



# N. F. S. Grundtvig: Charismatic Poet and Prophet, Pedagogical Pioneer, and Politician

---

John Dyce\*

*Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College*

## Abstract

The article evaluates the life and work of N. F. S. Grundtvig as a charismatic leader who played and continues to play a highly significant role in shaping the national life of Denmark. Grundtvig was a Lutheran clergyman and an important writer of hymns, songs, and poetry. Though a key figure in Denmark, he was something of an outsider and prophet in his life and work. Through his public speaking, he challenged Denmark in a time of territorial loss, cultural weakness, and constitutional change to define its identity, to find strength, and to develop fresh approaches to its national life. The article considers his personal gifts and circumstances as factors that led to him becoming a towering figure in nineteenth-century Danish society but argues that his polymath nature and consequent engagement across a range of aspects of Danish society enabled his influence to be embedded deeply in the Danish psyche and life.

## Grundtvig: The Dane Who Shaped Denmark

Perhaps only Hans Christian Ørsted, Bertel Thorvaldsen, Hans Christian Andersen, and Søren Kierkegaard ‘constitute the small handful of figures from the “Danish Golden Age” who achieved international and world fame’ (Troelsen 2009:215). Intellectually, Kierkegaard’s reputation dominates the world stage, though not always wholly positively. Malcolm Muggeridge, for example, referred to him, albeit with some affection, as the ‘weirdest’ of Danes (Muggeridge 1976:21). Kierkegaard’s reception was initially limited primarily to Scandinavia and, even there, not strongly received (Evans 2009; Hall 1970); but for a long time his reputation has been an international one with his writings translated into many

\* Dr John Dyce is Principal of the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College. His Ph.D. in adult education was on the application of key ideas of N. F. S. Grundtvig for lay theological education for engagement in the public square. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and an ordained clergyperson. He is currently working on an evaluation of Socratic Dialogue as *vekselvirkning*, a Grundtvigian pedagogical approach and method, and also on an ethno-symbolist examination of Grundtvig’s ‘patriotic’ hymns and songs.

different languages, thus extending his influence beyond Denmark (Stewart 2009). Internationally now, the extent of study of Kierkegaard's writings reflect his own prediction that 'someday, not only my writings but my whole life, all the intriguing mystery of the machine will be studied and studied' (Kierkegaard 1938:224). '[A]round the beginning of the twentieth century he exploded upon the European intellectual scene like a long-delayed time bomb, and his influence since then has been incalculable' (Evans 2009:1).

Yet, my focus here is upon N. F. S. Grundtvig, another Dane who, though a contemporary of Kierkegaard, 'does not share Kierkegaard's extensive international fame, but . . . has had a significance in his own home country which goes far beyond that of Kierkegaard' (Holm 2009:95) – 'the right man, at the right time, in the right place with the right programme' (Wählin 2006:133). Iversen (n.d.:1) refers to Grundtvig as 'the Danish national bard and modern father of the Danish Church and Nation' and Holm (2009:95) to him as 'the matchless giant'. Allowing for the possibility that Grundtvig often considered himself and his thoughts to be 'matchless' (Rørdam 1980), the suggestion that Grundtvig's stature in Denmark and indeed Scandinavia was and is worthy of the description 'matchless' has some justification. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, the Norwegian poet, declared after Grundtvig's death: 'His day was the greatest the Northland had ever seen' (Bjørnson 1915:167). Even Kierkegaard – and there was no warmth between them – could show respect to Grundtvig, though at other times he would refer to Grundtvig and his conversation in less flattering terms (Heiberg, Kuhr, and Torsting 1909–48). 'On one occasion, they came to the gate which was Grundtvig's destination; [Grundtvig] merely raised his hat; Kierkegaard bowed deeply and removed his hat with enormous respect' (Koch 1925:7).

### **Grundtvig's Influence on Danish Society**

Grundtvig belonged to the company of polymaths. His work encompassed at different periods of his long life Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon philology; theology; thinking on education, ideas which would underpin the development of folk high schools; poetry and hymns; Nordic and world history and antiquarianism; preaching and public speaking and much more. In many of the scholarly fields, he achieved distinction. He was prolific – for example, his hymns continue to this day to dominate the hymnbook of the Danish Church (*Den Danske Salmebog* 2003). There was a ubiquitous quality to his presence in Danish society. There were few areas of Danish life that were not touched significantly by Grundtvig's engagement and influence. He was a renowned public speaker and became a member of both houses of the Danish parliament. Though not an educator himself, his thinking on educational institutions and practice for both adults and children came to have a significant influence on educational values, institutions, and practice.

There is a saying: You meet [Grundtvig] at the Danish border (Thaning 1972:16). This first reflects the reality that it is within Denmark that one most readily encounters Grundtvig, though his influence is discernible across Scandinavia, in places of Danish diaspora, and across Europe and the wider world, often through non-formal and informal adult education movements. It reflects a further

reality that, in entering Denmark, one is entering, so to speak, 'Grundtvig territory'. He is all around, though sometimes hidden and unacknowledged. 'Whoever wishes to understand Denmark or the Danes or indeed the Danish legacy in other societies to which Danes have migrated, would do well to study the legacy of Grundtvig' (Bradley 2008a:32). '[I]n a Danish context it is difficult to get around Grundtvig', writes Holm (2009:95), '[e]ven in his own time Grundtvig grew to such a large stature that it was impossible to avoid noticing him'. This was unquestionably true in Grundtvig's own day: 'a kind of cult grew up around Grundtvig in his last years. It was scarcely possible that it should not. The old man after all lived so long that he had become a legend in his own lifetime' (Allchin 1997:88).

Perhaps most of all, however, he and his followers soon shaped fundamental elements in Danish national life and cultural identity – Danishness (*danskhed*), especially the idea of *folkelighed*. This latter term is a rather untranslatable (Christensen 1998), multi-faceted, shifting (Korsgaard 2004b), and complex (Korsgaard 2003) concept, relating to a people's roots, its language, its character, its values, its land, and more. According to one report:

Kaj Thaning wrote that *folkelighed* is 'a Danish word normally applied to that which has a popular, democratic, unassuming quality or character.' Uffe Østergård tells us that it 'refers to enlightened, responsible and tolerant participation in the exercise of power.' Vagn Skovgaard-Petersen has discussed its close connection to the problematic ideal of equality, a connection reflected in the etymology of the word itself. (Asian Human Rights Commission 2001:1)

This strong presence continues still when Grundtvig's thinking and example are clearly present in contemporary debates. By way of recent and perhaps continuing example: the *Jylland Posten* cartoons controversy was permeated, on both sides, by Grundtvigian notions of national identity and culture (*folkelighed*), of freedom (*frihed*), of belief and speech, and of dialogue and interaction (*vekselvirkning*). Different parties to the dialogue, of course, brought starkly different interpretations and applications of Grundtvig's ideas, sometimes with little or no legitimacy. Yet, 'few are the Danish contexts in which Grundtvig has not been invoked by one opinion group or another and few, if any, are the Danes who have held such a position in the modern period in Danish history' (Bradley 2008a:30).

### **Grundtvig and Charisma**

Grundtvig is almost certainly unmatched as *the* charismatic figure in Danish modern times (Borish 1998). It is tempting then to pursue a 'great man' approach to understanding the role of the charismatic. Such a traits approach is notoriously bedevilled, however, by the absence of any clear, unequivocal set of characteristics. Studies such as those by Dow (1969) and Willner (1984) are inconclusive in the search for common personal qualities amongst 'charismatic' leaders. And even the presence or absence of traits may be interpreted rather differently, as for example where the sexual prowess of Sukarno and the celibacy of Gandhi both contributed to their charismatic status. 'What we find instead is that one person's

charismatic leader is not necessarily another's' (Conger 1989:22). Yet, we need not dispense entirely with personal characteristics as part of the story.

Physical appearance can play its part. Human beings are physical beings and respond to the physical presence of one another, no matter how we might try to persuade ourselves that we are detached from such factors. We might contrast the fortunes of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig. A Nordic satirical publication, *Corsaren*, in words and by cartoon, ridiculed Kierkegaard in a sustained attack, making fun of his physical appearance, the uneven length of his trousers, his supposed arrogance, and many other things. Grundtvig was not spared the satirical glance of *Corsaren* but perhaps he was a more imposing figure than his fellow Dane and he had achieved the dignity of old age. Of Grundtvig in his final years, Edmund Gosse wrote:

He looked like a troll from some cave in Norway, he might have been centuries old. From the vast orb of his bald head, very long silky hair, perfectly white, fell over his shoulders and mingled with a long and loose white beard. His eyes flamed under very beetling brows, and they were the only part of his face that seemed alive. (Gosse 2008:330)

The eyes of course are an important part of our communication apparatus, whether consciously or otherwise. Grundtvig was a skilled, though fairly idiosyncratic, oral communicator. He attached immense importance to *det levende ord*, the living word – partly a theological idea, but also an understanding of how we most powerfully engage with one another. 'Few . . . have had a stronger sense of the power of the spoken word as personal communication' (Allen 1949:73). Powerful speakers in charismatic leadership are generally perceived as more potent, more attractive, and more credible (Erickson et al. 1978). In the pulpit, on the street corner, in the lecture room, or on a hillside, Grundtvig presented his argument with energy and conviction, asserting in his *Brevveksling mellem Nørrejylland og Christianshavn*, 'I spoke because I believed' (Grundtvig 2008a:119). Nugent Wade refers to Grundtvig's earnestness, deep conviction, his evident personal feeling, and his holiness (Toldberg 1948). His style was an unwavering one, even though he often revised his opinions and indeed core values at various stages in his long life and was plagued by doubts associated with his manic depressive condition. He was a *tour de force*, 'a living whirlwind' (Borish 1991:17), describing himself as a 'firebrand' and as a 'fire spouting mountain' (Allchin 1997:73). One anonymous contemporary observer wrote: 'I cannot describe how amazed and fascinated I was by the richness of the talk as it came welling out, the clarity which he gave me about the matter, the certainty of conviction that was revealed, the greatness which I had encountered' (ibid.:86, translating Johansen and Høirup 1948). Another recorded the authority of Grundtvig's style of speech: 'I feel as if I can still hear his strange and curious voice, both mild and weighty at the same time' (Trier 1890:12). He could use wit, particularly irony, to good effect. Michelsen refers to his 'admirable eloquence which was often mixed with wit and humour' (Allchin 1997:63, translating Johansen and Høirup 1948).

'[R]hetorical spellbinding and the charismatic affect it can induce are produced less by logic and ideas than by emotional stimuli . . . by the style of verbal

communication' (Willner 1984:152), building solidarity between speaker and listener (Morris 1946:214), through 'language that aligns' (Conger and Kanungo 1998:180). In language, content, imagery, and narrative, the appeal of Grundtvig's speaking and writing was emotional and the heart-felt. The term *hjertelig* – what is of the heart – is in various forms a strongly recurrent theme in Grundtvig's thought. Grundtvig was himself an emotional person. Bondesen, a fellow priest, reported the accounts of Grundtvig's congregation that '[Grundtvig's] sermons were lively and affecting, and he himself was often very intensely moved so that the tears ran down his cheeks' (Bondesen 2008:198).

Language was a key concern of Grundtvig's, and he had a deep love of, and concern for, the Danish *modersmaal*, the mother tongue. The lack of usage of the Danish language in public life and amongst the educated classes was regarded by Grundtvig as a sign of a deeper loss of pride in the nation: 'as for their national language . . . many of them were inclined to be ashamed of it and to look on it as the unpolished speech of an inferior class' (Davies 1944:6–7). It was the fate, Grundtvig wrote, of being cast aside contemptuously, and from that fate Grundtvig himself sought to rescue the mother tongue. Not only did he speak in Danish (in certain circles German was the language used by Danes), he employed the particular language of his region and of its ordinary, agricultural people. '[I] had that *folkelige* language and especially the peasant-speech of Sjælland more readily at my command than any other famous person' (Grundtvig 2008b:145). Though he also employed archaic vocabulary, created neologisms of his own, and used words and images sometimes quite idiosyncratically, he had an ability to speak directly to his listeners. His speeches, sermons, poetry, and hymns were suffused with the natural imagery of Denmark and its countryside, which also resonated strongly with his audience. It was a language that drew him large and eager crowds (Holm 2009:117), addressed particularly to those who were 'Danish-minded'. This expression may seem a little odd to a reader today, but it is sometimes employed in the discussion of Danish history and issues; for example in relation to Slesvig-Holsten with populations that were either 'Danish' or 'German'-minded (Stegmann 1948), or to those who are culturally disposed to Danishness in Greenland (*The Copenhagen Post* 2009), referring to those who are culturally oriented towards the Danish as distinct from another alternative cultural identity. Both the sentiments and the expression of Grundtvig's speaking and preaching were directed at those who were attuned to or open to Danish-mindedness.

The charismatic leader is 'one who can . . . tap the reservoir of relevant myths in his culture and who knows how to draw upon those myths that are linked to sacred figures, to its historical and legendary heroes, and to its historical and legendary ordeals and triumphs' (Willner 1984:62). Steeped in the national myths and folk tales, Grundtvig made good use of story (e.g., in his song *Sol er oppe, skovens toppe – gendigtning af Bjarkemaal* (1817)). The power of those stories with strong and deep cultural roots was deployed in the cause of affirming and shaping national identity, priorities, and values. Hovland et al. (1953) and Sears et al. (1985) amongst others raise the issue of likeability in leadership and its role in charismatic leadership. Grundtvig's personality could be a difficult, dour one. He was by no means an easy person, by temperament and in times of psychological

crisis, and for that reason alone made significant enemies. Grundtvig was impetuous, and volcanic, in constant ferment, always in search of spiritual reality and wholly indifferent to outward appearances (Aaberg 1945:105). He offended church leaders with his probationary sermon. His crossing of Clausen, a contemporary leading churchman and theologian, resulted in him being placed under censorship for much of his life.

The experience of exclusion played a part in shaping Grundtvig and his contributions. He was not, at least sometimes, unaware of his own dogmatism. 'I was at that time', he later acknowledged, 'nothing but an insufferably vain and narrow-minded Pharisee' (ibid.:93). Though we might acquit Grundtvig of personal vindictiveness being his motivation, it is clear that the apparent harshness and strength of his criticism of others and their position offended many, and association with him became a risky activity. He made little concession to the sensibilities of his audience: 'Was it possible that these people could be descendants of the giants whose valour and aggressive spirit had once challenged the greater part of Europe?' (ibid.:103). He castigated the people of his own nation for their lack of concern and their careless celebration in the face of the tragic event of the bombardment of Copenhagen. 'They talked of nothing, but of what they had eaten, worn and amused themselves with yesterday, or what they would eat, wear and amuse themselves with tomorrow' (ibid.).

Clearly, however, there were those audiences to which Grundtvig's message, the content and his ways of expression, appealed. Of a visit of Grundtvig to Kristiania in 1851, it was reported in *Danskeren*:

The students hailed him, the newspapers greeted him, the Norwegian Parliament suspended its sitting so that members might hear him preach; he spoke informally from the top of a tumulus to an open-air gathering in the countryside and formally from the pulpit of Kristiania's cathedral . . . he walked among crowds and talked with individuals both young and old, learned and simple. (Bradley 2008b:147)

In Denmark itself and in the disputed territory of Slesvig, there were listeners who responded positively to Grundtvig's prophetic calls for awakening, repentance, and renewal.

### **Context**

If personal characteristics and communication skills were vital to Grundtvig's charismatic impact, context was also an essential component. Though charisma and crisis are perhaps not necessarily bedfellows (for example, question how far new charismatic entities come into being other than in the context of crisis in the existing social order, but difficulties in addressing the issue arise from differing definitions of both charisma and crisis), charismatic impulses can occur in situations of distress 'whether psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, or political' (Weber 1968 [1925], vol. III:1112), of cultural distortion (Wallace 1956), when there is 'a longing for a leader who offers attractive solutions and visions of the future or [where] charismatic leaders have an easier time promoting a

transformational vision during times of uncertainty, when the status quo appears no longer to function' (Gupta and Krishnan 2004:2). Though the saying 'Cometh the hour, cometh the man' would have us believe otherwise, there is no certainty than crisis always generates charismatic as opposed to non-charismatic solutions (Dow 1969; Marcus 1961).

Some of the crises surrounding Grundtvig were, in part at least, Grundtvig-generated, notably the church controversies. These were highly turbulent times in Danish history (Bradley 2008a). Constitutionally, these were the closing days of the Danish absolute monarchy. Culturally and linguistically, there was a significant degree of Germanification of Denmark and of linguistic, cultural, and political contestation, particularly in the Danish-majority territory within the duchies of Slesvig and Holsten. Geographically, Denmark was suffering the loss of major parts of the Danish realm. Economically, there was a need for modernisation of an economy, which was still based on an old-fashioned agricultural system. Socially, there were political demands for freedom amongst the peasantry. Into that turbulence stepped Grundtvig.

Context, challenge, and leadership came together (Chinoy 1961:247), and Grundtvig both seized and created opportunities in the church and in the wider community. Though in his earlier years he had access to some of the Copenhagen churches, official interdict and fear of being associated with him shut off many pulpits to Grundtvig, but he created alternative locations, developing a form of revivalist meetings (*gudelige Forsamlinger*). In a more secular context, there were meetings of his followers (*vennemøder*) and informal gatherings, such as in sewing circles. Grundtvigian meetings, it was said, were characterised by a joyfulness, incorporating singing, dancing, and dining together (contrasted with the pietistic gatherings reflected in Karen Blixen's *Babettes gæstebud* (Blixen 1952) and Hans Kirk's *Fiskerene* (Kirk 2006)). They were spoken of as strong, gripping, intense and neighbourly (Bobjerg 1927:112). Feeling somewhat excluded from mainstream publications, he developed his own (e.g., the periodical *Danskeren*).

Grundtvig's personal context was also significant. Shifts in life fortunes had a huge impact on him. Under censorship restrictions for many years, marginalised in the life of the Church and psychologically vulnerable, Grundtvig had something of an outsider status, thriving in the face of resistance (Borup 1944) and advocating a counter-culture. As Shils reminds us, however, charismatic leadership is not always directed to changing the status quo (Shils 1958; 1965; 1968), and indeed Grundtvig could be highly reactionary. He was initially far from a democrat (even though his work laid foundations for and facilitated the development of the fledgling democracy of modern Denmark), supporting the continuation of absolute monarchy, though perhaps primarily in the belief that the least powerful sections of the community were better protected by a king than by a 'democracy' dominated by certain sections of Danish society. He did, however, come round to a belief in the new constitution and the folk high schools, and Grundtvigian societies of all kinds and public meetings, as well as some key Grundtvigian ideas, all contributed to supporting and skilling society for its democracy.

Grundtvig is sometimes referred to as a prophet (e.g. Allchin, Jasper, Schjørring, and Stevenson titled their 1993 book on Grundtvig 'Heritage and Prophecy'),

connected to the Old Testament sense. Berger (1963) argues that more recent scholarship questions the place of prophets within society and organised religion in ancient Judah, placing them more centrally and institutionally than marginally, asserting that charismatic leadership occurs within and indeed at the heart of organisations and institutions and not only on the edges or beyond. In reality, of course, Grundtvig was very much both insider and outsider. A major patron was Queen Caroline Amalie, and he was given a stipend by the king ('I was standing . . . idle in the market place that the King . . . on one occasion asked me what I was working upon' (Grundtvig 2008c:133)). He was a member of Parliament and was honoured in a number of other ways. Yet he was also marginalised. Widely disliked in church and other institutions, he was frustrated in his seeking of church appointments and subjected to censorship, and his hymns excluded from worship.

'[The crisis] was not merely the external, physical menace of . . . aggression . . . but a spiritual emergency coincident with, and attendant upon it, which threatened the national character . . . at its foundations. This emergency stemmed in part from [an] internal sickness' (Bright 1960:271, writing of Old Testament prophecy). Grundtvig saw Denmark through such a lens. There had to be an awakening or a re-awakening of what was in the hearts of the people. 'Everywhere I turn my eyes it seems to me I see in the realm of the intellect only sleepwalkers and night-wanderers, skeletons and ghosts' (Grundtvig 2008a:121). '[The] vision's ideals . . . suggest a radical departure from the present, they simultaneously suggest a return to values that are already cherished . . . [linking] these old but important values to future goals in order to heighten their meaningfulness' (Conger 1989:31).

Grundtvig's mission was a traditional nationalist agenda: to summon the nation back to true life, to authentic roots (Smith 1998), to an emotionally meaningful vision (Katz and Kahn 1978), to an ideal. As Conger (1989:29) has written, 'By presenting utopian goals to followers, the leader provides a sense of tremendous challenge and motivation for change'. In the famous expression, there had been 'outer loss' but now there would be 'inner gain'. This phrase is attributed to Mylius Dalgas, an agriculturalist, and was used after the defeat of 1864 as a motto for *Danskeren*, Grundtvig's periodical publication. Its original reference was to the need to compensate for a loss of territory (albeit the territories in question had been linked to Denmark, narrowly understood, through the king's role as duke) in Slesvig, Holsten, and Lauenburg. This was to be achieved principally through a process of moorland reclamation. The phrase, however, came to have a moral and cultural significance that Denmark's *territorial* loss could come to have a good result in terms of the *moral and cultural* strength of the people.

### **From the Charismatic Present to the Embedded Future**

Particularly as he neared the end, the issue became one of how to keep his heritage and his vision alive and active. 'Although the study of leadership has always presumed the existence of followers, their roles were viewed as essentially passive' (Hollander and Offermann 1990:182). Yet the continuance of a group of disciples and followers is self-evidently critical to the maintenance of the mission and to the perpetuation, not only of the memory but also of the cause. This of



course is the perennial challenge of those who would embed their vision in the life of the organisation or indeed nation. According to Weber:

It is usually the wish of the master himself, and always that of his disciples and, even more, of his charismatically led followers to change charisma and the charismatic blessings of his subjects from a once-for-all, extremely transitory free gift of grace belonging to extra-ordinary times and persons into a permanent, everyday possession. (Weber 1978:236).

This led one of Grundtvig's followers to affirm: 'We must strive to make the precious metal he quarried into current coin, even if it therefore becomes necessary to alloy it with copper' (Bradley 2008a:33). Noticeably, the comment affirms the possibility that, while remaining true to the ideals of the leader, the followers have a need, responsibility, and right to make adaptations. The extent of that scope for adaptation is, however, a matter of contestation.

'Out of his vision which others . . . learned to see through his eyes and therefore espoused, Grundtvigianism was born within his own lifetime, and a Grundtvigian viewpoint upon the central departments of Danish national life . . . emerged and endured' (Bradley 2008a:32). There are issues around such an assertion, not least that we cannot too readily assume a coincidence between 'Grundtvigian' ideas in diverse areas of national life (e.g., between 'church' and 'educational' or even within each sector). It is true however that the echoes and resonances of Grundtvig's teachings are clearly discernible across a range of aspects of Danish national life and may indeed be said to permeate much of what it is to be 'Danish'.

This reception and routinisation process was facilitated in a number of ways. Difficult though it can be to establish or even assert with confidence, I believe there is something in the Grundtvigian notion of *folkeånd*, the spirit of a people, and there was that of Grundtvig and his message which spoke deeply to the heart of the Danish people and resonated there. Grundtvig does not adopt a static notion of the folk spirit as a set of fixed national characteristics; he was too aware of the dynamic nature of human living, and his holding together of the personal and the communal in freedom would not admit the straitjacket of identity as 'sameness' (Smith 1991). Yet, he believed, there were characteristics of a people that were deeply rooted in its history and its ancient myths and which were part of a nation's being, albeit that there were times when this spirit had to be reawakened and revitalised. They were expressions of the national identity at its best (though he was acutely aware that the same traits could be deployed destructively). This spirit was intimately connected to language, particularly through its expression in the poetry but also everyday speech of the people (Andersen 2003). It was also intimately connected to Grundtvig's thinking on love and the heart. Love of *danskhed* was both a cherishing of what is true and an aspiration to what might be. Grundtvig's message sought to connect with the heart as well as the head. Trier and others testified that Grundtvig's speaking brought about a *forklaring*, a Danish/Grundtvigian term that speaks of clarification but also of transfiguration:

It was as if he took a veil away from my eyes . . . I had never seen things in that light before. It became so clear for me . . . While he talked . . . it was as if

I came home to myself. The most beautiful dream of my youth had been brought to life again. I finally knew what it was I had to take hold of. (Trier 1890:12)

Grundtvig left an immense legacy to the church and nation of a huge quantity of hymns and songs, including ‘national’ songs (Kuhn 1990), sung on all kinds of occasions, public and private, through which his ideas and language are perpetuated. Many Grundtvigian phrases have entered the everyday speech of the Danish people, expressing and affirming key ideas and values.

The impact capacity of Grundtvigian ideas was extended by a remarkable breadth in Grundtvig’s interests, understanding, and concerns, which contributed to his influence becoming embedded in a vast range of organisations (Wåhlin 2006), thus enabling his ideas (or applications and adaptations of them) to move from the temporary charismatic personal to the more permanent and embedded institutional. In education, a major channel has of course been the folk high school movement, but Grundtvigianism has shaped other forms of child and adult education on a voluntary or free model with a primary focus on ‘education for life’ (Bodenstein 1982). The establishment of *valgmenighed* (elective congregations within the national church rooted in Grundtvigian ideas), his emphasis on freedom of religious thought and practice, and his assertion of ‘first a human being and then a Christian’ (*Menneske først*) have contributed to shaping religious institutional life and practice as well as theological ideas. Economically, the followers of Grundtvig were active in the creation of a host of agricultural, cooperative, and land development organisations. Politically, Grundtvigians were particularly associated with the Liberal party (*Venstre*) but his influence can also be discerned in the historic development of the Social Democrats, and few major political controversies would be free of appeals, from various and conflicting sides, to Grundtvigian ideas, not least for legitimation. A host of social and cultural organisations – for physical education, leisure hobbies, and public speaking – grew up around the work of Grundtvigians (Eichberg 2006) and became vehicles for his influence.

Without detracting from the general conclusion that these were channels of Grundtvigian embedding in Danish society, it is right to note some caveats. It is possible to exaggerate or even mis-identify the role of Grundtvig and his followers in the creation of these organisations (Korsgaard and Wiborg 2006). Not all those institutions that were Grundtvig-inspired remained true to Grundtvig’s principles and values, and sometimes departed significantly from them (for example, the influence of Christen Kold on the folk high schools – Bjerg 1994; Lyby 2004). We need to distinguish the presence of Grundtvigian influence from the appropriation of themes, such as national identity and Danishness, in ways that are alien to Grundtvig’s thought as a whole.

Periodically, there has been re-introduction and revitalisation often by other charismatic figures, such as Koch and Lindhart (Eichberg 2006). One must be careful about suggesting a timelessness to ideas that are often quite strongly linked to their historical context. Grundtvig himself resisted any notion that there was available to human beings a universal truth – our perception of truth emerges from

interplay (*vekselvirkning*) of understandings of truth rooted in life experience (Korsgaard 2004a). Yet there was also interplay between particular life and human life in general. Across the generations, Danes have found Grundtvig speaking not only historically in and to his own time, but also of deeper, abiding truths and values of human existence.

We do indeed meet Grundtvig still at the border, with his influence strong, though perhaps more often now than before hidden and unacknowledged. In the words of Bjørnson (1915:166):

Visions unfolding like sun-clouds, when o'er  
Sea-circled lands they are riding,  
Northern lands' future, till time is no more,  
Ever guiding.

### References

- Aaberg, J.C. 1945. *Hymns and Hymnwriters of Denmark*. Des Moines, IA: Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Allchin, A.M. 1997. *N.F.S. Grundtvig: An Introduction to His Life and Work*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.
- Allchin, A.M., D. Jasper, J.H. Schjørring, and K. Stevenson, eds. 1993. *Heritage and Prophecy: Grundtvig and the English-Speaking World*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Allen, E.L. 1949. *Bishop Grundtvig: A Prophet of the North*. London: James Clarke & Co.
- Andersen, Balder Mørk. 2003. 'Grundtvigs folkelighedsbegreb'. *Grundtvig Studier*: 65–87.
- Asian Human Rights Commission. 2001. 'The Concept of *Folkelighed*'. *Asia Folk School Online*, 19 September. Available at: <http://afs.ahrchk.net/mainfile.php/background/11/> (accessed 27 September 2006).
- Berger, Peter L. 1963. 'Charisma and Religious Innovation: The Social Location of Israelite Prophecy'. *American Sociological Review* 28 (6): 940–50.
- Bjerg, Jens. 1994. 'Christen Mikkelsen Kold'. *Prospects – The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* 24 (1/2): 21–35.
- Bjørnson, Bjørnstjerne. 1915. *Poems and Songs by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson*. Trans. Arthur Hubbell Palmer. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation; London: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press.
- Blixen, Karen. 1952. *Babettes gæstebud*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Bobjerg, A. 1927. *Det Grundtvigske Livsrøre i Silkeborg-Egnen*. Copenhagen: Gads.
- Bodenstein, E. 1982. *Skolefrihed in Dänemark*. Tønder: Flensburg Paedag Hochschule.
- Bondesen, Nicolai. 2008. 'Minde om Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvigs Præstegjerning i Aaret 1821'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Borish, Steven M. 1991. *The Land of the Living: The Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's Non-Violent Path to Modernization*. Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing.
- Borish, Steven M. 1998. 'N.F.S. Grundtvig as Charismatic Prophet: An Analysis of His Life and Work in the Light of Revitalization-Movement Theory'. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 42 (3): 237–56.
- Borup, J. 1944. *NFS Grundtvig*. Copenhagen: CA Reitzels Forlag.

- Bradley, S.A.J. 2008a. 'Introduction'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Bradley, S.A.J. 2008b. 'The Visit to Norway 1851'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Bright, John. 1960. *A History of Israel*. London: SCM Press.
- Chinoy, Ely. 1961. *Society*. New York: Random House.
- Christensen, Bent. 1998. *Omkring Grundtvigs Vidskab*. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag.
- Conger, Jay A. 1989. *The Charismatic Leader: Behind the Mystique of Exceptional Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Conger, Jay A. and Rabindra N. Kanungo. 1998. *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations*. London: Sage Publications.
- The Copenhagen Post*. 2009. 'No Apology from Denmark'. 20 August. Available at: <http://cphpost.dk/news/international/89-international/46619-no-apology-from-denmark.html> (accessed 6 May 2010).
- Davies, Noelle. 1944. *Grundtvig of Denmark: A Guide to Small Nations*. Caernarfon: Swyddfa'r Blarid.
- Den Danske Salmebog*. 2003. Copenhagen: Det Kongelig Vajsenhus.
- Dow, Thomas E., Jr. 1969. 'The Theory of Charisma'. *Sociological Quarterly* 10 (3): 306–18.
- Eichberg, Henning. 2006. 'The Physical Culture Academy: People's Education through Sport in Denmark'. *Grundtvig Studier*: 188–209.
- Erickson, Bonnie, E. Allan Lind, Bruce C. Johnson, and William M. O'Barr. 1978. 'Speech Style and Impression Formation in a Court Setting: The Effects of "Powerful" and "Powerless" Speech'. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 14 (3): 266–79.
- Evans, C. Stephen. 2009. *Kierkegaard: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gosse, Edmund 2008. 'Two Visits to Denmark, 1872, 1874'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Grundtvig, N.F.S. 2008a. 'Brevveksling mellem Nørrejylland og Christianshavn, 1823–24'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Grundtvig, N.F.S. 2008b. 'Danskeren, 1848'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Grundtvig, N.F.S. 2008c. 'Introduction to Phenix-Fuglen'. In *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled: An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. and ed. S.A.J. Bradley. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Gupta, Varun and Venkat R. Krishnan. 2004. 'Impact of Socialization on Transformational Leadership: Role of Leader Member Exchange'. *South Asian Journal of Management* (July–September). Available at: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa5483/is\\_200407/ai\\_n21363249/pg\\_2/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5483/is_200407/ai_n21363249/pg_2/) (accessed 19 January 2011).
- Hall, Thor. 1970. 'Theological Table-Talk'. *Theology Today* 27 (1): 71–80.
- Heiberg, P.A., V. Kuhr, and E. Torsting, eds. 1909–48. *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer VI B 8, 3*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel.
- Hollander, Edwin P. and Lynn R. Offermann. 1990. 'Power and Leadership in Organizations: Relationships in Transition'. *American Psychologist* 45 (2): 179–89.

- Holm, Anders. 2009. 'Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig: The Matchless Giant'. Trans. Jon Stewart. In *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries. Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, ed. Jon Stewart. Vol. 7. Tome II: Theology. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley. 1953. *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Iversen, Hans Raun. n.d. 'Poverty and Churches in Denmark'. Available at: [http://www.ikstudiecenter.dk/undersider/litteratur/pdf/97\\_Poverty%20and%20Churches%20in%20Denmark.pdf](http://www.ikstudiecenter.dk/undersider/litteratur/pdf/97_Poverty%20and%20Churches%20in%20Denmark.pdf) (accessed 10 December 2010).
- Johansen, Steen and Henning Høirup. 1948. *Grundtvigs Erindringer og Erindringer om Grundtvig*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Katz, Daniel and Robert L. Kahn. 1978. *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. 2nd ed. New York: Wiley.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. 1938. *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard: A Selection*. Ed. and trans. Alexander Dru. London: Oxford University Press. [Entry for 20 November 1847].
- Kirk, Hans. 2006. *Fiskerne*. 6th ed. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Koch, Carl. 1925. *Grundtvigske Toner*. Copenhagen: Schönbergsske Forlag.
- Korsgaard, Ove. 2003. 'Folkelighed Versus Multikulturalisme'. In *At Være Muslim i Danmark*, ed. Lise Paulsen Galal and Inge Liengaard. Copenhagen: Forlaget Anis.
- Korsgaard, Ove. 2004a. 'Fra tugtemester til skolemeseter: Om forskelle mellem Luther og Grundtvig' [From Castigator To Schoolmaster: On Differences between Luther and Grundtvig]. *Grundtvig Studier*: 34–61.
- Korsgaard, Ove. 2004b. *Kampen Om Folket: Et Dannelsesperspektiv på Dansk Historie gennem 500 År*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Korsgaard, Ove and Susanne Wiborg. 2006. 'Grundtvig – the Key to Danish Education?'. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 50 (3): 361–82.
- Kuhn, Hans. 1990. *Defining a Nation in Song: Danish Patriotic Songs in Songbooks of the Period, 1832–1870*. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag.
- Lyby, T. 2004. 'Grundtvigs Dannelsesbegreb Mellem National Dannelse og Erhversorienteret Uddannelse'. *Grundtvig Studier*: 62–82.
- Marcus, John T. 1961. 'Transcendence and Charisma'. *The Western Political Quarterly* 14 (1): 236–41.
- Morris, Charles W. 1946. *Signs, Language and Behavior*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Muggeridge, Malcolm. 1976. *A Third Testament: A Modern Pilgrim Explores the Spiritual Wanderings of Augustine, Blake, Pascal, Tolstoy, Bonhoeffer, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Rørdam, Thomas. 1980. *The Danish Folk High Schools*. Trans. Alison Borch-Johansen. 2nd ed. Copenhagen: Det Danske Selskab.
- Sears, David O., Jonathan L. Freedman, and Letitia Anne Peplau. 1985. *Social Psychology*. 5th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Shils, Edward. 1958. 'The Concentration and Dispersion of Charisma: Their Bearing on Economic Policy in Underdeveloped Countries'. *World Politics* 11 (1): 1–19.
- Shils, Edward. 1965. 'Charisma, Order, and Status'. *American Sociological Review* 30 (2): 199–213.
- Shils, Edward. 1968. 'Charisma'. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills. Vol. 2. London: Macmillan.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1991. *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

- Smith, Anthony D. 1998. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. London: Routledge.
- Stegmann, H. 1948. 'South Slesvig'. *Scottish Geographical Journal* 64 (1): 9–15.
- Stewart, Jon, ed. 2009. Kierkegaard's *International Reception*. *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*. Vol. 8. Tome I: *Northern and Western Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Thaning, Kaj. 1972. *N.F.S. Grundtvig*. Trans. David Hohnen. Copenhagen: Det Danske Selskab.
- Toldberg, H. 1948. 'Nugent Wade i Helsingør'. *Grundtvig Studier*: 48.
- Trier, Ernst. 1890. *Femogtyve Års Skolevirksomhed i Vallekilde*. Copenhagen: August Bangs Boghandel.
- Troelsen, Bjarne. 2009. 'Hans Christian Ørsted: Søren Kierkegaard and *The Spirit in Nature*'. Trans. Jon Stewart. In *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*. *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, ed. Jon Stewart. Vol. 7. Tome I: *Philosophy, Politics and Social Theory*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Wählin, Vagn. 2006. 'Popular, Religious and Social Movements: Recent Research Approaches and Qualitative Interpretations of a Complex of Historical Problems'. *Grundtvig Studier*: 132–87.
- Wallace, Anthony F.C. 1956. 'Revitalization Movements'. *American Anthropologist* 58 (2): 264–81.
- Weber, Max. 1968 [1925]. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Trans. Ephraim Fischhoff, et al. New York: Bedminster Press.
- Weber, Max. 1978. 'The Nature of Charismatic Domination'. Trans. Eric Matthews. In *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W.G. Runciman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Willner, Ann Ruth. 1984. *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.