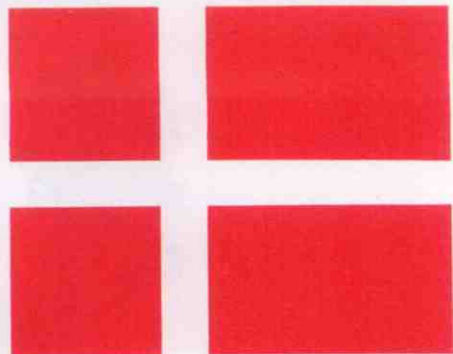


# Factsheet Denmark



## N. F. S. Grundtvig



Udby Vicarage, south Sealand, Grundtvig was born here on 8 September 1783, and he lived here in his early childhood. He returned later to serve as curate to his father, the minister Johan Grundtvig, from 1811 to 1813. Today some of the rooms in the vicarage are furnished with memorials of Grundtvig, which interested visitors may inspect. – Above: Grundtvig at the age of 36 painted by C. F. Christensen in July 1820. At one time the picture belonged to Grundtvig himself and hung in his home. In 1822 the painting was used as the design for an engraving that people in Copenhagen could buy at the time when Grundtvig was appointed curate at Our Saviour's Church. This took place on the first Sunday in Advent 1822. One of the shops where the engraving was on sale was Gyldendal's bookstore, where it could be bought for three Mark.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Danish cultural life was enriched by the emergence of two personalities who are still world-famous today: the philosopher *Søren Kierkegaard* (1813-55) and the writer *Hans Christian Andersen* (1805-75). Denmark also produced notable names in the history of natural science. But the personality who probably exerted the most marked influence on Danish society during that period and who has continued to affect Denmark to this day is not widely known internationally: he was the cleric, historian, educator and writer *Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig* (1783-1872).

It is remarkable that four titles are necessary to describe this pioneer figure. He achieved so much that many people have thought him to be an aberrant visionary. He passed through so many phases that for over a hundred years scholars have been debating when he was most truly himself.

It has to be admitted that Grundtvig himself gave the scholars one paradoxical signpost after another: no-one has emphasised more strongly than he that the spoken language, the *oral form*, is the only really effective means of that *communication* between human beings that brings us our most vital experiences; but that did not hinder him from becoming the most productive writer yet on Danish history. More than any other it was he who gave impetus to popular movements and motivated thousands of momentous meetings all over the country; but he himself was an extremely studious man who was really happiest when he was at his desk.

When all is said and done, the whole of his life and fortunes present a huge paradox: during World War II and at other crucial times Grundtvig's hymns and songs have proved to be a vital means of support for the Danish people; but in his lifetime he experienced a

reaction to his hymns that grew to be such a bone of contention that in 1826 he retired from the ministry because he was forbidden to use them at church services.

But let us try to find some explanation for these paradoxes.

### Ceaselessly involved

When Grundtvig was born into a clerical family in 1783 Denmark was a country that had been an absolute monarchy for over a century, a country without any big towns apart from Copenhagen, and with a population consisting chiefly of poor peasants without rights, who could neither read nor write. When Grundtvig died as an honoured and esteemed man in 1872 the country, according to the standards of the day, was very democratic with free election to the *Rigsdag*, a country with rapidly growing towns and the beginning of industrial development, but still



N. F. S. Grundtvig

#### N. F. S. GRUNDTVIG: LIFE

1783. Birth of Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig on 8 September at Udby Vicarage, south Sealand.

1792. After several years' home tuition Grundtvig is sent away to be tutored by Pastor Laurids Feld at Tyregod near Vejle, east Jutland.

1798. At Århus Grammar School.

1800. Passes university entrance examination at Århus. In the autumn enrolls for the theology course at Copenhagen University.

1803. First class degree in theology.

1805. Goes to Langeland in March to become house-tutor at Egeløkke Manor. His stay here has a profound effect on Grundtvig's development, but perhaps in particular because a sentimental attachment to the young lady of the manor, Constance Steensen de Leth (1777-1827), opens the young house-tutor's eyes to Romanticism and brings him to reject his hitherto Rationalistic view of life.

1808. Returns to Copenhagen in April to write and to study mythology. Given rent-free accommodation at Valkendorf College.

1810. Grundtvig's father urges him to become curate at Udby. Grundtvig preaches his probational sermon, in which he accuses the clergy of the time of lack of Christianity, and when he has it printed, six Copenhagen clerics complain to the University about the contents of the sermon. Late in the year Grundtvig suffers his first serious attack of manic depression.

1811. In January is reprimanded by the University for his probational sermon. Passes final catechetical test and is installed to his father at Udby in May. Announces engagement to Lise Blicher (1787-1851) in September.

1813. Death of Grundtvig's father. No possibility of remaining at Udby. Returns to Copenhagen as non-affiliated preacher and writer.

1815. Before Christmas resolves not to preach again until he gets his own living. Henceforth earns his living solely by writing.

1818. Is awarded a grant by the King as an appreciation of his translations of Old Norse myths and sagas, linguistic masterpieces. Lise and Grundtvig are married on 12 August.

1821. Inducted as parish priest of Præstø, 80 km south of Copenhagen.

1822. Birth of first son Johan. In the autumn Grundtvig is appointed curate of Our Saviour's Church, Copenhagen.

1824. Second son Svend is born.

1825. Heated public discussion in consequence of an attack by Grundtvig on the rationalist, Professor H. N. Clausen. The professor brings an action for slander against Grundtvig.

1826. In protest against not being permitted to use his own hymns for a Whitsunday festival service, Grundtvig resigns from his priestly office. On 30 October judgement is pronounced in the slander case: Grundtvig's criticism of Professor Clausen is de-

clared groundless, he is ordered to pay 1,000 *Rigsdaler* in costs and fine. He is also subjected to censorship. He is again obliged to live by his pen.

1827. Birth of daughter Meta.

1829. First visit to England to study Old English manuscripts. Made possible by a grant from the King.

1830. Second study tour to England.

1831. Third study tour to England.

1832. Is given permission to preach at Evensong in Frederik's Church, Copenhagen.

1837. Censorship order revoked.

1838. Delivers course of lectures on the history of the previous half century, *Mands Minde* (Within Living Memory), at Borch College, Copenhagen.

1839. On 9 June is inducted as minister at Vartov, an institution for elderly women in Copenhagen.

1843. Stay in England on a grant from the Queen.

1844. Suffers another attack of manic depression in the spring. On 4 July speaks at a large outdoor meeting at Skamlingsbanken near Kolding, southeast Jutland.

1848. At Præstø Grundtvig is elected member of the constituent national assembly.

1849. On 4 December is elected member for the Præstø constituency in the *Folketing*.

1851. Death of Grundtvig's wife on 14 January. He remarries on 25 October, this time the 38-year-old widow Marie Toft (1813-54) of Rønnebæksholm, a manor farm near Næstved in south Sealand.

1852. Grundtvig does not stand in the election and thus relinquishes his seat in the *Rigsdag*.

1853. Elected again to the *Folketing* in the election on 13 January, but loses his seat in a new election only four months later. Third manic depressive attack. For his 70th birthday in September he is presented with a substantial sum of money with which to found a high school.

1854. Birth of son Frederik. Grundtvig stands in the election in June and again takes his seat in the *Rigsdag*. Death of his wife Marie on 9 July.

1856. Inauguration of Grundtvig's high school at Marielyst on 3 November.

1857. Takes part in the great Scandinavian synod in Copenhagen. Retires from the *Rigsdag* in the election on 22 December.

1858. Marries 32-year-old Asta Reedtz (1826-90), a widow, on 14 April.

1860. Birth of daughter Asta.

1861. Grundtvig is enthusiastically feted on 29 May, the fiftieth jubilee of his entry into the ministry, and is granted the title of bishop by the King.

1863. The first *fellowship meeting* is held on Grundtvig's 80th birthday. These annual meetings continued after his death.

1865. Grundtvig speaks at a big meeting for people from Schleswig in Dyrehaven (Deer Park) near Copenhagen.

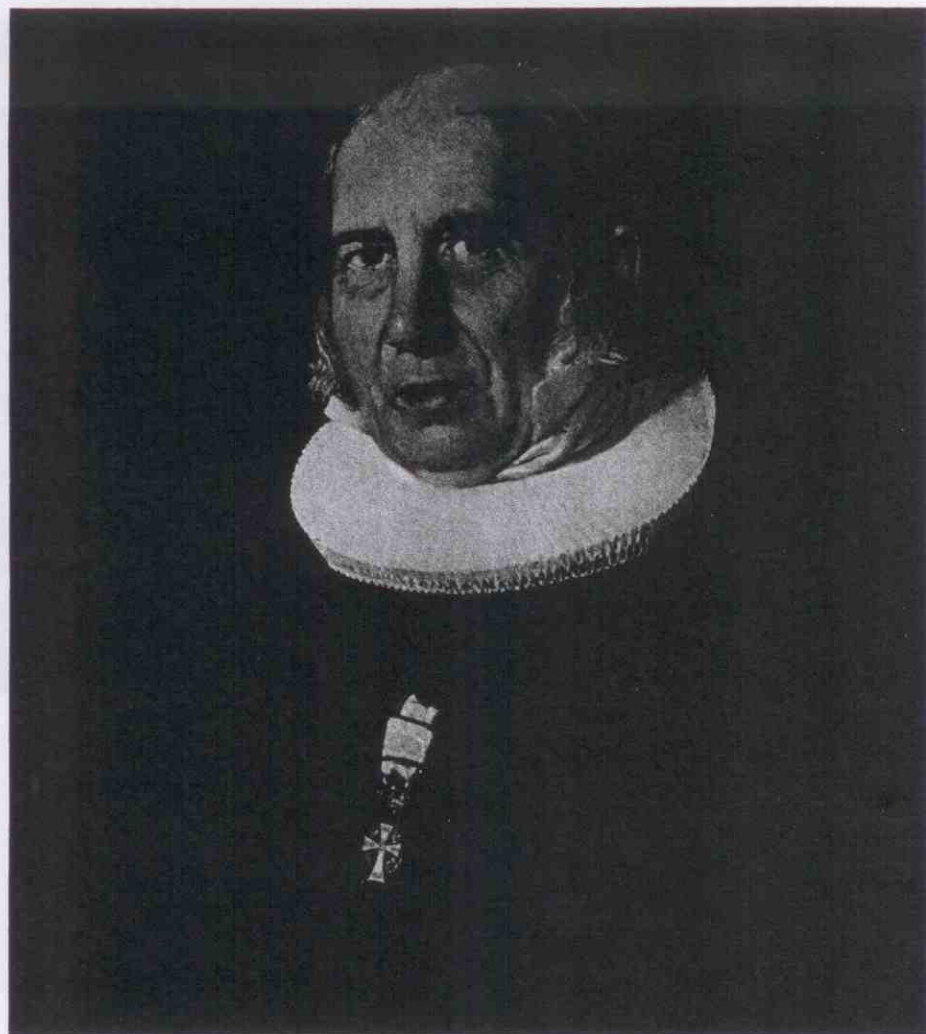
1866. Elected to the *Landsting* in order to be able to participate in the debate on a new constitution.

1867. Is assailed by a new, extremely severe attack of manic depression at Easter. Grundtvig is relieved of his work as a priest for over six months on account of his illness.

1871. Participates enthusiastically in the Scandinavian synod in Copenhagen.

1872. On 1 September Grundtvig celebrates the church service that is to be his last. The following day he dies, barely a week before his 89th birthday. After a magnificent funeral ceremony in Our Saviour's Church on 11 September, Grundtvig is buried according to his own wishes outside Køge, 40 km south of Copenhagen, beside his second wife Marie.

Grundtvig in 1843 painted by C. A. Jensen. The picture was exhibited at Charlottenborg, later on copies were made of it and hung in both Skovby Church, near Bogense, on Funen, and in Our Saviour's Church, Copenhagen. The picture shows Grundtvig just before his sixtieth birthday. His face bears the marks of the many struggles he has been through. But it is also a Grundtvig who has been minister of Vartov for four years now; who can wear the Knight's Cross on his canonicals; and who has just completed the third and final volume of his *Haandbog i Verdens-Historie* (*Manual of World History*).

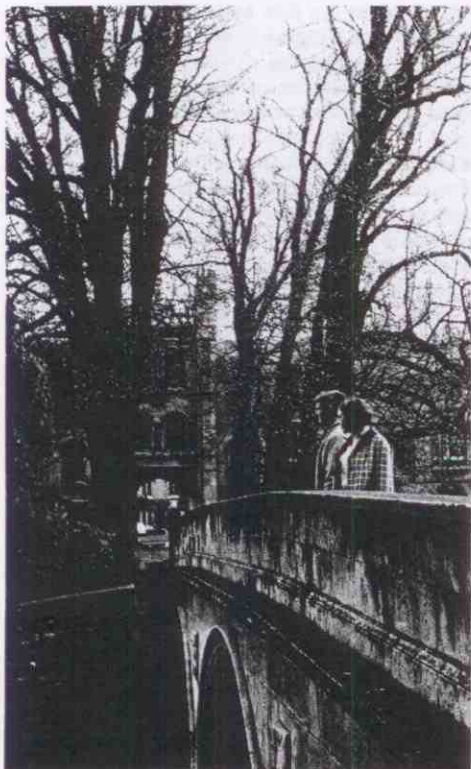


a society most of whose members lived in the country.

It so happened that it was during Grundtvig's childhood years that major upheavals began to gather momentum, when the events in Europe also affected the absolutist kingdom of Denmark. The most significant consequences were a series of agrarian reforms, of which the most important was the abolition of adscription in 1788.\* The repeal brought an enormous increase in personal freedom to the majority of the people and was soon followed by substantially improved financial prospects for the growing class of independent farmers.

The political reforms were accompanied by improvements in the sphere of enlightenment and education. Thus in 1793 the Royal Library was made open to the public, but the most important development proved to be the King's establishment of a substantial education committee in 1789. After many years of deliberation the work resulted in the introduction in 1814 of laws for obligatory school education. This legislation signified that it was now the aim of the state to ensure that all its subjects, regardless of class or geographical situation, should learn to read, write and calculate and to be taught the rudimentary principles of Christianity.

\* Adscription: statutory enactment of 1733, forbidding the male members of the population to move away from the estate where they were born without permission from the landowner. The age limits were originally 14-36 but later extended to 4-40. This secured a cheap labour force for the landowners during the prevailing agricultural crisis.



These reforms stand as monuments to the Age of Enlightenment with its enthusiasm for reason, but even before, for instance, the educational reforms came into operation, the intellectual climate was undergoing a marked change: Romanticism came as a surge of inspiration from Germany as early as the very first years of the nineteenth century – but far into the century the ideas of enlightenment continued to be important elements of the growing popular movement's battle to break the hold of what has been called *mental serfdom*.

Thus in Grundtvig's lifetime the population moved from being an ignorant peasantry forced to comply with the orders of the rich and the educated to an alert and involved people who were able to an increasing extent to hold their own opinion and have that opinion respected.

But if the people had gained much more power, geographically, on the other hand, the country had greatly diminished: at the Vienna Congress in 1814 the resolution was passed that Norway, ruled by the Danish crown for more than four centuries past, should unite

with Sweden; and after a war in 1864 Denmark lost Schleswig and Holstein to the kingdom of Germany, whose strength was increasing under Bismarck.

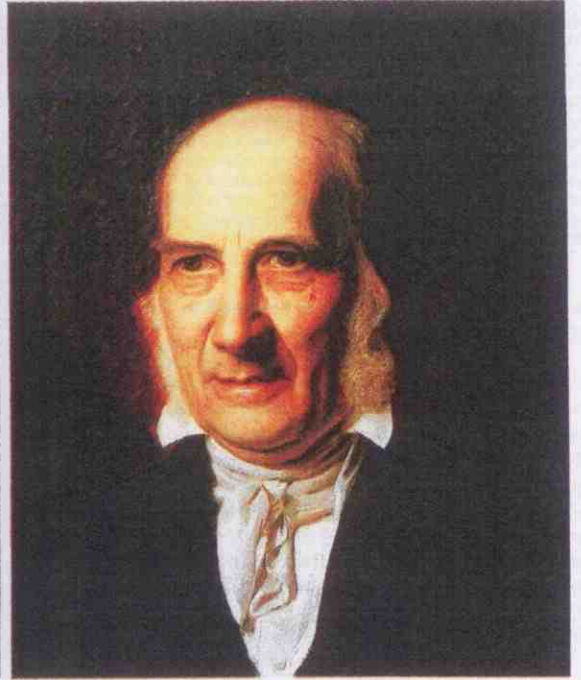
Grundtvig involved himself ceaselessly in all the changes with an energy that was to be of decisive importance. It was natural for him to follow in his father's footsteps and become a clergyman, but it was never enough for Grundtvig to work for the church. He was so deeply involved in his time that he had to take an active part: if Denmark were to emerge safely from all the vicissitudes it was vital to realise what was held in common by all Danes, what it was that kept the people together and conscious of themselves.

#### The Danish genius

In Grundtvig's opinion, history was the drama in which we can find the knowledge of what it is that we have in common as a people. It is through history that the Danes can apprehend what is especially Danish, the Swedes what is especially Swedish, the Germans what is especially German – and so on. Grundtvig was a universal historian. He believed that God had given every separate nation a particular role to play in the whole work of creation. Grundtvig's idea of the task of the Danish people within this comprehensive vision has been important in aiding the Danes to understand themselves.

Grundtvig several times used the expression that the Danes were God's Little Ones (*Vor-Herres lille Hjerte-Folk*), by which he meant that it was the Danes' mission to

Trinity College, Cambridge, photographed from Trinity bridge over the River Cam. On his third trip to England, in the summer of 1831, Grundtvig spent a week or two in Cambridge in June. To Grundtvig his stay at Trinity College was the highlight of all his experiences during his three summer visits to England, and was of practical value through his visions of what life could be like at a boarding establishment transferred to Danish conditions.



Two very different representations of Grundtvig, but which were both executed by Constantin Hansen. The pencil drawing is from 1846 and is one of a series of drawings of Danish writers that Hansen made for his own amusement. Grundtvig is riding his snorting Pegasus which naturally enough is figured as Odin's eight-legged horse from Norse mythology, Sleipner. The horse is pounding the ground with his forelegs, while with his hindlegs he is kicking out at two of Grundtvig's pet aversions: German and Latin, the two languages that informed social circles cultivated so assiduously that their Danish mother tongue was held in contempt. — Constantin Hansen painted the portrait during the winter of 1847-48, and later he also repeated it in a wax engraving. In 1863 he repeated it yet again. The portrait appears in Hansen's large-scale painting of the National Constitutional Assembly, executed in 1860-64. Hansen's satisfaction with this portrait may be due to the fact that he had Grundtvig's own word for the true likeness of the picture. At all events, on 20 April 1848 Constantin Hansen writes in a letter to a friend: After church Magdalene and I went to call on the Grundtvigs. I took his portrait along, and it met with general approval.

show how much can be achieved through loving kindness in this world! Grundtvig was completely convinced that his love for the Danes and everything Danish was overwhelming. On the other hand he also thought that one of the Danes' worst failings was their exaggerated enthusiasm for everything new from abroad, while semi-apologetically despising their own.

Phrased thus briefly Grundtvig's view may perhaps seem back-handed. But imbibed by the people through his hymns and songs Grundtvig's vision became a part of the Danes' cultural heritage in such words as: We were not created for grandeur and storm, / It serves us best to the earth to hold firm (*Vi er ikke skabte til højhed og blæst, / ved jorden at blive det tjener os bedst*), or: If our mother tongue does not strike home to a T, / Yet it melts the heart more than foreign tongues may (*Træffer vort modersmål ej på et hår, / det smelter dog mere, end fremmedes slår*).

Another area of Grundtvig's historical work that has exerted influence is his studies of myth. From the scholarly viewpoint his mythology of 1808 is considered to be the most important, but the most popular work was the mythology of 1832. It was with this book that Grundtvig came to the conclusion

that the ancient myths can be of direct use. For they witness to that which links modern Danes with ancient; what, as it were, they have in common with their forebears right back to times before the introduction of Christianity.

Grundtvig used a special expression, *Sindbilled-Sprog* (Symbol-language), to describe what is characteristic of the Danes and the other Scandinavians for all time. At times this view has been adopted by a number of folk high school leaders, and this brings us to another aspect of Grundtvig's many-sided achievement.

#### The folk high school

As can be seen in the chronology of Grundtvig's life, his career followed a very tortuous path. For over the first fifty years of his life he frequently changed posts. Not until he became pastor of Vartov at the age of 55 did he settle into a position that he filled for the remainder of his life.

During the preceding decades he had only periodically carried out his priestly function, and then other activities played a secondary role. Conversely, during the periods when he was without a clerical post he concentrated not only on historical studies but was also energetically concerned with the necessity to procure education for the people. This aspect of his work was especially intense in the 1830s, when Denmark took the first steps toward democracy and the King introduced in 1831 advisory assemblies of the estates of the realm: representatives of the nobility, the clergy, the commonage and the peasantry were to assemble at four different places in Denmark every other year to present their advice to the King.

If this experiment went well — not least for the peasants, who were still receiving only rudimentary education — a new kind of popular education would be necessary, said Grundtvig. It was just at this time that he discovered a far more straightforward and committed type of instruction at the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge than the kind he was familiar with at Copenhagen.

It was through this interplay of national needs and English inspiration that Grundtvig's

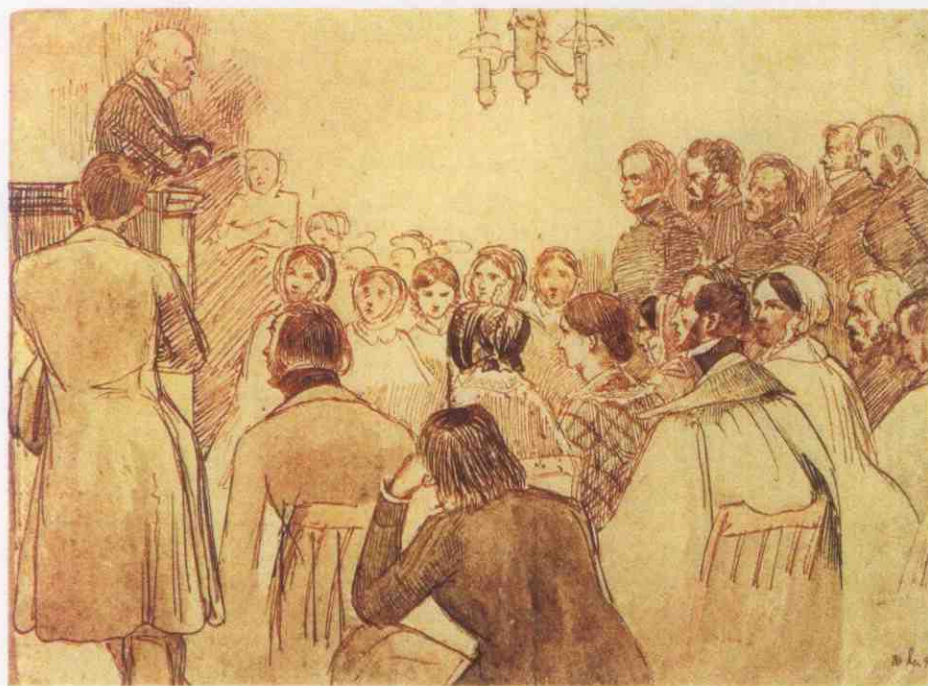
ideas for a *folk high school* took shape. He formulated this plan in a series of writings throughout the thirties and forties, and he became especially engrossed with the idea that the state ought to establish a high school at Sorø, southwest of Copenhagen.

However, nothing was to come of this. The state has never established any folk high school. But since 1851 the state has, on the other hand, provided support for many folk high schools instituted by private groups to be run all over Denmark, and since 1869 it has provided grants-in-aid for the students' payment for their stay at a folk high school. The first high school was set up in 1844 at Rødding in North Schleswig, and it was the increasing tension there at that time between Danes and Germans that resulted in Grundtvig's idea being tried out for the first time in that particular area.

Students at the folk high school are committed to exploring what we have in common as human beings. But the very fact that it is *mutual* precludes its inclusion in an educational structure in which the teacher is elevated above the pupil and knows all the answers. Each individual pupil has a human life in as full measure as the teacher, a life that is unique and at the same time a part of the great fellowship of the people. Therefore in a high school there cannot be examinations or tests, either before entry to the school or at the end of one's stay. Grundtvig was convinced that curiosity and the desire to learn are the only forms of motivation of any value, and they can only develop in freedom. You cannot force anyone to be curious.

The folk high school should be a place to which young adults come of their own free will, and where in company with their fellows and teachers they can work together on Danish history and literature, on the concerns of society — that is to say, history in the making — and on what they might otherwise agree to be appropriate. Grundtvig never drew up a fixed high school syllabus, but reiterated again and again that it should be *for the mutual good, liberal and voluntary*.

There are upwards of 90 folk high schools in Denmark today, more than at any time previously. They do not all consider them-



*Grundtvig as a lecturer. The sketch is dated 20 December 1843 and this enables it to be definitely assigned to Borch College in Copenhagen where during the winter of 1843-44 Grundtvig gave a series of lectures on Greek and Norse myths and ancient legends for ladies and gentlemen under the general title of Brage-Snak (Obscure Outpourings). The painter J. Th. Lundbye, who did the charming drawing, was an enthusiastic member of the lecture audience. On the day when Lundbye took his sketch-pad with him Grundtvig was delivering the fourteenth lecture in the series. Its subject was The Danish Odin.*

selves indebted to Grundtvig, but he is acknowledged by all to be the original inspirer of the schools.

There are folk high schools in the other Scandinavian countries as well, although it is only in Norway that Denmark has been followed to the extent that the schools do not provide qualifications in the educational system as a whole or hold examinations. Likewise in other European countries, in the USA and not least in Tanzania, educational experiments based on the folk high school ideas have been and are being made. It can hardly be doubted that to the extent that Grundtvig has an international reputation at all, it is in the field of the high school concept.

#### The co-operative movement

Although the first high school was established in 1844, more than twenty years were to pass before the high schools were to become a significant influence.

After the loss of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864 it was as if a wave of new energy flowed over the now diminished nation of Denmark. In the course of this wave the number of high schools more than doubled so that by 1870 there was a total of 52. While there were 729 high school pupils in the winter of 1865-66, the number three years later had increased to 2,071.

But the high schools were part of a larger progressive movement that has been called a *Danish cultural revolution*. The wave of enlightenment spread out from the high schools like circles in water, while simultaneously agriculture rejoiced in good prices for both grain and livestock. The high school idea of educational public meetings spread from re-

gion to region, and *community halls* were erected. These buildings began to shoot up from 1870 and became important centres for lecture meetings covering every possible subject from politics to debates on agricultural topics to discussion of Christian problems. The centres were also used for gymnastics, family celebrations and so on.

It was in the same period that those gaining their livelihood from the land, and the industrial workers, those two groups that were establishing a firm place for themselves in the still frail democracy, acquired organisations. The United Farmers' Party was founded in 1870, and it became first and foremost the political rallying ground for smallholders and owner-farmers, that is to say, the country

population. In 1871 the Danish section of the First International was instituted in Copenhagen, thus bringing socialism to Denmark in earnest.

The massive increase in education and the inception of organisations was to be the means that enabled Denmark to meet the challenge posed in the mid-seventies when trade conditions took a turn for the worse for agriculture.

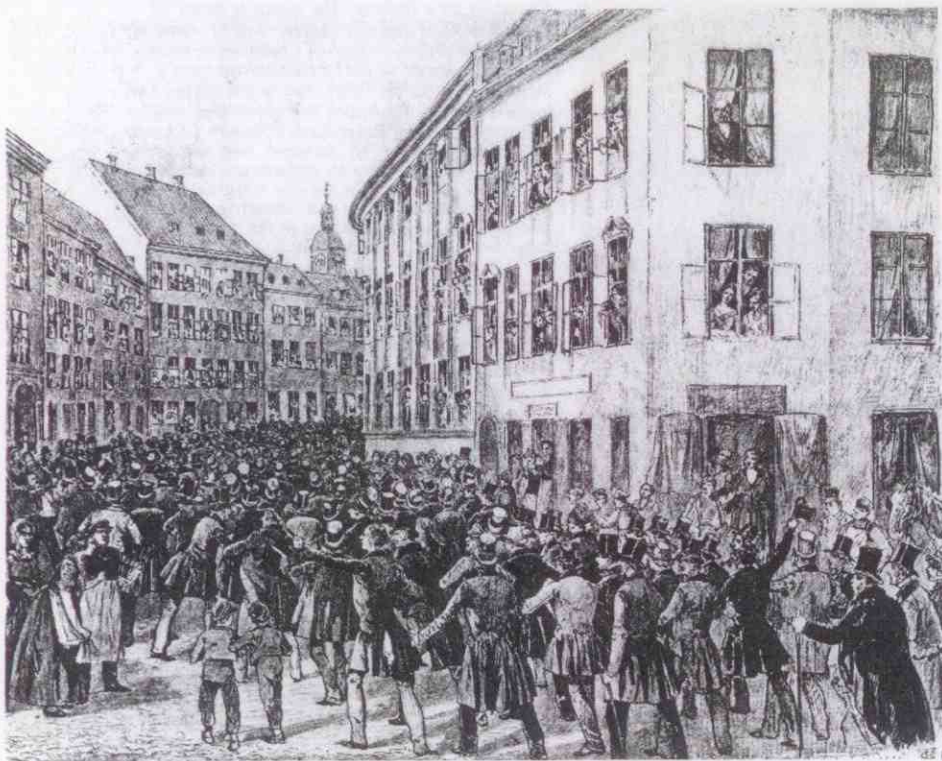
During the foregoing twenty years agriculture had organised its own financial institutes and established other forms of economic collaboration, but these institutions could do nothing to avert a crisis caused not least by the fact that rail and steamship transport made it possible for the USA to export grain to Europe in such quantities that prices were forced down to rock bottom.

It was necessary to think afresh, and now came the realisation that the Grundtvigian education wave with its marked emphasis on constantly seeking for solutions that chiefly promote the common good held even more potential. The reply to the challenge was to be increased improvement in products with the aid of new techniques, an enormous expansion in stock production and solidary collaboration in co-operative societies.

The *co-operative movement* originated in England. The first co-operative supply association was set up in Denmark as early as May 1866. By 1883 the country had 137 of these



*The Grundtvigian lecture milieu in full bloom. Erik Henningsen's painting På Askov Højskole 1902 (At Askov High School, 1902) has become a classic of life at a Danish folk high school. At the lectern is Askov's venerable principal, Ludvig Schrøder (1836-1908), surrounded by the teaching staff of the school, addressing his pupils, who are listening intently. Note that the Norwegian and Danish flags hang on the wall behind Schrøder, while a portrait of Grundtvig can be seen on the long side of the lecture hall, at the far left-hand-side edge of the painting.*



Two important documents from the inception of the breakthrough of representative government in Denmark. The mass demonstration to Christiansborg Palace on 21 March 1848 was a powerful sign that vigorous forces in the population wished the absolute monarchy to be replaced by a more liberal constitution. The demonstration is here seen as it passes the corner of Knabrostræde and Vimmelskaflet. It is characteristic of Grundtvig's attitude to the events that he himself did not take part in the march but is standing as a curious spectator at the open window of the second-floor apartment where he was living at the time. - Accompanying the picture is an example of Grundtvig's handwriting, the facsimile of one of the most imperishable of his educational songs, *Hvad solskin er for det sorte muld* (What sunlight is to the dark soil). At the top is written: At the inauguration of the school at Sjolte, 25 July 1856. Grundtvig also states that the melody to be used is that for *Det er så yndigt at følges ad* (It is so delightful to walk together) - he frequently wrote new lyrics for already existing melodies - and then follows the first verse of the poem: *Hvad solskin er for det sorte muld, / er sand oplysning for muldets frænde, / langt mere værdt end det røde guld / det er sin Gud og sig selv at kende; / trods mørkets harme / i strålearme / af lys og varme / er lykken klar!* (What sunlight is to the dark soil / is the light of truth to the soil's friend, / of far more worth than ruddy gold / it is to know one's God and oneself, / despite darkness' wrath / in dazzling arms / of light and warmth / we must clearly rejoice!).

consumers' associations on a co-operative basis.

It was at this same time that agricultural co-operative societies, that is, *producers' associations on a co-operative basis*, began to spring up alongside the co-operative societies. The first co-operative dairy was established in the summer of 1882 at Hjedding in West Jutland, but only eight years later the country could boast over 600 co-operative dairies, and by the turn of the century the number had risen to 1,029. Influence in the societies was democratically apportioned: votes were *for heads, not head of cattle*.

Likewise during the 1880s co-operative abattoirs were established one after another, and here again the ideological basis was expressed in such code words as *independence, autonomy and personal responsibility*.

It was not a question of the Grundtvigian high schools giving direct encouragement to their pupils to go back to their farms and set up co-operative societies, and not at all to actively enrol in the Farmers' Party. The old high school leaders were extremely cautious about becoming politically committed. But it was their wish to teach their pupils independence, and devotion to the common good. By showing that life was worth making efforts for and rich in possibilities they stirred the young people to put their initiative into use after their stay at high school, and many pioneers of the co-operative movement found their inspiration at a high school where Grundtvig's portrait hung on the wall of the lecture hall.

#### Democracy above all

The high school leaders had inherited their caution in the face of party politics from Grundtvig himself.

Originally he was an enthusiastic devotee of absolute monarchy, because he felt that only an authority able to survey the social system in its entirety from the exalted position of a father of his country will be able to ignore the various groups' personal interests and secure a social system that benefits the whole to as great a degree as possible: Then have we progressed far in wealth / When few have too much and fewer too little (*Da har i rigdom vi drevet det vidt, / når få har for meget og færre for lidt*), wrote Grundtvig in 1820, and then it was not democracy but absolutism that should secure this distribution of prosperity!

But when he saw democracy ploughing ahead with historical inevitability he involved himself with his customary energy and, as has been noted, made it his chief aim to include the weakest element, the farming community, in the new benefits. But he remained particularly sceptical of the parties. How could they avoid joining battle for the advantages of specific groups at the expense of the whole, he asked.

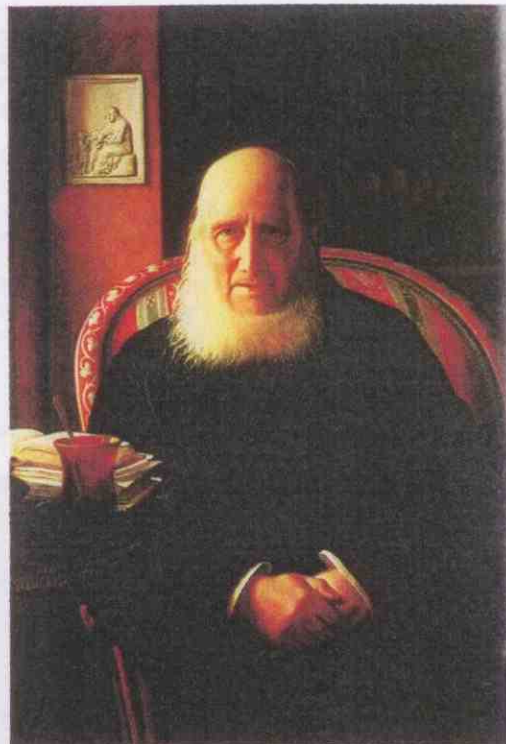
As can be seen from the survey of Grundtvig's life he did become actively involved in politics himself. But he did not join any party,

Det Indvielses  
Palace i Sjolle  
25 Juli 1856.

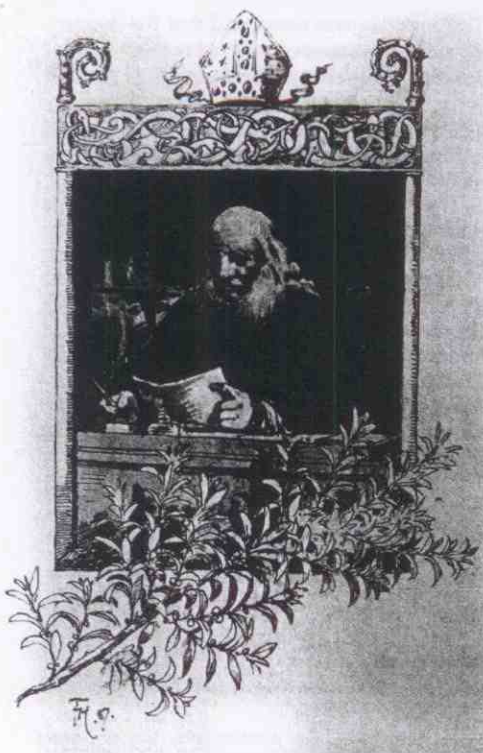
Mil. det er saa yndigt at følges ad  
Jeg vil tænke mig for det sorte Muld,  
for saa det Oplysning for Muldets Frænde,  
Langt mere værdt end det røde Guld,  
det er sin Gud og sig selv at kende,  
trods Mørkets Harmes  
i strålearme  
af lys og varme  
er Lykken klar!

Om Solen skinner i Sørøstland,  
og som den varmer i Sønderland,  
Al sandt Oplysning er mild og god,  
Saa den vil bryde saa velbesjaget;  
Jeg vil tænke mig  
af lys og varme  
for Lykken klar!

Om Underbløsten og Røddergrøn  
Jeg vil tænke mig om Gode Møder,  
Saa som Oplysning i sin Hord  
Der Underbløsten og Røddergrøn  
skal have;



Another painting by Constantin Hansen, this time from the summer of 1862. Grundtvig, now 76, is painted in his study at Store Tuborg, seated in a chair he had been presented with the year before by Danish women. That was also the year when the King, on the occasion of Grundtvig's fifty years' jubilee as a minister, had appointed him bishop. As well as the study's many books can be seen a relief. It is a cast of Bertel Thorvaldsen's Jesus velsigner de små børn (Jesus blessing the little children). Grundtvig sat at the same time for Wilhelm Marstrand, and according to Constantin Hansen it was not merely difficult for two painters to be working on the same famous model, it was also impossible to avoid talking about art with Grundtvig, who in this respect holds pretty hazy notions, which, without noticing it himself, Marstrand actually commented on, which did not seem to please G., as he replied with an unjustified attack on the crankiness of artists, and I almost think he meant: unbelief, Hansen wrote in a letter of 1 June 1862.



After Grundtvig's death his fame – and its cultivation – continued to grow. This picture from 1887 is typical in this respect. Grundtvig sits like a prophet of old holding his bishop's staff, in a Jugend-style frame.

so that he was elected for his own qualities in a political climate in which the party organisations were far looser and more informal than today.

It is characteristic of Grundtvig's development that when as a very old man he had himself elected to the *Rigsdag* for a final session, it was in order to fight, with all the energy he could muster, against a constitutional proposal (which was in fact passed), that he felt represented a curtailment of the democracy secured by the people in 1849.

Grundtvig's work as an active politician made its mark above all on that liberal aspect of school and church life that he found so essential, quite simply because he became more and more convinced that in intellectual and spiritual questions every form of prohibition is bad. It is only in freedom that we can explore the mystery of human life, that for Grundtvig could never be fully explained in parliament or the high school, but, on the contrary, in the church.

#### A broad national church

Experience has shown that it is very difficult for foreigners to understand the importance of Grundtvig's influence on church life in Denmark. Perhaps the key Grundtvigian terms *freedom* and *the common good* may also be of help here.

During the 1820s a strong secular movement developed in Danish religious life. After the peasants were able to read the Holy Scriptures for themselves they were in a qualified position to rebel against the dry and rationalistic preaching that the church meted out to them. It did not impart any feeling to them of the incredible fact that God loves humankind. As Grundtvig time and again came to experience ban after ban within the confines of the established church, he felt more and more sympathy for the strivings of these secular movements.

Originally he had called for the expulsion from the established church of those who did not share his own interpretation of Christianity. This view was expressed most strongly in a violent confrontation with the leading theologian of the day, Professor H. N. Clausen, in 1825-26. However, this confrontation brought a serious defeat for Grundtvig. After this he changed his tactics and demanded the right of the minority – himself and his ad-



N. F. S. Grundtvig.

#### N. F. S. GRUNDTVIG: WORKS

Grundtvig himself would be the first to point out that his written works can give only a faint reflection of his work for the Danish people during his lifetime. But this important reservation does not alter the fact that throughout his long life he was the most productive writer on the history of Danish culture. No collected edition of his works exists, and no-one has read his total production. But there are several editions of his selected works. This bibliography is a subjective selection from Grundtvig's chief works, arranged in four groups, to facilitate a survey of the extent of his enormous achievement. The dates indicate first edition in book form.

##### The historian

- 1808: *Nordens Mytologi* (Scandinavian Mythology).
- 1812: *Kort Begreb af Verdens Krønike i Sammenhæng* (A Brief Chronological Outline of World Annals).
- 1832: *Nordens Mytologi eller Sindbilled-Sprog* (Scandinavian Mythology or Symbol-Language).
- 1833: *Haandbog i Verdens-Historie I* (Manual of World History I).
- 1836: *Haandbog i Verdens-Historie II* (Manual of World History II).

1843: *Haandbog i Verdens-Historie III* (Manual of World History III).

1877: *Mands Minde* (Within Living Memory).

##### The theologian

1860: *Christenhedens Syvstjerne* (The Pleiades of Christendom).

1868: *Den christelige Børnelærdom* (The Christian Teaching of Children).

1871: *Kirkespejl eller Udsigt over den kristne Menigheds Levneds-løb* (Mirror of the Church or A View of the Life of the Christian Congregation).

Also numerous collections of sermons.

##### The enlightener of the people

1836: *Det danske Fjör-Kløver eller Danskheden partisk betragtet* (The Danish Four-Leaf Clover or A Subjective View of Danish Culture).

1838: *Skolen for Livet og Academiet i Soer* (The School for Life and the Soer Academy).

1840: *Bøn og Begreb om en Dansk Høiskole i Soer* (Prayers and Ideas for a Danish High School at Soer).

1847: *Lykønskning til Danmark med Det Danske Dummerhoved og Den Danske Høiskole* (Congratulations to Denmark on Danish Fatheadedness and the Danish High School).

##### The poet

1824: *Nyaars-Morgen* (New Year's Morning).

1837: *Sangværk til Den Danske Kirke* (Songs for the Danish Church).

1870: *Sangværk til Den Danske Kirke-Skole* (Songs for the Danish Church School).

After Grundtvig's death the two volumes of 1837 and 1870 were augmented by a further three volumes of hymns collected by an editorial committee: *Kirkeaaaret i Salmesang* (Hymns for the Ecclesiastical Year), *Kristenlivet i Salmesang* (Hymns of Christian Life), and *Efterslægt* (Aftermath). These five volumes contain the 1,500 or so hymns that Grundtvig wrote, original compositions as well as new versions of the old hymns, and translations, which have been published later in *Sangværk til Den Danske Kirke* (Songs for the Danish Church), vols. I-V. Grundtvig's copious poetical works were published in the collected edition *Poetiske Skrifter* (Poetical Writings), vols. I-IX, between 1890 and 1930.



The statue of Grundtvig in Vartov courtyard, created in 1931 by the sculptor Niels Skovgaard. Grundtvig is kneeling with his right hand in a wave emerging from the stone. It is an indication to the text entwining the whole block: Livets ord af guddoms rod/ kilden er til livets flod (Word of life from root divine/ is the source of the river of life). Vartov, whose minister Grundtvig was for so many years, is in the centre of Copenhagen, only a stone's throw from the Town Hall Square. To this day Vartov is a centre for Grundtvigian work in the capital, and his statue is surrounded by the bustling life of nursery school, youth club, student hostel, church, information office and secretariat for folk high schools etc.



Photograph of Grundtvig's grave at Køge Ås (Køge Rise), where Grundtvig requested to be laid to rest beside his second wife, Marie Toft. During the years following Grundtvig's death in 1872 thousands of his grateful countrymen made pilgrimage to the hillside burial place, which later became a peaceful sanctuary. But there is no doubt that the renewed interest in Grundtvig now being expressed, and further strengthened by the large-scale celebrations to mark the second centenary of his birth, will bring new pilgrims to Grundtvig's last resting-place, which is about 40 km south of Copenhagen.

herents, for instance – to break away from the established church. But as the necessity for popular and national community became increasingly important to him he came to deplore any form of breach within the church and firmly adopted the view that the ideal was essentially a broad national church allowing of a great deal of latitude, in which the various interpretations could exist in contiguity subject to two vital freedoms. First, the individual citizen's right to release from the obligation of attending services in his own parish church if he felt himself at odds with the minister, and to be free to attend whatever church he might choose. This right also included the eligibility to receive the sacraments with a civil element, such as marriage. But, if on the other hand the citizen was to have this freedom the minister too must have freedom to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments in the manner he felt to be most correct.

Grundtvig's opinions – that he put forward himself in the *Rigsdag* after the introduction of the democratic constitution in 1849 – won the day, as far as the liberty of the citizen to choose his priest and the pastor's liberty to preach the gospel were concerned. But as regards the rituals, the ministers of the Danish established church have little opportunity of diverging from the fixed norm.

In his search for what we all hold in common Grundtvig did not limit himself to what was common to all Danes – that was his brief as an educator. As a theologian he was deeply concerned with what *all Christians have in common* in the past, the present and the future.

He gradually came to see that this was not the Bible (Jesus and his disciples did not know the Bible, after all), but that the common property lay in the *Sacraments*: the cor-

nerstones of divine service must be *Baptism*, since Christians have always baptised those who believe, and *Holy Communion*, since that had been instituted by Christ himself.

This powerful emphasis on the importance of baptism and communion parallel with *hymn-singing*, in which Grundtvig, after *Thomas Kingo* (1634-1703) and *H. A. Brorson* (1694-1764), became the third giant of Danish hymnography, points to a characteristic element in that atmosphere of liberty Grundtvig played such a great part in creating.

#### Life is for living

Quite possibly the reader will suspect that Grundtvig did not find any conflict in acting as priest one moment and educator the next. Both were aspects of the same concern, just as Grundtvig the poet used both hymns and songs to illustrate this concern: our striving to gain as much understanding as possible of this puzzling but wonderful human life that we live in community with each other.

Grundtvig was convinced that the mystery of existence cannot be solved through speculation or meditation. The insight it is granted us to achieve comes while we are living our life. We are to *live* that life, and live it in such a way as will lead to our own development and to the benefit of all.

If we do that, then we can conclude, as he himself did in the very last lines that he composed three weeks before he died, that: Whether the span of life be short or long,/ It is for yield, and for the people's good;/ The day that's well begun is closed in goodness,/ And glows as beautifully in its evening hue (Om kort, om langt blev løbebanen spændt,/ den er til folkegavn, den er til grøde;/ som godt begyndt er dagen godt fuldendt,/ og lige liflig er dens aftenrøde).

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