

On Translating Grundtvig

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Grundtvig's works have never been extensively translated into English.¹ The first modern translation of over half a million of Grundtvig's words in six English volumes is the basis of this article. The difficulty of translating Grundtvig into English has long been recognised. Examples are given of the level of understanding that is required and of previous translations of a key hymn. Grundtvig is presented as the catalyst of modern Denmark, a man whose contribution surpasses all others and one who has no rival in any other country as the single founder of its values of freedom, learning, and cooperation.

Grundtvig's English skills

Grundtvig did not learn English either at Aarhus Cathedral School or at Copenhagen University, but for a man who knew German, Norwegian, and Swedish, and had taught himself Icelandic and Old English, English was just another language that he picked up as he went along. It became important for him only in 1829 when he was preparing for the first of his four trips to England. The King had granted him 2,000 *rigsdaler* to study the manuscript of the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, which is set

¹ Excerpts in this article have already appeared in some of the 6-volume series "N.F.S. Grundtvig. Works in English":

The School For Life. N.F.S. Grundtvig on Education for the People (2011) abbrev. to *TSFL*.
Living Wellsprings. The Hymns, Songs, and Poems of N.F.S. Grundtvig (2015) abbrev. to *LW*.
Human Comes First. The Christian Theology of N.F.S. Grundtvig (2018) abbrev. to *HCF*.
The Common Good. N.F.S. Grundtvig as Politician and Contemporary Historian (2019) abbrev. to *TCG*.
The Core of Learning. The Philosophical Writings of N.F.S. Grundtvig (2021) abbrev. to *TCOL*.
Denmark's Catalyst. The Life and Letters of N.F.S. Grundtvig (2023) abbrev. to *DC*.

in Denmark. He would be working with a transcriber at the British Museum, and since this required a good knowledge of the language, he began to take English lessons in Copenhagen from Carl Mariboe, a 28-year-old businessman newly returned from five years in London and now offering his services as an English teacher. Grundtvig had originally proposed to be away for a whole year but eventually cut the time to three trips of three or four months in the summers of 1829, 1830, and 1831.

To cut a long story short, he struggled with the language on his 1829 visit, managed quite successfully in 1830, and felt himself at home in the country, the language, and Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1831. Here, he was befriended by Professor William Whewell (pronounced “you’ll”), whom Donald Allchin calls, “the most wide-ranging [man] in the spread of his intellectual interests, scientific, philosophical, and literary.”² When Grundtvig first met him, he was Professor of Mineralogy (1828–32); later, he became Professor of Moral Philosophy (1838–55) and College Master (1841–66). Grundtvig was both in awe of him and indebted to him, as Professor Whewell opened opportunities for him and, in one case, invited him to dine at the college high table alongside the students – a revelation for Grundtvig. If any one man and any one place sowed the seeds in Grundtvig of a people’s high school back in Denmark, it was Professor Whewell of Trinity College. At the end of his stay, Grundtvig wrote in English to thank the professor; he could have done so in prose, but he chose poetry instead, a quite extraordinary venture and a sign of his own self-estimation and self-confidence, for he considered poetry the highest form of human communication.³ Although not a good poem by English standards, the last line shows his wish to remain in touch: “Forward calls ‘forget me not!’”

Ten years later, in 1841, Grundtvig’s English skills were requested by the Danish Queen, Caroline Amalie, who had befriended the Quaker anti-slavery advocate and prison reformer Elizabeth Fry. The Queen had invited her and her brother, Joseph Gurney, to Denmark. Being somewhat fluent in English and a friend of the Queen, Grundtvig was asked to accompany Mrs Fry as English interpreter on her trip to the Copenhagen prison. Grundtvig acquitted himself well and received praise from Mrs

² GS 1993, 243.

³ No. 140 in *LW*, 577.

Fry; his social conscience was shaken by what he saw, and, having previously dismissed the Quakers, he became an admirer of the way they put their faith into action.⁴ With his son Svend, Grundtvig visited England (and Scotland) one last time in 1843 and had many a conversation with clerics and accompanying friends. He remained an Anglophile until his death, but we have little knowledge of his English connection after 1843.

Grundtvig as translator

Grundtvig himself was a brilliant translator from Greek, Latin, Icelandic, German, and Old English. However, he himself rarely used the word “translation” (lit. a “carrying across”). He preferred the Danish word *fordanskning*, which translates literally as “Danification.” I accept his usage but cannot bring myself to use the equivalent “Anglification,” though that in effect is what all English translators have attempted. Grundtvig’s most famous Danish translations are *Deeds of the Danes* (from Latin), *Chronicle of the Kings of Norway* (from Old Icelandic), and *Beowulf* (from Old English). These were not much read at the time, but they were nevertheless highly praised by the Danish Grundtvig scholar Steen Johansen:

The linguistic dress in which Grundtvig clothed them bore such a powerful and personal stamp of the translator’s personality that in this regard they are without parallel in our translation literature. Grundtvig’s Saxo was indeed, as Hersleb wrote, “Every bit as much an original work as it was a translation.” That is how the chronicles have been regarded ever since, as works by Grundtvig!⁵

In 1836, in a burst of national pride and prejudice in *The Danish Four-Leaf Clover*, Grundtvig himself claimed that in the case of Danish the translation task was impossible:

I do believe that all that is beautiful and good can be translated into Danish with no loss whatsoever, while the best of Danish cannot be

⁴ DC, 209.

⁵ (GS 1968, 63).

translated into any language, not even into English, without losing at least the half of it.⁶

In his lifetime, nobody tested this outrageous claim from a man who first read Shakespeare in German: “Sein oder nicht sein”! Indeed, was there any *need* to translate Grundtvig’s works into English, even though several of them appeared in German translation, partly due to their relevance in the Danish-German conflict over the southern Danish border in the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein? The *need* for English translation came from much further away – from the USA.

The first translation

When Germany defeated Denmark in the border war of 1864, Denmark lost 40% of its land and experienced a national economic depression. In the USA, the Homestead Act of 1862 had granted 160 acres of public land to any citizen or immigrant who filed an intent to become a citizen. The states of Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska saw an influx of Danes embracing the pioneer spirit of the Midwest, where farm workers could earn twice as much as in Denmark and artisans could earn four to five times more. During the 1870s, almost half of all Danish immigrants settled in the USA with their families, but by the 1890s, family immigration accounted for only 25% of the total.

The Danes assimilated fast and soon learned English, while also holding on to Danish language and culture. The preexisting religious tension in Denmark between the liberal Grundtvigians and the stricter Inner Mission movement translated in the USA into a schism between the “happy Danes” and the “sad Danes,” also known as the “holy Danes”. Among the immigrants was Grundtvig’s son, Frederik Lange Grundtvig, who became the pastor of Clinton Lutheran Church, Iowa, from 1883 to 1900, from where he promoted all things Danish; he even compiled a Danish-only hymnbook which contained no fewer than 58 lyrics by his father (of 352), rising to 63 in the 2nd edition, to 88 in the 3rd and to 128 (of 737) in the 6th edition (1949). But they were still in Danish! However, Frederik Grundt-

⁶ *TSFL*, 145.

vig's work proved to be largely in vain, and he returned disillusioned to Denmark.

Gradually, as the Danish language gave way to English, translations of Grundtvig's hymns became necessary. The first record we have of such a translation dates from 1880, when Mary Elizabeth Fellowes, an Anglican in Hartford, Connecticut, wrote, "From the grave that dark cross take" (*Tag det sorte kors fra graven*).⁷ Subsequent attempts at translating Grundtvig's hymns and songs are listed in Index 7 of *Living Wellsprings* (396-405).

My discovery of Grundtvig

Born in London in 1944 and educated in England at school and university, I knew only one thing about Denmark, apart from the Vikings. This was the bravery of Captain Kurt Carlsen of the SS Flying Enterprise as it sank off Cornwall in January 1952. The BBC filmed the drawn-out process from a helicopter and, together with the 763,000 Brits who owned TV licences at the time, I watched the captain stay on the bow until the very last minute before he was winched away to safety.

In 1965, I met Hanna Graabech from Langa while I was studying English and Theology at London University, and she was studying English at Aarhus University. We married in 1967, and I emigrated to Denmark, where I eventually acquired Danish citizenship. At our wedding, we sang Grundtvig's "How sweet to travel the road ahead," (*Det er så yndigt*) and it stayed with me as a magnificent expression of marital love, superior to any comparable hymn in the English language. My eyes and ways were being redirected. I gradually picked up the Danish language and culture as I taught English to 16- to 19-year-olds in high schools in Randers and students at Aarhus University. Every day, I translated back and forth between the two languages. We spoke English at home (also with our two daughters) and Danish everywhere else. We were regular churchgoers and sang at least one Grundtvig hymn every Sunday. Then, while teaching in the English Department at Aarhus, I met the American teacher Shirley Larsen, who was writing the English summaries for *Grundtvig Studies*

⁷ LW 27, 103.

(*GS*). When she ended her stint in 1974, the co-editor William Michelsen asked me if I would take over the role. I answered affirmatively and made my first scholarly acquaintance with Grundtvig as the writer of the English summaries in *GS* 1975.

“You cannot translate Grundtvig! He’s too Danish, too difficult.” This is the gist of what I was told by countless Grundtvig scholars. Already in 1950, American scholars were asking the Grundtvig Society’s secretary Helge Toldberg for a selection of Grundtvig’s writings to be translated into English. In *GS* 1957, Henning Høirup lamented that “this has not been possible, despite the upswing in Grundtvig scholarship in English-speaking countries in recent years.”⁸ But this encouraged rather than deterred me. I took up the challenge, humbly but firmly. Having written the English Summaries in *GS* for a decade, by 1984 I was confident enough to collaborate with Niels Lyhne Jensen, Professor of Nordic Language and Literature at Aarhus University, to produce translated extracts of Grundtvig’s works in both Denmark and England – *A Grundtvig Anthology* published by Centrum JP, Aarhus, and James Clarke, Cambridge, respectively. Grundtvig was slowly but surely invading my consciousness, and I felt the need to dramatize his life in a Danish production for my local church in 1997, using only Grundtvig’s own words. I took the title from his memorable phrase in *Nordic Mythology* that human beings are “*a divine experiment*,” and finding no one else willing to play the lead, I took the role myself. I learned by heart the great lines that he wrote throughout his life, commissioned new modern music and dance, put on a Grundtvig wig, and took to the stage. My wife played Grundtvig’s first wife, Lise, and church members played the other roles. It was a great, but very local, success.

I was now well aware of both Grundtvig’s massive contribution to the making of modern Denmark and of his brilliance as a poet. But I had to wait until my retirement in 2008 before I could tackle the major works. My first concerted attempt to translate Grundtvig’s hymns appeared in *Hymns in English* (Det Kgl. Vajsenhus’ Forlag, Copenhagen 2009), which contained 42 new translations of Danish hymns, old and new, 21 of them by Grundtvig. Meanwhile, the director of the Centre for Grundtvig Research at Aarhus University, Michael Schelde, had asked me to submit some

⁸ *GS* 1957, 27.

test translations for a volume of Grundtvig’s writings on education. These were accepted, and I set to work on volume I. When this was published successfully in 2011, three more volumes were envisaged: on Grundtvig’s poetry, theology, and philosophy. The selection of texts for each volume was approved by a panel of eight Grundtvig experts, with Niels Henrik Gregersen and Ove Korsgaard as the overall editors. Eventually, we added a volume on Grundtvig’s politics, and finally a biography with 70 letters in both English and Danish which brought the series “N.F.S. Grundtvig. Works in English” to an end in September 2023. I pay tribute here to all the Grundtvig scholars who have helped me in this adventure:

- 2011 *The School for Life* – Uffe Jonas, Clay Warren and Ove Korsgaard
- 2015 *Living Wellsprings* – John Nicholson and Uffe Jonas
- 2018 *Human Comes First* – Niels Gregersen and Hans Raun Iversen
- 2019 *The Common Good* – Ove Korsgaard
- 2021 *The Core of Learning* – Anders Holm and Kim Arne Pedersen
- 2023 *Denmark’s Catalyst* – co-authored by Hans Raun Iversen
- 2023 *Grundtvig, Biografi og breve* – co-authored by Hans Raun Iversen

With the sixth and final volume, all published by Aarhus University Press, the translations amount to over 580,000 of Grundtvig’s own words.

Translating Grundtvig’s poetry

In their book *Understanding Translation* (Academica, DK 2008, 20), Anne Schjoldager, Henrik Gottlieb, and Ida Klitgård list no fewer than six competencies required of the translator: linguistic, cultural, textual, subject-specific, research, and transfer. Thus, the translator should preferably be both bi-lingual and bi-cultural; should be genre- and subject-cognisant; should have vast library, internet, and other expertise reserves available; and should also have a sixth sense of how to transfer meaning from the source language. Time and the critics will judge how well I have met these criteria.

In *GS* 2000 (60-70), Professor S.A.J. Bradley contributed an article outlining the difficulties facing the translator of Grundtvig's poetry and de-crying the popular perception that "translation belongs among the service industries of literature" (61). Readers are referred to this excellent essay in English in which Bradley translates first the words of Johan Bülow, who commissioned the translation, and then Grundtvig's own penetrating words regarding his "Danification" of *Beowulf*:

Bülow: Of course, you must press on with your poetic translation of *Beowulf*; I know what talents you have for writing both poetry and prose; but I want you to listen to the opinion out there among the scholars and provide us as well with a literal translation, a word for word translation.

Grundtvig: Trust me, I studied the original as meticulously as though I meant to produce a word-for-word translation; but when it came to creating a translation, the word-for-word idea was unviable; for me, the ideal of translation is to carry across the spirit of the original; and this cannot be done on a word-for-word basis but entails assumption and exercise of a poetic freedom; that is what *I* mean by "translating poetry."⁹

As I worked my way through the 580,000 words, Grundtvig's writing became familiar to me. When I occasionally got stuck, I turned first to my wife and then to Liselotte Larsen in the Grundtvig Library; both were of considerable help. I have always sought to be faithful to the text before me, yet I know from countless learned sources that Grundtvig is extremely difficult to read in the original, even for Education and Theology students.

⁹ (Bradley's footnote): "Letter from Johan Bülow, Sanderumgaard, 9 September 1815; item 134 in G. Christensen and S. Grundtvig (eds), *Breve fra og til N.F.S. Grundtvig*, I, 1807-1820 (Copenhagen, 1924). Introduction to *Bjowulfs Drape* (Copenhagen, 1820), p. xxxiv; and *Om Bruneborg-Slaget og et Riim i den Anledning* in *Danne-Virke, Et Tids-Skrift* II (1817), p.79. These sources are quoted and translated in my [Bradley's] article 'Grundtvig as Translator' in this volume."

¹⁰ No. 59 in *LW*, 144.

¹¹ No. 71 in *LW*, 159.

¹² No. 95 in *LW*, 194.

¹³ No. 82 in *LW*, 177.

¹⁴ *TSFL*, 38.

¹⁵ 'A Grundtvig Glossary' is available as an appendix this article.

When I came to his poetry in volume II, I became acutely aware that he was a poet of the first rank, a writer superior in poetry. In his poetry, he is succinct, precise, imaginative, astonishing, a rhyme-smith of the first rank. How could such a poet write such difficult prose? When I reached volume III on Theology, the prose remained a constant challenge. Even his sermons were tough to translate, and how on earth could his audience follow him as he added minor clause after minor clause to his major clauses? I recalled the service that Christian Thodberg had done all Grundtvig scholars when 40-50 years ago he wrote some of Grundtvig's sermons out as prose poetry, and suddenly they were easier to read on the page. Did he deliver his sermons as poetry? I wondered.

All Grundtvig's translators have been faced with the complex task of reproducing in English his contents and concepts, his metaphors and similes, his rhymes and rhythms, and the general singability of his hymns and songs. I have deliberately chosen to make the English versions follow the metre (always), the rhyme-scheme (mostly), the imagery (frequently), and the meaning (as far as possible). For those who know both languages intimately, the compromises are obvious from the very first page. One example is Grundtvig's baptismal hymn, "Herren strækker ud sin arm", literally, "The Lord stretches out his arm." Below is the original first verse with a literal translation beside it, followed by two previous attempts by other well-known translators:

Herren strækker ud sin arm,
 små vil han velsigne;
 kommer, små, til Jesu barm,
 lærer ham at ligne!
 Døb, genfød dem, Herre from,
 dybt i livets kilde!
 Aldrig de til død og dom
 sig fra dig forvilde!

The Lord stretches out his arm,
 He wishes to bless the little ones;
 Come, all you children, to Jesus' bosom,
 learn to be like Him!
 Baptise, rebear them, holy Lord,
 deep in the source of life!
 Never shall they to death and judgement
 go astray from you.

Lo, the Lord extends His hand
 To bestow his favor;
 Come, ye babes, at His command,
 Unto Him, your Savior.
 Lord, baptize them in Thy name,
 Give them life eternal,
 Keep them safe from sin and shame
 In Thy pastures vernal.

Cradling children in his arm,
 Jesus gave his blessing.
 To our babes a welcome warm
 He is yet addressing.
 Take them, Lord, give life anew
 In the living waters!
 Keep them always near to you
 As your sons and daughters.

Rev. Paulsen (1927)

Johannes Knudsen (1971)

It is immediately clear that Paulsen's version belongs to 19th century hymn-writing and Knudsen's to the 20th. Long ago, we dropped Paulsen's "Lo" and "ye" and "unto," while Knudsen's far superior version nonetheless has to rhyme "waters" with "daughters." A further complication arises from the fact that where English places the definite article *before* the noun, as in "the victory," Danish adds it *after* the noun, literally "victory the." Thus, two Danish syllables, the first stressed, the second unstressed, have become four English syllables, which must now be fitted into a singable line – but at what expense? It is not always possible to reproduce Grundtvig's rhyme-scheme, but all three translations here actually do so. Below is my version in *Living Wellsprings*:

See, his arms are open wide,
 little ones find blessing!
 Children, come to Jesus' side,
 in His love progressing.
 Lord, baptise them now, we pray,
 let them grow to ponder
 their new birth, so from Your way
 they may never wander!¹⁰

I have tried to reproduce the *spirit* first, and the rhythm, rhyme, and tune next. If you cannot sing it naturally, it is not right!

There is a case to be made for calling Grundtvig the greatest love poet in the language – for his love of God and life, his love of his wives, and his love of his country. From a hymn celebrating the love of God, let us turn to the well-known wedding hymn “Det er så yndigt at følges ad,” actually written for a silver wedding for two of Grundtvig’s friends. The tune is known to all Danes who have attended a church wedding, and again there is nothing comparable in English, no wedding hymn that is sung at *every* wedding. A literal translation would be as follows: “It is so lovely to walk together/accompany one another.” The first four words are fine, the last three not so fine in English. The rhythm demands something like “It is so lovely to side by side,” but then what? I have chosen “How sweet to travel the road ahead.” That is hardly a translation, much more a paraphrase, but at least it captures the *spirit* of the original:

Det er så yndigt at følges ad
 For to, som gerne vil sammen være,
 Da er med glæden man dobbelt glad
 Og halvt om sorgen så tung at bære.

Ja, det er gammen at rejse sammen,
 at rejse sammen, når fjederhammen
 er kærlighed, er kærlighed.

How sweet to travel the road ahead
 for two desiring to be together,
 for joy is double when we are wed,
 and sorrow’s storm-winds much lighter to weather.

How sweetly valid to travel married,
 to travel married when we are carried
 on wings of love, on wings of love.

The major compromise is with the 3-syllable Danish word “kærlighed” which corresponds to the 1-syllable English “love.” Here I have added “on wings of love” in preference to “by love, love, love” which is too reminiscent of The Beatles song. My hope is that everyone has forgotten the Danish Eurovision song contest winner from 2000, “Fly on the wings of love” which is itself an English reproduction of the Danish original “Smuk som et stjernesked” (Beautiful as a shooting star). Of such are compromises made!

Grundtvig wrote not only the greatest love hymn in the Danish language, but also the greatest love *song* – to his second wife, Marie, in August 1851 for their engagement:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. What is it, my Marie,
which tells us that we two
in speaking or in silence,
at rest or much to do,
feel we are closely wedded
like church in pray’r embedded,
like worshippers and priest?</p> | <p>2. It is because we wish for
each other as we are,
because we two can carry
each other as we are,
because awake or dozing,
our mouths will soon be closing
together in a kiss!</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The question-and-answer effect is so powerful, but it is the *content* of verse 2 that speaks to every couple, ancient or modern – to “wish for” and to “carry” “each other as we are.”

A final poem that demonstrates Grundtvig’s catalyst as a nation-builder and prowess as a modern poet is “Of the people,” his poem from 1848 on nationality. In Grundtvig’s day, Danes were born in Denmark and did not emigrate, so he is limited by time and space, but for us who are first-generation immigrants, you cannot *feel* you are a Dane until you have learned the language and the culture of Denmark, and even that may not be enough. At the time of writing, I have lived 23 years of my life in England and 58 in Denmark. I have both British and Danish citizenship and “love” both countries, but I am not a *Dane*, nor ever shall be. My wife was Danish, and both my daughters, born and bred in Randers, are Danish, but I have *married* into the clan and share with the late Prince Henrik and the new Queen Mary the status of being an honorary Dane. Time and again, I have returned to Grundtvig’s lines:

“Of the people” is our watchword
through the land from top to toe!
Something new is in the making,
even simpletons must know!...

People! What defines a “people”?
What does “of the people” mean?
Does the nose or mouth distinguish
how a “people” can be seen?...

There were “peoples” long before us,
great or small with that word blessed,
whether there is still a “people”
we must now put to the test:...

Of a “people” all are members
who regard themselves as such,
find their mother-tongue sounds sweetest
and their fatherland love much; ...

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

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!¹³

Translating Grundtvig's prose

In my estimation, an average Grundtvig sentence contains around 120 words. An average modern English sentence, say, in a novel, contains around 20-25. The longest Grundtvig sentence I have come across in the last 15 years runs to 286 words, in *On Historical Learning* from 1816. The work contains 5,232 words (minus the title and footnote) with only 45 sentences, the average length of which is 116 words. Syntactically the sentences are logical, held together as they are by a string of colons, semi-colons, dashes, and commas. Below is a *literal* translation of the 152 words in a typical Grundtvig sentence from the very first text I had to translate, "The University in London and the Academy at Sorø" (1827-28):

It may well be that anyone who is wholly ignorant of the history of the human spirit, or thinks that he can direct it whichever way he pleases with his own good sense and reason – the kind of person who is schooled from a young age and naturally gifted – considers it of no consequence that a new university is being built; he may think this, even when its builders are a people with the highest imaginable spiritual powers and the richest resources, i.e. the British, who since the days of King Alfred have improved themselves through the cloistered schools at Oxford and Cambridge and who only change their perspective roughly once in a thousand years; he may even think this when it is *they* who consider it essential to build a new university in the capital of the *world*; but for my part I am not in the least ashamed to see a world event in this English egg, which when hatched will, whatever else it does, surprise all observers, transform even the blind, enlighten what is living, and take control of what is dead.¹⁴

The only way to deal with this is to use what I call my salami-knife and cut it into five edible portions – which even then may prove indigestible. However, once you have digested the content, it is actually very interesting – and a powerful testimony to Grundtvig's anglophilia.

Having dealt with the syntax, we now come to the choice of vocabulary to reproduce Grundtvig's meaning. In the course of translating, I produced for myself 'A Grundtvig Glossary', listing the various options available.¹⁵ A good example is *oplysning*, for which there are four possible

translations: enlightenment, illumination, education, or information. The choice is often determined by the context, but the choice between “enlightenment” and “education” is often hard to make, so occasionally, I use both words: “education *and* enlightenment.”

The most challenging Danish word is *folk*, because it has been appropriated by US usage to mean “the people.” American presidential candidates will address the audience at their rallies as “you folks,” because it is so homely, so folksy. In the next sentence, they will say, “The American people are calling for change” – never the American “folk,” for they are moving up a notch in their overview of the nation. Hence, the US choice of “folk high school,” meaning the homely, local, we’re-all-in-this-together school.

Faced with the impossible choice between “folk” and “people,” I have consistently chosen the latter, for in UK usage “folk” is almost always used in apposition to some other noun, as in folk song, folk tale, folk dance, folk hero, folklore. However, US usage has influenced the rest of the world, so while there are no “folk high schools” *in the UK*, they are found in many other places in Europe, and even the Danes advertise themselves as “folk high schools” on their websites and in their brochures. At Elsinore, the home of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, you can find both: the “International People’s College – a Folk High School in Denmark.” Further confusion arises when US usage drops the “high” and talks about “the folk school” to a Dane. To an American, this can mean a weekend doing craftwork at the local school, while for Danes it means the entire grade school from 6 to 16.

One other word deserves a mention here. Professor Niels Lyhne Jensen taught me 40 years ago that when you meet the Danish words *vid*, *viden*, *vidskab*, *videnskab*, and *videnskabelighed* in Grundtvig, you have hit a red light, full stop! They all derive from Old English *witt* (understanding, intellect, sense, knowledge, consciousness, conscience), thence from Proto-West Germanic *witi*, thence from Proto-Germanic *witja* (knowledge, reason), and thence from Proto-Indo-European *weyd-* (“see, know”). We recall that the Anglo-Saxon “parliament” was the “witan” of “knowledgeable men,” a sort of King’s Council. Nowadays, in US and UK usage the singular denotes a form of intelligent humour, while the plural signifies one’s intellectual powers, as in “keep your wits about you!” The broad-ranged *videnskab* is most often translated by “science,” but “knowledge” and

“scholarship” are also possibilities. In Grundtvig’s case the better choice is usually “learning,” which in his time included all the sciences; hence volume 5 of my translated works is titled *The Core of Learning*.

Singing the faith

Sitting in a church pew on a Sunday morning and checking the hymns that we are about to sing in the course of our worship, I always look for, and hope for, one by Grundtvig. Two is a bonus. For in his hymns, we are at the heart of both the tradition and the modernity of the Danish Lutheran Church – and of the Church year. At Advent and New Year, “Welcome, new year of our Lord” is sung; at Christmas, “A child is born in Bethlehem,” and “Lovely is the midnight sky” along with a host of others; at Easter, the best-loved hymns are “Hail, our reconciling Saviour” and “Easter flower, why are you here?”; Pentecost is celebrated everywhere with “The sun now shines in all its splendour,” while at Harvest, the central hymn is “The forest leaves are fading fast.” Grundtvig wrote the best-known hymns for Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and the wedding ritual, while his hymn on death “To bid this world farewell aright” is equally magnificent but less used at funerals than “Hail, our reconciling Saviour.”

The new biography of Grundtvig, *Denmark’s Catalyst*, co-authored by myself and Hans Raun Iversen, presents Grundtvig as the catalyst of modern Denmark, a man whose contribution surpasses all others and one who has no rival in any other country as the single founder of its modern values of freedom and cooperation. Denmark is a culturally Christian country in no small measure thanks to Grundtvig. I venture to make the following comparison: no England without Shakespeare, no Denmark without Grundtvig. But where Shakespeare was a poet-playwright, Grundtvig was a pedagogue-poet-pastor-politician and philosopher.

Just as Schlegel, Hugo, and Pasternak felt the need to translate *Hamlet* into German, French, and Russian, respectively, so have I felt the need (the call? the challenge?) to translate Grundtvig into English with all the skills that I can muster. In so doing, I feel I have come close to the country’s greatest writer and the catalyst of modern Denmark. It is my hope that the 6 volumes will find their way at least onto the shelves of the

world's university libraries, so that scholars and students alike can benefit from an acquaintance with Grundtvig.

A Grundtvig Glossary – Edward Broadbridge 2025

In the course of the past 50 years, I have compiled a glossary of possible translations of Grundtvig's texts.

Almisstevang	Compulsory almsgiving
Almueskole(r)	commoners school (s) Board School
anskuelse	(world) view, way of thinking
Begivenhed før Beskrivelse	Events before descriptions
Bogkundskab	Book knowledge/Academic knowledge
Boglighed/boglig konst	The word-play on <i>bog-lighed</i> is hard to reproduce – learning in general/academic knowledge
Boglærde	Scholar, academic,
Bogorm(e)	Bookworm (s)
Borgerakademi	Citizens Academy
Borger-Skolen	School for the citizens, Civic School
Borgerligt samfund	Civilised society,
Bragesnak	Bragi Talks
Børneskole	Children's School
Byzantinsk (neds.)	Byzantine
Chinesisk Eksamensvæsen (neds.)	Chinese exam system
Christi menighed	The Church of Christ
Christenhedens Syvstjerne	The Pleiades of Christendom
Dannekvinden	The Danish woman/Danish women
Dannelse = folkbildning (sv) National dannelse/ erhvervsorienteret uddannelse	Education, Popular education, education of the people
Dannelse for livet	Education for life
Dannelse Fædrelandsk	Education in patriotism

Dannelse, folke-	Education of the people, popular education
Dannelse, klassisk	Classical education
Dannelse, lærd	Cultural education
Dannelse, nordisk	Nordic education
Dannelse og oplysning	Education and enlightenment
Dannelse, videnskabelig	Knowledge, academic
Dansk Gæstmildhed	Danish hospitality
Danske Samfund	Danish Society
Danskhed	Danishness
Den christelige Børnelærdom	Basic Christian Teachings
Den sorte Skole	The Black School
Det historisk-poetiske	The historical-poetic
Det levende Ord	The living word
Drengagtig Selvklogskab	Boyish conceitedness (of boys)
Drengeskole(r)	Boys' school
Drengvidenskabelighed	Schoolboy knowledge
Duelighed, praktisk	Proficiency, practical ability
Embedsmandsuddannelse	Training of civil servants
Faguddannelse	Vocational training
Folket	The people
Folkefærd	Nation, people
Folkefølelse	The people's feeling/feeling of the people
Folkehøjskole	People's/Folk High School
Folkelighed	The people's (life and) culture, the life and culture of the people, the people's character/nature
Folkenaturen	The people's nature
Folkeskolen	Public/Primary school
Folkestemmen	The people's voice
Folkeligt Statsraad	People's State Council
Folke-verden	World of peoples

Folkeånd	The people's spirit/spirit of the people
Forplante	Transmit (His life is transmitted)
Frie kirker	Free/independent churches
Friskolen	Independent primary school
Fædernelandet (Fædrenelandet)	Fatherland
Fædrelandskærlighed	Patriotism
Fælles Bedste	Common good
Fællesskab	Community, shared/common feeling
Godsejerstand	Landed gentry
Grundig lærdom og altomfattende videnskabelighed	Meticulous scholarship and comprehensive learning
Grundoplysning	Basic education
Grundsætning	<i>Theo.</i> Foundational doctrine. <i>Phil.</i> Basic principle
Gudelige forsamlinger	godly assemblies
Historisk Lærdom	Historical learning/scholarship/knowledge
Hjertelag	Kind heart
Hjertelighed	Heartiness, cordiality, heart-warmth
Hjerte-Menneske	Heart's goodness
Hjertesprog	Languages of the heart
Hvad udad tabes skal indad vindes (H.P. Holst)	What is lost abroad must be won at home
Højskole	College, High School, University
Folkehøjskole, den dansk(e)	The Danish People's High School (US Folk School)
Idégrundlag	conceptual basis
Indbyrdes undervisning	Reciprocal teaching
Jødeland	The land of the Jews, the Holy Land
Kirkelære	(church) doctrine
Konst	Artform, insight, but also artistic trick/feat/skill!
Kraftytring	power manifestation

Kundskab	knowledge
Levende veksel-virkning	living interaction
Levende virksomhed	spirited/living efforts/activity
Livets Skole	The School for Life
Livskraft	life-force
Livsanskuelse	Philosophy of life, life philosophy
Livs-oplysning	life-enlightenment/enlightenment of life
Livsytring	life manifestation/manifestation of life
Lærdom	learning, scholarship/knowledge
Lærde (de)	educated people
Mageløse opdagelse	matchless discovery
<i>Mands Minde</i>	<i>Within Living Memory</i>
Meddelelse (i skolesammenhæng)	teaching
Meddele	Impart (Spirit is imparted)
Menighed	Church, congregation
Menneske først og Christen saa	Human comes first, and Christian next
Modersmål	mother-tongue
Modsigelses grundsætning	The principle of contradiction
Mulktering	Punishments (e.g. fines for missing school)
Naturkundskaber	Natural sciences (?)
Naturvidenskab	Natural science
Naturens Orden	Order of nature
Oplysning	Enlightenment and education
Oplysning Dansk	Danish education
Oplysning, borgerlig	Education of the citizens, 'citizens' education'
Oplysning, for Livet	Education for life
Oplysning, hjertelig	Education of the heart
Oplysning, Menneskelig	Education of the whole man
Oplysning, naturlig	Education by nature
Oplysning, universalhistorisk	universal-historical education

GLOSSARY

Planteskole for Livet	Nursery for life
Real (Høj-)skole	Middle High School
Ridderakademiet	Knights' Academy
De rådgivende forsamlinger	The Provincial Advisory Assemblies
Saliggjørelses Orden	The order of salvation
Samfundssind	Public spirit
Sand Veksel-Virkning	true interaction
Seminarium	Teacher Training College, College of Education, Seminary
Sjælesørge	Spiritual advisor
Skole for Lyst	The School for Pleasure
Skolen for Døden	The School for Death
Skolen for Livet	The School for Life
Skriftklogskab	Knowledge of Scripture/scriptural knowledge
Stilling	often 'standpoint'
Stand/stænder	Estate(s) of the realm
Stænderforsamling	Provincial Advisory Assemblies
Symbolbøger	Confessional books
Tugtemester	strict disciplinarian
Til Livets Gavn og Landets Tarv	For the benefit of the life and needs of the country
Uddannelse, Borgerlig	Civil Education, Citizens' education
Universal-historisk vidskab	universal-historical education
Valgmenighed	Independent congregation within the DLC
Veksel-virking	Interaction
Vennemøderne	The Friends' Meetings
Videnskabelig uddannelse	Academic education/scholarly learning
Videnskabelighed	(process/pursuit of) Learning
Videnskaber	Branches of knowledge
Videnskabsmand	Scholar (later 'scientist')
Vidskab	Learning, scholarship

Virksomhed	Activity, activeness
Aandsdannelse	Cultural education
Aandsfrihed	Religious liberty, freedom of the spirit