ This in turn means that the *Yin* and *Yang* are also interchangeable. The interaction between *Yin* and *Yang* follows the rule that “reversal is the movement of *Tao*.”¹⁰³⁴ The inter-play of *Yin* and *Yang* marks the perpetual dynamic circulation of all forms of life. At the same time, there is also in both Confucianism and Taoism the “great triad of Heaven-Man-Earth” in which only the “perfect man” who fully develops his nature, can mediate between the “Spirit or Essence” (*Tian*) and “Substance” (*Earth*),¹⁰³⁵ and hence becomes a microcosmos. Within the human body, spirit and nature are unified according to the *Yin-Yang* interactive principle, and it is based on Heaven, Earth and humanity that all creation is achieved.¹⁰³⁶



(Figure 4)

So far I have generally introduced and compared the understandings of *Tao* and the *Yin-Yang* principle in Confucianism and Taoism respectively. In the following, I shall combine these two Chinese traditions in order to interpret the divine-human relationship in Grundtvig’s theology, again,

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., chapter 21.

“The grandest forms of active force
From *Tao* come, their only source.
Who can of *Tao* the nature tell?
Our sight it flies, our touch as well.
Eluding sight, eluding touch,
The forms of things all in it crouch;
Eluding touch, eluding sight,
There are their semblances, all right.
Profound it is, dark and obscure;
Things’ essences all there endure.
Those essences the truth enfold...

How know I that it is so with all the beauties of existing things? By
this (nature of the *Tao*).”

¹⁰³¹ Z.K. Zia, *The Confucian Civilization* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925), 27.

¹⁰³² J.C. Cooper, *Taoism: The Way of the Mystic* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: the Aquarian Press, 1972), 27-8.

¹⁰³³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰³⁴ Fung, *A Short History*, 351, 430.

¹⁰³⁵ Cooper, *Taoism*, 81.

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid. 81.

not so much from the perspective of a substantivist ontology, but more from the perspective of a relational ontology.

8.2.2.2. The Divine-Human Circulation

At the outset, I shall clarify the understanding of the Word from the Chinese perspective. I propose that the same pre-existent and incarnate Christian Word best synthesizes and manifests the ineffable Taoist *Tao* and the effable Confucian *Tao*, and the *Tao* as the “unitary first” and *Tao* as inherent principles of different categories of things. The Taoist *Tao* and the Confucian *Tao* become the same *Tao* in parallel with the pre-existent Word and the incarnate Word. Similarly, according to Gregersen, the “Logos” in the Gospel of John can be translated not only as “*Verbum* (Word),” but also “*ratio* (Reason or Pattern) and *sermo* (Sermon or Dialogue).”¹⁰³⁷ This opens up new dimensions for understanding the “creative and communicative” God¹⁰³⁸ among all the creatures. As Jens Holger Schjørring succinctly defines it, “the Word is [first] the feature of God’s own being.”¹⁰³⁹

The Word, like the Taoist *Tao* as a unitary principle, exists before all things. Word or *Tao* creates all things, and hence underlies all creation as the *ratio* of the cosmos in each category of things, but without its own face. In this respect, it resembles Zhu Xi’s concept of *Li*. Thus, Word or *Tao* becomes the universal principle and cosmic order of all creatures in the world in a Platonic cosmological sense, as it were. The unique *Tao* creates all things through the living interaction between *Yin* and *Yang*. But in Grundtvig’s theology, the Word, as suggested by Gregersen, plays its mediating role in the God-World relationship by being the archetypal microcosmos for human beings.

Furthermore, the Word became flesh and clearly manifests itself not only in its earthly life, but also in the living congregation through liturgy. The Word Creator (Taoist *Tao*) and the active incarnate Word (similar to the effable Confucian *Tao*) are one. The Word (*sermo*) as the true image of God is also dialogical with human beings with the image of God. In this respect, Grundtvig talks about the living interaction between the Word and human words, which are originally fused as a unity. Seeking to fulfill the lofty ideal of the Heaven-Humanity unity, Chinese philosophy talks about the living interaction between the *Tao* of humanity (human nature) and the *Tao* of heaven (divine or heavenly nature), which is originally the same *Tao*. However, the Chinese *Tao* (Way) also has a pragmatic and active connotation in contrast to western speculations i.e., to combine faith and action by walking on the way.

After clarifying this understanding of the Word, I shall try to explain how all things coinhere in the Word (*Tao*) and hence in the intra-Trinitarian fellowship of love. I shall first focus on the relationship between God and human beings in the light of the dynamic divine-human interaction as exemplified in Christ’s earthly life. Then I shall deal with the relationship between God and nature via human beings.

How do the divine and the human interact in human beings? The Word is the true image of God, and hence is the prototype of all human beings with *imago dei*. The divine-human interactive relationship in Christ, the incarnate Word, is exemplary to all human beings who are created to become Christ-like.

¹⁰³⁷ Gregersen, “Three Varieties of Panentheism,” 26.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁹ Jens Holger Schjørring, *Grundtvig og påsken* (København: G.E.C. Gad, 1987), 123.

Seen from the diagram above, the *Yang* and the *Yin* are two inseparable areas, symbolizing the divine and the human, and they are locked into the continuous “Creator-creature” relationship (Grell) manifested in the most fundamental reality of God’s love and mediated by the Word, which also exists in every human being. This is a protological proposition concerning the harmonious divine-human relationship. The *Yin* and the *Yang* are of equal extension, meaning that, the divine and human are in an original harmony. Furthermore, Jung Yong Lee points out that the difference between the *Yin* and the *Yang* is “conditional and existential, not essential.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Similarly, Grundtvig argues that there cannot be any “essential difference between the divine and human nature,” so that “the living touch [between the two natures] is still “conceivable”, which makes possible the “incarnation and the fusion of divine and human nature in Christ.”¹⁰⁴¹ True humanity comes from the divine, and true divinity is manifested by the human. In other words, the divine enlightens the human, and fulfills itself through the human. The creating and incarnate Word connects human beings with God in Himself, which, as Thyssen argues, “excludes ‘the sharp dividing-line between divine and human that our theologians usually draw.’”¹⁰⁴² The divine and the human will eventually coinhere in the same life, as is exemplified by the incarnate Word. Without the divine, there cannot be salvation in the human; without the human, the divine remains abstract and lonely in the eschatological reality.

The germs in the spheres of the opposite color indicate the interchangeability of the divine and human nature, as they are not essentially different. In the original harmonious divine-human relationship, there is also a mutually interpenetrating (*perichoresis*) *communicatio idiomatum* between the divine and the human.

However, because of the human fall, this harmonious divine-human relationship is broken. Thus Human beings need redemption. But the human fall, according to Yeo, is not of “ethical or substantive” nature, but of relationality as human beings failed to believe in and respond to the Word, and hence became “less human.”¹⁰⁴³ According to Lao-Tzu, “[i]t is the Way [*Tao*] of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and to supplement deficiency.”¹⁰⁴⁴ So the divine life must flow into the human life to reconstitute the human life. Again as Lao-Tzu says, “Reversion is the action of *Tao*.”¹⁰⁴⁵ This becomes the motivation of the divine-human circulation. Restoring the original human life also means fulfilling the deficient human life. It is both an analeptic restitution and a proleptic renewal. In this light, redemption through incarnation points to both a return to the originally created human life, and a future consummation of the true human life in the light of Christ-life of the incarnate Word. It entails a two-way communication: from the side of the divine, the human who sinned is gradually reconstituted and comes to flourish by the incarnate Word in redemption theology; from the side of the truly human, the creative Word is gradually embodied and flourishes in creation theology albeit being unknown to the fallen human beings in the beginning. Thus, the diagram can

¹⁰⁴⁰ See Jung Yong Lee, *The Theology of Change: A Christian Concept of God in an Eastern Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1979), 4-5, quoted in Yeo, *What has Jerusalem?* 21.

¹⁰⁴¹ Grundtvig, “Det medfødte og det gjenfødte Menneske-Liv (1857),” *US IX*, 429-30. “Det er derfor ganske i sin bagvendte orden, naar mahomedanske Teologer, som under alle Haande Navne har været enige med Mahomed og Koranen om at erklære den guddommelige og menneskelige Natur for saa væsentlig forskellige, at slet ingen levende Berørelse var tænkelige, - naar de ikke blot benægtede Mulighed af Guds Søns Kjødspaatagelse og Sammen-Smeltning af den guddommelige og menneskelige Natur i Vorherres Jesu Kristi Personlighed, og benægtede følgelig Muligheden af hele Gjenløsnings-Værket.”

¹⁰⁴² Thyssen, “Grundtvig’s Ideas on the Church and the People 1848-72,” in *Tradition and Renewal*, 359.

¹⁰⁴³ Yeo, *What has Jerusalem?* 60.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Lao-Tzu, chapter 77 of *Tao Te Ching*.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 160. It can also be understood that Tao always evokes its negation while moving in the world. See Fung, *A Short History*, 506.

also show us in the eschatological sense not only the natural continuity between the divine and the human in the life experience of love, but also the gradual restoration and flowering of the human recognition of God in natural theology even though it may not guarantee any true knowledge of God in the beginning. The inverted fluid¹⁰⁴⁶ “S” in the diagram shows the living dynamic interplay and interaction between the divine and the human. Moreover, the fluidity also implies the various complementary degrees of the divine and human in a person’s life in the dynamic circulating process. They coinhere in the same life though. Grundtvig insists that

the new life in Christ is only a renewal of the original human life in the image of God, which was lost in Adam, and presupposed the lack of a better human life that could last forever, obviously the same possession as was lost.¹⁰⁴⁷

This two-fold movement of people’s renewal of the original divine-human harmonious relationship resembles Grundtvig’s distinction of Christians’ soteriological absorption into Christ to fulfill the human life from naturalists’ spiritual absorption of Christ into themselves to return to the original natural human life.¹⁰⁴⁸ It is also similar to what Prenter calls Grundtvig’s “Christology on two lines”¹⁰⁴⁹ in terms of creation and redemption. As Prenter says, “life is created” in both “human life and Christian life” as well as in “congregation’s life and people’s life” by the same Word as Creator and as Redeemer.¹⁰⁵⁰ In this light, there cannot be any one-sided interaction so that either human life is fully subsumed by the Christian life (Lutheran orthodoxy) or the Christian life is subsumed by the human life (Karl Thaning’s secularizing interpretation of Grundtvig). In the eschatological reality, the living interaction between the divine and the human, or between the Christian and the *folkelig* in a particular nation, shall coinhere in the same Word. And it is through the same Word that creation and redemption can actually be put on an equal footing with a balanced relationship. The mutual indispensability of the divine and the human, and of creation and redemption, determines that there can be no place for a “secularizing theology” in Grundtvig’s thinking.¹⁰⁵¹ The mutual accomplishment of the human and the divine will wind up where true humanity is, there is true divinity; and vice versa.¹⁰⁵²

The different colors of each sphere in the diagram distinguish, but do not separate, the divine and the human. Thus God and human beings’ identities will not be confused because, according to Grundtvig, we are going to become God’s children, not God. Therefore, it is a fusion without confusion. Yeo explains this more clearly from the perspective of a relational ontology:

If God is the yang, humanity is the yin in interaction, in both relationship and partnership responding to God. The yin-yang paradigm is relevant to illustrate this vertical relationship, because the vertical relationship is highly organic and intimate. God and humanity are not the same; they are different from one another. For example, God is the Creator, while humanity is the creature of God; or God is infinite

¹⁰⁴⁶ I am here inspired by Bugge who says that there is “a fluid boundary between life as Christian and life as citizen of society.” See Bugge, “Indledning,” in *GSV* I, 18. “[D]els at dette synspunkts gennemførelse er præget af en flydende grænse mellem livet som kristen og livet som samfundsborger.” In 1811-1815, Grundtvig on the one hand, focused on the Word of God, and on the other, took education into consideration with salvation as its goal. (Ibid., 17-8). It also shows that the divine never separates from the human in Grundtvig’s thinking.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Grundtvig, “Kirkelige Oplysninger (1840-42),” *US* VIII, 438. (*saa forudsatte dog Savnet af et bedre Menneske-Liv, der kan vare evindeligt, aabenbar ligesaavel Besiddelsen som Tabet deraf.*)

¹⁰⁴⁸ Grundtvig, *Nordic Mythology* – Extract (1832), *SL*, 61-2.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Prenter, “Grundtvigs treenighedslære,” 63.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid., 71.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid., 71-2.

¹⁰⁵² I am indebted to Iversen for this insight. As Iversen says, “[D]et sandt kristelige som det sandt menneskelige og det sandt menneskelige som det sandt kristelige.” See Iversen, “Folkelighed og kristendom,” 69, 72-6.

and humanity is finite. Yet the difference between God and humanity does not mean that God cannot relate to humanity, or vice versa. In fact, the yin-yang paradigm helps us to see that the yin and the yang, though different, are not opposite. Rather, the yin and the yang are always in complementary relationship to one another. In other words, God and humans, though different, can always be in relationship, a relationship which can culminate in the wholeness represented by the Great Ultimate circle of the *T'ai chi* emblem.¹⁰⁵³

Here I shall not highlight God and human beings as two different entities although, according to Grundtvig, the divine and human nature are not that essentially different. What is more important is their inseparable relationality or deep coinherence. Gregersen points out that in Grundtvig's theology, the divine-human relationship is also predestined. He claims that in the light of both psychological and social analogy of the Trinity, Grundtvig creatively refers to the Father of love as the source of God's grace who needs the Son or the Word (the source of truth) to destroy the falsehood so that the gracious God can be God of true grace (Holy Spirit).¹⁰⁵⁴ This is Grundtvig's *Deus ad intra*. At the same time, God's love also needs human beings to be its earthly recipients so that the Holy Spirit as God's grace which is rooted in the Father's love can also flourish in human life through the incarnate Word of truth dwelling in human hearts.¹⁰⁵⁵ This is Grundtvig's *Deus ad extra*. Thus an *analogia relationis* emerges which protologically binds God and human beings together.¹⁰⁵⁶ It should be noted here that unlike what the symmetrical *Yin-Yang* diagram presents with God and human beings as equal counterparts protologically, Gregersen emphasizes more God's self-sufficiency and initiative to render His generous love or grace to human beings in Grundtvig's divine-human circulating relationship.¹⁰⁵⁷ Yet Grundtvig's deep divine-human coinherent relationship based on both the *Yin-Yang* paradigm and Gregersen's interpretation cannot easily defend itself in front of the problem of evil, which often reminds people of the absence of God himself and His grace. Although we can talk about a suffering God to be with all the suffering victims in the world, the deep divine-human coinherence in the light of the *Yin-Yang* paradigm points more to the protological state or an ultimate eschatological reality. For Grundtvig, however, redemption does not mean a simple return to the original divine-human relationship. As Gregersen suggests, through the divine-human circulation in Grundtvig's theology, the Spirit will bring "more out of less" back into the intra-Trinitarian communion with both human and God's life enriched.¹⁰⁵⁸

All in all, Jesus Christ (the Word) is both fully divine and fully human, and the incarnation manifests both the deep coherence and the mutual inherence of the divine and the human. He is the mediating prototype of the divine-human fellowship. With Christ as the archetype, the divine-human relationship can be expanded to family life, *folkelig* life, the whole of humanity's life, and even the macrocosmos. After all, Grundtvig believes that

¹⁰⁵³ Yeo, *What has Jerusalem?* 60.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Gregersen, "Nådespagten og menneskets frihed," 274.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid., 275-76.

¹⁰⁵⁶ The concept of *analogia relationis* can be traced back to Karl Barth. See, for example, Sueo Oshima, "Barth's *Analogia Relationis* and Heidegger's Ontological Difference," *The Journal of Religion* 63, no.2 (April 1973): 176-94.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Gregersen, "Radical generosity and the flow of grace," 143.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Gregersen, "Når der bliver mere ud af mindre," 29-30.

there is nevertheless a deep coinherence in all things, to say nothing as between man and his mother, as the Earth is, and between us and the air we breathe, so nothing in the world can be basically satisfied outside the fools...¹⁰⁵⁹

This ushers in my next point: How can it be manifested in the *Yin-Yang* diagram that God and nature is connected by Christ and also by human beings as the mediating microcosmos? Grundtvig uses poetic language to describe the deep coinherence of all things, including spirit and nature. We have already mentioned Gregersen's exploration of the circulation between the spirit and nature with human beings as microcosmos in Grundtvig's thought. The spirit and nature are also mutually interpenetrative, distinctive, yet inseparable from each other. I propose that the living interactive relationship between *Yin* and *Yang* can refer not only to spirit and nature, but also to heaven and earth. Together with human beings, heaven and earth will also be renewed. As Grundtvig's hymn reads:

All my living wellsprings in You shall begin!
In You reborn shall be earth and heaven,
tongues and peoples and stars be given
the fullness I ever bore within!¹⁰⁶⁰

This poetically describes how human beings hold within themselves all that is reborn by the Lord, including both heaven and earth. Christ is the archetypical microcosmos to mediate between the spiritual and the physical as well as between heaven and earth. Grundtvig says in his sermons that "you [God] created the earth in your image after your likeness."¹⁰⁶¹ The human fall is reflected by the separation of heaven from earth. But Grundtvig also declares that the birth of Jesus Christ results in the restoration of the marriage between heaven and earth.¹⁰⁶² He also imagines in his sermon that Jesus' dwelling inside the Christians leads to a heaven on earth.¹⁰⁶³ In his Annunciation sermon of 1836, Grundtvig clarifies this mystery: "This is because the heavenly fatherhood and the earthly motherhood have a name in common in which they are livingly fused together, and that name is *love*."¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁵⁹ Grundtvig, vol. 1 of *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* (1833), US VI, 28-9. "Der er imidlertid en dyb sammenhæng i Alting, end sige da mellem Mennesket og hans Moder, som Jorden jo er, og mellem os og den Luft, vi indaande, saa Intet i Verden kan i Grunden være tilfældigt uden for Tosser..."

¹⁰⁶⁰ Grundtvig, "Alle mine kilder skal være hos dig (1856-60)," in *Den Danske Salmebog* (København: Det kgl. Vajsenhus' Forlag, 2003), 448. Edward Broadbridge's English translation borrowed from *Hymns in English*, 30.

Alle mine kilder skal være hos dig!
Af dig genfødes skal jord og himmel,
Folks og tungers og stjerners vrimmel
Med alt, hvad jeg evig bar i mig!

¹⁰⁶¹ As Grundtvig prays, "Vi takke Dig, Du store Vingaards Mand, som var, førend Bjergene blev og Du dannede Jorden i Dit Billede, efter Din Lignelse." See Grundtvig, "Septuagesima Sunday 1834," in vol. 7 of *Grundtvigs Prædikener 1833-34*, 12 vols., udgivet af Christian Thodberg (København: G. E. C. Gad, 1984) 103. I am indebted to Allchin for this sentence. See Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 150.

¹⁰⁶² Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 155-56.

¹⁰⁶³ Grundtvig, "Præken paa 2 Søndag efter Trinitatis 1846," quoted in *GDK* II, 17. "O, hvor er jeg nu blevet rig, Min Jesus i mit Hjerte bor, Det er et Himmerig paa Jord!"

¹⁰⁶⁴ "... [Det er] fordi den Himmelske Faderlighed og den Jordiske Moderlighed har et fælles Navn, hvori de levende sammensmelte, og Navnet er *Kiærlighed*, det for Mandevid aabenbar uudgrundelige Hjerte-Dyb, som hos os er sig selv en Gaade." See Grundtvig, "Marie Bebudelses-Day 1836," in vol. 9 of *Grundtvigs Prædikener 1835-36*, 12 vols.,

Here the mediating role of Christ and human beings finds a parallel in the Chinese traditional triadic pattern of Heaven-Humanity-Earth,¹⁰⁶⁵ which accounts for the origin and development of all things.

Grundtvig's understanding of the heavenly fatherhood and earthly motherhood is similar to what the Chinese philosopher Zhang Zai writes in *Ximing (The Western Inscription)*:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.
Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature...

He who disobeys [the Principle of Nature] violates virtue. He who destroys humanity [*philanthropy, my alteration*] is a robber. He who promotes evil lacks [moral] capacity. But he who puts his moral nature into practice and brings his physical existence into complete fulfillment can match [Heaven and Earth].¹⁰⁶⁶

Zhang Zai points out that fatherly heaven (*Yang*) and motherly earth (*Yin*) reflect *Tao*, the origin of all things, while human beings exist in the middle of heaven and earth. Human beings who develop fully their nature bestowed by *Tao* in the ethical way of *Jen* (philanthropy) can best mediate heaven (spirit) and earth (substance). The ethical way is not far from the concept of love, the name that heaven and earth share in common, according to Grundtvig. From the Christian perspective, it is in developing best the divine-human relationship in love, as Christ does, that human beings can be the microcosmos to mediate spirit and nature. The traditional Chinese neo-Confucian philosophy focuses more on the ever-generating feature of Heaven or *Tao* through the *Yin-Yang* principle in order to "transcend the world within the world."¹⁰⁶⁷ It points to the continuous creation process in parallel with Danish scholars, e.g., Iversen's emphasis on Grundtvig's creation theology. Yet it should be noted that Grundtvig's heavenly fatherhood points to the Christian God revealed specially by the incarnate Christ while Zhang Zai's heaven points to *Tao* or nature with a naturalist overtone.¹⁰⁶⁸

After this general comparison I shall further explore the similarity between Chinese philosophy and Grundtvig on how the Word and Spirit in interaction with human words and spirits in each of them realize such a deep coinherence between heaven (*Yang*) and earth (*Yin*).

According to Grundtvig, the union between heaven and earth results from the "little word" (human word)'s response to, and fusion with the "great Word" (the divine Word) here and now:

udgivet af Christian Thoberg (København: G. E. C. Gad, 1985) 156. I am indebted to Allchin for it. See Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 224.

¹⁰⁶⁵ As Chih notes, "The divine relationship with the universe is the loving power of God comprehending completely from above and from below, and permeating from Heaven to Earth the whole creation. This immanence is often expressed emphatically by the union of Heaven and Earth. Man is the witness of this immanent universal love (*Jen*). Thus Heaven, Earth, and Man were called the 'Three powers.'" See Chih, *Chinese Humanism*, 41.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 497.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Huang, "Confucian Theology," 455, 469-75.

¹⁰⁶⁸ In Chinese philosophy, "[m]an, as the microcosmos, is destined to follow the pattern of the macrocosm. Heaven is the norm of human behavior. Man's mission is to create moral excellence following the model of Heaven that is manifested in nature and natural events. It is Heaven's power to create, Earth's power to transform all things, and man's power to realize moral principles. Heaven is above, Earth is below, and man is between. Nothing is more spiritual than Heaven, nothing is more refined and richer than Earth, and no creature born from the refined essence of Heaven and Earth is nobler than man. Man alone can love universally and, with righteousness, can match Heaven and Earth in loving and completing all creation." Chih, *Chinese Humanism*, 133.

The great word reveals to us
That heaven is near to earth
The little word in the soil replies,
God's paradise right now is here.¹⁰⁶⁹

The restoration of God's Word and human words is a deep mystery in human hearts. It is through love that heaven and earth are united. This mystery is shown by the life of the incarnate Word. As Grundtvig's hymn also reads,

O life lived in Christ [or Christ-likeness] !
You grant to our hearts
what the world never prized:
What faintly we glimpse ev'ry day, ev'ry hour,
Yet lives deep within us, we feel it empow'r;
My land, says the Lord [or Life], is both heaven and earth,
where love has its birth [or dwelling].¹⁰⁷⁰

Thus all things between heaven and earth coinhere in the Word that creates and redeems all things:

As for me You once have striven,
may I love life in You given;
May my heart for You alone beat,
so may thoughts alone in You meet,
In whom all things coinhere.¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁹ Grundtvig, "Til 'Danskerens' Læseverden i Jule-Ugen 1851," *Danskeren* Nr. 52 (December 1851), quoted in Bang, *Grundtvigs Arv*, 134-35.

Det store Ord os aabenbarer,
at Himmerig er Jorden nær,
det lille Ord i Muldet svarer:
Guds paradis er jo nu her.

The English translation is taken from Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 185.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Grundtvig, "O Kristelighed (1824 og 1853)," *Den Danske Salme Bog* (2003), 342. The English version is translated by Edward Broadbridge in *Hymns in English*, 44.

O Kristelighed!
du skænker vort hjerte,
hvad verden ej ved;
hvad svagt vi kun skimter,
Mens øjet er blåt,
det liver dog i os, det føler vi godt;
mit land, siger Herren, er Himmel og jord,
hvor kærlighed bor!

¹⁰⁷¹ Grundtvig, "Hil dig, frelser og forsoner!" *Den Danske Salme Bog* (2003), 218.

Du, som har dig selv mig givet,
lad i dig mig elske livet,
så for dig kun hjertet banker,
så kun du i mine tanker
er den dybe sammenhæng!

It is within the Word that the divine and the human, the spirit and nature, and heaven and earth are fused through the Spirit. According to Allchin's interpretation of Grundtvig, it is only through the Holy Spirit of love who comes from God the Father that the fusion of heaven and earth, and of the divine and the human, can be achieved.¹⁰⁷² As Grundtvig's hymn reads,

As the moon reflects the radiance of the sun,
so the Lord's people reflect His sun-face,
shining on the soil of the this earth
in our forefathers' offspring.

They produce by day and night
a sister for God's only-begotten Son,
a noble and true revelation
of earth and heaven, of God and man.

So sun and moon, like faith and hope,
are reborn as one by baptism in the Spirit;
They remain there in the Spirit's embrace
as bridegroom and bride in Jesus' name.¹⁰⁷³

The English translation by Edward Broadbridge is taken from *Hymns in English*, 34. Jørgen Pedersen has offered a thorough explication of the phrase "den dybe sammenhæng," which both the classical theological themes in the Middle Ages and the influence of Romanticism underlie. See Jørgen Pedersen, "Den dybe sammenhæng. Om Grundtvigs salme 'Hil dig, Frelser og Forsoner' som gengivelse af den cisterciensiske passionsrhythmus 'Salve, mundi salutare' set på baggrund af hans forhold til den middelalderlige hymnedigtning," in *Fra Augustin til Johs V. Jensen: Essays og Afhandling* (Viborg: Museum Tusculanum Forlag, 1991), 165-203.

¹⁰⁷² See Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 46-7.

¹⁰⁷³ Grundtvig, "Som Maanen skinner af Solens Glands (1870)," in vol. 5 of *Sang-Værk*, 626-27. I am indebted both to Birgitte Stoklund Larsen for informing me of this poem and to Edward Broadbridge for his English translation.

Som Maanen skinner af Solens Glands,
Saa Herrens Folk af Solaasyn hans,
Saa giennemskinnes paa Jorden Muld
vore første Forældres Kuld

I De Avle sammen i Lys og Løn
En Søster til Guds eenbaarne Søn,
En Aabenbaring, fuldskiøn og sand,
Af Jord og Himmel, af Gud og Mand.

Saa Sol og Maane, som Tro og Haab,
Gienfødes til Eet i Aandens Daab,
Og blive dertil i Aandens Favn
Som Brudgom og Brud i Jesu Navn.

This poem informs us of two facts: Christ is the mediator between God and humanity, and between heaven and earth; and it is through the Holy Spirit that God and humanity like sun and moon, will be fused in Christ.

Here Grundtvig's understanding of the Holy Spirit can be compared with the Spirit or *Qi* in Chinese philosophy. According to Chih's citation of the *Book of Changes*, the Spirit in Chinese philosophy is understood as follows: "That which is unfathomable in the movement of the centrifugal (Yin) and the centripetal (Yang) forces is the presence of a spiritual power" and "When we speak of spirit we mean the subtle presence and operation of God with all things."¹⁰⁷⁴ The Spirit of love in Grundtvig's poem is parallel to the Chinese notion of Spirit or *Qi*, which points to the origin and basis of the cosmos as *Qi* brings about heaven, earth and humanity through its changes.¹⁰⁷⁵ It is the "all-pervading and all-integrating spontaneous life force" as T'ien's immanence in contrast to T'ien's transcendence marked by its creativity.¹⁰⁷⁶ As Yeo further contends, "In this eschatological age, the Spirit being the Creative Force binds believers in the confession that they are the children of God."¹⁰⁷⁷ So the Chinese concept of *Qi* is the ever-generating Spirit of love.

But how does the interaction between the Word and the Spirit play out? As mentioned earlier, Gregersen focuses on the Spirit's procession *from* the Father and return *to* the Father. He notes that it is the Word's meeting with the Spirit that motivates the divine-human circulation. The interaction between *Li* and *Qi* in Zhu Xi's theory can also be a good parallel to explain the interaction between the Word and the Spirit. "*Li*" and "*Qi*" are also called law and Air, ("or in the language of Physics, Matter and Force"), which can account for the origin and dynamic balance of the world with its destruction and interruption because of human sin, but Zhu Xi neither affirms nor negates the "existence of God."¹⁰⁷⁸ Yet when such a naturalist interpretation of the world and human beings in terms of *Li* and *Qi* cannot be expanded further,¹⁰⁷⁹ Christianity provides a new inspiration that the Word is but the supreme ultimate and all-encompassing cosmic *Li* which is reflected by all creatures created by the Spirit (the *Qi*) and according *to Li*. As mentioned previously, the Supreme Ultimate of the universe is the metaphysical *Tao*, who "embraces the multitude of *Li* for all things and is the highest summation of all of them" as the moon in the sky is reflected in thousands of rivers.¹⁰⁸⁰ *Li* or now the Word is also the true image of God, reflected by both human beings and nature. This *Li* becomes effable in human tongues and manifests itself through incarnation. Being the true image of God, *Li* connects God and human beings, which is shown by a personal life of faith, hope, and love. As is said earlier, *Tao* always seeks to supplement the deficient and carries on its reversion task. In this light, when the human fall takes place, it makes the human no longer wholly human. So there appears a space between God's Word and the human word both of which were originally one. Therefore the Word (*Li*) becomes incarnate in order to meet the Spirit (*Qi*) working in the lost human beings so that the Spirit can re-create or renew them in the light of the Word, and bring them back to the original divine-human unity. The kenosis of the Word is in accordance with what Taoism says, that "yielding is the usefulness of *Tao*."¹⁰⁸¹ In this process, there

¹⁰⁷⁴ Chih, *Chinese Humanism*, 45.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Yeo, *Xiawa, dadi yu shangdi*, 277-78.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Yeo, *What has Jerusalem?* 153.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Y.Y. Tsu, "The Confucian God-Idea," in T.T. Lew et al, *China To-Day Through Chinese Eyes* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1922), 77-8.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Fung, *A Short History*, 631-32.

¹⁰⁸¹ See chapter 40 of *Tao Te Ching*. It can also be translated as "[w]eakness is the function of *Tao*." See Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 160.

is a dialogical space between the human word and the divine Word, and the latter enlightens, challenges, and confirms the human word in the light of the working rationale of the two opposing principles of *Yin* and *Yang*. The incarnation also leaves a space within the intra-Trinitarian fellowship, which must be filled by the redeemed human beings who mediate spirit and nature. This spirit-nature circulation complements the divine-human circulation motivated by the Spirit who works in both the human and the divine spheres as the creating Life-Giver through the Word. Allchin summarizes Grundtvig's view of human beings as follows: "Humanity...is to be understood *cosmologically* in relation to creation and *theologically* in relation to God."¹⁰⁸² He adds that Grundtvig's anthropology does not separate spirit from flesh with the latter being part of nature as "God's creation," so that "the salvation, the transfiguration of the flesh of the believers, involves the salvation and transfiguration of the whole world."¹⁰⁸³ Through the Spirit and the Word which are called the "two hands of God" by Irenaeus,¹⁰⁸⁴ the circulation starts with the love of God the Father, and is consummated in the love of God the Father. It is "God first, and [God] last."¹⁰⁸⁵ As Allchin summarizes:

In the divine economy of creation and redemption there is a constant reciprocity between the Son and the Spirit. Always the Father's love is made manifest in the Word who speaks, and is again made active in the Spirit who gives life, making the divine love incarnate. Mouth and hand together reveal the secrets of the divine heart.¹⁰⁸⁶

Although Grundtvig takes seriously the reality of the human fall and sin and the dark side of the world,¹⁰⁸⁷ according to Allchin's interpretation of Grundtvig, "the interaction of divine and human, eternity and time" is here and now, though the complete union is still not yet.¹⁰⁸⁸ This "yet" points to an inaugurated eschatological reality.¹⁰⁸⁹ But this historical development is epitomized and encapsulated in the incessant interaction between the divine and the human, whose distinguishable and inseparable relationship is demonstrated in the *Yin-Yang* diagram. Eventually the unity of creation and redemption will be achieved when the divine and the human are mutually subsumed, as it is with the essential Trinity and the economic Trinity.

8.2.3. Summary

In this section, I propose that the Chinese *Yin-Yang* diagram can provide an illustration of the divine-human coinherence in Grundtvig's theology. The circulation pattern engages not only the divine and the human and the Christian and *folkelig* in a specific nation, but also spirit and nature, which may be represented by the distinguishable but inseparable *Yin* and *Yang* in the Ultimate *Tao* or Word. The incarnation of the Word demonstrates how Christ as the archetype of human beings becomes microcosmos to mediate spirit and nature, and heaven and earth, so that the divine-human relationship is also expanded to the universe. Through the ministries of the Word and the Spirit,

¹⁰⁸² Allchin, "The Holy Spirit in the Teaching of N.F.S. Grundtvig," in A.M. Allchin et al. eds, *Grundtvig in International Perspective: Studies in the Creativity of Interaction* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), 140.

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 144.

¹⁰⁸⁵ See Svend Bjerg, *Gud først, og sidst: Grundtvigs teologi - en læsning af Den christelige Børnelærdom* (København: Forlaget ANIS, 2002).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 133.

¹⁰⁸⁷ See Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Idea on the Church and the People, 1825-47," 286; See also Allchin's quotation of Grundtvig's sermons, Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 157.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Allchin, *Grundtvig*, 155-56.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See Wen Ge, "Grundtvig's eschatology and its realistic significance: Reflections from the Chinese context," *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Jens Holger Schjørring et al. (København: Grundtvig-Selskabet, 2007), 198-214.

God the Father abides by human beings. With God the Father's love and Providence, the Spirit and the Word, the two hands of the Father, interact with each other to unify creation and redemption of the world in a circulating pattern. The divine-human circulation starts with and is consummated in the field of God the Father's love.

However, the *Yin-Yang* diagram also has its limits in interpreting Grundtvig's theology. As mentioned earlier, it explains things more in a relational sense than in a substantivist sense. *Yin* and *Yang* are two equal and mutually supplementary principles of life, in the light of which human beings are surely not the equal counterpart of the aseitic God. Besides there are also conflicts between the divine and the human, between the Christian and the *folkelig*, and between spirit and nature in the world, so that the harmony that the *Yin-Yang* diagram describes deserves an eschatological reserve. The mutual subsumption of the economic Trinity and the essential Trinity still demands a long historical progress. Furthermore, the Chinese concept of *Tao* pertains more to nature itself in a naturalist sense when compared with the Christian Word, even though both *Tao* and Word facilitate the living divine-human interaction. Finally, as Grundtvig himself opposes any systematization of life full of existential tensions, the deep divine-human coinherence is but a heuristic framework to enlighten human life with no intention of a conceptual domestication of the transcendent and immanent God.

8.3. A Chinese Appraisal of Grundtvig's Public Theology

8.3.1. The Interaction between Christianity and the *Folkelig* Life

Grundtvig loves both Christianity and the Danish nation. Sociologically speaking, when a society is in a transitional period, the once comparatively stable ethico-politico-theological stage of the state will be challenged. What ensues is the need to address the social anomie, and to re-explore an all-encompassing meaning system involving not least religion and politics. At a time of social crisis and national disaster, Grundtvig, as a faithful Christian and patriotic Dane, tries to revive the Church and awaken the national spirit. He fights bravely on the two frontiers all his life to challenge the ecclesial and civil establishments, regardless of a stable job and a secure family life for himself. Although he seems to concentrate on a particular sphere at times due to the upheavals of his clerical life and changes in the national situation, he holds firm to the living interaction between the Christian and the *folkelig*. According to Holger Begtrup, Grundtvig first discovers the link between the people's life and the Christian faith through a reading of John's Revelation in 1810, which reveals the "destiny of the Christian human life until the end of the world" (*det kristne Menneske-Livs Skæbne til Dagens Ende*).¹⁰⁹⁰ He also points out that in Grundtvig's theology "there is an indissoluble link between true Christianity and authentic *folkelighed*" (*den uløselige Sammenhæng imellem sand Kristendom og ægte Folkelighed*), so that "his work for the awakening and enlightenment of the folk life was therefore in his own eyes internally united with his steady effort for the promotion of Christian life in our people."¹⁰⁹¹ Even when Grundtvig seems to be pursuing a secular Danish cause, he adheres to God's grace and divine Providence and the innate "blessedness of the Danish people" (*det Dansk Folks Livsalighed*) created by God.¹⁰⁹²

This is the very point of departure for, and central concern in, his public theology. Christianity as a "heavenly guest," will not replace the nationalities in the world, but serve and refresh them to

¹⁰⁹⁰ GDK I, 126.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid., 101. (Hans arbejde for Folkelivets Vækkelse og Oplysning var derfor i hans egen Øjne inderlig forenet med hans stadige Stræben efter Kristenlivets Fremme i vort Folk.)

¹⁰⁹² Grundtvig, "Den Danske Sag I-II (1855)," *US* X, 40, 45.

develop freely.¹⁰⁹³ On the one hand, Christianity enlightens different people's life to reach a higher goal of spiritual reality in different mother-tongues; on the other, the different national lives also "strengthen Christianity to continue and fulfill its own life journey."¹⁰⁹⁴ As Iversen points out, the relationship between the Christian and *the folkelig* is not only "incarnational," but also "dialectic."¹⁰⁹⁵ The living congregation is the human witness to the spiritual reality of the Kingdom of God, which corresponds to human civil society. As Grundtvig claims:

Therefore, no matter how indifferent the papist Church State has been both to general enlightenment and to great human (universal-historical) knowledge and scholarship, and no matter how ambiguous the position the protestant State Church took towards it, it is obvious that our enlightened world must thank Christianity for all its universal concepts about human life in general, with progressive enlightenment and ultimate clarification. For this has come about despite the disbelief of the world unwisely but understandably not only boasting of these as its own invention, but imagining itself victorious both in confronting and defeating Christianity, not simply as a "sect," with limited conceptuality but as a brainchild of darkness. The Christ-like free congregation will always be like "the city on the hill" which cannot be hidden, a "house built on the rock" with the whole of hell against it, and the free congregation in the time of enlightenment must then enlighten the whole horizon to the very boundaries of the human spirit and human life, and endeavor spiritually to rule them, in order to make the earth submissive on behalf of heaven."¹⁰⁹⁶

The mission of the living congregation is to bear witness to and fulfill the "humanity of Christianity," that is, to enlighten the world about a holistic life from the Christian perspective. To be concrete, Christianity wishes for a specific free *folkelighed* to be its earthly home in each place. That is why Grundtvig believes that the task of his public theology is to awaken the national spirit. And although he and his supporters are accused by the strict Lutherans of "a mixture of politics and heathenism in their utterly other-worldly and supernatural Christianity" (*en Indblanding af Politik og Hedenskab i deres aldeles overjordiske og over-naturlige Christendom*),¹⁰⁹⁷ this only reflects how Grundtvig is trying to contextualize, that is, Danicize and socialize, Christianity through a living interaction with the heathen culture of the High North, and in his contemporary national situation so that his seemingly "other-worldly and supernatural Christianity" can be grounded in the Danish context. In other words, Grundtvig's effort in public theology is also to further contextualize ecumenical Christianity in Denmark. Named by others as "the new approach to church" (*den ny Kirkevej*), the approach is in fact a return to "the old paths" (*de gamle Stier*) in Grundtvig's attempt to reconstruct the Danish Church "through *folkelighed*, freedom, and historical enlightenment."¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹³ Grundtvig, "Menneskehed og Folkefærd Betragtede med Nordiske Øine I (1849)," *HB* II, 224.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Iversen, *Tro Håb og Kærlighed*, 38.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Grundtvig, "Det evige Livs-Ord af Vorherres egen Mund til Menigheden (1860-61)," in *Den Christelige Børnelærdom*, *US* X, 579-80. "Hvor ligegyldig derfor end den papistiske Kirkestat har været baade for Almen-Oplysning og for al stormenneskelig (universal-historical) Kundskab og Vidskab, og hvor tvetydig en Stilling dertil end de protestantiske Statskirker indtog, saa er det dog aabenbar Kristendommen, vor oplyste Verden maa takke for alle sine almindelige Begreber om Menneskelivet i det hele, med fremskridende Oplysning og endelig Forklaring, skjønt den vantro Verden, sært, men dog begribeligt nok, ikke blot praler deraf som sin egen Opfindelse, men indbilder sig netop dermed sejrrig at kunne bestride og overvinde Kristendommen, ikke blot som en 'Sekt' med indskrænkede Begreber, men som et Mørkets Foster. Den kristelige Frimenighed vil altid være som 'Staden paa Bjærget,' der ikke kan skjules, og som 'Huset paa Klippen' med hele Helvede imod sig, og Frimenigheden i Oplysnings-Tiden maa da nødvendig oplyse hele Synskredsen lige til Menneske-Aandens og Menneske - Livets yderste Grænser, og stræbe aandelig at beherske den, for paa Himlens Vegne at gjøre sig Jorden underdanig."

¹⁰⁹⁷ Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1863," *US* X, 541.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 87.

At the same time, Grundtvig's public theology also carries sociological consequences in the light of today's secularization. He is strongly opposed to liberal individualism, arguing that freedom must always be community-conditioned.¹⁰⁹⁹ The "individualistic Christianity" for the salvation of souls should give way to the understanding of Christianity as engaging itself in the world to continuously build up and enlarge the human fellowship of love.¹¹⁰⁰ Simultaneously, Christianity should also articulate its unique perspective on the holistic life to address social issues in the public discourse. The living words among people must enjoy active and free interaction or *dia-logos*, so that the living Word in the Church can specify the truth of life and re-identify the human life of faith, hope, and love. The plausibility structure of authentic *folkelig* life is a kinship-oriented civil society with natural bonds of love from people's hearts, which far and away transcends a machine-like State ruled by law. Besides, individualistic self-love cannot be solved by law anyway, only through education at people's high schools. People's freedom, equality, and the common good shaped in the people's high schools, underlie such a civil society between "heart" and "hand" to correspond to the spiritual reality of the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the ecumenism of Christianity also challenges *folkelighed* to move toward the whole of humanity so that *folkelighed* will not fall prey to an exclusivist nationalism of self-love.

8.3.2. The Relationship Between Heart and Hand in Grundtvig's Public Theology

Grundtvig's public theology involves both a constant internal renewal of Christianity together with the living congregation, and the external influence of Christianity upon public life. He is always concerned with the living interactive relationship between Christianity and people's lives. According to Begtrup, Grundtvig refers to the relationship between his "priestly and social ministry" (*præstelige og sin borgerlige Optræden*) as that between heart and hand.¹¹⁰¹ Prenter points out that Grundtvig's understanding of the image of God refers to the triadic structure of heart, mouth, and hand in correspondence to love, truth, and life force, which can be applied to both God and human beings for a holistic view of life: that is, the mouth speaks of the truth out of the heart of love, which is put into practice by the power of the hand.¹¹⁰² In this view Grundtvig uses simple language to speak in parliament about social matters, which are the work of hands (*hænders Gerninger*) whereas in the church, the faith community (*Tros Samfund*), he concentrates on God's Word that deals with the human heart.¹¹⁰³ In this light, it is easy to understand the aims of Grundtvig's public theology: to nurture the heart of love which can be implemented by the hand in civil society, both of

¹⁰⁹⁹ Mark C. Mattes, "N.F.S. Grundtvig's Approach to Christian Community and Civic Responsibility," in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 27, no. 1 (February 2000): 4, 12.

¹¹⁰⁰ Thyssen, "Grundtvig's Ideas on the Church and the People 1848-72," in *Tradition and Renewal*, 367. As Duncan Forrester notes, "The growth of Pietism, initially on Lutheran soil and encouraged by the romantic movement, reinforced an individualistic understanding of faith. Such internal pressures to withdraw from engagement with social questions in the public arena meant that for much theology and for many Christians the only appropriate responses to social problems were palliative rather than prophetic, handouts to the deserving poor rather than ensnarement with the issue of poverty, for example... The Enlightenment strongly encouraged a privatization of theology, and accelerated the decline of Christian social thought. Most social thinking attempts to operate independently of the tradition..."

Increasingly social theory developed *etsi Deus non daretur*, and a common assumption emerged that moral and theological considerations have little bearing on political, economic and social affairs." See Duncan Forrester, "Social Questions," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought* ed., Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 603.

¹¹⁰¹ *GDK* II, 88.

¹¹⁰² Prenter, "Grundtvigs treenighedslære," 70.

¹¹⁰³ Grundtvig, "Brudevielsen og Det Borgerlige Ægteskab i Danmark," *Danskeren* Nr. 47 (November 1850), quoted in *GDK* II, 88.

which are united by the word of mouth. If the hand corresponds to the heart, there will be a perfect unity of human life. As Grundtvig says:

And it goes without saying that when the heart is as good as it should be, and the hands can meet all the requests of the heart, then there will be such unanimity in the whole of human life that there is no need to have such a sharp boundary-line between the faith community and the civil society [*det borgerlige Selskab*].¹¹⁰⁴

On the contrary, the separation between hand and heart can only bring disaster to the national life. With the incarnation, the Word as the true image of God is manifested in Christian liturgy through imparting its holistic life of faith, hope, and love to Christians in the living congregation. Thus when Christians and living congregations are trying to lead a Christ-like life, and when their witness at the same time serves as a Christian enlightenment for people's lives, they are practicing Grundtvig's public theology. The *folkelig* and the Christian will finally coinhere in real divine-human life, which even abolishes the boundary between church and civil society.

8.3.3. Challenges

The National Liberals' question for Grundtvig shortly before his death is worth repeating here: how is Danish civil society faring nowadays in the light of Grundtvig's deliberations?¹¹⁰⁵

Ove Kaj Pedersen, Professor of Political Science at Copenhagen Business School, has pinpointed four secular uses of Grundtvig in Denmark especially since World War II: (1) focusing on civil education for the common good; (2) affirming individualistic freedom; (3) defending either the concept of welfare state or neo-liberalism; (4) emphasizing the Danishness of the National Church in terms of Grundtvig's liturgy and hymns while ignoring his theological and faith dimensions.¹¹⁰⁶ The application of Grundtvig's thinking in different aspects shapes the Grundtvigian ideology which has actually imprisoned Grundtvig himself.¹¹⁰⁷ This separation of the ecclesial and political Grundtvig makes the examination of Grundtvig's public theology relevant to the Danish context, and inspiring to global Christianity.

In the light of today's Denmark, a question naturally arises: Has Grundtvig's public theology been fully implemented? First of all, we need to ask some questions about the Danish National Church today. Is Christianity really free when it is still regarded as the civil bond of the country due to the historical confessionalization of Denmark based on Evangelical Lutheranism? Is the State today still a legitimate and effective agent for the socialization of the Danish Church by ensuring religious freedom?¹¹⁰⁸ Has the National Church become a stark civil arrangement without clerical privileges

¹¹⁰⁴ Ibid. "Og det følger af sig selv, at naar Hjertelaget var saa godt, som det skulde være, og Hænderne kunde opfylde alle Hjertets Begæringer, da vilde der i hele Menneskelivet være en saadan Overensstemmelse, at der ingen skarpe Grænse-Linier behøvedes mellem Tros-Samfundet og det borgerlige Selskab."

¹¹⁰⁵ Johansen and Høirup, *Grundtvigs Erindringer*, 264.

¹¹⁰⁶ My notes of Ove Kaj Pedersen's presentation at the Vartov conference of "Grundtvig som Samfundsbygger," January 24-5, 2011. I am very thankful for Prof. Hans Iversen's translation aid. See also Ove Kaj Pedersen, "Grundtvig som Samfundsbygger" (paper presented at the Vartov Conference on "Grundtvig som Samfundsbygger," January 24-5, 2011,

http://grundtvigcenteret.au.dk/fileadmin/www.grundtvigcenteret.au.dk/nyheder_og_arrangementer/arrangementsarkiv/Grundtvig_som_samfundsbygger/Ove_K_Pedersen.pdf (accessed July 15, 2013).

¹¹⁰⁷ Uffe Østergaard, "Denmark: A Big Small State," in John L. Campbell, John A. Hall et Ove K. Pedersen, eds., *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism: The Danish Experience* (Copenhagen: DJØF, 2008), 78.

¹¹⁰⁸ Østergaard, "Denmark: A Big Small State," 79. Østergaard further points out the political function of Danish Lutheranism. As he says, "Still, I think, the Lutheranism of the People's Church plays an enormous and insufficiently recognized role in defining the political culture of Denmark. In fact, we should probably talk of Lutheran or Protestant

and without being at the public expense? Is the National Church spacious enough to take in different Christian groups with various theological standpoints? Because of Grundtvig's emphasis on freedom so that theological rationalists or senior clergy cannot dominate in the interpretation of faith and church administration, Danish Christianity has taken a rather diffuse form. If we take Grundtvig's view as a historical and contextual claim, addressing the ecclesial challenge of his time, should today's congregation be further institutionalized so that it can voice its unique Christian view, and voice it more powerfully to respond to the challenge of secularization? If serious ecclesial disagreements emerge between different congregations, can the National Church still manage to hold them inside the framework?

Here I shall try to focus on one question concerning the role of the Danish National Church as a civil religion. I argue that Grundtvig is not a civil theologian, but a public theologian. As mentioned earlier (ch.2.3.), civil religion, by and large, refers to religious symbols and beliefs employed by the State to justify its legitimacy and political purposes.¹¹⁰⁹ It usually subordinates the Church to the State. According to Russel Richey and Donald Jones, there are five forms of civil religion with overlapping meanings in the United States and other parts of the world: (1) transcendent universal religion of the nation (a belief in the Republic), (2) religious nationalism, (3) democratic faith, (4) Protestant civil piety, and (5) folk religion.¹¹¹⁰ In the case of Denmark, the Evangelical Lutheran Christianity is closely related to the Danish *folkelig* way of life; it has a certain religious nationalism albeit in a humble way; it has something to do with the Danish democratization process in terms of the belief in freedom; and it also has an implicit civil function for citizenship training at confirmation classes. Grundtvig's public involvement from the Christian perspective is also intertwined with these aspects of civil religion. But is Grundtvig a civil theologian?

Two factors can show us that Grundtvig is not a civil theologian, but a public theologian. In terms of Danish Church-State relationship, his rejection of both the Caesaropapist State Church and the papist Church State means that he never fully identifies with the Danish State Church or the later National Church, but opts for a civil space capacious enough to allow for a living and free interaction between different Christian groups, as well as between the Christian and the human life. Besides, while Grundtvig emphasizes the blessedness of Denmark in the light of God's Providence with the particular role of Denmark or the High North assigned as the sixth congregation in world salvation history, he does not give up the ecumenical and transcendent dimension of Christianity corresponding to the whole humanity. Although he has to take the issue of the national bond into consideration when Denmark is challenged and threatened by powerful neighboring countries, he suggests that the Danish people should defend the nation from the perspective of a more cultural-ethnic nationalism. Grundtvig offers a Christian justification of the Danish *folkelig* life, but does not treat the *folkelig* life as the ultimate aim; he provides a theological legitimacy for the Danish cause, but he does not simultaneously develop a Danish supranationalism above other nations in the world. Furthermore, he continues to criticize the Danish National Church in terms of complete freedom for the priests and congregations, which makes him in part responsible for the diffused or even anarchical form of the Danish National Church today. Therefore, Grundtvig must be regarded as a public theologian.

Democracy rather than Social Democracy when analyzing the social and political model advocated by Denmark in particular and the Nordic countries in general." (Ibid.)

¹¹⁰⁹ Pierard, "Civil Religion," 583.

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid., 584.

Secondly, concerning the relationship between Christianity and *folkelighed*, I wonder to what extent Christianity has become an important cultural element of the Danish cultural-ethnic nation state.¹¹¹¹ According to Grundtvig's public theology, Christianity in Denmark has served both to create a free *folkelighed* and to inform people of the true nature of life. Yet the catholicity of Christianity requires that the Danish Church should transcend its role of civil religion, and challenge the once fixed *folkelighed* for a creative cultural and social reproduction in the contemporary world. *Folkelighed* is not a static and self-enclosed reality. If *folkelighed* ends up with a full identification with the welfare state, then Lesslie Newbigin's claim is true that the welfare state risks replacing Christianity or God due to its comprehensive provision of all the human need.¹¹¹² How can the ecumenism of Christianity with the spiritual vision of the kingdom of God become the incentive to keep the Danish *folkelighed* open to the whole of humanity?

Finally, how do we see today's Danish welfare state pattern in the light of Grundtvig's liberal vision of a civil society? Grundtvig's civil society focuses on freedom of speech, association, and trade so that citizens can voluntarily contribute to the common good. Since the 1870s, because of such questions as the relationship to the United Left; parliamentarism, and the guiding principle of people's high schools, religious or political, the followers of Grundtvig, i.e., the Grundtvigians, have been divided into the Left and the Right.¹¹¹³ Grundtvig provides a guiding principle for a civil society, but he himself is not willing to be identified with any political party. The engaging-but-not-identifying principle of Grundtvig's public theology, or the middle axiom, a term coined by J. H. Oldham,¹¹¹⁴ has handed a great problem over to the Grundtvigians: which side represents the true Grundtvigian identity with Christianity and *folkelighed* kept in a balanced way? It is interesting to learn of the "reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between state and civil society" in Denmark:

At least since the time when the absolutist monarchy began to consult groups in civil society about matters of state and economy, Denmark has exhibited a tradition of cooperation between state and civil society in which the strength of one depends on the strength of the other. For instance, the Grundtvigian movement in civil society was enabled by the state insofar as the Grundtvigians enjoyed constitutional protection of free association. And the state passed legislation permitting them to establish the folk [high] schools.¹¹¹⁵ Conversely, the Grundtvigian movement's success in forging a national identity provided a crucial source of political support upon which the state could draw as it later promulgated a variety of policies, such as those associated with the internal front strategy. In short, the Danish case suggests that a strong state requires a strong civil society and vice versa.¹¹¹⁶

¹¹¹¹ Grundtvig lived in a period of nation state after Denmark shifted to Constitutional Monarchy in 1849, and he naturally contributed to the building of the new nation. As Lesslie Newbigin points out, "The nation state, replacing the old concepts of the Holy Church and the Holy Empire, is the centre-piece in the political scene in post-Enlightenment Europe. After the trauma of the religious wars of the seventeenth century, Europe settled down to the principle of religious coexistence, and the passions which had formerly been invested in rival interpretations of religion were more and more invested in the nation state. Nationalism became the effective ideology of the European peoples, always at times of crises proving stronger than any other ideological or religious force. If there is any entity to which ultimate loyalty is due, it is the nation state." See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 14-5. I am indebted to Hauerwas and Willimon to find Newbigin's view, see Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 34.

¹¹¹² See Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984*, 15.

¹¹¹³ Ove Korsgaard, "Grundtvig's idea of a People's High School," 8-9.

¹¹¹⁴ The famous principle of ecumenical social ethics aims to balance the spiritual and social ministries of Christianity with Christian individuals to be involved in concrete social challenges. See W. A. Visser't Hooft and J. H. Oldham, *The Church and Its Social Function in Society* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1937), 191-92.

¹¹¹⁵ According to Edward Broadbridge, Americans often drop the "high" when talking about the people's high school.

¹¹¹⁶ John L. Campbell and John A. Hall, "Introduction: The State of Denmark," in *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, ed. John L. Campbell et al. (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2008), 24-5.

This reality is obviously contradictory to Grundtvig's vision of a stronger civil society and a weaker state.¹¹¹⁷ Furthermore, according to Ove Korsgaard, the pressure of the Second World War with Denmark's compromise¹¹¹⁸ also prompts the cooperation between the Social Democratic Party and the Grundtvigians to build up the welfare state "on both socialist and liberal principles."¹¹¹⁹ In general, the Grundtvigians maintain the vision of a civil society linked to a higher spiritual reality while the Social Democratic Party more pragmatically meets the contextual needs of the Danish people. The contemporary Danish situation shows that the social space for the voluntary third-sector seems still not large enough. Yet the Danish *phronesis* is to keep both in a living interactive relationship in order to fulfill Grundtvig's vision:

[I]t must transpire that the two things which naturally lie closest to the human heart, the *folkelig* and the godly, or indeed the heart and the spirit, were by no means inimical to each other; they neither excluded each other nor stood on the way of each other. Indeed, they were created to fuse in the word on our tongues about what it is here on earth that can create peace, freedom, and happiness, and what can and will lead those who believe into eternal salvation.¹¹²⁰

Allchin notes that Grundtvig, a theologian who seems not to fit into the 19th century, is not only deeply rooted in the past but also has a "strong future reference" with his prophetic voice.¹¹²¹ When today's world is plagued by various crises, we need to continue exploring what inspiration the world can draw from Grundtvig, the prophet of the North.

¹¹¹⁷ For an insightful discussion of the contemporary challenges that the Nordic welfare states face, see John J. Roger, *From a Welfare State to a Welfare Society: The Changing Context of Social Policy in a Postmodern Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). It is interesting to note that in the official Danish website for international recruitment, the term "welfare society" instead of welfare state is adopted to describe the social security system, which might imply some loosening of the bureaucratic structure in this respect.

https://www.workindenmark.dk/en/Find_information/Information_for_job_seekers/Why_choose_Denmark,-q-Denmark_%E2%80%93_a_welfare_society (accessed July 23, 2013).

¹¹¹⁸ On April 9, 1940, the German army invaded Denmark. The small country could not defend itself but submitted itself to the Nazi Germany. Consequently, the Danish institutions could run normally although under the control of Germany.

¹¹¹⁹ Ove Korsgaard, "Grundtvig's idea of a People's High School," 13. Korsgaard believes that Grundtvig's vision of society is in conflict with the Danish and Nordic welfare state model in terms of its pension system for civil servants and the state's responsibility for poverty relief. See Korsgaard, *N.F.S. Grundtvig*, 36-7.

¹¹²⁰ Grundtvig, "Fra Vennemødet 1868," *US X*, 560. "... det maatte vise sig, at de to Ting, som naturlig ligge Menneskehjertet nærmest, det Folkelige og det Gudelige, ja det Hjertelige og det Aandelige, dog ingenlunde var hinandens Fjender, at de ikke forskjød hinanden og heller ikke stod hinanden i Vejen, nej de var skabte til at sammensmelte i Ordet paa vor Tunge om, hvad det er, der hernede kan skabe Fred, Frihed og Glæde, og det, som kan og skal føre dem, der tro, til den evige Salighed."

¹¹²¹ A. M. Allchin, "Introduction," in A. M. Allchin et al eds., *Grundtvig in International Perspectives* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), 5.

9. Conclusion

In this study I have explored how Grundtvig influences both Danish church reform and social reconstruction both in and since the 19th century through the lens of public theology. In Chapter 2 I have provided a general introduction of the concept of public theology, a term albeit anachronistic to Grundtvig. While explaining the nuances in distinguishing public theology from civil religion, political theology, social ethics, and social theology, I have proposed that Grundtvig's public theology addresses Church, society/nation, the entire humanity as well as nature from his Christian perspective. Furthermore, I suggest that civil society should be the ideal stage for public theology to manifest its sociological significance.

In chapter 3 I have offered a brief biographical sketch of Grundtvig for international readers, not least the Chinese who may not be familiar with Grundtvig's life and work. I focus on Grundtvig's love of Christianity, the people, and the family in order to present Grundtvig both as a faithful Christian minister and a patriotic Dane who cherishes family life as the matrix of human love to be extended to civil society, to the nation, and to the whole of humanity or a global civil society.

A general introduction to the background of Grundtvig's public theology in the 19th-century Denmark follows in chapter 4. I have concentrated on the following four aspects: national humiliation from military defeats and the political shift from feudal absolutism to constitutional monarchy, the State's bankruptcy and the country's economic difficulties, the national cultural crises as perceived by Grundtvig due to the widespread influence of the Enlightenment ethos and foreign culture, and the historically entangled Church-State relationship with an imposed faith on the Danes. Born into this complicated and difficult Danish situation, Grundtvig's public theology engages both Christian life and the people's life for the common good in his ideal civil society.

In chapter 5, I have endeavored to delineate Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective in response to the challenge of modernity, from which he draws the conclusion that the historical apostolic witness of the living congregation crystallized in the Apostles' Creed is the unshakable foundation of Christian faith. With the inspiration of both Irenaeus and Luther, Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective shifts away from a biblicist orthodox faith, which frees him from the State's enforcement on and theological rationalists' monopoly of faith issues. With his emphasis on the fusion of the living Word and human words, Grundtvig shows how the divine and the human coinhere in the life of Christ, the incarnate Word, who is the archetype of all human beings. I follow two of Grundtvig's contemporary bishops, Bishops Mynster and Martensen in doubting the historical veracity of the Creed having been taught directly from Christ's mouth. I also think the contents of the Creed too narrow to address and absorb various faith controversies in different contexts. I suggest that in the light of Tillich's "Protestant principle" Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective promoting a sacramental objectivity is itself a theological construct whose "matchlessness" should be diluted. This is because faith is not solely based on the Creed and the two sacraments, but also has a subjective dimension of human experience in different cultural socio-political contexts. In this light Church and School, as well as faith and theology, should not be distinguished with a clear cutting edge – a distinction that would resemble the contemporary situation of ecclesial theology versus academic theology. Thus to

simply rest upon the objective faith foundation of Grundtvig's ecclesial perspective will result in a theological inertia. The flowering of Grundtvigian theology demands a continuous living interaction with school, culture, and politics in different contexts. This, I propose, is the task of public theology for Grundtvig's living congregation, a historical, spiritual, non-institutional, and universal congregation centered on the Word, which leads a Christ-like life to enlighten the nature of human life.

In chapter 6, I have explained how Grundtvig's social philosophy is centered on his concept of civil society (*det borgerlige Selskab*) as the plausibility structure of *folkelighed*. I first explain Grundtvig's Mosaic-Christian anthropology which enables him to change his attitude toward naturalists from conversion to cooperation. In acknowledging the remnant *imago dei* in naturalists which results in faith, hope and love in their lives, Grundtvig embraces the continuous ministry of the Word Creator and the Spirit Creator in the naturalists, who in turn morally absorb Christ into themselves in contrast to the Christians' absorption into Christ. Thus it is equally important to restore and revive people's natural *folkelig* life based on human nature in order to prepare people to meet the living Word. This also becomes the theological foundation of Grundtvig's public involvement in social reconstruction and national revitalization. By *folkelighed*, Grundtvig means a collective form of a free, equal, and democratic human life that is a historical cultural reality with a common language and history. This *folkelig* life, according to Grundtvig, can be realized in the civil society that he envisages. Here I have provided a semantic analysis of civil society (*det borgerlige selskab*) in parallel with *Borger-Samfund*, *borgerlige Samfund* and *Borger-Selskab*. I note that before 1833 Grundtvig uses these phrases interchangeably with the "State" in contrast to the "state of nature." As the State uses power to pressurize the people's spirit, it pushes Grundtvig to gradually distinguish State from civil society in 1833. I summarize that Grundtvig's civil society has the following characteristics: it is a natural human ideal; it is a historical reality; it is a spiritual organic unity; it results from an expansion of family life; its foundation is the common good; it is against liberal individualism; and finally, it is a free *folkelig* society. Following more the Lockean rather than the Hegelian pattern of civil society, Grundtvig believes that the State is merely an abstract foreign term whose power should be legally sanctioned to balance people's relationships and see to the common good of the society. The State should thus provide space for people's natural life in terms of freehold rights, freedom of trade, the right of associations, and voluntary service to help the poor.

The Church also needs restructuring. The former Caesaropapist State Church and the papist Church State should be transformed into a capacious civil space to hold various Christian groups in a living interaction with human life. I believe that this is Grundtvig's ecclesial wisdom. In the State Church or the National Church after 1849, Grundtvig insists that freedom should be extended equally to the laity and the clergy to become independent of the parish-tie and the enforced uniform doctrinal teaching and liturgy by the State. Sacraments should no longer carry civil consequences. Christianity should no longer serve as a civil religion with the historical confessionalization of Evangelical Lutheranism in Denmark. Moreover, the Church should no longer impose a Christian form on both State and School.

School should no longer concern itself with the faith issue, but only with the enlightenment of life according to human nature. According to Grundtvig, School should be freed from the spiritless Enlightenment ethos with a reductionist scientific view to approach life. The people's high school aims at transforming peasants into citizens in Grundtvig's civil society by promoting the people's *folkelighed*. Teaching in the people's high school should focus on history, mythology, and the constitution through the living words of the vernacular. Both civil conversion and confirmation (see ch. 6.3.6.3.1.) turn people's heads to real human life here and now. In hindsight, the people's high schools in Denmark accumulate the necessary human, cultural and social capital for the Danish civil society.

Then, I note that the living interaction between State, Church, and School shapes Grundtvig's civil society, which covers a holistic *folkelig* life. It corresponds to a "folkelig public" (*offentlighed*), which combines the private domestic life with the public politico-economic life, as separated by modern liberalism. It might just as well be called a *folkelig* society (*folkelig samfund*, an ideal, human but spiritual fellowship (*fælleskab*), which Grundtvig's public theology continuously calls forth. Grundtvig's ideal *folkelig* society may be rendered as the civil form of Christianity in Denmark.

Furthermore, Grundtvig also takes the *folkelig* approach to national salvation. For instance, the territory issue influences people's *folkelig* life. Although he claims that the Danish cause is not only the cause of Denmark, but also that of the high North, of the whole of humanity and indeed of Christianity itself, he opts not for a Danish supernaturalism, but for a humble national messianism by taking the North as the sixth congregation to bear witness to authentic Christianity and true human life for the world. Grundtvig does not confuse Christianity and *folkelighed*, but prepares people's *folkelig* life to be perfected by Christianity.

In chapter 7, I try to combine Grundtvig's ecclesial contribution (chapter 5) with his social philosophy (chapter 6) through the lens of public theology, which generally means participating in the public debate for the common good from a Christian perspective. There is a deep coinherence between his spiritual ministry and his social engagement with the fusion of Christ's divine-human life as the archetype. Grundtvig's public theology aims to promote the humanity of Christianity – to enlighten the true nature of human life as consummated in Christ and to create a free *folkelighed* as Christianity's earthly home and its living interlocutors. In order to do public theology, the living congregation should also be ecclesially prepared by first setting true Christianity free from any rationalist domestication and institutional confinement, by either the State Church or the Church State, and then by acquainting itself with the *folkelig* life wherever the living congregation is situated. Then a living interaction between the *folkelig* life and the Christian life can flourish in the same human life, says Grundtvig. Such an interaction is exercised between the living Word heard in church liturgy and human words. This dialogical dimension between the Word and human words encapsulates theology's participation in public discourse for the common good. This is the way public theology functions. In this light, any one-sided appropriation of Grundtvig's thinking – whether Christian or humanist as illustrated by various political appropriations of Grundtvig to

support different ideologies – misses entirely his holistic vision. Furthermore, it is only the theological dimension that can reintegrate the different secular uses of Grundtvig since his death.

Chapter 8 deals with my appreciation of Grundtvig's public theology from a Chinese perspective. The contemporary Chinese church and society are also in a transitional stage. Grundtvig can be inspiring in the following aspects. Ecclesially speaking, Grundtvig's creative use of the Nordic spiritual legacy sets a good example of indigenizing Christianity in Denmark. Moreover, his measure to re-socialize Christianity in Denmark is transforming the Danish National Church as a capacious civil space in which living congregations freely develop resembles. Similarly, Bishop K. H. Ting regards the Chinese Church Councils and Committees of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement at different levels as scaffolding to build up the true Church. Socially speaking, Grundtvig prophetically points out that various socio-political difficulties have resulted from the cultural crisis. The Chinese scholar Liang Shuming and He Lin reach a similar conclusion. In hindsight, culture has become one of the most important resources of soft power (Joseph Nye's phrase). For Grundtvig, the Danish cultural reconstruction to bridge the gap between the urban elite and the peasant farmers relies on the people's high school in the shape of his theological anthropology. It resembles the traditional Chinese humanist teaching to promote a human self-transcendence via the following of *Tao* for the lofty ideal of heaven-humanity unity. The incarnation of the Word with Christ-Life and the congregations' Christ-like life manifest the Chinese *Tao*, and thereby fulfill the Chinese ideal of immanent transcendence. This is also conducive to Chinese ethical reconstruction. Finally, in order to do public theology while keeping Christianity's unique identity, Grundtvig envisions a civil society with the kingdom of God as its frame of reference. The establishment of such a civil society presupposes a functional re-differentiation of State, Church, and School. Grundtvig does not intend to develop a concrete socio-political structure, but adheres to the principle of freedom and the common good in people's natural human life in which people can have living interactions with each other through living words. His ecclesial perspective prevents Grundtvig from identifying with any political party; thereby the spiritual identity of Christianity is also safeguarded whenever he freely engages in public issues. In China, the development of public theology also presupposes a civil society with Chinese characteristics. Grundtvig's principles are still relevant here. The Chinese scholar Deng Zhenglai's "positive interaction" between State and civil society combines both the top-down reform and the bottom-up effort, which is similar to Grundtvig's insistence on the living interaction between State and civil society to avoid both a violent revolution and chaotic anarchy when transforming State and society. Moreover, Grundtvig's kinship-oriented civil society also sheds light on the Chinese context where society is traditionally organized into, and by, families and clans. With the reference to the heavenly family and civil life, Grundtvig points out that the egoistic family life that engenders nepotism and corruption must be transformed into a loving Christian family life and extended to civil life in general. But civil life will never *replace* family life, for it is there that true human love is nurtured.

In short, I propose that Grundtvig's vision of civil society is unique when compared with modern theories of civil society. Grundtvig's civil society encourages freedom of trade for a future market on the condition of the common good; it protects individuals' freedom and rights while rejecting

liberal individualism; it promotes freedom of association in the light of the collective dimension of *folkelighed*; it provides a public space for people to voice diverse public opinions out of the bottom of their loving hearts in order for a living interaction to take place; it opposes the mechanic separation of the public from the private spheres as demarcated by political liberalism; it even sees itself as the extension of family life. This may be Grundtvig's unique contribution to the contemporary global context. Yet his vision is not without a Christian perspective: his civil society as the *telos* of his public theology corresponds to God's kingdom on the earth marked by justice, peace, and joy. There is here a deep coinherence between Grundtvig's Christian and social ministry.

In the second section of chapter 8, while seeking to integrate different interpretive patterns of Grundtvig's divine-human and Christian-*folkelig* relationship in the Danish Grundtvig scholarship, I attempt to offer a Chinese interpretation of the deep divine-human coinherent relationship in terms of the Chinese *Yin-Yang* paradigm. While pursuing the inter-cultural hermeneutic, I also realize the difference between them: God's aseity and human finiteness, the historical challenges of suffering and natural disasters in conflict with the protological and the ultimate eschatological divine-human harmony etc. So I choose more the perspective of a relational ontology than that of a substantivist ontology to interpret the deep divine-human coinherence in the *Yin-Yang* diagram. After a brief introduction to *Yin-Yang* philosophy, I propose that the Christian Word synthesizes the effable Confucian *Tao* and the ineffable Taoist *Tao* to connect God with human beings. The *Yin* and *Yang* in the enclosed diagram indicates the non-dissolvable relationship between the Creator and human beings (including all the other creatures and nature as well). The germs in the two equal extensions imply the *perichoresis* and interchangeability of the divine-human nature since, according to Grundtvig, the divine and human nature is not essentially different and therefore incarnation is possible. In the eschatological consummation, true human life that comes from the divine life will be fulfilled through the divine life; the divine life will be fully manifested by human life. The divine and the human life finally converge in the same life out of the fusion of God's Word and human words. The fluid boundary in the middle of the *Yin-Yang* diagram marks not only a living interaction but also a circulation between God and human being whose lives are both enriched in the circulating process. It also points to the divine-human fusion without confusing God and human identity. Meanwhile, Christ as the incarnate Word mediates not only God and human beings, but also spirit and nature as well as heaven and earth. Christ is the archetype of all human beings to be the microcosmos of the universe, which is itself the macrocosmos. Here the fourth public, i.e., nature, is also addressed by Grundtvig's public theology. Regarding human beings as the microcosmos between heaven and earth resembles the Heaven-Humanity-Earth triadic pattern in Chinese philosophy in which the perfectly developed human nature in *Jen* (love or philanthropy) is united with the *Tao* or nature of Heaven. Here the parental spirituality of heaven and earth in both Grundtvig and Chinese philosophy, especially in Zhang Zai, concur, although Zhang Zai's Heaven points more to an impersonal nature rather than the Christian God. The fusion of the divine and human life, of spirit and nature as well as of heaven and earth as an eschatological reality points to the mutual subsumption of the essential and economic Trinity. Finally the circulation from the divine to the human, and from spirit to nature is motivated by the Word's recognition of the Spirit's

work in the divine economic activities through God's love. The interplay between the Word and the Spirit is similar to the *Li-Qi* interaction described by Zhu Xi albeit with a naturalist overtone.

In the last section of chapter 8, I put forward a Chinese appraisal of Grundtvig's public theology especially in terms of the contemporary reality of civil society in Denmark. After re-highlighting the indissoluble relationship between authentic Christianity and true *folkelighed*, and between Grundtvig's Christian ministry and his public engagement, I wonder how Grundtvig's public theology is implemented today. According to Ove Kaj Pedersen's observation, the various secular uses of Grundtvig today seem to ignore Grundtvig's important theological dimension, i.e., the deep coinherent relationship between the divine and the human, which should negate any unilateral appropriation of Grundtvig's thinking, either Christian or humanist. In order to reclaim his public theology, I propose that Grundtvig is not a civil theologian, but a public theologian who refuses to identify himself with the Danish National Church because of the confessionalization of Evangelical Lutheranism as a continuous civil bond in Denmark. Simultaneously, Grundtvig will not take the Danish *folkelighed* as his ultimate concern, but, in his public theology, continuously challenges *folkelighed* to be open to the entire humanity in correspondence to the catholicity of Christianity. Last but not least, compared with the present-day welfare state, Grundtvig's vision of civil society seems far from fulfilled. There is neither a weaker state nor a larger voluntary third-sector in today's Danish society. This, however, has something to do with the historical cooperation of the Social Democrats and the Grundtvigians during the German occupation of Denmark in World War II. Yet the contemporary challenge of the welfare state under globalization makes the discussion of Grundtvig's civil society both timely and relevant.

Such is my apperception, appreciation, and appraisal of Grundtvig's public theology from a Chinese perspective. Facing the various present-day human crises in the global pluralistic milieu, I think Grundtvig the public theologian still has a living word to say.

Dansk Resumé

Denne afhandling har som mål at udforske Grundtvigs sociale filosofi, hans offentlige teologi, og hans relevans i forbindelse med samfundsopbygning i nutidens verden, ikke mindst i mit hjemland Kina. Jeg vil undersøge Grundtvigs bidrag til den kirkelige reform som den skete i Danmark i det 19. århundrede og den efterfølgende sociale genopbygning set gennem linsen af den offentlige teologi. Jeg beskriver hvordan Grundtvigs offentlige teologi angår kirken, samfundet/nationen, ja hele menneskeheden såvel som naturen ud fra hans kristne perspektiv. Desuden foreslår jeg at det civile samfund burde være den ideale baggrund for Grundtvigs offentlige teologi til at vise dens sociologiske betydning.

Efter en kort biografisk skildring af Grundtvigs liv og levned for kinesiske og internationale læsere som måske ikke er bekendte med Grundtvigs liv og arbejde, bringer jeg en generel introduktion til baggrunden for det 19. århundredes Danmark hvad angår politiske, økonomiske, kulturelle og kirkelige udfordringer, for at vi kan forstå de kriser som Grundtvig har kæmpet sig igennem og som gør ham til en offentlig teolog.

For at få sin offentlige teologi frem må Grundtvig først definere sit kristne perspektiv, før at han kan gå i gang med de forskellige sociale problemer. Hans kirkelige perspektiv (den kirkelige anskuelse) fra 1825 viser at han har fundet frem til det historiske apostolske vidnesbyrd om den sande kristne tro er grundfæstet i den apostolske trobekendelse. Den sakramentale objektivitet i hans kristne tro er baseret på det levende ord, der ikke alene sætter ham i stand til at svare på udfordringerne fra rationalismen og romantikken, men også frigør ham fra statskirkens indblanding, men også fra kirkestatens styring og monopol i trosspørgsmål. Og dog, i lyset af både Mynsters og Martensens kritik og Paul Tillichs protestantiske princip, så argumenterer jeg for at Grundtvigs mageløse opdagelse også er en kontekstuel teologisk konstruktion hvis mageløshed desuden kan relativiseres. Med udgangspunkt i Grundtvigs kirkelige perspektiv, definerer han den sande kirke som en levende menighed – et historisk, åndeligt og ikke institutionaliseret fællesskab som er centreret omkring det levende ord – at leve et liv i efterligning af Kristus og at være et vidne for evangeliet.

Desuden sætter Grundtvigs jødisk-kristne antropologi, som anerkender den vedvarende kreative embedsførelse i ordet og ånden også blandt ikke-kristne, ham i stand til at samarbejde med naturalisterne til folkets bedste. Inspireret af både hans kirkelige perspektiv og den kristne antropologi, vælger Grundtvig en folkelig tilgang til både den sociale rekonstruktion, og den nationale frelse i det 19. århundrede. Derfor kræver det folkelige liv i frihedens ånd og det fælles gode ikke en stat, men et civilt samfund (borgerligt selskab) som sin troværdighedsstruktur. I denne henseende følger Grundtvig mere Locke's fremfor Hegels mønster for et civilt samfund, og mener at statens magt bør være lovmæssigt underbygget for at kunne skabe balance indbyrdes mellem folk og for at sikre samfundet det fælles bedste. Samtidigt skal kirken ikke længere været styret af staten for at sikre den borgerlige religions formål, men blive transformeret til et rummeligt civilt område for at tilgodese forskellige kristne grupper til en levende interaktion med alt menneskeligt liv. Skolen til gengæld bør fokusere på den folkelige uddannelse for at oplyse om det naturlige

menneskeliv. Jeg argumenterer for at den levende interaktion mellem stat, kirke og skole danner Grundtvigs civile samfund, som hans offentlige teologi fortsat fremkalder.

Dernæst prøver jeg at skabe forbindelse mellem Grundtvigs kirkelige bidrag til hans sociale filosofi gennem linsen for den offentlige teologi. Jeg fremsætter den tanke at Grundtvigs offentlige teologi består af at fremme det menneskelige i kristendommen og belyse menneskelivets natur i lyset af Kristi liv og de levende menigheds kristelige liv i tro, håb og kærlighed. For at udføre denne opgave, kræver den levende menighed også en folkelig oplysning – for at udtrykke troen på et naturligt folkeligt liv gennem modersmålet. På denne måde finder kristendommen som en himmelsk gæst ikke bare et jordisk ly, men det realiserer også sig selv på den jordiske vandring ved at omdanne det folkelige liv. Set på denne baggrund mener jeg at det tydelige, men uadskillelige forhold mellem det kristne liv og det folkelige liv i Grundtvigs offentlige teologi forudsætter ikke bare en levende interaktion, men også en dyb sammenhæng mellem det guddommelige liv og det menneskelige liv som en eskatologisk virkelighed.

Dernæst fremlægger jeg en kinesisk vurdering af Grundtvigs offentlige teologi til belysning af hvordan Grundtvig prøver at kontekstualisere kristendommen og bygge et samfund på baggrund af hans kirkelige reform, hans kulturelle genopbygning og hans vision om det civile samfund.

Herefter forsøger jeg at tolke Grundtvigs begreb om det dybe sammenhængende guddommelige-menneskelige forhold i lyset af den kinesiske Yin-Yang filosofi, ikke ud fra en substantivistisk, men fra en relationel ontologi. Dernæst præsenterer jeg mennesket som det mikrokosmos der sammensmelter ånd og natur såvel som himmel og jord i Grundtvigs teologi. Det svarer til det traditionelle kinesiske mønster med himmel-menneskehed-jorden. Desuden afhænger det guddommelige-menneskelige kredsløb i Guds kærlighed af Guds to hænders gensidighed, dvs. ordet og ånden, som jeg forsøger at sammenligne med Zhu Xis begreber om Li og Qi.

Til sidst præsenterer jeg en kinesisk vurdering af Grundtvigs offentlige teologi især med henblik på den nutidige virkelighed i Danmark for det civile samfund.

De forskellige verdslige måder som Grundtvig bruges på i dag synes at ignorere hans vigtige teologiske dimension, dvs. det dybe og sammenhængende forhold mellem det guddommelige og det menneskelige. Den nutidige udfordring for velfærdsstaten i en globaliseret tidsalder gør diskussionen om Grundtvigs civile samfund både betimelig og relevant.

English Resumé

This study aims to explore Grundtvig's social philosophy, his public theology, and his relevance to nation-building in the contemporary world, not least in my native China. I shall examine Grundtvig's contribution to the 19th-century Danish ecclesial reform and social reconstruction through the lens of public theology. I have proposed that Grundtvig's public theology addresses Church, society/nation, the entire humanity as well as nature from his Christian perspective. Furthermore, I suggest that civil society should be the ideal stage for Grundtvig's public theology to manifest its sociological significance.

After a brief biographical sketch of Grundtvig for Chinese and international readers who may not be familiar with Grundtvig's life and work, I offer a general introduction to the background of 19th-century Denmark in terms of political, economic, cultural, and ecclesial challenges so that we know what kind of crises Grundtvig wrestled with that make him a public theologian.

In order to carry out his public theology, Grundtvig first needs to define his Christian perspective with which he can respond to different social problems. His ecclesial perspective (*den kirkelige Anskuelse*) of 1825 shows that he has discovered the historical apostolic witness to the true Christian faith based on the Apostles' Creed. The sacramental objectivity of his Christian faith based on the living Word not only enables him to respond to the challenges of rationalism and romanticism, but also frees him from the State Church's imposition and the Church State's monopoly on faith issues. Yet in the light of both Mynster and Martensen's criticism and Paul Tillich's Protestant principle, I argue that Grundtvig's matchless discovery is also a contextual theological construct whose matchlessness can also be relativized. Yet based on his ecclesial perspective, Grundtvig defines the true Church as a living congregation — a historical, spiritual and non-institutional fellowship centered on the Word — leading a Christ-like life to bear witness to the gospel.

Furthermore, Grundtvig's Mosaic-Christian anthropology, which acknowledges the continuous creative ministry of the Word and the Spirit also in non-Christians, enables him to cooperate with naturalists for the people's common good. Informed by both his ecclesial perspective and Christian anthropology, Grundtvig takes a *folkelig* approach to both social reconstruction and national salvation in the 19th century. So the *folkelig* life in the spirit of freedom and the common good requires not a state, but a civil society (*borgerlige Selskab*) as its plausibility structure. Following more the Lockean rather than the Hegelian pattern of civil society, Grundtvig believes that the State's power should be legally sanctioned to balance people's relationships and to look after the common good of society. Meanwhile, the Church should no longer be imposed upon by the State to serve the purpose of civil religion, but be transformed into a capacious civil space to accommodate various Christian groups for a living interaction with all human life. School on the other hand should focus on *folkelig* education to enlighten the natural human life. I note that the living interaction between State, Church, and School shapes Grundtvig's civil society, which Grundtvig's public theology continues to call forth.

I then try to combine Grundtvig's ecclesial contribution with his social philosophy through the lens of public theology. I put forward the idea that Grundtvig's public theology consists in the promotion of the humanity of Christianity, and the enlightenment of the nature of human life in the light of the Christ-life and the living congregations' Christ-like life of faith, hope and love. In order to carry out this mission, the living congregation also requires a *folkelig* enlightenment – to express faith in a natural *folkelig* life through the vernacular. In this way Christianity as a heavenly guest not only finds an earthly shelter but also fulfills itself in an earthly journey by transforming the *folkelig* life. In this view, I propose that the distinct but inseparable relationship between the Christian life and the *folkelig* life in Grundtvig's public theology presupposes not only a living interaction but also a deep coinherence (*den dybe sammenhæng*) between the divine life and the human life as an eschatological reality.

Then I proceed to provide a Chinese appreciation of Grundtvig's public theology, which helps to understand how he tries to contextualize Christianity and build up a nation in terms of his ecclesial reform, his cultural reconstruction and his vision of the civil society.

After this, I endeavor to interpret Grundtvig's concept of the deep coinherent divine-human relationship in the light of Chinese *Yin-Yang* philosophy from the perspective of not a substantivist ontology, but a relational ontology. Then I introduce how human beings as the microcosmos fuse spirit and nature as well as heaven and earth in Grundtvig's theology. It also corresponds to the traditional Chinese triadic pattern of Heaven-Humanity-Earth. Furthermore, the divine-human circulation in God's love depends on the reciprocity of God's two hands, i.e., the Word and the Spirit, which I shall attempt to compare with Zhu Xi's concepts of *Li* and *Qi*.

Finally, I put forward a Chinese appraisal of Grundtvig's public theology especially in terms of the contemporary reality of civil society in Denmark. The various secular uses of Grundtvig today seem to ignore his important theological dimension, i.e., the deep coinherent relationship between the divine and the human. The contemporary challenge of the welfare state under globalization makes the discussion of Grundtvig's civil society both timely and relevant.

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Appendix: N.F.S. Grundtvig and China

Grundtvig¹¹²² is not unknown in China. According to Professor Stig Thøgersen's research, Grundtvig was first introduced to China in 1909 through Cai Wensen (蔡文森)'s translation of a lecture given by a Japanese law scholar, Yahagi Eizou (矢作荣藏).¹¹²³ In 1914, Jing Yu (经宇, a pen name) may have been the first Chinese to give a general introduction to Grundtvig and the Danish People's High School.¹¹²⁴ In 1924 Ren Baitong (任白涛) wrote a lengthy article to introduce the rise of American and European adult education in which he devoted a special section to the Danish people's high school and his own visit to Roskilde People's High School.¹¹²⁵

The well-known Chinese educator and reformer Lei Peihong (雷沛鸿, or Lei Binnan, 雷宾南, or Binnan P. Louis), who studied socio-political science and pedagogics in England and America, graduated from Harvard University in 1919. He was President of Guangxi University and Director of Guangxi Provincial Educational Department as well as being one of the pioneers in promoting not only high school learning, but also adult education and basic co-education for children in the villages. He tried all his life to focus on the basic education for China's social reconstruction and national revitalization. He gained a good overview of the Danish education system during his study trip to Denmark (as well as Norway, Sweden, England, France, and Germany in 1927-28),¹¹²⁶ and he introduced the model of Danish adult education on his return to China. In 1928 he wrote a lengthy article on Grundtvig's life and work,¹¹²⁷ followed later by essays on the Danish law of the land, the Danish cooperative system, and the Danish public library movement, as well as an introduction to Christen Kold. Lei Peihong strove to introduce Grundtvig and to implement Grundtvig's educational ideas in Guangxi Province. Through his efforts in child and adult education Guangxi

¹¹²² The name of Grundtvig is translated into Chinese in various ways, such as “格隆费氏,” “葛令维格” “格朗德维奇,” “古伦多,” “古路特渭海,” “格龙维,” “格伦特维,” and “葛龙维.”

¹¹²³ Stig Thøgersen, “Grundtvig i Kina,” in *Grundtvig Studier*, ed. Gustav Albeck et al. (København:Grundtvig-Selskabet, 1995), 164. The lecture was noted down and published by Cai Wensen (蔡文森) with the title “丹麦之补习教育” [Danish Adult Education] in 《教育杂志》 [Journal of Education] 2, no.3 (1909):21-5. Stig Thøgersen is professor of Asian studies in Aarhus University. I am very grateful to Dr. Thøgersen for a discussion about his article whose relevant bibliography becomes an important source for me to continue to trace more related articles about Grundtvig and the Danish People's High School in China on 大成老旧刊全文数据库 [Dacheng Old Journal Internet Resources Base] <http://www.dachengdata.com>.

¹¹²⁴ 经宇[Jing Yu], “丹麦之平民中学校” [Danish People's High School], in 《教育杂志》 [Journal of Education] 6, no. 1(1919): 21-5. In his article, there are two errors: the English name of Grundtvig is rendered Bishop N. T. S. Grundtvig instead of N.F.S. Grundtvig; Rødding People's High School was established in 1845 instead of 1844. (ibid., 21)

¹¹²⁵ See 任白涛[Ren Baitao], “欧美成人教育之勃兴” [The Rise of European and American Adult Education], in 《教育杂志》 [Journal of Education] 16, no 12(1924): 16-7. He mistook that, introduced by his uncle who taught Grundtvig philosophy at Copenhagen University, Grundtvig had been to Germany and met with Gothe, Schelling and Fichte and Schiller due to his great interests in German philosophy.

¹¹²⁶ 李剑萍[Li Jianping], “雷沛鸿与二十世纪前半期中国成人教育,” [Lei Peihong and the Chinese Adult Education in the First Half of the 20th Century] *Journal of Hebei Normal University* (Educational Science) 1, no. 3 (July 1999):73-6.

¹¹²⁷ 雷宾南[Lei Binnan], “北欧的先觉者格龙维” [Grundtvig:The Prophet of the North], in 《教育杂志》 [Journal of Education] 20, no. 9 (1928). It is also included in his book 《雷沛鸿文集》 [Selected Writings of Lei Peihong], 2 vols. (Nanning:Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1990).

become one of the most educationally developed provinces in China in 1940s despite the province's poverty.¹¹²⁸ Lei Peihong is acclaimed as "the Chinese Grundtvig."¹¹²⁹

In 1928 Zhao Yangtian (赵仰天) translated H.W. Foght's *Rural Denmark and its Schools* (1915) from English into Chinese. This may be the earliest systematic introduction to the Danish school system with reference to Grundtvig. In December 1929 the famous Chinese educator Meng Xiancheng (孟宪承) recommended six English books¹¹³⁰ to Chinese educational circles and he himself translated into Chinese *The Folk High Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community* by Holger Begtrup, Hans Lund, and Peter Manniche. The book was published in 1931 and soon became very popular. Especially in the late 1920s and 1930s several more articles appeared introducing Grundtvig and the Danish people's high school in China with the hope that the Danish education model could help China out of its national, cultural, economic, and socio-political crisis by a reform of the Chinese educational system to establish schools for peasants and a reconstruction of the backward villages.¹¹³¹

In January 1934 Peter Manniche, Principal of the Danish International People's High School at Helsingør, was invited by the Jiangsu Province Institute of Education (江苏省立教育学院) at Wuxi to give four lectures there on "Grundtvig as the Founder of the Danish Folk High School," "The Danish Law of the Land," "The Danish Cooperative Movement," and "Different National Attitudes to Education."¹¹³² He soon became popular and later on he also visited Shanghai, Zouping

¹¹²⁸ 彭匈[Peng Xiong], "杰出教育家雷沛鸿" [The Outstanding Educator Lei Peihong], in 网上南国早报 [Webpage of Moring News of the South] (March 13, 2009). http://ngzb.gxnews.com.cn/html/2009-03/13/content_205138.htm (accessed August 5, 2013).

¹¹²⁹ See 喻本伐 and 方玉[Yu Benfa and Fang Yufen], "中国的格龙维: 雷沛鸿" [Lei Peihong: The Chinese Grundtvig], in 《教育研究与试验》 [Educational Research and Experiment] no. 2 (2010): 66-9.

¹¹³⁰ See Meng Xiancheng, "关于丹麦民众学校的书六种" [Six Books Concerning the Danish People's High School] in 《教育杂志》 [Journal of Education] 1, no 6 (1930): 1-12. The six English books are: Harold W. Foght, *Rural Denmark and its Schools* (1915), Olive Dame Campbell, *The Danish Folk High School* (MacMillan, 1928), H. Begtrup et al., *The Folk High Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community* (Copenhagen, 1926), Knight, *Among the Danes* (North Carolina University Press, 1927), and *The Folk High Schools of Denmark, and Schools: Public and Private in the North of Europe*, Governmental Special Report on Educational Subjects, England, Vol. XVII. The author noted that he had not received the last two yet by the time he wrote the essay. Meanwhile Stig Thøgersen also mentioned two other books that were influential in China. They are Harald Westergaard's *Economic Development in Denmark: Before and During the War*, and Hans Lund's *The Rise of the Danish peasantry*. See Stig Thøgersen, "Grundtvig i Kina," 169-70.

¹¹³¹ It should also be mentioned here that from 1912 to 1950 (with intervals due to the Japanese invasion and occupation especially China's Manchuria area since 1931), the Danish missionaries, such as Johannes Vyff (the founding principal of San Yu School), Anders Aagaard Poulsen (the second principal), Margrethe Aagaard Poulsen and Kaj Johannes Olsen (Estrid Nielsen's father and the third principal of the school), had been working on a Chinese school in the light of the Danish People's High School model. It is named School of San Yu (meaning the training of theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, knowledge of religion and culture) in Antong (the present-day Dandong), a city in Northeast China close to the border of North Korea. The campus life with voluntary morning singing, sports, and agricultural and horticultural courses and work, and students' autonomy and responsibility for food resemble the Grundtvigian people's high schools back in Denmark, according to the description of Estrid Nielsen, child of the Danish missionary and now a writer in Denmark. The Sanyu School develops into today's Liaodong College in Dandong. I am grateful to Sune Nielsen for sending me the Chinese translation of Estrid Nielsen's little writing *A Danish-Chinese School* (En Dansk-Kinesisk Skole). See also Dandong xinwen wang [Dandong News Webpage], <http://dd.nen.com.cn/76576586828087296/20120529/2627786.shtml>, (accessed January 3, 2013).

¹¹³² 石玉昆[Shi Yukun], "丹麦民众高等学校与国际民众学院" [Danish People's High School and the International People's High School] in 《中国教育界》 [Chinese Education] no.8 (1934): 23-8.

County, Jinan, Beijing and other places to give lectures.¹¹³³ Two Danish professors, J.U.S. Balslev (贝尔斯来福) and S. Juul Andersen (安德生), followed up on Manniche's visit and were introduced by him when they gave a 3-day lecture course in Zouping County in September 1934.¹¹³⁴ The famous Chinese intellectual Liang Shuming (梁漱溟)¹¹³⁵ was well-versed in Grundtvig's thought and the Danish educational programs of the people's high schools through reading Meng's translation¹¹³⁶ and in personal discussions with Balslev and Andersen and in Zouping County, Shandong Province on September 26-27, 1934.¹¹³⁷ In 1936 Dai Ziqin (戴子钦) published his translation of Noelle Davies' *Education for Life: A Danish Pioneer* (1931). There were even scholars and officials sent to Denmark by the government to learn about the Danish People's High School and the cooperative movements.¹¹³⁸ After 1937, however, the number of such articles dwindled dramatically, basically two reasons. First of all, China was invaded by Japan from 1937 to 1945 during the Second World War. The miserable life of the peasants hampered the continuation of such people's education projects as in Zou County and other places. Secondly, as Denmark was also occupied by Germany during the Second World War, it may have thwarted the Chinese people's zeal and patience to go on promoting the Danish model of people's education in China, whose effect would be far too slow to meet China's desperate needs under occupation.

However, in recent years and especially since the 1990s¹¹³⁹ Grundtvig has been taken up again by certain scholars in educational circles with articles published in China, including both the mainland and Taiwan.¹¹⁴⁰ The contents of these articles range from Danish adult education, the public library, and vocational education to special education – with more or less reference to Grundtvig. In 1994,

¹¹³³ See also Thøgersen, "Grundtvig i Kina," 180.

¹¹³⁴ "丹麦教育家来院演" [The Visit and Speeches of Danish Educators], in 《乡村建设》 [Village Construction] no 7-8 (1934): 34.

¹¹³⁵ Concerning Liang Shuming and his village construction project in Zouping County, see the Danish Scholar Stig Thøgersen's Book, *A County of Culture: Twentieth-Century China Seen from the Village Schools of Zouping, Shandong* (University of Michigan Press, 2002). His book also provides another important source, i.e, Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and David Strand ed., *Reconstructing Twentieth-Century China: State Control, Civil Society, and National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹¹³⁶ See 梁漱溟 [Liang Shunming], "丹麦的教育与我们的教育：读《丹麦民众学校与农村》" [Danish Education and Our Education: A Review of *The Folk High Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community*], in vol. 7 of *Liang shuming quanji* [Works of Liang Shuming] (Jinan: Shangdong renmin chubanshe, 2005), 654-84.

¹¹³⁷ See Liang Shuming, "与丹麦两教授的谈话" [The Talk with two Danish Professors], in vol. 5 of *Lingshuming quanji* (Jinan: Shangdong renmin chubanshe, 2005), 571-76. See Stig Thøgersen, "Grundtvig i Kina," 180.

¹¹³⁸ For example, in Guangdong Government's Public Report, it reads that Huang Zepu is sent to Denmark for a year to learn about the Danish village adult education. 《广东省政府公报》 [Guangdong Government Report], no. 225 (1934): 90.

¹¹³⁹ So far I have no access to the educational journals in China from 1950s to 1980s. Yet because of the particular political and cultural situations during that period, I doubt that there could be many relevant materials.

¹¹⁴⁰ See 詹栋梁 [Zhan Dongliang], "丹麦与北欧的民众高等学校运动" [The Danish and Nordic People's High School Movement], in 《国立台湾师范大学社会教育学刊》 [Sociological Education Journal of Taiwan National Normal University], no 17 (1988): 119-132. Prof. Zhan in chapter two of his book 《各国社会教育运动》 [The Social Education Movement of Different Countries] of 1991, also introduced the Nordic People's High School movements. See also 许智伟 [Xu Zhiwei], "格龙维与终生学习运动" [Grundtvig and Life-Long Education Movement], http://study.naer.edu.tw/UploadFilePath//dissertation/1019_03_0426.htm. (accessed September 23, 2012). Xu served as professor of education at universities both in Taiwan and abroad. He was also consultant to the President of Taiwan region. He had been in Denmark and learned about the Danish People's High School. See also 方德隆 [Fang Delong], "丹麦的民众高等学校" [The Danish People's High School] in *Gaoxiong Normal University Journal* no. 8 (1997): 25-43. In 1998, there was also a master thesis by 许丽婵 [Xu Lichan] titled 《丹麦高等民众学校之研究》 [The Danish People's High School] at National Chung Cheng University of Taiwan.

there appeared a PhD thesis by Wang Delin (王德林) entitled 《格龙维与丹麦民众高等学校》 (Grundtvig and the Danish People's High School) at Hebei University.¹¹⁴¹ In 2011 and 2012 there were two master theses dealing with the Danish People's High School.¹¹⁴² All this demonstrates that Grundtvig and his People's High School program are very much alive in Chinese academia and still inspirational for Chinese social construction with the aim of life-long education.

From a brief scan of these scholars' bibliographies, however, it is clear that most of their sources are in English or German with only a few Danish originals. Occasionally I also come across minor errors regarding Grundtvig's life and work, especially in the articles of the 1920-30s.¹¹⁴³ Furthermore, since Chinese educationists are more willing to appreciate Grundtvig's *educational* legacy, the most important *theological* roots of Grundtvig's thought on education for life are unfortunately ignored, which renders his educational enterprise purely humanist or secular. This may have something to do with the anti-religion ethos of the 1910-20s in China. Stig Thøgersen also observes that the anti-religious attitude¹¹⁴⁴ stemming from the popular western ethos of science and democracy in China prevents people, especially modern Chinese scholars, from appreciating the positive role of religion in a radical anti-colonial and anti-imperial context. When Liang Shuming, the great Chinese scholar of culture and religion and social reformer, once asked about the religious element in the People's High School during his talk with the two Danish visiting professors in 1934, the answer he got was that the purpose of religion in the Danish People's High School has been changed so as to opt for the development of human potential and the edification of personality.¹¹⁴⁵ Liang Shuming prophetically realized that it was not the educational program itself, but the spiritual awakening behind the people's high school movement that played the pivotal role in reconstructing Danish society in the late 19th century.¹¹⁴⁶ Without a complete and balanced understanding of the relationship between the Christian and the human in Grundtvig's thinking, the Danish People's High School program also risks losing the Christian perspective on the holistic view of human life.¹¹⁴⁷

Based on the reasons mentioned above, I would like to reintroduce Grundtvig as a Christian theologian to China, whose theology can also be of great significance not only for humanist enterprises like the people's high schools, but also for the present-day Chinese churches.

¹¹⁴¹ He later published it with the same title in 1997 by Hebei Education Press.

¹¹⁴² 王晓娟[Wang Xiaojun], 《丹麦民众教育研究》 [A Study of Danish People's Education]. Master thesis, Liaoning Normal University, 2011; 陈钊[Chen Yue], 《丹麦民众高等学校的发展历史及经验研究》 [The Danish People's High Schools: Development and Experience]. Master thesis, Southwest University, 2012.

¹¹⁴³ Another example is that 陈表 [Chen Biao] said that Grundtvig was born in 1782 instead of 1783. See Chen Biao, “丹麦农村成人教育的发展与影响” [The Development and Influence of the Danish Village Adult Education], in 《国力劳动大学月刊》 [Monthly of State Labor University] 1, no. 5 (1930): 4.

¹¹⁴⁴ Stig Thøgersen, “Grundtvig i Kina,” 168.

¹¹⁴⁵ See Liang Shuming, “The Talk with two Danish Professors,” 574.

¹¹⁴⁶ See Liang Shuming, “Danish Education and Our Education,” 655-56. Liang Shuming contends that all the Chinese national, political, economic problems can be summarized as the cultural problem, while the people's education is but the way to “nurture, complement and construct [the Chinese] culture.” See Liang Shuming, “民众教育何以能救中国 (1934)?” [How can People's Education Save China?] in vol.5 of *Liang Shuming quanji*, 486.

¹¹⁴⁷ This also happened in Denmark. For example, there appeared the debate between Poul Engberg and Holger Kjær over the issue of Christian free school in the light of the relationship between the Christian and the human. Concerning their arguments, see Poul Engberg, “Kristen friskole og folkets fællesskab” and “Det folkelige og det kristelige hos Aage Møller,” in *Kristeligt Dagblad* dated on December 13, 1979, and January 23, 1980 respectively. See also Holger Kjær, “Det kristelige, det folkelige og friskolen,” in *Kristeligt Dagblad*, December 27, 1979.